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CHRISTINA ROSSETTI: AN APPRECIATION.

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CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI, WITH HER MOTHER, FRANCES M. L. ROSSETTI.

*After the Chalk Drawing by D. G. Rossetti, made in 1877, and now in the National Portrait Gallery.
From a Photograph by F. Hollyer.*



Women are sometimes sorely tempted to fancy that we have gifts and graces which have been smothered and stultified by adverse circumstances. We bewail that we have never got our chance. It is possible that men are not exempt

from this failing, but there are some reasons why they have less temptation to it. All biography is full of stories of men who have triumphed over every sort of obstacle and disability, and a man can scarcely realise any disadvantages of his own lot, whatever they may be, without recalling some other man who was strong and brave enough to master similar drawbacks. Then, again, the difficulties or hindrances to a man's career are generally of an active nature, so that if there be any "go" at all in him, he understands at once that they serve only to test his strength and energy.

But with women there is a difference, less indeed than it used to be, but still persisting and likely to persist. First, they have comparatively little biographical guidance. And such biography of women as there is, deals chiefly with women of high place and fortune, of rare, adventurous career, or of tragic eminence of some sort. The peculiar difficulties and discouragements which beset most of their sex, seldom come much into such women's lives. Those women's lives whose history, experience and result would most benefit the majority of their sisters, remain yet for the most part unwritten.

This is why we wish to have a little talk over Christina Rossetti, the poet who not very long ago passed from us, and whom the verdict of critics ventures to place in comparison not only with Jean Ingelow but with Mrs. Barrett-Browning. For we think the story of her life is one which may come with peculiar strengthening and comfort to many a disheartened girl and woman. Yet had she happened to fall even just below the very high level of poetic power to which she rose, or had she chanced to lack the one advantage which her life possessed, it is very likely the world would never have heard a word of her life's history.

She was born in a prosy, dingy district of London, one of the long uniform streets lying to the south-east of Regent's Park, and then as now, the haunt of foreign refugees of every shade of political opinion. She herself was the daughter of an Italian refugee, and her mother was the daughter of another Italian, so it was by right only of her mother's English mother that Christina Rossetti could claim to be English.

Her father, who gained his livelihood as a teacher of Italian and who eventually became professor of that language at King's College, was somewhat of a poet, a great student of Dante, and altogether a clever and interesting man. Her two brothers, a little older than herself, have both reached celebrity, the elder of the two, the poet-painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti, attaining great fame, though he was a man of an unfortunate temperament leading to an unhappy history.

But from the first, it is evident that the paramount influence in Christina's life was that of her mother, a woman of sweet character, but one who, in modern parlance, "did nothing," save the housekeeping and mothering of a little household whose means were at once narrow and precarious.

The little girl throve somewhat feebly in her London home. She did not go to school, gaining all substantial instruction from her mother. Though we hear that she enjoyed *Hone's Every Day Book* when she was nine, she does not seem to have been a specially

bookish child, not so bookish as the elder sister and the two brothers, who were her only youthful companions. For visitors, there were only bearded Italian "patriots," in whose tragic histories, however, the well-trained little ones had sense and sympathy enough to take interest—Christina, with characteristic faithfulness, cherishing a relic of one all her life long, so that it stood in the chamber of her death-bed.

For pleasures, she had games with her brothers and sister, walks in Regent's Park, every corner of which she knew, investing the more picturesque points with romantic characteristics which would have escaped less poetic eyes. Above all, she had occasional visits to her maternal grandfather at Holmer's End—about thirty miles from London, a distance which in those days involved six hours driving in a stage coach! There she got her first revelation of the beauty of genuine nature and the first inspiration of her love and sympathy for the undomesticated animal creation. For animals nearer us, she had already learned a tender affection, for some of her earliest verses, written when she was about sixteen, were "On the Death of a Cat, a friend of mine, aged ten years and a half." Her happy visits to Holmer End ceased when she was about nine, at which time her grandfather removed to London and became a near neighbour. The old gentleman was very fond of little Christina, and prophesied great things of her. To the very end of her life she cherished the memory of these country visits, and spoke of the way in which they had awakened her imagination. A book, *Time Flies*, which she wrote fully forty years afterwards, abounds with allusions to those early days, whose slight incidents, indelibly impressed on her sensitive mind, she often wove into exquisite parables.

Another youthful joy lay in visits to the Zoological Gardens, though there her feeling was that the imprisoned birds should sing "plaintive verses." It is said that, as a child, she told of a strange dream she had. "She thought she was in Regent's Park at dawn, while, just as the sun rose, she seemed to see a wave of yellow light sweep from the trees. It was a multitude of canaries, thousands of them, all the canaries in London. They had met and were now going back to captivity."

A most interesting reminiscence of her childhood we find, when, veiling her own identity, she told—

"I know of a little girl who, not far from half a century ago, having heard that oil calmed troubled waters, suggested to her mother its adoption for such a purpose in case of a sea-storm.

"Her suggestion fell flat, as from her it deserved to fall. Yet nowadays here is science working out the babyish hint of ignorance."

She called herself "the ill-tempered one of the family," there having been, in her earlier life, a decidedly irritable strain in her disposition, partly caused by the infirmity of her health. "In later life," says her last biographer, Mackenzie Bell, "this was entirely conquered, and this conquest strengthened her character, as moral conquests ever do strengthen the character."

As Christina advanced into young womanhood the family means grew narrower. The brothers had not yet had time to make any mark in their respective careers, the father was growing old and feeble, and not only so, but his subject, Italian, was giving place to German as a favourite study. One of those critical times came when a household is brought to realise that "something must be done." It was decided that Mrs. Rossetti and Christina should start a little school. The experiment was first made in the house where the family had lived for some time, near Mornington Crescent. Fifty years ago this school-keeping was the favourite resource of

gentle poverty. It would be as wrong as it is idle to wish that such avenue of profit was still open, for too often it admitted women who had little to impart beyond their own prejudices and ineptitude. It must, however, be owned that it had some advantages, since it could offer an opportunity to such women as Christina and her mother. Neither of them might have been found able to pass modern examinations or to fulfil present-day "requirements," and yet surely their sweet, conscientious natures would be a priceless influence on any young girl with whom they came in contact.

The London school-keeping, however, did not succeed. Accordingly Christina and her mother, the invalid father accompanying them, resolved to renew the experiment at Frome, Somersetshire, the brothers and the elder daughter struggling on in London.

In Frome they stayed for about a year. It is significant that this was the longest period that Christina ever lived out of London. She was not very happy while she was there; it was scarcely likely that she could be. Her father's health was failing day by day, so that he died almost immediately their sojourn at Frome came to an end. The school venture succeeded no better than the first one had done. Also Christina had not long before had her first love-affair, receiving an offer of marriage which, as happened with another offer later on, she resolutely put aside in the belief that both were accompanied by circumstances which would not have conducted to her highest spiritual life.

But all these shadows, outer and inner, did not prevent her from keeping her mind and heart open to impressions and influences. Among those dull, grey days she laid up beautiful thoughts, albeit they may be sometimes tremulous with the misgivings of a self-mistrustful heart. She tells us that on one of her country walks she found a four-leaved trefoil. She did not then know of its rarity. She says—

"Perhaps I plucked and so destroyed it: I certainly left it, for most certainly I have it not. . . . Now I would give something to recover that wonder: then, when I might have it for the carrying, I left it.

"Once missed, one may peer about in vain all the rest of one's days for a second four-leaved trefoil.

"No one expects to find whole fields of such: even one for once is an extra allowance.

"Life has, so to say, its four-leaved trefoils for a favoured few; and how many of us overlook once and finally our rare chance!"

It is pretty to know that one who read this parable sent her a gift of a four-leaved trefoil, and doubtless Christina saw a still sweeter parable in the substitution.

After the return to London, and the father's death, the little family struggled on again, its path, however steep, being at least upward. Christina did some literary work in the way of compilation and translating; she also began to publish her poems. But she was not a voluminous writer, nor was any of her work, prose or poetry, from first to last, of the class which readily commands "a large market." Consequently, though her name was more or less before the public from 1855 to her death in 1894, and though some of her best poems were produced comparatively early, yet her income from literature never exceeded—and seldom reached—£45 per annum, until 1890!

Nevertheless, through the success of the brothers and other circumstances, the family affairs grew easier. In 1861 and 1865, the younger son took his mother and Christina for visits to the continent. Neither trip exceeded six weeks in duration, nor did either go beyond tracks tolerably beaten even then: the first was to Paris and Normandy, returning by the Channel Islands; in the second, Basle, Como, Milan, Freiburg and the Black Forest were

visited. Christina wrote of those holidays that they were "enjoyable beyond words; a pleasure in one's life never to be forgotten," adding that all she had seen made her "proud of her Italian blood." It appears that the little party walked into Italy by the Pass of Mount St. Gothard, for she says: "We did not tunnel our way like worms through its dense substance. We surmounted its crest like eagles. Or, if you please, not at all like eagles, yet assuredly as like those born monarchs as it consisted with our possibilities."

If we did not know that "Uphill" (which, short as it is, remains to many minds as her masterpiece) had been written in 1858, we might imagine it to be the outcome of such a pilgrimage. Mr. Mackenzie Bell aptly says that this "brief sixteen line poem reveals quaintly, with one flash of genius, a whole philosophy of life." It is not yet so widely known as to make quotation superfluous.

UPHILL.

"Does the road wind uphill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole
long day?
From morn to night, my friend.
But is there for the night a resting place?
A bed for when the slow dark hours
begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my
face?
You cannot miss that inn.
Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in
sight?
They will not keep you standing at
that door.
Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
Of labour you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who
seek?
Yes, beds for all who come."

Much that had made the interests and pleasures of Christina's life till this time, now began to fade out of her daily living. The brothers got married. The very success of the circle of brilliant young people who had frequented the Rossetti household during its struggling time, now drew them apart into spheres of their own. So just as Christina's own genius had obtained some sort of worthy recognition (peculiarly unprofitable as it remained till long afterwards) her personal life settled down upon the narrowest lines. She was not very much over thirty when she found herself the youngest member of a household consisting of her ageing mother and two old maiden aunts. Even her elder sister, Maria Francesca, for whom Christina had a most reverent love, was much withdrawn by duties connected with an Anglican sisterhood to which she had attached herself, her younger sister Christina's self-devotion enabling her to do thus without dereliction of home duty.

Henceforth, Christina devoted herself to the old ladies, not in any self-conscious spirit of sacrifice, but with joyful loving service. From that time, with the exception of one or two brief visits to a friend in Scotland, her "holidays" were taken in little commonplace seaside or spa resorts not far from London, and always selected solely with a view to the comfort and pleasure of the seniors. She had no "study" to herself nor made her work of any importance in the household life. All her daily comings and goings were regulated in the interests of mother and aunts, so that as their age and infirmities increased, she was little seen in society, and could receive nothing in the way of formal visits in her own house—that house in Torrington Square where she lived on till her death. Indeed in time its

public rooms were converted into bedrooms for the bed-ridden sufferers.

Despite her tender love for her brother, the poet-painter Dante Gabriel, and her interest and pride in his genius, there was much in his history which must have touched her tender spirit to the quick. She was very true about it, too. She would not put a gloss on his infirmities.

There is no doubt that Christina Rossetti's love for her mother was the "grand passion" of her life. All her books, save two, were dedicated to her. After the mother's death, which occurred at a great age, and only eight years before Christina's own, they were dedicated to her memory. Through the revelations of her made by her gifted daughter, we gain a glimpse of a singularly sweet and strong character, not without some of the mental limitations common to her period, but a woman with whom tender caressing speeches were a daily habit, one delicately scrupulous in money matters and always careful how to spare trouble to everybody.

Such was the life and the surroundings which sufficed Christina Rossetti for well-nigh thirty years. From everything about her she drew good and satisfaction and delight. As a young girl she had been of pensive nature, but it was the avowed creed of her later years that "Cheerfulness is a fundamental and essential Christian virtue—the blithe cheerfulness which one can put over one's sadness like a veil—a bright-shining veil."

She was always ready to learn lessons from the quiet, patient lives about her, those, as she herself expresses it—

"Learned in life's sufficient school."

telling us how "a good, unobtrusive soul," whom we now know to have been her aunt Eliza, found comfort in the recollection "that no day lasted longer than twenty-four hours," and setting before herself and others the example of "an exemplary Christian" (her aunt Charlotte) who said "that she was never blamed without perceiving some justice in the charge." Sometimes such little autobiographic touches (their secret kept till after her death) take very beautiful form, as when she tells us—

"Once in conversation I happened to lay stress on the virtue of resignation, when the friend I spoke of depreciated resignation in comparison with conformity to the Divine will.

"My spiritual height was my friend's spiritual hillock."

Her quiet matter-of-fact "changes" sufficed to help her to vivid or beautiful imagery. The sight of a spider running down the bare wall of seaside bedroom, apparently frightened of its own huge shadow cast by the gas-jet, was to her a symbol of "an impenitent sinner who, having outlived enjoyment, remains isolated irremediably with his own horrible, loathsome self."

The sight of swallows perched on a telegraph wire at Walton-on-Naze could give rise to a parable of subtle beauty, thus—

"There they sat steadily. After a while, when someone looked again, they were gone.

"This happened so late in the year as to suggest that the birds had mustered for migration and then had started.

"The sight was quaint, comfortable-looking, pretty. The small creatures seemed so fit and so ready to launch out on their pathless journey: contented to wait, contented to start, at peace and fearless.

"Altogether they formed an apt emblem of souls, willing to stay, willing to depart.

"That combination of swallows with telegraph wire sets in vivid contrast before our mental eye the sort of evidence we put confidence in, and the sort of evidence we mistrust.

"The telegraph conveys messages from man to man.

"The swallows, by dint of analogy, of suggestion, of parallel experience, if I may call it so, convey messages from the Creator to the human creature.

"We act instantly, eagerly, on telegrams. Who would dream of stopping to question their genuineness?"

"Who, watching us, could suppose that the senders of the telegrams were fallible, and that the only Sender of providential messages is infallible?"

She had, as we have said before, that love of all created life which did not only care for those which touched her own personality, as "Muff," the pet cat, but was also aware of links between her soul and those creatures which seem remotest from humanity. She did not think all is waste which does not serve man. She sang—

"And other eyes not ours
Were made to look on flowers,
Eyes of small birds and insects small:
The deep sun-blushing rose
Round which the prickles close
Opens her bosom to them all.
The tiniest living thing
That soars on feathered wing,
Or crawls among the long grass out of
sight,
Has just as good a right
To its appointed portion of delight
As any king."

Of course, such a temperament is open to soothing and consolation which could not touch the coarser natures which have not cultivated sympathy. She tells us how in her earlier, troubled times—

"One day long ago, I sat in a certain garden by a certain ornamental water.

"I sat so long and so quietly that a wild garden creature or two made its appearance: a water-rat, perhaps, or a water-haunting bird. Few have been my personal experiences of this sort, and this one gratified me. I was absorbed that afternoon in anxious thought, yet the slight incident pleased me.

"Many (I hope) whom we pity as even wretched, may in reality, as I was at that moment, be conscious of some small secret fount of pleasure: a bubble, perhaps, yet lit by a dancing rainbow.

"I hope so and I think so: for we and all creatures alike are in God's hands, and God loves us."

With such thoughts and feelings, vivisection was, of course, abhorrent to her, as much from the thought of those who inflict agony as of the dumb innocent who endure it. In her quiet way she worked in the cause of mercy and justice in this matter, as also in the effort to secure better legal protection for young people under the age of responsibility. She was much interested in endeavours to help the poorest girl-workers of London, such as the match-makers, jam-makers, and rope-makers. She had a friend actively engaged in this work and used to look for her accounts with great interest, saying—

"London makes mirth, but I know God
hears
The sobs in the dark and the dropping of
tears."

She would have liked herself to join in these labours, but felt that her duties kept her at home, for though by that time her dear mother had been taken from her—doubtless leaving a void which nothing could have filled so well as active good works—the two aged invalid aunts remained.

In neighbourhoodly services she abounded: she was ready to seek work for the workless:

and a most touching little relic is an accidentally preserved list of seaside lodgings, with a detailed description of accommodations and charges, drawn up by her to spare trouble to a suffering lady, the wife of a valued friend. Such books as she had in her little library—which after all was not hers in a way, for she had few books save those which had been bought by her mother—were always eagerly pressed into the service of any friend likely to find them useful. Mr. Mackenzie Bell says, "Whenever Christina Rossetti wished to confer a favour, her manner of doing so was as if she were about to ask one." That is the hall-mark of God's ladyhood.

It is said she was a great judge of character and had strong likes and dislikes. But she held all this in charity. None of her parables are more telling than that which narrates how a traveller was received at a certain house with great hospitality and courtesy, so that he felt "he lacked nothing but a welcome," and so went away with a most gloomy impression, only to learn afterwards that the hosts he had thought so chill, had been bearing an irretrievable grief, which they could hide from him, though they could not rejoice with him. So they had given him all they could. Her comment is—

"The fret of temper we despise may have its rise in the agony of some great, unflinching, unsuspected self-sacrifice, or in the sustained strain of self-conquest, or in the endurance of unavowed, almost intolerable pain."

Elsewhere, remarking that even our most cherished opinions are almost inevitably modified by time, she adds, with subtle wisdom—

"If even time lasts long enough to reverse a verdict of time, how much more eternity?"

"Let us take courage, secondary as we may for the present appear. Of ourselves likewise, the comparative aspect will fade away, the positive will remain."

She drained all the little pleasures of life to their last drop, loving to tend her ferns, to watch the sunlight effects in the trees of the London square, to walk in the London square itself. But let nobody think that this noble contentment is reached without effort. She was not one to talk of her struggles, but we can trace the marks of them, as it were, in her poems. She had cried—

"If I might only love my God and die!
But now He bids me love Him and live on."

She had felt—

"These thorns are sharp, yet I can tread
on them;
This cup is loathsome, yet Christ
makes it sweet,
My face is steadfast towards Jerusalem—
My heart remembers it.
Although to-day, I walk in tedious ways,
To-day His staff is turned into a rod,
Yet will I wait for Him the appointed days
And stay upon my God."

And thus she reached the calm heights where she could sing—

"Chimes that keep time are neither slow
nor fast,
Not many are the numbered sands nor
few;
A time to suffer, and a time to do,
And then the time is past."

The end came to her just when her selfless nature would have chosen, for as she had

thought God that she was left to mourn her mother and not her mother to mourn her, so she survived till both the aged aunts were also removed. Indeed, all the family circle, save her youngest brother, had gone before her—Danie Gabriel, the unhappy genius, her sister, and both her brothers' wives.

Christina Rossetti had suffered much from physical ill-health all her life, and her end was full of bodily pain of a peculiar nature which tended to gather clouds of depression about her. But one of those who best knew and appreciated her, declares that Christina herself would accept even this with joy, could she but have realised how the thought of her passage through these deep waters must strengthen and cheer others called to follow her by the same dark way. Her beautiful spirit never failed. To the offertory of the church, in whose services she had found so much comfort, she sent the regular contribution she could no longer give with her own hand. She liked to be told when visitors called, though she could no longer see them, and she liked them to be detained till she could send down some special, kind little message. She even instructed her nurse that if a certain valued friend should call soon after her departure, that friend should be at once admitted to look on her dead face.

In person, Christina Rossetti was very attractive, though an illness from which she suffered twenty years before her death, slightly marred the beauty of her face. She had a placid, gentle manner. "In going into her house," says her biographer, "one seemed to have passed into an atmosphere of rest and of peace."

Speaking, as she spoke, in symbols, we would say that the sweetest fruits often ripen in walled gardens.

"IF LOVING HEARTS WERE NEVER LONELY—";

OR,

MADGE HARCOURT'S DESOLATION.

By GERTRUDE PAGE.

CHAPTER XXIV MORE REASONING.



THE following day Madge rose and went down to breakfast as usual, and there was no shadow of regret on her face as she sat down to the table alone.

At ten o'clock Elsie entered the room ready dressed for walking, and greeted her affectionately.

"It is a grand day for a walk," she said brightly. "I am quite looking forward to it."

Madge did not say much, but she looked pleased.

Elsie had hoped in coming early to make Guy's acquaintance, and it was with disappointment she found him absent.

"Your husband is always out," she

said frankly. "I had hoped to make his acquaintance this morning."

"He has gone away for a few days," replied Madge. "Come, shall we start? I am quite ready."

Leaving the gay shops and promenades behind them, the two friends quickly made their way out into the open country, both drinking in the fresh morning air with delight, and glorying in the invigorating atmosphere.

For some time they talked of many ordinary subjects, both feeling shy of introducing the topic uppermost in their minds.

At last Madge said quietly—

"I want to thank you for all you said yesterday. You helped me a great deal; I wish I were good like you."

"But I am not good," said Elsie, half-sadly. "Sometimes I am very far from good. I have envious rebellious thoughts still."

"Have you?" said Madge. "I shouldn't have thought it; but I am rather glad, I shall not feel so shy with you."

"Indeed, you need never feel shy with me," said Elsie warmly. "I am at best a very faulty person, but I feel very much for anyone who is unhappy and long to

help them. I hope you are going to take my advice and try not to worry and think so much. Do you think you will?"

"I don't know," replied Madge doubtfully. "I feel sure it would be a wise thing to do, but I am afraid it is an impossible one for me. Leaving things alone will not tell me where Jack is, or if I shall ever see him again." Her voice trembled a little, but she continued, "To me the present goes for very little; it is the future I care about; I want to know what comes after! I used to try and persuade myself that it was nothingness, but the very fact that I cannot rest satisfied in that belief, goes to show me that I am wrong."

"You can take it in a broader light still," said Elsie, thoughtfully. "The fact that ever since man was created, the possibility of a future life and a strong belief in it and craving for it has existed; and that, after centuries of thinking, puzzling and doubting, it still exists, goes to prove strongly that there is truth in the idea."

"It is hardly possible that anything without truth in it could have lived on in spite of the perpetual questioning and doubting to which it has always been subjected."

"Then again, we can't help seeing that there is no such thing as 'nothingness' for any created object. Even a dead leaf is utilised in the great scheme of creation, and everything dies into new life. On the face of such facts as those shown in nature, it seems opposed to all reason to think that 'man,' the highest creation of all, should perish and be no more. The idea of becoming 'nothingness' is dreadful to me; it makes everything such mockery, especially the all-consuming and undying love one human being can feel for another.

"If Death, with his cold hand, quenches the truest love we are capable of, then we are dupes and fools to waste our strength and our substance, and to sacrifice 'self' at any cost for the sake of a fellow-creature. We should be worse off than the beasts, for they cannot feel, and, God knows, we can."

She hurried a little and a warmer glow spread over her cheeks.

"But it is not so," she continued firmly. "In my eyes, the very fact that we are capable of such love, points emphatically to the fact that we are capable too of a fuller and grander existence towards which we are journeying.

"It is not merely the enshrouding mystery that makes it impossible for us to rest and be satisfied here. It is an inborn sense of incompleteness; the struggling and striving of our better nature, to break away from all that so fetters it here, to a state of being in which it can breathe more freely and make quicker progress towards perfection.

"Your nature tells you that in every human creature, some more and some less, there is an implanted desire to worship, and, taking mankind in the aggregate, there is also a yearning after perfection. If you believe God created us, you must believe also that He gave us these characteristics. Does it not therefore, follow very naturally that a perfect state of being is possible to us, and that it is indeed the end and aim of every created soul, whether he thinks it and knows it or not."

She paused and they walked on in silence.

Presently they reached a stile and Madge leaned her arms on it and gazed across to the horizon with a tired look in her eyes, though she heaved a sigh as of relief.

"I like to hear you talk," she said after awhile. "I can't take it all in at once, but I have a presentiment that I shall by-and-by. There is a sense of restfulness in the mere idea."

"Yes," answered Elsie gently, "it may not come all at once, but I feel convinced it will presently, because you are too reasonable in spite of your scepticism to regret what, if there is not actual proof, there is a tremendous array of probabilities for. Believe me, Mrs. Fawcett, there is no rest on earth but the rest of patience and trust. When one has learnt to wait, one has attained a priceless boon."

Madge leaned her chin on her hands. "It is very hard, isn't it?" she said slowly.

"Yes, very," and Elsie's lips trembled

a little. "It is a lesson seldom learnt, except through a furnace of pain."

"And you think it is worth it?"

"I am absolutely certain," was the quiet answer.

"Yes—yes, I am sure it is," and Madge spoke a little quickly with straining eyes. "Perpetual unrest is—hell on earth."

They were silent a long while after that, and indeed spoke very little again until they were nearing home, then Madge said rather suddenly, "If I can once make up my mind that I shall see Jack again and my mother, I don't care about anything touching myself."

Elsie looked at her a little doubtfully; a question trembled on her lips and she appeared uncertain about asking it, but finally said hesitatingly, "I should think Mr. Fawcett must sometimes be quite jealous of your brother."

Madge glanced at her quickly and a touch of her old imperious self returned as she said, "My husband is very little to me compared with what my brother was."

"Surely he feels it a good deal," remarked Elsie quietly.

"A little perhaps at times, but not much. It is not his nature to take anything greatly to heart. We are fond of each other in a way, and we are happy together, but he knew when he married me my heart was in Jack's grave and I should never feel deeply for anyone again. He was quite content, for he likes to take things easily and calmly."

"Do you know, I think he has a very sad face," continued Elsie growing braver. "I have met him several times and I always think he looks unhappy."

Madge winced a little and changed colour, but she only said, "Oh, probably it is about his private affairs; he does get rather worried sometimes, but I never interfere, he goes his own way."

"A little sympathy often does great things," was the calm answer, "and it doesn't cost much."

"It might in some cases. We say 'pity is akin to love,' and in that respect it might lead to mistaken ideas and subsequent disappointment. Still, I don't want to be unkind, so I'll ask him when he comes back if anything is wrong."

"Do you expect him soon?"

"I hardly know, but he will probably come in a day or two, and then I will introduce you to him. I expect a letter to-morrow morning."

By this time they had reached their hotel, and after promising to meet again the following day, each went to her own room.

When, a short time afterwards, Madge again sat down to a solitary meal, a change had passed over her. Without scarcely acknowledging it to herself, she was conscious of a wish that Guy was in his usual place opposite to her. Probably there would have been only a little desultory conversation between them, but for all that she missed him. Far more than she realised indeed, for she thought she was only tired and sad and that his presence would have been better than being alone.

When at last the dismal meal was over, she made up a good fire and

settled herself comfortably before it, prepared to have a long think. The afternoon wore away and the dusk came on, but still she sat there silent and motionless.

As the fire-light lit up the room, it shone on a pale sad face and dark eyes dim with tears, strangely unlike the Madge of only yesterday.

The clock struck six and she started in surprise to find how quickly the afternoon had flown.

She had gone through much mentally during those silent hours, for all the old doubts and miseries had been bravely faced again and were quickly losing their hold on her. She began to feel at last that the chief fault probably lay in herself.

And presently in that hour of softness her thoughts turned to her husband, and they were more kindly than was their wont.

She remembered what Elsie said about him and she was sorry about it. She remembered the first evening on the verandah, when his sudden demonstration of affection had surprised her and she wished she had been a little kinder. She was afraid her manner had wounded him, and the thought hurt her, for he had always been so kind and thoughtful.

The regret grew on her, and she made up her mind that when he returned she would try and make up to him for her coldness.

"Even if I am not desperately in love with him," she said, "I needn't behave like an ungrateful wretch and hurt his feelings."

By-and-by she got up. "I wish he were here now," she continued, looking drearily round the room. "It would be pleasant just to see him, and it seems strange not even to know where he is."

One of his pipes lay on the chimney-piece. She picked it up and handled it almost caressingly.

"It is the one he nearly always smokes," she said to herself. "I wonder why he didn't take it. I will put it away safely for him," and she placed it in her work-basket.

Then she opened a book and tried to read, but found it impossible to fix her thoughts for many minutes together. Her mind kept wandering back to Guy.

"I wonder he didn't come and say good-bye," she mused. "It wasn't like him to go so suddenly without a word. Perhaps I have offended him somehow; I hope not. I hope he will come back to-morrow. Supposing he stays away several days, whatever shall I do with myself?" and she sighed wearily.

She turned to a cabinet in the room and took up a little book called *Hymns and Meditations*, left probably by a visitor to the hotel who had previously occupied the room. Opening it aimlessly she read—

"Source of my life's refreshing springs,
Whose presence in my heart sustains me,
Thy love appoints me precious things,
Thy mercy orders all that pains me.

If loving hearts were never lonely,
If all they wish might always be,
Accepting what they look for only,
They might be glad, but not in Thee.

Well may Thy own beloved, who see
In all their lot their Father's
pleasure,
Bear loss of all they love, save Thee,
Their living, everlasting treasure.

Well may Thy happy children cease
From restless wishes prone to sin,

And in Thy own exceeding peace
Yield to Thy daily discipline.

We need as much the cross we bear
As air we breathe—as light we see;
It draws us to Thy side in prayer,
It binds us to our strength in
Thee."

These lines came to her as a revelation.
She marvelled at the freshness of the
thought and appropriateness to her own
condition.

"If loving hearts were never lonely
They might be glad, but not in Thee."

And in her heart a new light came and she remembered the words that even her stepmother made her commit to memory: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you." Who could say that the Comforter was not about to enfold her in His Almighty wings?

(To be continued.)

VILLAGE HOMES FOR LADIES.

By H. B. M. BUCHANAN.

PART III.



IN this article I shall make a few suggestions as to how I think ladies, while living in their village homes, can obtain healthful and interesting outdoor occupations, and at the same time add a little to their incomes. Remember I only throw out suggestions; as to whether my suggestions

are suitable and workable will depend upon experience, and each individual's own inclination and aptitude.

There must be a radical alteration in the method of farming in this country very shortly, of that I am quite sure.

In the face of foreign competition, not very much longer can the farmer act independently of the farmers around him; that was all very well when wheat was certain of producing 40s. per quarter and over, and all other agricultural produce was at like paying prices. To-day farmers must combine in order to supply the markets with the best quality of produce, but principally that the produce may be uniform in quality.

With a view to get the cheeses of my tenants direct into the hands of the large London provision merchants, without the intervention of the factor or middle man, I interviewed a few of the heads of the largest provision merchants. In every case the complaint against the English farmer was the want of uniformity of quality, and in course of conversation in effect, they all said the same, namely, "that they felt sure that the English farmer had nothing to fear from foreign competition, if they produced the best quality and took steps amongst themselves to secure the quality being fairly uniform."

The Danish farmers, from being in a most deplorable condition, are now in a state of comparative prosperity, because they combined amongst themselves to form cooperative societies, in order to secure a uniform quality of bacon; the Danish bacon consequently by being of a uniform quality commands the

confidence of buyers, and therefore fetches a paying price. It is the same with the Danish butter; as one large buyer said to me: "Danish butter, I grant you, is not equal to the best English, but from January to December it is alike, and our experience has taught us that if a consumer gets used to a certain quality of butter, if you introduce a better quality, it will not be liked so well." Normandy and Brittany butter is established in the English markets for the same reason, namely, that it is always of a nearly uniform quality.

The movement amongst farmers towards cooperation in some few districts has already begun, and I am very sure that in the near future it must become universal.

This combination, cooperation or whatever you like to call it, means the formation of large cooperative factories and societies, whose formation and working will require a large body of paid workers. The produce from the farms of a district will have to be collected daily or so many times per week, and this will entail a careful and frugal organisation, it will also entail a heap of correspondence, the keeping of many books and accounts.

Could not a lady-tenant take part in all this, and by doing so add a little to her income.

Workers will have to be paid, and ladies make good clerks and book-keepers, and I have a shrewd suspicion when they had mastered their facts, that they would be very efficient in buying and selling.

But it is in fruit-growing (especially apples), early flower-growing, and in poultry-rearing, that I think a lady-tenant could employ her spare time most pleasantly and profitably.

To my mind there is nothing more deplorable than the present state of the English orchards. It is a sight that makes me sad and savage. Sad at the mournful sight of the poor, deformed, weedy, moss-eaten trees and neglected soil, and savage at the carelessness of the farmer and landlord that has allowed such wicked neglect.

What fruit is more in demand than an apple? What fruit is more wholesome and more varied in flavour than an apple? For years I have eaten an apple or so every day, and so I can speak with authority as to their merits.

At one time I was under the impression that an apple was indigestible to eat before going to bed, but when I was persuaded to try it for myself, I found that it was not only indigestible, but a good digestive, and of great benefit to the general health.

The public are beginning to find out these virtues of the apple for themselves, and as a consequence the demand for the fruit has been on the increase, and this increasing demand has been met from abroad, to the benefit of foreign growers, and to the lasting disgrace of English agriculturists.

There is no shred of truth in the statement that the best quality of apples cannot be grown in the English climate. The climate and soil are exactly suited to them, but to grow the best qualities (it is only the best qualities that can pay) it requires painstaking care and up-to-date knowledge.

Frosts occur in every climate that grows an apple; most foreign growers think themselves fortunate if they get one good year out of four, which is a smaller proportion of good years than what usually falls to the apple-grower in England. Why should not a lady-tenant begin apple cultivation on a small scale, of course, at first, gradually increasing it as she gathered experience and success.

I have before me an admirable book on fruit-growing by B. Wells, price one shilling. Mr. Wells, for many years at Crawley in Sussex, has been successful as an apple-grower, and in addition to his valuable personal experience, he is evidently enthusiastic in his belief in apples, and that as good, if not a better fruit, can be grown in England, than in any other country of the world. Mr. Wells is also, and rightly so, full of indignation at the stupid neglected condition of the English orchards.

An apple orchard takes twenty years before it reaches its full bearing powers; but the young trees from the first produce a certain quantity of fruit, and if the trees are planted far enough from each other so as to allow strawberries and fruit bushes, black currant for preference, to be planted between each tree, the produce of the whole orchard (provided the best quality is grown) will show a profit almost from the first.

Mr. Wells shows by figures that there is no comparison between the profits of an acre of fruit garden and an ordinary acre of hops, potatoes and other root crops. The cereals are of course quite out of it.

Mr. Wells says, "As to the cost of production of apples, compared with that of other crops, which has been estimated as most profitable, as hops, potatoes, or other root crops, if the comparison is made over a series of twenty years, the profits will be very much in favour of the apples. For six tons of potatoes at 50s. per ton, £15 per acre; while heavy costs are incurred in the production for culture, manure and labour, and that every year for twenty years, without accidents, the amount would be £300; while the value of the crop of apples at Glewstone Court, for the year 1805 amounted to £85 per acre, which was within nine years of planting; there are eleven more years to come in the series of twenty, during which time the vigour of the trees will increase, which gives a prospect of greater crops; this shows there is no comparison, the prospects of the returns being so immensely in favour of the apples and at a much less cost."

The best method of planting an apple orchard is to obtain the qualities suitable to the soil. This information must be gained from some practical gardener in the neighbourhood; and this opinion ought to be checked by an outside expert, who combines practical experience with scientific knowledge.

Above all things, the great essential is good flavour and the power of keeping. A great big apple that looks very beautiful, but is of a texture that will not keep, or whose skin rapidly wrinkles, is, for market purposes, valueless.

Mr. Wells' method is to plant suitable young trees six feet apart, and to plant between them strawberries and black-currant bushes; then, as the apple trees grow older and take up all the spare room between each tree, he gradually removes the strawberries and currant bushes, and he finds that the crop of the united orchard, almost from the beginning, pays all his expenses and rendered a profit. One year he sold from twelve acres of ground £400 worth of strawberries.

The great complaint of buyers against the English apples is not only because of their inferior quality, but of the careless manner in which they are packed. And this utter want of care and neatness in packing is true of the vast bulk of English fruit sent to market.

"Look here, sir," one day said a large greengrocer to me; "can you be surprised that we cannot buy English fruit when they come to us like that?" And he pointed with a finger of scorn at some baskets of English plums. "And can you be surprised we buy foreign fruit in preference when they come in packed like that?" And I was not surprised. "But," he went on to say, "here is an exception. The plums of this English grower are carefully selected and packed; and so sure are we of his fruit, that his brand on the box is sufficient. We do not ask to look inside, and, as a consequence, his plums always fetch a very good price, probably higher than any other plums in the market."

And so it is with apples. If they are to be profitably grown, they must be carefully packed without the slightest bruise, and picked just in the very nick of time, and carefully stowed away in properly-constructed houses; and when sent to the market, only the very best must be selected, and these must be packed in small and convenient packages. I would also suggest that a talking registered brand be placed on each package.

I do not for one moment say that a lady-tenant without any income whatever could make a living out of fruit-growing—she might if she had sufficient capital to make a start and had a good knowledge of the business, but even then I think it doubtful—but what I do say is, that a lady-tenant or, better still, two lady-tenants, taking between them a small village house, could by fruit-growing on the best and most scientific lines add to their income and, at the same time, be engaged in a most healthful and interesting occupation.

Mr. C. Lee Campbell of Glewstone Court, Ross, planted an orchard of apple trees of between eight and nine acres at distances of six, eight and nine feet apart in November 1883. In 1896 he sold eighty-five tons of apples at prices from 8s. to 28s. per cwt. Say the eight-five tons sold at the low average

of 9s. per cwt., this amounts to £765, which is equal to £90 per acre for the whole orchard.

The present system of land tenure in England is against the apple-grower, because, as I said before, it takes some twenty years before an apple orchard reaches its highest development. Unless a tenant can be made secure in a holding, or reap the benefit of the labour and capital expended, no one would undertake the expense and trouble of planting an apple orchard. No tenant would plant an orchard for the sake of a landlord; but I think an equitable arrangement between landlord and tenant might, even in the present state of the law, be reached.

The same difficulty, however, does not arise in rearing poultry, and it does seem a crying shame that we import such a prodigious quantity of poultry and eggs that could so easily be produced in this country. With poultry-rearing, as with all other agricultural produce, it is the best quality only that pays. Badly bred strains that run to skin and bone and carry very little flesh, costs as much to keep as the well-bred plump stock, and fetches a deal less money.

I rarely see in my part of the country a well-bred, carefully-selected strain of cocks and hens. In Surrey and Sussex they do these things better, although the way they artificially cram their poultry is not pleasant to contemplate. I would sooner give 4s. or 4s. 6d. for one large Surrey fowl than pay 5s. for a pair of the ordinary skinny things that mostly hang in poulterers' shops.

The Heathfield district of Sussex is well wooded and hilly, with deep valleys between the hills, and the land is naturally light and sandy. Most of the cottagers in this district keep a few fowls, and the dead poultry despatched from Heathfield to-day represents an annual value of £140,000.

A case is given of a labourer having a wage of 15s. per week, out of which he paid 2s. per week for his cottage and garden. His landlord lent him twenty-four hens, two cocks, and a movable house, and allowed him the free run of his fields. At the end of the year he made a profit of £20, returned the twenty-four hens, and had six pullets left to go on with.

There is no doubt that small glass houses, filled when required with warm moist air, devoted to the rearing of tomatoes and mushrooms, and arranged and worked so as to produce quantity without sacrificing quality, with every inch of room utilised and one crop succeeding another crop without intermission, pays very handsomely.

I have before me authentic figures showing the proceeds of one glass house. It is one hundred feet long and proportionately broad; it is filled with warm moist air; during the summer it is devoted to raising cucumbers and mushrooms.

The cucumber plants are set alongside, and at equal distances from each other in richly manured beds, and, when they begin to fruit, other plants are set between them, so that they may begin to yield when the older plants are ceasing to bear. Mushroom spawn is sown in the beds. Down the middle of the house runs a long narrow table, on which are reared ferns, foliage plants, orchids and other exotics.

The cucumber plants have yielded about three hundred dozen of high quality cucumbers that fetched in the Newcastle market 3s. to 3s. 6d. per dozen. Cucumbers could be grown all the year round; but in October the house is filled with flowers, especially chrysanthemums and tulips that will be ready at Christmas, and then the finest quality blooms will sometimes fetch 6s. per dozen.

The plants are reared in pots in the open air till they are removed in October to the forcing house. The house is reckoned to produce one thousand plants. If each plant should yield 3s. worth of blooms, it would amount to £150.

The rearing of rabbits, if conducted on the best principle, can be made to pay.

To sum up, a lady-tenant, on a small income, can live in a cheaper and more refined manner in the country than if herded in London and the large towns. In the country villages she can be of some use, of some importance, and, if she be to the manner born, a veritable messenger of light, culture, and refinement; and also, if she be fitted and has inclinations that way, she may add to her small income by taking up one or other of the industries I have lightly touched upon.

At times, by exchanging residences with a London friend, if she has the mind, she may add vigour to her brain and breadth to her soul by taking her part in the great surging on-pouring movement of the great capital. Her life then will be filled and rounded with high interests, and the deadly weight of having no definite, interesting useful work will be removed from her shoulders, her heart then will grow full of joy and her step become brighter and quicker, and all things, from the smallest weed growing by the roadside, will become filled with wonder, meaning, and hope.

CONCLUSION.

Since writing these articles I have read an article in the last Christmas Number of the *Land Magazine*, entitled "Women and The Future of Agriculture," by the Countess of Warwick.

In this article the Countess proposes the establishment of an Agricultural College for women, and in connection therewith the establishment, in suitable parts of the country, of Women Agricultural Settlements.

I can only say that I wish all success to her proposals. To make my scheme a success, what is required are women who have a practical knowledge of the industries I have touched upon in these articles, and a college or colleges on the lines the Countess proposes will give the much needed and essential knowledge. And if, in addition, a body of influential ladies were to form a society to find suitable tenants for the landlord when he had erected his Village Homes, and would advance to competent applicants small sums of money as a start, with interest and repayments at easy rates, then I think that in a short time not only would the country feel the benefit of a more even distribution of her population with all that that implies, but the importation of much foreign produce would rapidly diminish, because it would be produced, and produced better, by ladies and others in village homes and small holdings.





[From *photographische, Gesellschaft, Berlin.*
A SONG.

A SONG.

By WILLIAM T. SAWARD.



HIE! bird, hie! fly ever so high!
 My lover's awake, and the sun's in the sky:
 Sing me your sweetest,
 For she whom thou greekest
 Is queen of the earth, and star of the sea.
 Sing at her bars for me,
 Sing me a melodie,
 Bird of the wild wing, so happy and free!

Ho! bird, ho! fly ever so low!
 My love is asleep in her chamber, I know.
 Trill me a roundelay,
 As soft as the winds at play,
 Weave me a love song to spin through her dreams,
 Sing at her bars for me,
 Sing me a lullabie,
 Bird of the wild wing, so happy and free!

Hush! bird, hush! my beautiful thrush,
 Cease your mad song, your notes are all wrong—
 My loved one is dead, and her bridal bed—
 Is the silent grave, where the willows wave—
 Your passionate singing
 Sets my heart ringing
 With a hope that is broken, and empty, and dead.

LYDIA'S CHANCES.

By IDA LEMON, Author of "The Charming Cora," etc.

"Catus amat pisces, sed non vult tingere plantas." ("The cat loves fish, but will not wet her paws.")—*Latin proverb.*

I HAVE often felt sorry for Lydia Longthorne. She is a middle-aged woman now and begins, I think, to look a little bit discontented. She says sharp things occasionally and shows prickles that appear to justify her name. One wonders that she is not a person of more importance, for she has qualities that ought to lift her out of the commonplace. She has been very handsome, her water-colour drawings which adorn her drawing-room are surprisingly good for an amateur, and such work as she undertakes in the parish is carried out nearly to perfection. She is a lady, and perhaps it is due to her consciousness of this fact that she has never taken a more definite line. The gentility of the Longthornes has been held up, both to themselves and others, to a degree that might well be detrimental to originality. And then Lydia has so little chin, barely enough for beauty, certainly not enough for firmness, and beyond question not enough for power.

The want of chin ought to be compensated for by the upper part of her face. Her brow is good and her eyes are striking. But she is not as clever-looking as she used to be. I saw a portrait of her when she was twenty, half her present age, and one felt the face was that of a brilliant woman who might make her mark. It was when I was looking at the photograph that Lydia gave me the clue to the fact that she knew she had not fulfilled the promise of her youth. She had read my thoughts perhaps, for she said, with a laugh and a sigh: "That looks as if I ought to have done something, doesn't it?"

"It does," I answered frankly.

And then she said suddenly: "Did you ever hear the proverb 'Catus amat pisces, sed non

vult tingere plantas?' Well, I have kept my paws dry, but I have never caught any fish."

"There is a commoner proverb," I said, "'Nothing venture, nothing have.' You, I suppose, have ventured nothing, for fear of losing what you had."

"And yet," she said, "looking back, I am not sure there was much to lose."

Her expression momentarily was so wistful that I felt very sympathetic towards her. I, too, have known what it is to regret not having risked a little to gain much; things look so different from a distance, but the child's toys are dear to it, and we cannot be wise until we are grown up.

Since then I have heard all about Lydia's life and know why it is painted in such quiet colours and why it looks to her even duller than it does to others.

She was one of a family of seven, and her father was the squire of this place. It is a very quiet place, and he and his wife were old-fashioned people, little in touch with the wider life of the outside world, and not at all with the ideas of their time. The children were educated carefully, especially as to their accomplishments; they were, however, all treated in exactly the same way because they were not expected to have any individuality. The three boys had the wholesome training of a public school. The daughters were taught at home. Lydia was the third and was always regarded as the troublesome one. She had more originality and more spirit than the others, and she would have liked to use her mind. She loved books, but the family trembled at the idea of her being too learned, and when she sought her volume of poetry, was set down to employ her leisure in crewel work. Her talent for painting, as more harmless, was encouraged, and her master was so pleased with her that he was desirous of her becoming an artist by profession.

"Why should she?" said her father.

"None of his daughters need earn their living. He would leave them enough to live on. And besides, Lydia would be sure to marry. Was not Mary to make an excellent match with a month? And then there would only be Sophia older; Lydia would go into society with her sister, and beyond a diversion what need had she of painting?"

The master, who had the soul of a true artist, saw that it was no use talking to Lydia's father. But he did not cease to talk to Lydia herself.

"You must study hard," he said, "and perhaps by-and-by further opportunities will come to you. Many a would-be artist has had to conquer greater difficulties than you, and keep himself from starving meanwhile."

Lydia listened. He spoke to her of the glory of hard work, of how all sacrifices of time and pleasure and ease were forgotten when the task was completed, and approached to the thought that had been in the mind at its beginning. He spoke of fame and the power it gives. He did all to inspire a lawful ambition in the mind of the clever young girl. And for a time he kindled it. But it was not proof against the obstacles which choked the flame and that fault of temperament which, no one having striven to cure in Lydia, was lively to damp all enterprise. She was too prone to drift. She did not seem able to see what was the thing she really desired, and for its sake to put aside the minor things which interfered with it. She fittered away her time in pursuits which she despised and which gave her no genuine satisfaction, because her sisters expected her to join in them and called her peculiar when she refused. She did not seem to realise that what might be harmless for them was waste of energy for her. And so she played croquet, and did fancy work and paid visits, and painted now and then, and she did not realise till it was too late the value of what she had thrown away. When I once

visited the Grosvenor Gallery with her she became gloomy and dejected.

"If I had risked a little," she said, "I might have been a better painter than any of these. I might have had a position in the world and money and interests."

"Is it too late?" I asked.

She only looked at me.

Yes, it was too late. The very power of application had gone from her.

When she was about twenty (Sophia having that year made a better match than her eldest sister) there came to reside in the neighbourhood a family of the name of Gallett. The father had been a shopkeeper, but he had made a great deal of money; he had married a woman of refined mind and a better social position than himself, and their two children, a son and a daughter, had had every advantage of education. The father had now retired from business and bought an estate; the son was at Cambridge, and the daughter Violet had just returned from Dresden, where she was studying music. She was pretty, well-dressed, and had nice manners, and people were disposed to be kind to her; but there were some who were doubtful whether they would visit the parents, some quite determined not to do so. Among these were the Longthornes. To have made money in trade was in their estimation more reprehensible than to have been idle and lived on money someone else had made in trade; and Mrs. Longthorne, after seeing Violet at the clergyman's house, felt that as she could not possibly allow herself to be connected with such people, and as her eldest son was at an impressionable age, the less she had to do with them the better. So she did not call on Mrs. Gallett, and she would not allow her daughter to meet Violet if she could avoid it. The Longthornes being rather important people in their own little world, their example was followed by others, and though eventually they made their way, the Galletts were in danger of being cut by the county.

Lydia had taken a fancy to Violet and was sorry that they might not be friends, but she trusted to time, and, on the few occasions when they did meet, the girls usually talked to one another.

One day at the house of Mrs. Trefusis, the wife of the clergyman of Lydia's parish, she was introduced by Violet to her brother.

The attraction was mutual. Gallett thought he had never met any so good-looking, so clever, or so charming. For the first time his heart was touched. She, having had a larger experience of men than he of women, was less superlative in her admiration, but she was in a fair way to falling in love. During the long vacation they met again and again. He began to talk of Lydia to his sister.

"Lydia is very nice," said Violet, "but the parents are narrow-minded and old-fashioned. They will not visit us because father kept a shop.

You shall not be patronised by them. Don't get too fond of Lydia, there's a good boy."

Nevertheless, whenever he and Lydia met they talked to each other more than to anyone else present. And before long people noticed them and began to make remarks. One of Lydia's married sisters heard of it. She took upon herself to speak to Lydia.

"How can you let your name be coupled with that man's?" she said, "and his father a shopkeeper! You know you would never be allowed to marry him. Of course he would like the connection, but it would be hateful for us who have never had anything to do with trade. You could not expect us to visit you."

Then this sister told the other, and she also spoke to Lydia.

"What can you be thinking of? You are letting yourself be talked about. And you who were always so particular, so proud of being a lady, associating with shopkeepers! Mr. Gallett happens to have made money, but what do you think the relations are like? Dreadfully vulgar people, I expect. You could have nothing in common with them. And, as Mary says, you could never expect our husbands to know yours if you married him. But of course you won't be so silly."

And then the sisters told the mother and the mother told the father, and Lydia was forbidden to speak to the Galletts.

Lydia answered them all with spirit, but their arguments had weight with her; the vulgar relations (who did not exist, for both Mr. Gallett and his wife were orphans and only children), the being cut off from her own family (which, when I knew her, would have been rather a relief to her than otherwise), and her own pride in half a dozen generations of country gentlemen, all this took sides against her growing love for Mr. Gallett.

The next time she saw him she was with her mother. He smiled brightly when his eyes met hers and took a step towards her. Lydia knew she was being watched. She hesitated, then bowed coldly.

The remembrance of that minute in her life was anguish in time to come.

Even yet hope was not at an end. A meeting, an explanation, a little encouragement might have changed all. But he was sensitive and proud, and his sister was indignant, and they avoided the Longthornes. Then he went back to Cambridge. And when he came home at Christmas, Lydia was in London with her aunt. And before the next long vacation Mr. Gallett, senior, died suddenly, and the place was sold again, and Mrs. and Miss Gallett went abroad, and the son began to read for the Bar.

And now, as everybody knows, Sir Conrad Gallett is a Q.C. and M.P., and his sister married a clergyman who is in a fair way to be made a bishop. Sir Conrad's wife is a far grander lady than poor Lydia Longthorne, and

would probably not think her worth including in her visiting list, because she rather prides herself on only knowing people who are in some way remarkable.

And often when Lydia is reading the *Morning Post* to her deaf old mother, she comes across the name of the man she might have married. But she never mentions it if she can avoid it. And all the sympathy her family ever gave her was to say, when he was knighted, that, after all, it was a pity Lydia had looked down upon him.

And Lydia has never loved since she learnt her own heart—too late.

When she was about four-and-thirty she had another chance in her life.

She was staying at the time with some friends in London, and she went with them to a large missionary meeting. I have heard Dr. Somerton myself and know how he can speak to people's hearts. He told of his experiences in a far-off land, and he begged any who had money or leisure or influence, to do what they could for the cause of Christ. And he asked, were there no women who would go out to their heathen sisters? If there were none young and strong and happy, were there none lonely and weary and disappointed who knew the emptiness of world-service? Were there none who had failed and would be glad to begin anew? Were there none whose powers had not scope? None who yearned to give more than was asked of them in their present life? God would accept even these.

And Lydia walked back silent, with glowing cheeks and bright eyes, looking younger and prettier than she had done for years. That night she told her friend she had a call.

But before she spoke to Dr. Somerton she went home. She broached the matter to her family. It was met with horror. What new craze was this? Lydia turn missionary! Some laughed, some argued. Lydia's commonsense was appealed to. It began to speak to her. No longer had she before her the earnest, spiritual face of the colonial bishop, nor the rapt looks of other listeners, nor the atmosphere of prayer. And she began to look at this and at that, and to argue, and to wonder if it was a call after all.

And Dr. Somerton went back with his devoted little band of workers, but Lydia Longthorne was not one of them.

But I happened to see Lydia the day after the news of his martyrdom reached England. I knew her well by that time, and I believed her when she told me with a white face that she felt when she read the account of his death and that of two ladies, as if she saw the gate of heaven closed behind them and she was shut out of glory.

And so I tell you I feel sorry for Lydia Longthorne. She has private means, she is good-looking, she is respected, but she begins, I think, to look a little bit discontented.

DICK HARTWELL'S FORTUNE.

By SARAH DOUDNEY.

CHAPTER II.

THE Braces lived in a little modern red brick house which was the prettiest in the whole terrace. When Dick opened the gate he entered at once into a small bower of greenery. The evening primrose had unfolded its yellow blossoms in the cool light, and a bright star kept watch in the heavens. The sill of the bay-window was decorated with a row of richly-coloured geraniums; a

Virginia creeper draped the entire front with masses of graceful foliage, and a low hedge of laurel shielded the house from the foot-path. Tom Brace answered Dick's knock, and told him that Minnie was in the back garden.

"You're late, aren't you?" the young fellow said.

"Well, perhaps I am," admitted Dick. "Time seems to melt away somehow in this hot weather."

Minnie was sitting in the back garden with

some light work in her lap, and no one could have denied that she looked really lovely. She knew just how to pose herself. That fluffy golden head of hers came out admirably against a background of purple clematis. Her big blue eyes were raised languidly to give her lover a greeting.

"I've been sitting here for ages, Dick, wondering what had become of you!" she said in a plaintive voice.

"Well, I meant to come earlier, dear," he

returned penitently. "Would you like to go for a walk on the shore? It's quite fresh by the sea."

"No," she said, sticking the needle into her work. "I've walked far enough to-day. The fact is, Dick, I'm pretty nearly tired of a life of business. The ladies' whims and fancies are really sickening. I tried on seven tea-gowns this morning for the benefit of one fat woman. At last she chose the cheapest of the lot, and looked perfectly hideous in it."

"Poor thing," said Dick. "Seems to me it's a sad thing for a woman not to know when she's plain. If she only knew, she'd save a lot of money."

"And our firm would lose thousands!" cried Minnie, with a little scornful laugh. "The ugly women are the best customers as a rule. Oh, I'm sick of it all! Why shouldn't I wear gorgeous gowns instead of trying them on for other people to see? Why shouldn't I go pic-nicing and yachting in this lovely weather? It's too bad that I can't enjoy myself."

Dick stroked his chin with a rueful air, and looked at her in silence. She was exquisitely pretty; too pretty to stand in a show-room, and wait upon those who secretly envied her beauty, he thought. He wished with all his might that he could marry her at once, and take her off to a ready-made home, full of all the luxuries that her heart desired. But, even at his best, it was only a humble lot that he could offer her. Just a little house, in a quiet neighbourhood, with a bit of garden full of cheap flowers—just a man's heart, warm with true love—just a man's life, kept clean and bright for her sweet sake.

What was it, after all, for a girl who had such wonderful hair and eyes, and looked like a princess from fairyland? Anything that he might have said at that moment would have sounded futile, and so he held his tongue. It was the worst thing that he could have done.

"You don't seem to care," she said in her plaintive voice.

"I care too much," he answered. "It makes me wretched to feel that I haven't got a mansion and a yacht."

"Well, I must do without them, I suppose," she sighed. "I always knew you were not ambitious. There's to be a concert on the pier next Monday night; you are going to take me, of course?"

"Of course," said Dick, heartily. "And I wish you'd give me a tune this evening, Minnie. Have you learnt the new song?"

"Yes; but I don't care much for it. It's a sea song, you know. What makes you so fond of sea songs, Dick?"

"I can't say, I'm sure. Perhaps it is because the gipsy told me that my fortune would come from the sea," laughed Dick.

"It's a long time in coming," Minnie sighed again. "I think we make our fortune for ourselves," she added in a business-like tone. "We ought to go out to search for it."

"And miss it," Dick remarked.

"Nonsense. You are always inventing excuses for your laziness."

"I'm not a lazy man, Minnie; but I can't choose to throw up a decent berth till I see a better place. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, you know."

She did know. And because she was sensible of the wisdom of that old saying, she gave him a very sweet smile. He followed her into the little house, and they entered the front sitting-room. Then she sat down to the piano, and Dick seated himself at the open bay-window. It was pleasant to feel the cool air blowing across the mignonette, and stirring the foliage of the creeper; and all at once he found that his thoughts were carried away on the wings of the wind. They went flying out seaward till they settled on the Danish schooner, sailing merrily along into the twilight. Minnie had begun to sing, in a weak, sweet little voice, and her singing seemed to blend with the wild song of the breeze through the shrouds.

"That was charming, dear," he said at the finish.

"Oh, I can't do myself justice," she returned impatiently. "This miserable tinkettle has no tone at all. By the way, Dick, how does the piano fund get on? At the end of July you said you would bring me something worth having. Well, this is very nearly the end of July!"

The awful moment had come. But until it was right upon him Dick had not realised its horror. Quite suddenly he felt himself a mean perjured villain. The money had not been his own to do as he liked with; it had been saved out of his salary, it is true, but it was dedicated to a sacred purpose. Another kind of man would have invented a neat little story; but Dick was an inveterate truth-teller, and it did not even occur to him to varnish the plain tale.

So he sat bolt upright in his chair by the open window, and made a full confession of his adventures on the quay. The breeze was whispering in his ear all the time, and the breath of the mignonette floated into the little room.

"I wonder that you dared to come here this evening," said Minnie, when he came to an end. "I wonder that you could look me in the face. It's the most disgraceful thing I ever heard of."

"I'm very sorry that you take it in that way," he began feebly.

"In what way did you expect me to take it? Am I to pretend to sympathise with that disreputable person who fooled you out of five pounds? It's a very common trick. I daresay she has played it a hundred times before."

"She was not disreputable," said Dick firmly. "And I am quite sure that the money will be returned."

"I congratulate you on your faith in human nature!" cried Minnie, feeling that she was saying something that sounded withering. "Only it might have been better to wait until money was more plentiful. And it might have been kinder—yes, and more honourable—to remember that I had a slight claim on your consideration!"

"I acted on an impulse," admitted the wretched Dick. "Indeed, Minnie, I'm awfully sorry that you are hurt. Let me do something to please you, darling. Say you'll look over it, won't you?"

"I shall never forget it," she replied with calm sadness. "It will always be there."

"But in time perhaps you'll feel differently."

He was becoming desperate. "And if the money does come back, it will be all right, won't it?"

At this she blazed up again.

"It will never come back. Of course the girl was a regular cheat. If you had respected yourself you wouldn't have noticed her at all. And if you had remembered what was due to me you would not have been seen in a low neighbourhood!"

"Now that's going too far," protested Dick. "No one has ever called the quay a low place. I often go there to get a breath of fresh air after the day's work; and it is interesting to see the cargoes unshipped. This is the first adventure I've ever had there, Minnie; I'm not a man of adventures, and upon my word I think you ought to forgive me."

Her instinct told her that his stock of patience was used up. He had risen, evidently prepared to say good-bye if she wished it.

"You don't understand a woman's feelings, Dick," she said plaintively. "I forgive you, of course; but—but the wound remains."

She drew a step nearer, and he caught her in his arms with words of passionate regret. It was the very last time, he declared, that she should suffer any pain through him. The reconciliation was complete; but she did not press him to stay to supper. She had been terribly upset, she said, and must go early to bed.

Dick went out of the bowery little house into the summer night with the consciousness of being profoundly miserable. Minnie had put him entirely in the wrong; and yet, when he had stood talking to the skipper, he had not doubted that he was perfectly right. At the present moment he felt incapable of ever finding a clear path again. He could not even have given a distinct reason for his own wretchedness.

"You've put your foot into it, haven't you?" said Tom's voice by his side. "Ct'er up, old fellow. She'll come round all right."

He was a small, skinny boy of fourteen, but he kept pace, in a manful style, with Dick's stride.

"You're such a romantic chap, Dick," he went on. "Things aren't as you see 'em, you know. If you chose to go and chuck your money into the sea you had a right to do it. Don't take on about Minnie. She won't make a worse supper for this little row. And she means to stick to you unless she gets a better chance."

"Tom," said Dick, stopping short. "It seems to me that you know a good deal too much for your age."

"And it seems to me," returned Tom promptly, "that you know a good deal too little for yours."

He ran back to the house chuckling; and Dick walked on with the last words ringing in his ears. At six-and-twenty he was a boy still, curiously blind to the common falsities of his fellows, strangely ready to believe the best of every body. He did not want his faith to be disturbed and yet he had an uncomfortable conviction that Tom knew more about Minnie than he did.

(To be continued.)



RAMBLES WITH NATURE STUDENTS.

By MRS. BRIGHTWEN, Author of "Wild Nature Won by Kindness," etc.

ST. MARK'S FLY (*Bibio Marci*).

ST. MARK'S fly, so-called because it generally appears about the time of the Saint's day, has come late this year, but I see it now resting on various flowers, or else flying in its own very peculiar way with its long hairy legs hanging down like a bunch of black threads.

The male fly has clear wings, those of the female are dusky; the former has eyes double the size of those of the latter; both the insects are jet black and very sluggish in their movements, so by these characteristics they may be easily identified.

The female lays about one hundred and fifty eggs at a time in grass roots or decayed vegetable matter, upon which the grubs feed. These remain in the ground throughout the winter, and when full-grown the larvæ become chrysalides, and in a few weeks' time the perfect flies emerge.

Another fly belonging to the same genus (*Bibio Johannis*) is called St. John's fly, as it is to be seen about the latter end of June when St. John the Baptist's day is observed.

I am not familiar with its appearance, but I imagine from its scientific description it must be very similar to the St Mark's fly.

These two insects are, I believe, quite harmless, but some of their near relations are grievous torments to horses and cattle in the various countries where they are found.

In Servia a minute fly so irritates the flocks and herds by its intolerable stings, that hundreds of sheep and oxen are driven mad and perish in consequence of its attacks.

In India there are flies that can even pierce the elephant's hide, and in Florida, cows, horses, and mules are almost eaten alive by voracious fat-bodied flies, which give them no peace during the summer months. It is rather



ST. MARK'S FLY.

a consolation to know that an insect called the "coachman fly" preys in its turn upon these tormentors,* and "will sit through a long drive on the collar or some other part of the harness, or even on the steed itself, in order to pounce upon the insects as they settle. The curious thing is that the horses seem to know the difference, for directly a horse-fly comes, even if it does not sting, they become restless, tossing their heads and lashing

* *Royal Nat. History*, vol. vi., p. 59.

with their tails; but the 'coachman' may rest on any part of them for any length of time and never be interfered with or driven off."

The tsetse fly of Africa is perhaps the most formidable of these insect plagues; its bite is fatal to horses, oxen and dogs. Dr. Livingstone was constantly hindered in his missionary journeys by this apparently insignificant enemy, for in one short journey, although he scarcely saw more than twenty of the flies, yet forty-three of his valuable draught oxen died from their attacks.

The tsetse fly is scarcely so large as a blue-bottle, of a brown colour, with yellow markings and a long proboscis; fortunately its bite is harmless to man, but travellers may well dread its peculiar buzz, as it may portend the death of their horses and cattle, by means of which alone they can journey across the African deserts.

THE DEATH'S HEAD MOTH
(*Acherontia Atropos*).

I had a surprise this morning (last April)! A splendid specimen of the death's head moth (*Acherontia atropos*) has come out of its chrysalis, and is reposing upon a small branch I had placed for its convenience.

For seven months I have tended this said chrysalis, keeping the moss on which it rested sufficiently damp and yet not too wet, as either extreme would have been fatal to the insect.

Never having seen a living specimen of this, one of the largest of our native sphinxes, I gazed with delight at the varied markings on the body and wings, a rich intermingling of brown, blue, fawn and velvety black.

The antennæ are black and end in a white hooked bristle.

The legs are barred with black and white and thickly clothed with fawn-coloured masses of furry down. With bright orange under wings and a portly body of pale blue and orange, my readers can believe my new acquisition is indeed a rich piece of colouring.

The singular mark upon the thorax from which the moth derives its name, indistinctly resembles a human skull; an unfortunate fact for the insect itself, as in olden days it was looked upon as a weird forerunner of all kinds of evil, and its also possessing the power of emitting a low squeaking sound was sufficient to raise up a host of superstitious fears in the minds of ignorant people who persecuted and killed it without mercy. The Rev. J. G. Wood* relates an amusing incident where "A whole circle of village people were standing around a death's head moth that had by some mischance got into the churchyard. Not one of them dared touch it, and at last it was killed by the village blacksmith, who courageously took a long jump and came down on the unfortunate moth with his iron-shod boots."

I hoped to feed and tame this curious sphinx, but it would not partake of any kind of food, not even honey, which is said to be so attractive to this species of moth as to lead it to force its way into



DEATH'S HEAD MOTH AND LARVÆ.

* *Insects at Home*, Rev. J. G. Wood.

bee-hives, much to the annoyance of the bees; they are sometimes compelled to raise waxen walls at the entrance of the hive to keep out these intruding moths.

The caterpillar of this sphinx varies much in colour, but is usually of a lemon yellow and green with violet stripes on its sides; it is often four or even five inches in length.

It feeds on the potato, je-samine and deadly-nightshade, but is not often found, because it hides itself in the earth during the day, and creeps out for its food at night.

When labourers are digging up potatoes they frequently find the great chrysalides of this moth, which they invariably call "locusts," "ground-grubs," or "maggots."

I obtained my specimen from a poor woman who was begging her way to some potato-fields where she hoped to obtain work. I learned that she often came across these "locusts" as she called them, when engaged in digging up potatoes, and having received an order for some she duly brought them to me, but unfortunately only one chrysalid survived the winter and reached the perfect stage.

THE HUMBLE-BEE FLY (*Bombylius Major*).

The appearance of the graceful humble-bee fly hovering over the early spring flowers is to me one of the welcome signs of spring.



HUMBLE-BEE FLY.

It flutters over my beds of forget-me-not and pulmonaria, and poising on the wing like a humming-bird, it inserts its long and very slender proboscis into each blossom in succession, extracting the honey upon which its delicate life is sustained.

The slightest movement on my part sends it off so swiftly that the eye cannot follow it, and yet it will return after a time and allow me to watch its graceful flights just as long as I remain perfectly still.

It is a fly with a good deal of character, and it differs in many respects from any other with which I am acquainted.

I have sometimes caught a specimen in a soft gauze net and carefully placed it under a glass shade containing a small vase of sweet flowers for its refreshment. At first the fly gives up all for lost and lies on its back with its slender legs in the air as if in a dead faint; but it soon revives, and, softly humming to itself, it hovers gently round the flowers, and when at last assured that there is no outlet for escape, it becomes quite resigned and begins to draw honey from the blossoms until it is satisfied, when it will rest upon a leaf in a contented fashion not in the least minding its loss of liberty.

If my readers will contrast with this the conduct of a newly-caught blue-bottle fly placed under a glass, and think of the wild way in which it will strike itself against its prison walls, buzzing and dashing about in a blind unreasoning fight, I think they will understand what I mean by difference of character in insects.

This might afford a very interesting subject for study.

I believe very little is known about the life-history of this charming insect.

Its larvæ are said to be parasites, feeding upon caterpillars and other insects.

The perfect fly is seen from March to May, but I have not observed it in the summer or autumn months.



FLOWERS OF ASH.

THE ASH.

The ash is now becoming conspicuous by the size of its dark flower and leaf-buds.

This feature has often been noticed by the poets; Bishop Mant speaks of

"Its buds on either side opposed
In couples each to each, enclosed
In caskets black and hard as jet,
The ash-tree's graceful branch beset."

I scarcely ever pass by an ash tree in spring but I recall Lord Tennyson's well-known lines—

"Those eyes
Darker than darkest pansies, and that hair
More black than ashbuds in the front of
March."

As a rule the buds are placed exactly opposite to each other on the branch, but in the illustration they are alternate, as I find is often the case towards the end of the spray.

The flowers of the ash are varied enough to puzzle a young botanist.

Some of the flowers contain stamens, others bear only pistils, and some may be found with both stamens and pistils; these varied blossoms are described in botany as polygamous.

The ash is largely grown in Kent to supply poles for the hop-grounds.

The trees are planted in narrow strips of ground adjoining the fields, and when the young saplings are sufficiently tall they are cut down, and after a few years the stems that have sprouted from the root-stocks are just the straight poles that are required to support the hop-plants.

This process is repeated from time to time so as to maintain the needed supply.

A little wood of this kind is called a "shave," possibly a corruption of the word shaw with which we are familiar.

In olden times the ash was called "The

Husbandman's Tree," as it supplies tough flexible handles for all kinds of tools and agricultural implements.

We may easily distinguish the two kinds of catkins on the birch; the pistil bearing flower is small and upright, whilst the male catkin hangs down and bears the pollen in its bracts. Towards the autumn we shall find the small catkin, which is now erect, will have become



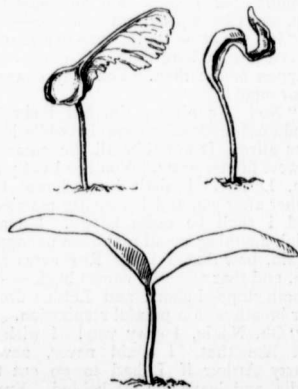
BIRCH CATKIN.

pendant and composed entirely of minute seeds which autumnal gales will carry far and wide.

SEEDLING TREES.

The lawns and flower-beds are now covered with sycamore, beech, and other seedling trees in various stages of growth. As the two seed-leaves or cotyledons, as they ought to be called, differ very much from the mature leaves, it is rather interesting to try and find out each species and thus learn to identify trees in their babyhood.

The sycamores seem to find it difficult to get out of their seed-coats, for here and there we may find one with a stem an inch long with the winged part (*samara*) perched at the top



SYCAMORE SEEDLINGS.

like some quaint kind of head-gear. Even if they get out of the husk they are for the first day or two crumpled into odd shapes, just as they were packed and curled up in the seed-coat; but before long they spread out their two cotyledons and seem to rejoice in the light and air.

These seedlings are of a dark green colour with a crimson stem, a combination we may also find in the bud of the tree itself, which in some specimens has outer bud-scales of the richest crimson, whilst the delicately folded young leaves within are of a vivid tint of green.

This year, 1898, I find a remarkable number of these seedlings with three and even four cotyledon leaves, showing that the seeds must have contained three or four embryos. A month or two later we shall find these young trees showing two leaves of the mature form, which is quite different from the strap-shaped cotyledon.

It may interest my readers to be reminded that the sycamore of which I have been speaking is not the sycamore of Scripture, that being a species of fig, an entirely different tree in every respect.

It has an oval undivided leaf like the bay-tree and having wide-spreading branches affording abundant shade; it is often to be met with by the roadside in Palestine, where it is planted for the benefit of wayfarers, who welcome the cool shelter it affords from the hot sun and also the sustaining fruit it bears.

Beech seed-leaves consist of two broad deep green cotyledons of palest green beneath; they are very distinctive, and once identified we can never mistake them.

The lime-tree has seedlings with deeply incised leaves, very unlike the perfect form.

If we have no companion who can name

these baby-trees for us, the only way to learn about them is to look under the various trees in April and May, when we shall probably light upon the growing seeds of each kind. When pressed and dried, they form an interesting collection either by themselves or to add to any dried specimens of the English forest-trees we may happen to be forming.



SHEPHERD'S PURSE.

SHEPHERD'S PURSE.

One of the commonest weeds to be found throughout spring and summer is the shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa pastoris*). It often bears as many as fifty pods on its stem, and by counting the number of seeds in each pod and adding the whole number together, we shall find the total to amount to about one thousand five hundred seeds. No wonder gardeners find it a troublesome weed when one plant can produce so many seeds and sow itself all over the garden. We may note its very varied leaves, those on the stem are oblong and arrow-shaped at the base, the root leaves being pinnatifid, that is cleft into divisions half way down.

In China and North America the plant is used as a vegetable, and it used to be credited with medicinal virtues.

My chief interest in this hardy little weed arises from its remarkable power of adaptation; if it happens to be growing in rich soil, it will attain to a height of one or two feet, but if starved in some wall crevice or growing between the stones on a hard gravel path even there it does its best; its stem is covered with immature purses and is crowned by a tiny head of flowers; it is thus a true emblem of patience and fruitfulness under adverse circumstances.

SISTERS THREE.

By Mrs. HENRY MANSERGH, Author of "A Rose-coloured Thread," etc.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"AND so you are engaged too, Norah!"

Half-an-hour had passed since Rex had left Cloudsdale, and Lettice and Norah were seated in the bed-room which they shared together, Norah still trembling and tearful, Lettice full of serious, wide-eyed interest.

"And so you are engaged too!"

"No, not engaged. There is nothing definite, but I know that he cares for me, and I have promised to wait—"

"It's the same thing, but—five years! It is a terribly long time! So much may happen before then. You may change your mind!"

"No! I can't explain, but I simply could not think of anyone else while Rex was alive. It would be all the same if it were fifteen years. You need not pity me, Lettice. I shall keep house for father after you and Hilary are married, and I shall be quite happy. I don't think anything could make me unhappy again, now that I know Rex cares for me, and that when he comes back—"

Norah stopped short, and Lettice drew her breath with a painful respiration.

"Oh, Nonie, I envy you! I wish I felt like that. I could never, never marry Arthur if I had to go out to India, and leave you all behind. Even now—Norah! if I speak out to you, will

you keep it to yourself? Will you promise faithfully not to repeat a word to father or Hilary, or anyone else? Will you? Answer, Norah, yes or no!"

"I—I—yes, I promise, Lettice, if you wish it, but wouldn't it be better—"

"No! No! I can speak to no one else, and not even to you unless you promise not to repeat a single word. Sometimes I am so miserable! I never intended to marry Arthur—never for a moment; but he was very nice to me—and (I know you will be shocked, Norah, you are so honest and brave) I wanted him to go on being attentive, and sometimes I did pretend I liked him a little bit, when he seemed discouraged, or as if he were beginning to care less than he used. Then that day on the river he asked me to marry him, and I said No! I was horrified at the idea, and I tried to refuse him, I really did, but he looked so miserable—I couldn't bear to see him. I was quite happy for a little time after that, and when he was away I longed for him to come back, but since then father and Miss Carr have been so cross; there have been such worries with the house, and workmen, and dressmakers, that I have felt sometimes as if I would give the world to run away and hide, and never see any of them again!"

Norah sat motionless, gazing at her sister in horrified silence. Her heart

beat in quick, painful throbs—even Rex himself was forgotten in the shock of hearing her worst fears confirmed in Lettice's own words. Unhappy! within three weeks of her marriage, with presents arriving by every post, the wedding breakfast ordered, the guests bidden to the church! It was some time before she could command her voice sufficiently to speak.

"But—Lettice! If you were happy at first, perhaps you are only miserable now because you are tired and overdone. I think even if I were going to marry Rex, I should feel sad the last few weeks when I thought of leaving father and the old home, and all the rest of you. It seems only natural. It would be rather heartless if one felt differently."

"Do you think so, Norah, do you?" queried Lettice eagerly. "Oh, I am so glad to hear you say that. I have said so to myself over and over again, but I thought I ought to be happy. I have been so wretched. That night when you thought I had toothache—"

"I know. I was afraid it was that. But, Lettice, if you are not satisfied it is not too late even now. You could tell Mr. Newcome."

But Lettice gave a shriek of dismay. "Oh, never, never! I daren't think of it, Norah. The house is ready, all the furniture—my dresses—the wedding

presents! I could never break it off. Poor Arthur would be broken-hearted, and his mother would be so angry; she would never let Madge speak to me again. Oh, no! I feel better already for talking to you. I get nervous and imagine things that are not true. I shall be very happy—of course I shall be happy. Arthur is so kind—and the house is so pretty. Don't look so miserable, Norah dear; indeed, indeed, I shall be all right."

"I hope so; but, Lettice, do think over it well while there is time. It would be terrible to have to break off your engagement now, but, at the worst, all the gossip and upset would be over in two or three months, and if you married it would be for your whole life. Father would be angry, but I would help you. I would stay with you, Lettice, and help you every minute of the time."

"I know you would, I know you would." Lettice spoke in a quick, breathless whisper, and her eyes were fixed as if she were a prisoner looking through the barred window and trying to summon up courage to escape—then a shudder shook the slight shoulders, and she jumped up, holding out her hands with a gesture of dismay.

"Oh no, no! Don't talk of anything so dreadful. Arthur is coming on Saturday and I shall be quite happy. I am dull because I have not seen him for so long, but you will see how bright I am when he is here. I was very weak and foolish to speak as I did, but I can trust you, Norah. You have promised not to tell."

"Yes, I have promised." Poor Norah was only too willing to be convinced, and surely what Lettice said was reasonable enough. She would wait at any rate until Saturday before making any further attempt to persuade her sister to a step which must bring so much suffering and humiliation in its train.

Two days later the bridegroom arrived. Lettice went to the station to meet him, and a very handsome couple they looked as they drove up to the door. Mr. Newcome immaculate as ever despite the long dusty journey, and so large and impressive, that Norah was quite embarrassed by the suggestion that she should address him as "Arthur."

Lettice was all smiles and radiance, much delighted with a necklace of turquoise and diamonds which her lover had brought as his wedding present, and which she exhibited proudly to every member of the household.

Father, brothers and sisters were alike so relieved to see her happiness that they were prepared to welcome Arthur Newcome with open arms, and to acknowledge that their prejudices were unfounded. They listened with smiling faces to his tedious description of his journey north, of previous journeys, or journeys still to come; they tried to show an interest in the items of stale information which he offered in words of studied length and elegance, and with the air of imparting a startling novelty, but alas, it was all in vain. After three days' experience the unanimous verdict proclaimed that such a well-behaved and withal tiresome, and prosy young gentleman had never before worn frock coats, or walked about country lanes in a tall hat and immaculate kid gloves.

"He must be different with Lettice. She could never endure it if he bored her as much as he does us," reiterated Hilary firmly, upon which Raymond's eyes twinkled with mischievous intentions.

"Well—do you know, I should like to feel certain about that!" he said, and forthwith strolled out into the garden through the open doorway.

Lettice and Arthur Newcome were pacing their favourite walk, the narrow shrubbery path which encircled the lawn, and at intervals of every three or four minutes the two figures came into sight as the path opened to drive and tennis ground. Master Raymond strolled across to the first of these openings, leant nonchalantly against a tree, and waited the approach of footsteps. They came—a strong, steady crunching of the gravel, a pattering of quick, uneven little steps, and the sound of a deep bass voice struck on the ear.

"—And further on in the transept aisle, I came upon a particularly heavy and unattractive cenotaph to the memory of—"

Raymond gasped, and rolled his eyes; then as the footsteps died away sped lightly across the lawn, and en-

sconced himself at the next point of vantage. The boom of Mr. Newcome's big voice came again to his ear. Poor little Lettice was evidently a good listener!

"—The epitaph is in the inflated style of the period—bombastic in character, and supposed to be written by—"

"Bombastic!" echoed Raymond in despair, "I know someone else to whom that epithet would apply uncommonly well. This is worse than I expected. I'll give him one more chance, and then—"

But at the third hearing Mr. Newcome was discoursing on "Allegorical figures and pseudo-classic statues," whereupon Raymond dashed off into the house and horrified his sisters by an account of his experiences.

"What a shame to listen like that. Lettice would be very angry if she knew."

"It was for her own good. Poor little soul, I'm sorry for her. What on earth made him choose tombstones as a topic of conversation?"

"I know. He has been staying in Canterbury. Lettice told me that he had written to her about the Cathedral," said Norah dolefully. "I wonder if I ought to go and join them! She asked me, and pinched my arm to make me say yes, but I thought Arthur looked as if he didn't want me. Can't we make an excuse and call her in? She looks so tired."

"Well, they are the funniest pair of lovers I have ever seen!" said Raymond, nodding his head with a knowing look, as if he had had an extensive knowledge of engaged couples, whereas he had never been in the house with one before. And just at that moment in marched Lettice, her fair face disfigured by a weary, irritable expression.

"I think you are all very unkind! I asked you to come into the garden. It's very mean to leave me all alone, when I have only a f—f—fortnight more at home!" The last word ended in a burst of tears, and she ran hurriedly upstairs to her own room.

What was to be the end of it all! Her sisters stared at each other with wide, frightened eyes, too miserable and uneasy to speak.

(To be continued.)

HOUSEHOLD HINTS.

It is highly dangerous to leave a gas-burner turned low unless surrounded by a globe, and even then a draught of wind may blow out the flame and leave the gas escaping.

GAS-BURNERS should now and then be cleaned out with a piece of wire or a long pin to clear out any impurities or dust accumulation.

CUPBOARDS and storerooms should periodically have the doors set open for air and light to penetrate, and the shelves should be cleaned or at least brushed out once a week.

SPONGES should never be used for applying a lotion to an open wound.

To keep a quill pen soft, have it always in the ink and do not let it get dry.

An old rusty pen left in the ink-bottle will be of service in attracting the corroding matter from other pens in use.

MATTRESSES, pillows, and bolsters should be periodically sent to the cleaners to be taken to pieces and cleaned. It is not good for health to use them for years uncleaned, as most people have them.

Do not let your neighbours have to complain of your gate squeaking for want of a few drops of oil applied to the joint. It is a most aggravating noise.

TEACH your children how to mend window-blinds, door-latches, and all the little things of the sort about the house; you will materially lessen your workmen's bills and give useful occupation to handy fingers.

A **PIECE** of black sticking-plaster, notched all round the edges, and applied outside a crack in the leather of a shoe, is a neat way of mending it, and shows very little.

BLACK alpaca is one of the nicest materials for an under-petticoat; it wears well, is light, and does not harbour dust.

TOAST to be crisp and well made should not be done all on one side and then the other, but the sides frequently changed to and from the fire; this evaporates the moisture more effectually. Much also depends on the kind of bread that is used and the condition of the fire.

NEITHER hot water nor hot ovens can be had if cleaning of the kitchen flues is neglected.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.



MEDICAL.

L. AURA.—Cod-liver oil is more a food than a drug. It is given

in preference to other oils chiefly because it is easily digested. When it disagrees, "emulsion of cod-liver oil" can sometimes be taken without unpleasant symptoms. A tablespoonful of thick rich cream taken three times a day is an excellent substitute—and by no means an unpleasant one.

A YOUNG MOTHER.—When a child of one or two years gets very fat, it is not a sign that he is healthy, but rather the reverse. Ricketty children are often exceedingly fat—the so-called "fat rickets." Children who have been fed on "infants' foods" are usually very fat—"fine fat fellows"—and ricketty. In the article on "Indigestion" that appeared in *The Girl's Own Paper* last December, details on infant feeding were given which we advise you to peruse. Do not trust too much to "infant food" as an article of diet under any circumstances, unless you are advised to do so by a physician.

FOOLISH.—Probably you have got wax in both ears at present. The offensive yellow discharge from the left ear is probably secondary to wax. It is not uncommon for wax to set up severe irritation, especially after unsuccessful attempts have been made to remove it. Drop into your ear a little warm solution of bicarbonate of soda (Gr. xx to ℥j of water) every evening for a week, and then gently syringe your ears. Before doing so, read the instructions and precautions given in the article "All about the Ear" which appeared in the November Number of *The Girl's Own Paper*.

R. M.—To ask for a cure for "back-ache" is rather a large order. We could enumerate hundreds of diseases which produce this symptom. We really cannot answer questions without any information, and we know of no measure that is a panacea for all human ills.—2. The lines—

"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depths of some divine despair
Rise in the heart and gather to the eyes"—

are by Tennyson.—3. There have been articles on the precious stones in *The Girl's Own Paper*.
MARKET.—Wash your head with borax (one teaspoonful to a quart of water), and occasionally, about once a month, with the yolk of an egg. The root of a hair usually does come out with the hair itself, but it is soon replaced by another. Hairs only live for a certain time, then they die and are replaced by young hairs.

A MOTHERLESS GIRL.—We were very pleased to receive your letter, for the information you have given embodies all that is necessary to enable us to completely answer your question. It would indeed be a relief to us if every correspondent would state her questions plainly and fully, and not leave us to guess at the question as well as to supply the answer; such correspondents can only receive answers of the same nature as their questions—brief and vague. You suffer from anaemia, and so spare ourselves the trouble of answering every correspondent who possesses the same symptoms as yourself. The symptoms of anaemia (chlorosis), as it occurs in young girls, are—shortness of breath, palpitation, flushing and blushing, indigestion, constipation, pallor of the face and lips, transparent, clotted bluish-white colour of the "whites" of the eyes, headache, dimness of vision, especially on rapidly turning round or ascending stairs, fainting, inability for mental work, but not wasting, very frequently the reverse. The cause of anaemia is, according to a very great authority, constipation. It occurs mainly in young women between the ages of fifteen and thirty, and, as far as our personal experience goes, is invariably cured by suitable treatment. The treatment is divided into three sections:—(1) general measures, (2) diet, (3) drugs. General measures first:—

Apparel.—Warm clothing and flannel next to the skin; no garters, especially not worn below the knee; loose-fitting corsets.

Exercise.—A walk in the fresh air every day, rain or shine. Do not walk to the point of fatigue.

Washing, etc.—Do not wash in cold water. In this complaint a cold bath may produce the most serious possible symptoms.

Now for the Diet.—A good nourishing light diet. At least four meals a day, but all must be small. No eating between meals. If indigestion is present, special dieting may be necessary. Avoid tea and coffee. A little wine is often of great value in this condition.

Purges.—Constipation must be cured. To accomplish this, the following pill may be taken every night or every other night:—

R. Aloin Gr. j
Ext. Nucis Vomicae Gr. ʒ
Ext. Belladonnae Vir. Gr. ʒ

In the slighter grades of anaemia this is all that is sufficient. If indigestion is present, this must be attended to. If the anaemia is severe, iron must be taken. Any digestible form of iron may be taken. Brand's pill is a convenient form and is very efficacious. One pill (5 grs.) should be taken after each meal. Iron cannot be taken if indigestion is present. We have answered this question fully, and will not repeat this information.

LILY.—It is rather difficult to tell you exactly what is wrong with your nose, for there are many possible causes of bleeding and soreness in the nostrils. The details that you give us incline us to believe that you suffer from a form of chronic nasal trouble that is very common in young women. You had better use this wash for your nose: Dissolve two teaspoonfuls of bicarbonate of soda and ten grains of pure carbolic acid in a pint of water. Cold cream is an excellent preparation to apply. We will treat this question on the nose more fully at another time.—2. Read the advice given to "A Motherless Girl."

GLADYS.—Are you quite sure that your friend does not suffer from indigestion? You are very emphatic about her not drinking tea, but does she drink anything else that is likely to disturb her digestion? However, we do not think that your friend's "red nose" is due to indigestion, but that it is due to a poor circulation. Let her read the answer to "A Motherless Girl."

STUDY AND STUDIO.

JIM and "LAWSON."—1. We find it difficult to answer such questions as "Who is the greatest living artist?" and "Who is the greatest living composer?" There are different schools in painting as in music, and each has its illustrious exponents, among whom it would be presumptuous and invidious for us to single out one as excelling all others of his own and of any other school.—2. As to your writing, we may say that in each case the down-strokes are too black and the letters too rounded, giving it a childish appearance, but possibly with time and care the hand may develop into a good one. We say "hand" advisedly, for the writing of the two letters is almost if not quite identical.

ESTELLE.—1. You will obtain the information you require by writing to Dr. J. N. Keynes, Syndicate Buildings, Cambridge.—2. Your writing is too small, round and faint. There is no freedom in it, and it is childish and unformed. We should advise you to practise daily a thoroughly good running hand on which you might model your own.

IRIS.—1. We refer you also to Dr. Keynes for full details of the Cambridge Higher Local Examination, held in December and January.—2. A good Italian book for a beginner is *Le Mite Prigioni*, by Silvio Pellico, and you would find some of Metastasio's plays easy, e.g., "La Clemenza di Tito."

NAN.—1. There is a wide field before you. Have you read (in fiction) *Lorna Doone*; Mrs. Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*; Kingsley's books, especially his *Heroes*; J. M. Barrie's works, and so on? You should not only read stories. We advise our readers who wish to be systematically guided in their reading to join the National Home Reading Union; secretary, Miss Mondy, Surrey House, Victoria Embankment, London, W.C. A useful little book is *What Shall I Read?* by Lily Watson (56, Old Bailey).

MARGARET.—Read our answer to "Nan." The lists of suitable books would be too long to give here in the six subjects you name, but we are very glad to see that you intend to read when you have left school. Especially do not neglect the reading of poetry. Such poets as Longfellow and Tennyson will help you.

GIRLS' EMPLOYMENTS.

ANXIOUS (Teaching Dressmaking).—If you wish to prepare by yourself for the examinations for teachers of dress-cutting you had better write to the Secretary of the London Institute for the Advancement of Plain Needlework, 16, Stafford Street, Marylebone Road, N.W., asking for advice on the subject. You will probably find that emphasis is laid on obtaining a practical knowledge of the Grenfell system of dress-cutting. Examinations are held in March, July, and December. It seems a pity that you are unable to attend the classes in Leeds, as the teaching given is considered to be particularly good.

H. W. (Civil Service).—We cannot recommend you a teacher by correspondence. Possibly the Secretary of the Birkbeck Institute, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., could advise you on this subject, as many students are prepared at the Birkbeck for the Civil Service. Whether the hours you mention are strictly adhered to we do not know, but it is certain that long hours are not among the grievances of Civil Service Clerks.

MARCELA (Learning French and German).—The Secretary of the Teachers' Guild, 74, Gower Street, W.C., would forward you information concerning the excellent opportunities given by the French Education Department to English girls who wish to acquire a knowledge both of French and of teaching abroad. If you could avail yourself of this privilege you would find yourself much better equipped for the teaching profession than by going to some foreign school and learning French on what are called "mutual terms." Later you could learn German in Germany by obtaining some post as teacher in a good family. Miss Nash, of the English and American Governesses' Home, 7, Kleinboerenstrasse, Berlin, might help you in this quest, but you ought to be able to afford to spend a few weeks in the Home till a suitable vacancy could be found.

A. C. (Infirmary Nursing).—We learn that at the newly established Brentford Infirmary, Isleworth, W., a few suitable probationers could be received. You may be glad to know of this opportunity, as at the older hospitals competition for entry is now so keen as to make it difficult for girls without means to be trained. The limits of age are from 22 to 32. Probationers are received on trial for two months; then, if accepted, they serve for one year at a salary of £5, the second year they receive £10, and the third £20. They are provided with full rations, washing, separate bedroom, and material for indoor uniform. The Infirmary is conducted under auspices which are favourable to a good hospital training. You should write to the matron if you desire the form of application.