

valley in the wild and trackless forest, on such a lake as that far from the busy haunts of men, with such an enchanting little fairy for his bride. 'Twas but a passing thought, bright as the moon-beam gleaming through the casement, and as transient too. For her father's matter of fact remark on this little pause in the conversation broke at once the charm, dispelled the poet's dream, and brought him down from the highest regions of Elysian romance—down to the very earth from which he was originally formed, to grovel in the dust, to succumb to the power and dominion of his bodily wants—the craving of his animal appetites—for I was very hungry; I had ate nothing since my early starlight breakfast.

"Mary, my dear," her father said, as if for the first time guessing the real state of his guest's appetite, "Why do they not bring in the dinner?"

The dinner at this moment answered for itself, as it just then came in.

"Oh! here it is," he exclaimed as he saw it. "You must know," he continued, addressing his guest, while a succession of dishes were being placed upon the table by his one solitary maid of all work. "You must know that this dining at five or six o'clock is a habit I've been accustomed to so long that I cannot bring myself to give it up. Nor do I find any inconvenience arising from it, in reference to the great changes that have otherwise necessarily been effected in my new course of life. We go out and work on the farm, or in the woods after breakfast, for we do work and hard too sometimes, but that constitutes one of the greatest charms in our new state of existence,—by and bye I'll tell you how—then we come in for a luncheon at noon, when our labourers get their dinner, and at night get ours, when the duties of the day are done, and our men come in for supper."

Dinner being over, I said inquiringly: "But about the work? I should like to know how you manage to convert such a hardship into a pleasure."

"Oh! yes," he said "I'm glad you reminded me of my promise, or I should have forgotten it. When we commenced, it certainly loomed large and we were very unwilling to take the bull by the horns. We therefore began gradually to try a little, and insensibly got into the way of it. Our awkwardness was very amusing for some time, and our progress very slow, but we improved rapidly, and were soon able to handle the axe like woodsmen, and our work, there were so many of us, told wonderfully, and in a few months we saw every variety of crop flourishing and coming to maturity, over a large space of ground which had so recently frowned upon us, in so forbidding an aspect.

Our patch of cleared land has now grown into more than a hundred acres, our solitary cow has increased to a dozen, our two sheep to five and twenty, and last, but not least, our log shanty has become the cottage you see, and all this principally by the work of our own hands, and we have by no means yet done. We shall begin in the spring to clear our oldest land of stumps, and fence it off into regular fields. The pleasure and satisfaction we feel in accomplishing all these objects, far more than repays us for all our toil."

"But does not a thought of the gay world you have left, sometimes, unbidden, come to mar your happy solitude?"

My host's countenance instantly fell and I saw how thoughtlessly I'd touched the only jarring string in the harmony of that happy family.

He turned his eye upon the old worn and threadbare uniform jacket I wore and said with a sigh, "Oh yes it does! It does! but not on my own account."

There was a long and rather embarrassing pause, which he broke by observing partly in reference to my question, but more to his own reflections.

"Were it not for that, I should not feel a wish to get back again. But I dare say," he added, and a smile of resignation if not of cheerfulness again lighted up his countenance as he did so, "I dare say it's all for the best."

What it was he alluded to I did not at the time understand but I saw it was something of a distressing nature, and I therefore could not ask for any explanation.

During this conversation Mary was playing on the piano and her brothers were reading, while Mr. Wrottesley,—such was his name,—and I were seated on each side of the fire with a corner of the table turned in between us, upon which was placed wine, biscuits, apples, &c.

I now rose from my chair and went over to the piano, conceiving that I could not otherwise more effectually turn the current of his thoughts into a less painful channel. After the strain the fair performer had been playing was finished, I begged her to sing me the song I heard when I first came to the door.

"Oh, no! not that," she said; "that's a song I never sing except when I'm alone or when my father is the only listener; but I'll sing you something else," and she instantly began, when her father also came and stood beside her, in all the doating fondness of parental love. She was evidently her father's pride.

Tea succeeded, followed by duets, trios, glees, &c., when I went to bed to dream of Mary and my strange adventure.