



SPRING.

From the Painting by DORA HITZ.



VOL. XIX.—No. 949.]

MARCH 5, 1898.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

SISTERS THREE.

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

CHAPTER XXII.

It was a gloomy afternoon. The rain was falling in a persistent drizzle; the clouds were low and grey. It seemed as if nature itself shared in the depression which settled on the little party gathered together in the drawing-room at Cloudsdale. What merry times

they had spent in this room! What cosy chats round the fireside in winter; what refreshing hours of rest in summer, when the sun blinds were lowered, and the windows stood open to the green lawn! And now they were all over. A melancholy feeling of "last time" settled on each of the beholders as they looked at Lettice with the betrothal ring

sparkling on her finger; at Rex, so tall and man-like in his travelling suit of rough grey tweed. To make matters worse, the curate had taken this opportunity to pay a call, so that they were not even alone, and the rain prevented an adjournment to the garden. Norah sat at the extreme end of the room from Rex, trifling with her teacup and spoon,



"IT WAS ALWAYS A TREAT TO HEAR HER PLAY."

All rights reserved.

with a feeling of such helpless misery as she had never known before in the course of her short life. The Mouse cried openly, Miss Briggs whisked her handkerchief out of her pocket at intervals of every few minutes, and Hilary's forced cheerfulness was hardly less depressing. As for Rex himself, he was perfectly quiet and composed, but his voice had a hard, metallic ring, and his face looked drawn and old. Lettice could not bear to look at him, for it seemed to her that there was more evidence of suffering in his set composure than in all the demonstrative grief of his companions.

Conversation languished over tea, and at last Hilary suggested music as a last resort. If there were music there would be a chance of moving about, and putting an end to these death-like pauses. Rex could speak to Norah, which no doubt he was longing to do, but so soon as music was suggested, the curate begged eagerly to hear Miss Norah play, and she rose to get her violin with the usual ready acquiescence. Norah had made immense strides during the three last years, and was now a performer of no mean attainments. It was always a treat to hear her play, and this afternoon the wailing notes seemed to have an added tenderness and longing. Lettice bit her lips to keep back the tears, while she watched Rex's face with fascinated attention. He had pushed his chair into the corner when Norah began to play, shaded his eyes with his hand, and beneath this shelter he gazed at her with the unblinking, concentrated gaze of one who is storing a memory which must last through long years of separation. How often in the bungalow home in India the scene in this English drawing-room would rise before him, and he would see again the tall, girlish figure in the blue serge dress, the pale face leant lovingly against the violin—the face which was generally so gay and full of life, but which was now all sad and downcast! Lettice followed Rex's example and turned to look at her sister. Dear Nonie! there was no one in the world like her! How sweet and gentle she looked. No wonder Rex hated to say good-bye—he would never find another girl like Norah Bertrand.

The curate was loud in his expression of delight when Norah laid down her bow, but Rex neither spoke nor moved, and Hilary in despair called upon the other visitor to sing a song. The curate had a pleasant little tenor pipe of his own, and could play accompaniments from memory, so that he was ready enough to accede to the request. His selection, however, was not very large, and chiefly of the ballad order, and the opening bars brought a flush of nervousness to Hilary's cheeks—"The Emigrant's Farewell!" What in the world had induced the man to make such a choice? An utter want of tact, or a mistaken

idea of singing something appropriate to the occasion? It was too late to stop him now, however, and she sat playing with the fringe of the tea-cloth, hardly daring to lift her eyes, as the words rang through the room—

"I'm bidding you a long farewell,
My Mary kind and true,
But I'll not forget you, darling,
In the land I'm going to.
They say there's bread and work
for all,
And the sun shines always there,
But I'll ne'er forget old Ireland,
Be it fifty times as fair!"

Could anything be more painful—more disconcerting? As the last notes rang out she darted a quick glance at Rex, and to her horror saw the glimmer of tears in those "masterful" eyes, which had hitherto been so scornfully free from signs of weakness.

The next moment, and before the choruses of "thank you's" had died away, Rex was on his feet, holding out his hand with an air of defiant indifference.

"I must go; it is getting late. Good-bye, Hilary. Good luck!"

"Oh, good-bye, Rex! I am so sorry—"

"Good-bye, Lettice. You will be an old married woman when I see you again."

"Good-bye, dear, dear Rex. Take care of yourself. C—come back soon!"

"Miss Briggs! Mr. Barton! Thank you very much. Oh, yes, I shall get on all right! Good-bye, little Mouse—give me a kiss!"

"Good-bye, darling, darling Rex—and I've worked a book-marker for you with 'Forget-me-not' in red worsted. It's gone in the post to-day, and you will get it in the morning."

"Thank you, Mouse. I'll use it every day of my life. Good-bye, Norah!"

"Good-bye, Rex."

That was all. A short grasp of the hand, and he was gone. The glass door banged behind him, footsteps went crunching down the gravel, and Norah stood like a frozen statue of despair in the dim, flagged hall. For one moment only, then Lettice seized her by the arm, and dragged her hurriedly along the passage. Such a flushed, determined Lettice, with sparkling eyes, and quick, decisive tones!

"Norah! You can't let him go away like that. You can't!—It's inhuman! The poor boy was crying when Mr. Barton was singing. I saw the tears in his eyes. He went away because he could not bear to stay any longer. And you never said a word! Oh, run, run—go out of the side door, and cut across the shrubbery to meet him at the gate. Oh, Norah, quick. It is your last chance! Think! You may never see him again!"

The last words put an end to any hesitation which Norah may have felt.

Lettice held the door open, and she rushed out into the drizzling rain, hatless, cloakless, as she was, forgetting everything but that awful suggestion that she might never see Rex again. Down the narrow path, where a few weeks before she and Rex had first discussed the journey to India: across the plot of grass where Geraldine had her garden, and there, at the opening into the carriage drive, stood Rex himself, staring before him with a strained, expectant glance, which gave way to a flash of joy as Norah's tall figure came in sight.

"I thought you would come! I thought you would not let me go away without a word!" he said, and Norah gave a little sob of emotion.

"What can I say? You know all I feel. I shall think of you all the time, and wish you good luck; and every night when I say my prayers—"

"I know! I thank you, Norah." Rex turned his head aside quickly, but Norah saw that he was trembling with emotion, and waited in awed suspense for his next words.

"Norah—it is a long time—three years—five years—I can't tell which it may be. I shall think of you all the time. There never will be anyone else for me; but it will be different with you. You will meet new friends up in London. There will be other fellows—better than I am—who will care for you too. Perhaps when I come back you will be married."

"No, Rex, don't be afraid. I am not like that. I never forget."

He gripped her hand, but made no answer, and they stood together in a silence which was sweet to both, despite the rain, the gloom, the coming separation. Norah was the first to find her voice.

"You will write home often; and we will send you all the news. The time will soon pass, and you will enjoy the life and the strange new country." She looked into his face with a flickering smile. "They say there's bread and work for all, and the sun shines always there."

"But I'll not forget you, darling, be it fifty times as fair!" came the answer in a strained, hoarse whisper. Poor, shy Rex! Even at the moment of parting it was agony to him to speak that word of endearment, and having said it, he was consumed with embarrassment. Norah was still tingling with delight, when her hand was seized in a painful grip, a gruff "Good-bye, Norah!" sounded in her ears, and she was left alone in the garden path.

She put up her hands to her face and sobbed in helpless misery—

"Oh, Rex, Rex! Five long, long years! Oh, God, be good to my boy—take care of him!—Bring him back safe and well!"

(To be continued.)



MEDICINAL HERBS.

By THE LADY GEORGINA VERNON.



Do not let this prosaic title frighten you, for the work connected with herbs is altogether interesting and delightful, whether you cultivate the herbs in your garden, or go and seek for them, basket and knife in hand, up and down the green lanes, on the breezy up-lands and down by the river's bank, and bringing them home concoct healing ointment and salves, strengthening decoctions and all the army of "sovereign remedies" spoken of by the ancient herbalists.

I do not wish to dwell upon the medicines of the chemist's shop, even if made of herbs, nor to describe senna tea, nor rhubarb root in all their nauseousness! But I will merely give a slight sketch first of the herbs which we may easily grow in our gardens—where, I hope, there is already a herbarium for pot-herbs—and then we will roam out into the country and pick some of the many plants which flourish and prosper best when left in their own self-chosen habitat.

In our medicinal herbarium we will plant the following:—Tree mallow, camomile, horehound, hyssop, marigold, horse-radish, rue, all the various "mentha" tribe, peppermint, spearmint, pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegio*), balm and poppies, and in them we shall find the principal garden herbs for daily requirements.

Mallow is most useful. You pick the large leaves and simmer slowly to make poultices or fomentations for swellings or inflamed surfaces. It is singularly healing, and each garden should possess a goodly plantation of this plant. It is easily killed by frost, but when once established young plants spring up year by year.

Camomile, so well known for soothing poultices in toothache, is also an excellent tonic when taken as a cold infusion, fasting in the morning. For feverish colds or chills, it should be taken as a hot decoction at bedtime, and produces abundant perspiration and lessens fever. Two or three flowers infused in water make a strengthening eye lotion.

The two next plants, horehound and hyssop, are used by our country people for colds and hoarseness; and in this way, take a handful of the leaves of each, with a few leaves of rue, make a strong infusion by pouring on boiling water, sweeten with honey, and drink at bedtime. Hyssop can be used with advantage as a gargle or as a green ointment for wounds, as it possesses very healing qualities.

Marigolds with their bright blossoms are well-known, and they are much valued to form a drink to be taken as a remedy in measles. The flowers should be dried in the shade, and can be kept for use at any time.

Horse-radish, which is generally only looked upon as an accompaniment to roast beef, is valuable as a cure for hoarseness. Scrape two drams of the root, cover with boiling water and infuse with an equal weight of brown sugar. Let it stand for a few hours, and then take an occasional teaspoonful, which will cure the most obstinate hoarseness. The root scraped and applied on linen to a rheumatic joint eases the pain.

Rue (*Ruta graveolens*) was a very favourite remedy with old herbalists for a host of diseases. It is a stimulant and anti-spasmodic, but the taste is strong and disagreeable. It is a most useful medicine for fowls, particularly for the roup, and can be given to them chopped small and mixed with butter.

Next on my list come the various plants of the "mentha" tribe—peppermint, spearmint, balm, and pennyroyal. All these are of an aromatic and carminative nature. They are most useful when distilled, but if we have not the means of preparing them thus they can be used as a decoction, in the way I have described before, namely, pouring boiling water on a handful of the leaves. These plants can all be picked green, carefully dried, and hung up in muslin bags for winter use. The various species of mint should all be cultivated; they prefer rather a moist soil, and can be propagated by dividing the roots in February or March. The old plants should be cut down at the approach of winter.

Poppies should be grown for the sake of their anodyne properties, as the heads of seeds—which should be picked when ripe—are useful for soothing pain, particularly used in hot fomentations.

I have mentioned some of the best herbs to cultivate in our gardens, and so we will go out into the fields and lanes to search for those wild plants which love best to grow in their natural homes.

The first plant which claims our notice is the common daisy, from which a most useful remedy for bruises and sprains can be made. Pick the blossoms in the early summer, some dry morning, pound them thoroughly in a clean mortar, then turn the mass into a coarse muslin or sieve, strain out the juice, and add to the quantity one-third of pure spirits of wine. Let it stand a few hours, and then if it appears thick, and the sediment has not all fallen to the bottom, add a little more spirits of wine. This preparation is called "bellis." It should be allowed to stand till winter, then strained and is fit for use. The lotion should now be of a clear, brown colour, and should be applied to the part affected by a linen rag steeped in the lotion. It is an excellent and a safe substitute for arnica.

We shall probably not go far without finding a bunch of nettles growing. Nettle tea is a specific for skin diseases or any impurities of the blood. And here let me remark, that young nettles picked in early May make the most delicious substitute for spinach, prepared in the same way, or can be made into a paysanne soup, such as would surprise a *chef de cuisine* by its velvety consistency and piquant flavour. A plant of which a decoction is esteemed serviceable in skin complaints and used much in the same way as nettles, is the common cleavers or *Gallium aparine*, which you will see clinging up the hedges with its long weak stems and many whorls of leaves; this plant is considered of great use by poultry fanciers, and is given chopped small to young turkeys with much advantage.

Now if we go on further along these tangled hedgerows we shall find much food for our collecting basket. First pick some bunches of the sweet wild violet leaves and flowers; from them you can make a delightful green salve for applying to inflamed surfaces, although I have sometimes found it more efficacious to simply simmer a handful in milk and then apply as a poultice. A little further on, by

this deep ditch, growing in the moist ground, you may notice some plants of comfrey, *Symphitum officinal*, with its rough leaves and purple hanging flowers. The virtues of this plant are manifold, but the root is the part which is usually gathered; this is good for wounds or cuts, when bruised and laid on them, and it is said to relieve the pain of gout either by making a plaster of the bruised leaves, or of the roots crushed, spread upon linen and bound on the affected part.

Another plant you may very likely find growing here on the shady moist side of a hedgerow is Solomon's seal or polygonatum; the roots of this are used very much in the same way as the roots of the comfrey, and are especially good in relieving bruises.

Amongst the tall grass and brambles of the hedge side you will see there are several sorts of St. John's wort or hypericum growing; but the one we now require is the sort named perforatum, and you can tell it by picking a leaf and holding it against the light, when it will appear as if full of pinholes; from the flowers of this plant a most useful red oil can be made. Pick a good handful of the golden flowers and put in a wide-mouthed bottle, cover with sweet olive oil and tie the top down with a bladder, then place the bottle where the sun will shine on it, and gradually you will see that the oil will change to a deep red colour, and then it is fit for use. The oil should be strained off and be used as a preventive of bed sores or for healing wounds. It should be applied with a feather. This same red oil also makes a healing ointment thus: Melt in a pipkin two drams of spermaceti, four drams of white wax, and three ounces and a half of the red oil. This will be found an invaluable ointment.

As we wander on along the lane in our search for plants, we pass a patch of once cultivated ground, and there we shall find an abundant supply of chickweed and groundsel, from which one of the best of the cooling green ointments can be made by simmering the whole plants (equal parts of each) in pure lard till the juice is extracted, then squeeze well through muslin into a basin and stir gently till it becomes cool.

All round in the tall hedges are growing wild roses in all their summer beauty, and in a short time, when the flowers are succeeded by scarlet hips, one of the most valuable cures for tightness on the chest or lungs can be made. The hips should be picked when dry, and the tiresome work of taking out all the little hairy seeds thoroughly done. Then place the hips in a saucepan with three-quarters of a pound of sugar to each pound of hips and a very little water. Let it boil gently for about an hour till the fruit is tender, and then pass it as a syrup through a hair sieve. The sweet fragrant jelly that results is of the greatest use in all cases of cold or hoarseness.

Now we must search on some old shed or wall for the common houseleek or *Sempervivum tectorum*. The thick fleshy leaves should be crushed with cream, and gives immediate relief in burns or scalds.

I fear I must now end this short paper, and I feel that I have only given a very slight glimpse into the world of herbs; but it may lead some of my readers to search for themselves amongst the treasures of our fields and lanes, and to decide with some of my country friends that such simple remedies as I have described are "better nor physic."

SPRING MEMORIES.



As I look back and think of the spring of last year it seemed to have begun the moment that the late snow had melted, which did not come till mid-January. It came suddenly one morning with a feathery wreath of whiteness, so soft and plenteous and unlike the tinselly conventions of the Christmas cards. The darkest rooms in the house shone as with a second sunlight, and the trees looked thick and bushy as though with a polar summer of foliage. The air was very keen indeed that morning, and perhaps the tiny squirrel, with its reckless display of tail framing its long narrow body in a handsome bush, knew what was coming as it flashed restlessly across the path to disappear swiftly up a high tree where it rested safely out of reach of a too admiring crowd of small boys. Its pretty tail erect, high above its tiny head was a sight to delight in, as was the way it sprang from end to end of the copse in a mid-air progression, never missing aim as it threaded its way among the tree-tops.

In London February always seemed quite a winter month, but here, in the depths of the country, after the ice-bound days before it we have felt in it the stirrings of the sap and counted it with the spring. It is not that February is a month of colour or of wide-spread scents. It has none of the melting richness that goes with waning and decay, but the rare and pure hues of crocus and hepatica, snow-drop and aconite have the clear tone that tells of life and growth to come. The reds and purples of the berry-harvest have fed the hungry

birds and been stored in the hoards of the squirrels such as that one who is nibbling a hasty breakfast under the walnut-tree on the lawn. The hedges are still bare and bleak, but look lower down, and you will agree with me that February is the month for ditches. The cleaver or goose-grass clothes it in a fairy dress of freshest green, and the delicate baby-fingers go climbing up the black twigs above look as if the message of spring had sounded into their hearts. We can forgive the way it chokes our red anemones in the garden in May for its witchery now. Peep into that catch-water under the willows by the marsh road as we jog slowly past in the donkey-car. How beautiful that great blue-green drooping clump of leafage is. I think it is the chervil, but it is hard to distinguish the umbelliferae until you can look either at the flowers, the seeds, or the stalks. The hemlock tribe are a bewildering cousinship, but the seasons would be poor without them.

Another early hedge-row friend is the ground-ivy with its sturdy little dark-green woolly leaves that push their way everywhere, "amongst which come forth the flowers, gaping like little hoods, not unlike those of germander, of a purplish blew colour," says Gerrard. "Mixed with a little ale and honey and strained it takes away the pinne and webbe, and any griefe in the eyes of horse and cow," he continues, with other minuter directions; "but I list not to be over eloquent among gentlewomen, to whom especially my works are most necessarie," and so we must not depart from his method towards "our girls" of to-day. Perhaps it was this use that gave the ground-ivy its other name of ale-hoofe. But a gayer sign in the hedge-bank to tell us that "sumer is a comen-in" is the shining celandine that flashes out suddenly and keeps a brave show among moist twigs and all the tokens of winter's departing train. The dark glossy leaves are as handsome as some of spring's gayest plants. Well may Wordsworth say—

"Ere a leaf is on the bush,
In the time before the thrush
Has a thought about her nest,
Thou wilt come with half a call
Spreading out thy glossy breast
Like a careless prodigal;
Telling tales about the sun
When we've little warmth or none."

Partly its sudden arrival "about the kalends of March," as Gerrard says, and partly its own starry profusion makes a warm glow of gratitude come in our hearts as we talk of it to each other going "home along" from the

daily walk which brings a fresh excitement every day in this early time.

Those spring weeks were a true revelation of English by-ways to the writer who sped swiftly past field and copse and hedge-row on the silent tyres, and drank in more beauty of English lanes than many years might have brought with slow feet as the only kind of pony. Look at that great pool with the thickly growing white water-flowers. That is scattered star-wort, and what a whiteness "such as no fuller on earth can whiten it," it spreads under the dark hedge. The marsh-marigolds and the cool primroses look so happy in these by-ways, where the children from the old thatched cottages and farms seem to have learned too much "behaviour" in the village school to tear them roughly up and strew them to wither as they do near the towns. That early winter cress has such a milky blossom that you can see its tiny flowers as you skim along, and wonder at the long green needles that shoot far above its head and guard it like a stalwart body-guard. The upper hedges are still leafless, but the blackthorn is hanging bridal wreaths for some half-mortal marriage among the black branches. No wonder that Tennyson's "May Queen" grieved to think that she would

"Never see

The blossom on the blackthorn, the leaf upon the tree."

When green is only breathed like a breath here and there the blackthorn breaks forth and has a timid look about its transparent whiteness. It recalls bridal as does the later thick sweet may with its godly scent, but the may tells of settled comfort as in Frith's "Village Wedding," and the blackthorn of some daring marriage between mortal and immortal, some "Margaret" who had to depart anon to "the little grey church by the windy shore," and leave behind "the red-gold throne in the heart of the sea." In the north they tell you of "the blackthorn winter," and truly it brings the cold with it and speaks of love among the thorns.

There is a strong fascination about the hardy flowers that venture out with no leaves to mother them. Hardy as they are, they are an ethereal tribe and have all the confidence of fine natures. While the garden is still bare enough but for crocus and aconite, the mezerion with its flower of downy pink bursts into blossom. You cannot tire of looking at it, but come nearer and smell its unearthly fragrance. I wonder what the materialists make of it. "There is no sense more akin to the soul than the sense of smell," Macdonald said, and indeed as I drink in the scent of the mezerion, I feel that what we know is the least part of what there is to know, that

"Ages past the soul existed,

Here an age is resting merely

And hence fleets again for ages."

In spite of the sweetness you feel that the little rosy cups are stubborn growths that cannot be easily quelled. A few weeks later while the flowers are still fresh, the tiniest spikes of green leaves break at the tips of the branches, and the whole has the effect of delicate Battersse enamel that Watteau or Boucher would surely have loved to paint. No wonder that Christina Rossetti sings—

"If I might see another spring
I'd not plant summer flowers and wait;
I'd have my crocuses at once
My leafless pink mezerions,
My chill-veined snow-drops, choicer yet
My white or azure violet,
Leaf-nested primrose; anything
To blow at once, not late.

If I might see another spring
 I'd listen to the daylight birds
 That build their nests and pair and sing,
 Nor wait for mateless nightingale;
 I'd listen to the lusty herds,
 The ewes with lambs as white as snow,
 I'd find out music in the hail
 And all the winds that blow."

Indeed this spring the winds blew up into a regular "whirly-wind" as the local eyewitnesses expressed it. We had been rejoicing in the giant elm in the park and leading the children under it, gathering the soft rosy blossoms that came before the leaves, and fancying dames in ruffs in Elizabeth's time talking of the Armada, and in the next century gentlemen in long ringlets whispering hair-breadth escapes from Sedgemoor fight that raged the other side of those far hills. But March had hardly shown her face when a hurricane arose and wind and water chased all but the boldest within doors. At 9 one morning anxious faces pressed against the panes watched a moment of unheard of fury in the blast and the giant elm thundered to the ground. Awe came over us as we watched the great root that stood thirteen or fourteen feet in the air and made a sheer wall above the pond which it had created as it was wrenched from the soil. It was pitiful to see the majestic boughs being lopt by degrees and carted away, and the little children climbing in and out of its patient branches, gathering wealth of fire-wood to last for many a long day. How well that it was too early for many little birds to be made homeless; I could find none but perhaps some shared the fate of the ravens in the tree in Losel's wood that White tells of in his *History of Selborne*, that would not be dislodged from their nest: "The tree nodded to its fall," he says, "but still the dam sat on. At last when it gave way the bird was flung from her nest, and, though her parental affection deserved a better fate, was whipped down by the twigs, which brought her dead to the ground."

Indeed, this hamlet, remote from railway trains, is a spot dear to shy birds and beasts as it is to the gipsies. How sure is the swoop of that great white owl that fans the air as it sails away down the field to the old canal and its rushes. It is soothing to a lover of odd and wild creatures to reflect that that bird with eyes like a lake has a young family in an unknown high part of our rambling home. There is no need for you to start with nightly terrors; that is not a poor deserted baby wailing in the night wind; it is the little owlets hooting weirdly to one another, and all unconscious that the baby's mother in the house below has never heard such curious talk before. We are not too instructed here for deep-set superstitions. The next village owns a witch, and I have heard talk in ours of the evil eye, and there is one gentle-hearted dame to whom, not so long ago either, the maids used to go for love philtres. If you looked into her mysterious, deep-set, kindly old eyes you would not wonder at her power. But spite of the spirit of the hamlet the boy there sleeps too soundly in rosy health for any boding owl or "black evet" to disturb his mother's peace.

The country-folk themselves are shy of strange life. It does not win their confidence to protect that green snake which was sunning itself among the pea-stalks. It is a harmless one that could not hurt a child, and it only wriggles sinuously away, raising its pretty head and twitching its forked tongue in wrath

when you try to capture it, yet the villagers count it part of the devil's brood and meet only to be killed. The hedgehogs come sometimes in the lane below and are a choice meal for the gipsies, who tell me of them as they sit and rest in the kitchen before they take their babies down to be christened by a parson near here who has a knack of not frightening them away. Look at that gipsy with her bonny brown baby tied in a neat bundle at her waist: she is as like as a portrait to Fred Walker's vagrant, with her glorious eyes and waves of untamable, black, glossy hair, and all the unconscious freedom of one who has "never slept under a roof."

But before March is over, spite of late biting winds that have robbed us of our fruit harvest, spring herself is with us. The great elms and the little hedge-rows soon have their film of faintest green that clings so tenderly to the grave old branches. In the garden copse where the beeches were golden in late autumn, we can find the ground underfoot alive with loveliness that passes spontaneously from glory to glory. The great splashes of gold and white and purple crocuses are followed by blue and pink-white violets that lie on the turfy copse soil like a baby's hand on a ploughman's. Side by side with the primroses that cover the font on Easter Day and comfort the mothers who are reminded of their babies that died and are safe, grow great tufts of purple-red tulips that are cut to be the glory of the festival altar. In between the rock-work are the dark green leaves that soon have sweet-scented narcissus nesting in the middle or the earlier clumps that nod with daffodils.

"That come before the swallow dares
 And take the winds of March with beauty."

This happy family in the copse that comes up in such a hardy way and yet in such reckless profusion, letting the wild hyacinth of the woods with its blue bells and delicate fretted edges mix with the aristocratic purple columbine, folly's child, and the proud tulip be threaded in and out by the white flowers of the wild garlic, is a natural entrance to a garden meant to be the meeting-ground of the parish. But the primroses under the beeches are not quite as thick and tufted as these under the Scotch fir. What would the garden be without that tree? Every season seems to heighten its beauty. The grey green young spring shoots and the dark resinous cones make fresh notes in the green harmony of branches which droop and spray and cast flickering pencilled shadows on the rough red stem at noon: yet in all its grace the fir is never languid, and its scent has the same stimulating force to the mind as the scent of the chrysanthemum, and a puritan touch which steadies the intoxicating odours of the spring.

All beneath the fir and the ilex and the bay was a barren wilderness a year ago, but now it is a sheet of blue forget-me-not, among which the primroses are nested and the periwinkle trails her wreath. One day we harnessed the donkey and went with baskets to that far dingle on the side of the slope and dug carefully among the lovely moss and roots of the wood and carried home the "spikes of purple orchises" and the blue-bells and the violets and set them under the acacia and the leafy medlar just breaking into large crumpled innocent-faced blossoms; how full the branches are of great green leaves, and how they seem to stoop and stretch a morning shade for us on the sunny lawn; they are very tough and strong and do not break when the little girl

with yellow hair swings and dances upon them. In a few weeks tall foxgloves, white and pink and purple, peer out from this flowery nook at the carts and wagons and gipsy-vans that pass by to the great world. The dark stains on the pure colour inside the "glue of bells," give a cast of thought to these delicate flowers and a refinement of beauty that is all the more queenly for the simple setting. As Gerrard says, "foxglove growth in barren sandy grounds and almost everywhere," and if you have despaired of any bed under the trees, see what can be done with some good foxglove seed.

But we need not look to gardens for beauty in this witching time when every blade of road-side grass is touched with magic, and the rain when it comes makes "even the cart-ruts beautiful."

How the sunlight revels in that great may-skirted meadow this warm afternoon, and gilds the buttercups and daisies and the clover-flower and every bit of canary and couch-grass, of hare's-tail and meadow-fescue that bend together under the waves of shadow as only those wonderful grasses with their fairy bodies and merry tossing heads can. The butterflies are come, and down below

"... above the daisy tree,
 Through the grasses
 High o'erhead the bumble bee
 Hums and passes."

while up in the air the birds

"Make all the April woods
 Merry with singing,
 They shall go flying
 With musical speeches
 High overhead in the
 Tops of the beeches.
 In spite of our wisdom
 And sensible talking,
 We on our feet must go
 Plodding and walking."

London folk think of grass in a lump, but you have only to watch the may meadows not to wonder at the thirty-seven heads under which Miss Plues describes them in her sweet, old-fashioned book on *Rambles in Search of Wild Flowers*.

Before we say good-bye to spring let us peep at that cluster of blue wind-flowers so very cool and fresh under the tall rose-bushes, all spotted with stary-white stamens and buried in dark green leaves. It grows wild in Wales, but it flourishes and comes up hardily in a shady garden-bed. It is a near cousin of the rare purple pasque anemone which Fitzgerald says grows wild on the Fleam-dyke, near Cambridge, and of which the old English folk believed that it grew only where Danish blood had been spilt.

"I sometimes think that never blows so red
 The rose as where some buried Caesar
 bled;

That every hyacinth the garden wears
 Dropt in her lap from some once lovely
 head."

Is it because of Danish blood that our blue anemone has such a pure luxuriance? After you have toiled the five miles to our nearest station, the first place to which the train carries you is Athelney where Alfred burnt the cakes. Perhaps some long-forgotten battle raged in these quiet fields and the bones of Guthrun's fierce soldiers and their fair northern brides wait the eternal term deep down under our tender blue anemones.

CLOTILDA MARSON.



"IF LOVING HEARTS WERE NEVER LONELY—";

OR,

MADGE HARCOURT'S DESOLATION.

By GERTRUDE PAGE.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ANOTHER CONFLICT.

AS Madge and Elsie sat talking through that long afternoon, Guy was very differently engaged.

During their two weeks in Monte Carlo, he had been passing his time in his usual careless, reckless manner, and the anxious look on his face the previous evening was not without due cause. The downhill road had been smooth and easy enough so far, but he had come to a barrier now, and a chasm yawned before him, which, if he had not the courage to turn back, would engulf him.

And on that bright sunny afternoon, while Madge laid bare her heart to Elsie Merton, Guy was put to the test and—failed.

For the first week fortune had favoured him at the gaming tables, but since, he had lost steadily and heavily. In the early hours of that afternoon he staked nearly everything he had left, in a wild venture to win all back; and lost all.

He left the Casino, as countless others have done before and will do again, while the terrible curse of gambling stains the earth—a ruined man.

He did not see the people that passed him; he did not see the pitying looks that followed him; he did not see the spring flowers or the sunshine; he saw only a vision of utter ruin.

With toilsome steps and bent head he climbed a narrow cliff path, and at the top he sat down and buried his face in his hands.

At first he was too much dazed to think. One overwhelming fact alone filled all his mind and wrung his inmost heart, and that was that he must leave Madge.

About this there seemed no question whatever to him.

He had gambled away his substance but he had not lost his sense of honour, and the idea of living on his wife under such circumstances was impossible to him.

No, no, it was all his own fault, all his own blind foolishness, and now he must go away where his disgrace would not touch her.

He raised his head and looked away across the blue waters, and a mighty conflict waged within him.

"I can't go," he said with clenched hands and teeth. "I can't bear not to be with her."

"You must," said a voice within him. "You can't live on her, and what else can you do here? Besides, when she knows she will turn from you; she will despise you; how can you face that?"

"How can I go and leave her all alone?" he urged fiercely. "I am her husband, it is my right to remain with her and take care of her."

"You have forfeited your right," replied the voice. "She is better without you now, and you know she would wish

it. She is not afraid of being alone; she is self-reliant and independent and will not miss your protection. She only liked you before; she did not love you; she will despise you now—do you hear?—she will despise you."

He groaned aloud and rose hastily, as if it were more than he could bear. He looked down the face of the cliff and for one wild, delirious moment he meditated suicide. "But I must see her again," he muttered between his teeth, and turned away. As he did so his attention was drawn to a small church not far away. The door stood open and he heard voices singing. The impulse to go nearer moved him, and with dragging steps he entered, and sat down in a dusky corner alone, leaning forward with his face buried in his hands. He remained thus some time, for the service seemed to soothe him.

But as he sat there, in that little foreign church in his hour of bitter need and heard the quiet praying, for the first time in his life he had a gleam of what was contained in the true heart of religion.

Without a word passing his lips or being addressed to him, a quiet strength seemed to enter his soul and the conflict grew less fierce.

"Yes, he must go," he said to himself. "It was the only course open to him, and the only one which gave him a chance of retrieving his wrong steps and regaining his right, once more to watch over her. How could he expect to win her love now, and what right had he to seek it?" he asked, "since by his own act he had made himself unworthy."

Then once more a great wave of anguish and weakness passed over him, and he ground his teeth fiercely together and clutched his hands tighter to his head.

The thought of leaving her wrung him past endurance. "I can't go," he muttered. "It isn't as if she didn't care for me at all; she must care a little."

"But does she care enough to forgive you?" asked the voice, and his only answer was a stifled groan.

And meanwhile the people thronged past him, out of church, unheeded. When at last he looked up, he found it had grown dusk, and that but for one or two others he was alone.

Then came that moment of all others in a man's life—the moment when he first desires to pray.

For the first time in his life, Guy Fawcett went down on his knees and buried his face in his hands in silent, wordless prayer.

And as he knelt thus, such a sense of his own littleness and unworthiness swept over him, that he hardly dared to breathe, but the cry of the publican was in his heart, "Oh, God! be merciful to me a sinner!"

And who shall say that wordless

prayer did not find its way straight to God's Mercy-seat, for are not the secrets of every heart known to the Great Creator?

How long he remained thus, with the stillness all about him he never knew, but he was aroused at last by the gentle touch of a hand on his shoulder and a voice saying, "My son, I have a message for you."

He looked up and his eyes met the tender, sympathetic gaze of an aged man, who said softly, "The Master said, 'Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'" Then he passed on his way, and Guy, after bowing his head once more for a few minutes, rose and left the church with a heart that was strong to do and dare.

But there was one thing for which he lacked courage, and that was to say farewell to Madge.

He simply dare not trust himself and decided not to run the risk of it; fearing to undermine his determination and undo all that it had cost him so much to bring his mind to. Accordingly he wrote to her instead, and gave the note to a trusty messenger, to deliver in a few hours. Then he wrote one or two business letters, and afterwards went to the station and took the first train to Marseilles with intent to sail in the next vessel leaving for a foreign country.

He had just sufficient money to get all he required and pay his passage; afterwards he must do the best he could.

Thus it happened that rather later than Guy's usual hour of returning, while Madge was sitting lost in thought over her afternoon's conversation, she received the following note—

"DEAR MADGE,

"I have to leave Monte Carlo hurriedly on important business and have not time to come up and see you. I will write in a day or two. Don't be anxious. Yours,

"GUY FAWCETT."

"Has the messenger gone?" she asked looking up quickly.

"Yes," was the reply, "he said there was no answer."

"Very well, I will have dinner at once; Mr. Fawcett will not be returning to-night," and a few minutes later, without showing the slightest perturbation, she sat down to her solitary meal.

When it was ended she went to bed, as her head ached badly after her rather trying afternoon, and it must be confessed her thoughts were far more occupied with what had passed then, than with her husband's unexpected absence. The latter did not surprise her very much, for he had been a little erratic in his movements once or twice, and she supposed he would be back in a few days.

(To be continued.)

A TOWN WITHOUT A WOMAN.

By Rev. W. DURBAN, B.A.



THE only town in the world without a woman is the curious little capital of Athos, that beautiful peninsula of white marble which runs out into the sea for a distance of forty miles on the coast of Macedonia.

This lovely promontory has two companion peninsulas which form the three picturesque feet of Calcedice, that section of Macedonia so famous in classic ages. It was across the base of the Athonite peninsula that Xerxes cut his canal.

There is not in all Europe a more wonderful spot than Athos. This "Mountain of the Monks" has for centuries been the Holy Land of the great Greek Church. Only a few English travellers have from time to time visited the peninsula, which must be reached by sea either from Contessa or Salonica. Not a woman ever sees any part of this locality except as it can be viewed from the ocean in passing along the Ægean; for the presence of the weaker sex is absolutely prohibited in Athos. The rocky range of hills forming the grand promontory runs right along the forty miles from the low ridge connecting Athos with the mainland of Calcedice, and the height increases steadily all the way until Mount Athos properly so-called soars up in a magnificent cone and reaches an altitude of very nearly seven thousand feet. At the base the width of the promontory is only half a mile, and here are still plainly visible the traces of the famous old canal. But the peninsula widens out until in some places it is quite four miles across.

No less than twenty splendid monasteries are perched and scattered in the recesses of this sublime headland or on the craggy and

sometimes apparently inaccessible cliffs of the coast. And here dwell under the conditions of separation from a far-off world the devotees of an extraordinary system of asceticism, quietism, and superstition which is in itself one of the most interesting studies in the development of the monastic life of the East.

On this shore, and on the rocky sides of these hills no woman has for ages been allowed to set foot. The metropolis of the district is the little town called Caryes. Here are all the essential features of civilised life. The streets contain bustling little shops, and there is a bazaar thronged with eager customers. Muleteers drive in and out the town, coppersmiths ply their tools, fruiterers pile up their

wares, boatmen lounge about, the monks from various monasteries pass to and fro on messages concerning the Holy Synod. But, as travellers visiting Athos never fail to remark, there is one charm entirely lacking. No form or face is seen of mother, wife, sister, daughter, lover or infant. Many a lively boy may be seen helping the merchants of the wealthy monks, or driving the goats and mules; but the merry laughter of maidens and the musical songs of Greek or Turkish ladies can never be heard in the streets of Caryes or anywhere in all the Athonite peninsula.

Here in Caryes is a little Turkish garrison, with officers, soldiers, and secular functionaries. But not one of these Ottomans can locate his harem anywhere in this celibate land. All must live a bachelor life.

There are in the twenty romantic convents of the "Mountain of the Monks" about six thousand devotees. Some of these establishments are exceedingly wealthy, having great estates in Roumania, Servia, Bulgaria, and Russia. The largest monasteries have hundreds of servants. Many of the convents are seats of skilled industry, and some of the monks are splendid musicians, others are excellent artists, and hundreds of the hermits are profound students.

It is extraordinary that the exclusion of the female sex should be so rigorously enforced in connection with a system which at the same time inculcates the most profound reverence for the Virgin Mary. Strange to say, it is by the Virgin herself that the perpetual banishment of her own sex from Athos is believed by the superstitious monks to have been decreed. In the beautiful monastery of Vatopedi, one of the richest of the Athonite establishments, is one of those "miraculous icons" so precious in the eyes of priests and worshippers of the Russo-Greek Church. The story implicitly credited is that this picture of the Virgin one day called to the Empress Pulcheria as she was going to her devotions in the great church, saying, "What do you, a woman, here? Depart from this church, for women's feet shall no more tread this floor!"

Now, it was this pious Empress Pulcheria who had so richly beautified the church which she loved so well in the monastery at Vatopedi. And yet she was constrained to obey this hard injunction. Never more did she

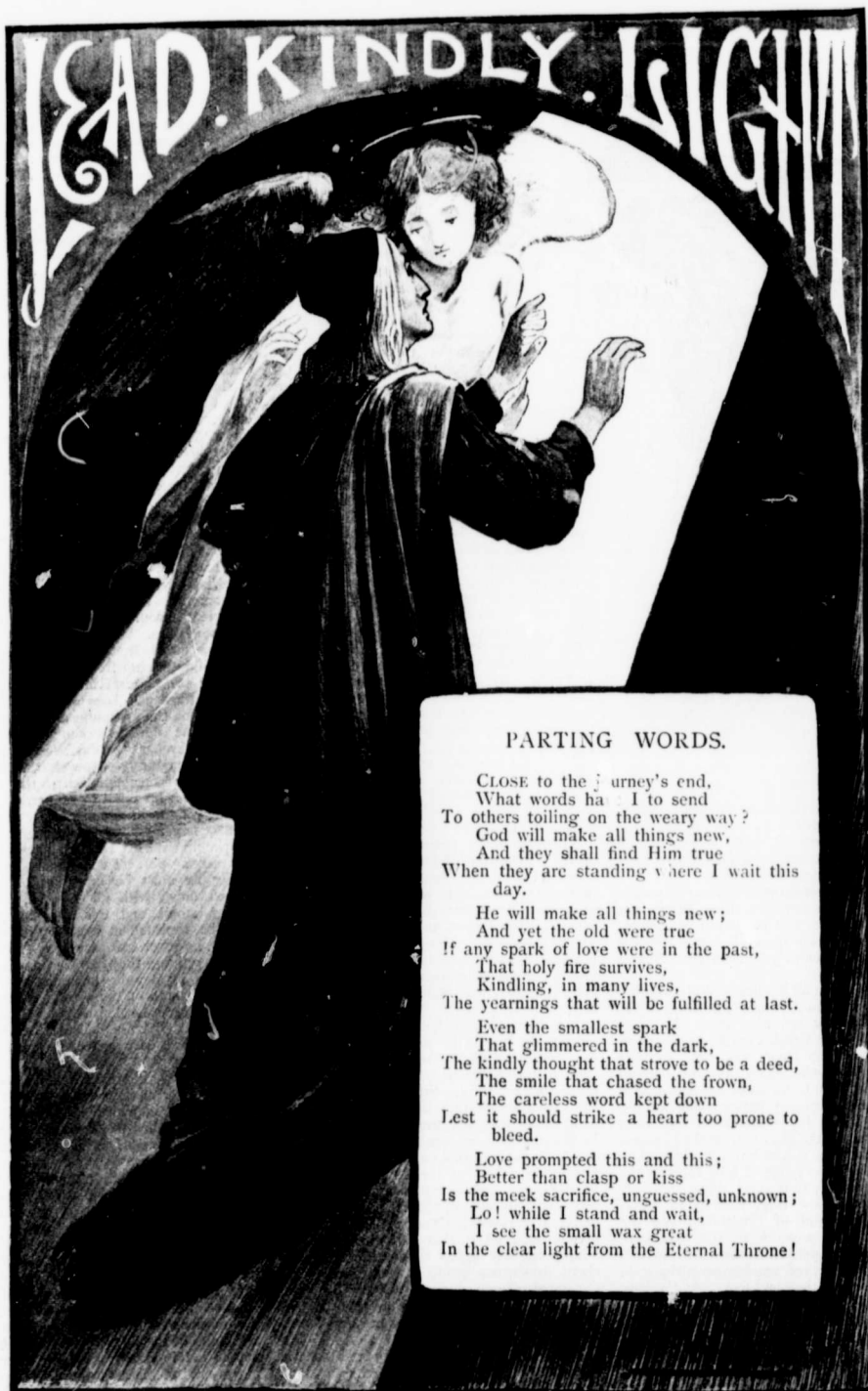
pray on that sacred floor, and never again did she see those lovely columns with which her munificence had adorned the church. And from that hour no woman or female animal has been permitted to set foot on the shores of the Holy Mountain. If the rigid rule against sex could be so applied, not a bird otherwise than of the masculine gender would be allowed to alight on twig or rock of the fair promontory which is so glorious a mountain-garden in the Eastern sea, that birds, angels, and women might seem to be its most fitting tenants.

Visitors, so long as they are of the male sex, are treated at all the Athonite monasteries with the most generous hospitality. But if a fowl appears on the table of the *hegoumenos*, or abbot of one of these great monasteries when entertaining his guests, it is sure to be a rooster, for a hen must not enter this sacred land, either alive or dead.

The fact is that throughout the Greek Church the position allotted to woman is one of great inferiority. When looking at pictures and relics in various cathedrals in Russia I have noticed that ladies were not allowed to approach the altar and to ascend the steps of the Iconostasis and to examine the sacred relics. They must remain outside the *bema*, but sometimes the gentlemen of the party might as a great favour take some relic to show to the poor ladies.

These monks from the Holy Mountain will astonish any visitor from the West by many a singular custom, especially in relation to diet. In the shops and bazaars of Caryes may be seen one of the commonest articles of diet at Athos, the devil-fish, hanging up for sale. But the traveller who has been accustomed to such a commodity as stewed octopus, finds it difficult to reconcile himself to the prospect of devil-fish for breakfast or supper. This tough reptile, caught in abundance on the coast of Athos, requires severe handling to deal with his peculiar qualities before putting him into the cooking-pot. To make him in any wise tender he must be lifted up on high and dashed down with all possible force on a paving stone, and this flagellating process must be repeated at least forty times. The monks, however, are perversely fond of cooking everything they eat in rancid oil, and therefore it may be imagined what is the nature of some of the viands put before the guest. Large black snails are particularly esteemed. Glyko, a delicate Turkish sweetmeat, served with coffee, is much more acceptable.

Beautiful Athos! Lifting up its glorious summit into the boundless azure above the sapphire sea in which it bathes its granite feet, it is often visible from the Asiatic coast eighty miles distant. Many a tourist, steaming along the Ægean, looks with wondering eyes at the far-off crest, and little thinks of the world of marvels hidden in that rocky fastness, shut out as it is from the turmoil and ambition of the modern world. Pilgrims from many regions come and go, but for many a year Athos will be spared the fate which has overtaken many another lovely and secluded spot. The promontory hallowed for more than a thousand years to the hearts of the millions who worship according to the teachings of the Orthodox Eastern Church is not as yet in danger of being overrun as a playground of miscellaneous holiday-seekers; but the few who can diverge from the beaten tracks of travel will be richly repaid by a visit to this enchanting realm.



PARTING WORDS.

CLOSE to the journey's end,
 What words have I to send
 To others toiling on the weary way?
 God will make all things new,
 And they shall find Him true
 When they are standing where I wait this
 day.

He will make all things new;
 And yet the old were true
 If any spark of love were in the past,
 That holy fire survives,
 Kindling, in many lives,
 The yearnings that will be fulfilled at last.

Even the smallest spark
 That glimmered in the dark,
 The kindly thought that strove to be a deed,
 The smile that chased the frown,
 The careless word kept down
 Lest it should strike a heart too prone to
 bleed.

Love prompted this and this;
 Better than clasp or kiss
 Is the meek sacrifice, unguessed, unknown;
 Lo! while I stand and wait,
 I see the small wax great
 In the clear light from the Eternal Throne!

DICK HARTWELL'S FORTUNE.

By SARAH DOUDNEY.

CHAPTER I.

ONE Saturday evening in summer Dick Hartwell sauntered down to the quay when the tide was high, and a faint breeze was blowing seaward. A big schooner, painted white, had finished unloading her cargo of red pine from the forests of Norway and Sweden, and was to set sail that very evening for Copenhagen. The quay was quiet just then; a calm light enfolded the low green hills and even glorified the shabby buildings on the edge of the water. Dick enjoyed the briny coolness here and liked the stillness.

A young woman was sitting on a piece of timber, holding the hand of a restless little boy of four or five. Dick noted, with the natural interest that he felt in all young women, a certain air of distinction about her face and figure. She was very plainly dressed, and her simple gown looked as if it had been made at home. Her eyes were dark; the hair coiled up under her hat was nearly black; he thought she did not seem quite English. Glancing at her again, he came to the conclusion that she had been crying.

At that moment she put her hand into her pocket and drew out a handkerchief. The movement left the boy free. He gave a gurgle of fun, snatched up a little satchel which had been lying in her lap, and made off with it to the edge of the quay.

"Come here, John," she called distractedly; but the child only laughed and ran faster. She rose to follow, and Dick, seeing that there was real danger, sprang forward and overtook the boy before he reached the brink. He seized the young rascal by the shoulder, and then there was a vigorous tussle. John evidently resented the interference of a stranger. He kicked out like a Shetland pony and roared with the full force of healthy lungs, but this was not all. In a frenzy of rage he flung the satchel away as far as he could, and it dropped with a small splash into the sea.

The young woman gave a cry which went to the very depths of Dick's heart.

"I'd better have let him alone," he said ruefully.

"I think you had," sighed the girl. "Ever since his father died he has been like this! Do you know what you have done, John?" she added. "All aunty's money was in that bag. She was taking it home to poor mother."

The boy had left off screaming. He looked up at her with a pair of wide blue eyes, and his round face lengthened visibly.

"Didn't mean to do it," he quavered with trembling lips. "Bad man made me."

"Why, if it hadn't been for me you'd have gone over along with the bag!" said Dick with very natural indignation. "It's to be hoped you'll take a turn for the better when you grow up. There's a great deal in store for those you belong to, I'm afraid."

"Please don't say that," entreated the girl, with a faint touch of resentment in her manner. "We have had trouble enough. Besides, a naughty child often makes a good man, and John was only four last birthday."

"Only four last birthday," said John in eager corroboration. "Very sorry, aunty. Is all the money gone?"

"All gone," she answered, trying to hide her tears. "I don't know what I shall say to your poor mother, John. It seems too bad to be true."

"How much was it?" Dick suddenly asked.

"Five sovereigns and about ten shillings in silver." The girl seemed to answer involuntarily. "We have been to see my brother; he is gone to the East to join an uncle of ours, and he gave me all that he could spare—just five pounds. My sister has been very ill, and she owes a little money. It will be paid by-and-by when I have had time to save, but I don't like to keep people waiting."

"Have you any work to do?" inquired Dick.

"Yes; I teach English in Copenhagen. My sister's husband was clerk in a merchant's office there, and after his death we stayed on. She has two children, this boy, and a little girl. It was her illness which made us get into debt; for two months she could not do anything, and when she recovered, my health began to fail."

Dick was looking at her attentively. She had an oval face, and a brown-tinted skin which seemed to soften the dark eyes and marked brows. Not a common face, he thought, and strangely sweet.

"We shall set sail presently," she went on. "The doctor said a voyage would be good for John and me, and Peter Jensen, the skipper, gave us a free passage. His wife came with us; she is our landlady's cousin, and she has been to this town before. While the schooner was unloading we stayed with my brother in his lodgings. Last night he went away."

Her voice faltered a little. She had been standing while she talked; then she seemed suddenly to feel that she had said enough, and she went back to her seat, holding the child's hand fast in her own. John made no attempt to get free; he was quiet and quite subdued.

Dick stood still and reflected. He knew perfectly well what he wanted to do, but he did not know how to do it. Perhaps she would take offence. Yet he believed that it was the right thing, and he must run the risk of a snubbing. He looked across the quay at the slim creature, sitting patiently on the timber, with the little scamp leaning his arms upon her lap. The boy's features were not like hers, but now that he was grave he had caught something of her expression. And he was a bonnie lad, a bairn that any man might have been proud to own.

Still hesitating, he glanced around at the craft lying at anchor, the ugly buildings on the shore, and the wide space of water rippling quietly under the calm sky. Suddenly a face looked over the side of the big schooner—a broad, honest face, with yellow hair and beard. It was the Danish skipper. Dick recognised him by instinct, and made up his mind at once.

"Here goes," he muttered to himself.

"Fine evening," he said aloud. "The lady says you will soon set sail."

"Yes, yes," answered the skipper, easy and frank. "It is good weather, and we shall have a fine passage home. I am glad for Miss Bendon and the little boy."

He spoke English well. It seemed as if he accepted Dick as one of the lady's friends.

So the way was made plain. Dick told what had just happened in a few straight words. The skipper listened attentively, and shook his head over the tale.

"The boy wants his father," he said. "Miss Bendon is too kind and tender. And now I wonder what is to be done?" She told her brother would be sure to help her; but that wild youngster has thrown the help away! Five good British sovereigns gone to the fishes!"

"Look here, Captain Jensen," Dick began. "I've a five-pound note in my pocket at this moment, and I'll hand it over to you for her. Don't let her have it till you're well out at sea. Tell her she can pay me back when she likes. I'll write my name and address on a leaf of my pocket-book."

The skipper pushed back his cap and rubbed his head thoughtfully.

"She is proud," he said. "My wife knows her very well. But she has had a hard life of late, and I don't see why she should refuse a kindness. Yes, I will take the money for her, and do all that you say."

Dick wrote on the leaf of his note-book, and handed it with the money to the skipper. Then he nodded good-bye to the Dane and crossed over to the girl, who sat listlessly waiting for the summons to go on board.

"Time's nearly up," he said cheerfully. "She's a fine craft; I'd like a voyage to the Baltic in her myself. But I'm clerk at a ship-builder's here, and don't get many holidays. Does this little man mean to be a sailor?"

"Yes," replied the little man promptly; "as soon as ever I'm big enough. Grandfather comed from the sea."

"Our father was captain of an English merchantman," his aunt explained. "We all love the sea; it gives us back health and strength."

"Perhaps you will sail again with Captain Jensen," Dick suggested.

She shook her head.

"No, I must work hard when I get back. And he will not come here again for a year."

"Well, I hope you'll have a pleasant voyage and good luck at the end of it," said Dick. "I wish I could think of something better to say," he added abruptly.

"There is nothing better to be said," she answered, lifting her dark eyes to his; and until that moment he had never known how very sweet dark eyes could be. "No one can want more than a pleasant voyage and good luck at the end. It is what we all ask for, isn't it?"

He smiled.

"An old gipsy told me years ago that my good fortune would come from the sea," he said. "But I don't believe in fortune-telling. There's the skipper calling you, madam."

He watched her on board, and then waited till the schooner had got under way. The breeze freshened, and she was soon scudding along, a gip-lant craft sailing into the sunset like a ship in a dream. She had left the quay a good way astern when Dick woke from a reverie and remembered the life that he had to live ashore, and certain claims that it made upon him. He put his hands in his pockets and whistled softly as he walked away. An anxious look clouded his face as he went quickly up the street.

The five-pound note belonged, strictly speaking, to the piano fund. And the piano fund only concerned two persons—Minnie Brace and himself.

About six months ago he had proposed to Minnie, and she had accepted him. The piano fund had been started soon after the engagement. Minnie was musical, and had told Dick that he must begin to save up for a first-rate instrument. She must have something better to play upon, she said, than the poor little tin-kettle at home. He was ready to gratify any wish of hers, and would have done his best to get her a church organ if she had asked for it. For he was honestly in love.

(To be continued.)

SOCIAL EVENTS IN A GIRL'S LIFE.

By LA PETITE.

PART VI.

LITERARY DINNERS.



OF course, I have been to a good many by now, for they are much more common than they used to be; but I looked on my first invitation with mingled awe and delight, and felt it was a step up the ladder of fame.

None but "women" writers were invited, which seemed to be another feather in my cap, for it betokened that I was recognised as one, and gave me a pleasant sense of importance. The dinner

took place at one of the large public rooms set aside for the purpose, and as we ascended the public staircase we heard a girl whisper to her companion in an awe-struck tone, "Those are women-writers!"

My head was held quite an inch higher after this, though there may be a doubt as to whether the remark were complimentary or the reverse.

A good deal of this awe has melted away by now, for everybody writes in these days, though they forget that every idea that comes into their heads may not be worth writing down.

The waiter stationed at the head of the stairs evidently thought that it would not be polite to call us "women," the grand old title that one hears too seldom nowadays, so he kept repeating, "This way for the lady-writers' dinner!" which made us laugh and everyone else stare, till we felt more like a travelling circus than ever.

First we were shown to a room where we laid aside our wraps and then to a reception-room, where we were received by the chair-woman and committee, who welcomed us and pointed to a table where lay various sprays of flowers. These were made up ready to attach to our dresses, and we were each expected to take one, a delicate, womanly touch, which at once robbed the assembly of its official and formal character.

Creeping into a corner I sat and watched the company assemble, and thrilled with pleasure as I saw the faces of many who had made me laugh or cry.

We each had given us a plan of the tables, so that we knew exactly where we were to sit and the names of all present, but I greatly wished the guests wore labels, so that one might know exactly who each lady was.

At length we were all assembled and a general move was made to the dining-room next door, the chair-woman and committee leading the way, but otherwise no precedence being observed.

The table, in the shape of a horse-shoe, looked charming, and, as name-cards were put on each plate, we had no difficulty in finding our places, and soon settled down.

It soon struck me as incongruous that we were waited on by men. It was hardly consistent considering we rigidly excluded them from the table, but this was almost the only mistake (if mistake it could be called), and was simply a matter of opinion. Besides, in a public institution, you must avail yourself of the services provided, and cannot alter it to suit your own tastes and fancies.

The menus had been designed by one of the guests, and bore on the front a Greek girl

reclining gracefully on a couch, with a book and a lamp before her, holding out a champagne glass to be filled. It was charmingly pretty; but, as one of those present observed, it was hardly a fair representation of the life of a woman-writer, for though indeed she may "burn the midnight oil," she has but little leisure to lie on sofas, and none at all to drink champagne!

As I looked round I realised more than ever what a mistake it was to suppose that cleverness must needs be allied to dowdiness of dress, or that busy women had no time to take a proper interest in their clothes. Each one of us was dressed as befitted the occasion with a due regard to fashion, though not a slavish surrender to it, and we all seemed to have laid to heart Shakespeare's injunction—

"Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not expressed in fancy; rich, not gaudy;

For the apparel oft proclaims the man,"
and woman!

The dinner passed off like most dinners, and it was only towards its close that it differed at all from others. When the dessert was reached the waiters were banished, and we felt that the real business of the evening was about to commence. Lighted candles were placed at intervals down the table, coffee was served and cigarette-boxes produced.

Not many of us smoked though, but I took a cigarette as a souvenir, and was assured, on masculine authority next day, that it was a very bad one.

Then the chair-woman rose and gave the toast of the first woman in the land, "The Queen," and, after that, we listened to several speeches upholding the importance of our profession and pointing out that, as our prospects improved and our influence increased so also should our sense of responsibility, and that we should aim high, so that others might be the better for what we wrote.

I noticed with amusement that the waiters peeped cautiously from behind the screens during the speech-making, as it was then rather a novelty to hear a woman speak; but they were visibly impressed by the good sense and capability of what they heard, and the spirit of scornful curiosity with which they entered soon changed to one of attentive approval.

This ended the formal part of the proceedings.

We listened to a charming song or two from a pretty girl, and then, acting on the suggestion of the chair-woman, moved freely about, chatting with those we knew, and being introduced to those we did not know, so that what with the "feast of reason and the flow of soul," the evening was gone before we realised it.

The husbands, fathers and brothers were waiting meekly in the ante-room to escort their respective belongings home, which I thought inconsistent, for if we were independent enough to come alone and eat alone, we might surely have gone home alone.

We parted with regret, promising to meet again next year. This we did, and from these dinners I trace many pleasant and helpful friendships.

As time went on too the small eccentricities, which our best friends might deplore as giving our enemies opportunities of scoffing, were softened down and we became less aggressive, so to speak. Of course people said unkind things, as they always do if they get the chance. For instance, our menus one year

had etched on them (by the same hand as before) the Greek girl again holding out a handful of food towards an exceptionally solemn-looking owl, Minerva's bird, as everyone knows, who looked rather disdainfully over her head. This was quoted as a sign that we tried in vain to lure wisdom to our side, but we paid no heed, and are now, I think, firmly established.

Last year, being our beloved Queen's Jubilee, our banquet was of course very specially brilliant and loyal. The committee wore white bows with pens, and their chairs were draped with broad red, white and blue sashes, and our name-cards had attached to them red, white and blue narrow baby-ribbon with a wee silver safety-pin run through it. This led to one of my secret ambitions being realised, for our chair-woman (a novelist whose books are widely read and highly thought of) suggested our each pinning our name-card to our dress so that everyone would be labelled. This was done amid much laughter, but I turned the blank side of mine outwards, feeling that no one would be burning to know my name, and if they were they would not be much enlightened when they saw it.

Our numbers had increased from the sixty who had assembled on the first occasion I spoke of, so that we had to have a larger room; but we no longer banished the waiters when we began speechifying, for we had got over our self-consciousness and took it all more as a matter of course.

Altogether it was the most successful gathering we had ever had, and was thoroughly enjoyable.

I felt very uplifted the first time I went as a guest to a mixed literary dinner, by which I mean a male literary club which has ladies' guest nights.

The dinner took place the evening of the day when we went to the Jubilee drawing-room, and those of you who have read that paper can imagine how tired we were; but all the same how we enjoyed it, and what a fitting conclusion it made to a memorable day. Of course it was more ceremonious than the others, and a regular *soirée* was held afterwards.

It was wonderfully interesting to note the faces of men whose books we had read and enjoyed, and, although obliged to admit that sometimes my ideal pictures of them were rather ruthlessly destroyed, still, on the whole, they were not so disappointing as one might expect.

It was pleasant too to notice that my sex held their own very creditably in the matter of speech-making, and were listened to with marked attention.

The hall in which we dined was very stately and handsome, and we all sat at separate tables, large or small, according to the size of our party.

The proceedings were agreeably diversified by songs, but for the rest there was so much to see and hear that any other amusement seemed superfluous.

Ladies and gentlemen left the table together, of course, when the time arrived for the *soirée* (which was held in an adjoining room), but many lingered as if loth to break up a happy party, and those in the balcony, as they looked down on the gay crowd, must have had an impression of a moving tableau, so bright and animated was the scene. But all must come to an end in time, and so did my last literary dinner, taking its place at length with the other social events of the past.

(To be continued.)

HOUSEKEEPING IN LONDON.

By "A GIRL PROFESSIONAL."

PART VI.
MONEY-CHANGING.

THERE are few enterprises of which their success or non-success is judged otherwise than by financial results; indeed, it seems as though finance were the foot-rule by which we measure everything, great or small, in these latter days.

Even in such a business as housekeeping when undertaken with a view to profit-making, the first judgment pronounced upon it would be one relative to its profitable or unprofitable returns. And yet, when these returns are the most discouraging, it does not follow of necessity that all is unsuccessful, or that failure must be written over the door. With many newly-established businesses profit is not expected to be shown for the first two or three years; if such pay their way while gaining a foothold they are thought to do well. Might we not claim the same leniency here?

The fact that at the end of the first three years there are no household debts behind us, that current expenses are met as they become due, and that we have a thoroughly well-furnished and well-repaired house which speaks in its own favour, and that our tenants are content and comfortable should surely stand for some measure of success as issue. My hope had been to have reported the complete repayment of the loan which started us and the opening of a household banking account, but this was not yet, and perfect truth demands perfect honesty. A fifth part of the loan was paid nevertheless, and more would certainly have followed had it not been for the constant drain kept up on one's resources by the monthly payments for furniture, etc., and the frequent deductions to be made for absences of one or another.

I omitted to say that when Mrs. Norris left we were under the immediate necessity of buying some more furniture in place of that we had had the use of while she was with us. Of these a dining-table was the chief, a side-board next chief, some more chairs and a few smaller articles as coal-scuttles, dish-covers, trays, etc., all much needed. As we were unable to lay down the amount required for these in ready money, we had recourse to a furnishing agency, and after giving satisfactory references secured their assistance. The sum required was about £23, and the interest was

five per cent.; this we repaid by monthly instalments, and though it was sometimes very difficult to raise the money by the necessary date, still we did complete all the payments in the twelve months, and greatly rejoiced when that burden rolled away.

The most trying hindrance to progress, however, was the frequent absences of one and another of our tenants for two or three weeks at a time on visits to friends and relatives. It was delightful for them doubtless to have these breaks in the monotony of their lives, and they came back cheery and full of talk, but to me each absence meant a dip into my own pocket to supply the deficit caused in the exchequer, lessened my chances of laying by, or even of using my money for myself, and effectually prevented all hope of making a margin of profit. Had they all been absent together the deficiency would have been less noticed, as we could have reduced our expenses accordingly, but this never happened, save once or twice in the holiday month; usually there were two left behind, and invariably one, necessitating the same observance of routine, and therefore but little reduction was possible. It became plain too that the house, though a fairly large one, was too small to admit of making more by than its actual expenses. Another floor would have made all the difference, as another mouth to feed would have made no perceptible increase in the amount of food and the payment for board or rent would have been actual gain.

It is generally understood in all such cases, that a number pays where a few prove costly, and experience only confirmed this axiom. Still it was not in our power to add to the number of rooms and to take in more guests, therefore a more careful looking round the corners became necessary, and a continual watchfulness against waste or imprudent spending. Saving could only be effected in small items, and must be done without giving rise to comment. If we could bring our expenses strictly down to the level of our actual receipts we thought ourselves fortunate, as, of course, in the said expenses were included the board and lodging of our own selves. This, we had not yet been able to do owing, as I have said before, to the frequent deductions that had to be made in the income, and to the heavy loss caused by the rooms remaining empty so long. On my own side alone accounts showed that I had actually paid for my board at the same ratio as the strangers; as during three years over £150 of my literary earnings had been swallowed up; until this drain was stopped it was impossible to feel any profit from the results of work. To set against this there is, however, an excellent home, an abundance of good food and home comforts; perhaps, as the trial term is scarcely yet expired, more than this ought not to be looked for.

I have been thus faithful to truth in order that the difficulties of such an enterprise—should any of my fellow girl-housekeepers care to take up the same—might not be glossed over; now lest it should be thought that we have lived at too expensive a rate, I must conclude by giving a few practical details of the actual "keep" of the house, more especially with regard to its table furnishing.

To secure variety and yet keep expenses within bounds is ever the problem; often it seemed that far too much is expended on the food, yet where to curtail it is impossible to say. Game and poultry are too costly for more than occasional use, pork is disapproved of, veal not much liked, therefore we are reduced to chief dependence on beef and

mutton, with rabbits by way of change when in season. I found the most economical things to be soups made entirely from vegetables, and they were always much liked. Of these we have a good choice—chestnut, tomato, potato, artichoke, haricot bean, peas, vegetable marrow, etc. Next to the soups, dishes of vegetables with appropriate sauces take rank in point of economy, and salads of different kinds. Jams are all home made, marmalade also; we have no wines or spirits, but in summer we drink fresh lemonade and in winter water.

The butcher's bill, the bugbear of every housekeeper, is mine no less; the only way I find it possible to reduce this is by going myself and choosing every joint, and when possible by paying cash for it. Its price is apt to grow when left on the books, and sometimes another customer's joint is added on to my account. The same with fish. Bread is delivered at the door in the morning, I can take exactly what I know will be needed, and have never yet been wrongly charged here. Butter is another difficult item, and where to get it most reasonably and of good quality (as only the best fresh is thought fit to eat) has necessitated many trials. On the whole I have found small pats bought at the dairy ready for the table to be as economical as any other; a cheaper kind served ourselves and for kitchen use. When possible I have endeavoured to buy in larger quantities bacon, butter, etc., from a city firm or the British Produce Company. At the latter place the gain has been in quality, prices being fully as high per pound as at local dealers. Potatoes and vegetables I have tried to obtain from a market gardener, but here again as with eggs, the cost of carriage outweighed the value of the goods. When possible to obtain fish from the Farringdon market it was both excellent in quality and very cheap. When a large number have to be catered for it pays to send for the advertised hampers both of fish and farm produce, but our small party precludes us from taking advantage of such.

Firewood by the hundred bundles we obtain from the workhouse; the order is a benefit to the labour department, and the supply is certainly a benefit to us, as the bundles are large and go further than most.

On the whole my experience goes to prove that housekeeping (professionally considered) is more difficult in London than in the country, and it is still more difficult for a small party than a large one. And yet I would not leave my readers with the impression that it is all difficulty, or that it has been all unprofitable. Looking around us I see the evidences of solid home and house building; looking forward to the future there is experience as a guide in preventing the recurrence of the same mistakes, and also as counselling for better terms when changes are made, and looking backward, there has been the training of character, the acquisition of a certain amount of skill in work, good friendships formed that may prove of great value later, and lastly I trust a fair reputation has been gained.

As the neighbourhood is one that is rapidly growing in popularity, and property is increasing in value, it is quite possible that we may receive an offer for the remainder of our lease that shall make it worth while to give it up. We are in a position to demand a substantial premium and thereby make of it a sound business transaction; in such a case a few years' trial of Housekeeping in London will have proved anything but a failure, even when judged by its financial results.

OUR BEAUTIFUL FURS, AND WHERE THEY COME FROM.

PART III.

Opossum.—The tree opossum is a native of the American continent, and is a large animal, its length from head to root of tail



COMMON OPOSSUM.

is twenty-two inches, and the tail fifteen inches.

The largest and most valued for its skin is the Virginian opossum (*Didelphis Virginiana*); it is not altogether a pleasing looking



MUSQUASH OR MUSK-RAT.

animal, about the size of a large cat. The colour of the animal varies a good bit from dirty board colour to a darker tinge; the ears are bare, so is the snout and end of tail which is white. It is also a pouched animal like the kangaroo. The young, directly they are born, are placed by the mother in the pouch, where they remain until old enough to run about for themselves. The teats are in the pouch of the mother. The fur is much valued for muffs, carriage wrappers and ladies' travelling hoods, etc.

Musquash.—I suppose all our readers have heard of the beautiful fur of the musquash, but, as far as I have seen, few know what the animal is like or how it lives, so a few words on this useful fur animal may be interesting.

The musquash is really a large water-rat amphibian, measuring about two feet, of which measurement the tail occupies about ten inches; its food mostly is of a vegetable nature, but will eat mussels and oysters when it can get at them; they are also dreadfully destructive in a garden, eating carrots, turnips, parsnips, maize and other vegetables. The animal lives in burrows, the entrance of which is mostly under water. The fur is much used for gentlemen's fur-lined coats. For trimmings of all kinds, and ladies' fur-lined circulars, the fur is much valued. The animal is also called musk-rat on account of the musky odour emanating from a gland in the body.

Grey Squirrel.—One of the largest of its kind, and I think the most valued of squirrel kind on account of its skin, comes from the south of Canada and Mexico; its length is about eighteen inches head and body. They vary in colour, some being much darker in colour than others. The destruction of these little animals is also very great, the demand being great, but fortunately they are pretty prolific. Ladies are very fond of the fur for their driving coats, and ordinary fur-lined coats, and for luxurious opera and travelling hoods.

Every one is familiar with the lively little English squirrel, which we have all watched in the woods. I myself have often watched them in the quiet spots of Richmond Park, feeding upon the nuts and acorns to be found in such quantities there, and when winter comes how they lay up a store for themselves.

The grey squirrel is one of the same species, description is unnecessary. They are all hibernating little animals, and lay up a store every winter, and hide their nuts and acorns away in all sorts of odd corners, and even when the snow comes down and covers the ground with a white mantle, his memory is



GREY SQUIRREL.

so good that he does not forget where he has hidden his store away, but scratches away the snow until he comes upon it. A pity some of us human beings can't take a lesson, and lay up a store for a rainy day. I think few then would suffer so much as they do in our hard winter months.

The last but not the least valued fur is the beautiful little silver fox. The much valued skin comes from the upper reaches of the



GREY FOX.

Mississippi. The general colour is rich brown on head and delicate yellow brown face, the body a beautiful silvery grey, legs brown yellow. Of course, this little fox has all the characteristics of its kind, which are too well known to describe.

Silver fox is much patronised for ladies' round boas and muffs. Before concluding this interesting subject, I may mention there are still some valuable furs we have not now space to deal with, viz., black and brown bear, otter beaver; this skin used to be largely

used if we recollect in gentlemen's hats. Black goat-is much used now for coachmen's capes and cuffs, and Persian lamb for ladies' fur ties. All these beautiful things made up are always on view at our large fur stores in the West End.
A. T. ELWES.



"MY ROOM": OUR RECENT ESSAY COMPETITION.*

(ONE GUINEA.)

DEAR MR. EDITOR,

What a ray of Sunshine "THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER" seems each Month to bring to me. How eagerly too, do I look forward to receiving it, shut away as I am in one Room, and having so few pleasures from the outside world, that perhaps I love the Paper more than many of your Readers.

I am, and have been for some years, an Invalid. Shut away at the very beginning of womanhood, and when life looked very sweet to me. It seemed so hard to have to lie still day after day, and suffer pain indescribable. Since, many times, how thankful I have been that my eyes were veiled from the future, and that I knew nothing of the long years which were to pass upon my bed. Truly God doeth all things well.

The Room in which I have spent so many years, is a very tiny Room, but yet made as bright and pretty as possible by a Mother's loving hands. Such a bare ugly room it was at first, and seemed impossible to make it look at all comfortable.

My Mother was unable to spend money upon it, but her clever fingers soon made an alteration. My bed is placed down one side of the room, which was necessary owing to want of space. Close to the head of the bed, is a recess, and a shelf covered with oil-cloth, and edged with fringe, was fixed to the wall, upon which I keep my books, and Photographs. Above this is a Text, which is very often so hard for God's Children when in trouble to say, from their hearts; "Thy Will be done." May God help us all to be able truly to say it, whenever He sees fit to give us the trouble which must come to each of us, sooner or later.

Underneath the shelf is a table, (really only a Grocer's empty box,) and although only rough unpainted deal, is not seen from the outer side of the bed, but when covered with a cloth looks quite smart, and is very useful to place my writing desk, and letter rack upon, and being close to the bed, are easily reached.

A little further on, and where my eyes can rest upon it, is a Text Roll. It is such a help to me, especially when unable to read my daily portion.

I can always find something suitable for each day. Sometimes I see written there, chiding words, at other times, words of warning, cheer, or comfort.

Sometimes, friends tell me I escape so much, and am shielded from so many temptations, in the solitude of my Room. They do not know, and only those can know, who like myself, are not able to be out and about in the thick of the fight. We have quite as

much to bear, and quite as many temptations to fight against, as those who are in the very front of the battle. They perhaps, are not the same kind of temptations, but yet, they are just as strong. Then, we are not so able to overcome them, and we cannot run away from them. We are so apt to make so much of any trouble, and to make mountains of mole-hills. Then there is the temptation to ill-temper, to irritability, especially when the pain is so severe, that a heavy foot-step seems too much to bear, and irritable words rise to the lips so quickly, and if allowed to be spoken cannot be recalled. How this must grieve the loving heart of Jesus, who is all love, and who when mocked, and insulted, when upon earth, was never heard to speak an unkind word. But those of us who know Jesus as our very own Personal Saviour, can go to Him at all times, and feel sure of His sympathy and forgiveness.

I think that verse in Deuteronomy 33-27, so suitable, especially for the weak ones, "The Eternal God is thy Refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms, and He shall thrust out the Enemy from before thee; and shall say, destroy them."

It is such a comfort to feel we can fly to Jesus, and know we are safe, for time, and for Eternity.

To go on with my description—The Text-roll partly overhangs the fire-place, and my bed too is in front of these, for the room being so small we cannot have a fire.

Above the fire-place is the mantel-piece, but which is so very narrow, and of no use at all, but my Mother placed a long piece of rather wide wood upon it, and covered it with some cheap mantel bordering, so that it is quite an ornament to the room, and will hold anything, almost, now.

Above the mantel piece, is a Group of "Bible Class Girls," with their Teacher, and at one time, mine also. Well do I remember her kind, loving Teaching, and ready sympathy and help. Occasionally, I have the pleasure of a visit from her, and sweet words of Counsel, and before she leaves, she talks to Jesus, and tells Him all about me, and asks for help in bearing the pain and weakness. I need not say, how she helps me.

There are two texts in white frames at the end of the room, which were given me one Birthday, by a girl friend. During the long wakeful nights, my eyes often rest upon them, and they whisper down into my heart, "Let not your heart be troubled." Again, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." They are such a help too, to my poor tired, weary, often heart-sick Mother. Truly she does need strength for the hard battle of weary days, and often nights too. But God is the Strength of her life, and is with her to help her in her

daily work. Jesus knows what it is to work, for was He not a Carpenter? There is nothing we have to do, or bear, but that He can enter into it and understand.

The other side of the room has another Text, bearing these words, "Seed time and harvest shall not cease." Appropriately entwined amongst the words, are poppies, corn, and corn-flowers. Last year, or year before, farmers said, "We shall have no harvest this year." That was afterwards proved utterly wrong. If the Corn had been very bad, all was not bad, and if the farmers had studied the subject in God's Word, they would have seen written the words that the Harvest should never cease. God's Word must be true, for He can never lie. On the same side of the room, is a Card bearing these words.

"Lo, I am with thee always,
Over valley plain and hill,
Through storm, or shade, and sunshine,
O doubting heart be still.
What matter earthly darkness, if I thy
Lord am near,
What matter earthly tempests, if thou
My Voice can'st hear?"

The other, and last end of my room, bears another text, which is just over my head. It is also a picture of the Good Shepherd, bearing in His Arms a little lamb, pressed so closely to His bosom, and looks so safe and happy, as if it loves to be there, and never wants to stray again. The good Shepherd has a crook in His free hand, and is looking down upon the little lamb, which no doubt has given Him a lot of pain and trouble, seeking for it. Does the little lamb not remind us of the trouble we often give, and how often we grieve the tender heart of Jesus? How often do we stray from His side, and yet He will seek us, until He finds us, and places our feet again in the Narrow path.

Close by the picture is the window, and I am more fortunate in that respect, than many of your readers in large Towns, who see nothing from their windows, perhaps for weeks and months, (when their work is there), but the roofs, and chimneys, of houses. My window is large, and though we have only a small yard, and a tiny flower border, yet there are gardens and trees to be seen, as far as the eye can reach.

I do thank God for this, and that He has placed me where the pure fresh air can blow upon me, and fill my room too. I often feel so grieved when I think of other Invalids, shut away in stuffy garrets, or damp dirty cellars, where no pure fresh air can possibly enter, and the very air they are breathing is poison. I was thinking of the Contrast today whilst reading a tiny poem, about two rooms, one richly furnished, and the owner

* These essays are printed exactly as written, without correction or alteration of any kind.—ED.

not happy in it, the other a poor, though clean room, and the owner filled with Peace.

A beautiful room with tinted walls,
A bust where the coloured sunlight falls,
A lace-hung bed with a satin fold—
A lovely room all blue and gold—
And weariness.
A quaint old room with rafters bare,
A low white bed, a rocking chair,
A book, a stalk where a flower had been,
An open door—and all within
Peace and content,

I must not forget to tell you of another occupant in the room, as well as myself. It is my sweet little canary. He sings beautifully, but we do not notice that so much as his dainty little tricks. He pretends to be angry sometimes, and pecks our fingers. He often comforts me when I feel more downcast than usual, and seems to say, "Cheer up," "Cheer up." He is very fond of my cat, who is often up here from early morning, until quite late at night, when my Mother calls him to go out. Sometimes, he will run up and down stairs. His little feet go, patter, patter. Sometimes he will not go at Mother's call, and she has to come and fetch him. Directly he hears her footstep, he takes hold of me very tight, and often when she pulls with all her might, she cannot get him away.

He often comes up here in the morning, and no one sees him, and if he cannot get in my room, he tries to reach the latch, and shakes the door until someone comes to open it. Then he is in my arms with a spring. I had him almost at the beginning of this long illness, when he was six weeks old. Some children gave me him, who lived about a minutes walk from our house. The kitten's mother used to come every night for him, and wait until he came, when they would run off together to bed, which was made up for them in a shed. Many people laugh about being fond of a cat, but this one has been with me in some of my extra bad attacks, and could not be kept from me. I could not bear the thought of parting from him, if he is, "only a Cat."

I think I have told about everything—except two chairs, and a table under the window, upon which stands a lovely berried plant, given by a school friend, on my Birthday, a few days ago. It seems to quite brighten up the room, and reminds me of the love which still remains in my friend's heart. I appreciate it more, knowing how very frail is human friendship, and how soon ended. But what matters. To the Child of God, One friend is ever near, and remaineth true, that is—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

I, like so many of your Readers, have no work to tell you of. At one time, I was able

to make little things to send out to Missionaries, and it was such a pleasure, but lately, my strength has so declined, that it seems as if, very soon Jesus will call me to that beautiful Home, where none can say "I am sick."

Perhaps, it is a work given me, to strive each day to bear with patience and submission, the pain and weakness God has in His infinite wisdom and love, seen fit to give me to bear. Each one's work is not the same. Some are striving to win their daily bread, and others are striving to win souls, and to give to them, "The Bread of Life."

God only can understand the longing we imprisoned ones often have, to be up and doing, and working for those, who in spite of age and increasing infirmities, are obliged to work for us. Well may we say—

"Help us Lord, to bear in patience, what Thy love sees good for me."

Let my fellow-sufferers bear in mind, that we are not alone in our hours of pain, and weariness. Jesus stoops from His Throne Above, (where His eye is ever upon us,) to soothe and quiet us, and tell us how He loves us, and that in a little while He will take us to dwell with Him in that beautiful Home. Until then, God be with you, and bless you all, is the Prayer of—

MARY R. LAW,
7, West Street,
Hertford.

December 14th, 1897.

Herts.

"MY ROOM."

(ONE GUINEA.)

My room!—the cosiest, warmest corner of a snug ivy-covered house. How can I describe it? A friend, on first entering it exclaimed "Why, your bedroom is a drawing room!" While a young married sister, proud of her own well-upholstered abode says of my room contemptuously "Quite a *girl's* room!" Well, I can understand both remarks. My room has softly tinted cream and blue walls, on which hang over 40 pictures, the most prized being two lovely opals of my Parents and a quaint old-world painting on ivory, of my Mother when only 5 years old; rows of stiff curls on her head, a white dress with no waist, blue satin shoes and one arm thrown round her favorite dog. Six brackets of various styles, a quaint folding mirror and two pretty bookcases, also hang on the walls. Two inviting easy chairs with down cushions, and an inlaid Davenport—a table covered with a many-hued Indian cloth, together with numberless vases and ornaments that stand on every available ledge. All these things make "My Room" a very pleasant and desirable "Withdrawing" room (as the word originally stood) while, on the other hand, the absence of design, the curious mixture of what is valuable and what is worthless, both in my pictures, books and ornaments, together with a spice of "comfortable untidiness," sufficiently explains the young matron's criticism "Quite a *girl's* room!" I only laughed at her, and rejoined "Well, you wouldn't like it to be 'quite a *boy's* room' would you?" But, to continue this "voyage autour de ma chambre"—of course I have a bed in it, covered at this season, with a cosy Duvet—and all my valances, chair-cushions, mantel border and carpet, have a prevailing hue of gold and brown, which harmonises well with the walls. The daintiest of carved and tiled wash stands—wardrobe, and dressing table with 8 delightful little drawers, complete the fittings. A pleasant, restful "Chamber of Peace" I often think, as I come in tired and draw my easy

chair into the window, and watch the sunset across the belt of trees beyond the garden, or, turning a little to the South, catch the blue outlines of the Welsh hills some 30 miles away. A Room that basks in almost perpetual sunshine, and I love the sunshine—though, as I now glance round and see my pretty, corner, medicine cupboard, I am reminded that sometimes the venetians are drawn down, the cupboard is open, and pain and darkness hold sway. Other sunshine, however, is admitted the sunshine of loving, tender deeds—a mother's soothing touch, a sister's kind thoughtfulness, and a friend's loving devotion, make pain a less dreaded visitor. Oh, how much I could tell you about "My room" in the past. Here, on my bed, once lay my snowy confirmation dress and cap, on that "Happy day that fixed my choice" for eternity. Here I retired with flushed face and beating heart, to read my first love-letter. Here, after a time of patient waiting, lay piles of dainty linen, provided by a loving mother for her eldest daughter's departure to a new home—and here were passed long hours of agony, when the happy dream had vanished—the idol fell from its niche, and a lonely, unattached life, stretched out before one in all its dreary unattractiveness—

"Ah well! I would not overstate that woe
"For I have had great blessings—little care—

"But since the falling of that heavy blow
"God's earth has never seemed to me so fair."

But the doctrine of Divine Compensation is a very real one. "The Lord is able to give thee much more" as a dear friend whispered to me. I have had many joys in "my room," indeed there is mostly sunshine here. Sometimes it rests on the half finished picture on my easel, and sometimes on the equivalent that reaches me after the Exhibition! Sometimes, as I sit reading, a tiny hand fumbles at my door and a little voice asks "May I tum

in" followed by the pathetic enquiry "Auntie, hab oo anything to amoose me wif?" And then dear little fingers rummage in my drawers for any desirable object. Sometimes the request is "A story, please Auntie," so we pull the easy-chairs close and the sunshine rests on us while I tell once more the old Bible stories so dear to every childish heart; I say sometimes "Hadn't we better go into the Dining room dears?" but the reply is—"Oh no, do let us stay here, we like your room far the best."

At intervals, my room is shared by the friend whose love (passing the love of women) has so amply filled the blank caused by man's unfaithfulness, and then indeed the sunshine is complete. "A friend, you know, should be a second self" and so she is to me. She too, infinitely prefers "my room" to the rest of the house, so it is the scene of our sacred talks and readings and musings.

Indeed everyone seems to like "my room"—the little ones creep in to prepare some wonderful present, which "Mother mustn't know about, but Auntie can help in." If dressmaking is on the tapis, the request is, "Will you fit me in your room, its so light and warm," or when dressing for a concert, "May I do my hair at yr glass?" or again "May I go and write my letter at your Davenport, its so quiet there"—and so you see I often have visitors, and they are all welcome—but most welcome of all is the Heavenly Guest, who, when the door is shut upon all outside worries and distractions, stands in the midst and says, "Peace be unto you!"

I hope He will send me the "Home Call" in my dearly loved room—for it looks "Towards the Sunset" and I know, (for I have His promise) that "At Eventide it shall be Light."

MARY FOWELL
2, Wellington Road
Oxton
Cheshire.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

GARDENING.—*What book can I get that deals with vegetable-growing? I have only a small garden and wish to grow common vegetables chiefly.*—OXIDE OF CALCIUM.

Flowers and Vegetables all the Year Round, published by Messrs. Sutton of Reading, is a book which you would find exceedingly useful. As the name betokens, it does not deal only with vegetables; but this fact would probably be no disadvantage, as you would doubtless like to have some flowers in your garden as well as vegetables. From your question, it is not plain whether you wish to grow vegetables for profit, or only for home consumption. If the former, "common" vegetables would be unremunerative, as prices are very low for all ordinary vegetables which can be grown with little skill or expense. Prime, spherical tomatoes, sea-kale, and early asparagus are the things that pay; but even these, of course, must be grown in large quantities and be furnished to some market where prices are good. If, however, you are growing for home consumption, it would be best to aim at variety. It would be worth while for you to turn your attention especially to saladings, such as endive, cos lettuce, radishes, mustard and cress, and to herbs such as sweet marjoram, thyme, tarragon, savory, chervil, and shallots.

INQUISITIVE writes—"Will you kindly reply in your *Answers to Correspondents* whether you can give information as to the origin of the expression 'Jessamy Bride'?"

The "Jessamy Bride" was Mary Horneck, one of the delightful family whose other members were styled "Captain" and "Little Comedy," and in which Oliver Goldsmith was a familiar guest. After his death the young lady received a lock of his hair, and it is supposed that he was in love with her. We cannot give the exact reason for the name bestowed upon Mary Horneck. Possibly some of our readers can make a suggestion. There is a story on this episode entitled "The Jessamy Bride," by Frankfort Moore, which might help **INQUISITIVE**.

IRIS says: "I have often read in books of the 'Gordian Knot'; may I ask you to explain what it is?"

The legend runs that the people of Phrygia were informed by an oracle that a waggon should bring them a king who would put an end to many internal disturbances in the country. While they were consulting on these points in the popular assembly, a poor peasant, Gordius, suddenly appeared, riding in his waggon, and was accordingly hailed as king by

his fellow-countrymen. Out of gratitude, Gordius dedicated his waggon to Zeus, and had it placed in the Acropolis. The pole was attached to the yoke by a knot of bark, so ingeniously tied that no one could unfasten it. The oracle declared that "Whoever undid the knot should reign over the whole East." Alexander, on arriving at Gordium, heard this saying. "Well then," said he, "it is thus I perform the task," and cut the knot asunder with his sword. To cut the Gordian knot is, therefore, to get out of a difficulty in a clever or summary manner. Shakespeare says, in *Henry V.*, of the king—

"Turn him to any cause of policy,
The Gordian knot of it he will unloose
Familiar as his garter."

OUR OPEN LETTER BOX.

Will any of our readers help **AN INQUIRER** to find a humorous piece for recitation entitled "Choosing Christmas Cards," also an American sketch which describes the telling to an inquisitive child the story of George Washington and his little hatchet? We heard the latter piece ourselves a day or two ago, but the reciter could only inform us that it was anonymous and in an American collection.

HASEL B—wishes to know the author of a poem entitled "Lady Maud's Oath."

CLARICE asks—"By whom and where is to be found the following quotation: 'The veil which hides the future is woven by the hand of Mercy.'"

LUCIE inquires the authorship and title of the poem in which occur the lines:

"Heaven is not gained at a single bound;
We build the ladder by which we
climb,"

and wishes for the tract or sermon by Canon Wilberforce on the text "The twelfth an amethyst." The subject was temperance.

VEE asks us to find her a serio-comic parody on "Old Mother Hubbard," which she thinks she has "read in some magazine."

Can anyone direct "A New Reader" to the humorous recitation, "How Bill Adams Won the Battle of Waterloo"?

STUDY AND STUDIO.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE.

THERE seems a little vagueness in the minds of our correspondents as to the method of procedure. We do not undertake to write, nor to send addresses, privately. We simply offer to publish requests for international

correspondence in this column. If A.B., for instance, being French, wishes to exchange letters with an English girl, she can do one of two things—either send us her request with name and address for insertion here, or write direct to some English girl, C.D., whose address appears under this heading. The only drawback to the latter plan is, that C.D. may already have found a correspondent, but we rely on the courtesy of our subscribers to, in such a case, write and explain. Matters will soon arrange themselves.

We hesitate to publish addresses when a pseudonym is given, but it would expedite affairs always to send name and address for insertion here.

MISS C. A. LAMPITT, 32, Tooting Bee Road, Upper Tooting, London, S.W., wishes for a French girl correspondent.

"**SPERO**" (Ireland) would like to correspond with a French or German girl, or both.

A. M. would be happy to exchange letters with a French lady.

MISS FLORENCE E. SMITH, Winfrith, The Crescent, Bedford, thinks "it would be delightful to have letters from, and write to, a French girl."

MISS JANE M. M. CUNNINGHAM, aged eighteen, exceedingly fond of music, French, literature, etc., would be very glad if Mademoiselle Jeanne Bossy of Avallon par Anvers would open a correspondence with her. Her address is, 6, Fettes Row, Edinburgh, Scotland.

MADMOISELLE PAULA DAHLHOFF, Engelstrasse 22, Münster, Westphalia, having seen our answer to **PHENIX** OF DEAD MOUNTAIN (November), would like to correspond with her. Miss Dahlhoff is a merchant's daughter, fifteen years old, still at school, acquainted with German, English, French, and Italian, and much interested in the study of literature and music. She writes an excellent letter, and, if **PHENIX** would like a girl correspondent, they might suit one another.

MISS G. E. BATCHELOR, The Rectory, Letcomb Bassett, Wantage, Berks., would like to correspond with a French girl.

LAURETTE H. (France) would be very glad to write to an English girl, and thinks that each correspondent should correct the other's mistakes. We commend to her notice one of the addresses given above.

MADMOISELLE YVONNE BRUNET, 22, Rue Joyeuse, Bourges, Cher, France, has long wished for an English correspondent, and impatiently awaits one.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MEDICAL.

IRISH MOLLY.—The medical part of your question resolves itself into—"Ought I to marry under the following conditions? I am twenty-two years old. Four years ago I had tubercular disease of the hip, but I am better now. My father died fourteen years ago. I have three brothers and sisters alive. My mother is still with us." If your hip is no longer diseased, and if you do not suffer from tuberculosis elsewhere, and if your father did not have tubercular disease, and your brothers and sisters are healthy, there is no reason why you should not marry. But if your family history points to tubercular tendency, or your hip is still affected, or you are ill in other ways, it is better for you to remain single, but this is a point which requires further investigation. The other part of your question depends entirely upon yourself. We cannot advise you whether to marry or not. You and your relatives must decide that.

"INSOMNIA."—Of all the symptoms that a medical man is called upon to relieve, none is more distressing, more complex in its causation, more difficult to treat or more likely to lead to serious results than sleeplessness. This condition may ruin the health, prostrate the energy, or even destroy the life of the most robust individual. You ask us for a remedy for this symptom. Read the above, and see what a task you have set us! In your case insomnia is probably due to taking a heavy supper before going to bed. Discontinue your supper and take a glass of hot milk instead, and see how you get on. Under no circumstances should you take any drugs to make you sleep; if you do, you will repent when it is too late.

M. E. H.—It is absolutely impossible for us to give you any advice on your most distressing complaint without a most complete personal inquiry into your symptoms and a thorough examination of nearly every organ in your body. Therefore consult your own medical man.

ANGELA.—Did it never strike you that "a swollen-up feeling in your throat, stuffiness in the nose and loss of taste" might be due to a local cause, and not to "something or other" in the blood? We feel certain that your nose is the organ at fault. You do not breathe through your nose, but through your mouth; therefore your mouth gets dry. The loss of taste and swollen feeling in your throat are secondary to some nasal condition, but it is difficult to say what that condition is without further details. Make a powder consisting of one tablespoonful each of borax, bicarbonate of soda, and chlorate of potash, and two teaspoonfuls of finely-powdered white sugar. Dissolve a teaspoonful of this powder in a tumblerful of tepid water, and use it as a wash for your nose and as a gargle for your throat. Do the best in your power to breathe through your nose and not through your mouth. "Does the taste ever go from any other cause excepting cold?" Most decidedly it does. Any disease of the nose may produce loss of taste.

STUDY AND STUDIO.

A WOULD-BE CHRISTIAN.—We feel very deep sympathy with you in your difficulties and trials. By all means persevere, and fight against the feelings of depression that are so natural in your circumstances. Your very troubles may, and doubtless will, be made the means of purifying and strengthening your character. We are glad that the "Talks in the Twilight" have proved so helpful to you. Without knowing a little more about you we could scarcely answer your question as to confirmation. Could you not consult your clergyman? Certainly you may write to us again, and if you like to put your troubles into definite words we will do our best to advise and comfort you.

G. H.—You should remember the advice which Matthew Arnold gave to a lady, never to pass a day without reading *something*. Even half an hour, well spent, will suffice to keep the flame of intellectual interest alive. From your excellent handwriting and clear way of expressing yourself we are sure that you would quickly improve. We should advise you to procure French and German reading books and go through them by the help of a dictionary. The text-books for the Oxford and Cambridge local examinations are the best, as they are usually published with notes, etc., and you could ascertain what these are for the current year by inquiry of J. N. Keynes, D.Sc., Syndicate Buildings, Cambridge; or, H. I. Gerrans, Esq., Clarendon Buildings, Oxford; at any shop where educational books are sold, or at a good school. We are glad you are fond of reading the ancient Greek legends, and should advise you to read Kingsley's *Hercules*, or Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales*, also Butcher and Lang's translation of Homer's *Odyssey*. Would you like to join the National Home Reading Union, Surrey House, Victoria Embankment? A book we have occasionally recommended here, *What Shall I Read*, by Lily Watson, would help you. We wish you all success.

GERTRUDE.—1. Charles Dickens had ten children, seven sons and three daughters. None, so far as we know, have attained literary distinction except the eldest daughter, Mary Angela Dickens. —2. The specimen of writing you enclose is very good indeed. You do not mention the little boy's age.

PANSY.—Send a note to the publishers of "The King's Daughter," enclosing a post card for reply, asking which book is the sequel to it, and you will probably get an answer by return of post.

A NEW READER.—1. We have written to B. M.'s publishers for her actual name, but have received no reply, which, from the terms of our letter, is equivalent to a statement that the name is not for publication. Even in Frances Ridley Havergal's *Life*, this authoress (her friend) is addressed and spoken of only as "B. M." The book *Eschiel and other Poems* by B. M. can still be procured, net price, 2s. 7d.—2. We have inquired for your recitation elsewhere.

GERTR.—1. Whether you could ever attain any degree of proficiency in playing the pianoforte after the age of twenty-one depends entirely on the amount of previous teaching and practice you have had. As you began at the age of nine and are anxious to resume the study, we should strongly advise you to take some lessons; you would soon see what progress you were likely to make, and whether it were worth while to go on working. Of course many people much older than yourself take pianoforte lessons, and profit by them, though we should consider twenty as a rule too late an age for any one who had never touched the piano, to begin.—2. Your writing is rather cramped, both letters and words being too close together; it is also too pointed. You would improve if you selected some good copies of "running-hand" and practised writing for a short time daily.

M. P. (Runcorn).—We never undertake to answer letters by post, so are afraid our reply will be of little use. Consult this column for amateur reading societies; *e.g.*, apply to the "Queen" Reading Club, Miss Isabella E. Kent, Lat. Rectory, Little Abington, Cambridge, or to Miss E. L. Langye, the Elms, Redruth, Cornwall. We frequently recommend The National Home Reading Union, Surrey House, Victoria Embankment, London.

RETSIE.—Capital! It is very pleasant and unusual for us to be able to give warm praise twice consecutively. Your story is fresh and touching, and well constructed. You need, as you say, to study your technique. There are occasional errors in composition, but these would be rectified by study. You should get Dr. Abbott's little book *How to Write Clearly*. By all means persevere.

MARIANNE (Franco).—Your story in its substance is far above the average of those we receive for criticism. It is very charming and graphically narrated. There are a few errors in expression which greater familiarity with the English language would prevent, *e.g.*, "in midst" instead of "in the midst," etc. But these are trivial blemishes, and we can honestly congratulate you on your work. We doubt whether there are many of our English readers who could write so good a French story.

CHARLOTTE DE STANCY.—You choose rather melancholy subjects for your verses. At the age of sixteen your thoughts should not be occupied with autumn and bereavement. "On the Death of my first Love" is irregular in metre, and incorrect in rhyme so far as the last verse is concerned. Your letter is modest, but we can never answer a question as quickly as you suggest, because we go to press long before you receive your magazine.

MISCELLANEOUS.

ADA.—Of course you will marry him, but he must use the name by which he was registered, not only because it is right but because legal difficulties might arise in the future as to his identity. For instance, if money were left him it would be difficult for him to claim it. Of course he can change his surname by advertising in the papers, which we understand would be sufficient proof of identity.

READER SINCE '82.—We are sorry to say that you are still legally bound.

A LOVER OF THE "G. O. P."—Gardening is capital work for the health. Different plants need different soil, but you should read Robinson's *English Flower Garden*, a most useful and delightful book. **PORRY SAELEN.**—The specimen of lace enclosed has no special value.

MAIDENHAIR.—Persian cats are more delicate than others and need care in the winter. A little meat, cut up very small, once a day would do them no harm. When washed, roll yours in an old shawl or piece of flannel, and let her get thoroughly dry by the fire. The long hair will need occasional cleaning, especially if you reside in London or any manufacturing locality.

IVY-LEAF.—1. We do not know of any home forecaxty the kind of invalid you describe. But you might get her into St. Luke's Hospital, Old Street, London, E.C., at from 14s. to 30s. a week. In any case, we recommend you to inquire there, stating the nature of the case. Should the invalid prove eligible you had better visit the hospital and see what sort of accommodation she would get for either of these payments. Otherwise, you might make a private arrangement to have her boarded and attended in some respectable house where you could visit her and see that she is properly fed and cared for.—2. You should state the quality and compass of your voice at one of the large Music Publishing Companies in London, and they will supply you with the studies for its training suitable for it. What would be desirable for a strong voice and large compass would overstrain and destroy a feeble one, and what would suit a soprano would be quite the reverse for a contralto.

RAEFFING.—Whatever may be considered to be of the nature of gambling is to be avoided. This is what was intimated by the writer of the story to which you refer.

EXCELSIOR.—The fanciful meanings attached to flowers and shrubs date back to very long before travelling in the high Alps became common, and their flora familiar. Thus it is not surprising that any flowers native to those, at one time inaccessible, altitudes should not have been included in the list supplied in the little books dealing with the "Language of Flowers." The giving of a language to flowers originated in the East, and La Mottraie (the companion of Charles XII.) introduced the pretty idea into Europe. Eastern women used to send a letter expressed by means of a bouquet, according to Lady Mary W. Montague. But it was almost formed as we have it by Aimé Martin; and English writers have much altered the original definitions, and enlarged the list.

SIPPY-SILLY.—At all libraries you will find a copy of Burke's Peerage. Back vols. may be found at second-hand book-shops and stalls. A note written direct to the Publishing Office, 50, Pall Mall, Messrs. Harrison, would obtain an answer as to the date of the first edition issued; and perhaps you could obtain an old copy there at a reasonable price.

HUMBER K. C.—A "60 gear," or even less, would be advisable. Should she learn to mount by standing on the off pedal before seating herself, she will then be able to have her saddle raised high enough to suit her when riding. The Dunlop road-racing tyres are very good; a little narrower than roadster tyres; and they are rather more apt to catch in tram-lines.

