

taken her for at least fifteen years younger than the sad-eyed invalid who led the life of a recluse for over a year in the lodging in Morrison street.

As Mrs. Gray remarked to the doctor, "These colonial women, even the quietest of them, do things in a remarkably rapid time; they quite take one's breath away."

It was only the end of May, and they might have been in the place a year instead of a month. On the thirteenth a telegram arrived at Stanley Moss, saying that Gerald had landed in Plymouth. He had received leave unexpectedly—indeed he was pronounced as unfit for further service. He would be with his mother that same evening.

The news quickly spread. Mary heard it in the afternoon. The next morning she was out, wandering restlessly amongst her flowers, near the lower gates. It was not yet seven o'clock, and Aunt Agnes was not awake she thought.

She opened the gate and walked, lost in thought, down the grassy lane. She longed for, and yet dreaded the meeting which she felt would take place that morning.

Suddenly she came on Gerald. He was on crutches, but his face was bronzed; he had no look of the invalid.

"Gerald!" she cried, her own face flushing and then turning pale again.

"I could not wait any longer, Mary. I did not sleep. And I have hobbled over—I did not want to call the groom. I would have stayed here, though, until it was a decent time for breakfast. 'I've come back, not 'covered with glory,' but as a poor old cripple," he added ruefully, Mary not having found words wherewith to welcome and yet to express her sympathy.

They walked slowly up to the house together. In the garden Mary gathered an early moss-rose bud and held it towards Gerald.

"You will have to put it in my buttonhole yourself, Mary. These crutches need all my care. I feel so glad to be at home again, and you back at Wolfcote, that unless I keep my hands on the things I shall forget that they are there at all, and come to grief."

Aunt Agnes was up, and she was standing just then at her bedroom window. Her eyes grew moist.

"God bless them!" she murmured. "Mary is crowning her hero."

And so she was: for love is the crown of life here, as it will also be in the life hereafter.

(The End.)