

He started from his reverie, looked at her, then burst into a laugh, and said:

Am I? Suppose you talk, my dear?

I'm strange here, she answered gravely, and nurse always told us old ones to be polite to new ones, and tell them things.

In-deed!—did she? Well, this nurse knows manners, at any rate, if she is such a fool; but—speaking quickly, as he saw Minnie's rising color—do you wish me to tell you where we are? the names of the hills, and of the woods? and—

I do not mind what it is, interrupted Minnie, as long as you do tell me. The curate always said that when he came, before our examinations, because, I think, he had to report progress, you know.

Really! said the Squire, with dry humor. Why, thought that nurse of yours said he was a poor, weak thing, or a stick, was it not?

Ah; but that was in the pulpit, she answered, quickly. I think he was quite equal to us children.

Well, if he was up to you he was no fool, said the Squire, promptly, as he stopped his horse. Now, my dear, what do you think of that view?

The child crossed her hands, and sat looking at the fair landscape for a long, long time.

He watched her in silence. It is beautiful! she exclaimed, at last. Her eyes filled and her lips quivered.

Grandpa, it is like a picture that nobody could paint—nobody but God. Minnie's eyes seemed to grow larger and darker. I did not quite know what he meant, when I learnt it, she said in a low tone to herself, after a time; but I do now.

Meant what, my dear? She started. Oh, it was a poem I had to say—a piece of one, and two lines were—

"This world is very lovely, O, my God! I thank Thee that I live!"

and I did not quite understand; but I do now, Grandpa; I think I do now.

Let us ride on, said the Squire, quickly. He could not understand sentiment, though he was rather emotional himself; he dreaded it for the child, however. Already she seemed to have gripped hold of a heart-string. The loosing would have been a pain to him.

The rest of the ride was through lovely lanes, which delighted her; and before the ride ended, various plans had been discussed and settled.

When Gertrude comes, you shall have a couple of donkeys; you can manage them alone; though, of course, I expect Madam will insist on sending a nurse, or a maid, or some one, with you.

As for that, interrupted Minnie, I shall be glad of her for Gertrude, for she is the most tiresome, rough child you ever saw, Grandpa; always tearing her clothes; and, oh, dear! the rows she got poor nurse in! Her things were always done before ours.

Really? said the Squire. Well, I am glad you are not like her, for Madam is very particular and nice in her way.

Then I am very sorry for her, with that piece of pork in pickle, as nurse says.

I do not think you need trouble about that, child. Madam is quite equal to a nursery full. Is she like you?

Like me! Minnie laughed so merrily, it was quite infectious. No, grandpa, she is dark, oh, so dark! I do hope she'll be good, I'm sure! She heaved a deep sigh, as if a burden rested on her. I cannot say she is pretty, Minnie said, presently.

Well, well! answered the Squire, his eyes really brimming with fun, though he looked grave. Handsome is as handsome does is an old, wise saying; and we shall see! Now, for a trot home. They rode on briskly. He admired the way in which she managed her wilful little steed. In fact, everything she did, and said, pleased him.

(To be continued.)

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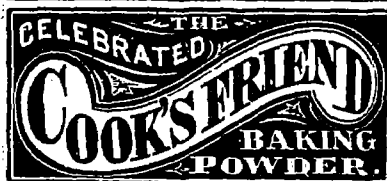
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