

## Choice Literature.

## ONE AFTERNOON.

If Prescience lived for any higher purpose than to thrill our nerves because the cook is going to leave, or to oppress us with prophetic dullness when we are on our way to the play that is to render obsolete all other plays and doesn't; if she did not make a point of taking a day off whenever a big bold destiny wants to be shown upstairs—then Prescience might have had something to say to Eleanor Glenning, when she left her Northumberland Avenue dwelling place one afternoon this summer.

"It's the last time," she said to her sister. "I'm not to be dragged to that house again. To sit and grind out talk and pump up laughter with those people is not my idea of using up an afternoon."

Minnie looked offended.

"No, there aren't any slummy little boys for you to pet, or any pictures of bare, brown, writhing women to look at, but you might remember the Cattermoul house is better than anything we ever knew before Uncle Ben made his money, and as for their At Homes!"

"Oh, Minnie! the dirty Briton in his slum is delightful, and the clean Briton may have his good points if he's a weird Bohemian, or even if he's only hereditary; but the great conservators of virtue and commerce in Bayswater!"

"Why, Eleanor, Bayswater is stately antiquity to us. We're the very newest thing there is! Nothing to us but money!"

"Child, you know it isn't pride in the grandeur of our hotel rooms or any of our expensiveness, that makes me hate middle class teas. The real patrician thing is to earn your own living. I'm so sorry for you, Minnie, that you never looked at life out of that window. It's a great pity our fortunes went up before you were old enough; you can't know how like a duchess in your own right it makes you feel to draw your month's salary from the school committee at Wentonmah."

Minnie lifted her little nose and sniffed at her sister, and presently they stopped.

The Cattermoul interior was a fine example of a pre-Ruskin, ante-Wilde foundation, with a highly modern stratum formed upon it.

Minnie's slim little figure found its way into a more densely-peopled room, as Eleanor braced herself to the work of looking pleased while a matron of unusually grand proportions talked to her.

"People are crowding to see an American beauty in the music room; but I say those sort of people are far too much encouraged. You are from the States! Really? One hears such odd things of Americans, doesn't one? There was a family of them in the 'otel with us at Bournemouth, and one of the girls spoke to my Cicely—such a fright it gave me. But I had the child away directly. To be sure you must have been a long time here. You've picked up quite an English manner. How does this seem to you now?" indicating the whole assembly with her chin. "I can't imagine you would have any such social gatherings as this in your towns?"

"Well, hardly; you never would find fifteen girls to one young man in our houses. It couldn't happen to us to have six nobly-made beauties sitting in a row like these, all dumb and apathetic and ignored by everyone."

The smile crept up to the matron's eyes, and wrinkled them.

"How interesting! I've often wondered if all those tales were true about your country. One reads that in some parts the men so outnumber the women, and have such fortunes with their ranching and stockbroking, that any girl who would go out there might marry whom she chose."

"No doubt," said Eleanor, and then the matron's underlip let go its hold upon the upper one and her eyes grew dim with thought.

"Eleanor! the energetic Minnie presented a tall and handsome lady shadowed by a slender lad," Mrs. Stainsby and her son!"

"A-ah!" Mrs. Stainsby cried, "how awfully nice to meet so many Americans in one afternoon! I'd just been talking to Mrs. Betts, your dazzling countrywoman, when this charming young sister of yours was brought to me! Too kind of her to bring us on to you!" She spoke caressingly, and waved her head upon its willowy throat. It was lost effort trying to get even with her, Eleanor's little compliment was batted back with a firm, prompt play—

"Ah—no—no—no! we've nothing like your grace, your conversation, your amusing slang—I am so fond of it! You know I say you Americans are all chic! Then your enormous wealth—Oh, we're too awfully out of it!"

Eleanor gasped as she fished in her mind for further flattery; there was a defensive gleam in Mrs. Stainsby's eye that showed she was ready to outdo her at any cost.

"Percy—to her son—"do you not remember those striking-looking girls from Texas, whose dress was so magnificent? They were so fond of eating sweets along the esplanade in their dear old independent way! How like them Miss Glenning and her sister are! Wouldn't you think it was Miss Tottie Crackets standing there?"

Percy had no opinion; and the opening whang of a Cattermoul duet released Eleanor, and she sank back into her chair.

The matron, however, had no scruples about violating the sanctity of the piano, she leaned toward Eleanor on a shabby little table till it creaked, and tea-pots and tea-jugs rattled together; Mrs. Langtry's photograph tumbled, and two Guelphs fell on the floor; but she went on in a deep dramatic recitative:—

"I suppose when a girl has been brought up perfectly from the cradle—casting a motherly glance at a young woman sitting near her—with none of their bold American ways and all the modern languages, not to speak of riding, painting, drawing, archery, and swimming"—she paused to sigh, and smile intensely on her daughter, then with an undulation that sent waves of motion to the remotest flounce of her figured gown, she turned on Eleanor a triumphant look of archness: "I've no doubt those ridiculously rich creatures out there, your Bilts and Astorgouls, would struggle with each other for the hand of a well-brought-up English girl."

Eleanor looked upon the maiden, whose pink, submissive face showed plainly that nothing yet had happened to her but to be brought up—and under pressure of her mother's eyes be-

gan to speak of the use of bowie knives in such a case; but the piano grew exacting and shut off conversation.

"Oh, Eleanor!" Minnie came whispering presently, "do come and see this Mrs. Betts. She's a vision!"

But Eleanor wouldn't; she had heard a shrill staccato piercing the pervading murmur, and that was all she would have of Mrs. Betts.

The next time Minnie came, to bring a bleary-eyed, Italian-looking man, her sister would hardly recognize her. The man had some good bows and gestures—Minnie called them his "courtly manners"—but there was a deep untidiness about him that Eleanor could only forgive in vicious little boys. However, they took him away from her to the piano, and there his voice, a melodious tenor, made a happy mist about him, obscuring all his sins.

The matron's face was turned, and Eleanor seized the moment to slip into the conservatory alone under a palm.

A familiar prelude sounded. He was singing the song of Schubert's that has been most sadly oversung, and yet never to be heard by her so often as to loose it from the memories of a fateful epoch in Eleanor Glenning's life. She is a handsome woman in a large style, with that urban impressiveness upon her face which only shows itself on this exposed surface of our race as the result of careful training; but the passion of the Schubert music now stirred it to pathetic youthfulness; varying shades of girlish pettishness and mirth and sadness fled across it, as clouds run over sunlit water.

For her the place and people had melted away, together with the London haze and ten years' time. It was May in a Western prairie State, and brilliant morning. She could not see the hot blue sky for the roof of interlacing boughs and fluctuating layers of pink petals overhead. The house that was her boarding-place during three years of student life in Mishwauk Normal College, stood among orchard trees, and there she sat, shaded by apple-boughs, a dozen text books scattered on the grass, and thoughts that had pleasanter ways open to them than this volume of pedagogic methods ready to instruct her. The atlas on her lap held a half-written sheet, with a bold heading: "The Development of the First Mathematical Idea in the Mind of the Child." But it was out of the question to feel any interest in the child or his alleged mind while two gray eyes kept smiling at her through the foolscap pages.

These gray eyes, brighter for laughter and deeper for thought than most openings through which souls look out, were set under large perceptive bumps and curving brows, in a dark face. The nose came out at an enquiring angle, and there were other evidences to show that Professor Murray Blake, of the Normal College, had lived, for the most part, to hunt and analyze and classify.

Neither the fact that he was coming into notice as a rising scientist in his specialty nor the more interesting one that he was tall and good looking, could make him popular with Eleanor's classmates—girls whose suburban life was only an annex to their home life in the city. He had such a sneering, sardonic look, they said; and he was no more like Charlie!

The reiterated wit of the remark that Professor Blake walked as if always on ploughed ground never disturbed Eleanor; she had only pride in the fact that he had put himself through a University course by years of teaching in district schools, but the funny girl of the class went too far when she said his mother cut his hair, and did a sketch of him, a head half-hidden by a bowl—which she was afraid to show Eleanor. The knowledge of it cooled their friendship.

Only a month before Professor Blake had brought Miss Glenning home from a lecture. They stood in the chill spring night among these very trees to watch the prairie fires. It seemed to him he had been waiting all his life to say the words:—

"Let us always be together, Eleanor; my future will be nothing to me if you are not in it."

For the first time his arms were folded round her; she could not speak, but the red flames shining on the level land, shedding faint aromatic smoke, the transmigrated fragments of a summer's blossoming—these must have had a voice to tell her meaning; at all events, he went away through the gnarled and naked tree trunks—black on one side, all crimson to the topmost twig upon the other—so warm at heart that not one reflection upon the structure of any organism, existing or extinct, found its way into his conscious thought that night.

From her window Eleanor sat the conflagration out, through hours whose length was imperceptible; when the cold white dawn at last looked in and laughed at her and sent her shivering to bed, she still smiled softly to herself in dreams.

By some mystery of craft Dante Gabriel Rossetti had put into the face of the little Virgin of his "Annunciation" two strong desires at conflict; the holy withdrawal from love; the holier need of it. These two are written together on every woman's heart. Love had found Eleanor, but this latent passion for renunciation, would that, too, be satisfied?

She frowned at her own persistent wandering from Pestalozzi, and returned to the essay with fierce industry. At any inopportune Murray might appear, for it was Saturday, the only segment of their busy week that could be given to the long, delightful country drive that yet was never long enough. Even this holiday excursion could not be all idleness; indeed, it always resolved itself into a search for the visible signs of a whole group of concrete sciences. On returning from the last of these expeditions, they had crossed the Boulevard late in the afternoon, at a point congested by a slowly-moving conglomerate of fashionable vehicles. Eleanor was beaming happily upon her lover, who, clad in shabby garments, bulging dangerously at the pockets with roots and rocks, held a big tin bucket on his knee.

Abbie Hancock, a young woman of the Normal seniors, who held in contempt the Normal College and all other sources of occupation outside the Mishwauk Board of Trade, passed them in a high and stylish cart. She followed the soft solicitude in the eye of Professor Blake down to the bottom of the bucket, and found there a heaving mass of turtles, kept in place by his large left hand. She did not cut her classmate and their teacher, but there was scorn in her eye as she bowed, and a waft of wind brought back her words to her escort:—

"Well, Charlie! if a gentleman friend of mine should take me snake hunting, I should simply die!"

Pestalozzi paled; Eleanor made little dents along the pencil with her teeth; she could not help wondering at the odd behaviour of Murray's aunt; they had met for the first time at the College yesterday. Murray had said he couldn't put off telling dear Aunt Mattie: She would be so glad to know

it! Miss Glenning was to be his wife. Aunt Mattie, who wore uncommonly fine clothes, but had the pinched face of a woman who knows poverty, concealed her delight at the news. She looked white and scared, and said, Oh, she must go home to Lilly. Lilly had been more poorly than usual. Without another word she went, and even Murray, who was not exacting as to forms, seemed puzzled. He was too agreeably occupied, however, with Miss Glenning and a new shelf of spotted spiders, to be seriously annoyed.

"Ah, well," thought Eleanor, "it's only that she doesn't know any better; it's easy enough to see that Mrs. Willard's husband's riches are not of long standing." With the comfort of this spiteful thought she went back to Pestalozzi but there was a noise of wheels, and then—some one was coming through the trees, but—disappointing apparition! this pudgy, panting man was only Doctor Munce, the County Board of Education President.

"Well, I must say, Miss El'ner, you look nice in that pink dress. You'd ought to wear pink right straight along."

"Have you a patient at the house this morning?" she cut in with schoolgirl tartness.

"No; come to have a talk with you." He sat down with some difficulty, upon the grass and wiped his warm brow, for the air was suddenly sultry.

(To be continued.)

## THE MISSIONARY WORLD.

## AT THE GATES OF THIBET.

The Rev. W. S. Sutherland, M.A., Scottish Universities' Mission, Sikkim, writes: Thibet, the mysterious land of the Lamas, is now attracting many eyes. The theosophists tell us that there the Mahatmas dwell. The late Madame Blavatsky during her stay in India opened communication with a princely Mahatma called Koot Humi, who taught her much wisdom, and her followers inform us that these Thibetan spirits delight to honour by occasional visits to them in England the most faithful of the sect. But the Mahatmas do not teach geography or any such thing. They sometimes carry letters and ring bells and condescend to perform rather inconsequent miracles, for the successful accomplishment of which a fairly competent Indian or English juggler would scorn to call in their aid; but they chiefly confine themselves to the imparting of theosophic lore. The Mahatmas, then, make Thibet even more mysterious. For more than a century the Indian Government has sought opportunities for opening close political and commercial intercourse; but the Thibetans are "dour" folk, and still at the close of this nineteenth century, when the world is belted by telegraph bonds, they sit behind those Himalayan walls a hermit race.

One hundred and twenty years ago the Bootanese, living to the south of Thibet, came into collision with the East Indian Company. In their trouble they begged the mediation of the Tashi Lama, a priest, who, as guardian of the ruler of Thibet, held the reins of power. The Lama interceded on their behalf with Warren Hastings, who thereupon sent George Bogle, a young Scotchman, to the court at Tashi Lunpo in Thibet. Trade was opened between Thibet and India through Bootan, and negotiations were begun for the residence of a British agent at Lhasa, the capital of Thibet. The death of Tashi Lama, however, brought these to an end. After this other envoys were sent; but the missions proved almost fruitless.

Brave-spirited travellers have done something to throw light upon the darkness. Towards the end of last century Manning reached Lhasa. He is the only Englishman who has penetrated to the holy city of the Thibetans. In 1836 Huc and Gabet, two French missionaries, travelled thither from China, and after great hardships arrived at Lhasa. They were permitted to remain for a very short time and were sent back the way they came.

Russian travellers have repeatedly made bold attempts to enter the capital of Thibet, but have failed. It was only the other year that two Frenchmen, M. Bonvalot and Prince Henry of Orleans, traversed Thibet from west to east. In their splendid journey they came close to Lhasa, and it must have been a very great disappointment to them that they were turned aside.

Now, what have we to do with Thibet? We have no Foreign Mission to Thibet? No; but for years our work in Darjeeling and Kalimpong has been growing, and we have been led constantly onwards till on the frontier of Thibet our messengers are now preaching the Gospel. Sikkim, the field of the Scottish Universities' Mission, is a wedge driven up from India, splitting apart Nepal towards the west and Bootan towards the east, and pointing to Lhasa, the holy city, the heart of Thibet. Lhasa to the north and Calcutta to the south are equally distant from Sikkim, and we accomplish the journey from Calcutta to Sikkim in one day. Sikkim lies on the threshold of Thibet. It is more. It is the door to Thibet.

Until a year ago the Thibetans claimed suzerainty over Sikkim, and there can be little doubt that Thibetan influence had some weight in the councils of the king of Sikkim, who for ten years refused to allow us to settle in his country. Now the Thibetans have surrendered their claims to be the superiors of Sikkim, and the king has granted us a location in the land.

The first mission-house in Independent Sikkim is built to be a centre of light to all the people. Here surely is a call to go onward. God has led us and blessed us as in the past we have followed His leading. Mr. Kilgour, in his last letters written from that house in Sikkim, tells of white fields that are already being harvested. The Church at home is responding. St. Aidan's Church, Edinburgh, Melrose