

**CIHM
Microfiche
Series
(Monographs)**

**ICMH
Collection de
microfiches
(monographies)**



Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions / Institut canadien de microreproductions historiques

© 1999

Th
cop
ma
the
sig
che



This
Ce d

10

Technical and Bibliographic Notes / Notes techniques et bibliographiques

The Institute has attempted to obtain the best original copy available for filming. Features of this copy which may be bibliographically unique, which may alter any of the images in the reproduction, or which may significantly change the usual method of filming are checked below.

- Coloured covers / Couverture de couleur
- Covers damaged / Couverture endommagée
- Covers restored and/or laminated / Couverture restaurée et/ou pelliculée
- Cover title missing / Le titre de couverture manque
- Coloured maps / Cartes géographiques en couleur
- Coloured ink (i.e. other than blue or black) / Encre de couleur (i.e. autre que bleue ou noire)
- Coloured plates and/or illustrations / Planches et/ou illustrations en couleur
- Bound with other material / Relié avec d'autres documents
- Only edition available / Seule édition disponible
- Tight binding may cause shadows or distortion along interior margin / La reliure serrée peut causer de l'ombre ou de la distorsion le long de la marge intérieure.
- Blank leaves added during restorations may appear within the text. Whenever possible, these have been omitted from filming / Il se peut que certaines pages blanches ajoutées lors d'une restauration apparaissent dans le texte, mais, lorsque cela était possible, ces pages n'ont pas été filmées.
- Additional comments / Commentaires supplémentaires:

L'Institut a microfilmé le meilleur exemplaire qu'il lui a été possible de se procurer. Les détails de cet exemplaire qui sont peut-être uniques du point de vue bibliographique, qui peuvent modifier une image reproduite, ou qui peuvent exiger une modification dans la méthode normale de filmage sont indiqués ci-dessous.

- Coloured pages / Pages de couleur
- Pages damaged / Pages endommagées
- Pages restored and/or laminated / Pages restaurées et/ou pelliculées
- Pages discoloured, stained or foxed / Pages décolorées, tachetées ou piquées
- Pages detached / Pages détachées
- Showthrough / Transparence
- Quality of print varies / Qualité inégale de l'impression
- Includes supplementary material / Comprend du matériel supplémentaire
- Pages wholly or partially obscured by errata slips, tissues, etc., have been refilmed to ensure the best possible image / Les pages totalement ou partiellement obscurcies par un feuillet d'errata, une pelure, etc., ont été filmées à nouveau de façon à obtenir la meilleure image possible.
- Opposing pages with varying colouration or discolorations are filmed twice to ensure the best possible image / Les pages s'opposant ayant des colorations variables ou des décolorations sont filmées deux fois afin d'obtenir la meilleure image possible.

This item is filmed at the reduction ratio checked below /
Ce document est filmé au taux de réduction indiqué ci-dessous.

10x					14x					18x				22x			26x			30x		
							<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>															
					12x			16x			20x			24x			28x					32x

The copy filmed here has been reproduced thanks to the generosity of:

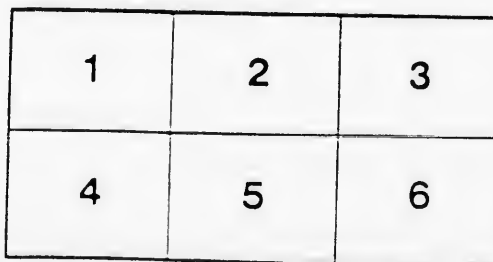
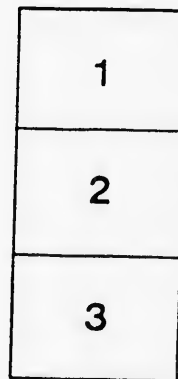
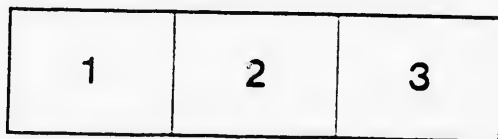
National Library of Canada

The images appearing here are the best quality possible considering the condition and legibility of the original copy and in keeping with the filming contract specifications.

Original copies in printed paper covers are filmed beginning with the front cover and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression, or the back cover when appropriate. All other original copies are filmed beginning on the first page with a printed or illustrated impression, and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression.

The last recorded frame on each microfiche shall contain the symbol \rightarrow (meaning "CONTINUED"), or the symbol ∇ (meaning "END"), whichever applies.

Maps, plates, charts, etc., may be filmed at different reduction ratios. Those too large to be entirely included in one exposure are filmed beginning in the upper left hand corner, left to right and top to bottom, as many frames as required. The following diagrams illustrate the method:



L'exemplaire filmé fut reproduit grâce à la générosité de:

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Les images suivantes ont été reproduites avec le plus grand soin, compte tenu de la condition et de la netteté de l'exemplaire filmé, et en conformité avec les conditions du contrat de filmage.

Les exemplaires originaux dont la couverture en papier est imprimée sont filmés en commençant par le premier plat et en terminant soit par la dernière page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration, soit par le second plat, selon le cas. Tous les autres exemplaires originaux sont filmés en commençant par la première page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration et en terminant par la dernière page qui comporte une telle empreinte.

Un des symboles suivants apparaîtra sur la dernière image de chaque microfiche, selon le cas: le symbole \rightarrow signifie "A SUIVRE", le symbole ∇ signifie "FIN".

Les cartes, planches, tableaux, etc., peuvent être filmés à des taux de réduction différents. Lorsque le document est trop grand pour être reproduit en un seul cliché, il est filmé à partir de l'angle supérieur gauche, de gauche à droite, et de haut en bas, en prenant le nombre d'images nécessaire. Les diagrammes suivants illustrent la méthode.

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



4.5

5.0

5.6

6.3

7.1

8.0

9.0

10



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

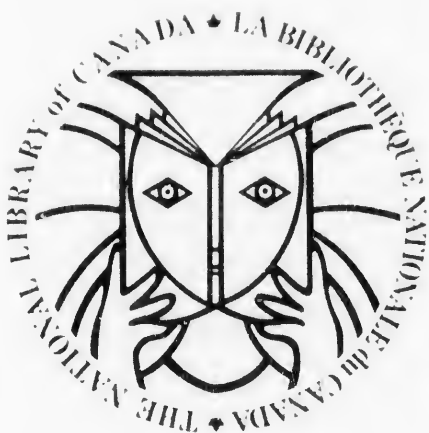


DAFF'S
CORNER



National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada



Canada

Presented
to

Bill Graham
10 Eden Place

By L. W. Sunday School



"Can't allow you to take them flowers away, miss."
"Oh, that is too bad!"—p. 2.

Froalispice.



DAFF'S CORNER;

OR,

THE MISSION OF THE DAFFODILS.

BY

A. M. L. FARROW.

With Illustrations.

TORONTO WILLARD TRACT DEPOSITORY,
TORONTO, CANADA.

PR 6011

A114

D34

1900Z

P***

NEW SERIES
OF
SUNDAY SCHOOL REWARDS.

In attractive covers, with Illustrations.

- CLAUDE'S VICTORY.** By EMILY BRODIE.
HUMP AND ALL. By C. LOCKHART GORDON.
THOSE TWO. By EMILY DIBDEN.
THE BOY MARTYR; or, Triumphs of Faith.
LITTLE TED; or, Who Found the Most.
CHRISTIE'S GIFT. By the Author of "Chick."
MANLY AND BRAVE; or, Holidays at Epton Park.
DAFF'S CORNER; or, The Mission of the Daffodils.
TWO LITTLE HELPERS. By H. BOULTWOOD.
LITTLE BRIGHT EYES. By A. PITTIS.
DODY AND JOSS. By Mrs. STANLEY LEATHES.
THE ADVENTURES OF A SIXPENCE. By H. BOULTWOOD.

1997



DAFF'S CORNER;

OR,

THE MISSION OF THE DAFFODILS.

CHAPTER I.

FLOWERS AND FACES.



T was not only the bright spring weather which attracted Ebba Morton and her youngest sister Agnes into the country lanes on the sunny March morning when our story begins.

True, the sky was as blue as the southern sea, not a cloud flecking the broad expanse of sapphire and turquoise, and the heat would have proved almost oppressive but for the vigorous east wind. It blew across the valley with just a spice of winter sharpness, to remind the flowers that the sunshine in which they were revelling could not

altogether be trusted, for the year was as yet in its youth. Overhead sang the larks in blithesome joy, and all around the young leaves' fresh green gave promise of coming summer. No wonder that on a sunshiny slope at the foot of the Downs the daffodils were 'dancing in the breeze.'

The field where they flourished, 'Daff's Corner' as it was called, was thus designated from its crowning glory in the sweet spring-tide. The name seemed to have been handed down from father to son among the village folk; and old David King, at the cottage hard by, would tell the chance inquirer, with some throbbings of ancestral pride, how he had often heard his grandfather say, "Daff's Corner have always brought luck to Daff's Cottage"—the special reason for such prosperity being the underlying fact, that a right of making a profit out of the field rested with the tenant of the gabled cottage, by permission of the lord of the manor, in recognition of some signal service rendered by a 'King' of former days. But now David had only the memory of the past on which to dwell; never more would the 'Cottage' own the 'Corner,' for the estate had passed into strange hands, and his thoughts were often embittered

as he remembered the old days of independence. Private sorrow too had helped to whiten his hair and weaken his once sturdy frame; still, in his way, old David could appreciate the beauty of the morning, as standing at his door supporting his rheumatic limbs on two stout sticks, his eyes roved over the hedge, along the soft undulations of the South Downs above, stretching away for miles and miles in loneliness, save for a few scattered sheep here and there, turned out to nibble the short, crisp grass at their own will.

The welcome sight of a neighbour coming up the road proved, however, an irresistible attraction to the old man, and hobbling to the little rustic gate, which opened away from the field on the opposite side of the house, he and his ancient crony Dan Milton were soon engrossed in discussing those rural matters dear to the countryman's heart.

In consequence of this, David did not see a pony-chaise approaching by the other road, which led to the village from the neighbouring town of Geerham. It contained the two girls above-mentioned, from whose lips burst delighted exclamations as they caught sight of the flower-bedecked meadow. Very soon their baskets were

filled to overflowing with golden clusters, and then they strolled into a small copse higher up, where the ground was cushioned with moss, out of which peeped tufts of early primroses. The boy in charge of the hired chaise meanwhile took advantage of their absence by snatching up all the flowers near at hand; but his occupation was suddenly interrupted as a burly policeman strode across the grass, calling out in stentorian voice that he was trespassing on private property. "And afore you go out of that gate, young man, just drop them flowers: folks ain't a-going to do as they likes s' long as I'm on duty, and Colonel Borley he gives me orders to look up trespassers."

Having ejected one crestfallen delinquent, he must needs expel any others lurking on forbidden ground. It gave him some extra and undesired exercise to parade the length of the field, with the hot sunshine scorching his red, round face, ere he met and accosted the two innocent offenders emerging from the copse.

"Now, young ladies, as you're a-trespassing, the sooner you goes the better, and I'll just see you off the premises."

"We really did not know," began Ebba, with flushing cheeks. "There is no board to be seen,

and the gate was unfastened, and I am sure no harm has been done by us."

"Pr'aps not, miss; but there *is* a board up there" (apparently in the main-entrance), "and people as won't walk out has to give me names and addresses, 'cording to the Colonel's orders."

"There is no need for that," responded the girl, as she walked with dignity, though with figuratively ruffled plumes, towards the gate. But she was not prepared for his parting shaft, which struck home.

"Can't allow you to take them flowers away, miss."

"Oh, that is too bad!" and "Ebba, it is a shame!" commented the two girls. Certainly it was aggravating, when they had driven from Geerham on purpose; but as there seemed no help for it, the baskets were emptied with impetuous jerks, and away drove the trio, leaving the policeman victor in the fray, and the gathered daffodils at his feet as trophies of the combat. A sudden gust of wind swept along the field, and the flowers still left to grace the greensward shook their heads with sorrow for their kin as they shivered in the breeze. Were they indeed of no use to any one now? Had they no mission

to fulfil? We shall see by the sequel that their brief lives glorified Him Whose bright livery they wore, Whom we so often dishonour and forget. The big policeman, all unmindful, stood leaning on the gate. "What were daffodils to him? Ever since he knew his right hand from his left they had come and gone with each succeeding spring; and for the life of him he couldn't tell why everybody should set store by such common things. Them young ladies—well, maybe he *was* rather hard on the silly maids. They'd oughter known better though; and he was particular put out that morning—ne'er a place to call his own when the missus had got her cleaning fit on. 'Twas enough to upset the patientest Job that ever lived, let alone Policeman Grunthorn!"

'Grumpy Grunthorn' (so ran the village title) had a heart; that was undeniable—but it was often hard to get at, being defended by a stout cuirass of official importance. Sometimes though a wandering sunbeam would find its way behind the defence, and then the citadel was won.

A childless man himself, no one suspected him of a yearning after the rosy-cheeked village children, who stood in wholesome dread of the blue-coated dignitary; but if he had a weakness

(as who has not?) it was for them, with all their provoking impertinence and pranks behind his broad back, which they vainly imagined shielded them from sight. Therefore we need not wonder at a smile breaking over his ruddy visage as he heard a little voice at his side—

“Mr. Grunthorn, I’m going away to-morrow, and Mrs. Grunthorn told me you were in the field, so I’ve come to say good-bye.”

“Well, Miss Nellie,” said our friend, “you’ll be hearty welcome back again, though by then maybe you’ll be a grown young lady, and you won’t care for Nuthurst folks.”

“Oh, Mr. Grunthorn,” gravely responded the small speaker, “I shall *never* forget anybody here, and I don’t know what I shall do without my dear old Guard,” laying her hand caressingly on the curly coat of the great dog standing by. “I do wish I might take him, but Aunt Judith says he wouldn’t be happy in London, and you know I might lose him. She says I am to come again soon, so I shan’t be grown up after all.”

Nellie Mayer had been on a visit of two months at Downside Farm, with her Uncle and Annt Benton; fever being prevalent in the London suburb where she and her widowed mother lived.

The child was warmly attached to her country friends, and she devoted this last day to sorrowful farewells, both to her acquaintances and favourite haunts, accompanied by the faithful Newfoundland. As she chattered to Grunthorn the flower-strewn grass attracted her attention.

"Why, who has dropped all those daffodils? Mayn't I have them, Mr. Grunthorn?"

"Well, my dear," rejoined the policeman, "they was dropped by folks as had no right to gather them, and it was my duty to see they didn't take them away; but here they be, and here they will be, for aught I know of, so you may pick them up if you like, missie."

It did not occur to the worthy man that here was another trespasser, incited moreover by the very guardian of the laws; but possibly he would have remarked "that there were trespassers and trespassers."

So Nellie ran off, carrying a big posy in each hand, and the next morning saw her and the daffodils on their way to London. While the train is conveying her to her expectant mother, let us look in on old David King, at Daff's Cottage. What a quaint old place it was! Perched in an angle of the 'Corner,' it seemed to nestle in a

bower of greenery; and the warm red of its roof tiles harmonized well with their growth of yellow stone-crop; old-fashioned creepers mantled the greyish walls, and the latticed windows, each with its tiny muslin blind, were as bright as Mrs. King's rubbing could make them. Peering in through the one casement on the ground-floor, old David might be seen, sitting by the fire in his arm-chair, for the warmth was always grateful to his aching bones, with the good wife near at hand preparing their frugal fare. They were a fine old couple even now; though David's tall form stooped under the weight of many long years, and age and sorrow had dimmed the brightness of Ruth's dark eyes and frosted her glossy hair. It was close upon fifty years since they had 'kept company' in the spring time of their youth; and now, hand-in-hand as it were, they were nearing the Heavenly Home, which (dear as was their earthly dwelling) David and Ruth could joyfully anticipate. Together they had forded the deep waters of affliction in company with One Who knew every step of the way, and He had led them safely through. The impress of grief was visible on each aged brow, but had you asked them the ancient question, "Is it well?" the cheerful response would have

been given both by husband and wife: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes."

"Wife," began the old man, "don't that little miss that's gone from the Farm bring our Pris afore you?—so hearty-like, a dancing up the fields after the flowers."

Ruth stopped peeling her potatoes and looked across the table at her husband with a sad smile.

"Why, father, you be always a-going back to them old days. Our girl wouldn't be a bit like that now; let's see, she be nigh upon thirty-six, if so be the good Lord have spared her all these years." And the mother sighed, as she thought of the lost daughter who had left her home-nest in the pride of her girlhood.

"There, there, mother, you be as bad as me," hastily rejoined Old David. "But we won't give o'er praying for our Pris: 'while there's life, there's hope,' Doctor Caley he says; and maybe, some o' these days, she'll find her way home. It mayn't be the home down here, but we shan't mind that, wife."

This was the sorrow which had darkened their life—the loss of Priscilla, their only child. She had been a lively, high-spirited, country lass,

foremost in fun and mischief among the village youngsters. But underlying this exuberance of animal life were deeply-rooted affections and a tenacious attachment to friends and home. Perhaps the father and mother were not over-wise in their treatment of this one darling; it is not an uncommon failing among parents. They hoped to keep her always with them, or at least near enough to be the stay and comfort of their old age; and we can scarcely wonder that an invitation for Pris to stay with David's widowed sister in London should have been a little unwelcome. The girl, somewhat fretted by parental restraints, was wild with excitement; she went and returned, but after that her thoughts were continually wandering away to the great city, so different in its surging life to the quiet, sleepy village of Nuthurst.

The visit was repeated, once and again, for how could David disappoint and grieve his one sister now that she was left alone to battle with the world, though not with poverty? But each time that he allowed his child to go, he solemnly gave her in charge to her aunt, as a treasure to be jealously guarded from harm; and Mrs. Miller was only too glad to have the bright, merry girl

with her, so that she willingly gave the required promise to her brother. She did her best, as far as she could, to keep Priscilla by her side.

Her lodgers (for Mrs. Miller let her front rooms) took a fancy to her young niece and liked to have her wait upon them, but here of course she was under her aunt's eye.

So far, so well—till one dull November day, when Pris had just passed her eighteenth birthday, Mrs. Miller was suddenly summoned to the bedside of a dying friend, and she was compelled to leave the girl at home.

The lodgers were out, and poor Pris had a rather miserable time alone; so when their next-door neighbour asked her in to tea, she was not loth to go, especially as Mrs. Grey's son and daughter were both at home. After tea, the young people coaxed and pressed and over-persuaded their visitor to accompany them to an entertainment; and with few compunctions Pris acceded to the repeated solicitations of her friends. "Your aunt won't mind a bit," Kitty Grey had said. "She knows you'd be safe with us, and mother don't mind me going either."

But Pris did not feel quite comfortable about going; did the striking of St. Martin's clock

remind her that in the old cottage at this time her parents would be reading their evening portion and praying for the absent daughter? If so, these unpalatable thoughts were easily and effectually silenced, and her uneasiness dispelled by the unaccustomed scene before her, the lights and dresses, the music and singing, and scarcely-veiled theatrical effects. Pris went home to bed in a whirl of bewildered excitement and strange new desires. Of course she went again and again, for the second step downhill follows so easily on the first.

Mrs. Miller, on her return, expostulated with her in a mild way, and at last proposed she should revisit Nuthurst; "she had been away nearly two months, and it was quite time for her to go back." The girl seemed out of sorts, alternately gay and gloomy, and her aunt could not altogether make her out. But the night before the homeward journey, when David and Ruth were longingly anticipating her coming, poor, silly, wilful Pris disappeared from Anstey Terrace, and from that day to this Nuthurst had never seen her face. Where had she gone?

Ah! this was not easy to say; but Joe Grey and his sister Kitty remembered that they had


often noticed a tall, soldier-like man, pass and re-pass the houses; and once they had met Priscilla returning home rather late (from the post, she said), looking flushed and eager. At the end of a fortnight came a note to Mrs. Miller signed by 'Arthur Churchill,' saying that Priscilla King was the writer's lawful wife, and as he wished her to assume the position to which her marriage had entitled her, he considered it to be best that she should not come in contact with her former acquaintances. Mrs. Miller's latent energy was roused; 'acquaintances' indeed! "when I'm her own father's own sister! and pray, what does he call them, I wonder?" But there, least said is soonest mended. I don't suppose David will ever forgive me, but I dare say it will all come right some time or other. Pris has plenty of sense (when she comes to her senses!), and perhaps after all it will turn out well for her—though I don't say but what she has been underhand and deceitful, and I have to bear all the blame!" Would it 'come right?'

What of the lengthened years of disappointment, sorrow, and suspense?



CHAPTER II.

LINKS.

S the two o'clock train from the South Coast teamed lazily into the busy London terminus, Nellie Mayer's eager little face peered out in search of the mother who, she well knew, was "sure to be in time." Yes! there she was, with a faint, excited flush on her pale cheeks; and in a moment Nellie was in her enfolding arms. The big porter close by smiled as he saw the warm embrace, and his eyes followed the flower-laden child as they crossed the crowded platform. How fair and fresh looked the golden daffodils in the smoky atmosphere!

By the time they reached the house, Mrs. Mayer had received all the messages Nellie could remember, and had heard of all her country delights. Children are always pleased with change, so Nellie did not unfavourably contrast

the sober-looking 'Young Ladies' Seminary,' which was her home, with Downside Farm, where just now the bright March sunshine was streaming in through the bow-windows, and the farmer had returned from market and was taking his seat at dinner. The same sunny gleams fell on Nellie's curly hair, while she flew up the steps into the hall; first, to jump into old Nanny's outstretched arms, and then to hug the dingy white cat sitting on the stairs.

"My goodness gracious, Miss Nellie," ejaculated Nanny, putting her insulted cap to rights, "why, you *have* been and brought back a country posy with you, and you do look well for sure! There's your ma now, she's been a-counting of the days for your coming home, and the young ladies are all a-wanting of you; and for that matter, so be I."

"You dear old Nanny," burst out Nellie, with another embrace; "I have such a lot to tell you."

"Yes, yes, I dare say, Miss Nellie; but now you had best take off your things and have your nice dinner. You've got it all to your two selves, for it's Miss Lakin's birthday, and Mrs. Lakin has taken all the young ladies to the Z'logical. Your ma wouldn't hear of their putting it off for you."

For some years Mrs. Mayer had presided over

a small middle-class girls' school; by this means she was enabled to keep up a comfortable home, and at the same time to educate her own little daughter. It was a boon to the child to have the companionship of other girls; and as Mrs. Mayer exercised a firm, gentle influence over her pupils, most of them were warmly attached to her. The continual strain of school and house-keeping was sometimes rather heavier than she could have wished, so it was a real relief when Nellie was invited to stay at Downside Farm.

After these visits, it is almost needless to say that her larder materially benefited, and her heart would throb with grateful pleasure as she surveyed the good country fare, the proof of her sister-in-law's thoughtful kindness. Even now, Nanny was unloading the roomy farm-basket, and overhauling butter and eggs and wholesome home-made delicacies, besides more substantial provisions.

"Nellie, dear," said her mother, when they had finished dinner, "you do not want to keep all those flowers for us, I think; suppose you take a nice bunch to Miss Gatby. She is sure to be in this afternoon, and would like to see you, I know. She was inquiring on Sunday what day you were coming home."

Nellie's blue eyes sparkled; Miss Gatby was the idol of her juvenile admiration. Ever since the child could read she had attended her Sunday class. But the teacher's influence did not stop there, it extended into the week; and many were the loving errands in which Nellie was her companion, thus unconsciously imbibing her spirit of real philanthropy. Lisa Gatby found leisure for such acts of practical charity, though her days were well occupied with home duties; she being her father's right hand now that the invalid mother was wholly laid aside from active life. Just look into the pretty room where she is enjoying an hour's reading, you will not forget her winsome, expressive face, shaded by soft, wavy hair. Her brown eyes look honest and true, and the firmly set lips tell of decision. As Hugh, her twin brother, says, "Lisa does everything she means to do, and she means everything she does."

This kind of character is not always the most pleasant to deal with, but Lisa had early learned the law of kindness from her mother's teaching and example.

When Nellie was ushered into the room you might see that the interruption was not un-

welcome, by the smile which flashed across Lisa's face. "Welcome home, little Nellie!" was her bright greeting; and in a minute the child was sitting on her lap, recounting (for the third time that day) some of her recent doings at Nuthurst. "And now," said Lisa, "you have come back to help mother, and learn as much as you can."

"Yes, Miss Lisa," gravely responded the little girl. "I have missed you every Sunday," continued Lisa, "for the class did not seem the same without my fidgety Two-Shoes: what did you do with yourself on Sunday afternoon at Nuthurst?"

"Oh," said Nellie, "I used to learn my verses first, those you marked for me in your letter, you know; and then, if it was fine, Aunt Judith let me go and see old Mr. and Mrs. King, and I used to sing to them. But, Miss Lisa, whenever I sang 'The old, old story,' it nearly always made Mrs. King wipe her eyes, and they both looked so sad."

"Perhaps it reminded them of something sorrowful," answered Lisa. "I think they are the old people you told me about, are they not, who live in the funny little cottage by the field?"

"Yes, Miss Lisa, and look at these flowers. They came from that same field, really, and mother said I might bring you some."

"I shall be very pleased to have them, dear, if you can spare all these," said Nellie's teacher. "They are splendid, and I know already what I shall do with them. You want to hear, I can see. Well, to-morrow afternoon I am invited to St. Margaret's Hospital, where Sister Maud, a friend of mine, is living, and I shall take your flowers to give the patients in her ward. They will like them so much, and I will be sure to tell you what they say. Now, dear, I think mother will be wanting her little girl, so run home as fast as you can."

"Good-bye, my own darling Miss Lisa," and off trotted Nellie, swinging her empty basket.

Spring brightness is not reliable; next day the sun was sulkily invisible, and dark masses of cloud obscured the grey sky. The wind had veered round to the south-west; at Nuthurst, it was

"blowing in anger from the distant sea,"

with an eerie sound of approaching storm. Here, in London, it alternately moaned and raged, and people hurried along the streets without loitering at the shop-windows. Sister Maud's little sanctum was snug and cheerful enough, thought Lisa

Gatby, as she received her friend's welcome and was ensconced by her in a low basket-chair. These two were friends of long standing; they had been schoolfellows of the constant sort, and were firmly attached. A meeting between them was now of rare occurrence, and possibly was the more highly prized in consequence. Maud Haycombe looked upon St. Margaret's as her home, having lost both parents since her appointment to the 'Basil' Ward; and her only brother being settled in Canada, she felt perfectly free to take up this, which she instinctively knew to be her life's work. She and Lisa were not of the same mind on many points. Maud was a High Churchwoman by early training and from personal choice; but with her the Substance was more than the Shadows, which, however, she believed brought out in stronger relief the great truths of the Revealed Word.

Lisa, on the other hand, belonged to the opposite extreme of the Established Church, but both souls met at the One Centre of Light.

It was always an interest to Lisa when Maud talked of her work and of the varying cases continually passing in and out of her ward: some, to return home in re-established health, others

to join the quiet sleepers who would never know more of earthly joys and griefs.

"I have had several fresh patients in just lately, Lisa; one interests me greatly, but you will see what she is for yourself, when you distribute your flowers. I expect her time here will be long and tedious, for the painful disease she is suffering from appears to have been aggravated by mental trouble. She will not speak more than is absolutely necessary, so that I know little beyond her name. But will you like to go in at once, before our early tea?"

The 'Basil' Ward was lofty and spacious, with long, narrow windows at either end. The walls were coloured light blue, to which intersecting crimson lines gave a warm glow. Most of the beds were full, for St. Margaret's was a well-known and favourite hospital.

As Maud and her friend paced along the centre, weary eyes followed them and pale lips smiled a response to 'Sister's' cheerful words—

"Miss Gatby is always a welcome visitor, is she not, Patients? I shall leave her here to be entertained by you." And Maud retreated, calling an under-nurse to follow her. Lisa began at once to move from bed to bed, speaking a few kindly

never know

nts in just
y, but you
en you dis-
ne here will
disease she
aggravated
peak more
know little
to go in at

icious, with
The walls
ltersecting
ost of the
as a well-

he centre,
s smiled a

tor, is she
be enter-
calling an
at once to
ew kindly



A white, haggard face looked up, while the woman raised her thin hand to take the daffodils.—p. 29.

—
we
bu
a
di
bl
ur
be
in
fl
ot

a
li
lo

w
e
w

b
v
f
s
f
s
g

words as she gave her floral treasures. To each bunch she had affixed a small oval card, bearing a brief message from Holy Writ; and while she distributed, a swift, silent plea ascended for blessing on her work. One bed only remained unvisited, but the occupant's face was hidden beneath the clothes as Lisa approached and said in her clear voice—"I hope you will like these flowers; do take them." No answer, so she tried other tactics.

"A little girl brought them from the country, and I promised she should hear how they were liked. I shall be disappointed to have even one left on my hands, and yours is the last bed."

This time the appeal met with success. A white, haggard face looked up, and the dark, sad eyes rested for a moment on Lisa's while the woman raised her thin hand to take the daffodils.

Suddenly a shrill cry of 'Mother! Mother!' broke the stillness of the ward, and with convulsive sobs she once more concealed her agitated features. For an instant Lisa felt bewildered, till she remembered the text she had fastened to the flower-stalks; then laying her cool hand upon the slender fingers outside the coverlet, she said in low, gentle tones—"Hush! I have a message for you."

The woman started and endeavoured to restrain her grief, and Lisa went on—"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."

A 'great calm' seemed to fall on this perturbed, tempest-tossed spirit at the soothing sound, and Lisa quietly rose to go; the slight rustle caught the woman's ears and she whispered with heaving breast—

"Miss, please come again."

"Indeed I will," responded the girl.

It was a relief to find herself outside the ward and beyond the gaze of so many eyes; she had been slightly startled at what had happened, and was anxious to tell her friend.


"I only hope," she said, "that it will not have a bad effect on the poor thing; you forgot to point out to me your special case, Maudie, but of course it is this same woman."

"Don't be uneasy, Lisa; most probably she will feel physically relieved after this mental outburst. I will just go and see if she is quiet, she may need her soothing draught; in the meantime I want you to read this letter from my Canadian sister, and then give me your opinion of my new relative."



CHAPTER III.

DIRK'S COURT.

HE odours of Dirk's Court were by no means conducive to the health or enjoyment of its teeming inhabitants; though for the most part they were blissfully unconscious of its imperfections.

For instance, it was 'sweet' Home to Mrs. Todd, whose favourite pastime it was to stand at her door, watching her hive of small Todds as they revelled among heaps of rubbish, and concocted mud or dust-pies out of the gutter, according to the material provided by the weather. She would say—"The children thrived out of doors in the fresh air!" and, "she wasn't like some people" (with a jerk of her red elbow towards the opposite houses), "she hoped *she* knew what was good for 'em."

Perhaps had his wife really acted out her theory, Isaac Todd might not so often have

frequented the 'Blue Dragon'; but did she know what was best for her family?

Mrs. Dobson opposite thought not; however, the two ladies were not on terms of intimacy, and her authority may be questioned. That neat, quiet little body looked out of place in the Court, and she certainly felt so, when Mr. and Mrs. Todd enlivened the locality with their unamiable discussions. Dirk's Court was not her abode by choice; she would gladly have gone elsewhere had not her orphan nephew and niece been dependent on her for home and livelihood. So that to make both ends meet, as low a rent as possible was desirable. The two children, pale, spiritless little creatures, went to the nearest school; and between times, walked soberly hand-in-hand about the streets, or made believe to play by the side of their aunt, occupied, as she always was, with machine work. She was unwilling for them to join the rough, ragged youngsters of the Court in their quarrelsome sports; and Mrs. Todd's sarcastic comment was evoked by this peculiarity of her neighbour's. The gossips knew but little of her; "she kept to herself," they said in rather aggrieved tones; so it caused no small stir amongst them when they discovered she had a lodger—

beyond the bare fact they were not much the wiser. The new-comer seemed as obtuse as her landlady, and almost ignored their friendly advances. But this they did find out, that she was in ill-health and rarely left the house. As time went on, the parish doctor made his appearance; and one cold day at the end of the winter, the Court was astonished and somewhat perplexed at the unfamiliar sight of a hospital ambulance at Mrs. Dobson's door, into which the 'lodger' was lifted, and then taken away, some said to the Fever Hospital, but that was a gossiping supposition. Her destination proved to be St. Margaret's, where she was to be for many long weeks of suffering and languor.

Spring merged into summer, and now the glaring August sunshine fell on the hot pavements. How scorching it was out of the shade! Even on the cool side of the streets people dragged their tired feet along. Mrs. Dobson, returning home with a large bundle of fresh work, stopped to rest for a moment or two on a doorstep; the heat had fairly overcome her, and besides, she was panting strangely. It could not be altogether from fatigue, for a sharp pain thrilled through her, and she caught her breath in gasps.

“Was she going to be ill? Oh! what would become of the children? But there, how foolish she was to think of such a thing! She felt all right now after the rest, and would go home and get a cup of tea in a jiffy. Johnnie and Susie would be watching for her; how pleased they would be with the big slice of plum-cake given her by the good-natured manageress at the shop! They often had a bit of something for a treat when poor Mrs. Churchill was with them.” Mrs. Dobson “wondered how she was getting on; perhaps next Sunday she and the children might get as far as the Hospital; then they would hear when she was likely to come out.”

Yes, there was Johnnie's puny little face pressed against the window-pane, and as soon as she entered the tiny room he began to chatter in his shrill, childish voice.

“We're goin' to have our treat a Thursday, and teacher says we'll all ride ever so fur, and see the daisies and the sheeps. Susie and me's goin' to bring you home some.”

How willingly would the hard-working aunt have joined in the prospective pleasure-trip, but time was precious, and she must labour early

and late in order to finish the garments just brought back, by a certain date.

Nevertheless, she could share in the children's delighted anticipations, which recalled her own child-life, and they had quite a grand feast off the plum-cake that afternoon. Night closed over the great city, and the soft darkness invited weary bodies to rest. How many among the millions were kept awake by mental cares! One of that countless multitude was tossing on her bed in St. Margaret's Hospital.

Priscilla Churchill had so far recovered from the severe operation she had undergone as to be allowed to dress and slowly walk about the ward; and the doctors gave her hope of a dismissal before winter.

"Hope!" she thought. "That is something I know little of. What have I to look for outside these walls? To be sure, Mrs. Dobson will welcome me, and Johnnie and Susie will throw their little arms round my neck; but they know nothing about my life and its wrong-doing. I cannot bear the weight any longer; I will tell all to Miss Gatby; she may help me, and perhaps will try to find out if *they* are still . . ."

"Can't you get to sleep, Mrs. Churchill?"

softly asked the night nurse. "It's so hot, no wonder! There, let me put you comfortable, and you drink this right off." And a cup of cooling mixture was held to the feverish lips. Mrs. Churchill drank and was refreshed; presently sleep hovered above her tired eyes, and like a weary child she sank into deep, dreamless slumber.

Nuthurst lay basking in the sultry afternoon sunshine. Great cloud-shadows calmly floated over the still green Downs, and hardly a sound could be heard save the quiet lowing of Farmer Benton's cows standing in the cool brook beneath the trees and lazily lashing their tails. Even Guard found it too much exertion to stroll about according to his wont, and stretched himself out full length upon the grass by the front-door, feebly thumping his tail, when his quick ears caught the sound of a familiar footstep.

It had been splendid weather for the harvest, and the fields were fast losing their golden crops. All hands were busy; Mrs. Benton's fingers fairly ached with preparing provisions for the harvest supper, which was to take place in a day or two. Just now she was taking breath, as it were, after the morning's work. Her plump, roundabout figure comfortably filled the old rocking-chair;

and as she sat at the open parlour window, the murmur of bees among the climbing creepers drowsily mingled with the hum of happy insects and a faint rustle of rose-leaves—inducing her to take a ‘nap.’ It might have been indefinitely prolonged, but she was roused by a cold, wet nose against her outspread hand, and she awoke with a start.

“Bless the dog! There, get away, Guard, and let me go and see after Jane,” and the good woman bustled away to inspect the day’s baking. “They’ve turned out well, ’m, though I says it,” was Jane’s greeting; “and if the men eats all them pies and cakes besides them other things, it’s their insides as ’ll be turned upside down.” And she suited the action to the word by turning out a substantial cake and placing it on a plate to cool.

“Well, Jane, they know best about that,” returned her mistress. “That smallest spice-loaf will be just the thing to take to old Mrs. King, and I’ll go up with it this evening—she’s been ailing of late.”

“More shame to them as ought to look after their aged parents, says I,” put in Jane.

“Ah, you mean her daughter; but then, no one knows if she’s dead or alive.”

“H’m!” snorted Jane; “I ain’t forgot Pris King; why, ’m, we had our Confirmation frocks off

the same piece, we was that friendly. She often says to me, 'I shan't always stay in this place, Jane, I wants to see the world; but there's no fear I'll ever forget you, nor father and mother.' So, 'm, it's my firm belief she's a living woman," illogically argued Mrs. Benton's 'help.'

"I hope you're right, Jane, I'm sure; but do be quick, the master'll be looking for his tea before you've got it."

The sun was setting like a giant ruby set in flaming amber, as Mrs. Benton slowly ascended the little rise leading to Daff's Cottage. A clear sky all round gave good hopes of the continuance of fair weather. The birds faintly chirped their evensong, and tired labourers were jogging homewards on their cart-horses. Women stood at the cottage-doors, refreshing themselves with the welcome evening breeze after the long, weary day; and many were the salutations given and received by Mrs. Benton.

She found David and his wife sitting in their quaint little porch, where errant honeysuckle sprays filled the atmosphere with fragrance. David rose with old-fashioned courtesy as the farmer's wife came up the pebbled path, and fetched a chair for her which he placed outside.

After half-an-hour's chat, Mrs. Benton rose to go, but she retraced a few steps to tell the old people she had received a letter from Nellie, full of messages to her friends.

"And, David, she wants to know if you have any roses on the large bush; she wishes you would send her one in my next parcel."

"Sure enough, ma'am, the little miss shall have some, anywhen you're sending."

"All right then, Jane shall run up to tell you," and Mrs. Benton hurried away.


The air was now deliciously reviving, and perfumed with sweet scents from the villagers' garden-plots. The moon was rising, and in the twilight the quiet hills stood out sharply defined. It was a lovely pastoral scene, suggestive of calm and holy musings. But from the village inn, as Mrs. Benton passed by, came sounds at variance with the evening's beauty; noisy laughter and coarse merriment, intermingled, alas! with quarrelsome, angry words. The words of Bishop Heber's hymn are, in a less degree, as sadly true of many a spot in England as of any dark, degraded heathen land—

"Though every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile."



CHAPTER IV.

THE LIFTED VEIL.

 LISA GATBY did not forget her promise to the sick woman in the 'Basil' ward; she made special efforts to visit her again and again, and was received with undisguised pleasure, although it appeared a difficulty at last to break through the veil of reserve in which she had shrouded herself. After a few commonplace remarks as to her health, the weather and so on, Lisa once ventured to say—

"I hope you have remembered the text I left with you the first time I came. You seemed in such trouble that day, and at first I feared it might be owing to something I had said."

Mrs. Churchill flushed, and put her hand into her pocket, drawing from thence a bulging envelope, which she placed in Lisa's hand.

"There, miss, open that."

"Why, you have really kept the withered daffodils I gave you!" said Lisa, astonished. "Then they pleased you, I am sure."

"Your kindness did, miss, and as for the flowers—perhaps you will scarcely believe that the last time a daffodil was in my hand, was—when I was a happy girl at home—and oh! the flowers and the text brought it all before me, and mother and father too."

The woman's voice was thick and husky, and broken with emotion, and Lisa noticed the other patients looking at her with curious though not unsympathetic gaze; so she merely said, "I think Sister will let us go into her room if you have anything more to tell me. It will be nicer to feel alone."

They found that Maud was opportunely engaged below, therefore the little room was their own for the time being.

Lisa felt strangely drawn towards her new acquaintance, whom she pitied with all the warmth of her large nature, as she watched the sad face which bore unmistakable traces of pride, self-will, and sorrow.

"Tell me all you want to say," she said; "you may feel sure your story will be safe with me."



promise to
Basil' ward;
to visit her
with undis-
a difficulty
reserve in
fter a few
health, the
to say—
text I left
seemed in
feared it
."'
hand into
ging enve-

Our readers will have probably assumed ere this that the life-story unfolded to Lisa was identical with that of the missing daughter, Priscilla King. All the details were not entered upon; "for, miss," she said, "you know enough to despise me. If I could only find out whether my poor old parents are living, they would welcome me home, I think, though I have behaved so undutifully," and hot tears furrowed her cheeks.

"Mrs. Churchill," answered Lisa, "I am so sorry for you. Don't think I 'despise' you, for are we not alike sinners in our Lord's sight?"

She spoke with Christian candour and delicate fellow-feeling, owning as sister the erring woman at her side; she knew and felt—

"Christ's mark outwears the rankest blot."

After a slight pause Lisa continued—

"I believe too that you are sincerely desirous to atone (as far as may be) for this wrong-doing; but your husband—?"

"He is beyond my reach, miss. A year ago the news of his death reached me. He was kicked by a vicious horse on a cattle-ranche in Texas, and never recovered consciousness."

"I wonder," interposed Lisa, "that you did not at once go to your old home."

"It was pride that stood in my way at first, and then my illness began," answered Priscilla. "You will readily understand, Miss Gatby, that I was never received by my husband's family, though I did my best to improve myself, and behave as he wished. His love for me cooled, but he was not unjust; and before going to America he settled a small sum on me sufficient for my wants. So I am not penniless."

"You have not yet told me where your parents lived," said Lisa; "I should be so glad to help you in the matter, if I may talk it over with my father."

"The name of the village is Nuthurst, near Geerham, in Sussex—and my father's name is King."

A sudden thought flashed across Lisa's brain, and her heart beat with pleasurable excitement. "Surely she could add the missing link to Mrs. Churchill's story—Nellie's old couple—their name was King—they had had some sorrow . . ." but she responded quietly—

"You are about leaving the hospital, I think you said. If you will give me your address I will

come and see you, and I shall hope to be the bearer of good news."

"It is a very poor place, miss," said Priscilla, "but my landlady was formerly kitchen-maid to my husband's mother, and I felt at home with her, being one of my own sort. I was glad too to be of some help to her, for she works hard to support herself and two orphan children left by her brother. The address is 24, Dirk's Court. Perhaps you wonder why I do not write to Nuthurst myself; but I felt I couldn't, miss, having treated them so—and then, the shock might be too much; that is, supposing they are living now. I'm sure I don't deserve to see them again."

"We none of us 'deserve' anything that is good," replied Lisa. "But you know it is said, 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord.' We 'deserved' nothing at God's Hands, so He has given us eternal life as His free gift. And if our Father in heaven welcomes us to Himself, oh, how glad your father on earth will be to take you home again!" So Lisa took leave of Mrs. Churchill with a warm hand-shake as they parted.

The latter did not write to apprise Mrs. Dobson

to be the

and Priscilla,
a maid to
home with
as glad too
works hard to
when left by
Court.

write to
Oh't, miss,
the shock
g they are
to see them

g that is
it is said,
either are
deserved'
given us
our Father
how glad
you home
Churchill

s. Dobson



"My girl, you read for mother and me to-night, and we'll
have the 'Blessing' Psalm"—p. 60.

of her
her l
expe
stay
visit
mun
caus
not
occu
her

It
left
of H
wea
rath
alwa
eyes
hop
fare
The
Dir
had
of t
pres
the
bea

of her return to Dirk's Court; she wished to take her by surprise and to give the children an unexpected pleasure. Once during her lengthened stay at St. Margaret's they had all paid her a visit; but since then there had been no communication between the friends. This would have caused Priscilla some little uneasiness had she not known how fully Mrs. Dobson's days were occupied, and that any brief time of respite found her often too tired to exert herself.

It was a dull autumn day when Mrs. Churchill left the hospital; she had regained somewhat of her old elasticity of step, and although still weakly, health glowed upon her cheek. She was rather a stately-looking woman (Pris King had always carried herself well), and now her dark eyes, so like her mother's, beamed with the glad hope of future happiness as she bade a grateful farewell to Sister Maud and the ward nurses. The cab set her down at the narrow entrance to Dirk's Court, whence many months before she had been carried a helpless invalid. The aspect of the place was as uninviting as ever, but for the present it was her place of abode, secluded from the great world outside. Followed by the man bearing her few parcels, she walked slowly along

the dirty pavement, thronged as usual by a crowd of gaping children, till number 24 was reached. The door was locked. Then Mrs. Dobson was out, and Johnnie and Susie would be at play in the tiny yard at the back, and had not heard her knock. So dismissing the cabman she waited a little, and then rapped the door again. Still no response.

Perhaps she could open the window and call. Mrs. Dobson's customary short thick blind was up, so she could not see into the room. The fastening was undone, and therefore she could easily raise the sash. How strange! The little room was empty; what could be the reason? Priscilla began to feel a kind of misgiving, and gladly leaned against the wall to steady herself. At this juncture, a neighbour appeared at her door, and she at once recognized Priscilla.

"Well, to be sure, you be a stranger; but law! don't you know what's the matter? Mrs. Dobson's been dead and buried these three weeks, and the children's took off to the House. There! I be sorry I've told you so quick; come into my house, 'm, and sit down; you do look bad, sure!"

Mrs. Churchill mechanically followed the garrulous, good-natured speaker; and as in a dream

she caught sight of numerous spectators at doors and windows, all agape with expectant curiosity, for this was a most unlooked-for gratification to the Dirk's Court gossips. They would have dearly liked to press into the dirty untidy room, both to see and hear Mrs. Dobson's 'lodger.'

With some trouble a dilapidated chair was cleared and wiped over with Mrs. Watkins' ragged apron, and then the voluble woman resumed her narrative.

"'Twas just about this time, last Monday three weeks—let me see—yes! for I'd just come back from work—I see Mrs. Dobson at her door, lookin' queerish-like, and she says, 'Mrs. Watkins, I wish you'd come in, I've got such a pain o' this side (puttin' her hand on her heart, *so*), so I hurried in when I'd just called across to Mrs. Todd (as is my cousin), and none too quick, 'm, for there she was on the floor, and if you'll believe me, 'm, she didn't live more nor ten minutes. I was that flustered with the poor children a-cryin' and . . ."

"Would you mind getting me some water?" interrupted her listener. The sudden shock made her faint, and the woman's loquacity disgusted her. Having taken a sip out of the cracked teacup to prevent a repetition of Mrs. Watkins' conversation, she said—

"Please tell me where the children are, I should not like to lose sight of them—and I left a box when I went away."

"It's at the baker's; I'd have willing took it in, but Mrs. Scott's a sort o' relation, and in course she had the most right."

"Thank you," said Priscilla, grasping at this intelligence. Now she could get away from the Court, and further news might doubtless be obtained at the shop.

"The children, poor dears . . ." attempted Mrs. Watkins.

"I will hear all about them another time, I think; I feel I cannot bear more just at present; thank you for giving me a rest," and Mrs. Churchill contrived to leave. She had to run the gauntlet of the onlookers, and what a relief it was to find herself beyond the Court! Mrs. Todd immediately made her way across to the house she had vacated.

"Well, Mrs. Watkins, she might ha' been more neighbour-like; but there! me and my man we always said she were a proud, stuck-up piece o' goods. I'm sure I wouldn't speak bad o' them that's gone, but I *do* say Mrs. Dobson might ha' been livin' now, for all I knows, if she'd chose to ha' told some on us what was the matter with her.

My goodness! I left the treacle on the table, and there's that Bill been at it. Get out o' my sight, or I'll give 'ee such a whackin' as never was!" and Mrs. Todd's portly person disappeared within her own doorway.

The proprietress of the 'Home-made' Bread Bakery was a practical, business-like woman; and from her Priscilla heard what little there was to tell about her friend's sad, sudden death. It seemed that of late she had often complained of pain at the heart, and Mrs. Scott at last prevailed upon her to see a doctor.

Alas! it was too late; she died the next day.

The parish authorities found no more money in the house than was sufficient to pay the rent; and as it appeared that Mrs. Dobson's next-of-kin were in Australia (Mrs. Scott being only connected by marriage), the twice-orphaned children were placed in the Union. Mrs. Scott good-naturedly proposed to take Priscilla into her house "till she could turn herself round," and the offer was gladly accepted. She felt confused and unnerved, and thankfully laid down on the flock bed to rest, if not to sleep.

Was not this a kind of retribution? She had wilfully cast off the friends of her early years;

and now, all uncertain as to their fate, God had bereft her of the one friend whose home she could call her own. There might be no other open to her. She was a young woman still. What if years of loneliness were stretched out before her, in long, unbroken vistas? What if she were to live, and die, in solitude? It was poor comfort that she had enough money to supply her daily food.

Comfort! Ah! with one of those strange, incomprehensible memory-flashes, the word recalled to her that 'message' which Miss Gatby had given with the daffodils. Once again the holy words exerted their healing influence on her bruised spirit—"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." And Priscilla's humble, unspoken pleadings ascended up above the noisy din of the great city into the ears of "the God of all comfort."

The next morning Mrs. Churchill awoke refreshed, her mental equilibrium restored. "What was the first thing to be done?" Mrs. Scott could afford her temporary shelter, and as Miss Gatby might communicate with her any day, she was unwilling to leave the locality.

How she desired and at the same time dreaded to receive the promised visit! Would its import

be sad or joyous? The critical moment was nearer than she thought. Lisa was not one to let the grass grow under her feet; whatsoever her hand found to do, she did it 'with her might.' After consulting her father, she decided to write to Mrs. Benton, whom, from Nellie's chatter and Mrs. Mayer's description, she seemed to know almost personally. The kind-hearted farmer's wife would rejoice in the joy of her old friends David and Ruth; but she must be gently cautioned not to break the good news too suddenly.

To come to the point, we will take the liberty of looking over Lisa's shoulder, as with heightened colour and kindling eyes she peruses a letter just received from Downside Farm.

"DEAR MISS GATBY,

"It gives me much pleasure to inform you that I have seen Mr. and Mrs. King; they are willing and anxious to take back their daughter, as we felt sure would be the case. They bore it better than I expected, though it affected them deeply; but old David said, 'Mother and me, we've never give up praying, and we was sure the answer would come somehow. It seems to have put new life into Ruth, and I hope, for Priscilla's sake, they will live for years. She

must come home at once, for the old people say they talk and think of nothing else. I am sure you will have your reward, dear Miss Gatby; you have been so truly kind, and they are most grateful.

“I remain, yours truly,
“JUDITH BENTON.”

So this was the result! As Lisa pondered the chain of circumstances, she recognized “the unbounded might of prayer.” Now to tell Priscilla! No time was to be lost, and she arranged to go that afternoon, taking as her escort Mrs. Gatby's staid attendant. She had little difficulty in finding the object of her search, as the ‘Court’ inhabitants were all aware that Mrs. Churchill was at the baker's shop. There we will leave Lisa for the present, and meanwhile look in upon our little friend Nellie.

That young lady had certainly begun the day by getting out of bed the wrong side; things would get lost, and everybody and everything seemed to be antagonistic. She had a squatted tiff with her favourite school-friend, Daisy Read, and had even called her a ‘nasty, spiteful thing!’ Finally, her small troubles were dissolved in a flood of tears, and after that the tempest cleared

off, and the breach was made up over a stick of barley-sugar.

By all which we can see that Nellie was not a 'perfect' child. She was occasionally visited by these April showers, and Lisa often talked to her about her gusty fits of temper, whereupon she would be very penitent and behave like a lamb—till next time. Still, on the whole, Nellie did justice to her kind teacher, and at home she was the life of the house. At tea-time that same evening, when all the girls were dispersed to their respective homes (for Mrs. Mayer received day-pupils only), her mother held up a letter—

"Guess, Nellie, what is inside!"

"Oh, mother," responded the little girl, with dilated eyes and long-drawn breath, "is it something about me?"

"Well, certainly a little girl is mentioned, but then she is referred to as being a 'good child,'" gravely said her mother.

Nellie coloured and looked extremely sedate.

"I'm almost sure it *is* me. You see, I'm not always naughty, mother; I really am quite good now."

"Then you must be right, for the letter is from Nuthurst, and somebody wants somebody else

(two somebodies indeed!) to spend Christmas at a dear old farm-house, where . . ."

"Oh, mother, I never, never will be cross again, at least I don't think I will be!" and Nellie fairly danced about the room, causing the tea-things to clatter in sympathy.

"Sit down to your tea, little whirligig, and don't spill it," admonished Mrs. Mayer. "Aunt Judith thinks it will do us both good to get away from home for a thorough change in the holidays; but, oh dear! what about leaving Nanny and puss?" and Mrs. Mayer pretended to draw a very long face. Nellie pondered.

"We couldn't take dear puss, 'cause Guard wouldn't like her; and I don't think Nanny could leave her quite alone . . ."

"I think I can settle it, Nellie. Suppose we ask Nanny if she would like to invite her nephew and his wife and the little girls for Christmas?"

"Yes, mother, and they could have my doll's house to play with," joyfully answered Nellie. "I do wish Christmas would come!"



CHAPTER V.

REUNION.

ONCE again our attention is called to the London station, where we witnessed Nellie's meeting with her mother.

Then, it was spring; now it is late autumn, and the early mornings are sharp and frosty. A train is just starting for a southern county, and one of its passengers is taking leave of Lisa Gatby. Needless to say it is Priscilla Churchill on her way home!

"And you will be sure to write in a day or so, Mrs. Churchill? I shall be very anxious to hear."

"Thank you, miss, and God bless you!" was the tearful response, and now the train moved, and she was off. Past the "jumbled heap of murky buildings;" then flashing by thinly-housed suburbs, with rows of small dwellings intersected by rough plots of ground, the fringe of London

was left behind, and the real country began. On and on sped the iron horse, and now in the distance Priscilla could see grey outlines of familiar hills; soon she was able to distinguish white chalky tracks winding up the green heights. On the other side was the sea, and in an hour she would reach the station, from whence the road led straight 'Home!'

"Geerham! Geerham!" sounded in her ears, and with a start Priscilla realized that her journey had come to an end. Mrs. Benton was waiting on the platform to welcome the stranger. She recognized the good farmer's wife, though her figure had become stout and matronly, and time had streaked her hair with grey. Mrs. Benton was not so sure about Priscilla's identity; she had last seen her a slim, fresh-looking girl of seventeen. Could this indeed be Pris?—this tall, handsome figure, who came forward to meet her with outstretched hands, and tearful dark eyes?

"Dear Mrs. Benton!" All doubt was dispelled by the voice, and Priscilla's first welcome home was of the heartiest.

"Bless you, my dear! I am downright glad to see you. Now you go and get into the chaise while I look after the luggage,—one box—all right."

Priscilla Churchill felt almost a girl again as she and her kind friend jogged leisurely along the high-road behind sober old Dolly. With innate delicacy Mrs. Benton talked of everything but the past, and she diverted Priscilla's thoughts by dwelling on the country scenes and objects around them, pointing out this and that improvement, and dilating on the new residents at 'Thornhope,' a large mansion recently erected near the village. But as they approached Nut-hurst, both unanimously became silent. Priscilla sat still, only her tightly-clasped fingers betraying any inward agitation.

Now the grey Norman tower of the old church shows among the elms; then the Rectory is sighted; how familiar is the aspect of everything!

It seemed only yesterday that she went prim-rosing in the woods belonging to Baron's Court; there were some girls leaning against the stile which gave admittance to the path (just as she used to do!)—but they were all strangers, and she herself was strange to her native place.

"Now, my dear," broke in her silent companion, "you are close home; and see, there's father at the gate and mother waiting inside the porch!"

and unshed tears glistened in Mrs. Benton's kind eyes. "You get down here, and I'll drive on to Ben White's; I shall find him in the smithy, and he will be sure to let his lad run up and help with your box. No; I'm not coming in to-day, my dear, but you shall see me to-morrow, please God."

Over the solemn meeting and reunion of Priscilla and her parents let us drop a sacred veil. Such moments are hallowed foretastes of the 'rest' that 'remaineth'; a 'stranger' may not 'intermeddle' with such 'joy.'

We may, however, take a glimpse at the cottage and its inmates that evening when the fire-light flickers through the window and lights up three contented faces inside. David sits in his elbow-chair on one side of the hearth, with Ruth on the other, and the restored daughter between the two. When she places the old brown Bible before her father, ere they retire to rest, he lays his hand on her shoulder and speaks with thick utterance—

"My girl, you read for mother and me to-night, and we'll have the 'Blessing' Psalm—for the good Lord have had a Father's 'pity' on us, and we'll thank Him in they words."

And the silence of years is broken by Priscilla's voice as she begins—

“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.”

And now our story draws to a close as the old year also nears the end of its life; and even in the secluded village—

“What a strange life it was! Oh, if the story
Of all its joys and sorrows could be known,
How would dark shadows, mingling with its glory,
Round its whole course be thrown!”

It is Christmas Eve, and the bells are ringing; the sweet sounds rise and fall with the swelling of the soft night wind, carrying the message of peace over the lonely hills, and up and down the valley. David King and his wife and daughter are listening, and Priscilla says with a smile—

“Mother, it *is* nice to hear our bells again! This time last year I was so miserable. I wanted you both so badly, and yet I couldn't make up my mind to humble myself. Arthur never liked the thought of my writing home, and I used to feel as if I'd made my bed I must lay on it; and perhaps while he was with me I didn't care so much. Sometimes I thought I'd try and find

out Aunt Miller, not knowing she'd been gone these six years. To think, after all, it was the daffodils did it! And they were Nuthurst daffodils too! They seemed to break my heart, and to bring you both right before my eyes. God made the way easy for me to come back, didn't He? He sent Miss Gatby . . ."

"Bless her, bless her!" interposed old David.

"She's been a-treading in the good Lord's footsteps; and bless Him for it too!"

And Ruth looked up to the starlit sky, and softly added "Amen!"

At Downside Farm there is a happy family gathering. Nellie looks in Elysium, perched upon a stool at her uncle's feet, with Guard close at hand, and her mother is enjoying the holiday rest and quiet.

The small presents have been duly prepared by her little daughter, and they are to be given the next day.

Aunt Judith will also make the happy child her almoner to several of the villagers, including our old acquaintance, Grumpy Grunthorn and his wife: and Nellie is full of pleasant anticipations on her own account. She knows there is something from Miss Lisa for her in mother's

trunk, and sundry probabilities dart into her mind as to other possible gifts.

Meanwhile the 'happy bells' ring on.

Darkness broods over hill and dale, and the iron grasp of winter is on the land; but by-and-by the buds will peep and spring will summon forth the flowers. Daffodils will reappear in 'Daff's Corner,' and forbidden childish hands will snatch at the golden beauties, for Johnnie and Susie Dobson are looking forward to a home in that mysterious region, 'the country.'

Priscilla has made up her mind to train and tend the little orphans for her dead friend's sake. Farther on, in the summer time, Lisa Gatby has promised to accept Mrs. Benton's oft-repeated invitation, and she hopes to accompany little Nellie on a visit to the Farm, so that old and new friends anticipate a pleasant meeting.

The Daffodils' Mission is not yet ended. Its results are expanding and widening still.

"Flowers preach to us if we will hear."

Priscilla heard and heeded their silent message, bidding her return to her forsaken home, an earnest of that higher Call which will influence and sanctify her after life.

This was the first link in the golden chain ; we have glanced at a few others :—now, farewell to Nuthurst and its associations !

But as we remember the spring-tide treasures of 'Daff's Corner,' and recall their fair array, their innocent gaiety, and the sweet, unconscious influence through which some hearts were made 'exceeding glad', surely the poet's words are true of us ; surely in responsive sympathy, each

"heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils."

THE END.

n; we
ell to
asures
their
s in-
made
are
ch



