

Choice Literature.

"What Can It Matter"

PART II.

Mary had a fair share of bodily strength, and a great deal of determination...

"Well, you shut it, didn't you?" asked Willie, not deigning to look back...

Mary did not answer him. She felt her temper was troubled, and she had no wish to quarrel...

Sprat had the happiest knack of diverting people's attention to himself, by tricks and exploits of all kinds...

The grass, which had neither been grazed nor cut since the autumn of the previous year, was now a good height...

But presently Master Sprat came to a standstill, and, pointing with his nose towards the ground, seemed all at once as if turned to stone...

"What is it, Sprat? Good Sprat! his, seek it out!" cried Willie, fancying it was a field-rat or a hedgehog...

But Sprat made no movement in advance, and as Willie drew nearer, to examine the spot for himself, a bird rose up from the ground with a harsh frightened scream...

"It is a partridge, Mary! just come here; we have actually lighted on a partridge's nest in the grass. I know the eggs well. I say, what a rare piece of luck; and what beauties, just?"...

From this moment out all remembrance of the gate or their temporary quarrel passed from the children's minds. They took one egg, only one, from the nest, and, full of new-born zest for the expedition, pressed forward, and crossing the gate at the far end of the field...

It was now about the hottest part of the day, and the shade of the trees, when they reached the proposed end of their journey, was most refreshing. Willie revealed in it even more than Mary, for her large straw hat kept her head cool, and sheltered her eyes from the sun...

The cool green atmosphere under the trees looked so inviting, Willie and Mary rested themselves a while before prosecuting their egg-hunt, and both being in high good humour, Willie rallied his sister on her obstinacy about the gate...

"It is always the same cry with you, Willie," she said, as she tickled her brother's ear with a long blade of grass...

"I never say anything of the kind," replied Willie, laughing. "Besides, even if I do, I'm quite right to say it; for what can it matter whether one puts the kettle on the right hob or the left, or puts their spoon into the right-hand corner of their mouth, or the left?"...

"Unless you live for a hundred years longer than I do you will never convince me of it," cried Mary, laughing.

"And pray, supposing I were to outlive you by so many years, how am I to convince you of the fact when you will have been dead and gone for a century? But that's the image of your reasoning, Mary—a compound of old women's saws and girls' logic!"...

But by-and-by the workmen's bell in Farmer Stack's yard could be heard booming across the fields, announcing to the laborers that it was one o'clock, and time for dinner, and bidding the wives in their cottages look sharp and see that everything

was ready for the goodman, when he came home for his mid-day meal.

When Willie and Mary heard it, they sprang to the ground, and looked into each other's faces with dismay; so much time had been lost in crossing the fields and looking after the partridge's nest, the morning had slipped by without their knowing it, and now they would only have time to make a hurried search for the treasures which lay concealed in the thickets of "old Stack's glen," as Willie irreverently called it.

He had "spotted," as he had told Mary already in the cottage, several of those prizes beforehand, and consequently, they were not long in finding and taking possession of some really rare and pretty specimens of the genus "egg," all of which were now placed in Willie's hat, both for security and convenience, and in addition to these, many other new nests were found; for the glen was not a common resort for egg-hunters, and the birds had, until now, built their nests and reared their young in comparative safety and seclusion.

It seemed to the children as if ten minutes had scarcely gone by, when the bell from the farm swung out its summons again, and Willie knew he had now barely time to cross the fields and get home, so as to go with his father to the dairy fields, where forty or fifty cows had to be milked, and the cans full of the white frothing fluid to be driven home to Farmer Stack's dairy.

"What a bother to have to stop now, just when I was in the very thick of nests of all kinds!" cried Willie, testily, as he climbed over the arm of a branch, and let himself swing down to the ground. "If you had not lost so much time over that confounded gate, we'd have had another half-hour to spend here. It's too bad! I wish you'd be satisfied to do as I tell you, and not always fight up for your own opinion."

Mary did not answer. She had sense enough to know that in Willie's present humour anything she said would only add fuel to his wrath, so she busied herself wrapping the eggs round in soft dry moss, and placing them again in the deep crown of her brother's hat.

Still, they had not done a bad morning's work. They had secured the much-coveted egg of the golden-crested wren, besides many other good and valuable specimens. And as Willie counted them over, and found they had a total of fifteen, his brow somewhat relaxed, and, whistling for Sprat, who had been chasing rabbits in a neighbouring furrow, to follow him, they went out of the glen, and crossed over the gate which led them back into the pasture-field.

"Well, Mary, where is the bull?" asked Willie, as, having helped his sister over the bars, he turned to survey the field. "Like all your other sage predictions, it has ended in smoke, and a nice chouse it would be now if we had to force open that gate a second time; why, father would have started for the dairy field without me, and I should catch it pretty hot for my pains. Come now, Mary, confess you were wrong: what could it matter?"

Mary shook her head, but still sought safety in silence; for, though Willie's arguments sounded plausible, she knew they were unground and hollow, and that she had right on her side, though she could not at the moment make it appear so.

And yet the moment was near at hand which was to prove its truth to a demonstration, and give to her "girls' logic," as Willie had so contemptuously called it, a weight which even Willie himself would be forced to recognise.

Meanwhile, Willie pressed forward towards the open gateway, carrying the precious hat in his hand which contained the spoils of the day; his face was flushed with excitement, and his whole carriage exultant and triumphant. Mary followed closely at his heels, a little less triumphant, but still well pleased with the day's success, till they both reached the gate, which still remained open as they had left it, and through which they passed again, Mary making one more ineffectual effort to close it as she went through.

The pasture from this out was free of check or hindrance, nothing save rows of stately beeches marked one field from another; across whose stems, when necessary, an iron railing could be temporarily fixed to separate the grazing grounds. It was a picturesque pasture also, for the sward was undulating and close, and dips and hollows gave shady nooks, where the sheep could huddle together on sunny days, or in storax and uncertain weather.

Willie began to lag a little in his pace as he drew nearer home, for the sun was beating down on his uncovered head, and making him feel faint and giddy.

"Run on, that's a good girl," he cried to his sister, "and fetch me out the basket from the house, for I cannot stand this heat longer; it is making me as sick as a dog; and for goodness sake call in Sprat, for his barking would drive a saint mad!"

Mary turned, as her brother spoke, and looked into his face, for she was afraid he might be feeling more ill than he said, at the same time calling to the dog to come.

"What can he be barking at! he is down somewhere in the hollow, and does not hear me. Sprat! Sprat!" she cried, pausing, and looking across the field.

At this moment there was a strange sound like the muttering of distant thunder, and Willie paused too, and looked round, while his face grew whiter than before.

"It could not be the bull?" he said, quickly; for the sound was not unfamiliar to his ear, and the suggestion of his heart found vent in sudden words of terror.

"Oh no, Willie! how could it!" or Mary, running a few steps forward, and trying if it were possible to catch a glimpse over the brow of the meadow.

"Come back! come back! are you a mad-woman?" cried Willie, almost fiercely, as again the muttering sound rose distinctly on the sultry afternoon air, followed almost immediately by a loud and brazen roar of anger.

"Good heavens! if it is the bull we must out and run for our lives," said Willie, in a tone which sounded to Mary so strange and unlike himself, that she looked at him for a moment in unbelief and terror-struck surprise.

But in another instant all doubt on the subject was removed, as the huge black bull belonging to Farmer Stack came round the corner of the hillock, tearing up the

gravel with his feet, and bellowing forth his anger and defiance.

"Sprat, Sprat, you brute! come here, sir!" roared Willie, furiously; for the dog was leaping up at the animal's nose, and evidently driving it to desperation. But it was no use to shout or whistle; Sprat was far too excited to hear or see any one; besides, there was the danger of attracting the bull's fury to themselves. So, Willie, turning, measured with his eye the distance between his home and the spot where they stood.

"If the bull takes it into his head to give us chase we are lost," he said, turning, with white lips, to his sister; "we must only make for home as fast as ever we can, and trust to our legs to save us."

But even while he spoke there was a loud yell of pain from the unfortunate dog, and, looking to the corner of the field, they saw poor Sprat tossed high in the air above the horns of the furious animal.

The cry of horror uttered spontaneously by both Willie and Mary, as they heard their favourite's yell of pain was perhaps the worst and most unfortunate occurrence that could have happened, for the bull seemed instantly to become aware of their presence, and, in this discovery, to lose sight of all other surroundings, and to concentrate all his fury on the human occupants of the field.

"Run, Mary! run for your life! he has seen us!" cried Willie, catching his sister by the tippet, and dragging her forward. "If we could only reach the stile we should be safe!"

Not another word was said by either of them, but, distracted with fear, both children fled for their very lives. Mary was fleet of limb, and unnumbered by the precious cupful of eggs, she soon distanced her brother, and was making good speed towards the haven of safety.

But Willie, already sickened by the intense heat of the sun, and still unwilling to part with his much-prized treasures, strove vainly to keep up with his sister. His legs trembled and bent beneath him, and the sky and fields and the flying figure of Mary, all sped round and round before his eyes. At last he ventured to look over his shoulder, and saw, to his horror, that the bull was close upon him; it was coming up at a furious gallop, at every step tearing up the grass and mould, and snorting threateningly.

Away went the cupful of eggs—the oval and spotted trophies of the day—flying and hopping over the field in reckless disorder. For one brief moment this action was of service to the boy, for the animal, blind with rage, seemed for a time to imagine that in Willie's broad-brimmed straw hat his enemy lay at his feet.

He rushed at it head downward, impaling it with fearful accuracy on his horn, but the next minute he was again on the boy's track, bellowing furiously with disappointment, and intent on an immediate revenge.

Willie, who at every step stumbled and fell in the giddiness and terrible anxiety of his flight, heard Mary's voice call to him from the stile. She had reached it, while he—she, her elder brother, and superior in strength and courage—was panting hopelessly to overtake her. Why did she not come to his help? Why did she not call some one to save him from this dreadful death?

"Willie, Willie, make haste, make haste!" she cried; "a few steps more, and you will be safe. Father is running up the road, and will be in the field in a moment."

But all the fathers in the world could not save Willie now, for the bull was actually at his heels, and the scattered mould and clay were rattling sharply about his ears; he looked up, and saw Mary standing on the top of the stile, her arms stretched out to save him, but in the next moment he was driven forward with a terrific impetus, and dashed headlong against the high laundry wall.

Mary gave a yell as she saw her brother thrown forward, almost at her very feet, impaled, as it seemed certain to her, against the stone-facing of the wall; but happily this was not the case. He had been dashed against it, it was true, but the horns of the bull had missed their aim, and instead of plunging into poor Willie's body, they had struck the wall above, and Mary saw that before her brother could receive the necessary coup de grace, the bull would have to recoil a step or two into the pasture behind. She never stopped to reason; indeed she never knew exactly why she did it, but in this crucial moment of extremity, Mary seized the lilac dress, which was hanging on the wall beside her, and flung it hastily down upon the head of the infuriated bull.

The aim was a good one, for the curved horns caught the linen fabric as it fell, while the stones which had held the dress in safety above rattled down upon the animal's neck and shoulders. In his rage he leaped aside, tossing his head aloft to rid himself of the unlooked-for embarrassment, but by this movement he only succeeded in entangling himself worse, for the dress still clinging tightly to the point of his horns, now fell over his eyes, and dangled down in front of his legs to the very ground.

Again he recoiled, moving backwards step by step, to shake himself free from the blinding hindrance which now covered his whole head, while muttering with an awful but suppressed anger.

"Willie, Willie, make haste! if you can only get up here and cross the stile, you are safe. Here, here, I will pull you across," cried Mary, wringing her hands hopelessly, as she saw her brother lying stunned and motionless at the foot of the wall beneath. What was she to do now? Another moment, and the golden opportunity might be lost. She gathered up her skirt in her hand, and, brave girl as she was, made ready to leap into the field again, and face the danger she had so happily escaped, when all at once a strong hand pushed her aside, and some one jumped heavily from the top of the stile into the field beneath.

It was her father, and in another moment Willie was lifted up, and partially dragged over the wall into a place of safety on the other side.

The bull, who at every fresh moment became more entangled in its linen noose, was soon secured, and a chain having been fastened into the ring in his nose, he was led away across the meadow to his own pasture field.

Meantime, Willie was slowly becoming aware that he was safe, and that his safety was not owing to his own powers, or his own skill, but to Mary's ready wit and dauntless bravery. He said little then; indeed, he scarcely spoke all that long evening, but lay on the settle in the kitchen, staring into the fire, and sighing heavily to himself.

But that night, when Mary crept into his room in the dark, to bring him a cooling drink and to wish him a comfortable and restful night, he stretched out his hand, now hot with fever from the shock of the past danger, and drawing her down close to him, said into her ear, "Mary, you are the bravest and truest little brick in all the world; if it was not for you and your 'girls' logic,' I should be dead and gone now. I'm sorry I have nothing to give you in return, though I know you don't mind that; but this much I'll promise you, old girls, that with God's help I'll never worry you again with that most foolish of all my foolish sayings, 'What can it matter?'"

Explanation of Phosphorescence.

From a shining body undulations are propagated in the ether, and these, impinging on a phosphorescent surface, throw its molecules into a vibratory movement. These in their turn impress on the ether undulations; but by reason of the difference of its density compared with that of the molecules, they do not lose their motion at once; it continues for a time, gradually declining away and ceasing when the vis viva of the molecules is exhausted.

When a phosphorescent surface is exposed to the luminous source, it necessarily undergoes a rise of temperature, and the cohesion of its parts is diminished, but after its removal from that source, as the temperature declines and radiation goes on, the cohesion increases, and a restraint is put on those motions.

Now let the phosphorus have its temperature raised, and the cohesion of its molecules be thereby weakened, and the restraint on their motions abated. At once they resume their oscillations, and continue them to an extent that belongs to the temperature used. When this has passed away, a still higher temperature will release them once more, and the glowing will again be renewed.

What would be the result if we could cause the surface of a mass of water on which circular waves are rising and falling to be instantaneously congealed? It might be kept in that condition for a thousand years, and then, if instantaneously thawed, the waves would resume their ancient motion from the point at which it was arrested, and it would now go on to its completion.

So with these phosphori. Exposed to light of a suitable intensity, their parts begin to vibrate; but the freedom of those motions is interfered with by their cohesion. Amplitude of vibration must always be affected by cohesion, and if the ray be removed and the temperature be permitted to decline, the restraint becomes greater and greater, and they pass into a condition somewhat like that which has just been illustrated. It matters not how long a time may intervene, rise of temperature will enable them to resume their motions.

These principles give an explanation of all the facts we observe. We see how it is that as we advance from one temperature to another the phosphorus will resume its glow, and that there is, as it were, for every degree a certain amount of vibratory movement that can be accomplished, or, to use a different phrase, a certain amount of light that can be set free. It also necessarily follows that different solids will display these motions with different degrees of facility, and hence shine for a longer or shorter time, and with lights of different intensities.

But in liquids and gases, which want that particular condition of cohesion characteristic of the solid state, and the parts of which move freely among each other, phosphorescence can not take place, for it depends on the influence that cohesion has had in restraining the vibratory movements.

Further, the condition of opacity does not permit phosphorescence to be established. The exciting ray can not find access to disturb the interior layers of the mass, and even if it did and phosphorescence ensued, how could we expect to be able to discover it through the impervious veil of the superficial layer? The light of the most brilliant phosphorus cannot be seen through the thinnest gold-leaf. Its intensity is vastly too small. These are the reasons that no one has ever yet succeeded in detecting phosphorescence in metals and black bodies.

It will be gathered from this explanation that I am led to believe that all the facts of phosphorescence can be fully explained on the principles of the communication of vibratory motion through the ether; that as upon that theory an incandescent body maintained at incandescence would eventually compel a cold body in its presence to come up to its own temperature by making its particles execute movements like those of its own, so the sunshine or the flash of an electric spark compels a vibratory movement in the bodies on which its rays fall; that these vibrations are interfered with by cohesion in the case of solids, but that they are instantly established and almost as instantly cease in the case of liquids and gases; that reducing the cohesion of a solid by raising its temperature permits a resumption of the movement; and that the condition of opacity, whether metallic or otherwise, is a bar to the whole phenomenon.—Dr. J. W. DRAPER, in Harper's Magazine.

In Christ's humiliation stands our exaltation; in His weakness stands our strength; in His ignominy our glory; in His death our life.—Oudworth.

In all temptations be not discouraged. Those surges may be not to break thee, but to heave thee off thyself on the Rock of Christ.

LORD WILLIAM RUSSELL, when he was on the scaffold about to be beheaded, took his watch from his pocket and gave it to Dr. Burnet, who was attending him, with the remark, "My timepiece may be of service to you. I have no further occasion for it. My thoughts are fixed on eternity."

Scientific and Useful.

PUFF PASTE.

One pint of unrolled lard—half lard and half butter is better—to two pints of sifted flour and a pinch of salt. Cut the lard into bits about the size of filberts, and drop into the dry flour; stir it around once or twice, until the lard is well covered with flour, and add one-half pint of cold water, stirring together into a stiff dough: work it as little as possible; divide it in small pieces; dust the board with flour, and roll out and line the plates ready for the fruit, unless you prefer pies as I do—with only an upper crust.

VIRGINIA SWEETMEAT PUDDING.

Take what you think will be required from a jar of any nice preserve, quince or peach being the very nicest for the purpose. Fill a baking dish with alternate layers of sliced loaf bread, buttered, and the above-named preserves. Then to a dish holding two quarts add a raw custard, composed of one pint of milk and three well-beaten eggs, flavored with a little lemon or nutmeg. Put the dish in an oven or stove, and let it bake for half an hour, when it will be ready for the table.

ITEMS WORTH COMMITTING TO MEMORY.

A bit of glue, dissolved in skim-milk and water, will restore old crapes. Half a cranberry, bound on a corn, will soon kill it. An inkstand was turned over upon a white tablecloth—a servant threw over it a mixture of pepper and salt plentifully, and all traces of it disappeared. Picture-frames and glasses are preserved from flies, by painting them with a brush dipped in a mixture made by boiling three or four onions in a pint of water. Soft soap should be kept in a dry place in the cellar, and not used until three months old.

CLEANING CARPETS.

Take a pail of water, and add to it three gills of ox-gall. Rub it into the carpet with a soft brush. It will raise a lather, which must be washed off with clear, cold water. Rub dry with a clean cloth. In nailing down a carpet after the floor has been washed, be certain that the floor is quite dry, or the nails will rust and injure the carpet. Fuller's earth is used for cleaning carpets, and weak solutions of alum or soda are used for reviving the colors. The crumbs of a hot wheaten loaf rubbed over a carpet has been found effective.

TO BONE A TURKEY.

After a fowl is drawn, take a very sharp knife and carefully separate the flesh from the bones, beginning at the wings, and being very careful not to break the skin; scrape the flesh clear from the bones, going from the wings to the breast, then the thighs, then the legs; when all the bones are loosened, take hold of the turkey tightly by the neck and give it a pull, when the bones will come out, but this requires the greatest patience and care to do nicely, and it is far better to send it to a professional cook to do for you. There are steel instruments for boning turkeys.

COFFEE WITHOUT FILTERING.

Allow a heaping tablespoonful of coffee for each person, and one to the pot. If for an especial occasion, stir an entire egg into the dry coffee. Ordinarily one egg is sufficient for four mornings. When thoroughly mixed pour over it a pint of either cold or boiling water, stirring thoroughly; let it come to a boil; add about a pint of boiling water for each person; let it boil up once more for a moment, pour off and back a cupful; stir again, add half a cupful of cold water, and set it in a warm place for 15 minutes to settle before sending to table. A half-teaspoonful carefully-prepared dandelion improves it, and renders it less hurtful. This will pour as clear as brandy.

CULTURE OF ROSES.

Many well-informed persons appear to think that roses are difficult to manage, and will not bloom without some special or mysterious treatment not generally understood. Now, nothing could well be further from the truth. We believe there is no flower of proportionate value that can be had so easily and with so little trouble. The rose is a good feeder, and will do well in any ordinary fertile ground, but is, of course, improved by rich soil and thorough cultivation. It is always best to plant in beds or masses, and not singly. The ground should be well spaded and pulverized to the depth of a foot or more, and enriched by digging in any fertilizing material that may be convenient. Make the bed of any size or shape that suits your fancy; only remember that roses appear to best advantage by themselves. Therefore, make the bed only large enough for the roses you intend to plant. If you wish other flowers, make other beds; do not put them with the roses.

DISTANCE OF THE STARS.

In a recent lecture delivered in Edinburgh on "The Stars," Professor Grant gave a graphic idea of the immensity of space. He said a railway train travelling night and day at the rate of fifty miles an hour would reach the moon in six months, the sun in two hundred years, and Alpha Centauri, the nearest of the fixed stars, in forty-two millions of years. A ball from a gun, travelling at the rate of nine hundred miles an hour, would reach Alpha Centauri in 2,700,000 years; while light, travelling as it did at the rate of 185,000 miles a second would not reach it in less than three years. Light from some of the telescopic stars would take 5,760 years to reach the earth; and from some of these clusters the distance was so great that light would take half a million of years to pass to the earth, so that we saw objects not as they really are, but as they were half a million of years ago. These stars might have become extinct thousands of years ago, and yet their light present itself to us. As to the magnitude of the stars, he noticed that it was computed that Alpha Lyra was one hundred billions of miles distant from the earth, and its magnitude and splendor were as 20 to 1 when compared with our sun. Similar investigations brought out the fact that our sun was neither vastly greater nor vastly less than the great majority of the stars.

LYRA is God's school, and they that will listen to the Master, those will learn at God's speed.