

Choice Literature.

A POSSIBILITY.

"I'm nothing but a possibility!" pouted Edna Gray, looking suddenly up at her uncle, as he sat on a black mass of drift-wood once part of a great wreck: "Herr Lundi says perhaps I shall make a proficient musician; father says some time I may make quite a capable woman; and old Bridget declares I may become quite a good-looking one. At present I am only a gaunt, meagre question mark—a useless, restless interrogation point."

The quiet gray eyes of Edna's listener sought her flushed, impatient face an instant, and then, with a quiet smile, returned to the long, white-crested waves, which were breaking one after the other on the wide beach. Edna derived great comfort from the smile, for uncle Gregory always smiled with, and not at one. She ever found it easy to talk to him, for he never confused her with the troublesome question, "What do you mean?"—a very troublesome question when one does not know—and generally understood her meaning before it was expressed.

"Yes, you are a possibility," he repeated, "and you perhaps will never understand the blessing of it—not until you know the meaning of an impossibility."

Now this response was quite unlike Uncle Gregory. It was not his way to reply in riddles, and Edna was vaguely disturbed. Nor was there an opportunity for an explanation; before the next strong wave had taken up the quivering line of foam left by its predecessor their tete-a-tete was interrupted.

Gregory Gray was a physician, and as such he was suddenly summoned to the great hotel opposite which that portion of the wreck had happened to be lodged by the wind and tides.

Edna was much annoyed. Not, she assured herself, simply because their cosy little talk must be suspended, but on her uncle's account. He was a busy man, and greatly needed the few days' vacation he had taken: to-morrow he would return again to the hot, crowded city, and it was too bad to have the last day burdened with professional duties. True, he had said he would be back in a minute; but Edna knew by experience what a doctor's minute meant, and had little hope of resuming their conversation that afternoon.

Rising, with an irritated frown, she shook the sand from her jaunty blue skirt, picked up the discarded sailor, and climbed to the position on the mass of wreckage that her uncle had occupied before. From this superior height she became suddenly aware that they had not been alone after all, for there, on the other side of the debris, sat a girl of about her own age, plainly clad in some dark stuff, which, like the little lizard, might have taken its colour from the background, so like the wreck it was in general effect and tone.

The stranger looked up, and the two pairs of blue eyes had an odd encounterment. Edna's were angry and accusing, while the others had almost a wistful light in them as she said:—

"So you are the possibility?" "In my mind I pictured you quite differently," reproachfully. "Why, you said you were gaunt, and crooked like a question mark!"

"It is very impolite to listen to other people's conversation," said Edna, severely.

"He knew I was here. He saw me—the man with the kind eyes that you call uncle," replied the other, apologetically; "besides, I could not go away."

"Why couldn't you?" asked Edna, forgetting her role of corrector in the inherent love of asking questions.

A faint colour arose to the pale face below her, and the girl laughed nervously. "Well, if you're a possibility, I guess I must be the impossibility that your uncle spoke of. I can't walk;" and the girl drew her coarse skirt more closely about the poor deformed feet that had before escaped Edna's notice.

Something rose suddenly into Edna's throat and made it ache strangely; a great wave of something, which seemed to rush over her and flow toward the girl below. Slipping from her lofty perch she made her way to the unfortunate girl's side and sat down, looking at her with great, sympathetic eyes. But what could she say to this girl, who was an impossibility? This poor girl who could never hope to be a fine, strong, accomplished woman, who could never even hope to walk! The words of her Uncle Gregory came forcibly back to her: "Yes, you are a possibility, and you, perhaps, will never understand the blessing of it—not until you know the meaning of an impossibility."

"I have to say here until Willie comes for me," explained the girl, recognizing Edna's change of manner with an amused smile. She was accustomed to a certain sort of compassion, a superficial compassion given by every passer-by—yet sweet, too, in its way.

"Is Willie your brother?" asked Edna, gently, for want of something better to say.

"No, he is my cousin; I live at his home. You see I too, have an uncle," said the girl, proudly, but the pride vanished as she concluded, "but I have no father or mother—There! there comes Willie now."

Edna looked up to see a barefooted, freckle-faced lad wheeling a cheap rolling chair along the beach. He stared indifferently at her, but greeted his cousin with a bright smile, as he tossed a bunch of dark red flowers into her lap.

"Oh! oh! what are those?" cried Edna, lifting one of the blossoms as she spoke.

"Water-watches, five-o'clocks, ten-o'clocks, umbrella, old-witch, frying pan and tin cup," rattled off the boy, but so rapidly that Edna could distinguish only half he said.

"Willie, Willie," said his cousin, with a gently reproving accent, "why don't you tell where they grow?"

"Up country, off shore," was the lad's brief statement, the off shore pronounced with a curious stress on the first word.

"They are called both water-clucks and water-watches, and they grow in the cranberry bogs in great numbers," explained the girl. "The children will not pick them on their way to the distant school, for fear it will rain in consequence. The first row of thick red leaves they call 'five-o'clocks,' the next row 'ten-o'clocks.' Then, drawing those down a little, you see the round frying pan which holds the yellow part."—"The stamens," corrected Edna.

"And in the centre, the old witch and her umbrella."

Edna uttered an exclamation of pleasure. "What a cunning little green umbrella!" she cried.

Her pleasure quite won over the heretofore stolid Willie. "I'll bring you some to-morrow," he said, shyly, as he assisted his cousin into the chair.

"You are very welcome to some of these," exclaimed the young girl, extending the bouquet toward Edna; "but Willie can, most likely, bring you prettier ones to-morrow; for the old witch has opened her fatal green umbrella too wide in these."

"That means it's going to rain," announced Willie.

"Oh, no! it only means that the flowers are old, Willie," corrected his cousin, then to Edna. "Do you think you can manage to be here at this time to-morrow to get them? I come here 'most every day, for the wreck makes a comfortable seat, and it is the easier wheeling for Willie."

"As to that, I could wheel you anywhere on the beach," began the lad, gallantly, "you're as light as nothing." In spite of which brave assertion, Edna noticed that his face grew very red and his breath came short and hard as the chair cut deeper and deeper into the white sand.

"Good-bye, my possibility," sang out the girl, turning in her chair to catch the last glimpse of Edna, who remained on the wreck.

But Edna could only smile and wave her hand; that pale, wistful face seemed to choke her utterance.

She sat a long time gazing motionlessly at the great sea before her. The tide came in, and some of the waves even gurgled about the wreck where she sat without attracting her attention. At length, however, the sound of her own name aroused her from her reverie, and she glanced up to find that her uncle had returned.

"What, Edna, still here!" he cried, springing to her side with what, had she been less preoccupied, she would have considered remarkable agility. "Pray, what thought has so completely taken possession of your faculties that you cannot hear a voice ten feet away? Are you still considering possibilities?"

"No, sir; an impossibility this time."

Dr. Gregory Gray gave vent to a low whistle.

"Uncle Gregory."

"Well?"

"You said I would never understand the blessing of being a possibility until I understood the meaning of an impossibility. I understand it now. I saw her just after you left."

"Her?"

"Yes, the lame girl who sat on the opposite side of the wreck."

"So she is the impossibility, is she?" questioned Uncle Gregory, gravely; and Edna described to him what had just taken place. "But I cannot see why you should pity her so much," he commented, when Edna finished her tale, "when you consider the position of a possibility so tiresome. You told me an hour ago that you were a nonentity, a cipher, with just the faint possibility of some day amounting to something. Now, certainly, that is not an enviable state."

Edna blushed. "Don't, please don't quote any more!" she pleaded: "you cannot think how silly and wicked it makes me feel. I wonder, Uncle Gregory, that you did not overwhelm me with sarcasm when you realized, all the time, what foolish complaints I was making; but that is not your way. Anyhow, I had forgotten about myself; I was thinking of her. Uncle Gregory, she must be made a possibility."

(To be continued.)

MISSIONARY WORLD.

REPORTS OF MISSION STATIONS IN THE NEW HEBRIDES.

Ancityum Statistics.—Communicants, 253; admissions, 7; baptisms, 14; attendance at services, 600; candidates' class, 12; teachers, 32; schools, 28; attending schools, 300; population, 750; marriages, 13; books in circulation, the whole Bible, Pilgrim's Progress, etc.: native contributions, \$900; value of labour given, \$250.

Around the island of Ancityum there are twenty eight village school-houses besides two large central churches to care for. On making my parochial round of visitation, I found that four of these schoolhouses were becoming dilapidated. After talking the matter over with the people, new houses in each case have been built in their places. Last year we were enabled to erect a weatherboard church, with iron roof, at Aname station. This year we have opened a corresponding church at the Harbour of Anelcauhat. These two churches have been built by the Ancityum Saw Mill Company, and the cost has been defrayed by the proceeds of coconuts (copra), and arrowroot made by the natives, our Foreign Mission Committee of the Free Church of Scotland kindly allowing the latter contribution to go for that purpose. In addition to the work of the carpenters, the natives wattle and plastered the inside of the building with coral lime; our residence at the Aname, or north side station, during the months of October and November was much blessed by seeing several wanderers reclaimed. The daily attendance at school during that time averaged over 100. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper has been dispensed three times on the island this year; on the last occasion three new deacons were elected, and two new village teachers were appointed. I am sorry to say that Mrs. Lawrie has suffered very much in health this year; and on that account we were absent seven weeks visiting Dr. Gunn and other missionaries in the S.S. *Croydon*. The Mission Synod again met at our station this year; excluding native helps, but, including missionaries' children, there were forty-one present. This is the largest gathering that has ever been held at any one place, which is an indication of growth. The usual supply of almanacs for 1892 were printed for the Christian families throughout the group.

Futuna Statistics.—Communicants, 11; admissions, 3; baptisms, 3; attendance at services, 220; candidates, 32;

teachers, 4; schools, 4; attending school, 120; population, 480(?); books of scripture, 3; other books, "Harmony of Gospels," catechism, etc.; value of contributions, \$165, of labour \$32. The earlier months of the year were spent in New South Wales on furlough. When we returned to Futuna in June, we learnt that the work had been going on tolerably well during our absence, and the teachers left in charge had attended well to their work. The natives had the raw material for making arrowroot already dug, and had themselves arranged about making it, independently of our arrival. There was a little addition made to the membership of our Church at the first communion after our arrival, and the candidates' class has been steadily increasing. The heathen feasting, which was a source of much trouble for some years, has been given up by the church-going people. Three rain-makers lately destroyed their sacred stones publicly, and joined the candidates' class. Two of them are young men, whose presence we are glad to see in the class. The heathen, who appeared inclined to yield when we left on furlough last year, still hold out against the Gospel. We are now engaged in building a new substantial church, the materials of which are being paid by the proceeds of arrowroot. The natives have helped heartily in erecting the building. The present state of the work is encouraging.

Tanna Statistics.—Communicants, 4; baptisms, 2; attendance at services, 400; teachers, 7; schools, 9; attending school, 150; population, 4,000; books, New Testament and two Old Testaments; other books, Old Testament history, Catechism, hymn book, and primer; money contributed, \$15. The outstanding events of the past year have been: (1) Our return from furlough; (2) putting into the hands of our people the complete New Testament and a Bible history, and (3) the erection at Port Resolution of the "Scotch Church—a memorial of workers and work on Tanna." We found on our return that one teacher had died during our absence, and that one new school had been opened. The teachers had kept up the services, and there had been no notable relapses. Although the numbers attending the services continue very much the same, they represent more districts than formerly, so that now, from Port Resolution to Kwamera, there are some in every district who attend our services. There have been intertribal wars during the year in various parts of the district, but in no case did they stop, even temporarily, the Sabbath services in the various villages. Our contribution of arrowroot for the year was \$23 lbs. As usual, the making is free labour, the raw material being purchased. Whilst the Scotch Church was being built, the natives made daily large contributions of native food, of the value of which I cannot form an estimate.

Weasisi Statistics.—Attendance at services, 110; teachers, 2; schools, 2; attending school, 80; population, 4,000; books of scripture, 3; other books, 3; value of labour given, \$10. In regard to the above statistics, it is only right to say that they represent matters as they were before the people were scattered by war. This year has been unique in our experience. At the end of last year the materials for our Jubilee School Church were landed. At once we began the works of its erection; but there were many other things needing attention. Amongst other things, I paid visits to the west coast of Tanna and other parts of the island. By the second week in May, the building was ready for use—not finished, as the materials for lining and wooden floor (since procured) were not provided. While this and our ordinary missionary work were going on there were two other forces at work. We had to carry on a vigorous opposition to heathenism. All around us preparations, often concealed from us, were going on for a series of heathen ceremonies. At the same time some discontents were secretly agitating for war. On the evening of May 6 an attempt was made on the life of a chief in the district where our out station was, and to whom most of our worshipping people owed allegiance. This put an end to the preparations for heathenism and our hope of having a special gathering to mark the opening of our church. As our out station, Nalungenia, was on the war frontier, we were forced to remove the teacher, and the station was closed. On July 24 things were brought to a climax. Early that morning Kaukari, the important chief, and Yakoli, who was the man we depended on for our mission work at Nalungenia, were both shot, and died from their wounds. The people at once fled to the westward, and before sunset the next night everyone had fled from around us. So that in the course of two days and a night, or between 8 a.m. on Friday morning and sunset the following Saturday, six villages were evacuated and burnt, and about 400 people driven from their homes. At least 100 of these were worshippers, and for weeks afterwards our premises formed the centre of the battlefield. Peace has been restored, and we have resumed services, but not school work. I have made a trip round Tanna in my boat, and was well received at all the landing places. The people on the west coast have built a house for me, and still hope for a missionary.

KANAKA LABOUR.

The New Zealand *Presbyterian* says: At the recent meeting of the Mission Synod, held at Ancityum, the following deliverance on the above subject was unanimously adopted, viz.: The New Hebrides Mission Synod, having heard of and witnessed the renewal of the Labour Traffic by the Queensland Government, feels it to be its duty, at this its earliest opportunity, to protest against the Pacific Island Labour Traffic, for the following reasons: 1. Although the