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CLARA MORISON

A TALE

OF

SOUTH AUSTRALIA DURING THE
GOLD FEVER

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL I



LONDON

JOHN W PARKER AND SON WEST STRAND

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P R E F A C E.

THE following tale has for its author a young lady who, for some years, has resided in one of the provinces of that distant country in which the scene of the novel is laid. This preface is written by the friend to whose care she entrusted the manuscript; and the work has been printed without the advantage of the author's final revision.

Of the merits of the story it would be altogether unbecoming here to speak. The fair writer's aim seems to have been to present some picture of the state of society in the Australian colonies, especially as it existed in South Australia, in the year 1851, when the discovery of gold in the neighbouring province of Victoria took place. At this time the population of South Australia numbered between seventy and eighty thousand souls, the greater part of whom were remarkable for their intelligence, their industry, and their enterprise—characteristics which had doubtless been fostered by the energy shown in developing the mineral resources of the country, and which, in the instance of the Burra Burra and other copper mines, had met with such signal success. When it became known that gold in illimitable quantities, at a locality not more than three hundred miles distant from their own territory, was to be had, it can scarcely be supposed that a people, so keenly alive to their own interests,

would remain unmoved. Resolute attempts were made to discover a gold field near Adelaide. Finding the gold would not come to them, the people determined to go to the gold. Accordingly, the entire male population, with comparatively few exceptions, removed in the course of a few short weeks, to the vicinity of Mount Alexander and Forest Creek. Most of them left in vessels which were gladly sent from Melbourne to convey them. Others ascended the course of the River Murray, depending partially for subsistence on the game which abounds on that noble stream. Others, again, pursued the shorter but more adventurous route, across the inhospitable region which separates the two colonies, startling the wild tribes of the interior by their apparition, and leaving occasionally behind them small mounds of earth to mark the place where the strong man had bit the dust.

The exodus was almost complete, and entirely without parallel in the history of any country. The absence of the 'braw foresters,' so pathetically bewailed in the old ballad, was not more keenly felt by the Scottish maidens, than was that of many a husband and lover from the hearths of South Australia. None but women and children were to be seen anywhere, and the skill manifested by them in the management of affairs was the subject of much admiration. The entire vintage of that year was gathered, and the wine made by them; and never was there better made. 'In those days,' it may be emphatically said, 'there was no king in Israel, and every woman did that which was right in her own eyes.' No sight or sound of manual labour met the ear or eye. An unwonted silence prevailed. A state of society unsung by poets, and such as was never seen before, existed, in which gentleness, and

courtesy, and loving kindness reigned, and which will never be forgotten by those whom a supposed hard fortune compelled to remain behind. Had Mr. Tennyson been there at the time, another book might have been added to his 'Princess.'

Marvellous successes attended those who were first on the gold-fields. The South Australian settlers were remarkable for their good fortune—it may be added for their sobriety, and for the good example they set to the rest of the diggers. A few months, in many cases a few weeks, sufficed to gratify their desires. None of them took kindly to Victoria, or thought of making a permanent abode there. They remembered, too, that warm hearts were beating for them in their own loved and beautiful province, and that bright eyes were waiting to beam brighter at their return.

And the return came; and many a green valley, and vine-clad cottage, bore witness to the welcoming back, it may almost be said 'with timbrels and dancings,' of the wanderers laden with their golden spoil.

It is the above epoch in the history of South Australia which the writer has seized on for her story. How far she has been successful in so doing, it is for the gentle reader to determine.

B.

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CLARA MORISON.

CHAPTER I.

LIKE ALL FIRST CHAPTERS—INTRODUCTORY.

MR. MORISON had been sitting in his study for half an hour one morning, neither reading nor writing, but apparently settling the pros and cons of some new resolution which he had just formed, or perhaps trying to make it appear as graceful as it was convenient. At the end of his half hour's deliberation he rung the bell, and desired the servant to let Miss Susan and Miss Clara Morison know that he particularly requested their presence in his study immediately. They soon appeared, obedient to their uncle's summons; and while he is clearing his throat and making a few preliminary observations not much to the point, we will take a glance at the parties, and briefly explain their relative positions.

Mr. Morison was a grave, respectable looking man, between forty and fifty, who had a handsome house, and saw a good deal of company, in a fashionable street in Edinburgh. He had a delicate and rather *exigeante* wife and seven children, to whom he was as much attached as he could be to anything; but living up to his income, he felt that the recent death of his brother, leaving him two penniless girls to provide for, was a dreadful calamity; and it was in order, as he thought, to do the best for them with the least possible inconvenience to himself, that he sent for his nieces on this memorable morning. He did not like to be opposed in anything, and both of the young ladies knew it.

Susan was about one-and-twenty, with a plain face, and a figure barely tolerable; but her voice was exquisitely musical, her manners graceful and refined, and

every accomplishment which she had cultivated was thoroughly acquired; she was a skilful musician, she drew admirably, and she understood more than one foreign language. Mr. Morison felt that she would be an excellent governess for his family, and rejoiced in the idea that he was able to do all his duty by her. But with poor Clara, what was to be done? There she stood, with her soft grey eyes, sunny brown hair, radiant smile, and graceful figure, formed to delight her father's eyes and to gladden his heart, but without one accomplishment that had any marketable value. She neither played, nor sung, nor drew, but she read aloud with exquisite taste; her memory was stored with old ballads and new poems; she understood French, and was familiar with its literature, but could not speak the language; she could write short-hand, and construe Cæsar's Commentaries; she played whist and backgammon remarkably well, but she hated crochet and despised worsted-work. In her father's lifetime, Clara had been the general referee at home on all miscellaneous subjects. She knew what book such a thing was in, what part of the book, and almost at what page. But alas! no one cared now for such accomplishments, and she hung her head before her matter-of-fact uncle.

'My dear girls,' said he, 'you are aware that I am not rich, and I hope that neither of you have any objections to doing something for yourselves. I think, Susan, that you could make yourself useful in instructing my three girls, for your education has been a long and expensive one, and must now be turned to account. You will be treated by me and by your aunt exactly as a daughter of our own, and visit and receive visitors with us. And, my dear Susan, as you know your poor aunt's delicate state of health, I hope you will relieve her as much as you can from the fatigue and worry of looking after servants and ordering dinner. You have, since your mother's death, three years ago, had the whole management of your father's establishment, and

I am sure you take sufficient interest in us to do your utmost in mine. Now I hope, Susan, that you have no objection to make to this arrangement.'

Susan murmured, 'None whatever; but what shall Clara do?'

'Clara, unfortunately, has not made the same use of the advantages she had,' replied Mr. Morison. 'I do not see how I could get a situation for her, except perhaps as a nursery governess, with some eight or ten pounds a-year, which I am afraid Clara might think too small, and her employer too large, a remuneration for her services. My idea for Clara is, that she should emigrate to Australia.'

'Australia! sixteen thousand miles off!' cried both sisters, bursting into tears.

'What matter for distance?' said Mr. Morison. 'If Clara were to take a situation at all, you must be separated; and if you would look on the thing rationally, you would see that the greater the distance the better for her. In Australia they cannot want accomplished governesses; Clara might get fifty or sixty pounds a-year, and take a good position in society besides. And Clara, you are a pretty and a good girl; you will be sure to marry well in a country where young ladies are so scarce, and where nobody looks for a fortune with his wife; and then you can write for Susan, if you like, to join you.'

'But am I to go alone?' said Clara. 'I am only nineteen, and it is a dreadful thing to go through that long voyage without a friend.'

'I have spoken to Captain Whitby, of the *Magnificent*,' said her uncle, 'and he says that his wife will be a mother to you during the voyage. You will probably make friends among your fellow-passengers in a four months' voyage; and I will give you a strong letter of recommendation to my old friend Campbell, who is a rising merchant in Adelaide, and whose wife will give you a home till you get a situation. And I hope, my dear girl, that you will hold fast by your religious

principles even in such a distant land, for that is my only anxiety about you; and write to us by every opportunity that offers. I am confident that you will make a capital colonist. I have spoken to Captain Whitby about an intermediate berth for you; the accommodation between decks is of a very superior description—very superior, indeed. But, my dear child, if you do not like to go, say the word.’

Clara gasped, and felt nearly choked; but managed to say—

‘What does my aunt say about my going so far?’

‘She thinks it highly advisable, particularly as the climate is so fine, and she does not think the long, cold Scotch winters agree with you.’

‘If I am to go, when does the vessel——’

Clara could say no more.

‘Oh, no hurry—not for six weeks yet. You will have to get your things in order, and I will see that your outfit is complete; but you will tell me to-morrow morning if you have any reasonable objection to make. You had better sleep upon it, Clara, and tell me to-morrow.’

The sisters withdrew into their own room—not to consult, but to weep. They had never been separated in their lives. The loss of both their parents had made them all in all to each other; and though a vague and alarming idea had crossed each of their minds that their poverty might prevent them from living together in future, it had never been expressed in words, and it was only intimated by the frequency and tenderness of their caresses, and by long silent gazes into each other’s eyes, that they felt a time might come when they could neither caress nor look at one another.

Susan’s tears were of unmingled sadness; but there was some indignant bitterness in Clara’s. Susan felt that her uncle was kind to her, and that for Clara he was doing the best he could. But Clara, more clear-sighted, saw that her uncle wished to be spared the

mortification of seeing so near a relative reduced to be a nursery governess in his neighbourhood. But this feeling she did not communicate to Susan, when she saw that her sister did not herself perceive it; but said, she dared to say it was all for the best, but it was very sad.

They did not think of making any objection, or of pleading for any delay, but prepared for the worst by fresh bursts of tears; and when they did at last speak on the subject, it was about the long letters they would write, and the prayers they would offer up to God for each other.

‘I shall be comfortable,’ said Susan; ‘but what troubles you may have to go through, and I not near to help or comfort you! But yet, my darling, you are not appreciated here. You have finer abilities than I have; but because I make a noise on a piano, and scratch figures on Bristol board, I am extolled, and you are disparaged. They will judge better in Adelaide, I hope; and you will be marrying some rich man, and keeping your carriage; for you are very lovely, at least in my eyes. And when you are rich, and I would be no burden to you, send for me; for though my uncle and aunt are very kind, I am yours and you are mine, till death.’

‘Till death,’ said Clara. ‘But I can form no hopes of anything brilliant in the prospect before me. I feel so helpless, so useless, as if I might perish, and no man regard it. Only in your heart would I leave a void.’

Thus all that day did the sisters grieve together; and, after a sleepless night, rose at their usual hour, and went in to breakfast. Mrs. Morison was up, and dispensing coffee, which they scarcely expected, for she had been confined to her bed-room all the preceding dreadful day.

‘Well, Susan,’ said she, ‘this is the last day I mean to get breakfast for the family. You will, as my eldest daughter would do if she were old enough, pre-

side at the breakfast-table in future, I hope. The effort is really too much for me. I feel now quite exhausted, and I think I caught a chill this morning. Clara, will you ring the bell for me, my dear? What a treasure you will be in any Australian family; you are so obliging, and so fond of children. Your domestic virtues are quite undervalued in this country: every one looks to show and flourish here; but I believe that a truer taste pervades the communities of our colonies. I expect to hear of your being domiciled in some nice Scotch family in Adelaide, or near it. I would not like you to go far in the bush. The natives and bushrangers make it unsafe; and I have heard, too, that snakes are numerous and dangerous in the thinly-settled districts: so, for our sakes, as well as your own, do not venture far out. But every one says that the climate is delightful, and that is a grand consideration; and people are so simple and unsophisticated: the state of society is very charming. Governesses of every kind are so much wanted, that I have heard of people going in quest of them on board every newly-arrived ship, and engaging them before they put foot on shore. But, Clara, you must follow Mr. Campbell's advice, and not take the first situation that offers. You should prefer forty pounds a-year, with a comfortable home, to sixty, where everything is not *comme il faut*. We hear of servants and distressed needle-women making brilliant marriages in Australia. So, Clara, who knows how long you may continue teaching? But let your choice fall on a man of sound principles and religious feelings, if you mean to be happy.'

Mrs. Morison had gone on, without looking at Clara's red eyes, or Susan's woe-begone face; but, in presenting to them both the idea that Clara would be appreciated in the far land they destined for her home, she had done something to comfort and encourage her. So that when, after breakfast, her uncle asked her how she

felt on the subject of emigration, she replied, in a firmer voice than she could have thought possible the day before—

‘I have no objection to make. I will go to Australia.’

Her uncle and aunt encouraged and indulged Clara during the short time she had still to remain with them. Every one was busied with her outfit, which was a very good one, though principally adapted for summer wearing; for English and Scotch people never reckon on Australia having a winter at all. All Mr. Morison’s children gave Clara a little present to keep for their sakes. A great proportion of her friends gave her books, chiefly religious ones, with good wishes for her temporal, and especially her spiritual, prosperity, written in a bold hand on the fly-leaf.

Susan wished Clara to take all her books, as she herself did not care so much about reading as Clara did, and, besides, she would always have access to her uncle’s library, and the circulating libraries in town, whereas Clara might not be able to meet with books in that distant land.

Clara accepted her sister’s generous offer, leaving her only a few keep-sakes. Everything that Susan had she would have given to her sister; but, except in the matter of the books, Clara would not consent to such robbery.

Captain and Mrs. Whitby were invited several times to Mr. Morison’s, that Clara might become acquainted with them.

The host and hostess thought them most excellent and delightful people; but Clara could not admire them. They took too much notice of her, and made her feel uncomfortable. They talked of the colony of South Australia with raptures, which encouraged her at first; but when she discovered that this was their first voyage thither, she felt that their praises were no recommendation. Clara read every book that she

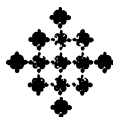
could procure about the colony she was bound for; but the accounts were so contradictory, that she came to no satisfactory conclusion.

She felt nervous when she heard that a young lady, named Miss Waterstone, was to share her cabin, and must, necessarily, be her intimate companion during the long dreary voyage. Mrs. Whitby was to be a mother to Miss Waterstone likewise. Clara begged her uncle to invite this young lady to spend a few days with her before undertaking the voyage together. And Miss Waterstone accepted the invitation for the last week but one of her remaining in Edinburgh.

Miss Waterstone was apparently about twenty-five. Her charms were fully developed, her complexion florid, her voice loud, and her manner imposing. She took so much notice of Mrs. Morison's children, that this lady was fully convinced of Miss Waterstone's amiability; and, as she behaved with great deference to both her host and hostess—never allowing herself to contradict them in the slightest point—they thought her a young woman of good judgment, with very correct principles. Mr. Morison earnestly recommended his young niece to her care, and presented her with a handsome work-box, which raised her opinion of his virtues to an extravagant pitch. Miss Waterstone's final destination was Melbourne; so that, as she sometimes regretfully said, she could do nothing for Clara at the end of the voyage; though, every now and then, she forgot it, and, with singular irrationality, proposed entering into partnership and commencing a school, in which she would take all the higher branches, while Clara would look after the house, and teach the junior members of the establishment. Mrs. Morison could not see that there was much to choose between Melbourne and Adelaide, and thought it would be as well for Clara to change her destination, to secure so valuable a friend; but her husband, not knowing anybody in the colony of Victoria, but an unmarried sheep-farmer, who lived a hundred-and-fifty miles up the country,

was obliged to give up the idea of the partnership, which would have been, indeed, an excellent arrangement for Clara. A few friends gave her letters of introduction to their Australian acquaintances; of which more hereafter.

Miss Waterstone had no doubt of her success: she was thoroughly competent to undertake anything in the way of education, though, as yet, she had had no experience; and she trusted to her letters of introduction bringing her at once into the best society in Melbourne. Clara tried hard to get up her confidence as well, but could not. She saw a thousand difficulties from within and from without, which no one else seemed to see for her. And when her friends wished her a safe and pleasant voyage, as if all would go smoothly if she were once landed in Australia, she felt that worse might follow, and that dangers by sea were the least of the risks she ran.



CHAPTER II.

WILL PROBABLY BE MISSED, FOR IT ONLY DESCRIBES
A LONG VOYAGE.

IT was late in the autumn of 1850, when Clara Morison set sail from Leith in the good ship *Magnificent*. The bitter parting from Susan was over. Miss Waterstone was drowned in tears on taking leave of all her friends; and they both felt ill and miserable as they lay in their respective berths, Clara above and Miss Waterstone below, sobbing and crying. Miss Waterstone left neither father nor mother, nor brother nor sister, behind her; and Clara thought her situation comparatively enviable, particularly as she was so hopeful of success in Victoria, till Miss Waterstone suddenly burst out with—

‘Oh, how I envy you, Miss Morison, if you do not leave your heart behind you. I have tried to keep up my spirits, but really I can stand it no longer. Oh, dear Robert! I may never see you again; and I never knew how dear you were to me till now!’

‘Oh!’ thought Clara, ‘everybody has her romance: this commonplace-looking woman may be as sensitive as I am, and have more to grieve for.’

‘I fear, if you are heart-whole, Miss Morison, that you will scarcely be able to sympathize with me; for love seems a delusion to all who have not felt it; but to those who have——’

Miss Waterstone could say no more.

‘I can give you my sympathy, though I have had no personal experience of the feeling,’ said Clara. ‘My idea of the subject is, that love is a very uncomfortable thing.’

‘Ah! my dear child, that is not the term to apply to it. It is anguish or ecstasy.’

Here Miss Waterstone groaned and blew her nose.

‘Do feel for me, my dear; it would do me so much good to talk about him.’

'Are you engaged, and have your friends objected to your marriage?' said Clara. 'I suppose you expect him to follow you to Australia?'

'I certainly do,' said Miss Waterstone, 'for I know he loves me; in fact, it is just possible that he is on board this vessel; but we have seen none of our fellow-passengers yet. He intends to go to Melbourne, and that is the reason I wished to go there, and indeed, I wish you were to go there too. I am sure you will like Robert, he is so handsome and agreeable, and genteel in his manners; I never saw any one so much the gentleman, and such a lady's man he is too; reads all the new novels; he used to get them for me; and goodness! how angry my old aunts used to be when they found them in my room. They forbade him to enter the house again; but I heard from a sure hand that he was going to Melbourne, so I made up my mind to go before him, that my cross aunts might suspect nothing. And even if I do not meet him—but that thought is not to be borne;—I must not dream of it. Still one can die in Australia as well as in Scotland, and it will not take much to kill me. But oh! Miss Morison, I feel very unwell indeed. How are you feeling now?'

Clara felt too ill to make any further inquiries as to Miss Waterstone's love, though she thought she was behaving very imprudently, and was still more imprudent to confess all this to such a stranger. But the real miseries of sea-sickness, aggravated by the want of attendance and comforts which cabin passengers could command, but which are utterly unattainable in the intermediate, banished every unkind thought from her mind, and made her only pity her companion, who was suffering more from sickness than herself.

Mrs. Whithy came down to see them once, and brought something that the girls could eat and drink; but her words of encouragement were more valuable than all, and she could not stay to give them many.

Miss Waterstone eagerly asked the names of the

cabin passengers, but though they were all given with precision, she seemed dissatisfied with the answer. She next falteringly inquired if there were any intermediate passengers on board besides themselves.

'Only two young men, Mr. Renton and Mr. Macnab,' said Mrs. Whitby. 'I suppose you will mess with them, for there are too few to make two messes?'

'Oh!' said Clara, 'could not Miss Waterstone and I have a table to ourselves?'

'I don't see how it could be done,' said Mrs. Whitby; 'besides, there is no steward for the intermediate, and as I fancy you will not like to go on deck to roast your coffee or get your meals, you will find these young gentlemen very useful.'

'I would like to join them by all means,' said Miss Waterstone. 'It would be so dull to be always by ourselves; don't you think so, Clara?'

Clara thought that Miss Waterstone's willingness proceeded from her knowledge of one at least of the parties spoken of, and was surprised when, on Mrs. Whitby's leaving their cabin, Elizabeth Waterstone burst into tears afresh, on account of Robert's not being on board.

'Do you think it right to mess along with two young men who are utter strangers to us?' asked Clara.

'If it had been wrong, would Mrs. Whitby have talked of it as a matter of course?' said Miss Waterstone; 'besides, they will be company for us. It would indeed be dull work this four months' voyage without a beau or two. We can get up a flirtation; I will take the tallest, and you will flirt with the shortest, and I dare say we shall have famous fun.'

'That would surely be wrong, Miss Waterstone; we cannot be too cautious in our manners to young men, thrown as we are into such close contact with them. And you an engaged woman too! It is not right to trifle with other people's feelings.'

'Tut! tut!' said Miss Waterstone, 'you know nothing of the world, or you would never put the

words feelings and flirtations together. Flirtation only means lively talk, and if you would condemn me to silence or to dull prosy conversation, I shall never get through this dreary voyage at all, with such a weight on my mind as I have, too. But do you know I feel much better now. I would like to peep out and reconnoitre. Come with me, Clara; do, there's a dear.'

So Clara, forgetting that her hair was in disorder and her dress crushed and tumbled out of all shape, good-naturedly accompanied Miss Waterstone into what was to be their dining-room and common sitting-room. Clara was pleased to see that they were divided from the young gentlemen by a long, narrow deal table, with ridges like those on the desks of church pews, to prevent plates from slipping off. The young gentlemen were on deck, so that the girls could look about them. Ships were not so crowded with passengers then as they are now, and the other four cabins of the intermediate were untenanted by any living occupant, but were full of goods, chiefly stores for the cabin; for the steward and the steward's boy were continually scrambling up and down the hatchway in search of something in them. At the further end of the apartment was a small room, that seemed to run into the mainmast, which was the dormitory of the first and second mate. The sound of children crying, and people groaning and squabbling, was easily heard through the thin partition which separated the intermediate from that part of the steerage allotted to the married folks and their families. They heard eight bells strike, and presently saw their two fellow-passengers descend the ladder, one bearing a small pitcher of pease-soup, and the other a piece of salt pork on a tin plate. They started on seeing the two girls, but recovering themselves, begged that they would share their repast, as their allotments were put together.

Miss Waterstone begged to be introduced, and having ascertained that Mr. Renton was decidedly the tallest

and best-looking, while Mr. Macnab was short and surly, with a dreadful squint, turned to Clara with a meaning smile, and said,—

‘Miss Morison and I, who I beg to inform you am Miss Waterstone, of Duke-street, Edinburgh, are scarcely in dinner costume, but you must excuse us for to-day, gentlemen. We will sit down with you for society, though I think neither of us can eat anything; and it does not look very tempting either.’

Tin plates, and knives and forks, were with some difficulty procured, and the two young ladies got a portion of the mess, but Clara could eat nothing. Miss Waterstone ate a little from complaisance, and endeavoured to make herself agreeable by the suavity of her manners. After dinner, Clara asked how the dishes were to be washed. Mr. Renton offered to do it, and Miss Waterstone was about to accept the offer, when Clara interfered, by saying—

‘If we are spared the trouble and annoyance of going on deck to get our provisions by these gentlemen, it is the least we can do for them to keep things clean and tidy down stairs. If they would be so kind as to bring us some hot water, we will wash the dishes, and the table too, for it needs it sadly.’

Miss Waterstone would have demurred, but Clara for once insisted on having her own way, and carried the point. Hot salt water was brought, after which the gentlemen went again on deck.

‘Going out on speculation, I suppose,’ said Renton. ‘Can’t hook any one at home, and trying it on in the colonies. What an extensive affair the eldest one is, but the little one knows what she is about too. Ha! ha! What fun we’ll get out of them both, Macnab! I wish I had not been in such dishabille, but on board ship one can’t be always spruce, particularly through that confounded sea-sickness. And I flatter myself that I have the air of a gentleman, even in the shabbiest clothes.’

‘Who cares about a body’s air?’ said Macnab, with a

supercilious sneer; 'it is what a body has that takes the women's fancy. I dare say that they would like to be saved all trouble in catching a husband on land, by fishing a little at sea; but they are no bait for me, I'm thinking.'

In the meantime the young ladies had retired to their cabin, and Miss Waterstone was very anxious to know Clara's first impressions of the beaux they had got. She herself saw some resemblance between Renton and Robert; there was the same look about their eyes, and their manners were very similar.

'You see that I have got the best of the two,' said she, smiling. 'Macnab is a perfect fright, and of all things in the world I abhor a squint. Oh, how I pity you, Clara! you cannot possibly flirt with such a creature. His west-country drawl is really detestable, and yet he seems to grudge his words as if they were music.'

'If I were to pass an opinion at all on the subject,' said Clara, 'on such slight grounds as I have for judging, I would say that I would rather go through this voyage with Mr. Macnab than with the other. He may be rude and surly, but Mr. Renton strikes me as being familiar, and inclined to be impudent.'

'Only kind and friendly,' said Miss Waterstone, eagerly; 'you cannot expect the stiffness and ceremony which you find in Edinburgh on board ship. There is an absence of all restraint here.'

'Ah! Miss Waterstone, I have read and heard that where there is no artificial constraint, young ladies should put a great deal of restraint upon themselves. For instance, when no one sees what you do, you should be the more careful to do nothing imprudent. I have often felt myself frozen up in a *tête-à-tête* with a gentleman whom I treated with cordiality when I met him in company.'

'Well, Miss Morison, I don't know what to make of you at all. A *tête-à-tête* is the most delightful thing in the world, but those aunts of mine would never give

me any opportunity for one, and I used to lay my plans beforehand, in order to manage an interview.'

Clara now said that she would like to read a little, and took up a book into her berth with her. Miss Waterstone got out some letters from her dressing-case, and began to read them, sighing and groaning at intervals. Suddenly they were in total darkness, and Miss Waterstone rose in real alarm.

'Clara, we are going to have a dreadful storm,' said she; 'I never saw anything so sudden in my life. Oh dear! we shall all be drowned! I must see what it is.'

And throwing down her letters with precipitation, she rushed out at the cabin-door, but all was as light in the dining-room as before; and after consulting with Clara, they came to the conclusion that something must have been put on the bull's-eye that served them for a window.

'Probably the plates for the cabin dinner,' said Clara, 'for I believe the pantry is just above us, from the noises I hear.'

Miss Waterstone was very indignant, and wanted to go on deck to remonstrate, but Clara intreated her to remain below, and not show herself in such dishabille.

'The plates cannot remain there long,' said she, 'and we can surely stay contentedly in darkness for half an hour. I cannot think of thrusting ourselves forward, during the bustle of the cabin dinner, to make complaints.'

'Whenever the gentlemen come down I'll tell them of it,' said Miss Waterstone, 'and send them up to rectify it. I don't see what right the cabin dinner has to deprive us of the light of day; it is unjustifiable. In the meantime let us open the door and let in the borrowed light from the saloon, as they call it, into our state-room.'

Clara consented to the door's being left slightly ajar, getting up herself, and smoothing her hair and arranging her dress as well as the bad light permitted her; but Miss Waterstone still remained straining her eyes over

her letters, till aroused by the footsteps of Renton and Macnab descending the hatchway.

‘Do go and speak to them, Clara; I am not fit to be seen. Bid them remonstrate with the steward, and get the plates taken away—my eyes ache dreadfully for want of light. Quick, Clara, before they go into their cabin.’

Timidly, Clara went out, and explained their annoyance. Mr. Renton said he was enchanted to have an opportunity to oblige the ladies—there was nothing he would not do to please the fair; and hurried off. Mr. Macnab gave a sardonic smile, and retreated into his cabin. The steward was hurried and cross, and made great objections to lifting the plates; the bull’s-eye was just at his pantry-door, and it was very inconvenient to put them anywhere else; but Mr. Renton talked so much and so loudly about the deprivation and annoyance to the young ladies, that he attracted several of the cabin-passengers round the disputants. They gave decision in favour of the ladies, but could not help laughing at the vulgar importance of their champion. The steward was offended at his manner, and determined to set the plates on the bull’s-eye every day, to give Renton the trouble of coming up and battling for daylight for the ladies.

Hot and triumphant, he came down stairs; Clara went out to thank him, while Miss Waterstone murmured her gratitude from the further end of her cabin.

We need not go into detail with the monotonous life on board a passenger ship during so long a voyage. To fancy that a captain’s lady can take a motherly charge of any intermediate passenger is a splendid absurdity, which nobody that had been on board a week could believe for a moment. Mrs. Whitby did more than could be expected from her; she came to see the girls once a-week, and asked after their health. She found Miss Waterstone on very good terms with her messmates, ordering Mr. Renton about in the most unscrupulous manner, but always joining the reluctant Clara in every

request she made. When they went on deck, they had no proper place allotted to them, and not being permitted to go aft with the cabin passengers, sat on a bench together, amongst the steerage passengers. If Miss Waterstone's voice had not been so loud, and her flirtations with Mr. Renton so undisguised; if she had put as much restraint upon herself as she had done in her visit to Clara's uncle, Mrs. Whitby, who was not ill-natured, would have pressed Mrs. Surford and Mrs. Hastie, the principal ladies in the cuddy, to have invited the girls to the poop; and really felt for Clara, who looked uncomfortable and unhappy. But to invite Clara without Miss Waterstone was impossible; Renton and Macnab would have followed them, and the exclusive society of the after-cabin would never tolerate such a wholesale invasion of their privileges.

How Clara longed for the voyage to be over!—how she wished that she had been rather sent out alone, than with a companion who compromised her so fatally, yet so good-humouredly! Her heart sank within her when she remembered her uncle's assurances that Mrs. Whitby would be a mother to her, and that she was sure to make valuable friends on board; and a dread came over her that his golden dreams about South Australia might prove as groundless.

Miss Waterstone was continually taking notice of the children, and talking to the servants of the ladies in the cuddy, which was considered presumptuous and impertinent by those ladies; and Clara's backwardness and timidity were also misconstrued. Even what Mrs. Whitby told in the cabin about Miss Morison's good connexions—her excellent uncle, his handsome house, elegant furniture, and numerous servants—went against his niece. If she really was a good, amiable girl, why did a man of Mr. Morison's means and standing send her out alone to such a distance?

Mr. Macnab got more endurable towards the end of the voyage. Miss Waterstone thought he was becoming melted. And as for Mr. Renton, he was delightful.

Clara would often have remained alone in her cabin, and allowed Miss Waterstone to go on deck without her; but she felt that her companion needed protection, though she did not wish it. How often Clara wished for solitude. How weary she was of Miss Waterstone's long digressive descriptions of Robert and his charms; and of all the other delightful young men who either had admired her, or ought to have done so. How sick of all her companion's cross-questionings as to the state of her own heart, and whether she had ever had an offer, and if there were many beaux visiting at her father's house; or if her sister was never jealous of her superior charms. In vain Clara again and again answered in the negative to all these questions. The undaunted Miss Waterstone returned to the charge, and only felt hurt at Clara's closeness; it seemed such a bad return for all her confidence.

Then Miss Waterstone was always dreaming that Mr. Macnab had stolen her hundred sovereigns out of her dressing-case, and getting up at any hour in the night in great alarm, striking a light, and counting them all over for security. She once insisted on Clara's getting up too, and seeing that her money was safe. Poor Clara's ten sovereigns were not so hard to count. Miss Waterstone was of opinion that her uncle should have given her, at least, fifty.

'You should always have enough to take you home again, if you do not succeed, or do not keep your health in a strange country,' said she; 'and it is no wonder that I am so anxious about mine. If Robert does not come to Melbourne, I may feel too broken-spirited to take a situation, and will need all I have got. But it really is the most singular thing that I should dream this so often, and always of Mr. Macnab. I never dream of Mr. Renton taking it, or of Mr. Melvin or Mr. Macfie, the mates, doing such a thing, and I am sure they all need it more than Mr. Macnab, who is very well off indeed. It is really wonderful that I should always fix on him as the thief. He looks very avari-

cious certainly, and has a greedy look about the eyes. We had better both beware of him, for the thing is quite outside of the common.'

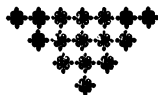
But in the morning her suspicions vanished, and she was as gracious to Macnab as ever, and that was as gracious as he would let her be. Miss Waterstone was very affable and polite to the mates, who lived in the mainmast-cabin, and got them to procure her some comforts and luxuries, which, they said, they stole for her; so, as she said, it would have been more to be expected that she should dream of their being the thieves.

But the voyage was got through at last, and, after seeing a very unpromising-looking island, about which Miss Waterstone fell into raptures, and misquoted some sentimental poetry about yon green isle, and which, they were informed, was called Kangaroo Island, they took a pilot on board, and slowly went up the creek till they got into Port Adelaide. Miss Waterstone wanted to go on shore at once; Mr. Renton took the opportunity of the first boat that came to leave the ship; but Mr. Macnab had a considerable quantity of goods on board, and would not land till he saw them safe.

Clara cogitated within herself how she should appear before Mr. Campbell. She wished to prevail upon Mrs. Whitby to accompany her; but she was surprised to see that lady go on shore along with Mrs. Hastie and her family, merely remarking to her, that she had better go to town on the morrow, and see Mr. Campbell at his place of business in Hindley-street. Mrs. Whitby bade Clara good-by for the present, saying that she was going with Mrs. Hastie to a friend's house, some miles out of town, and left Clara in great perplexity. Miss Waterstone volunteered to go to Adelaide with her; and Clara, hoping that she would be as prudent and quiet on shore as she had seemed to be at her uncle's before she sailed, accepted of her offer, and thanked her for her kindness. Clara's boxes were got

out, and she packed up all her loose property, with the exception of a book, and a few nick-nacks, which Miss Waterstone had admired, and which she now begged her to keep for her sake.

Good-humoured Miss Waterstone was much obliged. She regretted parting with her dear Clara, hoped they might meet again, and put the presents in her box. Miss Waterstone did not dream this night about the loss of her money; but though undisturbed, Clara was too much excited to sleep. The next day she was to be thrown upon the world in a strange land. All her deficiencies stared her in the face. She saw Mr. Campbell looking sternly at her, and asking what right she had to any countenance or protection from him. She saw Mrs. Campbell eyeing her from head to foot, and expressing by looks, if not by words, her annoyance at being burdened with such a helpless creature. She saw Renton shaking hands with her in an offensively familiar way before Mr. Campbell's face. She heard Miss Waterstone's loud vulgar remarks. She fancied that Mr. Campbell must have seen the cabin passengers of the Magnificent, and heard from them what sort of people the intermediates were. And tossing to and fro in her narrow berth, she sobbed aloud at the humiliation of her position.



CHAPTER III.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF ADELAIDE.

IT was a hot day, rather towards the end of an Australian summer, when Clara and Miss Waterstone went on shore, and after a little difficulty about Clara's luggage, which, after some hesitation, she directed the draymen to take to Mr. Campbell's warehouse, they got into a port cart, and drove up the miserably dusty road which leads from the port to the town. Everything looked as disconsolate as Clara's own thoughts. The grass was scanty, and so burnt up, that one wondered if it ever could have been green; there was not a flower to be seen; the sun was scorchingly hot; the wind, direct from the north, blew as if out of a furnace; the cart jolted, as if it would shake her to pieces, while the passengers abused the weather, and prayed for a railroad. Miss Waterstone's round face was streaming with perspiration; Clara's pocket-handkerchief became nearly black in her vain endeavours to keep hers clean; and the pale muslin dress and white chemisette and sleeves, which she had put on as suitable for the weather, were sadly crushed and soiled. The sight of green gardens in North Adelaide refreshed her eyes; and as the cart drove into town, her curiosity and interest in what she saw for a few minutes drove away her painful sensations. The streets, though straight, were most irregularly built upon; houses of brick, wood, earth, and stone, seemed to be thrown together without any plan whatever, and looked too incongruous even to be picturesque. The river was unworthy of the name; she had never seen a burn in Scotland so small. And when one of the gentlemen in the cart told her that on this river Torrens, the inhabitants of Adelaide were almost wholly dependent for water, she feared that there must be dreadful scarcity at times. She wondered at the complacent

tone in which this gentleman talked of the colony, though he confessed that it was often as hot and as dusty as now; and that in winter the streets and roads were dreadfully bad—almost impassable.

Miss Waterstone groaned audibly, from the effects of heat and exhaustion; and pitied Clara, who had been condemned to live in such a fiery furnace as Adelaide seemed to be. But the cart stopped, and with it her lamentations; and the driver directed them to a large building, a few doors off, which he said was Campbell's store.

Clara would fain have made a more creditable appearance than she now could, and was half inclined to ask the gentleman who had spoken to her before, if he knew of any respectable boarding house where she might rest for half an hour, but did not like to take the liberty. Miss Waterstone eagerly forced her on, being so anxious to get into the shade, that she quite overlooked the appearance they must both make—dusty, and burnt quite red with the sun.

The warehouse door was open, and the girls looked in.

'Is Mr. Campbell in?' said Miss Waterstone, taking the lead from her anxious companion; 'we have particular business with him.'

'A consignment,' muttered the clerk; 'rather a heavy article;' but he said aloud, 'Mr. Campbell has just gone out, but you will take a seat in his private room till he returns. He cannot be ten minutes.'

'Oh! most gladly will we take a seat out of the sun,' said Miss Waterstone. 'The heat is really beyond everything. Is it always like this in Adelaide? Oh, me! I feel melting away altogether.'

And Miss Waterstone sat down in Mr. Campbell's own particular chair, loosened her bonnet, wiped her face, unclasped her shawl, and spread out her clothes as much as she could, that they might come down to in-doors temperature.

'Oh! Clara,' said she, 'this is refreshing. I feel as if I were down a well, and yet the thermometer says

89 degrees. What it can be outside I cannot fancy; something very near the boiling-point, I dare say.'

Here Miss Waterstone laughed, and turned over the leaves of some newspapers that lay on the table.

'Everything seems in order here; it does not look so unlike Edinburgh in-doors as out. Maps pasted up and letters filed with the greatest propriety,' continued Miss Waterstone. 'I am sure Mr. Campbell must be an excellent man of business. I see our names are in this paper as having come by the 'Magnificent,' and I dare say Mr. Campbell is expecting us, or at least you, for I fancy he knows nothing of the Waterstones. Well, I hope you will get on well with him. You heard how much he was respected from those gentlemen in the cart,—quite at the top of the tree in the colony. I don't see why he should not engage you himself, even if he has no family, which you are not sure of; I dare say his wife would be the better of such a companion as you would make; and you would see such lots of folk in a house like his. I must say you are in luck, Clara;' forgetting how much she had pitied her ten minutes before.

In vain Clara tried to collect herself for the important meeting,—in vain she tried to frame an initiatory speech; tears started to her eyes, her heart beat wildly, and her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth. Miss Waterstone found out that she, too, was very thirsty, and was just going to rise to request a glass of water, when the door opened, and Mr. Campbell entered.

He seemed to be about the same age as Mr. Morison. He was dressed in white from head to foot, and though rather stout, had a good presence, Miss Waterstone thought. His complexion was fair, but on this hot day his face was red all over; he looked good-natured, but not very firm; and from his voice twelve years' residence in South Australia had not taken the accent so dear to Clara's heart.

Miss Waterstone snatched from Clara's passive hand

the letter of her uncle, and presented it with an air of some importance to Mr. Campbell. Clara trembled as he opened it, and read to himself as follows:—

‘DEAR CAMPBELL,—

‘After so long a silence on my part, I fear that you will consider me as trespassing on your well-known good-nature in the request I am about to make to you.

‘My poor brother William, after a tedious illness, died a few months ago, leaving his affairs in a sad state. He would speculate beyond his means, and the result has been ruinous. He left his two girls to be provided for by me, and of course I have done all in my power for them. The eldest and plainest girl I have given a home to, but I cannot afford to injure my own family so much as the additional burden of the younger would do; and as she is a thoroughly amiable, good, and pretty girl, I think she may by your good offices make her way well in a colony like yours.

‘My brother made a great pet of Clara, and did not force her on so much with her education as he might have done; he selfishly trained her to minister to his own private comfort, instead of looking forward to her ultimate prospects in life. She used to read aloud to him, copy letters and accounts, play whist and backgammon, and I am aware that she has very good abilities. She has had a thorough English education, is a very fair French scholar, and a first-rate arithmetician; but I regret to say that she is quite ignorant of music and drawing. I have found it impossible to get a situation for her in this country, but I feel convinced that she would be a treasure in any family who preferred solid acquirements to superficial accomplishments.

‘I hope, dear Campbell, that for auld lang syne you will look to her a little, and that your kind-hearted wife will give her a home till she gets a situation.

‘If it is impossible to get anything suitable for her,

you may draw on me for as much money as will take her back to Scotland, though that is an extremity I can scarcely imagine Clara to be reduced to in your flourishing community.

‘We hear great things of your mines in South Australia, and all your friends in Edinburgh expect you to come home as rich as a nabob some day soon. It is nearly twelve years now since we parted, and I cannot say that I have ever met any man that I respected or liked so much as you all that time. Mrs. Morison and I often talk of the pleasant evenings we used to spend with you in the Crescent. My family now amounts to seven,—three girls and four boys, and of course they are the finest children that ever existed. They are all in great grief about parting with their cousin Clara, and all their mamma can say to them about its being for Clara’s own good does not quite dry their tears.

‘I hope Mrs. Campbell’s motherly heart will warm to the orphan thrown upon her tender charity in a strange land. Mrs. Morison would have written to her, but all this excitement has been too much for her nerves, and she feels quite inadequate to the task. She joins me in kindest regards to Mrs. Campbell and yourself, and in the hope that you will soon revisit Auld Reekie,

‘Believe me yours sincerely,

‘JAMES MORISON.’

After reading the letter, Mr. Campbell looked dreadfully puzzled. Which was the lady, and what was he to do with her? Miss Waterstone certainly had given him the letter, but she did not look at all like the family, and he hoped that she was not the one he was to take care of; besides, she seemed confident and comfortable, and though in some instances new comers had presented letters of introduction to him with considerable coolness, Miss Waterstone’s self-possession was beyond anything he had yet seen; and when she began to speak, and complained of the dust and the heat with

loud volubility, while Clara stood trembling in the background, his alarm as to his consignment found vent in words, and he exclaimed, 'Which lady is Miss Morison?'

'Oh! not me,' said Miss Waterstone, with a hearty laugh; 'only to think of me being supposed to be the principal party here! I am Miss Waterstone, a fellow-passenger of Clara's, and I accompanied her because she did not like to come by herself; and if it had not been for this dreadful heat and abominable dust, I would have liked it very much; but it is delightful here, just like a well. Can your thermometer be right, Mr. Campbell? Is it really so hot here as 89 degrees? We never suffered so much from heat, even when crossing the Line, as we have done to-day; but the sea breeze is preferable to the land breeze. I should fancy that the soil here could grow nothing, for it seems to spend 'most of its time in the air,' as the old song says. Eh, Mr. Campbell?'

Perhaps Miss Waterstone thought that she was giving Clara time to come to herself while she was speaking, but it had quite the contrary effect.

'I hope, Mr. Campbell,—that is, I wish,—I am sorry. I will do anything. Will Mrs. Campbell——'

Here she came to a full stop, and felt that she had said nothing, and yet too much.

'I should have thought,' said Mr. Campbell, gravely, 'that my old friend Morison might have heard of my sad bereavement before you set sail; but I regret to be obliged to tell you that I cannot offer you Mrs. Campbell's protection, which I know she would have gladly given you. She is no more!'

Clara grieved for the bereaved husband; she grieved, too, for herself, and burst into tears. Mr. Campbell was rather pleased with her sensibility, for he overlooked the selfish part of her sorrow.

'Ah, Miss Morison, it makes a fearful blank,—but I can offer you the protection of my house, if you choose to accept of it; that is, if you have no other friend,' said Mr. Campbell, hesitatingly.

Miss Waterstone signed to Clara to take advantage of this offer, but Clara mournfully shook her head, and took from her bag three other letters of introduction, which her friends had given her on her departure.

'Oh, my poor child,' said Mr. Campbell, kindly, 'these are quite valueless. One of the parties addressed, to my certain knowledge, lives at Hobarton, another in Sydney; so much for Edinburgh folks' knowledge of Australian geography.'

'But the third?' said Clara, eagerly, 'surely I may try what it can do?'


'I do not know who wrote this letter,' said Mr. Campbell, 'but if any one had given a letter of introduction to any girl I took any interest in, with such an address, I should look on it as an insult. He bears a bad character, and you must not know him.'

'The letter is from his aunt,' said Clara; 'I understood that he was married, and that his wife would be kind to me; but take it, destroy it, or let me tear it in pieces.' So saying, she tore the letter into shreds, and exhausted and heartsick, sat down to hear what advice Mr. Campbell had to give her.

'If,' said he, 'you really have no friends here, I can give you a home. I have room enough in my place out of town.'

Visions of the whist and backgammon, and of all the little attentions Clara might pay him, floated through his mind; and burnt, and dusty, and tearful as Clara was, there was no disguising that she was a bonnie lassie; and he felt inclined to press her to become an inmate of his very dull, lonely house, but he resisted the temptation.

He felt relieved when Clara gratefully but decidedly declined his offered hospitality, and begged him to recommend her to a respectable house where she might stay till she found employment. He delicately inquired into the state of her finances, and hoped she might be able to make her money hold out till then. Clara assured him that she would do her best with her



ten pounds, or rather, what was left of it, for she had been obliged to break in upon it for the day's expenses; and, turning anxiously to Mr. Campbell, said she would go to the cheapest respectable house he could point out; she did not mind about discomfort, but the place must be respectable.

Mr. Campbell good-naturedly put on his hat, and offered to accompany Miss Morison in her search for lodgings. He told Clara that Mrs. Handy's house was thought very well conducted; that Mr. Handy had gone to California on a gold-hunting expedition, and though he had been gone more than a year, did not speak of coming back soon; but that, in his absence, the boarding-house was very creditably managed by Mrs. Handy. It would not cost Clara more than eighteen shillings a-week to live at Handy's. There were often no ladies there; but she ought to keep by her hostess as much as possible.

'I will make inquiries amongst all my lady acquaintances,' said Mr. Campbell, 'and do all in my power to get a situation for you; but, Miss Morison, you must form no extravagant idea of the remuneration of governesses here. They can get no more than they do at home, and often not so much. They are frequently called upon to assist in household work, and generally are made to act as nursemaids. The only point in which their situation is better than in Scotland is, that their term of service is not generally so long. There is more chance of promotion; but girls should be cautious in that matter, too; for I have seen some governesses make wretched marriages, from not knowing the man's character, and having no one to find out what he was for them.'

Clara thanked Mr. Campbell for all his advice and kind intentions; agreed that she would try to be useful, and would not object to a small salary. He laughed when she told him that she knew a little Latin, and could write shorthand, and thought her education had been singularly misdirected; but by this time they had

reached Mrs. Handy's door; and Miss Waterstone, who was faint with heat and fatigue, declared that she would stop there a week, while the vessel was in harbour, and keep Clara company till she had got over the novelty of such a strange life. Mr. Campbell had taken as great a dislike to Miss Waterstone as it was in his nature to feel; for she was not overawed by his manner, and did not seem to know her position. He did not like this woman to stick so close to his *protégée*, but he said nothing. He recommended Miss Morison to Mrs. Handy's particular care, and left her, with a comfortable consciousness on his part, that he had done all he could, and more than could have been expected from him.

'I wonder,' thought he, as he retraced his steps to his place of business, 'if James Morison had heard of my wife's death, and sent out this pretty niece to be Mrs. Campbell number two. It looks very queer, for I sent him the paper, and there has been time in twelve months to fit out the young lady and despatch her. I think she knows nothing of the matter, however; but, upon my word, it is the boldest stroke ever James made. If not to be my wife, what should make him send the poor thing here? Everybody that can do nothing at home is sent out as quite good enough for the colonies, and generally with such a flaming high character, that we require to be cautious. I have had two clerks recommended to me by friends at home, as trustworthy and honest, who have robbed me right and left; and three others, who habitually got drunk, and neglected and mismanaged my business, who, I was informed, would prove treasures. I like to see a man earn a colonial character before I trust him far, and a woman too. And this girl may turn out like the rest of them, though she has a sweet voice, and a modest, timid manner.'

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOARDING-HOUSE.

MRS. HANDY regretted that she had not two rooms vacant, but she hoped that the two ladies would not object to occupying the same room. Miss Waterstone said she would prefer this arrangement, and Clara, though longing to be alone, if but for half an hour, could make no objection. The bed-room they were shown into was somewhat larger than their cabin on shipboard; and though it was scantily furnished, it looked clean and tidy. Mrs. Handy having procured them a tolerable supply of cold water, which, she said, would make them half forget how hot it was, left Miss Waterstone and Clara to arrange their toilet.

‘Oh, Clara! what shall we do?’ said Miss Waterstone. ‘My portmanteau is in Mr. Campbell’s store, and so are all your things. I hope some one will think of sending them, for we can’t go in to dinner as we are.’

But there was no help for it, as neither Clara’s boxes nor Miss Waterstone’s portmanteau made their appearance till the following day. Mrs. Handy obligingly brought their dinner into their bed-room; but hoped that they would come into tea.

‘I told the gentlemen,’ said she, ‘that I had two young ladies in the house, and they were like to pull me to pieces because I did not bring you in to dinner. We have tea a little after seven, and as it will then be candlelight, you need not mind about your dresses.’

So at a quarter past seven, the young ladies emerged from their apartment, and were introduced by Mrs. Handy to so many new names, that they forgot them all immediately. They sat down on each side of Mrs. Handy, and felt that they were gazed on with considerable curiosity by some eight or ten pairs of eyes. There were two clerks in situations, two on the look-


out for a clerkship, a middle-aged man who did something in the commission way, a German gentleman with a large moustache, two assistants in shops, who seemed to be looked down on by the others; the overseer of a sheep-farmer in the north, who had come into town to sell sheep and get stores for the stations; and a new comer, who, without being a clerk or accountant, or, in fact, brought up to any business at all, had come out to South Australia, in the hope that something would turn up for him there. He was very simple, and seemed to be the general butt.

Miss Waterstone felt quite happy when she saw so many people who seemed disposed to be agreeable; she saw with half an eye the great joke of the establishment was to make Mr. Blinker (the butt) show off, and she felt sure that she should not want for attention where the gentlemen formed so overwhelming a majority. Close beside her was the country overseer, Mr. Humberstone, not ill-looking, rather well-dressed, disposed to be complimentary, and labouring under the strange delusion that he was very bashful, and wanted a great deal of encouragement.

Miss Waterstone had received a piece of bread and butter from his hands with a gracious smile, and had laughed at an attempted witticism on the similarity of their names, which had been received with general applause. Mrs. Handy had just asked her if her tea was sweet enough, when the door opened, and a gentleman with spurs and large straw hat on, and looking hot, dusty, and tired, entered the well-filled parlour.

‘Well, Mr. Reginald,’ said Mrs. Handy, with the accent of surprise.

The new comer quietly ascertained that he could be accommodated with the sofa for a bed; and having vanished for a few minutes to brush away the marks of his journey, soon reappeared, brought forward a chair, and sat down next to Clara, displacing the surprised Mr. Haussen, the German, who speaking English very imperfectly, and only by his gestures expressing



politeness, had struck Clara as being by far the most gentlemanly of the party.

'Ah!' said Mrs. Handy, 'Mr. Reginald knows what he is about when he gets near the ladies. Let me introduce you. Miss Waterstone, Miss Morison, just landed to-day from the *Magnificent*; Mr. Reginald, from the North. I think you know Mr. Campbell, Mr. Reginald, a friend of Miss Morison's,—a relation, I believe?'

'No relation,' murmured Clara.

'I felt quite pleased,' said Mrs. Handy, 'at the high terms Mr. Campbell used to-day about this establishment. He said I was the only person in town he could trust ladies with.'

'Do give me a cup of tea, Mrs. Handy,' interposed Mr. Reginald, 'for I am dying of thirst. I come near you to be well supplied; all selfishness on my part.'

Mr. Reginald saw that his newly-introduced companion was pretty and ladylike, and evidently ill at ease in the motley assembly she was thrown amongst. Her face was so intelligent and expressive, and her manner so timid, that he wondered what strange chance had sent her alone, or with such a companion as Miss Waterstone, to South Australia.

Clara, in the two half glances she had given him, saw a gentleman tall and dark, with fine eyes and a singularly pleasant smile. His age seemed to be about thirty, and his accent was English.

'Does this put you in mind of Todgers', Miss Morison?' said he, while the hostess was warmly recommending Miss Waterstone to change her mind about going to Melbourne, and remain in Adelaide, which she confidently asserted was far the better, and appealed to the gentlemen for confirmation.

How refreshing to poor Clara was this little allusion to a book! Of course Miss Waterstone had read all the current literature of the day that Robert had procured her, and considered herself, in her own phrase, *a well-read woman*; but whatever she read she made a

point of forgetting, so that for those four months Clara had been debarred from her favourite topic of conversation. She smiled her assent, and Mr. Reginald continued,—

‘We have a greater medley here than Mrs. Todgers had; English, Scotch, and Irish, and the German gentleman at your other hand. It is a pity he knows so little English, and has so little confidence in what knowledge he has, for he is highly accomplished, and you would find him agreeable when you got to understand him. I think I see Jenkins at the other end of the table, and perhaps that poor, ill-used individual, Blinker, might pass for Augustus Moddle. We certainly want Miss Cherry Pecksniff, though your companion makes no bad Miss Merry.’

Clara felt flattered at Miss Waterstone’s being considered her companion merely, not her friend. She felt more at ease with this strange gentleman than she had done since she left home, and with a look such as her father had loved to see, said,—

‘Then you do get a sight of Dickens’ works here?’

‘It would be too bad if we did not,’ said Mr. Reginald. ‘I get tired sometimes of the mighty dead, and like to hold communion with the delightful living. I get out the newest works of Dickens, Bulwer, and Thackeray. Have you seen the end of ‘Pendennis,’ Miss Morison?’

‘It had not all come out when I left home,’ said Clara, ‘and I was very anxious to know how it was to wind up.’

‘So am I,’ said Reginald. ‘It would be too trite and commonplace to kill off Blue Beard’s wife, and get Laura to marry him,—but yet I do not feel that Pen deserves her. I am afraid, however, that George Warrington is too rough and gruff to suit a lady’s taste.’

‘O, no, indeed,’ said Clara, ‘I do not like Pen; he wants courage. If men knew how much women admire courage—moral courage in particular—they

would not be so fond of making themselves appear small and petty in their presence, as they are.'

'What has struck me most in 'Pendennis' is that chapter about Sadducees,' said Reginald; 'it seems to be written for this colony; how many Sadducees we meet here every day! men who have no genuine faith in anything, who see things going wrong, but will not give themselves any trouble to set them right, men whose belief is only opinion, and whose love degenerates into convenience!'

'Miss Waterstone is going to sing,' said Mr. Oscar. 'Why, Mr. Reginald, you completely monopolize Miss Morison.'

Miss Morison blushed. She had forgotten the whole company; she had heard voices and laughter, but knew not what had been said, or who had been amused. She had even forgotten that Miss Waterstone was present; she had only felt happy, and was unconscious of anything else.

Miss Waterstone sung. Never had she sung so well. The hot wind clears the voice, if it has no other good effect; and a naturally fine voice, some musical talent, and a slight infusion of taste, rendered her song a very pleasing performance. Miss Morison was next entreated to sing. She said she never sung, and appealed to Miss Waterstone for confirmation.

'Indeed,' said Miss Waterstone, 'Clara has never favoured me with anything like a song the whole voyage; except, indeed, the words. I think she knows the words of every song that ever was written. And for poetry, too, I never saw such a memory.'

'Miss Morison would not sing to-night, even if she could,' said Mr. Reginald, in a low tone, to Clara.

Clara smiled. 'But, indeed, I cannot sing at all, nor play either,' said she.

'If Miss Morison knows the words of songs,' said a black-eyed puppy, with an imperial, from the other end of the room, 'she will be invaluable to Blinker. He is acquainted with all the tunes, but fails in the

words. It is Miss Waterstone's privilege to call: I merely hint that Blinker sings.'

'Indeed he does, charmingly,' said half-a-dozen voices. 'You see the ladies are dying to hear you, Blinker.'

'Ask him, Miss Waterstone,' whispered the country overseer. 'It is such fun! You have no notion how soft he is.'

And Miss Waterstone, entering into the joke, pressed Mr. Blinker to sing. And Mr. Blinker would do anything to please the ladies; but he did not sing well. He knew what good singing was; he understood music; but his voice was not what it used to be. He would do his best, however, if they would not be too severe upon him. Would Mrs. Handy let him have her 'Little Warbler?'

'Oh!' said the puppy before mentioned, whose name was Brown, 'Miss Morison will enable us to dispense with the 'Little Warbler' for to-night. We must get a song of some kind from Miss Morison.'

Clara looked indignant, and with a glance made Brown lower his eyes, which saved Mr. Reginald the trouble of telling him to hold his tongue.

'Well,' said Oscar, 'here is the 'Little Warbler,' and go it, Blinker!'

So Blinker began at the beginning of the book, and sung 'The Last Rose of Summer,' in a feeble, croaky voice; but was greeted with a round of applause at the termination, and an earnest request for another. He sang the next in order, and was again applauded. He liked to sing, and whenever he seemed inclined to shut the book and give up, the other gentlemen whispered that the ladies were enchanted with his performance, and would be quite grieved if he did not continue it. The German, who had a fine taste in music, had put on his hat at the beginning of the second song and gone out; and nothing but his desire to see how his fair companion would get through what must be to her a very uncomfortable scene, prevented

Reginald from following his example. Fourteen songs had been sung by the indefatigable Blinker—four comic, and ten sentimental—before he laid down the book. Then Miss Waterstone sung again. Not so well as at first, for her lungs were quite exhausted by laughter, suppressed and otherwise. Clara had not much more uninterrupted conversation with Mr. Reginald; but she felt that he understood her; and she wondered if South Australian sheep-farmers were all as agreeable. In the midst of these thoughts, she heard the clock strike. She did not exactly know what hour; but she telegraphed to her companion, who understood the signal.

Miss Waterstone wished to shake hands with Mr. Humberstone at least; but she saw that Clara's dignified reverence looked well, and ventured on an imitation. Mrs. Handy accompanied them to their bed-room; hoped they had enjoyed themselves; said that she herself had never passed a more delightful evening, and bid them good night.

'Ah, Clara!' said Elizabeth Waterstone, 'I thought that you never flirted, and could not conduct a *tête-à-tête*. Well, if you never did in Scotland, you came off amazingly well for a beginner. You monopolized the handsomest, the richest, and the most agreeable gentleman in the room. Mr. Humberstone tells me he is a large sheep-holder, and of a good family, too; but I see you did not care to flirt till you found some one worth your while!'

'Do you call that flirting?' said Clara. 'Mr. Reginald only talked to me as my father used to do—my own dear papa! Oh, if he was with me, I should be able to bear anything! Welcome poverty and labour, if shared with him! I must try to do nothing unbecoming his memory, and, by God's help, I will do what is right in the thorny path I have to tread.'

'Dear me, Clara! you are on your high horse, to-night; but do not be so much uplifted. I think Mr. Reginald is a dreadful flirt. Mr. Brown told me as much, when he saw you so much taken up with him.'

Clara paid no attention to these words; but knelt down, and prayed long and fervently that her steps might be ordered aright. She would enter into no conversation, though Elizabeth was disposed to talk; but, contrary to her own expectation, after this exciting day, fell immediately into a sweet, sound, refreshing sleep. Next morning, Mrs. Handy told the ladies, after breakfast was over, and the gentlemen dispersed, that she considered Mr. Reginald as a king compared to the rest.

‘The others may have more fun, but Mr. Reginald is always polite and gentlemanly; I never saw anybody with finer manners in or out of the colony. And they all grumble at the food I give them but Mr. Reginald. If I gave him bread and water, I believe he would make no complaint. If you only knew Mr. Oscar and the trouble he gives me, you would wonder that we have hung together so long. At first I used to fret myself sadly when he said, ‘No pudding to-day, Mrs. Handy! I shall be obliged to try another house.’ Or sometimes with a sucer and a toss of his head, ‘The grand secret of making good coffee, is to put in *plenty* of coffee. Perhaps you do not know that, Mrs. Handy. You will be the better for the information.’ Or sometimes, ‘Do you think us Abyssinians to live on raw meat, Mrs. Handy?’ Or, what was worse than all, when I had made a nice light pudding, and taken such pains with it, he would call it a delusion, and teach the other gentlemen to do the same. But Mr. Reginald is not like that.’

Clara’s boxes and Miss Waterstone’s much wished-for portmanteau arrived in the forenoon. Mrs. Handy recommended a washerwoman to Clara, telling her that the washing of her ship’s-clothes was likely to cost her about thirty shillings. This would make a great hole in her finances; but Clara was determined not to be discouraged by trifles, and sat down to write the commencement of a letter to Susan, which was tolerably cheerful.

Miss Waterstone went in to dinner this day, which was Saturday, in all the glory of a well-fitting black silk dress, a gold chain, pretty bracelets, and several handsome rings. Clara's dress was quiet and simple; her hand and arm, without ornament of any kind, were perfectly beautiful, and her throat white and slender. Mr. Reginald thought he had never seen anything so unique as this solitary girl, who seemed pleased to sit beside him and ask him questions about the colony, without either forwardness or *mauvaise honte*. It was not to every lady that Mr. Reginald could be agreeable. He had no *petits soins*, paid no compliments, and had no frivolous remarks to make. Miss Waterstone would have found him a much duller companion than the sprightly Humberstone; but Clara had a very different taste.

'I do not understand what makes people get fond of South Australia, while at the same time they own to so many disagreeables in it,' said Clara to Reginald.

'I shall find it difficult to make the feeling understood,' replied he; 'in time I hope that you will share it. When our weather is fine, it is very fine indeed; there is something in the air so clear, so bracing, that it seems to be enough of happiness to breathe it. Then, when our society is good, it is so cordial and unceremonious. There is not that universal desire to keep up appearances here which poisons English society, and renders hospitality a toil to the giver and a bore to the receiver of it. In fact, six years' residence in this colony has made me quite unfit for England, and I feel very much indisposed to submit to either its climate, its restraint, or its etiquette. But I suppose, Miss Morison, that you are disappointed with South Australia, or at least with Adelaide; you have come out at a bad season of the year, and I fear that your beautiful imaginary pictures of the Arcadian scenery and pastoral tranquillity of Australia have been too like fairyland to be ever realized.'

'Indeed, I cannot say that I expected to like the

colony,' said Clara. 'Some have greatness thrust upon them, and I think I may say that emigration was thrust upon me. My uncle thought it advisable that I should come out, and endeavour to get a situation as governess here, for it is no easy matter at home; and as Mr. Campbell was an old friend, he recommended me to his and Mrs. Campbell's care; but, unhappily, Mrs. Campbell's death has deprived me of a protector and adviser; so here I am.'


Mr. Reginald saw many difficulties before this young girl, but he talked encouragingly, and was pleased to see that she was determined to do her utmost for independence.

After tea, Mr. Brown, who liked to do rude things when he could, began a violent philippic against Scotland, concluding with his stock quotation from Byron about 'The land of meanness, sophistry, and mist,' winking with one eye to Oscar, and keeping the other fixed on the two Scotch girls. Clara's lip slightly curled, but she took no further notice of the impertinence; not so Miss Waterstone; she fired up, and defended her country.

'I am sure, sir,' said she, 'there is no country superior to Scotland, or any people better than the Scotch. Mist, indeed! mist is a far cleaner thing than that abominable dust that covers Adelaide all over like a cloak. I suppose you think we can't grow anything in Scotland, but if you just saw how green the grass is there, and what apples, and pears, and gooseberries we have, you would change your mind. And for a city, what city can beat Edinburgh, the modern Athens?'

But here Mr. Brown sought to escape from the lady's rhetoric, by calling out another accomplishment of his unfortunate butt.

'Ah, Blinker,' said he, 'it is a pity that your scruples about the gentility of the thing prevents you from starting a dancing-school. You would have all the beauty and fashion of Adelaide eager for initiation into



the matchless grace of your Terpsichorean feats, or feet,—it's all the same.'

'Do you really think so, Brown?' said the hapless Blinker. 'If you will move the table aside, and whistle 'the Original,' I will give you the polka.'

'But you must have a partner,' whispered Ivory; 'can't you ask one of these ladies to dance?'

'Miss Morison is dying to dance with you,' said Brown; 'go and ask her.'

Blinker did as he was bid, but met with a chilling negative. He was next instigated to ask Miss Waterstone, but she said that she could not dance to whistling, and professed herself very anxious to see him dance, which she could not do so well if she joined him.

Thus encouraged, Blinker went through all his steps with more precision than grace. Mr. Haussen again retreated, and Clara asked Mr. Reginald if he was not inclined to leave the house with his German friend.

'This is not very pleasant,' said he, 'but for two or three days it forms a variety to me. My bush life is very solitary, and after eight or ten weeks of it, I feel wondrously charitable, even to such absurdities as these. But I hope, Miss Morison, that your stay here will not be a long one, for a week of such vulgar jokes is more than enough.'

'I do not know how long I may remain here. I do not think my uncle contemplated my going to a boarding-house; but when Miss Waterstone has left for Melbourne, I shall keep to my own room more than I can now. I feel more timid about getting a situation than I did; for it would have been better, much better, if I could have gone from Mrs. Campbell's house, than from such an establishment as this. I never met with gentlemen so familiar and presuming, except, indeed, one on board the Magnificent; but he was a 'single spy,' here 'they are in battalions,' and support each other.'

'We must not think too much about them,' said

Reginald, gaily; 'it is too great a compliment. I want to ask you if you are an admirer of Byron's; for if you are not, you had better disguise your sentiments, if you wish for peace at Handy's. These half gentlemen are all rabid for Byron.'

'I have read very little of his writings, and what I have read has puzzled me much,' said Clara. 'One moment I admire, next pity, then hate, then despise. I do not feel comfortable in reading Byron; my mind aches with his jerks more than my body did yesterday in the port cart. And can you tell me what he wrote for, Mr. Reginald? It seems to me that he could not help writing, but that he wrote without a purpose. He throws no light upon the path of life.'

'Only the light—the beacon of his own sad experience,' said Reginald. 'How wasted were all his powers! How contented we should be with mediocrity, when we see that such a brilliant destiny was so miserable! But you are too young, or not young enough, to admire Byron. I have, of late years, seen more earnestness in his sorrow, and I detach it as much as I can from the sneers and frivolity, which, I think, were mere excrescences on the reality of his style. But what annoys me most with these Browns and Oscars, and such like, is, that the very jerks which you feel so painful, and which to me are affectations, form his great recommendation to them. It encourages them in their frivolity and unbelief to see a man of such genius as Byron placing pathos and satire side by side in unnatural juxtaposition. One of them is out of place. I would deny the sincerity of the sneer; they would ignore the pathos.'

'How much more healthy is your Walter Scott,' continued Reginald, 'though I do not consider his genius so great; but his sympathies were wider, and his observation genial. When he paints a villain, he is generally a villain—not Byron's melodramatic half-scoundrel, half hero, with some infusion of the fool.'

Still, neither Sir Walter's villains nor heroes are so much to my taste as his middling characters. His back-grounds are well filled in, all the accessories are perfect, and his minor characters never out of place. But I suppose you, like every Scotchwoman I have met, worship Sir Walter, and think I am giving very faint praise indeed.'

'I like Sir Walter much,' said Clara; 'but my father used to be disappointed in my admiration of his novels. He considered them perfect, and incapable of improvement. I could find no fault with them; but I missed something.'

'Yes,' said Reginald, 'it is the outer life he portrays; the inner he rarely touches upon. In reading them, I feel a thousand thoughts come into my mind, deeper and higher than what are expressed in the book for me. I think that even *mediocre* people like ourselves have still depths of thought within them which they like to have stirred up sometimes.'

Clara was pleased to hear her sentiments so naturally expressed, and was still more pleased that she was called *mediocre*. Her father had taught her that a fine taste for poetry and a well cultivated mind did not make her a genius; but her aunt and uncle, and, latterly, Miss Waterstone, had been accustomed to annoy her by supposing she thought herself very clever. She had talked about books to this stranger, because he had started the subject, and because she had nothing else to talk about; but she had sometimes feared that he would think her a blue-stocking, who wished to make a parade. That very evening she had heard Miss Waterstone telling the two gentlemen nearest her, that Clara, though not accomplished, was quite a learned lady—quite intellectual, indeed.

'Intellectual!' thought Clara. 'What a vague idea Miss Waterstone has got of the meaning of words! The utmost that can be said of me is that I am intelligent. I hope Mr. Reginald thinks me so.'

The evening wore away; and, after the ladies had gone out of the room, cards were brought out: and, with the exception of Blinker, who could not play, and Reginald, who would not, the whole party sat down to loo. Reginald took up a book, and seemed all impatience till the game should be over. He went out to smoke, and came in to find the party more engrossed in their game than before. He took up the book again, and smoked another cigar; but there was no stopping them till twelve o'clock, when he dismissed them with some thankfulness that it was Saturday night, and that next night they were likely to go to bed soon.

When they were all gone, and the doors shut, Reginald took from his pocket two letters, which he had got at the post-office that day. One of them was opened, the other had the seal unbroken. He had merely glanced at the first, but had had no opportunity of reading the second, and even now he seemed to want courage to begin.

'Had Julia married me,' said he, half aloud, 'when she should have done so, and that is six years ago, what a companion this gentle girl would have made for her. Let me see, we might have had three children now, and Miss Morison would have taught them, and kept Julia from feeling dull in my absence. And Julia would have grown to be a domestic, affectionate wife—she was as wax in my hands then; but six years have been spent by me in solitude and labour, by her in dissipation and gaiety, and we are both changed. I fear that the song is not right about 'absence making the heart grow fonder.' That ship-board song, six years ago, seemed to speak to the heart; but I doubt it now.

'But I must read these letters, and perhaps answer them too, as there is a mail making up for England on Tuesday. It would be foolish to delay writing till I am in the bush, for my letter will be gloomier from Toringa than from Adelaide.'

So he got paper, pen, and ink together, preparing to answer before he began to read.

'I had better read my mother's over again first,' said he. It was as follows:—

'MY DEAR CHARLES,

'I have just got your letter of May the twelfth, and am delighted to hear that you are so well, and making your way in the world, as I always knew you would. Your letters are all most interesting to me, and I feel so glad that you do not cut them short, but give me full weight of foreign post well filled.

'Your sisters have been spending a month with me lately; Jane brought her three children for change of air; and though they were quite sickly when they left Everton, they soon were able to make noise enough for half-a-dozen, which of course delighted me; and when James came for them he was quite struck with the change in their appearance.

'He is getting on very well now in his profession, and has got all Lord L——'s agency, which is a very handsome thing; and they have got a most beautiful house in Everton now. It is in the High-street, and is twice as large as the one they used to live in. They see a great deal of company, for both Jane and Mr. Marston like society; but yet I fancy that it is greatly on Julia's account that they give so many parties. You would be proud of Julia, Charles, if you could see her now. I am very proud of her myself, though her engagement to you is not generally known. I think that she grows handsomer every year; her figure was slight and girlish when you left home, but it has developed into what everybody calls perfect. She has been taking lessons in singing from Signor Farinelli, and her voice is considered the finest in all Everton. The Hon. Mr. Ashleigh, Lord L——'s eldest son, paid Julia great attention at the county ball, and was heard to remark that Miss Marston's air was as good as that of any lady he had ever seen.

‘I am sorry to say that your sister Alice has not recovered her strength after her late severe illness. She must be nursed all winter, and when spring comes on, Edward means to take her for a tour on the Continent. She has asked Julia to accompany her, and though Julia wished to go, she asked my permission before she would consent. Of course it was just what I could have wished, for she will be a cheerful companion for Alice, and, by your quiet fireside some day, she will be able to tell you all about her wanderings, and the sights she has seen, which will be the more delightful to you, as you have never been abroad.

‘I dare say Julia’s fidelity has been much more tried than yours, for you can never see any one so beautiful in Australia, while here some of the handsomest and finest young men in the country have been most assiduous in their attentions. People wonder that she does not make her choice, but I never breathe a word about her reason. I say there is no hurry; but she is now twenty-five, and I hope that you will come and claim her soon, for I should like to see my only son happy before I die, and I may not be long for this world.

‘Everything goes on much as usual with me at Ashfield. The garden has lost almost all its glory, but Richard promises that it will surpass all former years next summer, and be quite a great exhibition of itself. He is always asking me when you are coming back to England to see the trees you planted, which are thriving very well; he wishes to surprise you by a great many *lusus naturæ*, as he calls them, but I don’t exactly know what he means by the phrase. He requests you to send some more Australian seeds. Very few of those we received have come up, and even those that grow do not seem to thrive; but Richard wants to try again.

‘I feel my rheumatism coming on again, and expect to be able to go out very little all this winter, but my friends are very kind in visiting me. Julia promises me a two months’ visit after Christmas, which will be

delightful, for she fills the house with amusing company, and saves me from the trouble of entertaining them. After she returns from the Continent, she promises me another visit, and we propose going to see the Great Exhibition together.

‘I have been thinking, and Julia too, that in a short time you might be able to return to England for good and all, and settle down in the old house, or in a new one if you prefer it. It seems a burying alive of Julia to take her to your lonely sheep station, so far from town. If you could afford a house in Adelaide for her, though it would be equally hard for me to bear, it would be different for Julia, for she is formed for society. So do, my dearest Charles, make money as fast as possible, and come back with a fortune to justify Julia’s choice in the eyes of the world, and you will make the evening of my days as happy as it can be.

‘When I get on this subject, I forget everything else that I ought to tell you, so I may as well conclude by subscribing myself your attached mother,

‘E. REGINALD.’

Mr. Reginald next looked at the other letter. It had a very pretty seal, was inclosed in a tasteful envelope, and was addressed in a very pretty hand; but Charles Reginald felt afraid of it. The proposition that his mother had made would probably be repeated in it, and he knew that he could not accede to it. But he must read it, and did accordingly. It ran thus,—

‘MY DEAREST CHARLES,—

‘I wish you would not write me such dull letters as your last two have been, giving me advice, and so forth. Nobody ever thinks of advising me here. From your dear, kind mother, down to our little niece Fanny, all with one accord allow me to do just as I please, and you must be as complaisant, or you and I will quarrel.

‘When Jane asked me what was in your last letter,

it quite took me by surprise. I could give her no answer. There was no news in it; only the names of some books you wanted me to read, and some songs you would like me to learn. I appealed to Jane if I had any time to read, or if it was possible for me to learn such antiquated songs, and your sister quite took my view of the matter.

‘We have had delightful pic-nic parties this last autumn, and now we are beginning to be gay in Everton. I expect to be out two or three nights a week, and we have most pleasant parties at home. The plan of Jane’s new house is so much to my taste, that I send you a copy of it, that you may get up something like it, or at least imitate the air of it, if you cannot have so large a house. The double drawing-room holds twenty couples comfortably, and the loftiness of the ceiling makes it delightful to sing in. I have got up as high as B flat in it, and you know that I used to have difficulty with G sharp not long ago.

‘I am going to visit your mother about the New Year, and when Spring sets in, I go with Alice and Mr. Bisset on the Continent. Will not the tour be delightful? and I know it will do Alice much good.

‘My brother James and Jane say they will never be able to do without me so long, but I dare say they will enjoy a little quiet, for I am as restless as ever, and like nothing so well as variety. Your mother and I are of opinion that as we have waited so many years already, we had better wait a few years longer, till you have made your fortune, and then you could come back, and settle near Everton in some sort of style. Your mother proposed your living at Ashfield, and getting some additions made to the old house, but it would never do. It is old-fashioned, and suits an old lady like your mother, but I never could submit to the narrow passages and low ceilings. You give me no brilliant description of your present dwelling; I assure you that I

do not find it at all tempting. I know I could not live in the bush; I should mope to death. Much as I love you, Charles, I cannot consent to live so many miles from civilization, among savages and snakes. I have given up a great deal for your sake; do make an effort, or even a sacrifice, to please me. I always thought you rather contradictory; but how a man of your talents and accomplishments can profess to like a life which by your own description is monotonous and unexciting, I *cannot* understand.

‘My dress at the county ball was considered the most tasteful in the room. It was a suggestion of my own that Madame Estcourt worked out, and it was quite a success. It was of white satin, trimmed *en bouillon*,—but of what use is it giving you any account of it? I suppose you would rather see me in a brown stuff dress, with a blue apron, or some such horror, than in the most elegant attire. I hope you dress like a gentleman, for I cannot bear to fancy you untidy. The sleeves of coats are worn very wide, and the collars very low. I hope you will have yours made thus.

‘In all your letters you have never mentioned whether you wore a moustache or not, or if your black hair curled better in your hot climate than it used to do in England. Your mother gave me such a pretty present on *your* birthday, of a bracelet. Only one is worn now; at least, if you wear two, they must not match, but be as dissimilar as you and I. Such disparity is fashionable, you see.

‘By the bye, how old are you? Either thirty or thirty-one, I know, but I am not certain which. I am twenty-five, but do not feel at all old yet. I seem to get younger every day; at least, Jane and your mother say so.

‘People have forgotten, if they ever knew, that I am engaged to you; and it is so pleasant and so comfortable to be able to flirt without any danger of being caught myself; while no one knows how secure I am.

I hope you dance sometimes, and have not forgotten how to sing. I never can get such a good second as yours to join me.

‘The three children send love and kisses to Uncle Charles, for though they have never seen you, grand-mamma has been talking so much about you lately, that they are quite fond of you.

‘Do you know, James and Jane are so glad that I held out against being married to you when we were first engaged, and going with you to Australia. They were just saying last night, that, instead of enjoying myself for six years in my own element, and, consequently, looking well and happy, I should have been old and careworn by this time, with the dreadful long voyage, and all the hardships you described; and you would, perhaps, have ceased to admire, if not to love me. And I must have admiration as well as love; I cannot live without some incense.

‘So, dear Charles, write me a very delightful letter. Put as many compliments in it as you can—conscientious, if possible; and believe me, yours ever,

‘JULIA MARSTON.’

Reginald sat for ten minutes in silent thought; and then took up his pen to answer Julia’s letter. To his mother he could write from the country; but he felt that he must let Julia know the plain truth as soon as possible.

He wrote as follows:—

‘MY DEAREST JULIA,

‘I am very much grieved that my letters are too dull for you. I cannot write you news, when you know nobody here. I can only write my own thoughts and feelings, which, as I have not you near me to enliven them, must necessarily be stupid, and sometimes sad. I fear, my dear girl, that the life you lead, and which you seem to enjoy so much, is no good preparation for ultimately settling down as my wife,

for I am not a lively man, though I will love you truly, and devote myself to making you happy. But I cannot give parties, or go with you on tours, nor am I witty enough to keep you always amused. My mother and you seem to have formed a very erroneous idea of my circumstances. It would be many years before I could be justified in selling off my sheep, and living like a gentleman in idleness. Even a house in town is beyond my present means; and even if I had it, I should be obliged to leave it for half the year to look after my stations; and after waiting so long, it is a cruel thing to think that I cannot have you always with me. And, dear Julia, look at the matter, not from the false point of view you at present see it from, but reasonably and generously. I have worked hard for six years, and am now able to give you all the comforts, and even some of the elegancies of life. But you wish me to wait till all my youth is over, and I have pined and hardened in solitude, that we may be able to begin life in style, and make a respectable figure in that circle which is to you 'the world!' I do not mean to reproach you; but you have enjoyed everything that your heart could wish for these six years, and yet you object to sharing my moderate fortunes, and making a paradise of my cottage. You would rather wait till I was old, and worn, and rich. Oh, Julia, how happy you would have made me if you had married me *that* May!

'If you will promise to come out with me, I will go home after the New Year; and if you really wish it, and my circumstances will afford the expense (which they may if wool brings a good price next clip), I promise you a house in Adelaide, not so handsome as your brother James's, but as good as is expected here by people in our position.

'For my dear mother's sake, I would fain have settled down in her neighbourhood; but, perhaps, we can prevail upon her to come out with us. The climate will suit her admirably, and as for the voyage, it is not disagreeable, if you have a tolerable captain and a good

protector. And my mother may make a new Ashfield of my poor station of Taringa; she shall change its name into something more English, if she pleases, and you two will make me the happiest of men. And I will not bore you with books either: you shall play and sing, and I, though rather rusty, will cultivate the second you like. And we will ask friends to see us; and I can certify, that Mrs. Charles Reginald, of Taringa, will be more admired in South Australia than Miss Marston was at any county ball, or town of Everton either.

‘I wear no moustache, but, if you like it, I can easily get one up. I saw a white hair among my raven locks this morning, which set me moralizing on the departure of youth; but I am only thirty-one, after all. I shall certainly get a coat with wide sleeves and fashionable collar, though I fear that before this reaches you they will have gone out of fashion, and you will be shocked at the idea of my wearing complacently what has been exploded for months. Still, Julia, this may prove to you that I wish much to please you, and would do anything in my power to gratify your every wish, even every whim. I did wish to hear how you were dressed at the ball, and was quite disappointed when you stopped short in your description; so write me a full account of your last dress in the answer to this, which I shall weary for sadly.

‘Do not think me too exacting, my dearest love, and believe me yours devotedly,

‘CHARLES REGINALD.’

Charles sighed when this letter was finished, and lay down on the sofa to try to sleep; but the hard pillow under his head, and the anxious thoughts in his heart, kept him awake the greater part of the night.

CHAPTER V.

A SUNDAY AT MRS. HANDY'S.

MRS. HANDY'S table was not half filled next morning at breakfast, for several of the young gentlemen preferred cold tea, or even none at all, to getting up in time for it on Sunday morning: so that the breakfast-things lay on the table till it was time to lay the cloth for dinner. Mrs. Handy complained of their laziness to the young ladies, and Miss Waterstone wondered at her submitting to it, and declared that, after a certain hour, they should have no breakfast.

'The Adelaide people are all very tender in the mornings,' said Mr. Humberstone. 'I can't sleep a wink myself after five o'clock, and it puzzles me to get through the hours before an Adelaide breakfast. I get up as usual, and get out, but there is nobody up; I have to walk about the streets for an hour and a half before I meet even a milk-man, and I should be glad to talk to him, but he cannot stop—he must serve his customers. I next see servant-girls, very untidy, with night-caps on, coming out to get wood to light the fire, and to fill the kettle; but in fact these things should be brought in overnight. In another hour or so, I see Adelaide trying to get up and look awake, and by that time I think breakfast will be ready, and come in here to find Mrs. Handy's gentlemen snug in bed yet. It is really scandalous. They would be the better for living in the country for a year or two. And what makes all the Adelaide ladies look so pale, but their not getting up early enough? We have not many country lasses, but what rosy cheeks *they* have! Ah! Miss Waterstone, there's no flowers in the garden like those flowers; I know you are an early riser; you need say nothing about it, for in fact I am quite convinced of it.'

The ladies went to Little St. Andrew's, the church of the Scotch establishment, where the service was so

delightfully familiar to Clara, that she almost forgot she was in a strange land ; and she came home soothed and tolerably cheerful ; but the confusion and noise of dinner distracted her again. Mr. Reginald had been out all day, and she missed him.

In the afternoon, Miss Waterstone complained of a headache, and saying that an hour's rest would put her to rights, lay down in her own room ; while Clara sat with her kind-hearted hostess, and heard her talk of many things—of cookery, of servants, of washerwomen, of the difficulty of getting servants that could do anything, and of the comfortable position of servants in this colony, compared with that of their employers.

'They get good wages,' continued she, 'and have no cares ; they have only their dress to find ; and really my Jane, with her seven shillings a-week, dresses better than myself. To see her go out now in her flounced muslin gown, satin visite, and drawn bonnet, you would take her for the mistress, and not the servant. She is out walking with her lover, for it is her Sunday out to-day, and a good match she is making—a master carpenter, who employs three or four men, and as sober and respectable a young man as is in the colony. Ah, well ! Miss Morison, I hope you will like the colony ; it is hard to get a good situation here, but I am sure that you will get on well when you are once in a respectable family. Your friend, Miss Waterstone, has a nice frank manner, that will take people at first, but you need have no fear but in the long run you will succeed as well. What do you think of Mr. Reginald, Miss Morison ? He is not quite so handsome as he used to be on board ship, nor perhaps so lively, but I suppose it is the dull life he leads. It was always a kind word or a smile to me when he saw me so poorly on the *Davutless* ; and my husband said that he was as considerate and polite to the poorest woman on board as to any of the young ladies in the cuddy. He is an old acquaintance of mine, you see ; and I have had good reason to like him, for he has encouraged this house as

much as he could, and recommended it to his friends. And really it is a good thing that I can make my own living, for Handy has sent me nothing as yet. It is a hard life : up early, and down late ; but I can pay my way, and look everybody in the face. You can't think how sleepy I get Sunday afternoons. I fancy it must be the early dinner. I must lay my head on the sofa for half an hour ; I see you have a book.'

Clara had a book—one of the good books she had got as parting presents from her friends ; but her mind was too anxious to take in what her eyes mechanically wandered over, when Mr. Reginald came in. A heavy shower, which had fallen during the night, had refreshed everything ; the wind was from the south-west, and was fresh and bracing, and you could almost fancy that you saw something green springing up.

'Now, Miss Morison,' said Reginald, 'is not our fine weather very fine, as I said last night?'

'It is indeed,' answered Clara ; 'the short walk to and from church was so delightful, that it made me quite like the country.'

'You cannot quite call this the country,' said Reginald ; 'but I know that you will like the real country when you see more of it. Adelaide was never much to my taste, though I often weary to come into it, particularly in winter, when the evenings are long and the roads bad, but I am always glad to get out of it again. This weather promises me a pleasant day for my ride home to-morrow.'

Clara was sorry that he was going away so soon, for what could she say to the other gentlemen, or how escape their impertinence? She hoped that Mr. Haussen would sit beside her sometimes. She sat some minutes in silence, and so did Reginald ; then he suddenly said,—

'Have you read Borrow's 'Lavengro' ?'

'No ; I have heard of it, and seen reviews ; critics call it stupid ; but I liked the 'Bible in Spain,' and I think I should like it.'

‘What struck me most was, that in this book, which is either an autobiography or an imitation of one, he meets with characters, describes them, and makes you interested in them, and then they disappear, and you see them no more, and the book leaves off without ending anything, as unfinished as the lives of its readers. This is life-like, but not book-like; everything in books is jointed in and polished off—neatly, but not naturally. Have you ever observed this? I suppose it is highly probable, Miss Morison,’ continued Reginald, ‘that we may never meet again; yet I should not write a life of myself without describing our short acquaintance, and many like it,—pleasant passages which lead to nothing.’

‘You must see many different characters in a house like this,’ observed Clara.

‘Of course,’ said Reginald, still thinking of Lavengro, the last book he had read, and which he was glad to talk over to an intelligent listener. ‘I think the most prominent characteristic of Borrow must be what phrenologists call secretiveness. He seems to delight in concealing his thoughts, his attainments, his past life and future intentions, from every one he meets, or at least Lavengro does.’

‘Perhaps it is merely the invention of an imaginary character?’ said Clara.

‘It seems to come out of the very nature of the man,’ said Reginald; ‘and it has set me wondering what the man really is, since all he tells of himself seems intended to obscure the subject.’

‘I like to see the portrait of the author prefixed to a book, provided he is dead,’ said Clara; ‘but I am not fond of seeing living writers trying to look sublime at the commencement of their own works, and yet by some perversity that I cannot account for, I long to see the portrait anywhere else.’

‘Do you draw at all, Miss Morison?’ said Reginald.

‘Oh, no! not at all,’ said Clara. ‘I am singularly ~~destitute~~ of accomplishments for an Edinburgh girl of

the nineteenth century; but I admire drawing very much, and my sister used to make little sketches for me, and smile at the criticisms I made.'

'I have made several sketches of Australian scenery to send home to my mother and other friends,' said Reginald; 'but whether I have not done them justice, or that the scenery is not really fine, I know not, but they have not been much admired. What a splendid display of all works of art there will be in the Great Exhibition in a few months from this time. I suppose that you must regret losing the opportunity of seeing it, by coming to this wild country? Several of my friends have gone home expressly to see it, and if I could have combined business with pleasure, I should have set sail by this time.'

'I really regretted leaving my native country when it was on the eve of so wonderful a display,' said Clara. 'My sister Susan is going up to London with my uncle and aunt, but I was to go to South Australia, and everybody seemed to think, the sooner the better.'

'Your sister would fain have kept you longer, I dare say,' said Reginald.

'Indeed she would, or have gone instead of me, had that been permitted; but what my uncle thought right, she was convinced must be for the best, so she gave up her own wishes with wonderfully good grace.'

'But your inclination was not consulted any more than your sister's.'

'Ah! but I am not so good as she is. Papa used to say that girls were generally taught to place generosity before justice, and he determined to reverse the matter with us; Susan did not relish the justice-lessons much, but when she came to the generosity, she revelled in it. She seems quite to enjoy every sacrifice she makes, and has no conscience whatever on her own side; but as for poor me, I have been so engrossed with the justice, that I have never got so far as the generosity.'

'You do not mean me to believe that you would

not make a sacrifice for those you love?" said Reginald.

'I could make a sacrifice,' said Clara, 'but I should know that it was a sacrifice, and be fully aware of its extent, which Susan and all amiable girls never are.'

'Then you deserve the more credit if you do your duty because you feel it is right, and not to gratify a selfish desire to make others happy, and so promote your own enjoyment,' said Reginald.

'Do not say so,' said Clara. 'How much more beautiful is spontaneous benevolence than such calculating virtue as mine is!'

'Miss Morison,' said Reginald, kindly and gravely, 'I see you have a passion for depreciating yourself, and that you have a pleasure in telling that you want this or that good quality; but you will find that an indulgence in it will do you no good in South Australia. You must say what you can do, and look confident, or ninety-nine in a hundred will not think you capable of anything. I am a good deal older than you, so I hope you will not take my little piece of advice in bad part.'

'No, indeed,' said Clara, 'it is very kind of you; you are quite right to tell me of my faults.'

'I did not call it a fault,' said Reginald.

'Well, my imprudence,' said Clara.

'But here comes Miss Waterstone, looking well again. We have been talking of the Great Exhibition, and Mr. Reginald has been expressing his surprise that we did not delay emigrating till we had seen it. I have given my reason, that I had no choice. Will you give us yours?'

'Why,' said Miss Waterstone, looking a little confused, 'I was hurried in my departure in many ways; and even if I had stayed, it is very likely that my aunts would not have gone, or if they had, they were sure to leave me to keep the house; and perhaps it may turn out a failure after all; and a ship sailing from Leith with a married captain, was a great inducement at the

time, I remember. And after all, I suppose we will see all about it in the papers; though I do hate newspapers, and never read them when I can help it; and there's nobody now to make me read them against my will, which is a great comfort, isn't it, Clara? Aunt Penny used to make me read the *Courant* and the *Witness* till I was hoarse. When the General Assembly of the Free Church was sitting, and Aunt Penny was not well enough to go to hear the speeches, she used to make me read them all; and once they took me three hours and a half, and I could not speak above my breath for a fortnight afterwards. So I just hate the papers.'

One after another the gentlemen dropped in; tea relieved Miss Waterstone's headache, and she listened to Mr. Humberstone's account of bush living—tea without milk, drunk out of pannikins three times a day, with an unvarying routine of mutton and damper for solids, with sympathizing wonder. There was talk of a very desultory nature going on. Mr. Reginald seemed reserved, and Clara felt dull. It certainly was not proper Sunday conversation, and perhaps he would have preferred going to church. She wished to go herself, but Miss Waterstone did not feel well enough to accompany her, and she felt she could not go alone. So she sat beside Mr. Reginald, looking sad and anxious, but very pretty, while all the wit of the company was lost upon her.

Mr. Reginald liked to see her silent, for it is a rare virtue in one that can converse well; and he felt too anxious himself to talk. The letters he carried in his pocket were uncomfortable ones, and he sat contrasting in his mind's eye the quiet girl beside him with his own brilliant betrothed, as he remembered her, and as his mother's letter described her. Julia was certainly handsomer, and more striking. Her hair and eyes were darker, and her figure taller and more commanding. There was no comparison in beauty, but yet Clara looked charming. And she was going to be

a governess to some half-dozen children, with domestic drudgery enough besides, and would be glad to marry any one, to put an end to it. Governesses generally make bad wives, and their manners are often not agreeable; but Miss Morison had evidently never taught yet. But yet a lovely, accomplished English wife was preferable to a girl like this, thrown into the colony with no connexions that any one knew of, and with merely a letter-of-introduction passport into society.

When they had got into their room at night, Miss Waterstone confided to Clara her opinion that Reginald was a *stick*.

‘Mr. Humberstone says that he is going out of town to-morrow, too, and will ride in Mr. Reginald’s company a good bit beyond Gawler Town, though where that is I know no more than the man in the moon; so we shall both be minus our beaux. By the bye, when do you mean to see Mr. Campbell again?’

‘I do not like to give him much trouble,’ said Clara; ‘if he sends me no message, I shall call at the end of a week to see if he has heard of anything for me.’

‘Did your uncle say nothing about taking you back in case you did not succeed?’

‘He did not seem to contemplate any such contingency,’ said Clara, mournfully; ‘but Mr. Campbell mentioned it as a *pis-aller*. I do not wish to return if I am unwelcome, to embitter dear Susan’s happy home. So I will take any situation in South Australia rather than be sent back as returned goods, unsuited to the market.’

And Clara looked slightly scornful.

‘Well,’ said Miss Waterstone, ‘I shall be quite sorry to leave Adelaide, for I shall be all alone in Melbourne, whereas you are as good as a sister to me here. But do you know, Clara, that my sleep in the afternoon has not made me feel wakeful now. I am dreadfully sleepy, though it is quite early. There is only ten o’clock striking.’

CHAPTER VI.

A GLIMPSE OF A SITUATION.

NEXT morning, Mr. Reginald read the newspaper till all the gentlemen had gone out but Humberstone, who was flirting with Miss Waterstone in a despairing manner, regretting that he should never see her again, entreating her not to leave Adelaide for Melbourne, and vowing that he would wear the willow for at least a year and a day; all which Miss Waterstone took as it was meant, and treated as an excellent joke. Clara was rising to leave the room, when Reginald started up, and said,—

‘Come, Humberstone, we must be going; I have an English letter to post, or I should have been on the way before breakfast. Don’t leave the room without bidding me good bye, Miss Morison. We have not known each other long, but let us shake hands at parting.’

Clara looked him in the face, stretched out her little hand, which he grasped with a friendly warmth, a half-muttered good wish, and a look that said, ‘If I could serve you, I would.’

The example of shaking hands once set, Miss Waterstone and Mr. Humberstone went through with it, and made many fine parting speeches. Miss Waterstone followed with her eye from the window her country friends, while Clara retreated to her room, and sat for a full half hour endeavouring to analyze her emotion. Was it right in her to be so sorry at this gentleman’s departure? Why did she think so much of him? Why did her thoughts follow him to his lonely home in the distant bush? And why had she talked so much to him, and to no one else? She came to the conclusion that it was foolish, but natural, and not at all wrong. She busied herself in getting all her things arranged, in mending everything that needed mending, and in

adding a few lines to her letter to Susan. Thus the day passed away, and the evening was to be spent among strangers. Her friend was gone.


'Ah, young ladies,' said Mr. Brown at dinner, 'your gallant knights are gone. They love and ride away. Blinker, you must give us that song to-night; your voice is in excellent trim, and the ladies will show their appreciation by tears if not by applause, if you sing it with feeling.'

'I am going to sail away this week,' said Miss Waterstone; 'so all the Adelaide gentlemen may ride away when they please, and where they please, for me.'

'But Miss Morison has not that consolation,' said Oscar. 'What a fellow that Reginald is to talk; but I would put no trust in him if I were you, Miss Morison.'

And so on for all the evening Clara was annoyed by the impertinence of the young men, which she could not laugh off, as Miss Waterstone did. Blinker sang appropriate songs, and was made to declaim very incorrectly several hackneyed pieces of poetry; and Clara had no refuge. She tried to get Mrs. Handy to talk to her, but that lady liked the amusement going on, and could not bear to lose any of it; so that Clara sat silent and uncomfortable, which was attributed to her not having a beau. Thus passed day after day till the Friday on which Miss Waterstone was to return to the *Magnificent*, and Clara to call at Mr. Campbell's; and they went together to his store.

Mr. Campbell had a very numerous acquaintance, but on inquiry he found that very few of them wanted governesses. Most of them sent their children to school; it was cheaper, and more convenient; some would like a governess, but had not accommodation, for the children had too little room already. Some wanted an elderly person, who had had experience in tuition; but could not think of entrusting their children to a girl of nineteen. But the want of music was the great drawback, for though most of these



music-requiring ladies had no piano, they could never think of getting a governess merely to teach reading and writing ; they could teach these things quite as well themselves. There was only one lady who would like to see Miss Morison, though even she was afraid she would not suit, and she wished Mr. Campbell would desire her to call. It was a nice walk, only four miles and a half out of Adelaide. Mr. Campbell gave Clara directions as to her road, which she could not easily mistake, for all the roads go straight north or south, east or west, from Adelaide ; and telling her that Mrs. Denfield was a high-spirited woman, who did not like contradiction, and though she was very clever she spoilt her children a little, but that she was very amiable notwithstanding, he recommended her to go that very day, that no time might be lost. So Clara took a hurried but kind leave of Miss Waterstone, who promised to write to her whenever there was anything worth writing about, and set off on her nice walk. The sun was overpoweringly hot, and when Clara got out of town, and had to walk between sections fenced with posts and rails, she longed for the green sheltering hedges of her own country. Here and there the corn was left on the field, though it had been reaped weeks ago, and she wondered to see how small and far apart the shocks were. Where the wheat had been reaped by the machine, and the heads merely had been taken off, the long stubble, which is reckoned of no value in Australia, had been either burned or was left standing till favourable weather came. She saw one large field which had accidentally taken fire, and watched the active exertions of all the people about to extinguish it by beating it out with boughs. It had been a very dry winter, and the crops in the plains near Adelaide had been very poor ; so that she had no flattering view of the capabilities of South Australian soil. But with all this, there was an appearance of civilization and comfort in the numerous cottages on the way, each having a small garden, and generally

a patch of vines, which were loaded with fruit ; and what interested Clara still more, she saw many wells near the cottages, which encouraged her often to ask for a drink of water. She was unused to walking far for so many months, and the road was often so deep in sand, into which her feet sank every step, that she was very thankful when a decent-looking woman asked her to sit down out of the sun and rest a bit. She wiped a chair for the lady to sit on, and went on with her washing. Several children were about her, eating bread and butter with their grapes. They had all dirty faces, but looked healthy enough ; their clothes were neither fine nor altogether whole ; the furniture was scanty, and altogether Clara did not see that overpowering contrast between the exterior of this dwelling and those of people in the same rank in Scotland which she had been led to expect. But the bread and butter, and the smell of meat baking in the camp oven, and the teapot, which the eldest girl was brightening a little for father's dinner cup of tea, were all very different, and looked as if, whatever crops might be, the labourer ran no risk of being starved.

A little curly-haired boy crept up to her, and asked her her name, where she came from, and where she was going ; and Clara, having no motive for concealment, gave him ready answers.

'You're going to Mrs. Denfield's ; that's where my sister Louisa Jane stops,' said he. 'Mother, this lady is going to Louisa Jane's missis's.'

The mother looked rather curiously at Clara, and said, 'My Louisa Jane is coming home next week, for she can't stand the work nor the rowing she gets there no longer ; and them children are enough to tire out the patience of Job himself. I hope, miss, that you aint a going to be governess there, for the last one had a pretty time of it. The boys and the girls, too, gave her such sauce ; and then if she scolded them, their mamma's tongue came cataracting down upon the poor thing ; and if Mr. Denfield said a word to help Miss

Dobson out, I expect he caught it too. Maybe I am too free of my tongue, miss, for Mrs. Denfield might be a friend of yours ; but I can't forgive her for not letting Louisa Jane come to see me, and forbidding her to take the children out a-walking this way ; for she says it is only to have a gossip at her mother's, that will spoil her for a week afterwards. I wonder what mississes think servants are made of, if they are not flesh and blood the same as them. Suppose her children had to go to service, I fancy she would like to see them odd times, particular if they lived within a mile. My Louisa Jane did not like Miss Dobson, for she held her head high, and would not speak free-like to the servants in the kitchen ; for my maid has a good spirit of her own, and she thinks that as they were all working for wages, there should be an equality. But, as I says to Louisa Jane, mind Miss Dobson wears better clothes than you, and sits at table with your missis, and does no dirty work, so there should be a difference.'

'I had better go now,' said Clara ; 'I feel quite rested now. I have not much further to go, I hope ?'

'Only a mile and half a section,' said Mrs. Watts. 'You'll find it easy ; a white house in the middle of a section, with the haystack on the left hand, and the hedge of kangaroo thorn round the garden.'

Clara met the master of the house in the doorway, who was wiping his forehead and calling on Betsy to look sharp with the dinner. He gave a slight bow as he passed the young lady, and hoped she did not feel the weather too hot. But she felt it all the hotter after her temporary shelter, and plodded on more wearily and despondingly than before.

In front of the white house was a very pretty garden, full of a variety of fruit trees and vines ; and she saw there two girls and a boy, who were busy picking grapes and devouring them, seeds and stones included. They had no hats or bonnets on, and were very much freckled ; they stared for a few seconds at the new

comer, who found some difficulty in untying the rope that fastened up the gate, and supplied the place of the lock, which was broken ; but they did not offer to assist her, and resumed their pleasant occupation. A sharp-looking girl, whom Clara conjectured to be Louisa Jane, came out.

‘ My word ! Master Henry and Miss Lucy and Eliza,’ said she, ‘ wont your ma be angry to see you ‘out without hats this broiling hot day, and eating them Muscats too. You’ll all be ill as sure as I’m here. I’ll just run and tell your ma. Come in, there’s dears, and get on your hats ; you know you’ll be sunstruck.’

The two young ladies said that they never wore hats, and that their sun-bonnets were dirty—much too dirty to wear ; and scolded Louisa for her laziness in not washing them, and her ill-nature in not giving them their best bonnets when the others were not fit to put on.

Clara had by this time reached the door, at which she knocked. Louisa Jane whispered to the children that most likely this was the new governess coming, at which news they hurried in at the back door, to get into the parlour as soon as she did, and have a good look at her before their mamma made her appearance. So by the time Clara was ushered into the sitting-room the whole of the juvenile Denfields were there ready to inspect her. There was the eldest, Caroline, who seemed to be about fifteen ; then James ; then the three whom Clara had seen in the garden, and Robert and Emily, first merely looking at her, and then asking her questions.

‘ What a pretty frock you have on,’ said Caroline, ‘ though you have got it rather dusty with the walk ; and your bonnet is very nicely trimmed. Have you been long in the colony, or have you just come out ?’

‘ I only landed last week,’ said Clara.

‘ Then why do you wear your hair in ringlets ? they are quite out of fashion. All new comers wear their hair crimped and stuck out in great bunches, and it looks

so stylish. If you stay here you must wear your hair like that, for ma does not like curls at all. What is your name?

‘Clara Morison,’ was the reply.

‘It is a nice name, I like it. Our last governess was called Bridget Dobson; wasn’t it a horrid ugly vulgar name? but she was a vulgar creature altogether.’

‘I do not think it such a vulgar name,’ said Clara. ‘There was a Mrs. Dobson who translated Petrarch beautifully.’

Miss Denfield stared, and continued, ‘If you are to be our governess you must give us nice short lessons, and let us play a great deal. I am not too old for play yet, though I am so tall, and I don’t mean to give it up till I come out, and I hope that will not be long. There is Miss Robertson came out at fifteen, and I wish you would help me to persuade ma to let me accept the next invitation I get. It would be delightful to dance till daylight. It is never too hot to dance you know, and I would never miss a dancing lesson for the world, but I do hate learning spelling and grammar, and doing horrid sums when it is as hot as this. Ma says she is fit for nothing to-day, and what can you expect of me? Master James, don’t break the chairs, swinging upon them like that; and do, Miss Eliza, keep Emily from ma’s work-box. She has got everything out of it; and there now, if she has not run the scissors into her hand. Oh Emily, don’t cry, it is not very bad. What will ma say?’

But Emily was of opinion that it was very bad indeed, and screamed so that Caroline was forced to take her out of the room to her mamma. Clara saw the other children do a good deal of mischief, and when she mildly hinted that they had better not, they merely stared at her, and went on. Three quarters of an hour elapsed before Mrs. Denfield entered, and with considerable dignity requested Clara to resume her seat when she rose to accost her. Mrs. Denfield prided herself on two things in particular; first, that she was

lady-like, and secondly that she was decided. Her manner was cold, her eye critical, her mouth hard in its expression, and her gait stiff; but still she was, in the opinion of those twenty people who formed her world, such a lady-like superior woman. She was anxious that her children should be as ladylike and firm as she was, but neither precept nor example had hitherto succeeded in producing that result. She had at last adopted the opinion that mothers were not the best instructors of their darlings, but that they needed a subordinate educating machine, such as a governess, to act under their orders, and to cram the minds of children with useful knowledge, without either inspiring any of the respect, or winning any of the affection which was due to the mother, and the mother alone.

Her cold grey eyes looked Clara over; the result was not satisfactory. As Clara's colour rose at the inspection, she supposed that she had not been accustomed to good society; and as her flexible mouth did not close like a vice, she was of opinion that she wanted firmness. Besides, she was too young, and what some people would think too pretty for a governess, though there was no mind whatever to be found in her face.

'You are, I presume,' said Mrs. Denfield, 'the young person in whose favour Mr. Campbell spoke to me on Wednesday evening? Miss Morison, I believe, is your name?'

'Yes, ma'am,' said Clara.

'Pray, have you been accustomed to tuition? for I consider that a great point.'

Clara's distressed eyes glanced at the children, who were all eagerly listening, but whether Mrs. Denfield thought that they would profit by the colloquy, or whether she thought it a good trial of the governess's patience to conduct her ~~cross-examination~~ before her future pupils, she did not take the hint, but looked impatient for an answer.

'I have never been in a situation yet, but I used to teach the little ones at school,' said Clara.

‘An apprentice, I suppose,’ said Mrs. Denfield.

‘It was only because I liked it,’ said Clara; ‘I think there are no such things as school apprentices in Scotland.’

‘Then you are Scotch; yes, I hear you have the accent very strong. Were you at a boarding-school or a day-school, Miss Morison?’

‘I have been at both,’ said Clara, ‘and had instruction at home besides.’

‘Are you acquainted with the routine of tuition? Could you give me any idea of how you would go through one day with these young folks of mine?’

‘I cannot tell until I know what progress they have made. Probably your boys go to school, and as for the young ladies I must take each separately, as there is such a difference in their ages, and they cannot learn exactly the same lessons,’ said Clara.

‘I understood from Mr. Campbell that you know a little Latin, Miss Morison; and if you could carry on James and Henry for a few months, to prepare them for a good school, I think it would be a good arrangement for all parties. What is the matter, Caroline?’

‘Oh, ma,’ said Caroline, who just now burst into the room, ‘I wish you would come and speak to Louisa, she is so cross with Emily, and was just going to give her a slap, when I said I would run and tell you. And what do you think Sarah is doing, ma? She is scrubbing out your room with the same water she took to wash the passage; all her laziness to save her drawing more water from the well.’

‘Servants are the plague of my life,’ said Mrs. Denfield. ‘You will excuse me five minutes, Miss Morison. Put on your bonnets, my dears, and pick some grapes. I dare say Miss Morison would take a few this hot day if you dip them in cold water for a few minutes to cool them.’

When Mrs. Denfield returned it was without her children, to Clara’s great delight; she resumed her conversation without delay.

'Caroline, as you may see, is very sharp and observant; nothing escapes her, and as she tells me all that she sees, she prevents these girls from imposing upon me. I feel that under a mother's eye alone can daughters in particular be rightly brought up; and if we should happen to come to terms, Miss Morison, let it be on the distinct understanding that my authority is in no way delegated to you. You teach them such and such lessons, and report to me how well or ill they have been learned, and what their behaviour has been; for my children are of such an affectionate temper that they cannot bear anybody to find fault with them but me. And in the next place, Miss Morison, I wish you to tell me exactly what you can and cannot do. I beg that you will resort to no subterfuges, for children are acute observers, and if you lay claim to any knowledge or skill which you do not possess, you will completely lose their esteem whenever they find it out.'

'I can teach all the branches of an English education,' said Clara, 'and I understand French grammatically. I could give lessons in Latin for the first year or two, and I could instruct the young ladies in plain needle-work.'

'No fancy work, knitting, or crochet?' asked Mrs. Denfield.

'No, ma'am.'

'No music?'

'No, ma'am; I know only the notes.'

'Don't you draw at all?'

'No, ma'am.'

'Cannot you teach dancing?'

'Oh yes, at least I can dance well; my master always said I was his best pupil.'

'Was he a Frenchman?'

'Yes, ma'am.'

Mrs. Denfield hesitated a little, and then said, 'May I ask your age?'

'Nineteen, ma'am.'

'In what vessel did

‘In the Magnificent—in the intermediate.’

‘I have met a Mrs. Hastie, just come from Scotland; I suppose a fellow-passenger of yours. May I inquire from her as to how you conducted yourself on board? Excuse my doing so, for in a colony like this one cannot be too careful.’

‘Mrs. Hastie knows nothing whatever about me, ma’am,’ said Clara. ‘We never spoke to the cabin passengers all the voyage. I have no reference except to Mr. Campbell; my uncle did not even procure me certificates from the schools and masters I attended, for he thought that Mr. and Mrs. Campbell’s interest would be sufficient to procure me the situation I wanted. Will you try me for a month, and see if I will not suit you?’

‘Well,’ said Mrs. Denfield, ‘with so few accomplishments, and no recommendations, I suppose you will be glad of a home. I cannot afford to give you a high salary.’

‘I would come for twenty pounds a-year,’ said Clara, anxious to bring the matter to some conclusion.

‘Twenty pounds a-year! what an absurdly high salary for a nursery governess! If you had known anything of music I might have stretched a point, but I do not consider myself justified in offering you any more than fifteen.’

‘That is very little,’ said Clara; ‘I do not see how a young lady can provide her dress and contingencies on such a small income.’

‘I do not care for the young person who occupies the place of governess in my family dressing at all expensively. The plainer the better, provided she is clean and neat. Every governess I have had has assisted me with the family needlework; and Miss Dobson, to whom I gave fifteen pounds a-year, used to dress two of the younger children every morning. She was no musician, certainly, but she drew nicely; I shall be grieved if Caroline’s drawing is to be at an end: and she was very skilful in all kinds of fancy work. I can-

not possibly offer you any higher salary, Miss Morison ; it is for you to accept or decline it.'

Clara's colour went and came several times during this speech ; she knew it would be a most uncomfortable situation, but yet she thought it right to take it ; for, according to Mr. Campbell's account, this was a fair specimen of colonial ladies, and no other employer might appear before her money was spent, and she was destitute. So she consented to take the salary of fifteen pounds a-year, board and washing (this last in moderation), for instructing Mrs. Denfield's seven children.

Mrs. Denfield now became tolerably gracious to Clara. She had asked her a great many questions, she had engaged her at a low salary, she had a prospect of her boys learning Latin at no expense ; in fact, she had been decided, and made the governess come into her terms without binding herself in any way. So she was talking rather pleasantly about the colony and the weather, the vineyard and the dairy, and Clara was beginning to think that she would like her a little, when Mr. Denfield entered, with the children.

'Ha!' said he, 'a young lady here, and a fair one. Introduce me, Mrs. Denfield.'

'This is Miss Morison, about whom Mr. Campbell spoke to me.'

'Just so,' said Mr. Denfield ; 'I am glad to see that it is Miss Morison. I hope you will like Langley, Miss Morison. I am sure, Caroline, and Lucy, and Eliza, you will like this nice lady to teach you your lessons. She does not look at all like Miss Dobson, my dears. Why do you not ask Miss Morison to take off her bonnet and what-do-you-call-it, Priscilla ? she must be smothered in them.'

Mrs. Denfield was displeased at her husband for admiring the new governess, and at his taking it for granted that she was engaged without its being announced from head-quarters ; and still more at his rebuking her for a failure in courtesy. So she changed her mind, and determined that Miss Morison should *have another situation to seek for.*

'You are always too precipitate, Mr. Denfield,' said she. 'I have not settled matters with Miss Morison yet; there are some inquiries to make before a final engagement can be entered into.'

'A final engagement! That sounds very like a marriage,' said Mr. Denfield, laughing heartily. 'Never mind, Miss Morison, there are lots of young fellows about here who will be very desirous of entering into a final engagement with you; but in the meantime, we must allow Mrs. Denfield to have her way in the first place, and to make your prior engagement as firm and decided as she is herself. Ha! ha!'

'I am sure I shall like you,' said Miss Denfield; 'you look so good-natured.'

'I don't like a woman to teach me,' said Master James; 'I want to go to school like other boys.'

'So you shall, my boy, and Harry too,' said Mr. Denfield. 'This young lady cannot take charge of such great unruly fellows as you are; can you, Miss Morison?'

'Miss Morison has promised to do so,' said Mrs. Denfield; 'she knows Latin, and says that she can lay the foundation for that language. I hope she can do it well, for it occurs to me that there is some difference between English Latin and Scotch Latin. Is there not, William, my love?'

'Oh! to be sure there is; Scotchmen make all the vowels broad,' rejoined Mr. Denfield. 'I remember a chap, of the name of Macbarnet, coming to our grammar-school from the north, and how terribly he got laughed at among the boys for his way of pronouncing the words.'

'After which fashion do you pronounce the language?' said Mrs. Denfield, with such cold severity, that hot as the day was, Clara felt a shiver come over her.

'After the Scotch fashion, ma'am,' said she, flushing under the supercilious sneer of the boy James, who, knowing nothing whatever of the matter, thought it a fine thing to despise ladies' Latin.

'It is of very little consequence, Priscilla,' said Mr.

Denfield, apologetically; 'Macbarnet was really the best scholar among us, and was never once out in his quantities.'

'I beg your pardon, Mr. Denfield,' said the lady, 'but I am disposed to consider it of great consequence; and I am glad I am aware of this point, Miss Morison, for I should have been sorry indeed if you had succeeded in holding it back from me. I will let you know on Monday whether I can engage you, and in case I do, you ought to hold yourself in readiness to accompany the messenger.'

Clara assented, and feeling uncomfortable under Mrs. Denfield's eye, she moved to take her leave; having merely tasted the glass of colonial wine that Mrs. Denfield had offered her, and leaving both fruit and bread much as she had got them. Mr. Denfield went out to open the gate for her, and Caroline followed with a bunch of grapes, which she insisted on her eating by the way; while Mrs. Denfield, more displeased than ever, sullenly determined that, whatever might be said on the subject, that girl should never enter her house again, to make mischief, as she was sure to do.

As Clara went home, her heart felt unaccountably lightened. She had observed Mrs. Denfield's manner, and was convinced that her answer would be unfavourable; but she was conscious that she had conceded every point, and that she was not to blame for her bad success in her first attempt to get a situation.

So she picked her grapes, and slowly returned to Adelaide, happy in the thought that on this evening, for the first time for months, she could have a little solitude, and even looking forward to a return to Mrs. Handy's cordial face with a sort of home feeling. Mrs. Denfield's coldness had made her long to return to the boarding-house. The sun was low when she got into town, and in passing Mr. Campbell's store, she found it was shut, so that she could not on this evening give him any account of her conversation with his amiable friend.

On reaching home, Clara went straight to her room to obtain a little rest, but was not long left to herself, for in half an hour Mrs. Handy tapped at the door, bringing in a cup of tea, with bread and butter; and Clara begged she would sit down to hear about her application to Mrs. Denfield, while she took the welcome tea. Mrs. Handy was convinced that Mrs. Denfield would send for Miss Morison on Monday. She knew very well that Mrs. Denfield could afford to give a better salary than fifteen pounds a year, and concluded by advising Clara to make a stand at first both for more authority and more pay.

Clara said quietly that she did not expect to get this situation, but that even if she did, she was not in circumstances to make any stand. She must come into her employer's terms, or not be engaged at all.

'Well, Miss Morison,' said Mrs. Handy, 'I suppose it is all for the best, but things do go contrary with us all sometimes. I am losing all my pleasantest people. There's Mr. Haussen has given me notice to-day, and I believe it is just the singing and dancing they make Mr. Blinker do in the evenings that sends him off; but I cannot say a word about it, for Mr. Oscar and Mr. Brown, and some of the others, would leave, if I dared to find fault. I don't think you like the noise they make either, and I must say that it would be a great deal more gentlemanly if they would exert themselves to amuse you in a quiet way, than by making game of that poor harmless creature. We have got a new gentleman to-day, who takes half a room till Mr. Haussen goes. He is a Jew, a Mr. Samuels; but he does not mind about eating pork. He took bacon at dinner to-day, and I was rather sorry to see it, for you know that it is the most expensive article on the table; and I have had Jews who were more particular, and I liked them for boarders very well.'

CHAPTER VII.

ANOTHER GLIMPSE, AND A RESOLUTION.

CLARA did not admire Mr. Samuels at all; on the contrary, she took a great dislike to him at first sight. He insisted on sitting beside her, and talking to her about dress, fashions, and personal ornaments; he turned his rings and brooches in every different light, in order to dazzle her by their brilliancy, and in spite of her short answers and averted head, he seemed determined to force himself upon her attention. Clara made her escape as soon as possible, not feeling quite so sure that she was glad Mrs. Denfield would not have her.

Monday brought a stiff note from that lady, saying that, after making further inquiries, she had found that Miss Morison would not suit. When Clara next saw Mr. Campbell, he seemed to think that it must have been her own fault that she had failed; and though she repeated her conversation with Mrs. Denfield nearly verbatim, he was not convinced.

Mr. Campbell was not so rich as he was supposed to be; his own affairs were puzzling him, and he felt the burden of Clara's very oppressive, though not very important. So he told her that she had better advertise. She sat down directly at his table, and promptly wrote the following:—

‘Wants a situation as governess, a young lady capable of teaching thoroughly all the branches of an English education, French, dancing, and the elements of Latin. Only a moderate salary is required. Address to C. M., Post-office, Adelaide.’

‘Will that do, Mr. Campbell?’ said she, ‘or had I better leave out the Latin, as I don’t pronounce it after the orthodox fashion in South Australia. But you know the Scotch way is *the best*; I asked

Mr. Haussen, a German gentleman, whom I met at Mrs. Handy's, how he read Latin, and he told me it was nearly the same as ours, whereas English Latin is utterly unintelligible all over the Continent.'

'Don't leave out the Latin,' said Mr. Campbell; 'it will do very well for people in the country. Scotch folks will prefer it as you pronounce it, and nine-tenths of the English don't know Latin from Greek; even English gentlemen are generally ignorant of all classical literature; Scotland is the place to be inducted into the humanities. If Mrs. Denfield had not been such a very superior woman, she would never have found out anything wrong in the broad vowels; but it cannot be helped now. I like your promptitude, Miss Morison; no sooner do I say you should do such a thing, than instead of asking how it is to be done, you set about it and accomplish it. And you wipe your pen when you have done, which looks methodical, and is good for my favourite pen. I expect that something will come of this advertisement. You must send it to one or two of the papers, for how many insertions?—let me see—I think three insertions in two newspapers will do, Miss Morison. I shall feel great pleasure in being of use to you, and of course all applicants can be referred to me. My name is good for something in Adelaide. Yes, Miss Morison, I feel convinced that this advertisement will do you good.'

Clara having still further reduced her stock of money by paying for advertising, waited with some impatience for the result. Mrs. Handy spoke to her kindly and cheerfully, and if there had been no one else in the house, Clara would have been comparatively happy; but the vulgar jokes she was subjected to from the young men in the boarding-house were intolerable.

At last came an application for her services; it was couched in these words:

'Mrs. Caumray presents her complements to C. M., and would be glad to see her on Tewsday next, at the

—— Hotel, where I am stopping for the preasant time, at three o'clock P.M.'

Clara shrugged her shoulders slightly at this elegant note, but with only thirty shillings in the world, she must not be too particular ; so she showed it to Mrs. Handy, who read it twice over.

'Well, Mrs. Caumray's compliments are something new ; and the paper is beautiful, though I can't say the same of the writing and spelling. I fancy she would not speak to me now, though many a good day's work she has had from me when she wanted it ; for Caumray used to drink awful the first year they were here, and if it had not been that she took in washing, both her and her little girl might have starved. When he took the pledge, and they went out to the country, they never took any more notice of me. I hear they are doing very well down south, and Mr. Oscar told me that Caumray had bought three more sections of land yesterday at the land-sale. They live about thirty miles out of town, with a sort of rough plenty about their housekeeping ; but I can see by this that Mrs. Caumray wants to start in a more genteel line now, and get a governess for Janey, and make a lady of her. Set them up to get a born gentlewoman to teach a girl that I remember going about in perfect rags ; but it is all of a piece, for the last time I saw Mrs. Caumray and Jane, they were riding through Adelaide on beautiful horses, and had on handsome green cloth habits. I dare say you would be kindly treated there, Miss Morison ; but it seems a casting of pearls before swine—excuse the quotation—for you to go to my old washerwoman's.

'How old is the little girl?' asked Clara.

'Let me see ; she was eight years old when we landed, and that is fully six years ago ; she must be going on for fifteen now. All the children she had after her died in the colony, so it must be only for Janey that she wants a governess.'

'Then they came out in the same ship with you and Mr. ——.' Here Clara stopped short.

'Yes, with me and Mr. Reginald. I knew what you were going to say. Only she was in the steerage, I was in the intermediate, and Mr. Reginald in the cabin, of course. What a good laugh he will have when I tell him that Mrs. Caumray wanted you to go to learn Janey the accomplishments, as she calls them. Really, Miss Morison, you must not go there; you are sure not to like it, and you will find it difficult to get a genteel situation afterwards. And what would Mr. Reginald think?'

'I have no choice left,' said Clara, 'for I have scarcely any money left. I will, if possible, agree with this lady. I dare say I shall be happier with her than I could have been with Mrs. Denfield; and even if I am not, we were not sent into the world to be happy.'

'What were we sent for, then?' said Mrs. Handy.

'To be useful, to be strong, to conquer our faults, to uproot our pride'—and Clara dashed a salt drop from her eye, and looked so determined that Mrs. Handy was of opinion that, though she was a gentle-looking creature, there was a great deal of spirit in Miss Morison.

'After all,' said Mrs. Handy, 'I dare say that is very true. I expected to be happy when I was as young as you, and yet my life has been only one of very hard work, with a good deal of anxiety, and very little pleasure or happiness in it at all. So I hope that as you don't seem to expect happiness, but only mean to do your best and be useful, you may find happiness by the way.'

Mrs. Caumray was a stout, good-humoured looking woman, very proud of her nice farm and beautiful dairy, but above all things proud of her only daughter, whose rosy cheeks, and tall though awkward figure, gave promise that she would one day turn out a fine woman. Janey was an admirable horsewoman, and understood

all about cows, and pigs, and poultry ; but she had had no education but what had been picked up from young gentlemen who had been at her father's in the capacity of servants, no uncommon thing in South Australia. Generally speaking, they were what Scotch people call '*ne'er-do-weels*;' but it was a convenience in the evenings, when the day's farm-work was over, that they could hear Janey read, set her a copy, and make her work a few sums.

But, as Mrs. Caumray wisely observed, Janey was getting too old to have a young man for a teacher now ; she must either go to a boarding-school or have a governess. She would be likely to pick up the finest manners at school, if she went to a first-rate one, and an inferior one was not to be thought of. So Mrs. Caumray applied to two or three of the most esteemed boarding-schools in Adelaide ; but as her accent and manners were unmistakeably vulgar, she was told that they had no vacancy at present.

When Clara entered the room which Mrs. Caumray for the present occupied, she found that both her husband and daughter were with her. She hoped that they were a more united couple than Mr. and Mrs. Denfield, and they appeared to be so, so far as she could judge at sight. Miss Caumray was standing at the window, looking out at the numerous passengers, which are so irresistibly fascinating to a country girl. She looked at the young lady whom she expected to be her governess with a sort of wondering awe, as she thought of the French and Latin ; but the idea of dancing crossed her mind, and made a smile pass over her face.

The awkwardness of introduction by people who did not well know how to set about it fairly over, Mrs. Caumray said,

'Jane, my dear, will you go to Miss Nicoll's, and get your dress tried on, and tell her as both yours and mine must be sent here by Saturday morning, for your father says he can't stop in town no longer.'

Jane took a parting stare at Miss Morison, and went her way.

'It is better, Miss Morison, that she should not be here while you talk over matters with Mr. Caumray and me.' In this sentiment Clara heartily joined. 'I like your appearance, and think you are sure to suit me; but would you tell me who I can refer to about your character and all that sort of thing?'

'I can refer you to Mr. Campbell, of Hindley-street, an old friend of my uncle's.'

'A most respectable gentleman, indeed,' said Mr. Caumray; 'that is quite satisfactory.'

'So it is,' concurred Mrs. Caumray. 'I don't know anybody whose recommendation is worth more; but I wish you could teach music and singing, for Miss Caumray has a wonderful ear, and is wild to learn the piano; but perhaps you know enough to begin her, and her father has promised her a piano, and I know he will have no peace till he gets it, so I wish you could give her music.'

'I know the notes of music, but I can teach nothing further.'

'Well, Jane shall get a musical question and answer book, and you can teach her out of that, surely; for she is a great girl now, and has no time to lose. You will wonder that I don't send Jane to school, having only one daughter to educate.'

'I suppose you do not like to part with her,' suggested Clara.

'Indeed and I don't,' said Mrs. Caumray; 'but yet I did make some inquiries about a school for her, and went to some ladies the other day; but they looked so proud and haughty, that I was afraid they would make my girl as proud as themselves. She will have a good bit of money by and by, and that makes me want her taught to be humble. She is naturally of a very meek disposition, Miss Morison; and if anybody takes exceptions to her, and finds fault, she cries dreadful, and won't speak for an hour or two; but for all that, she

must be found fault with sometimes. You will have it all your own way, for I never interfere, and neither does Mr. Caumray. It's her manners that I am most particular about, for in the bush people gets so rough, and the neighbours about has no notion of gentility ; so I like to keep Jane at home, at least I do my utmost. Now, Miss Morison, what salary would you be seeking ?

Clara had been instructed by Mrs. Handy to ask a tolerably high salary, and to do it coolly too ; so she said, ' Forty pounds a-year.'

' That is quite a large sum for teaching one girl,' said Mrs. Caumray. ' I never heard of such a salary being given in town or country ; and there is that very genteel lady, Mrs. Forbes, only gives thirty, and her governess knows music too.'

' That may be true,' said Clara, ' but does she understand English ?'

' I'm sure I never thought of asking, but you know that it is a great matter to be able to play.'

' What I say I can do you will find that I will perform,' said Clara, remembering Mr. Reginald's advice. ' When my uncle sent me out to Australia, he expected that I should get at least sixty, and had poor Mrs. Campbell been alive I should have been staying with her, and should have felt in no hurry to take a situation. As it is, I am anxious to have a comfortable home, and will take forty.'

The confidence and decision with which this was said produced its effect. To get a young lady, a friend of Mr. and Mrs. Campbell's, at forty pounds a-year, would, in spite of the want of music, be a grander thing than even Mrs. Forbes' thundering polka-player, who knew nobody in the colony, and whom nobody knew. ' And as for the money,' thought Mrs. Caumray, ' we can afford it a mighty sight better than Mrs. Forbes can, with all her genteel airs.'

But she could not resist the temptation of satisfying her curiosity as to where Clara lived, if it was not with

the Campbell's; probably it was at Mrs. Barnard's, who was a great friend of theirs, and the most elegant woman in Adelaide.

'You say that you want a comfortable home, Miss Morison; where are you stopping now?'

'I am in a boarding-house at present, and I do not like it.'

'Whose boarding-house is it? Miss Renshaw's, I suppose; that is the best in town.'

'I do not live there; I am staying at Mrs. Handy's.'

Mr. and Mrs. Caumray both flushed when Mrs. Handy's name was mentioned, but the lady's colour was the highest, and lasted longest. Clara commanded her countenance as well as she could, but her heart sank when Mrs. Caumray began to speak.

'I don't think we can come to terms, Miss Morison; you know you don't teach music, and you ask too much salary, and I don't see no use in girls learning Latin; do you, Mr. Caumray?'

'Neither do I,' said he; but he whispered something to his wife.

She shook her head. Clara tried to look unconscious, but blushed, in spite of herself.

'Will you not think of it again, Mrs. Caumray?' said she. 'If you really think the salary too high, give me what you consider reasonable.'

'She does not know yet,' said Mrs. Caumray, in an under tone to her husband. 'It will never do. We cannot have her.'

'I will call again to-morrow,' said Clara; 'perhaps you will have settled then how much you think me worth.'

'No,' said Mrs. Caumray, shaking her head, 'you will not do; how old are you?'

'Nineteen last September.'

'Oh, you are much too young for Jane; Jane is going on for fifteen. Have you ever been in a place before? I beg pardon; I mean a situation?'

'Not a regular situation,' said Clara; 'but I have

taught a good deal at school, and understand giving instruction quite as well as those who have had more experience.'

'But experience is the great thing, Miss Morison; I am sure you will not do;—I wish you a good afternoon.'

'I do the same,' said Mr. Caumray.

And presently Clara found herself in the street, without having succeeded in getting a situation. She went straight to Mr. Campbell's, and told him the result of her advertisement. He looked annoyed, but he was too honest a man to reproach her for telling the truth.

'Well, Miss Morison, I really do not know what is to be done with you. How does your money hold out?'

'I have still thirty shillings, but I must not wait till it is all spent,' said Clara; 'I am very slow at needlework, but I sew neatly; do you think I could get anything to do in that way?'

'I do not know,' said Mr. Campbell; 'I will inquire. I believe that it is a business which does not pay, all over the world. You could not, even if you were a skilful sempstress, earn so much as would pay Mrs. Handy her eighteen shillings a week.'

Mr. Campbell took two or three turns about the little room, and then took out Mr. Morison's letter, desiring her to read it.

When Clara had done so, he asked her if she would like him to draw upon her uncle for as much money as would take her home.

'No,' said Clara, 'I would rather work my fingers to the bone than be dependent on his unwilling charity.'

'I am not rich, Miss Morison,' said Mr. Campbell, 'but I daresay I could lend you a trifle till you get employment.'

'It was cruel, cruel, to send me here,' said Clara. 'I can I get nothing to do at

all? I have made no objection to any sort of drudgery.'

'Ah! Miss Morison, if you had been a strong servant girl, instead of an educated lady, there would have been no difficulty in getting you a place, and good wages, too.'

'I never thought of that before,' said Clara; 'I can go to service. I don't know anything about work yet, but I shall soon learn, and you don't know how strong I am. Do you think anybody would take me? Will you ask for a place as housemaid in a respectable family for me, and I know that I shall soon learn to work hard and well. Do let me have a trial, Mr. Campbell.'

Mr. Campbell admired the girl's independent spirit, and smiled approvingly; but when he looked at the little white hands and taper fingers, the slight figure and elegant bearing of the young lady, he was rather doubtful whether anybody would take her as a servant.

'I will inquire, Miss Morison,' said he. 'By the way, Mrs. Bantam mentioned to me the day before yesterday that her last girl—one of that batch of Irish orphans who turned out so ill—had got drunk and been so furious, that Mr. Bantam was obliged to turn her out of doors; and that after she had gone, Mrs. Bantam had missed a great many things, which the girl had stolen. She told me that she would not engage another till she found one with a good character; perhaps she would take you. She is a very amiable, kind woman, and I dare say she would take pains with you, if you were willing to learn.'

'Do not tell her who I am,' said Clara; 'only say that I have never been at service before.'

'And that not having succeeded in getting employment as nursery governess or needlewoman, you wish to get a servant's place. Mrs. Bantam is an English lady, and has an idea that Scotch young ladies are ignorant of all household work; so I will not tell that

you are a lady. Come in here to-morrow about this time, and I will let you know what Mrs. Bantam says.

Mr. Campbell felt comfortable in the thought that the girl's good sense and high spirit would carry her through the world, and save him any further trouble; but Mrs. Handy was horror-struck when Clara made her acquainted with the result of her interview with Mr. and Mrs. Caumray.

'To think, Miss Morison, that your being staying in house could do you any harm; I am so sorry about it. To be sure it must be wormwood to her that I know how poor she used to be; and as she knows me to be free-spoken enough, of course she supposes that I should tell you all about it before she saw you again. But after all, it would be hard for you to be comfortable with such a vulgar woman; and I am sure you will soon get a better opening.'

'I have made up my mind,' said Clara, 'as to what I am to do. Mr. Campbell says that if I had been a hard-working girl, I should have had no difficulty in getting employment, so I have resolved to go to service.'

'Go to service? Don't think of such a thing! You are not fit for the work, and will lay yourself up in a week; and besides, you will quite spoil your chance of getting well married; and that would be a pity.'

'No matter,' said Clara; 'I will keep out of debt and out of danger; and there is no necessity for being married.'

'Perhaps not, Miss Morison; but you would not like to be a servant, at everybody's beck and call, for your whole life. By the time you have tried it for a year, you will long to get free; and I fancy you would not like to marry the butcher or the baker, or any of that sort of people.'

'Do gentlemen never marry so much beneath them?' asked Clara.

'Why, shopmen and clerks sometimes do marry

servant-girls, and I have heard of two or three gentlemen who did the same; but then their wives are not visited by genteel people,—at least, by the lady part of them. You must not go to service, Miss Morison; I am in no hurry about the board, as my house is full; and if you could make yourself handy and useful about the house, I could easily make a deduction. Jane is so thoughtless; she forgets more than half she is told; and you could do a deal to save my poor feet. Perhaps something suitable may turn up in a week or two. Mr. Reginald will be in town again soon; wouldn't you like to see him again?

'I feel very grateful for your very great kindness, Mrs. Handy, but Mr. Campbell says he knows of a lady who is in want of a maid-of-all-work, and has promised to speak in my favour to-day; and I am bound to him to accept of the place, if Mrs. Bantam will take such a poor, stupid thing as I am.'

'It would be quite colonial in you to change your mind to-morrow,' said Mrs. Handy.

But Clara felt that she could not trifle with Mr. Campbell, or lose the chance of what appeared to be an unexceptionable situation. Grateful as she felt to Mrs. Handy for her kind offer, she was conscious that the position of hanger-on at a boarding-house was neither very safe nor very respectable.

'If Mrs. Bantam will engage me,' said she, 'I will go there; if not, I shall really be very glad to do all in my power to assist you. In the meantime, will you let me go to the kitchen to see how you manage things there; and if you can give me any hints or advice, I shall be very much obliged to you. I see the parlour looks dusty; let me try to sweep and arrange it; I think I could manage to have it done before Jane comes to lay the cloth for dinner; and be good enough to criticise my performance when I have finished.'

Mrs. Handy was pleased with Clara's first attempt at work, and gave her a fair meed of praise. She then

proceeded to give her directions about a variety of things, told her how long a joint of meat took to bake in a camp-oven, how long in a brick-oven, and how long it took to roast before the fire ; how clothes should be washed, and how starch should be made ; how knives and forks should be cleaned, and how German-silver could be kept from turning yellow ; how floors were to be scrubbed, and hearths blackened or whitewashed ; how furniture was to be oiled, and crystal polished.

Clara got quite confused by hearing that so much knowledge was indispensable to a good servant. Things which she had thought were done merely by instinct, she now saw required thought and management ; but some of Mrs. Handy's directions remained in her mind ; and she went to Mr. Campbell's next day, with the determination that if he got her a place, she would do her utmost to keep it.

Mr. Campbell had not found much difficulty in persuading Mrs. Bantam to try his protégée, for the idea of getting a girl who was sober and honest, and who spoke the truth, was a welcome one to her after her experience of the last two or three who had so grievously imposed upon her good nature. Clara had dressed herself very plainly, in case Mrs. Bantam might wish to see her ; so there was nothing to distinguish her from others except the propriety of her language ; but that her Scotch accent prevented Mrs. Bantam from observing. As she was to be taught everything, Clara offered to go for the first month without wages ; at the end of that time, there was to be a new agreement. Mrs. Bantam hoped that they might get on comfortably, for she said she did not like changing her servant often.

Next morning Clara had to bid Mrs. Handy good-bye ; that worthy lady was not satisfied with shaking hands ; she threw her arms about Clara, and kissed her affectionately.

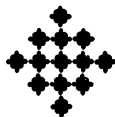
'I will not tell any of the gentlemen where you *have gone*, though they may tease me ever so much.

I will not even tell Mr. Reginald when he comes into town again. He is sure to ask me about you, for he seemed to take more interest in you than I ever saw him take in anybody.'

'Do not tell anybody anything about me, my dear Mrs. Handy. I must not even come to see you again though I do like you so much; for I must only associate with my equals. I hope your Jane will not think herself very much above me.' And here Clara laughed a little sad laugh.

'My Jane shall think nothing about the matter, either good or bad, for she shall know nothing; but do come to see me sometimes, Miss Morison; Mrs. Bantam will surely let you out now and then.'

'If I can I will; and again good-bye my dear kind friend.' And Clara set out to try the world for herself, with a singular mixture of pride in what she was doing, and of contempt for all who would despise her for it. But yet she feared to meet any one she knew, and a figure slightly resembling Mr. Reginald's sent her two streets out of her way.



CHAPTER VIII.

AT SERVICE.

WHEN young ladies in novels are set to any work to which they are unaccustomed, it is surprising how instantaneously they always get over all the difficulties before them. They row boats without feeling fatigued, they scale walls, they rein in restive horses, they can lift the most ponderous articles, though they are of the most delicate and fragile constitutions, and have never had such things to do in their lives.

It was not so with Clara, however. She found the work dreadfully hard, and by no means fascinating; and though she was willing and anxious even to painfulness, the memory that had tenaciously kept hold of hard names and dates, which her father had trusted to as to an encyclopædia, seemed utterly to fail her in recollecting when saucepans were to be put on and taken off, and every day brought the same puzzling uncertainty as to how plates and dishes were to be arranged at the breakfast and dinner-table, which Mrs. Bantam had more than once shown her, with a particular desire that she should do it exactly in the same way.

Then she was very awkward at lighting a fire, and would often let it go out black just when it was most wanted. The camp-oven was a perfect heart-break to her, for she could never hit upon any medium between scorching heat and lukewarmness. Mrs. Bantam said that every new comer from England was awkward with the wood-fires and the camp-oven at first, so she excused her; but Clara knew that she should have been no better if the fires had been of coal, and the oven the newest invented patent cooking apparatus, but this opinion she prudently kept to herself.

She made a considerable smashing of crockery the first week; next week she scalded her arm pretty

severely, and felt almost unable to move it for two days; the third week she was becoming more fit to be trusted, but yet she was conscious that if Mrs. Bantam had not been a paragon of good nature she would not have patience with her even for the month that she got no wages. And as for her work ever being done, she never could see over the top of it. Mrs. Bantam came into the kitchen every day to bring up arrears, and Clara with hopeless admiration saw her quietly put one thing after another out of her hands finished.

'I am afraid I shall never learn,' said Clara to her mistress one day. 'I am sorry I am so dreadfully stupid.'

'I dare say you will learn in time, though you seem determined to take your time to it, Clara; but where in all the world can you have been brought up to be so helpless. I do not know a young *lady* in the colony so ignorant of all household matters. The people next door, whom you see sometimes in the back yard, keep no servant, and do all their own work, but yet every body knows the Miss Elliots are ladies, though I do not visit them myself.'

'I am heartily ashamed of my ignorance,' said Clara, 'but I was a spoilt child at home, and am suffering for it now. I fear you do not think me anxious to do right from the many failures I make.'

'You are too anxious, I think, and get nervous. Keep yourself cooler in future, and you will do better.'

Clara endeavoured to keep herself cooler during the last week of her month's probation, for she was very anxious to remain with Mrs. Bantam. It seemed to be a quiet place, and neither her master nor mistress was unreasonable. She was too busy to feel her solitary kitchen dull, and though she ached all over every morning from the exertions of the preceding day, that was preferable to the headache which Mrs. Handy's young gentlemen had inflicted upon her every evening. She was subjected to no impertinence; the butcher and baker called her 'Miss' when they came with their

commodities; Mrs. Bantam did not send her out on many errands, and though waiting at table was a humiliating piece of work, there had been no strangers as yet to make her feel it deeply.

The month having expired, Mrs. Bantam was of opinion that though a very great deal was yet to be learned, some progress had been made; and offered Clara four shillings a week to stay. 'You are nothing of a servant,' said she, 'but you are civil and honest, so I will try you a little longer. If you would only learn to be methodical you would suit me.'

Clara was grateful and happy, and sat down forthwith to write to her uncle, in order to give him a clear statement of the new position in which she was placed. She had not considered it advisable to write on the subject till the month of trial had expired. To Susan she would have written on the same day, but could not find time, and was forced to delay it till the next Sunday evening, when she entered into detail, describing her mode of life at Mrs. Handy's, her two unsuccessful attempts at getting a situation as governess, and her final settlement as maid of all work, with a very kind lady.

'Do not fancy that it is so very dreadful, my dear sister, or that I am completely miserable. I am determined to be happy if it is possible, and though now I feel the toil fatiguing, because I am new to bodily labour, in time I shall feel it nothing, and have leisure in the long winter evenings which are coming on to read and to write to you.

'The house I am living in is situated in a little garden; it is a real cottage of one story, which almost all the houses in Adelaide are, with only a trap ladder leading up to the little attic where I sleep. I have a fine view of the hills from my bed-room window, and now that the great heat has moderated I think the climate delightful. I still sleep with my window open that I may have enough of fresh air, and it is no uncommon thing in summer for people to leave all their

doors and windows open through the night. I think that shows that the colony must be an honest place; but you must always bear in mind that this never has been a penal settlement.

‘I do not think you would fancy the trees here, at least taken separately. They are evergreens, and looked fresh when everything else was burnt up, but now the newly sprung grass makes them look rather lugubrious. They are somewhat scraggy, and the bark is white on the greater proportion of the trees around the town, which gives them quite a ghostly appearance by moonlight. There are a few near the river Torrens which look really pretty, and I have been told that in the bush there are much finer trees than in the neighbourhood of town. They say that South Australian wood, being of slow growth, and consequently very hard, makes the best fuel possible, but I find it no easy matter to kindle it, and am always getting splinters of it in my hands; but of course I shall learn to do better soon.

‘I suppose that when you receive this you will be in London with my uncle and aunt to see the world, and to wonder at the Great Exhibition. But, Susan, I am seeing life, and learning lessons which I hope I shall never forget; it is not merely the things I am learning to do, useful as they undoubtedly are, but the new thoughts and feelings which my present employments awaken, which will benefit me much. I have hitherto lived too much in books, and thought them all-important; now I see what things fill the minds of nine-tenths of my sex—daily duties, daily cares, daily sacrifices. I see now the line of demarcation which separates the employers from the employed; and if I ever, by any chance, should again have a servant under me, I shall surely understand her feelings, and be considerate and kind. How I reproach myself now for the unnecessary trouble I used to give our good faithful Peggy and Helen, and all through want of thought.

‘So again I say, do not pity me much; feel for me a

little, but rest assured that these little trials I meet with will do a great deal of good to

‘Your most affectionate sister,

‘CLARA.’

Mrs. Bantam at last found Clara useful. If she learned slowly it was surely; and at the end of three months she was really a tolerable servant—not a strong one, but industrious and tidy. She often speculated upon the girls next door. There were three of them. They must be Scotch, for they were always singing Scotch ballads, and they went to the Scotch Church.

They were all very comely, if not positively pretty, and in spite of the work they had to do Clara would have known them to be ladies even if Mrs. Bantam had not told her so. Their two brothers went to business in the morning, and returned in the evening, and Clara would sometimes see one or two of the sisters meeting them at the gate, and bringing them into the house through the little garden. They had a piano, and used to play and sing in the evenings; sometimes Clara would go into the corner of Mrs. Bantam’s yard to listen, or if she happened to be passing that way she would linger near the windows to catch the words of some familiar ditty. The young men used to dig in the garden, or sometimes chop wood in the yard in the mornings.

Clara had been once sent by Mrs. Bantam to borrow a log of wood, for they happened to be out of it; and she saw the eldest Miss Elliot busy washing out her kitchen. Clara was delighted to see it, but Miss Elliot did not like quite so much to be caught by the girl next door doing the most disagreeable piece of work in the house. However, she pulled down her sleeves, and showed Clara where to get the wood, saying that Mrs. Bantam was welcome to it.

As Clara got more *au fait* in the routine of her daily duties, she found the evenings long and wearisome. She thought that she ought to employ them in sewing

for herself, for her wages were not high, and the clothes she had were not suitable to her employments; so she began her first attempt at dress-making on a dark-brown print, with unhappy looking white spots on it, which was to be a morning wrapper. She did not know how to cut it rightly, and it turned out to be a deplorable misfit; and what between the gloomy colour of the thing itself, and the cheerless solitude in which she made it, the tears dropped often and fast over it. Stitch after stitch she put in, and thought of her old happy home—her father, her mother, her sister; of the want of some one to exchange an idea with; of the constraint of this continual reticence, till her heart felt ready to break. When the gown was really done, she brought down a blank book that she had got for a journal on board ship, but which she had written nothing upon there, and relieved her mind by expressing her thoughts.

‘It is right that I have made this dress, but to make another in the same way would kill me, I think. I had better go in rags than have my heartstrings torn up like this. I must read, though I have no face to look up to when I lift my eyes from the book; I must write, though nobody but myself shall read it.

* * * * *

‘I hope I may never meet Mr. Reginald again; I feel that once we were equals, but that now, without any fault of mine, I am hopelessly his inferior.’

Such were a very few of the thoughts which Clara committed to paper. She felt relieved by doing so, and then began to read something not very wise, or very deep, but amusing; for she did not want to over-think.

CHAPTER IX.

A VISITOR.

MRS. BANTAM did not much approve of her servant's studies, and after Clara had gone on with them for a week, she told her that it would be much better if she would sew, and pronounced a decided negative on either reading or writing upstairs when she had gone to bed; for, said she—

‘A girl I had two years ago used to read novels in bed half the night, and was never fit for her work through the day. She was always pale, and had a startled look about her; but one night she startled us all in earnest, for she set fire to her bed, and we had difficulty in putting it out. So, since that, I have made a rule that no servant of mine shall read in bed; and I hope, Clara, that you will not break it.’

‘Then do not be angry if I read or write in the kitchen, ma’am,’ said Clara; ‘for I feel too sad and lonely to sew much.’

‘I am as fond of a book myself as anybody can be, but I never let reading interfere with my duties,’ said Mrs. Bantam; ‘and I hope, Clara, that you will not let a passion for novels lead you into idleness and all mischief, as it did poor Eleanore. She has turned out very ill; gone quite wrong indeed.’

Clara coloured at this comparison, but she said nothing.

‘Well, Clara, we are going to have a visitor to spend a few weeks with us, so you must see that the spare bedroom next mine is very clean and comfortable, for this lady is just out from England, and seems to be very precise and particular. I do not know her myself, but she has brought letters to Mr. Bantam from a gentleman in Staffordshire. She wants a situation in a respectable family, or as teacher in a

good school; and Mr. Bantam has asked her to stay with us till she meets with something to suit her.'

'Was it the lady who called yesterday?' asked Clara.

'Yes; and she comes this afternoon with her luggage. Now see and don't make any mistake at table, Clara; for this lady is very observant, and of course will blame me as well as you, if anything is wrong.'

'I will try to get everything done *comme il faut*.'

'No slipslop French, at any rate, Clara; Miss Withering would consider that dreadfully out of place. Mr. Bantam is to be on an election committee this afternoon, and he dines in town; so you had better have dinner ready by three, when I expect Miss Withering here.'

Clara thought a great deal about Miss Withering. She had only had one glance at her face; it was neither pretty nor young, but there was a confidence about its expression which looked as if its possessor could make her way in the world.

Three o'clock came, and with it Miss Withering and her boxes in a spring cart. She had a quarrel with the driver as to the amount of his charge for bringing them, but was ultimately obliged to pay the full sum, as he would not go away without. So Miss Withering entered Mrs. Bantam's house highly malcontent, and took off her bonnet and shawl in the room her hostess showed her into, in a state, for her, of considerable excitement. She was dissatisfied with the colony generally, and as this was a very wet day, and she had got splashed in the cart, she felt justified in complaining of a climate which she had been led to believe, from books published, and general conversation in England, was the finest under the sun.

'I cannot think how you can submit to such streets, Mrs. Bantam,' said she, as she sat down to dinner. 'I feel that I have been deceived with regard to South Australia. I was told that it was Italy without its sirocco, and that the air was so mild that throughout

the whole year sleeping in the open air was agreeable and innoxious. Now my experience hitherto has been very contrary to these accounts; the bracing frosts of England are luxuries compared with this plashing, continual rain.'

'I cannot say I like the rain much,' said Mrs. Bantam; 'but unless we have a great deal of rain in winter, we have short crops in summer. Last season was dry and very pleasant while it lasted, but we are suffering for it now, in high prices and scarcity both of corn and hay. We are but young people here, and Rome was not built in a day.'

'Pray, Mrs. Bantam, have you been long in South Australia?' asked Miss Withering.

'Only ten years; I cannot call myself one of the original colonists, but I have been here long enough to see great improvements, and to have ceased to think about returning to England.'

'Do you mean to say that you have lived ten whole years in such a place as this? really you must have made many sacrifices, and submitted to many discomforts. No lady thinks of staying ten years in India, Mrs. Bantam.'

'You would not compare South Australia to India,' said Mrs. Bantam, warmly.

'Indeed I should prefer India of the two. I like warm weather, and a lady never needs to do anything whatever there; while here, I understand, that servants are so scarce and bad, that a lady's life is one of unmitigated slavery. You should really get Mr. Bantam to take you home again; Mr. Dillon expects that you will not be long in returning to Staffordshire.'

'There are a great many things to be considered, Miss Withering, before I could make up my mind to leave this colony. I rather think I like it too well to leave it, even if it were advisable otherwise.'

Miss Withering elevated her eyebrows at this speech, and gave her attention to her dinner and Clara, whom she watched with her pale cold blue eyes till she suc-

ceeded in making her nervous and uncomfortable. Miss Withering wanted a great deal of waiting on. She could not help herself to water from the jug, though it stood at her hand; nor hand anything past, as Mr. and Mrs. Bantam usually did.

After dinner, she asked Mrs. Bantam if she would send one of her girls to Rundle-street for the key of her work-box, which she had left at the house where she had been living for the last two days. Mrs. Bantam supposed Clara would make no objection, and Clara did not. It was not raining just then, but the streets were very wet and muddy; she was picking her steps very carefully in coming home, but just in turning an awkward corner, she met Mr. Renton full in the face. He was carrying a large parcel and a handbox, and looked as much caught as she did.

'Ah! Miss Morison, this is an unexpected pleasure, for I have never got sight of you since we landed. Where have you hidden yourself, and how have you been this age?'

A heavy shower came on, and Clara was obliged to stand beside Mr. Renton under a broad verandah, subjected to the inspection of half-a-dozen children, who were watching the rain from the windows of the cottage.

'Got a good situation, I hope, Miss Morison. Have you heard from our extensive friend, the fair Elizabeth, yet?'

'Not yet, Mr. Renton. I suppose she has forgotten me.'

'I'll be bound she has not forgotten me,' said Mr. Renton. 'I flatter myself that I did make an impression in that quarter; but where are you living, Miss Morison?'

'I have got a very comfortable situation; I hope you have succeeded in getting into a line of business that suits you?'

'Why, not quite! I have tried several places, but the fact is, they were not suited to me; they wanted a

man of less talent and less ambition than I am. I have been thinking of going to the Turon, the New South Wales gold fields, you know; but I have gone as assistant to Macnab in the meantime, and am really invaluable to him with the ladies. With servant-girls, in particular, I am irresistible. This parcel, Miss Morison, contains five pounds seventeen and sixpence worth of drapery that I induced a red-handed, coarse-looking girl, who is going to be married next week, to buy at Macnab's; and I capped the matter by offering to take the young lady's parcel home myself, so she bought a guinea bonnet out of very joy. And she came into the shop to buy a pair of shoes, an article we were out of. Really, Macnab ought to consider these things, and remunerate me accordingly.'

By this time the shower had moderated, and Clara and Renton parted. She made the best of her way home, and Mr. Renton proceeded up another street to deliver his precious parcel.

Miss Withering received her key with dignity, opened her workbox, and took out a narrow strip of muslin, which she began to hem slowly and painfully, while she talked in an oracular manner to her good-natured hostess, who grew uncomfortable under the battery of her words. The new-comer boasted herself to be a person of great discernment, and told Mrs. Bantam that she could read people's characters at a glance.

'I have astonished many persons by my singularly quick perception, and many of my friends have regretted not attending to my warnings in time. I hope you will excuse me for mentioning that I think the girl who waited at table to-day only wants an opportunity to be impertinent; and you will allow me to find fault with her in case she treats me with disrespect. I suppose you do not find your girls improve after you have had them for six months?'

'They are very seldom good for anything after that time,' said Mrs. Bantam; 'and yet I dislike changing

so much that I would submit to almost anything. I have had great trouble with Clara, not from any want of respect, but from her total ignorance of every kind of work. I cannot bear to find fault, and she really is a good, well-meaning girl, though fonder of reading than I quite approve of.'

'There is nothing spoils a servant so much as a taste for reading,' said Miss Withering; 'it makes them dislike working, and besides, they fancy when they have read a few books, that they know as much as their mistresses, and then there is an end of all right subordination. The old plan was the best, to have servants in their proper places; let them learn to wash and scour, bake and brew, and leave reading and writing to their betters. 'A little learning is a dangerous thing.''

'One girl I had was quite ruined by reading,' said Mrs. Bantam; 'I told Clara about it, but she seems to think that, as she does all the work of the house, she may have the evenings to herself.'

'Ah! Mrs. Bantam, I see how you are imposed upon. I am pretty sure that a great deal of the work Clara professes to do falls upon you; and in order to let her amuse herself in the evenings, you are forced to slave half the day.'

'Well, there is some truth in that,' said Mrs. Bantam.

'It was for the girl's own good I spoke,' said Miss Withering; 'for it would be much better for herself if she would bring up her arrears, and keep the furniture brighter than she does, than to be filling her head with nonsense.'

When Mr. Bantam returned home to a late tea Miss Withering began a discussion on politics with him. Mr. Bantam was a Radical, a Dissenter, and a Voluntary; Miss Withering was very High Church indeed; so that Mrs. Bantam, whose opinions were not very decided either way, but who rather inclined to her husband's views, had great difficulty in keeping the

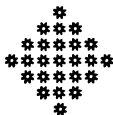
expressions of the disputants within 'parliamentary language,' and was not sorry when bed-time put an end to the altercation.

'What a talented man Mr. Bantam is!' said Miss Withering to his wife, when she came to see that her guest was comfortable for the night. 'Very decided in his views, and prejudiced on some points, but really a masculine mind. I admire firmness in others as much as I cultivate it in myself; so do not be annoyed at our war of words, my dear Mrs. Bantam; we are only trying the stuff we are made of. I have enjoyed this little conversation more than I have done anything since I left England.'

'Well, Elinor,' said Mr. Bantam to his wife, in confidence, 'I am sure I was foolish to ask this Miss Withering to stay here, for I don't think we shall find her a comfortable guest. Do you?'

'She seems a clever, sensible woman,' replied the lady; 'she admires you very much, and thinks you very talented indeed.'

Mr. Bantam was greatly mollified.



CHAPTER X.

HOW MISS WITHERING MADE HERSELF AGREEABLE TO
MRS. BANTAM AND HER GUESTS.

ERE a week had passed, Mrs. Bantam found that Miss Withering was not at all a desirable guest ; but still she had a great opinion of her judgment, and thought that it must be from some fault of her own that she was always uncomfortable with her. Miss Withering ordered Clara about in the most unreasonable manner, and it was only by the greatest effort that Clara could submit patiently. She despised the meanness which could lead Miss Withering to accept of hospitality from people whose existence she was embittering ; for day after day she succeeded in detaching the members of the family from each other, and rendering herself the centre round which the household must revolve.

She pitied Mrs. Bantam for having so much to do ; wondered why Mr. Bantam did not get her a carriage to drive about in—it would benefit her health so greatly ; thought that as Mrs. Bantam did not keep two servants, she should have one strong enough and clever enough to spare her every fatigue ; talked her victim into a wretched headache, and then was afraid Mr. Bantam did not feel enough for his angelic wife.

To Mr. Bantam, when she could attack him singly, she regretted his wife's weak nerves and easy temper ; asked if he did not think it advisable to have a competent person in the house to look after Clara, and get her to do her duty ; admired the force of his mind and the vigour of his fancy ; sighed over the difficulty gentlemen find in getting ladies to enter into their projects or pursuits, or to comprehend business matters ; and concluded by saying that Mrs. Bantam was the most amiable of women.

To Clara she seldom spoke, except to find fault ;

but after Miss Withering had been with her mistress a week, something occurred which almost made her continual watching and reproving nothing to Clara. It was towards the close of a fine mild winter day in the end of May, when a knock called Clara to the door, where, to her great surprise, she saw and recognised Mr. Reginald ; but owing to the shadow in which she was thrown, he did not know her again.

‘Is Mrs. Bantam at home?’ said he. Clara could not trust herself to speak, but made a gesture of assent, and opened the parlour-door to admit him, retreating to the kitchen with all possible despatch, saying to herself, ‘He will not stay long. I hope he will not stay to tea. How wretchedly ill he is looking!’

‘How long it is since you have been in town, or, at least since you have come to see us, Reginald,’ said Mr. Bantam. ‘What has kept you in the bush for so many months?’

It appeared that Mr. Reginald had suffered a long illness, and had come to Adelaide for change of air ; but that, finding his usual abode at Mrs. Handy’s occupied, he thought of returning the next day but one.

‘Do stay with us, Reginald,’ said Mr. Bantam. ‘You can give your vote in Adelaide for whatever county you have qualified for ; and though you and I differ on politics, we wont quarrel. You will find a powerful ally here ; Miss Withering is a strong church and state lady, but I am not afraid to contend with both of you.’

Mr. Reginald hoped that it would put Mrs. Bantam to no inconvenience, and being assured that it would not, confessed that he should only be too happy to spend a month in such pleasant quarters. Mrs. Bantam’s conscience pricked her a good deal that night, for having entrapped an invalid within ear-shot of Miss Withering’s tongue, but as that lady had been milder and more agreeable that evening, she was inclined to think it was all for the best after all. But Clara’s part was the hardest to go through. She delayed

bringing in tea till Miss Withering declared that 'that girl' meant to starve them all, and rung the hand-bell with such violence as nearly to dislocate the handle.

When she did bring in candles and tea, her cheeks were painfully flushed, and her hand trembled so that she could scarcely put the cups and plates in their places. Miss Withering's eye was upon her, but that she heeded not; she saw at a glance that she was recognised. She cast one imploring look at her friend of the boarding-house, to let him know that he must take no notice of her; it was understood, and Reginald only gave one or two stolen glances to see how the young lady got on at service. She did not do Mrs. Bantam credit this evening, and made so many blunders, that Miss Withering looked from her to her mistress as if to say, 'Do not you see what an affected, stupid thing she is?'

After tea, Clara heard with despair of the arrangement that had been made, and she and Mrs. Bantam went in together to put the prophet's chamber, as they called it, into a habitable state.

'And I must wait on him here for a month,' she wrote down in her short-hand journal, 'and never speak to him, and nobody must know that we have ever met. He said that our meeting formed a page of his life; truly it fills a page in mine, too. Miss Withering is not handsome, neither is she agreeable; I am sure he will not like her. . . . How I wish she had never come here! I always was afraid of visitors, and the first has been so bad, that I never thought I could feel the second a worse infliction; but I do.'

When Clara had written this, she remembered that she had got that day through Mr. Campbell (who sometimes looked in, and was pleased to see how bravely she got on) a letter from Miss Waterstone, which she had twice opened, but only to be interrupted. Anybody's thoughts were better than her own just then, so she opened it again, and read as follows:

'MY DEAREST CLARA,

'I have been very long in writing to you, but my plans have been so unsettled, that I did not like to write till I had fixed upon something.

'You know what was my great inducement for going to Australia, and when I heard from Aunt Rachel that Robert had got a good situation in Glasgow, and had no intention of leaving the country at all, I saw that I had no chance of seeing him in Melbourne, so I had *half a mind* to go home again. But you know it would have looked a foolish-like thing in me, and I don't think Robert behaved well about it at all.

'However, I made up my mind to forget him, and to take a situation in Melbourne; and I daresay I should have succeeded if I had not foolishly (you will say) fallen in love. I could not refuse such a handsome offer as I had made to me just three weeks ago to-day, and I think you will be glad to hear that I am going to be comfortably established. Mr. Patrick Fleming is, *in my opinion* at least, very agreeable. He is in business in Melbourne; I liked him from the first day I saw him; he is tall and fair, with fine blue eyes (you prefer *black*); and though he has been a great many years in Port Philip (or Victoria I should call it now) he is as fond of Scotch music and Scotch *people* as ever.

'Melbourne is a much finer town than Adelaide; the streets are regularly built, and are kept in better repair; but the environs are not so pretty, and there are not many villages near the town. However, I prefer Melbourne on the whole, and the river is much finer than that miserable little burn they call the Torrens; but I have *good* reason to prefer this place for it is to be my home, and my *intended* has a nice shop in one of the best streets, with a dwelling-house upstairs.

'Do write to me soon, my dear Clara; and let me know what you are doing. You must address to
Mr. P. Fleming, Collins-street, Melbourne. It seems

queer to write the name before it is really my own, but Patrick is continually asking me if it does not sound very well?—he is *so* amusing.

‘I want to know how Mr. Macnab and Mr. Renton are getting on, for I still take a great interest in all my fellow-passengers. Remember me kindly to Mrs. Handy when you see her, and believe me to be,

‘Yours very affectionately,
(for a short time only) ELIZABETH WATERSTONE.’

‘A kind husband and a happy home,’ sighed Clara, after reading this letter. ‘Ah, Miss Waterstone! you are indeed to be envied.’

On the following morning when Clara was getting the breakfast-table arranged in the parlour, Mr. Reginald came in. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Bantam, nor even Miss Withering, were early risers, so he was the first to make his appearance. Both of them coloured a little, but Reginald recovered first, and said, rather confusedly:—

‘I hope you are well, Miss Morison. I did not know that you were living here. If I had known, I would not have accepted Mrs. Bantam’s kind invitation, for I see you would rather have my absence than my company. I will go to-day if I make you uncomfortable.’

‘Do not go on my account. Mrs. Bantam has a right to ask what guests she pleases. I shall get used to this; I know I looked very foolish last night, but you are the first person I had met who had known any thing of me before I went to —.’

‘Could you not have done better, Miss Morison? Could not Mr. Campbell have got you any situation as a governess? This is a sphere for which you were not formed, and it must be painful to you to submit to the position you hold here.’

‘I am not heroic enough to deny that it is painful, but I had no alternative. I am not accomplished enough for Adelaide people; I had no money, so I

determined that if my head was valueless I would try my hands, and I have succeeded better than you could have expected.'

'But, Miss Morison, would you not prefer to go home. I think you told me that your uncle was in good circumstances, and it would be better and happier for you to live with your sister in his house than to go through such drudgery here.'

'If my uncle writes me a kind invitation to return to Scotland I will gladly go, but I will not for a cold one. It would make Susan unhappy if I were to be a burden on my uncle. So I am better here.'

'But you are pale and thin, Miss Morison; your eyes look as if you did not sleep well, and I fear you are suffering a great deal in silence. Shall I speak to Mrs. Bantam, and represent your former position to her that she may show you more consideration?'

'Do not speak, I beseech you, Mr. Reginald. She is very kind, very patient with me; she has taught me everything, for I was dreadfully stupid. I beg of you to take no notice of me at all, but just let me go on in my old way, and not try to make me discontented with the station in life in which God has seen fit to place me. I must order myself lowly and reverently to you as well to all my other betters, so good-bye, we are strangers now.'

So saying Clara returned to the kitchen, and waited till the bell summoned her before she would again encounter Reginald's eyes.

Miss Withering soon found out that colonial gentlemen were not attentive, and that Mr. Reginald was neglectful beyond all forbearance. He was at all times rather spasmodic in his efforts to please ladies, and Miss Withering trod so ruthlessly on his pet prejudices and old established opinions, that he could barely be civil to her. Mrs. Bantam required very little from her guests beyond an appearance of satisfaction with what she did for their comfort, and she did not mind though Mr. Reginald forgot to inquire after her last

night's headache on the following morning, or that he required to be reminded to pass anything across the table, even though she wanted it herself. But to Miss Withering these were serious things, and she very soon began to talk at Mr. Reginald to Mrs. Bantam, and made her regret having invited Reginald to the house. But she could not send Miss Withering away; it would be cruel, for she was very poor; she was certainly clever and managing, and though she was not an agreeable or accommodating guest, she might be an admirable governess for unruly children.

Mrs. Bantam was glad when one of Miss Withering's morning tirades was stopped by the arrival of a gig at the door containing Mr. Hodges and his daughter Minnie. She had but a slight acquaintance with them, but what she had seen of them she liked very much. Mr. Bantam had sold some property for Mr. Hodges lately, and had got a good price for it; the two gentlemen were both busy electioneering on the same side at the present time; and when Mr. Bantam had taken his wife on a tour down to the south they had been most kindly entertained at Mr. Hodges' for a week. Mrs. Hodges had been everything that was hospitable, and Minnie had walked with her guest to all the prettiest spots within walking distance, and had laid herself out to please her with the frankness and earnestness of a country girl, anxious to convince her town acquaintance that the bush is the most delightful place in the world.

Mrs. Bantam introduced the new comers to Miss Withering, who thinking that there might be a situation in this quarter, drew herself up to her full height, and looked like the concentrated essence of all the virtues and accomplishments extant. Mr. Hodges thought her ladylike, Minnie thought she was a bad specimen of a class which she generally disliked;—a new-comer, who did not take kindly to Minnie's own dear colony.

'You have not come all the way into town to-day,'

said Mrs. Bantam; 'early risers as I know you to be, thirty-five miles of indifferent roads cannot be gone over by eleven o'clock.'

'No, no, Mrs. Bantam; a merciful man is merciful to his beast,' said Mr. Hodges; 'my poor grey could not do it so soon. We came in as far as the foot of the hills yesterday, and stayed all night with our friends the Summerses; and the late breakfast there, and one thing or another, has kept me out of town till now; and I have business to do, and little time to do it in. Mr. Bantam is at his office, I suppose?'

'He went nearly two hours ago,' said Mrs. Bantam. 'But though you are hurried, Miss Hodges is not. I hope she will be induced to pay me a visit of a month now, after my trespassing on her good nature last summer.'

'Don't trespass on it now, by calling me Miss Hodges; I hate the name so thoroughly. Will the new Council not be able to change our names as well as the English Parliament? I really wish, papa, you would inquire, for it would be so delightful to have a pretty name.'


'I am quite contented with my name myself,' said Mr. Hodges, 'and if you dislike it, you have it always in your power to change it for a prettier; don't you think she has no reason to complain, Mrs. Bantam?'

'I like to be called Minnie best, and you called me so in the country,' said the young lady.

'Very well, Minnie; I am sure that your father is in no hurry for you back again just now, and I should be so pleased if you would spend a few weeks with me, till business again brings Mr. Hodges into town.'

'The children will lose their lessons, and I fear mamma will have too much to do if I leave her so long. And besides, papa, I ought to go to stay with the Elliots, if I have any time to spend in Adelaide.'

'But I am very anxious for your company just now, Minnie.'



And Mr. Hodges seemed well-disposed towards his daughter's accepting the invitation.

'We see,' he said, 'so little good society in the bush; and really Minnie grows quite wild.'

But Mr. Hodges looked very proud of his daughter, notwithstanding.

'But, papa,' said Minnie, 'I cannot do it. What *would* Annie Elliot say to see me next door, after all my promises to come to her the very next time mamma could spare me? Do you know the Elliots, Mrs. Bantam?'

'I am sorry to say that I don't; but perhaps you could take me to see them.'

'Minnie has a school-girl friendship for Annie Elliot,' said Mr. Hodges, 'and is always keeping up a correspondence with her. I can't fancy what they write about, but they fill sheet after sheet of paper.'

'Now, papa, it is a shame to say you don't know what we write about, when I read you my last letter from beginning to end, not forgetting the postscript. I was rather proud of it, do you know, Mrs. Bantam. I had made quite a hit in giving a description of papa's accident, which turned out quite harmless; and I wrote about mamma's fears that Ellen's second teeth were coming in cross; and I described Mrs. Caumray's new governess, whom I saw at church; and Miss Caumray's fashionable bonnet; and John's insane desire to learn the native language; and all about Charles losing himself in the Murray scrub, and asking for a night's lodging from a German, who looked upon him as a beggar, and would hardly let him in; (was it not disgraceful inhospitality for the bush?) and after I had read every word of it to papa, he said it was only a rigmarole about nothing.'

'Young ladies are very fond of letter-writing,' said Miss Withering, 'but I think that some restrictions should be put upon this taste. In the school which I conducted in England, I made a point of seeing every

letter written by the young ladies, and sealing and addressing it myself. Also I kept a very strict watch that no letters should be interchanged by the girls or sent by the servants. I prevented a great deal of mischief by that means.'

'That is a very good old-fashioned system,' said Mr. Hodges.

'But unrestrained letter-writing gives a person a fluent style,' said Minnie.

'Yes; but not a correct or concise style,' said Miss Withering. 'How few ladies can write a business letter! they cannot keep to the point; they enlarge and digress on every hand; and it is a common subject of complaint that after you have got through perhaps six pages, you find the only important part of a girl's letter in the postscript.'

'Very true! very true!' said Mr. Hodges. 'I must say, Miss Withering, that your views are very judicious. Now, Minnie, I hope you will not make a convenience of your kind friend here, and be constantly running out to see Annie Elliot. I have an engagement this morning, so you must excuse me for the present, ladies—I must wish you good morning.'

So saying, Mr. Hodges left the room, and presently drove off.

'By the bye, I ought to have asked Miss Withering if she has any objection to sharing her room with you, Minnie, before I induced you to stay; for Mr. Reginald occupies the only other spare room I have,' said Mrs. Bantam.

'I should be most happy,' said Miss Withering, 'if Miss Hodges would give me her company in my dormitory; I shall be only too glad to have some one to talk to while I dress and undress, for it seems such a waste of time otherwise.'

'I hope you have a tolerable servant just now,' said Minnie to Mrs. Bantam; 'for I cannot bear to think that I shall give you trouble. I can do anything for myself, but I dislike making my hostess feel uncom-

fortable by making her girls have more to do than usual.'

'Clara is a very fair servant,' said Mrs. Bantam, 'though she is not very strong.'

'You are too good-natured,' said Miss Withering. 'I never saw any one so easily pleased in my life.'

'I know that for one I have had better, I have had two worse than Clara, and I regard her accordingly.'

'That speaks ill for South Australian servants,' said Miss Withering; 'but Miss Hodges will judge for herself.'

'South Australian servants are not so bad as they are called,' said Minnie. 'Perhaps they are not such working machines as English servants, but we have met with so many instances of genuine good feeling in ours lately, that I am determined to find some better topic of conversation than the faults of domestics, which I have long been sick of hearing from our neighbours. I walk or ride across for a little change to see a friend, and hope to get into some agreeable conversation, when, behold! they will talk of nothing in the world but Sarah's blunders and Mary's depravity; dwelling upon trifles with severe displeasure, till I am inclined to think that if our characters were as much taken to pieces by them in the kitchen, as theirs are by us in the parlour, we should cut a very poor figure indeed.'

Miss Withering and Minnie were water and fire, and never could agree. The water at first made the fire burn dim, and Minnie felt uncomfortable while Miss Withering dilated on the elegance and etiquette of English life, and the many blunders which novices made on the threshold of the world.

Miss Withering was of opinion that a sister was a very unfit teacher for her brothers and sisters. There could not, under her management, be the strictness or the regularity which, like the hem at the end of the garment, prevented the fraying and wasting of the loose edges of time. Punishments were rarely enforced by a sister with sufficient rigour to prevent the recurrence of the fault, and often an appeal to mamma would

thwart the firmest and best-laid schemes of the amateur governess. Minnie was conscious that she was not very strict or regular with her dear pupils, and that there was a great deal of truth in what Miss Withering now insinuated gently, and then declared boldly; but she had both sense and feeling, and she was convinced that such a teacher as her disinterested adviser would be a great change for the worse.

The first opportunity Mrs. Bantam had to speak to Minnie alone, she apologized for inviting her to meet a person who, though clever, was so disagreeable; but said, that she herself was so tired of her, and had been so worried with her advice and opinions, that she hoped Minnie would excuse her, and talk to Miss Withering a little to relieve her, and contradict her as much as she pleased; 'for, my dear child, I cannot contradict any one, and I cannot make up my mind to offend her, and get quit of her at once.'

'Then I have free leave to say what I like to this lady?'—and Minnie clapped her hands. 'I will not let her talk against the colony, or despise the Elliots because they do their own work. Greek shall meet Greek, and a fine tug we shall have!'

'Remember, I don't want you to quarrel with Mr. Reginald,' said Mrs. Bantam; 'I will not forgive you if you do.'

Clara was alarmed at the announcement of a third visitor, but a sight of Minnie dispelled her apprehensions. Minnie was tall and straight, with an easy, though not fully developed figure. Her hair was dark-brown, and in great profusion; her eyes were very blue, and clear, though not sparkling; her nose was rather too large, but the effect of it was carried off by a tolerably wide mouth, with beautiful teeth, and a bewitching smile. Her hands were rather red, and she was a good deal freckled; but yet nobody could say there was anything vulgar in Minnie's appearance.

She volunteered to save Clara all further trouble with the bed-room she and Miss Withering occupied;

and as, previous to her arrival, it had been left every morning deplorably untidy, this was a great relief to Clara.

‘And, Clara,’ said Minnie, ‘as there is only you to do the work of the house, and now it is full of visitors, you must sometimes have more than you can manage; so ask me to help you when you have a push. I can do anything in the way of making puddings and pies; indeed I am quite fond of it, and will not let our girl do them at home.’

To Mr. Reginald, Minnie was frank and agreeable; she had a piece of knitting in her hand, from which she looked up every now and then to listen and reply to what was said. Miss Withering proposed a game at whist after tea, saying that it was the only game of cards that she liked, for it was the only one which was rational and solid. Mrs. Bantam could not play, but Minnie could; so the two gentlemen sat down to play with the two young ladies—Minnie and Reginald against Miss Withering and Mr. Bantam. Mrs. Bantam was in a state of great delight when she saw Miss Withering fixed to the card-table, and felt herself free to do as she pleased. She went into the kitchen, and found Clara endeavouring to read, and silently wiping away the tears that rolled from her eyes.

‘What is the matter, Clara? Are you ill?’

‘No, ma’am; but I have wanted to speak to you for some time.’

‘Do you want to leave me, Clara? I shall be quite sorry to part with you.’

‘Shall you, indeed?’ said Clara, her face brightening at the thought that some one cared a little for her. ‘I am so glad to hear you say so. I did not wish to leave, but I wanted to know how I have displeased you; for you do not seem to put the same confidence in me you used to do.’

‘You have not displeased me at all, Clara. It is only that Miss Withering’s nonsense. I wish she had never entered the house. Never mind what she says,

or what she makes me say, for I like you as well as ever, and should be grieved if you went away; and I am sure you would never get such a comfortable place as you have here. So dry your eyes, you silly child, and tell me if you don't think Miss Minnie a very much pleasanter guest.'

Clara agreed that Miss Minnie was a paragon of a visitor, and received directions from Mrs. Bantam with regard to supper with restored equanimity.

Miss Withering understood whist better than the other players, but she had decidedly the worst partner; for Mr. Bantam made many and serious blunders. She laid down the laws of the game with great precision, explained how her partner might have taken such and such tricks; and when he would have passed it off, saying, that as they were only playing for love, it was of no consequence, she would not have such a pal-liation.

'Excuse me, Mr. Bantam; if a thing is worth doing at all, it is worth doing well. If you mean to play whist, you must attend to the rules of the game; it is a game of skill as well as chance.'

'Really,' said Minnie, 'I do not see any pleasure in playing at anything that requires much thought. I quite hate chess for that reason. I see no use in making a labour of an amusement, any more than in turning conversation into a pitched battle.'

'Thank you, Minnie,' said Mr. Bantam; 'I see I may trust to you as an ally. Suppose we are partners to-morrow evening, you will not take my blunders much to heart, eh?'

'If you will be merciful to mine, I will overlook yours,' said Minnie.

CHAPTER XI.

MINNIE STANDS UP FOR HER COUNTRY.

NEXT day being very fine, Mrs. Bantam asked Miss Withering and Minnie to accompany her when she made some calls. Miss Withering was surprised and shocked at everything she saw; the houses were small, the furniture scanty and shabby; the children seemed like wild things, and the number of babies who were brought out to be admired was really quite intolerable. Mrs. Bantam was going round her acquaintances with families on this day, in the faint hope that some one of them might think Miss Withering a desirable governess. She could not conscientiously recommend her, but she would let her be seen and heard; thinking that her air of confidence and universal knowledge might induce an engagement. Miss Withering, though not admiring Australian society, prudently kept her thoughts for the amusement and edification of her more immediate companions; and looked more like a being from another sphere condescending to enlighten and astonish inferior creatures, than like the ill-tempered, domineering woman she really was; and when in the house of a quiet and easy, but not particularly clever or tidy lady, who had four young children, she met Mrs. Denfield, the congeniality of their natures drew them together.

Mrs. Bantam had scarcely a bowing acquaintance with Mrs. Denfield, and was not inclined to cultivate it; but she was pleased to see that she seemed to be struck with Miss Withering's appearance and manners. She ventured to ask if Mrs. Denfield was in want of a governess, for her friend Miss Withering had been highly recommended, and had had much experience in tuition. Mrs. Denfield said that she was at present but indifferently pleased with the young person she had; but as the engagement had been entered into for

three months, and only six weeks had elapsed since it was made, she supposed she must keep her till the full term had expired. But she looked at Miss Withering keenly, and asked several fishing questions as to her qualifications. Miss Withering, of course, could do everything under the sun, and had the best possible manner of imparting knowledge; she talked like a book on the subject of education, and flattered Mrs. Denfield so delicately that a certain impression was made.

‘If nothing else turns up,’ thought Mrs. Bantam, ‘here is an opening for Miss Withering. I can, perhaps, submit to her for six weeks, but no longer.’

Minnie had meant to go to see the Elliots this afternoon, but Mrs. Bantam had a bad headache, and besought her to stay with Miss Withering, while she retired to her bedroom for a little peace and quietness. So Minnie goodnaturedly gave up her pleasant visit, and endeavoured with all her powers to amuse her unwilling subject. Miss Withering would not be led into any topic of conversation; she must start it herself, and turn it, if possible, her own way. The sad state of manners in the colony was her present theme, and she dilated upon it, almost with feeling.

‘It would have been a great thing for you, Miss Hodges, if you had been two or three years in a good boarding-school in England. It would have made you see things in the same light in which they appear to an Englishwoman like me.’

‘And I think that a very unpleasant light,’ said Minnie. ‘We have gone with Mrs. Bantam to see five ladies to-day; I have been quite happy in these visits; would it really have been better if I had been as dissatisfied as you have been?’

‘You would find yourself much at a loss in English society, Miss Hodges. It is not customary for young ladies there to talk about babies cutting teeth, or the wearing out of children’s shoes; or to discuss the best method of ironing and clear-starching, or what shape

of pinafore sits best on the shoulder, and is most easily made.'

'What is the great end of conversation, Miss Withering? Is it not to suit what you have got to say to the tastes and capacity of the person you address? I like to please those I am with, and though you may think my subjects low and common-place, I both gave pleasure and felt it.'

'That is a sort of truckling I could not submit to,' said Miss Withering. 'I was born to rule, and cannot stoop to my inferiors. A master-mind like mine was not made 'to chronicle small beer.''

'I can assure you,' said Minnie, 'that Margaret Elliot, who is the very cleverest girl I know, can both make small beer and chronicle it. I am sure her mind is cultivated as highly as any English lady's, and yet she never complains of me, though I am so inferior to her on all points.'

'She cannot have a lofty mind, or she would revolt from such drudgery as she has to do. These girls actually wash and scour; I can see them from my window.'

'She has a comprehensive mind; it can take in small things as well as great,' said Minnie, thinking she had settled the matter.

'How did you become acquainted with these Elliots, Miss Hodges? Your papa does not seem to feel cordially to them; I do not like girls having friends whom their parents do not approve of.'

'Papa cannot but approve of them,' said Minnie. 'Though he talks sometimes of foolish schoolgirl friendships, it is only in jest, for I owe more to the Elliots than we can ever repay in gratitude. We were ship-mates in the 'Alexander' eleven years ago, and Dr. Elliot was very attentive to mamma and me, when we had the fever on board, though he was not the surgeon of the vessel. We took a house between us when we landed here, and lived three months as one family. Of course, when we went to the bush, and they settled in

Adelaide, we could not see each other so often ; but when it was thought advisable that I should be sent to school, Mrs. Elliot offered to take me into her house, that I might go to school with Annie, who is of my own age.'

'Annie—that is the least of the three, is it not ?'

'Yes, she is not so tall as either of her sisters, but she is a dear girl ; and we became great friends in the four years that I lived at Dr. Elliot's. It was a second home to me ; Margaret and George used to help us with our lessons in the evenings, and I know I learned more from them than I did at school. I am sure I was ten times happier there than I could have been at a boarding school.'

'I suppose it was quite as expensive.'

'Perhaps it was ; but then I had all the advantage of a home while I was learning, and as every one of the Elliots was clever, and knew more than I, their society must have done me good besides.'

'My opinions are very different from yours upon this point,' said Miss Withering. 'Girls never learn anything thoroughly unless they are kept under strict discipline ; but tell me more about your friends ; their father and mother are dead now, I believe ?'

'When Dr. Elliot died, after a long and severe illness, he left the two brothers to maintain the family ; for he had very little notion of economy, and the trifle which he had laid aside was left to his wife ; but she did not long survive him—only about twelve months, and now the girls are obliged to be very economical, in order to live on their brothers' salaries and their own little money, for George and Gilbert settled that all their father and mother left should belong to their sisters.'

'I wonder that the young ladies do not take situations, as you say they are clever and tolerably accomplished.'

'George and Gilbert would not hear of such a thing, and the girls are too fond of being at home to wish to

leave it. They are so united a family, that they cannot part with one of their number.'

'They are not all young,' said Miss Withering. 'Have they never thought of relieving their brothers by marrying, or have they had a chance? They certainly cannot be called handsome, and they want style.'

'Now, I call them all good-looking,' said Minnie. 'Grace has been engaged nearly two years, but as Mr. Henry Martin does not get a high salary, they are waiting till he has a rise. He is at the Burra mine, in the Company's employment; so they see each other very seldom, though their engagement is no secret. Grace talks about it to her friends as a matter of course. They take the thing quite coolly and comfortably, are confident that on some future day they will be made happy, and are not particularly miserable in the meantime.'

'And the second sister,' said Miss Withering; 'is there any prospect of her settling in life soon?'

'No, I do not think there is at present. Papa was quite angry with Margaret for refusing a friend of his, who was in very good circumstances. He was rather handsome too, and not stupid; but Margaret did not like him. Papa said it would have been such an advantageous connexion for the whole family.'

'Don't you think she was wrong and selfish in refusing such a connexion, Miss Hodges?'

'What would it have been worth to the family if Margaret had not been happy? George and Gilbert were quite satisfied with her conduct, and I am sure she must have been right. Do not fancy that the Elliots told me this. It was from papa I heard it. As for Annie, I hope she is not going to be married for a long time to come, for I want to keep my friend.'

'But these three girls all at home must be a great burden on their brothers; the poor young men cannot think of marrying themselves, and they seem very nice lads,' said Miss Withering, looking searchingly into Minnie's face.

'Oh! time enough for that; they are both quite young yet; indeed, Gilbert is scarcely one and twenty; and really they are so comfortable with their sisters, that they have no inducement to think of marrying. Such a man as Mr. Reginald, now, would be the better for a wife; for he is alone in the colony, and has no one to talk to at home, neither mother nor sister. Don't you like Mr. Reginald, Miss Withering? Would you not take compassion on his solitude, and condescend to marry a bushman?'

A faint smile for a moment played on Miss Withering's thin lips, but it disappeared when she recollected that Reginald was anything but attentive to her, and that to Minnie he had been more agreeable.

'Don't you think his manners are very gentlemanly, Miss Withering?' asked Minnie.

'Anything but that. He is a bear. I have never seen such a thing as a gentleman in the colony. I suppose there are none.'

'Don't you consider Mr. Bantam a gentleman?' said Minnie.

'He is rather clever, though opinionative; but he cannot be called a gentleman.'

'And what do you call Mrs. Bantam, then?' said Minnie, in increasing wonder at the new comer's impertinence.

'A most amiable useful woman, but not a lady,' said Miss Withering, authoritatively.

Minnie would not deign any answer to this, feeling too indignant to trust herself to speak. She expressed a great wish to read that day's newspaper, and hoped Miss Withering would find a book to amuse her, for of course she did not suppose that a new comer could take any interest in colonial matters or colonial politics, or Miss Withering might have the newspaper.

'I like to get information from what I read,' said Miss Withering, taking up a book containing the driest chips of history, which Mr. Bantam had bought years ago, but which had never been cut. She asked

Minnie to get her a paper knife, which after a quarter of an hour's diligent searching was found and given to her.

'There is a great deal of valuable information contained in this work,' said Miss Withering, after she had cut several leaves and read three pages. 'I have really found one fact which was new to me already.'

'Yes,' said Minnie. 'Don't we feel every book we read convince us of how little we know?' Miss Withering stared. That was not generally the result of her reading.

'I am not a very great reader myself,' said Minnie, 'and am not so fond of solid reading as I ought to be. I like a lively novel better than anything else.'

'I think time is too valuable to be frittered away over novels,' said Miss Withering, 'and even newspapers are a dissipating kind of reading. History, philosophy, biography, and science, particularly medical science, are what suit the requirements of my mind.' And so saying she again settled herself to pick up her chips for a blaze on some future occasion.

Whist this evening was pleasanter to Mr. Bantam than on the previous night, but Miss Withering was not at all satisfied with her partner. He was absent and forgetful, and not all her remonstrances could induce him to take an interest in the game.

'There is to be a concert at the Exchange to-morrow evening,' said Mr. Bantam, who had won the rubber, and thought he had done great deeds. 'Shall we make a party and go to it, ladies? I can assure you, Miss Withering, that we have very good concerts in Adelaide considering what a young colony this is, and that it is not very populous. The many Germans who have settled amongst us have infused a taste in our audiences for what is called solid music, though I myself scarcely understand it.'

Minnie was delighted at the idea of the concert; she had not been at one since she was grown up, and knew it would be delightful. But when she remembered

that she had a great deal of shopping to do next day to be in time to go to her father's by the dray, her spirits fell at the thought that she would not get her visit paid to her friends next door till she had been three whole days in town.

'I want a new carpet, Minnie,' said Mrs. Bantam, when they went out the next day, 'for Miss Withering is always fixing her eyes on the old one as if she were counting the holes and darns in it, and I feel it quite unpleasant. Will you help me to choose one?'

'I will give you my taste on the subject,' said Minnie, 'and what is more, I will help you to cut and make it, for I made all our last one at home, with very little assistance from mamma. We shall improve the appearance of the parlour greatly, I have no doubt.'

Minnie had a most miscellaneous list of articles to purchase, and had to go from one end of the town to the other in order to get what she wanted. There were commissions from both the servants at home, besides what was wanted for her mother and the children. She hesitated a long time about the cook's Sunday dress; but Mrs. Bantam was much longer in making up her mind about the carpet. It was nothing to please herself and Minnie, but she wanted to get something that Miss Withering could not greatly object to. This stripe would suit the room nicely, but Miss Withering would think it stiff; that diamond-shaped pattern looked rich, and would be serviceable, but Miss Withering would certainly think it gaudy. So they chose something not sufficiently *prononcé* to please themselves, but which the shopman called quiet and genteel, hoping that its unobtrusiveness would disarm criticism. But, alas! they might as well have got something to please themselves, for Miss Withering looked very contemptuously on the new carpet when it came home, and could not have supposed that Mrs. Bantam meant to put it in the parlour. Kidderminster carpets, she ~~were~~ never used at home except in nurseries;

Brussels and Wilton had completely exploded the homelier manufacture.

Mrs. Bantam was both tired and mortified, but a cup of tea gave her new strength and spirits, and she was quite able to go with the others to the concert. Minnie was enchanted with the music and the numbers of people she saw; she sat next to Mr. Reginald, who talked agreeably to her whenever there was a silence; her face was radiant with pleasure, and she almost forgot her disappointment at not seeing the Elliots, in the enjoyment of the moment. Of course Miss Withering had heard really good music before, and could see nothing delightful in the performance; the airs were old and hackneyed, and she smiled at the simplicity of the novices around her. She remarked many things on which she meant to comment afterwards, and particularly the words and looks of poor Minnie, who, she thought, was certainly much too free in her conduct in a public place.

While they were absent Clara thought she would try to write to her sister, but when she had begun, 'My dearest Susan,' she could proceed no further. A full tide of bitter thoughts broke in upon her. Every day lately had been so miserable, that even Mrs. Bantam's half apology for her coldness had scarcely relieved her oppressed spirit. She began to feel now that Reginald was dear to her from the pangs which his attentions to Minnie inflicted. It was in vain that she said to herself that it would have been the same had he been an old married man; her keen self-scrutinizing eye saw that her heart was implicated; and her judgment decided that if she ever hoped for peace or happiness, a love so hopeless must be crushed before it grew too strong to master her.

She did not feel that she had done wrong; it was natural that her mind should turn to the only person who seemed to understand her feelings, or to compassionate her position. Even Mr. Campbell had fancied her nature 'like the dyer's hand, subdued to what it


wrought in;’ Mr. Reginald alone could see that she suffered in secret, and that this life, though she had entered on it of her own free will, and was convinced that she was right in doing so, was one of much painful humiliation. But no further should this feeling on her part go. She had only answered Mr. Reginald in monosyllables, and with distant respect, even when they were by chance thrown in each other’s company without witnesses. This had been but rarely since Minnie had come, for she was an early riser, and used to chat gaily with Reginald before breakfast, until the other members of the household made their appearance.

Clara did not dislike Minnie in spite of this, nor did she think that as yet there was any love between them; but it cost her great pain to see conversation going on that she was shut out from, and to observe that Reginald watched the expression of Minnie’s eye while Miss Withering was speaking, enjoying its decided antagonism to the insufferable new comer. And Minnie’s position was so good, her face so pleasing, and her manners so frank and prepossessing, that Clara was convinced that love would soon ensue on Reginald’s part, which Minnie surely could not fail to return.

Clara stole into the empty parlour, and sat down where Reginald had been sitting at tea. She fancied Minnie sitting opposite her, and recalled her bright look and merry laugh. Then she took up the book Mr. Reginald had been reading, and looked into it. It was a novel from the circulating library, and a very silly one.

‘I cannot read such trash as this,’ said she; ‘if he admires it, he has not such a fine taste as I had expected from him. I dare say that I have imagined many wonderful things of him, because I have seen and talked to no one else yet. After all, he may be but an ordinary mortal.’

But Clara did not feel any the better for this supposition. Her nature was one that loved to admire and



look up to whatever was true and noble; and though much suffering was connected with her admiration of Mr. Reginald, it made her still more miserable to think that he was not admirable. However, she thought she had found an idea that would do her good; and she began to write down in her journal all that might lower her friend in her estimation; she enlarged upon his reserve, his bad taste in novel-reading, and his somewhat hot discussions on politics; and feeling that she had done a great deal to uproot her strong prepossession in his favour, she shut and locked up her journal with some little triumph. Two hours were yet to elapse before the pleasure-seekers were expected home; and Clara began to repeat what she called her 'household treasures,'—those pieces of poetry which she had learned in happier times, and which her father used to call for in the twilight, when he sat in his easy chair by the fire, and she was on a low stool at his feet.

Different as were her circumstances now, and different as the scene was on which her eyes rested, it was surprising how much better she felt in thus making her thoughts and memories audible to herself; poem after poem was gone through in a low, distinct voice, while her fingers mechanically endeavoured to twine the hair, which she had properly braided on going to service, into the long ringlets she had worn at home. Her kitchen brightened as she stirred the fire and snuffed the candle at intervals; her spirits rose, and life seemed again endurable. Even the sound of Minnie's joyous voice, when she returned, and Mr. Reginald's anxious hope that she had not caught cold in the slight shower they had encountered in the walk from the Exchange, though they sent a pang through her heart, did not make her relapse into such hopeless and deep misery as she had felt when they set out.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FAMILY NEXT DOOR.

WHEN Minnie promised to help Mrs. Bantam to make the carpet, she did not expect that it was to be done in such a hurry; but Mrs. Bantam had a fidgetty desire to have it put down, for she knew it would look much better on the floor than in the hand. Carpets were not things to stand being criticised without the general effect being seen; so the poor slandered Kidderminster was cut immediately after breakfast, and Minnie and Mrs. Bantam set to work, and did not stop till it was finished. Then it was laid down and admired by the makers; but Miss Withering thought it looked cold, and that the colours did not harmonize with the window curtains. Minnie was too anxious to go to see the Elliots, and make an apology to her dear friend Annie for not coming sooner, to be roused by anything Miss Withering could say. She put on her bonnet, and hurried away. Just as she got to the Elliots' gate, she saw George and Gilbert coming home to dinner, accompanied by another young gentleman who was a stranger to her. She had scarcely time to knock at the door and receive admittance, when they all came in.

'Ah, Minnie!' said George, 'you have been more than three days in town, and have never come to see us, though you were only next door.'

'I have very good excuses to make, George, if you only knew them,' said Minnie.

'That you have been so happy at Mrs. Bantam's, that you have forgotten us,' said George.

'I will make my excuses to your sisters,' said Minnie, who felt offended at George supposing such a thing as that she felt coldly to her old friends.

Minnie did excuse herself, though rather awkwardly, to the Misses Elliot. She did not like to tell them

that she had wished Mrs. Bantam to call with her the first time, but that she had refused, saying that Miss Withering would certainly wish to go with them, and that she would not bring such a torment on the Elliots for the world. Nor did she like to reveal just at first how disagreeable Miss Withering was; and that Mrs. Bantam wanted her to save her from the annoyance of her interminable harangues and uncomfortable innuendoes; so that having made the most of the shopping, and drawn out the round of calls and the making of the carpet into the utmost possible tediousness, she felt that, after all, she had made a very poor apology.

‘I am glad you have come to-night, Minnie,’ said her particular friend, Annie Elliot, ‘for after being so gay, you would have found it very dull if we had only been in our old way; but George has brought his friend, Mr. Everard Harris (from the Burra), to spend the evening with us, and he will enliven us, if any one can. He came down from the mine yesterday, and only stays till the day after to-morrow. I liked him very much both times I have seen him, and I hope you will like him too.’

‘I should much rather have come when you were alone,’ said Minnie.

‘But you can come some other day; you can come often before you go out of town. What do you say to giving Mrs. Bantam your mornings, and spending your evenings with us, when our brothers are at home? You used to think it pleasant.’

‘So I do yet,’ said Minnie, ‘nor did I ever weary of mornings in your house. How often I think of your mamma’s good-nature in letting us iron on Saturdays; I am sure we spoiled many of our dolls’ things by ironing with too hot irons; but it was so nice.’

‘Well, come in to dinner now, and we will talk of old times by and bye.’

Mr. Everard Harris was a young gentleman whom every one thought very good-looking, though he had

not a good feature in his face; but there was a brilliancy in his oddly-shaped eyes, and an expression of humour in his irregular but most mobile mouth, that conveyed a feeling of pleasure which beauty itself can scarcely give. He was tall, his movements were easy and graceful, and no one disputed the symmetry of his figure. He had not been more than a year in the colony, but he was popular from the first, and was always the chief man in company. George Elliot had hitherto admiringly acquiesced in his superiority, but on this particular evening he did not like it quite so well. Mr. Harris sat between Minnie and Annie at dinner, keeping up a rattle of lively small-talk, and dividing his attentions so fairly between the two ladies, that not even George could see any difference.

Grace was always quiet, and Margaret and Gilbert had their heads so full of politics at this particular time, that they could talk of nothing else; Annie was delightedly listening to what Mr. Harris was saying, and George, without the assistance of some one of his family, found it impossible to start a subject that would amuse Minnie, and bring himself forward.

When dinner was over, the young people sat round the fire, and George succeeded in getting beside the young lady he wished to please.

'There is to be a *conversazione* at the Mechanics' Institute in a fortnight, Minnie,' said George. 'Will you go with us? I think you will like it. We have a lecture, with music and singing afterwards.'

'I shall be delighted to go if I am in town, but papa has only given me a fortnight to stay in Adelaide, and three days have expired already.'

'I saw you last night at the concert with Reginald,' said Mr. Harris. 'I bowed to him, but he seemed to be too pleasantly engaged talking to you to pay any attention to me. What a queer kind of duenna that was sitting beside you; I think she is the approved mixture of whalebone and vinegar. Oh! George, you should have seen her, sitting upright, tall, thin, and

bony, with a precise black silk dress, and virtuous bonnet, endeavouring to keep this young lady and Reginald quiet in their flirtation, but not succeeding.'

George looked cold, Minnie looked hot, and could not resist a hit at Miss Withering, as the most tiresome of new comers, concluding by saying,—

'If I have leave to stay in town till the day of the *conversazione*, you must be good enough to take me; and I shall like it quite as well as the concert; for, as Miss Withering says, it is a great thing to be able to get information; and I hope your lectures are not too abstruse for my comprehension.'

'Oh! not at all,' said George; 'they are generally too popular for me; I hear nothing but what I have known before. The music is the most pleasing part of the performance to my taste; but of course you will not think it equal to what you heard last night.'

'It was very fair,' said Harris, 'very creditable to such a place as Adelaide; but you should have heard Jenny Lind in '*La Figlia del Regimento*,' Miss Hodges.'

And here Mr. Harris burst forth into an opera reminiscence. From that he went to the ballet and Cerito, then to the theatre and Macready; next to the Fine Arts and Landseer, describing all the things which his auditors had never seen, and had no chance of seeing, with an animation and enthusiasm which made Annie almost wish to return to England, and produced a greater effect upon Minnie than all Miss Withering had said upon the advantages of the mother country.

George, completely silenced by this great Tom o' Lincoln, sat wondering when Minnie would turn her face towards him; Grace was pleased and quiet as usual; but Margaret, who thought it mattered very little what people had seen, unless it was followed by reflection and action, got into a train of thought of her own about the education question, which then was agitated between the voluntary party and their opponents. The voluntary side was sure to triumph in the matter of re-

ligion, and Margaret saw with sorrow that the State grant was doomed as regarded the clergy; but she hoped that the liberal party, as they were called, would not commit so suicidal an act as to withdraw support from education unless it were divorced from religion. Gilbert was writing to the newspaper on the subject, and a few ideas that might enlighten it were crossing Margaret's mind, when Mr. Harris, leaving the ornamental, touched upon the useful, and mentioned steam and railways. He was astonished that none of his auditors had seen a railway, and that only Grace and George remembered being in a steamer. Margaret would fain have recalled her thoughts from her own subject, and fixed them on railways, but she could not manage it. Perhaps Gilbert had been thinking about his letter, too, for when he did speak, it was on quite a different subject from what was under discussion.

'Are the Burra proprietors ever going to pay dividends again?' said he; 'it is a great pity that they should have been stopped just now, when there is such a stagnation in the colony; money being scarce, and labourers coming out when there is no employment for them. The great bulk of emigrants from England are despatched in spring, and reach us in the dead of winter, which is always a slack time. If they were to land in September, in time for the sheep-shearing, or in December, for the harvest, they would soon be dispersed through the country, instead of remaining, poorly fed and ill-lodged, in town.'

'Oh! the dividends will soon be resumed,' said Mr. Harris; 'there is no fear of the company, for they have an immense quantity of ore raised, and the Patent Copper Company have ship-loads of copper smelted and ready to be taken to the port; but you know what abominable roads we have just now. It would be so expensive to get it carted down at present, that the proprietors do wisely to wait till the roads are fit to travel on. Besides, some creditors are pressing them, and they are spending their present receipts in clearing

off old scores. And this monster engine for keeping the mine clear of water has cost no trifle of money either; but what a property that copper mine is, after all. Those lucky fellows that invested in it at first are getting eight hundred per cent. on their outlay.'

'I think bad times are coming on the colony,' said Gilbert, 'and really we deserve it. These elections have made me ashamed of my fellow-colonists; such an amount of clap-trap and mock wisdom, such truckling to the masses, such abuse of the term liberty, put me too much in mind of Yankeeland.'

'I thought you were a Whig, Gilbert?' said Harris.

'So I used to consider myself, but I find that though I have changed none of my principles, I am looked upon in this land of enlightenment as a red hot Tory.'

'I must say that I feel slightly conservative myself when I am told to look up to the working-classes, as a respectable man in a fustian jacket once required me to do at a public meeting lately; but it is not *selon les règles* to talk politics to ladies; is it, Elliot?'

'Indeed!' said Annie, 'if you are to exclude politics you condemn Gilbert to silence, and Margaret too, for she is quite as enthusiastic as he is. If ever I am inclined to be merry since this excitement came on, they seem to think me childish and frivolous.'

'And what does Miss Hodges think on the subject?' said Mr. Harris, with an air of empressement which made Minnie blush.

'I have not quite made up my mind,' said Minnie; 'I think both parties go too far, papa on the one side, and our good friends here on the other.'

'Then you think ladies have nothing to do with politics?' said Harris.

'If ladies can understand them I think they are entitled to take as much interest in them as gentlemen,' answered Minnie.

'Do not say *gentlemen*, that is not the term,' said Harris. 'It is working-men who are the parties most capable of judging upon all political subjects, and for

whose especial behoof every law must be enacted. They may form a combination against the use of machinery where it is much needed; they may petition Government to impose an export duty on corn; but yet the friends of improvement and free-trade will still consider them infallible dictators of what is right and wise in colonial policy. 'Let us protect the working man,' is the cry that wins the day in South Australia. But, for my own part, I take as little interest in politics as any lady in the land. I, like them, had no vote, and I was glad of it, for it saved me a world of trouble—

'How small, of all that human hearts endure,
That part which kings or laws can cause or cure.'

'That couplet of Goldsmith's is a fallacy, though it sounds very well,' said Margaret. 'A great deal of our happiness depends on the good government of the country we live in. I do not like to see you so indifferent to the welfare of South Australia, Mr. Harris.'

'My father sent me here in the hope that I should learn to be more avaricious,' said Harris. 'He had heard that colonial life made people sharp and keen, and as I always made ducks and drakes of my cash at home, he thought I could not but improve here. I think I have got a little better, for no one will trust me, so I keep out of debt—but I never have a surplus. My whole energies are devoted to the task of making my month's pay satisfy my month's wants; so what stake have I in the colony? And now, when I am disposed to pass a delightful evening in such agreeable company, do not fancy that I can be stirred up to honourable action. The non-political young ladies will sing, I hope.'

The piano was opened, and Annie played an accompaniment, while Minnie and Harris joined her in singing. George had a cold, and could not sing; Gilbert read the newspaper, whose arguments he meant to demolish, and the two elder girls went into the kitchen to look after tea. Harris had a remarkably fine voice,

and knew how to aid without drowning those of his companions ; their voices had never sounded so well, and they were delighted with the effect. Tea was only a short interruption ; for Annie insisted on Minnie's going over all their old songs together, and Mr. Harris could always extemporise a second or a third, as it was wanted.

Then Mr. Harris, after deploring the want of ladies' society at the Burra, intreated somebody to play a waltz or a polka, for he had not had a dance for six months. Minnie expected George to ask her to dance with him, but Mr. Harris engaged her beforehand, leaving the Elliots to dance with their sisters. When Minnie was tired, her partner danced with Annie, and, to her surprise, George did not ask her hand after she had rested. He spoke very little, and seemed out of spirits ; he handed her a book of engravings to look at, but did not himself point out what he liked, and what he hoped she liked. When Mr. Harris was quite tired, he sat down and talked, expressing his intense enjoyment of this evening, which he said he should mark as a white day in his almanack, if he had happened to have one.

'You had rather a black day at Kooringa lately, when the floods came,' said Gilbert.

'And washed the people out of their Burra burrows,' said Harris. 'I saw a rich scene there and then, Miss Annie. Some honest fellows, miners, who had comfortable houses in the township, went to lend their assistance to the poor half-drowned inhabitants of the holes in the side of the creek. You know, Miss Hodges, that a number of the miners make a hole, rat fashion, to put their heads in, and bring up their families in a subterranean sort of way. This was cheap, but neither healthy nor comfortable, and when the floods came it appeared to be rather an unsafe proceeding. No lives were lost, but a good deal of curious property was floated away. These good fellows I spoke of worked hard to fish out the people from one of these holes. The husband was in the mine at the time, but they

had to take out the woman and her children, and she sent them back for a box of clothes, some stools, a chair, and some bedding. The water was rising very fast, and when they had brought out all these articles, and stood gasping to recover their breath, she whined out, 'Oh ! please do go in again ; there are two nice logs of wood on the fire, and it is a pity they should be lost.' The fellows looked quite disgusted, and walked off, leaving the woman bewailing the loss of her fuel, and wondering how people could be so disobliging. Of course I sympathised with her, though I did not offer to dive for the wood.'

'I suppose you have a considerable population both above and below ground ?' said Minnie.

'Upwards of four thousand now, and I am sure they made noise enough for eight thousand at the election. It is quite a rising place, and plenty of business doing. The town will look larger when the burrows are abandoned and substantial cottages erected. The company have warned the miners that they must not live in holes for the future, and have given them six months' notice to quit ; but the working men are quite offended at this ; they think if they take the risk at their own valuation, the Mining Association should not interfere.'

'You don't mean to say that they have any desire to return to their holes after being so summarily ejected ?' said George.

'I saw them baling out the mud the day I left Koorringa for Adelaide,' answered Harris, 'with a view to taking possession again. They are sure to live in them till they are again washed out, or till the six months are up ; but they mean to petition for a longer lease. Well, I suppose they are as comfortable as the poor gold diggers on the Turon ; that is wet work.'

'Gold may be bought too dear,' said George, sententiously. 'I should be sorry to run the risk of losing health and happiness for ever so large nuggets.'

'That monster one of a hundredweight might tempt

even the philosophic George,' said Harris. 'Is not it a thousand pities it could not have been sent in time for the Exhibition? The articles near it would have been overlooked, for such a mass of gold would be the greatest wonder in the Exhibition.'

'I do not think so,' said Margaret. 'It would not tempt me much. I would much rather see something on which skill and labour had been employed, or genius had struck out a world-wide interest from homely materials, than an ugly mass of gold, worth, when dug out of the ground, 3*l.* 17*s.* 10*d.* per ounce.'

'I am sure it could not be ugly,' said Annie; 'and if they had carved and brightened it up, it would have looked beautiful.'

'I believe it is as pretty a sight down the Burra mine as anywhere,' said Gilbert. 'I thought when I went down with Henry that it was magnificent; the malachite and variously-coloured ores, with pieces of quartz and crystal sparkling all round, must make it more brilliant than any gold or silver mine in the world.'

It was getting late, and Minnie went to put on her bonnet. She felt that George was stiff and cold, and that she had talked more to Mr. Harris than she ought to have done in the presence of such old friends. She wanted to tell Annie again how really sorry she was not to have come before, when they were alone; but the words stuck in her throat, and when her friend asked her how she liked Mr. Harris, and was so glad that she had had an opportunity of seeing him, she could only say that he was very agreeable, and that she liked him very much. When Grace asked her to come again soon, and hoped she was happy at Mrs. Bantam's, Minnie could contain herself no longer, but told her friends, in confidence, how disagreeable Miss Withering was, and how she worried Mrs. Bantam out of health and spirits.

'So don't fancy that I am forgetting you, or that I am happier there than I should be here, if I do not

come so often to see you as we could wish ; but pity me for having to entertain or to quarrel with a person whom I so exceedingly dislike.'

'But,' said Margaret quietly, 'you will be happier in the evenings, for both Mr. Bantam and Mr. Reginald are said to be clever, agreeable men.'

'Oh, yes!' said Minnie, blushing, 'you would like Mr. Reginald, Margaret ; he is quiet, and not at all funny ; he would just suit you, besides that you would agree on politics. And Mr. Bantam plays whist so delightfully ill, and makes Miss Withering so cross ; it is fun to see her bristling up with Hoyle at her finger's end when he makes a mistake.'

Mr. Harris had his hat in his hand when Minnie returned to the parlour, and would see her safe to the end of her long and perilous journey next door. George did not offer to accompany them, nor did Gilbert, but hoped Harris would take good care of her. Minnie did not hear what her companion said, and answered yes and no at random, and was glad when Clara opened the door and she parted from him.

The family at Mr. Bantam's were just breaking up to go to bed, when Minnie entered ; but Miss Withering detained her, saying that she wished to have a talk with her by the fire.

'I hope you have spent a pleasant evening, Miss Hodges,' said she ; 'I saw three gentlemen going in at the gate immediately after you left us. Are there three Mr. Elliots, or was one a stranger ?'

'It was a Mr. Harris, from the Burra, a friend of Grace's intended ; I never saw him before.'

'He is taller than either of your friend's brothers, is he not ; and a finer figure ?'

'Yes, I think he is,' said Minnie.

'Well, what have you been doing all this evening, Miss Hodges ? you have been in no hurry home ; so I conclude that you have enjoyed yourself very much among your old friends. There is so much cordiality and freedom from restraint in such visiting as yours,

and the single strange gentleman would prevent it from being too domestic. I suppose you were singing with the Elliots?

‘Annie and I were singing with Mr. Harris; he sings very well indeed.’

‘Better than Mr. George Elliot?’

‘Yes, I think he does,—more correctly and scientifically. Annie says she finds him easier to sing with.’

‘Well, you must have been very happy. It has been a miserable evening here, for I could not prevail upon Mrs. Bantam to try whist; and though I said I had no objection to dummy, neither of the gentlemen would consent to play under such circumstances; and then, instead of talking, they sat down to read. I do not think Mr. Reginald addressed twelve words to me in the course of the evening.’

‘Was he so much interested in the novel I recommended to him?’ said Minnie.

‘Oh, no! he threw it down, saying he wondered Miss Hodges could like such rubbish; and began to read some work of Carlyle’s,—*Heroes and Hero-worship*, I think it was, which I believe he had read before. Such a puerile mind his must be, to require to read anything over again. You understand me better, Miss Hodges; and I really have some pleasure in talking to you. Your mind is a rich though an uncultivated garden, and I feel much disposed to endeavour to do something with it. What shall we talk about to-night? I think that if we were to take the life of Hannibal or Alexander the Great, and go over the incidents in their order, we should find it a most interesting and improving study.’

‘It is late,’ said Minnie, ‘and my head aches; I could not talk history to-night, even if I were up to the facts, which I am not.’

‘How do you teach your sisters history, Miss Hodges, if you are unacquainted with its facts?’

‘Oh! they are at the History of England,’ said Minnie, with great simplicity; ‘and I know that well

enough, particularly the first part of it; and then I have the book before me. I do not like to trust to my memory; I might make some mistake.'

'Oral tuition is very much in fashion now,' observed Miss Withering; 'I know some families where they do not allow the governess to use books at all, but insist on her knowing everything independent of them, and require her to be constantly communicating information to her pupils, while they are walking and dressing, and even at meal-times.'

'Oh! how I pity the poor governess's head,' exclaimed Minnie.

'Your sandal has got untied, Miss Hodges; you will be sure to break it, if you do not fasten it up.'

'Oh! so it has,' said Minnie; 'I suppose it slipped the knot when I was dancing. How untidy it must have looked!'

'You should always tie it in a double knot; I will show you how it is done. There is a right and a wrong way of doing everything.'

'Oh, Miss Withering,' cried Minnie, 'I must and shall go to bed; you did not help to make the carpet, and of course you are not tired.'

'I never did such a thing in my life,' said Miss Withering, 'and could not think of attempting it. I see you have pricked your fingers sadly; and as for poor Mrs. Bantam, she could not sew at all this evening. In England, some one is sent from the furnishing warehouse to measure the room and fit and make the carpet, which is a much better arrangement. I was forced to try to amuse Mrs. Bantam to-night; I got her to hold several skeins of silk while I wound it. Mr. Reginald never offered to do it when I brought them out.'

But Miss Withering was speaking to the fire or the table, for her auditor had escaped. What a relief it would have been to Minnie to take a good cry, but she dared not do it, for fear that this dreadful woman would observe her. Her only plan was to pretend to

be asleep; so, though Miss Withering addressed her several times when she came in, she gave no answer. Minnie could not sleep for a long time; she reproached herself for not apologizing to George for her somewhat snappish speech to him at first; for not denying that she flirted with Reginald; and, above all, for receiving so much attention from Mr. Harris. He ought to have known better than to take so much notice of a stranger when there were three Miss Elliots to talk to; and if she had only had five minutes' quiet conversation with George, all would have been well. But the evening had been spent, and could not be recalled; and George thought she had found new friends whom she preferred.

'And I am sure,' thought Minnie, 'that neither of these gentlemen are half so delightful as George can be. Reginald is too grave, and Harris too flippant; George is so true and honest, and sprightly, too, when he pleases. If Gilbert had been offended with me, I could have gone straight up to him, and explained matters; but I feel more shy with George. I suppose it is because he is older, that I am more afraid of offending him. And to think that Annie really fancied I should like to see a stranger among that dear circle. I hope she does not like that Mr. Harris too well. It was very wrong in me to tell her that I thought him agreeable.'

At last Minnie fell asleep, and dreamed most disagreeable dreams, starting up in bed sometimes, and occasionally receiving a sharp poke from Miss Withering's elbow, to admonish her to keep quiet.

CHAPTER XIII.

CLARA HAS AN INVITATION, AND GETS A 'SUNDAY OUT.'

MINNIE felt too ill to get up after her miserable night; she was hot and feverish, and even Miss Withering advised her to take breakfast in bed; so Clara again met Reginald alone in the parlour.

'Miss Morison,' said he, 'I have a message to deliver to you; do not leave the room till you hear it.'

'A message for me! from whom, sir?' said Clara.

'It is from your friend, Mrs. Handy; she is quite grieved that you have never been to see her, and when she heard that I was staying at Mrs. Bantam's, she asked me how you got on. I said that you seemed to work well, but that you looked as if you were ill; and she wishes you to ask Mrs. Bantam to let you take tea with her to-morrow. You will only see her husband, who has just returned from California. Mrs. Handy says she will not believe you are comfortable at all if you do not come, for if Mrs. Bantam refuses you permission, she must be a very unfeeling mistress.'

Clara's face had brightened at the first mention of Mrs. Handy's invitation, but when she thought that all the work and Miss Withering stood in the way of her accepting it, she sighed, and said—

'I fear I cannot be spared, for with so many strangers in the house, there is a great deal to do.'

'I am going out to-morrow,' said Reginald, 'to spend Sunday with a friend in North Adelaide; so I am off the list for that day; and surely Mrs. Bantam will not object to your going out for once, for you really want a change. You will be ill, and I fear I shall have helped to make you so, from the additional work I have inconsiderately brought upon you.'

'I do not mind work, I am strong enough; but do not talk of my being ill,' said Clara, nervously. 'What would become of me if I was really ill? Miss Wither-

ing would have me sent to the hospital, and I suppose that my mistress, kind and good as she is, could not bear to be burdened with me, and would take her advice. I must not think of it.'

'If you were in distress, Miss Morison, and a friend offered you assistance, would you be too proud to take it? Will you trust me as a man and a brother, and write to me if you are in want or sickness? Here is my address. I have sisters whom I should be sorry to see friendless in a strange land, as you are. You are as well born and as well educated as they are, and knowing what they would feel, I can understand what you must suffer in your present position.'

Clara took the address in her hand. 'God only knows what is before me, sir,' said she. 'In case of sickness, I might draw on my uncle, through Mr. Campbell, but you know I should be unwilling to do so. I will keep your address, and I will not forget your kindness. It does me good to hear that I have a friend in the world. If circumstances should justify me in applying to you for temporary assistance, I am not too proud to do it—though I have no claim on anybody here, and least of all on you.'

'Only the claim that you may need help, and that I should be glad to give it. It is simple enough, and if our cases were reversed, you would see how natural and proper it is. When I see Mrs. Handy to-day, shall I tell her that you are coming at three to-morrow?'

'I will ask my mistress, and should really like to go above all things. I long to see her kind face again,' said Clara, as she left the room.

Reginald strolled out to look at the weather, and to see if any vessel was signalled. There was an English vessel coming in, if the ball at the flagstaff told the truth, and Reginald determined to go to the post-office as soon as the mail came into town, to inquire for letters. He expected a letter from Julia, not in answer to that which we saw him write at Mrs.

Handy's, for the eight months, which has been our course of post, had not expired; but he had only had two short letters from his mother since, telling him that Julia had started for the continent with his sister Alice and Mr. Bisset, and hoping that she was writing to him frequently and fully, describing all she had seen; but till now he had not had a word from Julia. When he got a letter, addressed by her, at the post-office, with a foreign post-mark, and looking very thick and closely written, his spirits rose; but on opening it he found the greater part was written by his sister Alice, and a short, cold letter from Julia was all he received after months of silence. She described what she saw and whom she saw, but said very little about either herself or him. He would have preferred her lively raillery, or even her scolding, to this chilling indifference; and when he saw that she took it for granted that he had agreed to her proposal to wait till he could return to England, and only mentioned their marriage casually as a very distant event, which she had given up thinking of, he felt doubly anxious to know how she would receive his refusal of her request.

'She loved me once,' thought he, 'and perhaps the earnestness of my appeal may awaken that affection, which all this gaiety and the foolish indulgence she meets with, have so sadly deadened. But she will never be able to accommodate herself to me, so I must try to humour and study her. If I can only make her happy, I shall be happy myself, whatever sacrifice I may have to make. How different is this poor Clara; differently placed and differently minded; but I do not think Julia would feel much for her. If I were not engaged, I should feel tempted to break through all my rules about unequal matches, and appear the most inconsistent of men, by offering a heart and a home to Mrs. Bantam's servant-girl.'

Minnie got up after breakfast, and as her knitting and cotton were done, she begged a piece of work from Mrs. Bantam. She could not sit idle, and did not

feel inclined to read. Mrs. Bantam had nothing at hand, but Miss Withering volunteered to give her employment. It was to knit her trimming for sleeves. She had seen that Minnie knitted fast and well, and as she herself despised such a mechanical kind of work, and yet wanted the thing done, it was a very good arrangement for Miss Withering. So Minnie knitted while Miss Withering talked, for though the narrow strip of muslin was always in the new comer's hand, she got on very slowly with it, for her eloquence was very exacting, and could only have full effect when her eyes were fixed upon her listener. Miss Withering's bearing with regard to Clara had now assumed a new phase; she pitied her, and hinted that she feared she was going into a consumption.

'I heard her coughing last night after you were asleep, Miss Hodges; and really she is so pale and thin, that she looks fitter for an hospital than for service. It is a pity that Mrs. Bantam does not keep two servants, for it is quite painful to look at that poor overworked creature.'

Minnie rose and left the parlour, and found Clara making her bed.

'Clara, you are not well,' said Minnie; 'I meant to do the room to-day, when I had had a rest, for I slept badly last night, and feel a little queer this morning. Let me finish it now, and go to your regular work.'

Clara would not allow this, but Minnie insisted on helping, at any rate, and in a short time all was tidy.

'Thank you, Miss Minnie; the sight of your face does me good,' said Clara.

'I suppose Miss Withering's countenance is not a cordial to you, Clara, any more than it is to me. I think she has talked me ill, and I am quite afraid to go back to sit with her. Will you fetch me my knitting, and I will stay here. Tell Mrs. Bantam where I am, if she inquires.'

Miss Withering was sitting wondering what had taken Miss Hodges away, and what she could find to say to Clara, when the latter entered, and was taking away Minnie's work.

'What a ghost you look, Clara! I think you are falling into a decline, from the cough you have; you should really take care of yourself, and not take too much fatigue. Will you bring me my pocket-handkerchief from the bed-room, and tell Miss Hodges that she has left me quite alone; and that I want the knitting to be made broader as it gets to the middle; I will show her how it is to be managed.'

Minnie reluctantly returned, and received instructions from head-quarters as to the trimming. All day she submitted to Miss Withering's persecution with an aching heart, but uncomplaining tongue; but in the evening, when Mr. Bantam had gone out on business, and Mr. Reginald looked too dull to amuse her, she could hold her head up no more. She entreated Mrs. Bantam to let her go to bed.

'Certainly, my dear. I hope you may have a sleep, for that will do you more good than anything.'

'I scarcely expect to sleep, but I shall rest,' said Minnie.

'Shall I come with you to amuse you?' said Miss Withering.

'Oh no!' said Minnie, trying to disguise her horror at the proposal. 'Do not give yourself any trouble about me. I shall be well to-morrow, I dare say.'

She had lain down about ten minutes when she heard a gentle tap at the door.

'Who is there?' said she.

'It is Clara. I want to know if you would like anything—if I can do anything for you.'

'Yes, you can. Bring me a glass of water and a candle, if you please; I put mine out, and I should like to read now.'

The candle was brought, but Minnie's eyes ached, and she could not see.

'Shall I read to you?' said Clara; 'perhaps it might set you to sleep.'

'Perhaps it may,' said Minnie, recollecting the drawling way in which the servants at home read.

Clara opened the book, even the silly novel, and read so sweetly, so musically, that Minnie felt relieved by the sound of her voice. She finished the novel, for Minnie had got near the end of it; and as she declared she was not tired, her listener began to ponder what she should like to hear next.

'Can you read poetry as well as prose?' said she. 'I like nothing so well as hearing poetry read to me, if it is well read. Get me Tennyson's Poems from the parlour, there's a good girl, and let me hear you read some of them.'

Clara returned with the news that Mr. Reginald was reading the book that was wanted. Would Miss Minnie like her to ask for it?

'Oh, no, it is of no consequence,' said Minnie.

'But, Miss Minnie, I know many of Tennyson's poems by heart. I will repeat them if you would like it.'

'I should like it exceedingly.'

So Clara repeated the 'Talking Oak' with spirit and fanciful feeling. She asked if Minnie was tired, but she was in a state of tranquil enjoyment, and begged Clara to go on. She then began 'Locksley Hall,' and gave it with all the indignant bitterness which the poet throws into it, but which, perhaps, poor Amy did not deserve. Mr. Reginald passed the door once or twice during this recitation, and stopped to listen to the sound of what he had been reading, as if life and reality had been given to it through the utterance of this poor servant-girl. When he heard her scornful way of treating a love which was not 'love for evermore,' he thought that when Clara loved it would be for once and for ever, and he shrank from the mockery which Julia offered him as an exchange for a true heart. He determined to go home to his station on

Monday morning, to relieve Clara from the trouble and humiliation of his presence—he had gratified a selfish desire to see into her character at the expense of her comfort, but he was determined to do so no more.

Clara wound up with ‘The Lotos-eaters,’ which she rehearsed so dreamily that it sent Minnie into a sound sleep; and then, as it was late, and Mrs. Bantam had told her she need not sit up, she went to her attic to go to bed.

What a bright day this had been to her—Mr. Reginald’s interest in her, the invitation from Mrs. Handy, her mistress’s consent that she should go out for the whole afternoon, the pleasure of reading aloud and repeating her favourite verses to that kind-hearted girl, whom Miss Withering had tormented as well as herself, for she was sure that Minnie’s illness had been either occasioned or aggravated by that evil-disposed person—all these things filled her mind with a joy and thankfulness which could only find a vent in tears. She looked at the address again; she was glad to know Mr. Reginald’s Christian name; she felt that he respected her, and that his offer of assistance was no insult. She sat half-dreaming on her box, with her face buried in her hands. ‘He may love Minnie, but still he esteems me; and Minnie does not care for him—her heart is elsewhere; I am convinced of that.’

Clara’s heart was lifted up to heaven that night in devout thankfulness that life was again a blessing. One is not apt to feel religious influences when simply uncomfortably unhappy, but the depth of misery, or the lighting up of the heart after it draws the soul to the Giver of all good. In her desolation, in the sharp pangs of jealousy, in the anguish that for the last fortnight she had endured, Clara had turned for help to God, and now in her comparative happiness she acknowledged his hand.

‘I shall not be at church to-morrow,’ said she; ‘how dreadful my uncle would think my neglect of the pub-

lic ordinances of religion ! but I want the sunshine of human sympathy and human friendship, and I trust that I have enough of religion within me to purify me from the worldliness of the week.'

Miss Withering was of opinion that Clara was likely to catch a severe cold if she exposed herself to the night air, and, for the girl's own sake, urged Mrs. Bantam to insist on her coming home before dark, in time to get tea for the family ; but when Minnie heard that she was going to see the only friend she had in the colony, and that this was the first time she had asked for permission to pay a visit, she offered to get tea, and hoped Clara would enjoy herself. Minnie had been very much struck with Clara's accomplishments, from which she had derived benefit the previous evening ; and expressed such a warm interest in her, that Mrs. Bantam resolved she would never let Miss Withering shake her confidence in her servant again.

Clara walked now through green plots and then through dirty streets, for there was nearly a mile between Mrs. Bantam's and Mrs. Handy's, and Adelaide is not half built upon. Wherever grass could grow, it came up green even in corners of streets. Wherever Clara could find it, she would even go out of her way to tread on it,—sometimes half creeping through a dilapidated fence to go over a whole acre of green turf, full of yellow flowers. She picked a few little blossoms, and found that they were fragrant enough, though the sweetest were too small to look beautiful until they were closely inspected.

She went round by the back way, in case of meeting Brown, Oscar, and Co. going out for their Sunday stroll, and found Mrs. Handy watching for her at the door. She kissed her, and brought her into her own little room.

'Handy is out for a walk, but he will be in soon,' said she ; 'so tell me all the news before he comes. Of course you would not like to tell me how you like your place before him, as he is a stranger. Mr. Regi-

nald told me that you were the most elegant hand-maid he ever saw, and that you did everything so nicely. I knew you would try, but it is a wonder that you have strength to do so much. And your mistress is kind, and your master quiet; and if your visitors are all like Mr. Reginald, they will not give you much trouble.'

Mrs. Handy then took off Clara's bonnet and shawl, and drew off her gloves, saying that really her hands looked wonderful, considering; 'and I must say, Miss Morison, though you are thinner, and have lost your colour, you are quite as lady-like as ever. I did not let my husband know you were at service; he fancies you are a governess, so give yourself a few airs, and he will believe it. And tell me when you heard from Miss Waterstone, and how she is getting on.'

Clara told all she knew of her friend, and also that she had met a fellow-passenger in the street the other day, who told her he could do anything he liked with servant girls, but who had not succeeded in finding out where she lived, though he seemed very anxious to know. Then she told what difficulty she found in learning to work, and how patient Mrs. Bantam had been with her. She asked if Mr. Reginald had mentioned Miss Minnie Hodges' name, or told Mrs. Handy what a pleasant girl she was.

'He only said there were two ladies visiting at the Bantams', but mentioned no names. The Hodges are neighbours of the Caumrays, and Mrs. Caumray feels quite bitter because Mrs. Hodges will take no notice of her or her family. Now that she has got a genteel accomplished governess for Janey, she thinks she is as good, if not better, than Mrs. Hodges, whose eldest girl has to teach the little ones.'

Clara next mentioned Miss Withering, and said that she did not like her at all. She knew that it was not considered quite correct to criticise her master's guests to a stranger; but if Mrs. Handy had kept her secret from her own husband, it was not likely that any of

her other revelations would be repeated; and she felt great relief in telling her troubles to ears that heard, instead of to senseless paper. She next asked how the house got on,—if the gentlemen made as much fun of poor Mr. Blinker as ever, and if Miss Waterstone's friend, the overseer, had ever been in town again; not that she cared very much to know, but she knew it would please Mrs. Handy if she expressed curiosity. She learned that poor Blinker, after having endured persecution till all his money was spent, came to the conclusion that he did not know what to do, and was much obliged to Humberstone for seizing upon him, and taking him to the country, where he said he would make a man of him. He was to be a hut-keeper at first, and if he was worthy of promotion, he was to be advanced to take a flock of sheep. Oscar and Brown had talked to him of Arcadia and corrosive sublimate; of pastoral pipes, of damper and shifting hurdles, till he was in a state bordering on distraction. He had come into the kitchen, and asked Mrs. Handy if they put corrosive sublimate into the dampers, or how did they make them damp—was it by pouring water on them after they were baked, or by boiling them for awhile? She had told him that damper was a wrong name, for it was the driest description of bread that could be made, except biscuits; but that he would be shown how it was to be made when he got to the station—he would have nothing to do but to follow directions; this had relieved him, and he went off next day with Humberstone, quite happy.

When Mr. Handy came in, Miss Morison was introduced to him, and the new girl, Leonora, got tea. It was new and delightful to Clara to take tea in company with any one—to be asked to take another cup—to be pressed to try another piece of seed-cake. Mr. Handy was cumbrously polite, and paid her several slow compliments, but Clara was in elysium, and not at all critical; she thought the attention and the compliments could not be improved, they were so pleasant.

Mr. and Mrs. Handy talked a good deal about Reginald, and all in high praise of his many good qualities.

'Now, should not you think, Miss Morison,' said Mrs. Handy, 'that when my husband had got home to his own comfortable house, he would be inclined to stop at home, and not to wander to the ends of the earth again to seek for gold?'

'I am sure,' said Clara, 'that such a pleasant teatable as this should make you very reluctant to go through as much discomfort and privation as you must have suffered in California.'

'The tea is very well in its way, Miss,' said Mr. Handy, 'particularly in such pleasant company as we are favoured with this evening; but when a man comes home, and cannot get work at his trade, he feels quite lost. I should like to take a turn at Bathurst, till things work themselves right in Adelaide. I am a builder by trade, and that business is very slack just now. It is all very fine talking about the hard life in California, but that only makes me inclined to try if I could not take it easier in New South Wales. And *that* hundredweight of gold!—I cannot get over that. Suppose I were to pick up such a bit, Betsy, would not you set up for a lady directly? Oscar, Brown, and the rest, would have to march in double-quick time, and we would buy a place in the country, and live in peace and quietness.'

'You don't seem to value peace and quietness much, Handy, or you would remain where you are now. He had not been home a week, when he began to talk of going off again. It is not fair to me; is it, Miss Morison?'

'Well, Betsy, if I had brought you anything back from California besides myself I should have liked to stop; but whatever I made there by hard work went to feed a parcel of sharks that cheated folk right and left.'

'But the Sydney people will cheat you quite as cleverly as the others. You know that most of the diggers are old convicts,' said Mrs. Handy.

'I am sure they are better than the Californian rascals; if they were not convicts before they came, they deserved to be every day of their lives that I had anything to do with them. An honest man has no chance among them; but there is more law and justice in New South Wales. There is a settled responsible government there, and not so much of Judge Lynch's authority.'

Clara asked some questions about the state of California, and the methods of obtaining the gold, but Mr. Handy was too sore upon the subject to tell anything but how he had been overreached; he would give no general information, but was copious concerning his personal experiences.

Mr. and Mrs. Handy promised to see Clara home, so she was in no hurry to go, and sat chatting happily till near ten o'clock. She parted with her friends at the corner of the street, got in quietly, and was not found fault with for being too late.



CHAPTER XIV.

MRS. BANTAM AND MINNIE LAY A PLOT TO GET QUIT
OF MISS WITHERING.

AS Miss Withering would not go to chapel upon any consideration, and disliked to go to church by herself, Minnie, though in general a chapel-goer, felt obliged to accompany her, and was entertained with lectures on the ignorance and vulgarity of the great proportion of dissenting teachers, both in the way to church and on her return. In the afternoon Miss Withering yawned over a volume of sermons, which she complained were rather superficial, and took the book into her bed-room, thinking she might be able to fix her mind upon her studies if she were undisturbed.

Mrs. Bantam and Minnie canvassed Miss Withering's character in her absence, and found themselves of one mind on the subject.

'I think I know now why newcomers are called Griffins in India. It has not been adopted here, but it is very appropriate to Miss Withering. She is a Griffin,' said Minnie.

'I wish I could tell her to go away,' said Mrs. Bantam; 'but I cannot do such a thing even to a servant without its disturbing me for a week; and she is such a clever woman that I know I should feel ten times worse if I quarrelled with her. Could you not do it, Minnie?'

'I have said more rude things to Miss Withering than I ever thought I could say to any one, but it has no effect upon her except to make her say more disagreeable things.'

'What does she say to you? I think she is more polite to you than to me,' said Mrs. Bantam.

'Oh, it is not what she says, but her spiteful way of saying it, that makes me so uncomfortable,' said Minnie. 'Would not Mr. Bantam quarrel with her

if you asked him? I think he grows thinner every day she is here.'

'I could not trust Mr. Bantam; if he could be roused to say anything he would say a great deal too much, and then she will spread such reports about us. She says such things about people she knows, it makes me quite afraid to give her a handle. I do not know how I can manage it.'

'I have got an idea that may do,' said Minnie. 'You know she is always asking Clara to do unreasonable things for her; let Clara refuse, and you can take her part. I think that may make a breach wide enough to get Miss Withering out of the house through.'

'It is really a capital thought, Minnie. Well, two heads are better than one; I never should have contrived such a plan by myself. I will tell Clara about it as soon as she comes home. I am quite thankful for your suggestion.'

And Mrs. Bantam began to read with some composure, while Minnie's thoughts wandered no further than next door. She must go and see the Elliots again to-morrow, and try to get George to be once more friendly.

Reginald returned from North Adelaide about eight o'clock in the evening, and told Mrs. Bantam that he found he must return to his station immediately.

'I am sorry you are leaving us so soon,' said Mrs. Bantam, 'and still more distressed to see that you have derived no benefit from the change of air. You look quite as ill as when you came. Could you not stay another week to see what that would do for you?'

'You seem to be in a great hurry, Reginald,' said Mr. Bantam. 'I understood the visit was to be for a month, and unless you give us good and sufficient reasons, I shall not be inclined to let you go. I feel quite disappointed in my visitors. Here is Reginald, who came here looking ill, now going away worse; and

poor Minnie, who came blooming like a rose, looks more like a lily now ; and——’

‘What of me, Mr. Bantam ?’ said Miss Withering, with a very stern expression.

‘Oh !’ said Mr. Bantam, shrinking into himself, ‘I do not see much change upon you. Your constitution seems not to be affected by the air of Adelaide, which has told so sadly on poor Minnie, and even the servant girl seems to suffer from it too. But I must drive you down to the sea-side some fine day this week, Minnie, and see if I cannot bring back your roses.’

‘By-the-bye, Mr. Reginald, I think you are fond of reading manuscript,’ said Miss Withering. ‘Read this aloud, and guess where I found it.’

It was not a large piece of paper that she handed to him. The writing was in a plain round hand, and appeared to be only a fragment, for it terminated abruptly. He saw it was in verse, and after glancing down a line or two to get into the rhythm read as follows :—

‘Lords of creation ! how I envy you !
 What in these stirring times can woman do ?
 Shut up each avenue, close-barred each gate,
 Every approach forbid her to the Great !
 Even if Ambition does not fire her soul,
 If Independence merely is her goal,
 Scarce can her head and hands, however good,
 Earn that small pittance, even a livelihood.
 The pleasure, too, of giving is forbid ;
 How much good will lies in her dormant, hid !
 The power to bless, relieve, protect, maintain—
 Her nature longs for—struggles for—in vain.
 Thus the sad teacher, or domestic slave,
 Feeling her toil but drag her to the grave,
 Looks for a refuge from her war with life
 Even as a loveless and indifferent wife ;
 Dashes the tear-drops from rebellious eyes,
 Veils the heart’s image of Love’s happy skies,
 Stifles the proud thoughts that across her come,
 And marries—not a husband—but a home.
 ‘But surely *I* shall never stoop so low,
 I shall not tamely yield to Fortune’s blow—
 Not necessary is it to be great,
 Or rich or honour’d, ’tis the chance of fate ;

Or loved or even happy ;—wise men say
Life was not meant to be a holiday.
Through many pangs the soul shakes off the dust ;
I *must* do right,—that is the *only* must.
Shake off——'

Reginald had not read far before he was as certain that Clara had composed and written these lines as if she had told him so. But though he was sure that Miss Withering had come unfairly by them, and shrank from making the inmost thoughts of the poor girl public, he could not stop without betraying her secret, and he accordingly read all the verses.

'Where did you get this?' said he, almost fiercely. 'It is not your own writing, is it, Miss Withering?'

'No, indeed! I do not write like a charity-school girl. This is my writing,' said Miss Withering, showing her name on the fly-leaf of her book of sermons, in which the letters were all length and no breadth, and formed a complete contrast to poor Clara's business-like hand.

'Is it written by any friend of yours?' asked Minnie.

'I knew that none of you would find it out. It is some of Clara's scribbling. She seems fond of copying poetry, or she would not have taken the trouble to write out such stuff; but perhaps it is for the improvement of her hand.'

'How did you come into possession of it? I am sure she did not give it to you to criticize,' said Reginald.

'Why, I missed my brooch this afternoon, and I thought I would just look if Clara had not picked it up by mistake. Girls do such things sometimes, you know. And there, between the leaves of Longfellow's poems (that was the odd name of the author), I found this slip of paper sticking out. I thought I should like to see what was in it, and then that you would like to see it too, for Miss Hodges has such an idea of Clara's taste in poetry that perhaps she will admire this precious fragment.'

'I wonder at you,' said Minnie. 'I am ashamed of

you, Miss Withering. Your brooch is safe. I put it away this morning in its proper place. You know I have arranged the room ever since I came here, and you should not have been going up like a spy into Clara's garret, until you had asked me if I had seen the brooch, and Mrs. Bantam if she would give you leave to do such a thing. English ladies may think this sort of conduct right, but colonial people think differently.'

'Ah! you have a great deal to learn yet, Miss Hodges,' said Miss Withering. 'It is quite a customary thing in England, and I have heard so many strange tales about Australian servants, that I did not think it necessary to stand upon ceremony with Clara. But are you sure my brooch is safe? I should be quite grieved to lose it.'

Mrs. Bantam would fain have taken Minnie's side of the question, and rebuked Miss Withering's over-suspicion; but she could not hit upon the exact words to say, and her courage died during the hesitating delay.

'You will oblige me, and I am sure Mrs. Bantam too, by taking this piece of paper and putting it exactly where you found it. I will go with you and carry the candle,' said Minnie, resolutely.

Mrs. Bantam wished the manuscript to be replaced; Mr. Bantam agreed that they had no right to keep it; and Reginald was relieved to see Minnie mounting guard, and insisting that it was done.

'Though these lines are not half so pretty as what Clara repeated to me last night,' said Minnie, when she returned to the parlour, 'perhaps that was the reason she copied them, for she might not think them pretty enough to learn, and yet be unwilling to lose them altogether. Is it not strange, Mr. Reginald, that Clara should have such a taste for poetry, and her reading aloud is the most beautiful I ever heard. None of the Elliots have such variety in their tones, though they are admirable readers too.'

'I should like to know the Elliots,' said Reginald. 'I hear that they are such a fine family altogether.'

'I wish you knew them,' said Minnie. 'I know which of them you would like best. Margaret is exactly to your taste, I should think. She is so clever, and knows so much, but yet has no pretension about her; you really must get introduced to them—don't you know George or Gilbert?'

'I know George a little, from seeing him in Ainslie's store; I must fish for an invitation the next time I meet him. He seems a fine, intelligent young man.'

'They are all intelligent,' said Minnie; 'but though Gilbert is very clever, I consider Margaret the genius of the family.'

Reginald had rather a horror of 'the genius of the family' in general, and he doubted Minnie's ability to judge of what would suit his taste; but yet he did wish to know a family whom every one respected, and a good many people loved, and he had had his curiosity raised with regard to the second Miss Elliot years ago.

'Margaret, is not that the young lady I used to hear Dent talk so much about?' said Reginald. 'He used to come to my station, and talk in the evening of his fair lady.'

'Yes, it was Margaret that he admired so much, though they were very unlike each other,' said Minnie.

'I cannot think what made the man confide so much in me,' said Reginald. 'He struck me as being a close, reserved man, and yet he unbosomed himself regularly every time he came to Taringa, until he had actually proposed. He never could bring himself to confess the refusal.'

'He was certainly close and cautious in money matters,' Minnie said, 'but this love seemed to be a thing that he could not keep to himself. He told papa all about it in the same way, and papa, as in duty bound, told it over again to mamma and me. What Mr. Dent admired in Margaret I cannot conceive; he did not

think her pretty, and I am sure he did not appreciate her talents.'

'Perhaps her manners were frank, and that to a man like Dent is a great attraction,' said Reginald.

'No—Margaret's manner is cold, and to him was particularly so. She had no money, no position, and few accomplishments, and yet he liked her notwithstanding; and in spite of his money, his position, and his perseverance, Margaret could not like him.'

'My taste is so diametrically opposed to Mr. Dent's, that I cannot think of admiring Miss Margaret Elliot. I never can be his rival.'

'Oh, you don't know till you see,' said Minnie; 'don't be too sure.'

When Reginald saw Clara in the morning, he was pleased to see how much better she looked. 'Have I not prescribed well for you?' said he. 'You look quite a different being to-day—you must go to see Mrs. Handy whenever you are afraid of being ill. I am going to my station again this morning, and I feel relieved to see that I have not killed you outright.'

'There is a great deal of vitality left in me yet,' said Clara, smiling, 'and I think even Miss Withering will not succeed in crushing it out of me. While Miss Minnie remains here, I shall not mind the other much.'

She looked straight into Reginald's face while she said this, to see if he really cared much for Minnie.

'Yes, that young lady is a visitor among a thousand. Without great abilities or much cultivation, she has a steady, fearless uprightness and truth in her that are very delightful to see.'

'She is very pretty,' said Clara.

'Do you think so, Miss Morison? I consider her pleasing in her appearance, but I do not think her pretty.'

'Hush! I must go now; I hear Miss Minnie coming out of her room.'

'Good bye; do not forget my address.'

‘Good bye ; I am much obliged to you,’ said Clara, as she hurried out of the room.

Reginald left Adelaide immediately after breakfast, leaving no one to regret him much but Clara, who, though she had been miserable when he was near, felt now that she missed him, and scolded herself for being so very unreasonable. Mrs. Bantam proposed that Minnie should take the room which he had occupied, which Minnie would gladly have done, to escape, for some part of her time, from her tormentor ; but Miss Withering would not part with her, and assured Mrs. Bantam that, in Miss Hodges’ present state of health, it would be highly dangerous for her to change her sleeping-room. So, as they trusted soon to get rid of Miss Withering herself by following Minnie’s ingenious plan, of which they had made Clara cognizant, they thought she might as well remain in the same room while she stayed in Adelaide.

But as if by some instinctive knowledge of the snare laid for her, Miss Withering seemed determined to ask Clara to do nothing so unreasonable as to justify opposition. Clara could not refuse to brush her dresses, though it took up a great deal of valuable time ; nor to fetch her pocket handkerchief from the next room, though Miss Withering could easily have done it herself ; so things remained *in statu quo*.

Minnie would not take Miss Withering’s hints of her curiosity to see the Elliots, and as Mrs. Bantam could not go without her incubus, she went by herself in the afternoon. She went early enough to have a good talk with Annie, and she hoped that when George came home she should not be too flurried to speak comfortably to him.

Annie was alone, and delighted to see her. ‘I have been wondering if you would come to-day, for I feel so dull,’ said she. ‘Grace and Margaret have gone an hour ago to spend a long evening with Mrs. Plummer, and have left me to keep the house. Gilbert is going to dine with the Plummers, and will bring them home

in the evening, so George and I shall be much the better for your company. How is Miss Withering?

'Oh, the griffin! She gets worse and worse. She has driven Mr. Reginald out of the house, and I should gladly follow. In time she will send Clara away too, and then we shall see Mr. and Mrs. Bantam slowly taking leave of their paradise, and leaving her 'monarch of all she surveys.' You will have an observing neighbour then—I advise you to keep your blinds down as it is. But I was much comforted the other night by the servant Clara reading aloud to me, and repeating poetry so softly and so sweetly, that it really felt like a balm to my ears and nerves, after they had been irritated by Miss Withering's sharp, inquisitive, mischief-making voice. I cannot help thinking that Clara must be a lady, her accent is so beautiful.'

'It is rather strange,' said Annie, 'but perhaps she might have been a shop-girl in some fashionable milliner's establishment. Those girls pick up the accent from the people they serve, you know. But you must see Gilbert's letter to the newspaper, if you promise not to tell whose it is, for of course it is anonymous. Margaret helped him with it, and George criticised their joint production, so you must really read it all through. I think it is very clever myself.'

Minnie read it all, and admired it as much as her friend expected.

'Why does not George write something of his own?' said Minnie.

'Oh! you know George is not half so clever as Gilbert, though, *entre nous*, Minnie, I like him the best. Besides, poor George seems very dull and out of spirits lately. I think Mr. Ainslie is very unreasonable in making him go back to work at the office in the evenings. You know his hours are long enough through the day. But he told me he should not need to go back to-night, and that is pleasant. And now, Minnie, we must try over the new songs Mr. Harris has lent me. They belonged to his sister; you see the

name, Maria Harris, at the beginning of the book, in her own hand, I suppose, and a beautiful hand it is. I really wish I did not write such a scrawl myself; but you don't write any better, and that is one comfort.'

They tried over several songs, and were sure that George would be able to take a part in some of the prettiest, when he came home.

'I suppose Grace and Margaret will spend a duller evening at Mrs. Plummer's than we shall do at home,' said Annie; 'for Mrs. Plummer never thinks of inviting anybody to meet them, as Grace is engaged, and Margaret has so much sense. Mrs. Plummer is very prosy, and she never talks on any subject but the state of baby's teeth—I am *so* tired of those eye-teeth! As I am volatile, and like to talk, I am sometimes favoured with a strange face; and I have several times met a certain Mr. William Bell lately; such a strange fellow he is, Minnie; I should like you to see him, and to tell me what you think of him. He contradicts everybody, and me in particular, a great deal more than I like; he would argue every point with George and Gilbert, instead of concurring with them, or letting the thing pass, as Mr. Harris does. Mrs. Plummer says he is an admirer of mine, but it must be an odd sort of admiration; I don't think I could win a compliment from him if I were to try for a month. And, strange enough, George has taken quite a fancy to this Mr. Bell, and says he thinks he shall make a fast friend of him. He is a brother of the James Bell who died a short while ago—you saw the death in the papers; he was in business in Hindley-street; I don't know whether William means to carry on the concern. But, bless me! Minnie, here comes George, and I have quite forgotten his dinner; the potatoes will be soup by this time, for we have sung six songs since I put them on. Do talk to him, and keep him in good humour while I try to make them presentable.'

Minnie blessed these potatoes from the bottom of her heart, for it is so seldom that young people in the

middle ranks of society have an uninterrupted moment together, to make up any little misunderstanding, that the opportunity was as rare as it was desirable. A frank look and smile to George when he came in, an expression of her pleasure that there was no stranger with him to-day, and that he did not need to go back to his work, seemed to make her peace, for he never thought of jealousy again. There was no Mr. Harris to eclipse him at home, and the relieved manner in which Minnie mentioned Reginald's departure, convinced him that his suspicions in that quarter were unfounded.

Minnie exhausted part of her grudge against Mr. Harris by talking slightly of him all dinner time, which made her friend warm in his defence. She began to fear that Annie's heart was in danger; but if he liked George, and would follow his advice, Mr. Everard Harris might make a tolerable husband after all. George's hoarseness, which had been brought on in a great measure by shouting for unsuccessful candidates at the elections, was quite gone by this time, and he sung with the girls with great success. He begged Minnie to listen to a really fine article from the 'Edinburgh Review,' which had struck him when reading by himself; he showed her some drawings which he had just finished, and hoped she would like them; in short, he was delightful, and Minnie did not think it near time to go when she heard the gate open and saw the other members of the family come in.

'We have had such a delightful evening!' said Annie. 'I have been pitying you three sadly, for you have been where you had neither books, nor music, nor conversation, and we have been revelling in all of them.'

'Neither books nor music, certainly, but enough of conversation,' said Margaret.

'Of course,' said Annie, 'you had the progress of the teeth brought down to the latest date, and Mr. Plummer has been lording it over Gilbert because he is a government officer, while Gilbert is only a lawyer's clerk, who has not even got articles; and talking mag-

niloquently of 'our department of the public service;' but surely you do not call that conversation, Margaret?

'No, I do not; but we had other speakers and better subjects; at least another speaker,' said Margaret. 'We met one of the most brilliant birds of passage I ever saw—a Mr. Staynes, on his way to Sydney. He has seen all the great writers of the day, and does not point out their faults or disagreeable peculiarities, but admires them after seeing them quite as much as we do unseen. Your friend, William Bell, was at Mr. Plummer's, too, quite eclipsed, but resigned; and he listened without contradicting very much.'

'He asked for you, Annie,' said Grace; 'and Mrs. Plummer looked quite sly on the subject. Gilbert asked him to come in, but he said it was too late, and promised to spend an evening with us some other day.'

'He walked home with me,' said Margaret, 'and really, Annie, he is quite agreeable when you have him, as we Scotch say, to a 'two-handed crack.''

'I suppose you mean a tête-à-tête, Margaret,' said Minnie.

'I mean nothing so tender as that,' said Margaret.

'And were you sewing all the evening?' said Annie. 'Mrs. Plummer has always a nice piece of work for her young friends when they come to visit her.'

'I had something in my hands,' said Margaret, 'but it got on very slowly.'

'What was this Mr. Staynes like, Gilbert? It is of no use asking Margaret,' said Annie.

'Much plainer than even William Bell,' said Gilbert, 'and not so tall. Grey eyes, fair hair, and a dull complexion, but he speaks pure English, and choice English, and seems to know everything. However, he must be at least five years older than I am, and I do not mean to remain stationary; though we are ill provided with the means of improvement in the colonies, I shall surely be able to make something of myself by that time.'

'I must go now,' said Minnie, 'it is surely very late.'


'Only twelve o'clock,' said George. 'Time flies swiftly when we are among friends.'

Minnie found George ready to escort her home, and in the tone of his voice in wishing her good night, and the pressure of his hand at parting, she felt an assurance that she was loved by him. She did not care whether Miss Withering was up or not, she was indifferent now to either her talk or her silence. All the family had gone to bed but Clara, who opened the door for her, but she did not want to go to bed just then. She sat for an hour and a half by the parlour fire, which went out while she thought how happy she was.

George was poor, but time would amend that; he was only a merchant's clerk, while she was the daughter of a wealthy stockholder, and a justice of peace for the province besides. But she felt that there was really no disparity between them, and that by and bye her father would see that he could have no son-in-law so good and suitable in every way as George Elliot. There was no hurry for the marriage. Minnie must remain at home at any rate for several years to come, to educate her sisters, and by the time the youngest was out of the school-room, George would be thirty-one, and Minnie herself twenty-five, a very proper age, just the ages of her father and mother when they were married; and surely George would be rich enough to begin life with her in a quiet way then. Minnie recollected a thousand little words and looks which convinced her that she was not mistaken, and that George had liked her for a long time, when she had never dreamed of such a thing. Even his sulkiness last Friday was confirmation strong. How delightful it is when a girl's first intimation of the love she feels is awakened by the consciousness that she is beloved! Minnie wanted no declaration, no engagement; she rested in her present happiness with perfect satisfaction.

Minnie looked so well and cheerful next day that Miss Withering was convinced that she must have entered into a clandestine engagement with one of the Elliots. She had no faith in human nature, and could not fancy a girl's looking happy unless she had done something wrong. She determined to watch Minnie narrowly, and if she had her convictions strengthened by observations, to communicate with Mrs. Bantam, and even if she found it necessary, with Mr. Hodges. These things should be taken in time; Mr. Hodges had evidently no desire for an increased intimacy on his daughter's part with this low family, and he would feel very much shocked and very grateful for her timely discovery. He was a man whom a clever woman could turn round her finger, and he was very likely to engage Miss Withering on handsome terms to look after the education and right training of his family, which Minnie by her duplicity would have shown herself quite incapable of doing.

These were pleasant thoughts for Miss Withering, and made her more than usually polite to every one, and even to Clara, to whom she presented an old gown with great condescension. How Clara longed to refuse it! but she swallowed down her proud heart, and heroically said, 'thank you,' determining to give it to the first black woman who might come to chop wood. It was old and oddly made, but her acquaintancè, Black Mary, would make no objection, and would be very much the better for a gown, for she had nothing at present but an opossum skin rug, and an old drawn silk bonnet, which had once been white. The dress was a morning wrapper, and drew in with strings, so that it would be sure to fit; and it had also a capacious pocket, which would charm Mary's heart. Mary occupied a considerable part of Clara's next letter to Susan, which she now mustered courage enough to write; she described Minnie at great length, slightly touched upon Miss Withering's character, but did not mention Mr. Reginald's name. She described the delightful visit to Mrs.



Handy's, chronicled the weather, the appearance of the country, and the political news, so far as she had gathered them from broken scraps of conversation when she was waiting at table. It was what Mr. Morison would have called a good letter, for it contained a great deal of information clearly expressed, but Clara knew that Susan would be disappointed with it, for it was empty of those delicious personalities which sister expects from sister. 'Any other person might have written this,' said she to herself, bitterly, when she laid it aside, 'but I cannot make a better one. I cannot write how I feel, for it would only make Susan miserable.'

In her journal she felt at liberty to write without reserve. She wrote how absurd it was in her to regret Reginald, for it would be the best thing that could happen that she should never see him again; noting it first in short-hand; then not feeling much relieved, repeating it in long-hand; and at last burning it lest any one by any chance might see and be able to read it. She then imagined herself in the parlour, and wrote down a fanciful conversation, in which she bore a principal part. She differed from Miss Withering on every point, supported Miss Minnie, and contradicted her master and mistress most unscrupulously whenever she put any absurdity into their mouths, which was not seldom. Nor had she said half she intended, when Mrs. Bantam roused her from her interesting employment by bidding her bring in supper, as Miss Withering had got very hungry over a keen discussion.

CHAPTER XV.

CLARA HAS AN OPPORTUNITY OF SEEING HER FELLOW-PASSENGERS.

THE discussion which had occasioned Miss Withering's hunger, had been on the subject of marriage, and the motives which should induce thereunto; and Miss Hodges had advanced such dangerous and heterodox opinions with regard to this important matter, that her benevolent friend was certain there was that something very wrong going on.

'There can be no excuse for marriage but love,' said Minnie. 'I am sure I never could bring myself to marry for friendship, because I should have to leave so many dear friends, that I should be the loser if my husband did not love me as much as all of them together, and if I did not love him quite as much.'

'You do not mean to say that circumstances, position, and connexions are to be overlooked,' remarked Miss Withering. 'I think it a very impertinent proposal when a young gentleman offers a young lady an inferior home, fewer comforts, and a lower position, all merely to gratify a selfish feeling, which he dignifies by the name of love.'

'There is some truth in that, Minnie,' said Mr. Bantam. 'I think, unless a man is her equal, that he has no right to urge a union with a young lady. Don't *you* marry to be worse off than you are, for marriage brings so many cares and toil upon you that you do not need poverty to aggravate them.'

'Indeed,' added Mrs. Bantam, 'young people are very apt to think too lightly of the advantages of a comfortable home. They fancy that if they are only fond enough of each other, the butcher's and baker's bills will be paid somehow; but there is nothing like poverty coming in at the door for making love fly out of the window.'

'Debt is indeed a wretched thing,' said Minnie, 'and even the most affectionate pair could not be considered happy if they owed money which they could not pay. And I should like always to have enough to eat; but I have not many wants, and should not break my heart because I wore gingham while my neighbours wore silk.'

'But when people are poor, and have much drudgery to do, they get so very coarse-looking,' said Miss Withering; 'and in a climate like this, if ladies have toil and cares, even when in comfortable circumstances'—and here she glanced at Mrs. Bantam—'sufficient to plant wrinkles in their cheeks before their time, what must poverty superadded bring a poor young wife and mother to? I had heard in England that people faded very fast here, and so I was in some measure prepared; but I must confess that those ladies you took me to call on the other day, looked so miserable and careworn, that I was quite shocked at their appearance. And the neglected children, who were in everybody's way, must be a great drag upon their unfortunate mothers. I have quite made up my mind to remain single unless I could marry a gentleman worth at least eighteen hundred a year—and even then I think I should be thrown away upon such specimens as I have yet seen.'

Mr. Bantam looked his intense pity for the gentleman whom Miss Withering would take, even in fancy—it would be, indeed, a take in.

'Can't you say ten thousand a year at once?' said Minnie, scornfully. 'But, to be sure, I do not think there is a gentleman with so much as ten thousand a year in the colony. There are a few who have eighteen hundred, but I have never seen a rich man who was half so agreeable as the poor men are in general. He seems always in such fear of being caught, that one is obliged to look cold and distant out of self-respect; and it is quite a penance to me to be cold or distant to any one.'

'I should think it is,' said Miss Withering. 'Your manners are certainly very much the reverse in general. But you show no stiffness to Mr. Reginald, and yet I have been told that his circumstances are good.'

'He does not come up to your mark by a long chalk,' laughed Minnie.

'What *did* you say?' exclaimed Miss Withering, in a tone of utter amazement.

'I meant that he has not nearly eighteen hundred a year,' said Minnie, blushing at having been led into speaking colonial slang.

'Oh! is that what you meant? I understand *English*, but I see you colonists are corrupting the language sadly. It is a pity, for the purity of their diction marks the lady and gentleman. Mr. Bantam quite puzzles me sometimes with novel phrases, and even Mrs. Bantam makes me feel at a loss to apprehend her meaning occasionally. But to return to our original subject, though Mr. Reginald is tolerably rich, you still think him agreeable, Miss Hodges?'

'He is rather slow,' said Minnie, who now was determined to defy Miss Withering, 'but I think he is really a good fellow; he does not seem afraid of being taken in and done for, so that I feel at ease with him. But I suppose he is engaged to some cousin or other at home, for he has just the cut of it.'

Miss Withering seemed to be greatly shocked, and said, coldly, 'I see I must get you to explain the unintelligible words and phrases I meet with in the Adelaide newspapers, Miss Hodges. What is a *nobbler neat*, for instance?'

'Don't you know what a nobbler is, Miss Withering? Your education must have been neglected! Why, you are quite as ignorant as the judge, who positively asked once in full court what a nobbler was—and it was considered a capital joke all over the colony. A nobbler is half a glass of spirits, generally brandy; and when it is taken neat, it means that it is undiluted.'

'I am glad to find that my ignorance is sanctioned by such high authority, for I suppose that his honour the judge is at least a gentleman,' said Miss Withering.

'But he has not got eighteen hundred a year,' answered Minnie, maliciously. 'Though, perhaps in consideration of his high standing in the colony, you may place him in the list of your 'eligibles.' I advise you not to refuse the judge if he asks you.'

'I must say I feel surprised at your mode of expressing yourself, Miss Hodges; and it is odd that you seem to think yourself competent to give advice to me, who have seen so very much more of the world than you have done. Perhaps I may be allowed to hint, that it is not considered ladylike to talk of love in the manner you do.'

'It is ladylike to laugh at love, and even to despise it, I suppose,' said Minnie.

'Certainly, that is quite admissible, even in the best society,' replied Miss Withering.

'But,' said Minnie, 'it is unladylike to feel it, to honour it, or to speak of it with earnestness. We are only to be unbelieving spectators of such things, if we are to be considered worthy of the world's respect or admiration. Well, I don't care for being thought to be a lady; I would rather be considered a genuine character, which I will try to deserve by saying always what I think, without distressing myself about how it will sound in the nice ears of society.'

Miss Withering looked infinitely more shocked than before, and addressed herself to Mrs. Bantam, speaking at Minnie, who was quite callous to her disagreeable remarks, and ate her supper as carelessly as possible; choosing to be deficient in politeness, rather than let Miss Withering fancy she cared for being considered ladylike or vulgar.

Minnie was engaged on the afternoon of the next day in trimming a new bonnet, which she meant to wear to pay a visit with Annie Elliot. Miss Withering advised her to trim it fashionably by only giving

it a deep curtain and strings, leaving the bonnet bare of ribbon elsewhere ; but Minnie was determined not to take any advice from the griffin, and, out of a spirit of contradiction, put on even more ribbon than she would naturally have done. She had triumphantly crossed the ribbon over the bonnet, and made a large knot at one side, when she found that she should not have enough left for strings. Mrs. Bantam, seeing that she looked mortified, suggested that Clara should be sent out to get an additional yard, and Minnie went herself into the kitchen to ask the favour. Clara was very willing to oblige Minnie, and even the information that she must match the ribbon at Macnab's did not damp her zeal. Miss Withering took the opportunity to get Clara to execute two or three little commissions for her at the same time, and gave her orders with great exactness. It was to get two yards and a half of white blond, with a tolerably rich edge ; and three yards of peach blossom gimp, to match a piece of silk which she gave her ; also half a yard of pea-green satin ribbon, about an inch and a half in width, and three quarters of a yard of wiredrawn black tulle.

Clara set off to execute these commissions, and rejoiced that the roads were not muddy ; for there had been a keen, dry north-east wind, blowing strong for the last two days, which had made the footpaths dry, though they were hard and uncomfortable, being, as it were, baked into shoe moulds and irregular excrescences. She was sorry that she had not closed her letter to her sister, for she would have liked to have put it in the post office as she passed ; but she had omitted to mention Mr. Campbell's name, and as she felt grateful to him for the interest he had taken in her, she did not like to despatch it without taking some notice of him ; and there was too little daylight remaining for her to have ventured to write anything additional before she went out.

She found Renton looking well, but could not see Macnab, with whom she would rather have transacted

her little business, for he generally sat in a little back crib, dignified by the name of the counting-room, whence he might see, but in which it was hard to get a sight of him.

Renton was in his element, talking an old woman into the purchase of a set of red cotton pocket-handkerchiefs for her husband.

‘Twenty pence apiece, young man! I think that is a most unconscionable sum,’ said she. ‘I can get as good as these anywheres for fourteen pence, and I don’t see no call on me to give you such a price.’

‘We could show you an article at one and two, ma’am,’ said Renton, ‘but it would not give you satisfaction. These are the genuine Turkey red; all dyed with turkey’s blood, ma’am. It makes a fast colour, but you know, my good lady, that it comes expensive. Ah, Miss Morison, you are giving us a call at last. What shall I have the pleasure of showing you?’

‘I want this ribbon matched,’ said Clara.

‘Was it bought here?’ said Renton, ‘for I can’t pretend to match things that have been got in other shops.’

‘Yes; it was bought in this shop last week,’ said Clara.

‘Oh, yes, very true; I know the article now. A tall young lady who came from the country bought it, and you want three yards of it, I suppose.—I assure you, Mrs. Higgs, that these handkerchiefs are worth double the money I ask for them. They are the real adamantine touch—you may put them on in the pot, and boil them ever so fast, for the colours are faster still.’

‘Only a yard of ribbon for me,’ said Clara.

‘Phil,’ said Renton, ‘make up a dozen of these pocket-handkerchiefs for Mrs. Higgs, and put them along with the shawl and gown-piece, and take them home for her.’

‘I have not bought the gown-piece,’ said Mrs. Higgs, who had yielded upon the other counts of the

indictment, but was determined to make a stand there.

'It is the most genteel thing in the shop,' said Renton. 'The Governor's lady got a dress of it just last week, and I am sure if you once saw it on her, you would confess that a thing does not show what it is till it is hanging on a lady.'

Mrs. Higgs was completely overcome, and saw Phil put the dress into the parcel with pleased resignation. Renton made out her little bill, received payment, and then turned to Clara, who told him her other commissions.

She had felt her eyes ache a good deal during her walk, and now, in the dubious glimmer of a newly-lighted lamp struggling with the setting sun, she endeavoured to get Miss Withering's silk matched. Mr. Renton left her to attend to a young milliner who was choosing a variety of materials for her trade; Phil had left with Mrs. Higgs' parcel, the other shopman had gone to his tea, and Mr. Macnab kept to his books, so that Clara could get no assistance. Her eyes grew dazzled over the varieties of peach-blossom; then she looked over a box of ribbons to find a right pea-green; and after turning over all the black tulles in Mr. Macnab's shop, she found out that there was none of the kind that Miss Withering wanted. So she went into three other shops, with no better success; and as the shopmen were all sure that they had the article she wanted, she was obliged to turn over all their stock of the description before she found out their mistake.

Renton had offered to send home her small parcel, in the hope of getting her address, but Clara had declined his courtesy. She now returned unwillingly to ask him if he knew where she was likely to get the wiredrawn tulle. He directed her to a large shop at a considerable distance, where he said she was sure to find the article; and as he was then at leisure, asked if there was any news of Miss Waterstone. Clara told

him of that lady's intended marriage, and Renton received the intelligence with his usual nonchalance.

'So, the fair Elizabeth has charmed another, and thought it of no use waiting for me. I wish the marriage had taken place here instead of Melbourne, for it would have been a good thing for the shop. It would have taken twenty yards of white satin to make a proper wedding-dress for her; and I know she would have everything of the best for such an occasion.'

'You take a great interest in the shop, Mr. Renton, and yet you say that you are going to leave it soon,' said Clara.

'Not so sure of that now, Miss Morison. Mac has behaved very handsome, and I think I'll stick by him. I expect soon to get a footing in the business, now that Mac knows my value. Times are rather dull in Adelaide just now, but the premises are central, and we have never felt custom slack, so I think I shall let the Turon alone. I could not blarney the gold out of the quartz as I did Mrs. Higgs out of her sovereign with that tale of the turkey's blood. Besides, I never was fond of hard work in my life, and I have a notion that it wont agree with me, so I'll stick to the counter and Mac—Mr. Macnab, don't you see Miss Morison here?'

Mr. Macnab now emerged from his den, looking very much as usual, grunted that he did see Miss Morison, and hoped she was well, and that she liked the colony; then, without waiting for an answer, he made his way into the back shop.

'A sad bear, is he not?' said Renton, compassionately; 'but I bear with him, *for a consideration*, you know. I hope you will give us a more extensive order next time you look in our way. Good evening, Miss Morison.'

It was quite dark before Clara had completed her purchase of tulle; and the walk home was miserable, for the cutting east wind entered into her eyes, and made them ache dreadfully.

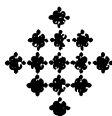
Minnie was of course quite pleased with her ribbon,

and attached it to her bonnet with great satisfaction.

'It will look quite nice to-morrow when I go to see Mrs. Beverly. I used to go to school with her when she was Miss Watts, and she expects me to spend one day with her while I am in town; Annie Elliot is going with me. Mrs. Beverly has got a little boy now; Annie says he is quite a beauty, so I long to kiss him.'

'Where can Clara's eyes have been?' said Miss Withering. 'She has brought me sky-blue ribbon instead of pea-green, and if she calls this gimp peach-blossom, I call it puce. The things are of no use whatever; it is a downright picking of my pocket to buy such things for me.'

'Clara shall go and exchange them to-morrow,' said Mrs. Bantam, apologetically. 'It is not a good plan in general to give commissions to servants, they execute them so badly; but I did not think Clara would be so stupid. By the bye, Mr. Campbell sent across a letter for her while she was out; I will give it to her now, and tell her she must rectify her blunders to-morrow.'



CHAPTER XVI.

DARKNESS AND SORROW.

AT the sight of a letter from Susan, Clara forgot the pain in her eyes; she devoured every word of the long, closely written epistle, and then sat down to add a postscript to her own, with the view of posting it to-morrow, when she had to rectify her blunders with regard to Miss Withering's commissions. While reading and writing, she wiped her eyes frequently, for the tears came very fast, hot, and scalding; and when she had signed her name and addressed the letter, she became conscious of an insupportable pain shooting through her head. She had heard that weak eyes were quite common in Australia, and knowing that Mrs. Bantam had a lotion which she used when she suffered from them herself, she requested some for hers; and her mistress, without looking at Clara's eyes carefully, gave her the lotion, telling her to apply it frequently, for it never failed to do good. But it was rather of a stimulating nature, and was very unsuitable to the violent inflammation which Clara was suffering from, and as all through the long night she kept applying it, in the hope of relieving the pain, she grew gradually worse, and in the morning she could open neither of her eyes.

No one has ever had ophthalmia without feeling apprehensive that it will terminate in total blindness; and as Clara, alone and friendless in a strange land, contemplated the loss of her sight as probable—nay, almost certain—it is no wonder that her mental agony should increase the real physical pain she felt. Her pulse was high, and her skin parched and burning; but in a sort of despair she got out of bed, groped to her clothes, and dressed herself. She went down stairs, but found she could do nothing, not even light the fire; so she sat down on the single kitchen chair, and waited

till she should hear either Mrs. Bantam or Miss Minnie getting up. Minnie was the first to move, and Clara, tapping at her door, entreated her to speak to her for a moment. She was shocked at Clara's miserable condition.

'Go to bed directly, Clara,' said she; 'you are not fit to be up; you are going to have a sharp attack of ophthalmia, and must take care of yourself, or you may find it a serious affair. Keep out of any draughts, for it is very sensitive to cold. It must have been going on my message yesterday that brought it on, and no wonder that you matched Miss Withering's silk so badly with this hanging about you. Mrs. Bantam and I must do all that there is to be done for two or three days; but keep yourself quiet and easy, Clara; it will do you no good to fret.'

'Had you ever eyes like these, Miss Minnie?' said Clara.

'No, nor any of our family; but I remember seeing Mrs. Elliot when she had ophthalmia, and I saw how it should be treated.'

So Clara returned to her room, with no other company than her miserable thoughts. She thought of going home blind to her uncle, and being a burden upon him, and feeling that she was of no use to anybody. It was hard that, now she had learned the use of her hands, all the labour should be thrown away from want of eyesight. She thought how grieved Susan would be to see her so helpless, and how she would overwork herself to make up for her sister's inability to do anything to serve her generous uncle. Then she thought that she should never see Mr. Reginald again; and that it was well he was gone, for she could not bear him to see her. She envied everybody who could see, and even Miss Withering, for the time; for though her eyes had a disagreeable expression, they seemed to be very strong, and never failed her.

Minnie brought her up some breakfast, which she could not eat, and shortly afterwards came up with

Mrs. Bantam and Miss Withering, to hold a council as to what was to be done.

'I say leeches,' said Miss Withering, oracularly; 'and as Miss Hodges is going out, at any rate, she might get half-a-dozen.'

'Yes, Clara,' said Minnie, 'there is nothing so good or so safe as leeches in inflammation of the eyes. I am sure they will do you good, and I shall be very glad to get them for you.'

'But who is to put them on, for I cannot touch a leech?' said Mrs. Bantam.

'I will see that they are put on,' said Miss Withering. 'I have a great turn for all branches of medicine and surgery, and rather like the employment than otherwise. And, Miss Hodges, you will exchange the ribbon and gimp for me, as you are going to the chemist's next door.'

This arrangement was agreed to, for though Minnie pitied Clara for having such a nurse, she had no doubt that she would be the better for her skill.

Miss Withering really enjoyed the task she had imposed upon herself; she compelled her patient to remain quite still, and rebuked every moan she made, while she recounted dreadful stories of the French and English soldiers in Egypt, and many other cases of ophthalmia, which she had read of in her favourite medical books; dwelling upon the frequency of the disease in Australia, and on the liability of a person who has had it once to have it again.

Though Clara could see nothing with her eyes, she seemed to see a great deal in them; a sort of morbid vision had taken the place of the natural sight, and while lying in Mrs. Bantam's attic, she saw around her her own lost home: every little adjunct was there—her father's spectacles were lying beside him on the round table; she imagined that she had put them on, and was trying to read the debates in parliament to him; her sister's drawing portfolio was open, and she was putting the finishing touches on a favourite land-

scape; her mother was stitching a shirt-collar—it was two-threads-stitching, and Clara found herself compelled to count the threads as the needle went in and out. This picture she could not shut out; her mind intently examined it, while it as intently listened to Miss Withering's spoken pictures of sufferings which she was likely to endure, and was as sensible of every throb and sting that shot through her own head as if nothing else occupied her attention.

At last the leeches were tired, but not Miss Withering. She brought hot water, and made Clara foment her eyes, remarking how frightful she looked, and that very likely she would not be able to see for a month.

'You can scarcely expect Mrs. Bantam to keep you when you are such an object. You should go home to your friends, Clara; it does not suit mistresses to have their servants laid up and giving trouble, instead of doing work. Would you like me to write for you to your parents, that they may know what a state you are in, or would you prefer the hospital? I thought at first that you might get better in a few days, but I see now that the inflammation is very violent, and will not be so soon cured. If Mrs. Bantam approves, I should say blisters on the temples, and perhaps a dozen more leeches would be beneficial; but I must go down to lunch now; keep the hot cloths on your eyes, and do not moan so childishly—to think of a grown woman having so little fortitude! I will make you up a dose of medicine when I am down stairs, and I will see it swallowed, too; for I am sure you are too much of a baby to take it unless you are looked after.'

Clara's eyes partially opened upon Miss Withering's return with her potion, and the sight of her cold, inflexible face did not by any means sweeten the dose; but she swallowed it, and tried to feel grateful for what was really good service on Miss Withering's part. That lady had no contemptible amount of skill in matters like this, and had Clara's feelings been less acute, and

her sense of desolation less crushing, she might possibly have benefited more by her deeds than she suffered by her words and manner. She tried to be brave, and to show Miss Withering how much she could endure without flinching, but the effort only increased the fever and reduced her strength. Miss Withering was satisfied that she had done a world of good to Clara, by standing firm and not allowing her to give way like a baby; and went down to dinner in a state of self-glorification at her condescension, for which also she received high praise from both Mr. and Mrs. Bantam.

Minnie had spent the day with Mrs. Beverly, and the evening with the Elliots. She had met Mr. William Bell, and had paid as much attention to him as she could spare from George, who had a great deal to say to her. She had again promised to go with the Elliots to the *conversazione*, if she was in town so long; and Mr. Bell had been trying to ask if he might accompany the party, for ten minutes, without success, when George put an end to his abortive attempts by asking if he had any objection to join them.

Minnie would not allow that Mr. Bell was plain-looking; he could not be so with such expressive eyes, and such a good-humoured smile. She was too grateful to him for not coming between her and George, to consider that his manners were defective; and if he was a little contradictory, why, it served to bring other people out. And he seemed to understand Margaret, and not to be afraid of her, so that, on the whole, she assured Annie that he was very agreeable, with more satisfaction to herself than in the praises which had been extorted from her in favour of Harris.

With sunshine in her heart, and comfort on her lips, she hurried up to Clara's cheerless attic as soon as she came home. Miss Withering had left the invalid by herself since dinner, and Clara's heart leaped to hear the light step of the young guest breaking upon the dreary solitude.

'Well, Clara, how are you getting on? I think the eyes look better to-night. Do I hurt them by putting the candle so near you?'

'A little; but I really think the pain is not so violent now,' said Clara.

'Don't be afraid of losing your eyesight,' said Minnie. 'I fancy Miss Withering has been croaking to you on that text, for she never could resist such a favourable opportunity of prophesying evil. The lady I saw (who was the mother of the young ladies next door) had ophthalmia quite as severely as you have it, and she was able to go about the house in a week, and in a month she could read and sew by candle-light; and though she lived for three years afterwards, she never had another attack. So you must keep up your spirits, and trust to my friends the leeches—wonderful little doctors they are—but did not they bite sharply?'

'Very sharply, indeed,' said Clara. 'I thought they were almost taking out my brains. But what does Mrs. Bantam say about me, for Miss Withering spoke of my going home to my friends or to the hospital. I have no friends here—I am quite alone; so do, Miss Minnie, try to persuade Mrs. Bantam not to send me away. I shall feel so grateful if she will only keep me till I get well.'

'Miss Withering is a humbug,' said Minnie. 'Mrs. Bantam has no idea of sending you away, and if Miss Withering tries to put such a notion into her head, I will take your part against her, and be quite glad of the pretext for a quarrel. I suppose that you think I might offer to read to you to-night, in return for your kindness to me on Saturday; but you are too feverish, and it would do you more harm than good. You look thirsty; shall I give you a little water? There now—you only want a tolerable night's sleep to give you the turn; sleep and quiet will do you more good than all the medicine in the world.'

And Clara felt so soothed by Minnie's kind voice and cheerful words, that she really fell asleep, and

though her dreams were wild and uncomfortable, she felt better when she woke. Miss Withering, however, insisted on completing her cure, and infallibly prevented a relapse by the application of six more leeches, and two small blisters on the temples. The eyes were then certainly cured, and Miss Withering considered herself entitled to Clara's everlasting gratitude. By the time that Minnie was sent for, Clara was able to do her house-work as usual, but was forced to sit with vacant hands when that work was done, and to content herself with turning over and over again the confused chaos of her thoughts.

Miss Withering had given Minnie several hints that she expected an invitation to her father's house, because she was very anxious to study colonial subjects and colonial manners, and thought that the bush was the best place for arriving at a right conclusion as to the real merits of the land she had adopted. Mrs. Bantam, though desirous of being freed from her guest, had too much conscientiousness to give any encouragement to these suggestions, and Minnie herself heard the hints as if she heard them not. She would as soon have invited a boa-constrictor to her home as the formidable griffin. Clara was quite sorry when Minnie was borne away by her father, though she was pleased that the custom of the colony, as well as Minnie's natural delicacy of feeling, prevented any offer of money in the shape of vails when she went away. She took a cordial farewell of every one but Miss Withering, to whom she was very stiff, and left that lady as firmly rooted in Mrs. Bantam's house as she had been on her arrival. But Miss Withering had not succeeded in collecting any such chain of evidence with regard to the conjectural clandestine engagement, as she thought would justify her in making known her suspicions to Mr. Hodges. Minnie had been several times at the Elliots', and had talked of them all frankly enough, but had not been betrayed into confusion by Miss Withering's insinuations. She was so comfortable now

in her own mind, that she did not heed what anybody said ; it was only after that miserable evening when Mr. Harris's star was in the ascendant, that Miss Withering's words had stung her, and made her show her agitation. If she had gone to the conversazione with her friends, Miss Withering would have gone there by one means or another, and have watched her behaviour ; but Mr. Hodges came into town for his daughter before the day fixed for that mild species of dissipation.

She had hinted her fears with regard to Miss Hodges to Mrs. Bantam, but that lady had expressed such a horror of meddling and mischief-making, and declared so decidedly that the Elliots were as well-born and as well-educated as the Hodges, and that in time it would be a very likely and suitable thing if Minnie could make it up with one of the young men, that Miss Withering was convinced Mrs. Bantam would be a very bad coadjutor.

When Minnie was gone, Mr. and Mrs. Bantam felt how invaluable she had been to them, for they were again burdened with the whole of Miss Withering's tedious dogmatism ; but though her bright idea had not benefited herself, it did not fall to the ground, for about a week after she had gone, it was acted upon, and the Bantams and Clara were delivered from their unwelcome guest.

Miss Withering was somewhat of a 'gourmet,' and had a partiality for hot suppers, which was contrary to all Mrs. Bantam's ideas of health and economy ; and she had accordingly resisted that encroachment with all her power. But Miss Withering, having made a poor tea on Thursday evening, had taken a violent fancy for something nice for supper, and had talked of what was customary in England for a long time in vain.

'What has Clara to do now, when she can neither read nor sew in the evenings, but to get supper for the family in a civilized manner? I am quite tired of bread-and-cheese, and I am sure so is Mr. Bantam ;

besides, cheese is indigestible, and apt to occasion troublesome dreams. Would you not relish a nice pork chop to-night, Mr. Bantam?

'I assure you, Miss Withering,' said Mrs. Bantam, 'that there is not a morsel of anything in the house that could be made warm for supper. There is cold roast beef, but nothing else.'

'I saw such beautiful pork-chops in a butcher's shop in Rundle-street this afternoon. Can you not send Clara for a dish?'

'I certainly shall not send her on such an errand,' said Mrs. Bantam. '*You* may do as you please.'

So Miss Withering asked Clara to go out at nine o'clock to buy pork chops for supper; and Clara said she would rather not. Miss Withering was determined to carry her point, and called on Mrs. Bantam to support her; but she was sadly disappointed, for she only said the girl was quite right not to do such an unreasonable thing.

The griffin saw that her hold on Mrs. Bantam was lost, for in spite of her conviction that she was born to rule, she knew that if she submitted to one act of rebellion, others would follow; so she retreated to her room, packed her trunks, and made her preparations for departure on the morrow.

Mrs. Bantam could scarcely believe she was serious when she announced her determination to go. She made no polite objection, fearing that the slightest hint would be sufficient to induce her tormentor to remain, but bade her good-bye with an agitation which certainly had no grief in it. She stretched herself out on the sofa when the door closed on Miss Withering, and indulged in a comfortable lounge for nearly two hours; then she went into the kitchen, and raised Clara's wages to five shillings a week on the spot.

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. REGINALD'S LETTER TO ENGLAND IS RECEIVED AND ANSWERED.

MISS MARSTON was reclining on a sofa, reading an interesting French novel, when the letter of her suitor in Australia was delivered to her. She had come up with Mrs. Reginald to London for a fortnight, to see the Great Exhibition; but Mr. Bisset, who was to take them under his escort, had been delayed from unforeseen causes for three days, and Miss Marston felt impatient of a stay in town which she had not yet enjoyed. However, Mr. Bisset was positively coming this very day, and Julia was filling up the hours which must intervene with a very exciting tale, which she could not leave till she had finished; so she put the letter unopened into her escritoire, saying to herself, that a letter from Charles would suit her better when she was weary of pleasure, than when she was anticipating it; and returned to see what answer Celestine gave to poor Armand. When Mrs. Reginald came in from her own apartment to sit with Julia, she rose and placed a chair for her in the most pleasant part of the room, and bringing her the newspaper and her spectacles, she settled herself again to her novel. It was by such little attentions as these that she had made herself so dear to Mrs. Reginald, and convinced her of the amiability and genuine goodness of her disposition. The mother was very fond of talking of her son, and Julia listened with patience, if not with interest. Mrs. Reginald read every description of colonial news, from the Adelaide newspapers which her son sent her, to the shorter notices of the colonies given by the London journals, and drew from all she read the deduction that Charles was quite lost at a sheep station in South Australia, and that it was only a feeling of duty which made him say he liked it. While Julia, for her part,

was sure she should be miserable there, and talked so much and so feelingly of the pain it would give her to part from all her dear, dear English friends, that Mrs. Reginald thought it would be blameable in even her own son to wound so tender a heart, and condemn so brilliant a girl to such a limited sphere.

Mr. and Mrs. Bisset, as soon as they arrived, were of course all eagerness to set off to see the world's wonder, and Julia having finished her novel, and Mrs. Reginald read every word of the colonial news, they too wished to lose no time, and were very soon ready. What they saw I need not describe, for of course my readers have either seen it for themselves, or read all about it in the newspapers, according to Miss Waterstone's plan; and even we in the colonies are getting tired enough of that Great Exhibition and its appendages. Of course Mr. Bisset's party were charmed with everything they saw; but there was one part to which Mrs. Reginald's motherly heart turned with peculiar interest; this was the South Australian division. There was not much to see in it—wool, wheat, and mineral specimens being almost the only articles exhibited; but Mrs. Reginald gazed at and admired the wool, long and intently. A knot of gentlemen were talking together close to this department; one of them, a tall, thin gentlemanly man, who was dressed with peculiar care, seemed to look on the pieces of ore as if he remembered every one of them.

'Fine specimens these,' said he to the person next him; 'the Burra malachite is not to be despised even in the world's fair, Langton.'

'The Russian beats it hollow,' said Mr. Langton, 'but I care more about the wool. That is Escott's; I should know it among a thousand. You can see that he has still got Humberstone with him. I fear my old master's will not look so well this year.'

'Can there be any of Charles's wool in the Exhibition?' whispered Mrs. Reginald to Julia; 'this gentleman seems to recognise some of the specimens.'

'Nonsense!' said Julia; 'he would have written to us that he meant to exhibit if he had sent anything home.'

'The Port Phillip specimens of wool are much better than the South Australian,' said the tall gentleman; 'but in the matter of minerals none of the Australian colonies have anything to show, except South Australia.'

'True,' said Mr. Langton, a short, thick-set man, who had been an overseer in the north, and had returned to England to gratify a feeling of home-sickness after ten years' absence, but who meant to return to the colony. 'I wish I had done as you did, Mr. Dent, and bought Burras with my capital before I left; I might then have been drawing my dividends here and cutting a figure. You bought cheap; but I suppose you mean to hold, for one cannot get more than three per cent. in this old country.'

'Pshaw!' said Mr. Dent, 'I don't trust to my Burra dividends altogether, though they are pleasant things when they come, and I certainly do not mean to sell out any of my shares.'

'Come with me, Mrs. Reginald,' said Julia, 'Mr. and Mrs. Bisset are on before us.'

'Mrs. Reginald!' said Mr. Dent, coming forward, 'I have no doubt, from the locality in which I find you, that you are the mother of my friend, Charles Reginald, of Taringa, in the north.'

'I am very glad to see any friend of my son's,' said Mrs. Reginald, 'and so I am sure is Miss Marston and Mrs. Bisset. Alice, this is a friend of your brother's.'

'I ought to have given you a letter of introduction before this time, which Reginald was good enough to give me,' said Mr. Dent, 'but I have never been in —shire since I came to England. I do not deserve this pleasant meeting, but I hope you will permit me to wait on you in town while you remain in it. My name is Dent; probably Mr. Reginald has mentioned

me in some of his letters. I shall be proud to make the acquaintance of his family.'

As Mr. Dent had no party of his own to accompany, he was easily prevailed on to join Mr. Bisset's; and, giving Julia his arm, he felt quite happy. Miss Marston was so strikingly beautiful, that he wondered at his ever having admired Margaret Elliot, and the elegance of her deportment made him reflect with incredulity on the time when he had fancied Margaret ladylike. Mr. Dent had been in the colonies from his childhood, and had grown up to manhood in the bush, where he had rarely seen a female face; and the death of his father put him into possession of considerable property in the shape of flocks and herds when he was about four-and-twenty. He had taken cattle and horses overland to South Australia, and sold them well; he had disposed of his sheep with their stations at a good time, and realized prices beyond his expectations; and when he settled in Adelaide to look out for investments for the capital he had realized, he naturally began to look out for a wife at the same time.

He had looked very keenly to his own interest in all the bargains he made, indeed, too keenly for Margaret's taste, despising as she did the great colonial sin—an overweening love of money. Mr. Dent had been at first incredulous of Margaret's contempt for riches, but when he saw that it was borne out by her whole behaviour, and that it was in no way allied to extravagance, his affections fixed themselves on her in preference to prettier and more fashionable girls, whose fathers and mothers flattered and invited him, and who were very much more gracious to him themselves. Besides, Margaret's good sense, her varied information, and her lofty self-respect, gave her in Mr. Dent's eyes the appearance of a lady. Her few accomplishments she did not parade; her face, though he did not think it pretty, was expressive; he knew that she was religious without being tiresome, and that she would certainly make a good wife. He himself stood very high

in the world's opinion—it is surprising how easily a man can gain a good character. Mr. Dent was free from the more vulgar vices; he was not extravagant, neither could he be considered mean; he was fond of ladies' society, and had great ideas of propriety in his intercourse with them. So every one said, 'What fault has Margaret Elliot to find with Mr. Dent?' But if Margaret had seen no positive vices, neither had she seen any virtues in her persevering admirer. He had no greatness of soul, no highminded generosity; nothing, in fact, to look up to; and she had given him his dismissal as soon as he afforded her an opportunity, which was not till half Adelaide was fixing the wedding-day.

Mr. Dent never paid another visit to the cottage after he had been refused; if he was not to be Margaret's husband, he cared little to be her friend. The death of an uncle soon obliged him to go to England, in order to convert into money a quantity of miscellaneous property which had been left to him, and there he resolved to obtain a handsome, accomplished English wife.

Mrs. Reginald was pleased to see Julia so friendly with her son's friend, and asked him to come home and dine with them. Mr. Dent was, of course, most happy, and accepted the invitation with many thanks.

'Now tell me how Charles looks,' said Mrs. Reginald, after dinner, to her guest. 'It is long since this likeness of him was taken; does he look much older?'

'Considerably older,' replied he, 'and not so animated—but of course he cannot be so lively at a dull place like Taringa, as he must have been in such a delightful family circle as this.'

'Is Taringa very dull? He writes as if he liked it,' said Julia.

'Wretchedly dull, in winter especially. In summer Reginald has a few visitors, but some of them are queer characters, though all meet with a welcome from him. I always called on my way to and from the Burra,

and I think he was glad to see a gentleman for a change.'

'He keeps his health, however,' said Mrs. Bisset, 'and that is a great point. We hear from all quarters that the climate is very fine.'

'Very middling,' said Mr. Dent; 'nothing to equal either Van Diemen's Land or New Zealand, and even Port Phillip is cooler and pleasanter. The hot winds in Adelaide used to lay me up altogether.'

'Are there many snakes in the colony?' asked Julia.

'There are none in the town, and for some distance out of it; but in the bush they are pretty numerous. A lady of my acquaintance used to be dreadfully alarmed by seeing one pop its head through a cranny in the back of her parlour chimney. She had a great horror of snakes, and this creature's occasional appearance quite preyed upon her spirits. You know that snakes are fond of being about old walls, and I suppose the wall of her house had not been well built (few colonial houses are), and the snake had found a nest there to live in.'

Julia looked shocked, and whispered to Alice to ask Mr. Dent how Charles was dressed now; for she did not like to inquire herself. Alice did so, and Mr. Dent willingly gave the information.

'In town, he dresses tolerably well; but in the bush he is quite different. You should see him, Miss Marston, in an old shooting-coat, often out at the elbows, a blue striped shirt, moleskin trowsers, and a leathern belt round his waist; a cabbage tree hat, with a black ribbon round it sometimes—the whole affair not worth a shilling—and a short black pipe in his mouth; no waistcoat, no gloves, and very thick boots. I always made a point of dressing very particularly when I visited him, for I thought my example might do him good; but I think nothing but a visit to England will improve him. The sheep farmers who live round him dress no better than himself, and that encourages him in his carelessness.'

‘Does Mr. Reginald really smoke—and smoke such a thing as a horrid black pipe?’ asked Julia.

‘He takes a cigar in Adelaide, but in the bush he sticks to the short pipe. He sits in that long, low room of his, close to the wide open fireplace, smoking and reading alternately, and sometimes both together, for the entire evening, unless any visitors happen to be there, when he will make an effort, and be very agreeable. I always came provided with a pack of cards, and we used to play piquet together. There was no man in the colony I liked so well as Reginald; there was no nonsense about him.’

‘What are the characteristics of colonial ladies?’ said Julia. ‘Do they dress as wretchedly as poor Mr. Reginald?’

‘Some do dress shockingly. Ladies are always so ill supplied with servants in the colonies, and have to do so much with their own hands, that it would be unreasonable to expect them to be handsomely dressed.’

‘I suppose that we shall hear of Charles marrying a colonial young lady some day soon. I should like to hear a description of the wife he is likely to get from a gentleman who has seen so much of South Australia,’ said Julia.

Mr. Dent could think of no one as a colonial lady but Margaret Elliot, and he accordingly gave her portrait.

‘I will describe one to you whom I used to consider a very favourable specimen of the class. She was tall and fair, with a slight stoop; her voice was rather loud than soft, and her manner would have been lady-like if it had not been too abrupt. She was very well informed, and particularly fond of posing people with puzzling questions. She danced tolerably, and played and sung a little; her hands were neither small nor white, but yet they would have looked well if she had not spoiled them with washing dishes and scrubbing floors. I mention this lady in particular, for she is more likely than any in the colony to take Reginald’s

fancy, unless, indeed, he returns to England, and sees how superior ladies are here to those half-polished, half-educated colonial girls.'

'You are describing a lady whom you admire,' said Julia, 'but you do not flatter her. Could you really consider a girl who did such drudgery a lady? I think washing dishes is a very singular accomplishment.'

'Ladies are forced to practise strange accomplishments in the colonies. There are many who could afford to keep enough of servants, who cannot get them, and the mother of a young family, in particular, is greatly to be pitied. The houses are all so small, that there is rarely a nursery, and not always a nursemaid; and the children are always under people's feet in the single sitting-room.'

All this talk was no good preparation to Julia for the reading of her lover's letter; and when she saw that he would not yield to her wishes, but required her to go with him to the miserable colony which he said he liked, she felt very indignant. She drew in her mind's eye a picture of him equipped as Mr. Dent had described, and could not bear the idea of spending her life with such an object. The dull home, where every comer was welcome, and the picture of a colonial lady's toils and cares, made her long to break off an engagement which never could result in happiness to either party. But what would Alice and Jane say, and, above all, how bitterly Mrs. Reginald would feel her conduct! And Julia was entirely dependent on her brother James, who was warmly attached to Reginald. She thought how foolish she had been to have engaged herself at all. She put away Reginald's letter without letting any one see it, and made up her mind not to answer it till she had returned home.

Miss Marston had observed that Mr. Dent admired her, and she rather liked him, though he had told her so many disagreeable things. She had led him to believe that she was very young when Charles left England, and as she did not look more than twenty,

Mr. Dent had no suspicion of the engagement ; though he was certain that, if Reginald came home for a visit, he would undoubtedly be enslaved by her beauty and talents.

If Mr. Dent was not very polished, he was evidently desirous of pleasing ; and as he had scarcely any English acquaintances, he would have been inclined to cultivate this, even if Julia had not been of the party. He was anxious to buy a property in the country, and Mr. Bisset recommended him to Thorns, which was offered at a moderate price, and which was within two miles of Ashfield. There were many improvements to be made on the house and grounds, but he rather preferred it on that account, and showed both taste and discrimination in the remarks he made on the subject.

Julia was to return to Ashfield when their short stay in London was over, and she thought with complacency on the probable new neighbour, whom she laughingly told Mrs. Bisset she should like to civilize.

‘Don’t you think, Alice, that if I could get him to fall desperately in love with me it would do the poor man an infinity of good?’

‘You take people at an unfair advantage, Julia,’ said Mrs. Bisset, ‘for there is no chance of his love being reciprocated. And what a miserable neighbour you would have if he fancied you had used him ill. I am sure his face could look remarkably unhappy ; it is rather a hatchet face at best.’

‘It is rather thin, and I am sure a hopeless passion would make Mr. Dent look quite *distingué*. I assure you I mean to try, so don’t any of you drop a hint of my engagement to Charles. I hate being laid on the shelf so summarily.’

Mr. Dent always happened to meet with Mr. Bisset and his party in their frequent visits to the Exhibition, and as he had been there from the first time it was opened, he was at first valuable as a cicerone, and subsequently the whole family grew accustomed to his presence, and would have felt disappointed if he had not

accompanied them. When Mrs. Reginald was leaving town, Mr. Dent spoke of going to look at Thorns, and was invited to spend a week or two at Ashfield, that he might have every opportunity of inspecting the property he desired to purchase. His attentions to Julia were not marked, for he was only feeling his way; but he was thoughtful of her comfort, and spared no pains to amuse her. When she sang, he listened with pleasure, but he preferred her talk, for she was lively and amusing, and succeeded in making him shine in conversation as he was conscious he had never done before. With Margaret he had felt nervous and embarrassed, and neither party had been felicitous in selecting topics for discussion. Margaret liked to get a thorough insight into whatever chanced to be mentioned, and always succeeded in convincing him that he knew nothing about the subject; but Julia lightly skimmed over the surface, and was infinitely better suited to Mr. Dent's cast of mind.

Mr. Dent liked Thorns very much, and succeeded in getting the price still more reduced; then having consulted with an architect and ornamental gardener, he proceeded to establish himself there as an independent country gentleman, with an income of three thousand a-year. He went very frequently to Ashfield, and consulted Julia's taste upon the improvements he was making; but yet he was so unobtrusive, and had always such admirable reasons for asking her advice on this particular point, that even Julia was puzzled as to his feelings. When they met at parties, Mr. Dent did not dance with her; indeed, he did not dance with any one, for he did not dance well enough to venture on such an exhibition; but he paid Julia a shade more attention than any other lady in the room, which pleased Mrs. Reginald much, as he was such a friend of Charles!

Julia did not answer Reginald's letter till she was thoroughly ashamed of herself for her delay, nor till she had got another as uncompromising in the main

point as the first. She did not take Mrs. Reginald into her confidence with regard to these letters or her answer; but only said that she had insisted on his giving up smoking, and dressing like a gentleman, otherwise she would not go to South Australia with him. She wrote thus :—

‘ MY DEAREST CHARLES,

‘ I am quite shocked at your cruel language, and the doubts you cast upon me. After all the sacrifices I have made for you, can you really expect me to leave all my beloved friends here, and live so miserably as people do in Australia ?

‘ Dear Charles, I have seen a friend of yours, a Mr. Dent, who says that you go with your coat out at elbows, and smoke a short black pipe constantly. I thought I should have fainted when I heard of it, and Alice too was greatly shocked. It is not what your friends in England would have expected from you. And I cannot learn to wash dishes and scrub floors, as Mr. Dent says all colonial ladies must do. And the idea of snakes peeping out of the fireplace is too much for my nerves altogether.

* * * * *

‘ Mr. Dent has bought Thorns, and is consequently a near neighbour of ours. We met him first at the Exhibition, where your mother could not help fancying that some of the specimens of wool were from your flocks ; I did not fancy anything so absurd, for my love is not so blind as your mother’s. If you make yourself agreeable to me I shall always like you ; but if you will not I must and shall grumble.

* * * * *

‘ Alice is very much stronger since her tour on the continent, and was equal to a great amount of sight-seeing. I have grown to love her more dearly than ever. Independently of her being your sister, she is very loveable for herself. I should not like her so much if she were not more gentle and forbearing with

me than you are ; she never reproaches me as you are so often doing. Indeed, Charles, it is cruel of you to write so unkindly to me. Alice wished me to go to Carrington with her for the autumn and winter, but your mother had set her heart upon my staying with her, and as she has the best claim upon me, I remain at Ashfield for some months. James has got accustomed to my absence, and Jane says she does not miss me so much as she expected ; they have complimented me by making me godmother to their beautiful baby, and I can assure you that little Julia promises to eclipse me altogether.

‘Your mother is very well this summer. She is going to write under the same envelope, so I may close this by hoping that you will not be unreasonable with your very affectionate,

‘JULIA MARSTON.

‘P.S.—Mr. Dent says that you are very likely to fall in love with a young lady, who, though well enough connected, is very much reduced, and is obliged to do things which are left to servants here ; but he said she was well-informed, and fond of asking questions. I felt quite jealous, and longed to ask her name ; but though I was desirous of information, I could not bring myself to ask any questions except from you. Your taste must have deteriorated from what it was when I knew you, if you can admire this lady, supposing Mr. Dent’s description of her to be correct. Yours ever,

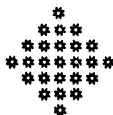
‘J. M.’

‘I wish I knew whether Mr. Dent likes me or not,’ said Julia, half aloud to herself, when she had finished this letter. ‘It would be better to be happy with him than miserable with Charles, who can easily get a wife in the colony willing to go to the bush with him. But then what would my friends say to such a thing? I should like him to be more explicit, but I cannot bring him to the point. He always looks at me, and seems to value my opinion more than that of others ; but I

suppose that my face is a pleasing object to most people, and I have sense and taste sufficient to give weight to what I say. Thorns will be a beautiful place when it is completed; perhaps he is waiting till then before he speaks out, and then I *ought* to refuse him.'

Months passed, and Mr. Dent slowly but surely found his way to Julia's heart: his face grew handsomer every day, and his manners more polished; his taste in books and music echoed her own; and her influence made him too delightful for her own peace. But still Mr. Dent would not speak without more encouragement than Julia felt she ought to give, and which the very yearnings of her heart made her backward in giving.

Mrs. Reginald looked forward to her son's coming home soon to relieve the flutter of spirits which Julia evidently suffered from; and she had planned that if Charles could not remain in England, she would accompany him to Australia, and brave the long voyage and all the hardships of colonial life, for the sake of her son and her daughter, Julia.



CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. REGINALD MAKES THE ACQUAINTANCE OF THE ELLIOTS.

WE return to Mrs. Bantam's kitchen in Adelaide, where Clara sits listless and weary, suffering from the stagnation of mind which generally succeeds to great excitement. The routine of her daily duties did not rouse her; she seemed to be unable to struggle against what she knew to be a wrong state of mind. Her thoughts, on every subject but one, were vague and indistinct; while, on that subject, every idea was sharp in its outline, and painful in its intensity. She tacitly acknowledged that she was not strong enough to struggle with her love; she must let it wear itself out, and as it had no encouragement, it was sure to die. Now she longed to be with Susan again, and tell her all her sufferings, for her sympathy might compensate for the coldness of all the world beside; then again she shrank from going where she could never see Reginald more. She despised herself for giving away her affections when they were neither asked nor cared for; but yet love had become so identified with her nature, that she thought she should be nothing at all without it. Her only amusement was a dangerous one; it was journalizing. She had nothing to be interested in but herself, and her mind was constantly turned inwards, so that every shifting cloud or shadow was observed and magnified. She had found so much pleasure in writing imaginary conversations when she could share in none real, that she indulged herself in it till it became necessary to her; and she said many brilliant things on paper to her uncle, to Mr. Bantam, and Mr. Reginald. She introduced herself in the same way to the family next door, and gave a distinctive character to each of them, corresponding to the expression of their faces. From the first she had liked them, but she did not win

their friendship until two long conversations had passed between them.

Two or three months passed before Reginald came again into town, or at least to Mrs. Bantam's. She wondered if he meant to make any stay in the house, and looked into the little room he had occupied, to see if it was in fit order to receive a guest. But he had only come to call, and though Mrs. Bantam invited him to make a longer visit, she did not press the matter. A feeling that if Mr. Reginald was staying with them, Miss Withering might be induced to return, though perhaps it was unreasonable, influenced her in not insisting upon his accepting her hospitality.

But, in truth, her dread of the griffin's return was a continual trouble to Mrs. Bantam; she used to plan what she would do if she met her in the street, and what if she called, without ever coming to a distinct idea of the right conduct to be pursued. Miss Withering had never been at the house since her exit; Mrs. Bantam had heard that she had got a situation at Mrs. Denfield's, with a salary of thirty pounds a-year; and that she ruled the household with a rod of iron. Strong as Mrs. Denfield's will was, it succumbed to Miss Withering's, which was stronger. By adroit flattery of the children, and still more skilful management of Mrs. Denfield's own peculiarities, she succeeded in commanding a respect and consideration which no governess had ever obtained in the family before. Mr. Denfield certainly hated her; but as, in her opinion, the master of the house was a mere cipher, she took little pains to ingratiate herself with him—she could hold her ground without him.

The children were forced to learn unreasonably long lessons, as they had such fine abilities; they were punished severely if the tasks were not well learned, for there was nothing like decision in the management of such remarkable children; and the servants were kept running at Miss Withering's beck and call, that they might feel a proper respect for the lady whom

Mrs. Denfield entrusted with the office of instructing her prodigies of genius. Caroline Denfield did not love her governess, but she stood in awe of her; and she loved her mother better every day, which was a result exactly suited to Mrs. Denfield's views. Her love for her father was also increasing, but that neither of the ladies in authority paid any attention to.

But Mrs. Bantam had no confidence that this state of things at Langley would continue, and was nervously afraid of Miss Withering's coming back with some good excuse, such as so clever a woman could not fail to find. She started quite alarmed at a strange knock at the door, particularly if it was a loud one, and Clara was instructed that she was particularly engaged in case Miss Withering asked to see her. Clara would not say 'not at home,' which was likely to be more effectual, for the pretext of an engagement would be but a flimsy protection from such a dauntless invader.

Clara saw that, as Mr. Reginald left their house, he met George Elliot going into his. They seemed to exchange a few words together, which probably resulted in an invitation on George's part, for Reginald accompanied him into the cottage. Clara was bringing in water from the butt which stood in the yard when she observed this; she tried to go on quietly with getting the dinner forward, but she experienced the old feeling, which resembled envy of the Misses Elliot, coming upon her more strongly than ever.

Mr. Bantam did not come home at his usual time, and her mistress came into the kitchen to see if dinner was not getting spoiled.

'Did you not think that it was Miss Withering, when Mr. Reginald rapped at the door to-day, Clara? The two people, though so different, having been here at the same time, I naturally think of the one when I see the other, and his rat-tat on the knocker is nearly as decided as hers. What should I have done if it had been really she? I have not such a good way of

managing as poor Mrs. Campbell had. She was quite infested with 'consignments,' as Mr. Campbell had so many Edinburgh connexions and acquaintances, but she used to get quit of them very cleverly.'

'I have heard that Mrs. Campbell was very kind,' said Clara.

'Oh, yes! she was remarkably kind and obliging to her friends and equals; but when people are forced upon one, as Mr. Dillon forced Miss Withering on me, one cannot stand upon ceremony. I remember one young girl whose father had been at school with Mr. Campbell for three months, and who founded some claim upon him through that, whom Mrs. Campbell did not like, but whom she could not get rid of for more than a month. But it chanced that a young gentleman who visited at the house took some notice of Miss Ker, and flirted with her a whole evening, with which the young lady was very much pleased, and got into high spirits; so Mrs. Campbell was very much shocked at the impropriety of her conduct, and dismissed her the next day with a great deal of good advice. By the bye, you had some recommendation to Mr. Campbell, Clara, as a needlewoman, or something of that kind; but I can tell you that you are much better off in a comfortable place like this, than if you had been a *protégée* of poor Mrs. Campbell, for she would not have paid you as much as the current rates for your work, and would have made you feel dependent besides; though nobody could be more attractive or delightful in society than she was.'

'Do you know what became of Miss Ker, ma'am?' asked Clara, sympathizing in a fate which might have easily been her own, for what would Mrs. Campbell have thought of the way in which she had talked to Mr. Reginald?

'Miss Ker, poor girl! she met a wretched fate. She married a man whom she knew nothing about; but, poor little thing, she had no home, and could not get a situation. This man had a good deal of property;

she was pretty and inexperienced, and thought anything that would give her a shelter would be comparative happiness. He had a shocking temper, and was very unsteady; but that was not the worst of it, for about six months after he married Miss Ker, he went on some pretext to Sydney; and shortly afterwards, his wife and four children came out to Adelaide to join him. Of course the true wife took possession of all his property here, and poor Miss Ker was left penniless with a sickly baby, and was forced to apply to the Destitute Board. She gets rations from public charity in this way, and takes in plain sewing; but her constitution is quite broken up, and the doctor says she cannot live over another winter. Girls should be very careful who they marry in a place like this, for there are many men who have a wife in each of these colonies, besides one in England. I am glad to see that you are contented without any followers, Clara, for you have a chance to draw a bad lot; and even at the best, you will never be so comfortable as you are here. You have no care, no trouble, your work is not hard, and your hours are regular; you have nothing to do but draw your wages and buy your clothes, and you are clear of the world. Don't marry the baker if he asks you, for I have heard that he is dissipated and extravagant, and you would lead a wretched life with him.'

Clara disclaimed all intention of taking the baker, who besides had no desire to ask her. He thought her genteel in her manners, and rather pretty, but she was not tall enough to come up to his ideas of a fine woman, and he was afraid she wanted style. He had asked her once if she was going to a tradesman's ball, and had generously offered 'to stand treat if her missis would let her come'; but she had refused so haughtily, that he was offended, and took Plummer's Betsy instead.

Mr. Reginald liked all the Elliots better than he had generally liked people whom he had heard so much praised. He differed from Mr. Dent with regard to Margaret, for he thought her positively pretty, par-

ticularly when she smiled; but he did not feel at all inclined to fall in love with her. He compared her in his own mind, not with Julia Marston, but with Clara Morison, and thought her infinitely less charming. Margaret Elliot was full of what she herself called *elbows*,—salient points which people who did not know her very well were apt to find inconvenient. She had been accustomed to take the lead in conversation at-home, and being more reflecting than observant, she was not skilful in adapting what she had to say to the tastes and prejudices of those whom she addressed. If a subject did not interest her, she could not feign an interest, and either sat silent, or expressed her disapproval; but when a subject did interest her, she was completely possessed with it, and could not be prevented from enlarging upon it with warmth and vehemence. Her mind was not poetical, nor imaginative; if she was silent, she seemed always to be thinking, never dreaming. Her eyes were never timidly cast down, but bravely looked the whole world in the face, with a steady truth in them which demanded nothing less than truth in return.

Grace was more loved by common acquaintances, and Annie more indulged and humoured by the family at-home; but Margaret was the life and soul of the circle. She studied mathematics with George and law with Gilbert; she read the driest books, and made extracts from them in an old ledger which she called her album, and was fond of singing something wise and stirring to the tunes of love-songs. She read all the newspapers she could get hold of, and was as well acquainted with current history as with Mangnall's Questions. In general she preferred the company of gentlemen to that of ladies, though this preference was not reciprocated, for gentlemen did not like a girl who thought for herself, and spoke as boldly as she thought, without desiring to be led by their superior judgment. From all these characteristics, it is not surprising that she won for herself from the public voice of South

Australia the reputation of being a blue, which she bore very philosophically, but sheltered her sisters from any imputation of the kind, for she knew they disliked it.

She rather liked Reginald at first, though his character was scarcely marked and rugged enough to come up to her idea of manliness. She knew he had been a friend of Robert Dent's, and was afraid he was of the same calibre. Reginald agreed with her about Dickens and Thackeray, but they differed on Tennyson and Carlyle. She admired what was clear, and thought many of Tennyson's poems were incomprehensible, and therefore valueless; Carlyle's style was so unnatural and affected, that if he had as much sense as Reginald gave him credit for, he should reform it forthwith; and when she was met by the assertion that the gift of language is not bestowed upon all men in equal measure, and that it is often as easy a task to change one's character as one's style, she declared that if what a man writes is not clear, he must either think indistinctly, which is a radical error, or mystify his clear thoughts by involving them in a complexity of words, which is a contemptible practice, merely followed to make people wonder what the meaning really is, and fancy that as it is incomprehensible, it must needs be deep and wide.

'Macaulay writes very differently, and very much better,' said she.

Reginald admired Macaulay too, but insisted that he felt more improved by reading Carlyle than Macaulay; which Margaret wondered at, but believed that he really thought so. 'None of those dreamy Germanized minds ever have much strength in them,' thought she; then said aloud, 'I dislike German philosophy, for it leads to nothing.'

'That is a sweeping charge,' said Reginald, 'yet I think it is not altogether an unfounded one. There is a friend of mine who studies Kant and Fichte, and talks admirably on all subjects connected with the

mind and the will ; but he really does nothing with his knowledge, and finds it as difficult to resist temptation as the most ignorant ploughman in the colony. He has been long attached to a lady in his own country whom he has known from childhood ; but he could not resist the fascinations of a pretty milliner in Grenfell-street, and he is going to be married to her to-morrow. He feels very much ashamed of himself, and made as many apologies to me as if I had been his conscience-keeper, because he had told me previously of his love for the other lady. He begged me to be present at the ceremony, that I might see how very pretty and captivating the girl was, and I have agreed to go. After the honeymoon is over, he means to go to Ballarat, to try the diggings there ; for he does not seem able to settle down comfortably. Do you know of any party who will start from Adelaide about that time, Mr. Elliot, for Haussen is desirous of meeting with one ?

‘ I know of one party consisting of two shopmen, a bricklayer, and a gentleman, who start in ten days,’ said George ; ‘ but very few people take a month to think of the matter. Have any of the shepherds in your neighbourhood gone off yet ?’

‘ A few,’ said Reginald, ‘ but the chief migration has been from the mines. Several parties have left the Burra and the Kapunda, and all the unprofitable mines are getting fast deserted. I hear that a good many young gentlemen are leaving Adelaide for Ballarat—have you no idea of trying your luck yourselves ? The distance is not so formidable as to California or the Turon ; you can get to Geelong in two or three days, with good winds, and sixty miles is nothing of a land journey.’

‘ We have no intention of leaving South Australia,’ said Gilbert. ‘ I have no inclination to give up my home and situation for gold washing, and our sisters would never hear of such a thing.’

‘ I am grieved that gold has been found in these colonies,’ said Margaret. ‘ We were avaricious enough

before the discovery, and I fear it will only feed the restless desire of our population to make money as easily as possible—we meet with so many men who think it quite a virtue to be worldly-minded. I wish we could find coals in the colony, for we should see how many gentlemen would fancy digging for them; though they are really far more useful, and look beautiful, too, when they burn; and though the work is not a whit dirtier or more disagreeable, I think we should have a very poor turn-out. People are fonder of unearned money than of what they give a real, fair proportion of work for.'

'I should not like to burn coals,' objected Annie; 'they make so much dust, and have a disagreeable smell. There is nothing so cheerful as a blazing wood-fire.'

'The Sydney coal, which is the only kind you see here, is not nearly so good as what we burned in Scotland,' said Grace. 'I hope that if we were to get coals here, they would be of better quality.'

'But it is their application to machinery that would make them so valuable to us,' observed Gilbert. 'Once give us coals, and we should not be long in having railroads.'

'You are going to be a lawyer,' said Reginald to Gilbert, 'and I suppose it would be very ill-advised in you to give up good prospects to dig for anything, even for coals.'

'I have not got my articles yet,' answered Gilbert, rather gloomily, 'but I study as hard as if I could be admitted. I hope to make myself so useful to my employer, that he will give me my articles to retain my services. I like law very much, and Margaret and I help each other on. We mean to be Mr. Sampson Brass and Miss Sally, by and by.'

'I think Dickens wrote that sketch to frighten ladies from law, which, besides, is a thing he never can resist hitting hard. How well he describes Doctors' Commons in David Copperfield! Do not you find law a very dry study, Miss Margaret?' asked Reginald.

'Nothing is too dry for Margaret,' said Annie. 'She has an idea that what men can understand should be comprehensible to women, but I think law very dry indeed; and as for mathematics, they are frightful.'

'I do not understand why the piano should be kept shut,' said Reginald. 'It is quite a cruelty to me, for I never hear such a thing in the bush, and very seldom even when I visit Adelaide. I know that Miss Margaret Elliot can both play and sing, and feel extremely anxious to hear her.'

'How do you know that I play or sing, when you never saw me in your life before?' demanded Margaret.

'Mr. Dent used to expatiate on the subject of your accomplishments once a fortnight at my station,' Reginald answered. Margaret did not look at all conscious.

'Do you know what has become of Mr. Dent?' asked Annie. 'Somebody told me last week that he was travelling on the continent, and had married a Parisian lady; but I did not believe it.'

'He has not written to me since he left the colony, though he promised to do so, so I know nothing of what he has been about. I gave him a letter of introduction to my mother, which he does not appear to have delivered, for she takes no notice of either it or him when she writes. But his friendship for me was merely one of convenience; it suited him to call at Taringa in his frequent visits to the Burra, and he consequently took every opportunity of doing so; but I never expected his liking to outlive change of scene and circumstances.'

Margaret was delighted at this hit at Mr. Dent, for she scarcely expected it from such a quarter. She opened the piano with alacrity, and Reginald, who would not lose the rare opportunity of cultivating his fine second, volunteered to take a part. Grace busied herself with a piece of crochet, while Annie came up close to her sister, wondering very much in her own mind whether Reginald was to turn out the paragon that Margaret could fall in love with. She thought

her sister everything that was beautiful and excellent, and was afraid that this sheep farmer, though his talk was certainly not so dreadfully sheepish as that of the generality of his class, was not quite good enough for Margaret.

When he had gone, Margaret was sorry that she had not talked more with him, instead of wasting so much time in singing ; for, as she said to Grace, ' he is a new character to me, and I should like to understand him better ; ' but Annie thought his singing was better than his conversation, for it was in perfect harmony with Margaret's, while there were jars and discords in their spoken expressions. Grace settled the matter by trusting to see a great deal more of Mr. Reginald, for Henry Martin had said that no man in the north bore so high a character, and that his acquaintance was well worth cultivating.



CHAPTER XIX.

MR. AND MRS. BANTAM RETREAT BEFORE THE ENEMY.

MRS. BANTAM, in the course of a morning call on Mrs. Townley, a mutual acquaintance of herself and Mrs. Denfield, was alarmed to hear that Miss Withering had been inquiring very particularly about her, and had spoken of calling on her the next week, and bringing Mrs. Denfield with her. Some words had fallen from her lips about spending a week in town, as the children had petitioned for holidays, and Miss Withering had thought it advisable to allow them a short respite, in order that they might engage in their studies with renewed ardour at its termination.

Mrs. Bantam consulted with her husband as to what should be done, and they came to the resolution that they should go out of Adelaide for a fortnight, so that Miss Withering might be met by a true 'not at home' from Clara. There was not much doing in the commission line of business at the time, and Mr. Bantam thought that he might take a holiday, and spend a week or two with Mr. Hodges. Mrs. Bantam was charmed with the arrangement, and communicated her intention to Clara in an overflow of spirits.

'You will have an easy time of it when we are gone,' said she. 'I do not care for anything extra being done; only keep the house clean and tidy, and if any friend comes to call, ask her to walk in and rest, and give her a glass of wine; for it is a long way out of town, and people are always tired before they get here. I leave you the keys of the wine-cupboard, for I can trust you with them, Clara. If Miss Withering comes, you must not let her in on any account. Have you any message to Miss Minnie, whom you liked so much, and who was so kind to you when she stayed here? Yes, you send your respects; well, I will deliver them. I assure you I am quite thankful that you are so

steady, for I feel comfortable in leaving you in charge of the house.'

Clara did not feel quite so comfortable in being left to a fortnight's utter solitude, and looked at the gig which conveyed her master and mistress to the country with a regret which she could not conquer.

She tried to write to her sister, and to Miss Waterstone; she journalized till she was weary of writing, and read some of Mrs. Bantam's books, hoping that they would be more interesting than her own. She considered herself fortunate in a visit from black Mary, one day in the first week of her solitude, and bribed her, by crusts of bread and an old gown of her own, to relate to her what she remembered of her history. It was uninteresting enough, but yet it did not seem true, so that it was unsatisfactory in all respects. Mary had no way of recording time except by moons, and no power of counting more than ten; after that they were called many moons; and when she told Clara about the pickaninny she had had many moons ago, who had wasted away and died, she did not weep as an English mother would do, nor did her voice sink to sorrowful pathos; but she talked of it with indifference, till she had finished her recital, and then burst out into a long expostulatory whine, which terminated in a request for medicine, for she felt very bad. Almost all the natives are fond of medicine, particularly of castor oil; and if you keep a good medicine chest in the country, they will besiege you for it, or for salts, senna, or any other nauseous drug you choose to give them, which they swallow without a grimace, and always profess to feel much the better for. Clara indulged Mary with a dose, which she swallowed with a horrible relish, and took her departure forthwith.

After a week had been passed, sadly enough, Clara wrote a note to Mrs. Handy, requesting her to come and see her for an hour or two, for she herself could not leave the house; and next day, at about eleven o'clock, Mrs. Handy knocked at the kitchen door. Clara

opened it with agitation, and falling into the arms of her only friend, sobbed as if her heart would break.

'What is the matter, Miss Morison?—what distresses you, my dear Clara?' asked Mrs. Handy, puzzled to know what could occasion such violent distress.

'I am very foolish, but this does me so much good! Don't be angry at me for crying like a baby; I thought I should lose my senses altogether from being left so long alone, but the sight of your kind face is bringing me to myself again, though in a strange way.' And Clara set a chair for Mrs. Handy, close to her own, and clasping her hand in both of her own, looked in her face steadily, as if to sun herself in a human smile. Mrs. Handy waited till she was more composed, and then opened a budget of news.

'Handy goes off next week,' said she. 'I persuaded him past the Turon scheme, but he has set his heart on going to Ballarat, which we hear such great accounts of now; and indeed I prefer it greatly to the other, for it is pretty close at hand, and the people are more respectable there. And who do you think is going with him, but Haussen—you remember him, the German gentleman, who was so polite, but said so little—and Samuels, who used to wear so many rings? They want a fourth, and Mr. Oscar has offered to go with them; but they fight shy of him, for they don't think he'll work hard. I wish they would make him cook to the party, for it would just serve him out for all his grumbling, and the trouble he has given me these many years. Both Samuels and Handy are very particular about their food, and would not spare him. And do you know that Mr. Haussen has got a wife now—a silly pretty little thing that used to work as a milliner's girl in Grenfell-street? She is to live with me while her husband is gone; and I shall do the best I can for her, as I know Mr. Haussen will do by Handy at the diggings; but she does give herself airs to be sure, just as if nobody had ever been married before.

Mr. Haussen was married when Mr. Reginald was in town last, and he got him to go to the wedding, and be groomsman. And Mr. Humberstone was in town a few days ago, and says that Mr. Blinker makes a first-rate hut-keeper; but that he suits that place so well, that he has no chance of promotion to be a shepherd. He fries chops to perfection, and his dampers are the best to be seen for fifty miles round—quite famous, in fact; and he has ventured on some attempts at puddings, which have given great satisfaction. I told Mr. Humberstone about his old flame being Mrs. Fleming now, and he seemed quite vexed, for, as he said, she would have suited him to a T. He quite looked down on Mrs. Haussen, when he met her at table; for, as he said to me, with a sort of sigh, ‘she was not half so fine a woman as Miss Waterstone.’

Clara became more cheerful during this recital, and was smiling and laughing, taking an interest in the tattle of the boarding-house, and telling the most insignificant things to Mrs. Handy, when Miss Withering and Mrs. Denfield knocked at the door. She knew the rap and the voices, and entreated Mrs. Handy to go and open it, for her face was stained with tears, and she could not bear the idea of seeing and being recognised by Mrs. Denfield.

Mrs. Handy was good-natured enough to do what Clara wanted; she hastily threw off her bonnet and shawl, and put on a large apron, and then went to the door courageously.

‘Mrs. Bantam is at home, I hope,’ said Miss Withering.

‘No, ma’am; she is not at home,’ said Mrs. Handy.

‘I suppose she will be in presently; I will wait till she returns.’

‘She has gone to the country, and will not be home again for a week.’

‘I am sorry to hear that,’ said Miss Withering, ‘for I had promised myself the pleasure of spending this very week with her; but as I am an old friend, I need

stand upon no ceremony; so I'll stay here, notwithstanding, as I have been accustomed to do when in Adelaide. James, bring my box from the carriage. I know my room.'

'I beg your pardon, ma'am,' said Mrs. Handy, 'but I was left in charge of the house, and got no instructions to receive visitors. I am sorry it has happened so unfortunate, but I cannot go beyond my orders. I wish you a good morning.'

Miss Withering, astonished at this rebuff, requested James to replace her box on the carriage; and, loudly complaining of the woman's insolence, proceeded homewards.

'I shall enjoy my holidays more at Langley than at poor Mrs. Bantam's, for indeed pity alone induces me to visit her,' said Miss Withering. 'She is so weak, that she lets herself be imposed upon by everybody, and is the better for having a strong-minded friend by her side. I am sure that vulgar woman who opened the door is cheating her during her absence. You keep your servants in very different order from poor Mrs. Bantam's. I never need to give you any advice; everything is done just as it ought to be at Langley. All that I can give you is sympathy, and that you may be assured I feel for you. I regret that certain parties scarcely appreciate you, and that all your sacrifices and toils are not sufficiently considered.'

'It is too true,' said Mrs. Denfield; 'I have all along felt this great want of congeniality; but still in all great points agreement is preserved; it is only in trifles that I feel the jar.'

'Nothing can be called trifling that wounds the feelings or cramps the genius; consideration should be shown to the slightest wish of one so thoroughly a lady as yourself. But gentlemen are so very deficient in those delicate sympathies which are felt by us, that I fear little is to be hoped.' And here Miss Withering applied her handkerchief to her eyes, and gave two little sighs.

Mrs. Handy stayed with Clara till four o'clock, and as she left, asked a favour from her.

'Will you copy out for me in a legible hand a few of the songs and poems that Miss Waterstone said you knew so well? I have brought you a blank book for you to write them down in. It would be a great acquisition to me, for I have lost my 'Little Warbler.' Mr. Oscar says that poor Mr. Blinker took it, but that I do not believe, though I am sure if he had wanted it he might have had it and welcome. But you cannot think how much I miss it. You need not try to recollect exactly what was in my book, but write what you yourself think pretty, and I assure you I shall prize it very much. Now, good bye, my dear child; don't get so miserable again, for you have a friend in the colony, though neither a great nor a strong one.'

Clara's pen was a quick one, and the blank book filled fast. Mrs. Handy had shown a woman's tact in the request she had made, for nothing could have relieved the poor maid-of-all-work more than this delightful task. She first repeated the songs and poems aloud, that she might be sure she had them perfect; and then wrote them where they would be seen and prized by a friend.

Grace Elliot observed that Clara was left all alone, and thought that the poor girl must feel miserably dull. She exchanged a few words with her over the fence, asking her if she was afraid to sleep in the house when there was no one else in it, and assuring her that Adelaide was very little infested with robbers, and that she need not be afraid of them.

The second week was not so long as the first, but yet Clara felt unspeakably relieved when she saw her master and mistress return. Mrs. Bantam's first question was as to what had been seen or heard of Miss Withering; and Clara told her that though she had called, she had not seen her, but the person with whom she had lived when she first came to the colony, who had happened to be in Mrs. Bantam's house at the

time, had gone to the door instead, and passed herself off as a woman left in charge, completely discomfiting Miss Withering, though the griffin had done her utmost to effect an entrance.

‘I do not think I could have managed the thing half so well myself,’ said Clara, ‘so I hope you are not displeased.’

‘Displeased! no, I am delighted, for nothing could have happened better,’ said Mrs. Bantam, glorying in the success of her retreat. ‘And she brought Mrs. Denfield with her too, and her box—the impudence of that woman is really beyond everything. I may be glad that I was safe enough thirty-five miles off, thanks to Mrs. Townley’s information. I will never accuse her of being a gossip or tattler again, now that I have gained so much by her telling all she hears to everybody. Well, I suppose I am safe now from Miss Withering till Christmas, and may keep my mind easy till then.’



CHAPTER XX.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA UNDER AN ECLIPSE.

BUT, before Christmas, changes came upon the colony, from which neither Mrs. Bantam, nor the family next door, nor any other family in town or country, could escape.

There had been for some months, as has already been hinted, a stagnation of business, and a great want of money in South Australia. Over-speculation in building and in mines had prevailed for some years, and though the mines which were every now and then discovered, and paraded as likely to rival the Burra or Kapunda, undoubtedly contained copper ore, it was neither of rich quality nor in great quantity; while the high prices of labour and freight demand both these requisites to make mining pay in South Australia. But speculators had bought the mines, and puffed the mines, selling shares at an enormous profit, and commencing in many instances expensive workings, which produced ore not worth the freight, till every one that had dabbled in shares felt a painful tingling come over him at the very name of 'indications.' The gold interest in New South Wales had not been shaken into its place; the exchanges were so much against England there, that the banks in all the colonies were forced to sell bills on England at a discount. The Burra dividends had been stopped, and though there was every prospect of a speedy resumption, still it prevented money from being in circulation during the scarcity from other causes. There was a general want of employment, particularly in Adelaide. No one had courage to build, and all trades, connected with the erection of houses, were suffering. Clerks were getting miserable salaries, and every situation that was open was besieged by dozens of applicants. Shops were empty of customers, but overflowing with goods; for a

market so small as that of Adelaide is easily glutted ; and the colony had over-imported, trusting to the large profits of retail business. Under all these circumstances of depression, it is not at all surprising that when the wonderful gold-diggings of Mount Alexander were discovered, so many times richer and more productive than those of Bathurst or Ballarat, the rush from Melbourne was followed by a similar rush from Adelaide.

Labourers, tradesmen, shopkeepers, clerks, and gentlemen, all caught the gold-fever, and there was no business doing in Adelaide but the sale of outfits to the diggings. You could have no better account of the state of Adelaide about Christmas, 1852, than is contained in a letter from Annie Elliot to her friend Minnie :—

‘ MY DEAREST MINNIE,


‘ I promised to write you soon after my last, to detail all that happens in Adelaide, but I have nothing to write about but the all-engrossing gold-fever. I suppose you see plenty of drays going overland in your quarter, but here most people go by sea. The clerks out of employment, supernumerary shopmen, failing tradesmen, parasol-menders, and piano-tuners, went first ; but now every one is going, without regard to circumstances or families. Married and unmarried, people with lots of children, and people who have none, are all making up their minds and their carpet-bags for Mount Alexander. Those who are doing nothing here fancy they will do something at the diggings, and those who are doing something are sure they will do more ; so that there is no security against any one’s leaving dear South Australia.

‘ We hoped that our dear family circle would have been spared, and that we should have shown an example of moderate contentment ; but, oh ! Minnie, George and Gilbert are both making preparations, and will sail in ten days at furthest. And yet, you know

that neither of them is avaricious, but they have been in a manner forced to go. When Mr. Ainslie told George that he had no more need of his services, for he could keep his books himself in future, George looked out for a party to join, but could not meet with one that suited him; and as Gilbert was threatened with a reduction of his salary, both Margaret and Grace advised him to give up his situation and accompany George, so that in case of sickness one brother might take care of the other. I cried a great deal about losing them both, for we shall be all so anxious and miserable while they are gone; and we hear such dreadful accounts of the bad health that the diggers suffer, with no protection from the changes of the weather in this variable climate but a tarpaulin, or a tent at best. And the water they have to drink is as thick with mud as pease-soup, which must be as bad as poison.

‘But Margaret and Grace are busy making things as comfortable for the poor dear fellows as they can. I am sure Grace has thought of many things that will agreeably surprise them. Well, as I was saying, we were making up our minds to their leaving, when dear Grace got a letter from Henry Martin, saying that he had got his dismissal too (he called it ‘*the sack*,’ but that was only his fun), and hoped he was not too late to join George’s party. Henry is expected in Adelaide to-morrow, and will spend a week with us before he starts for the Mount; and I hope he will cheer dear Grace a little, for she feels so sad to think of us three girls being left without a protector in the colony.

‘Margaret is the bravest of the whole of us; she has promised to Gilbert that she will make extracts for him, and go through Chitty systematically in his absence; for though Adelaide just now looks as if it was knocked completely on the head, she has confidence that it will revive again, and that Gilbert will find both his own and her knowledge of law useful to him yet.



‘I wish, Minnie, you were here to see how our parlour is confused with the purchases they make ; it is now a lot of Guernsey shirts, then a collection of pannikins, that are displayed and commented on. The cradle stands in one corner, for they all admire it so much that they will not allow it to be turned into the kitchen ; and George actually put their pickaxes and shovels, and crowbars, and fossicking knives under the piano, till Grace remonstrated with him on the impropriety.

‘Grace and Margaret have been sewing over again the strong shirts they have bought ready-made, which Grace says are only *blown together*. I have done nothing but make a housewife-case, and stick needles and pins, and tapes and buttons in it ; but my head is not fit for such a bustle. I have promised George to keep the garden in order, and see that the dollicas grows well over the verandah, to shade us from the west sun, which comes in so dreadfully in the afternoon. The seeds you gave me have come up, though I did not scald them with hot water.

‘Henry writes that Mr. Harris says he must turn over a new leaf, and save enough of money to take him to the Mount ; for he does not like the idea of staying at the Burra when all the men have left it ; besides, he thinks that it will be bad for him—he will be made too much of.

‘William Bell says he shall probably go in a few months, but he has his brother's affairs to wind up, and they were left in a very involved state. I like him now better than I did, though he does not flatter me at all. By the bye, Mr. Plummer took it upon him to lecture Gilbert about leaving his situation to go to the diggings. Mr. Plummer is apprehensive of a reduction in his own salary, for the government are cutting down every description of expenditure in their panic ; but he valiantly resolves to stick to the public service of South Australia, for he knows that nothing could be done in his department without the aid of

his experience. So he wonders at Gilbert's being dissatisfied with a diminished salary; but a reduction of ten shillings from two pounds a week is rather severe.

'Things are cheap enough in Adelaide now, but people are afraid to buy the greatest bargains, for they do not know where money is to come from for future necessities. We are perfectly besieged by women offering to do washing and needlework for us, saying that they are in great distress; but, of course, we are less able than ever we were to pay for labour which we can do ourselves.

'Has your papa lost anything through Mr. Campbell's stopping payment? George says that there are enough of assets, but that it is impossible to turn them into money in Adelaide at this time; so Mr. C. has got permission from his creditors to go to Melbourne to sell his goods, and six months' time to do it in; and I hope he may be able to clear off all his debts soon.

'I hear that our next-door neighbour, Mr. Bantam is going to Melbourne, some time next month; he lost sadly by Men-koo and Mount Remarkable shares. He has advertised the house for sale, but I see nobody looking at it. I wonder what will become of your pretty friend, Clara; perhaps Mrs. Bantam will take her to Melbourne, as it is impossible to get servants there. I hear that Mrs. Bantam is in great distress at leaving Adelaide; I never see her over the door, but poor Clara looks very woe-begone.

'Our butcher's man has dwindled into a small boy, who tells us that he is the only man at the shop. Our baker drives his own cart, and you see women driving about quite independently now. If you go up into the business part of town, you hear men in knots talking of going by the 'Hero' or the 'Queen of Sheba,' and the words nuggets, ounces, gold-dust, cradles, and diggings, are in everybody's mouth. The chief streets are still very full of a most unsettled-looking population; but the outskirts of Adelaide are greatly thinned, and the villages round about are almost deserted.

‘George and Gilbert hope to have your best wishes for their success. George has a favour to ask of you; he knows that you have three copies of Shakspeare in the house, which nobody reads but you, and even you seldom; and he asks if you would let him have the old one, with the absurd woodcuts, to read at Mount Alexander. He does not like to deprive Margaret of her beautiful copy, and is sure that the quaint old-fashioned one will be more delightful at the diggings than any he could buy; besides that, everybody is buying up Shakspeare in Adelaide. I know that you will send it in by the dray on Tuesday, along with an answer to this long letter. I hope you have more cheerful things to write about than I have, and that the gold fever has not cost you so many tears. All the family unite with me in love to yours and you; so I must remain, as ever, your very affectionate

‘ANNIE.’

The dray which was to bear Minnie’s answer and the Shakspeare did start, as Annie expected, on the Monday, so as to reach town on the following day; but the driver, going into an inn on the road for a glass of ale, met with a party of diggers going overland, who were much in want of a man who had been used to drive bullocks or horses; for they were all shopmen, and got on very badly. They told the man that they would take him with nothing, that he might live with them, get to Mount Alexander without spending a shilling, and share equally with the party when he arrived. This temptation was too strong for Ben Hardy; he joined the party, and telling the landlord of the inn to send in the dray for Mr. Hodges, who would pay any one handsomely for his trouble, he cracked his new whip over his old bullocks by way of farewell, and left them.

Several days passed before anybody found it convenient to take the dray into town, and it was not till the party were on the eve of sailing that the parcel

was delivered. When Annie opened her note she found that Minnie had been very anxious for its speedy delivery ; for Charley had taken a violent desire to go to the diggings, and her father and mother were afraid to trust him alone, or among strangers. They therefore begged George and Gilbert to take him with them for the sake of old friendship between the families ; offering to pay a full share in all the expenses they had incurred or might incur. Nothing could make them feel so easy in letting Charles go to the diggings at all, as the knowledge that he was with such a steady set of young men, to whom also he had been in the habit of looking up ; for Charley was only seventeen, and though he was a fearless rider, and knew how to deal with wild cattle, and could shoot kangaroos and wild turkeys in the bush, he was utterly ignorant of the world, and his parents and Minnie were afraid that if he got among bad companions now, he might be ruined for life.

‘It is too late now,’ said George. ‘We have taken out our passages, and cannot afford to forfeit them ; but if Charley has set his heart on going, he had better wait till we can inform him as to our whereabouts, and join us at the Mount.’

‘He will be of no use,’ said Martin. ‘A raw lad of seventeen will be rather an encumbrance. Don’t you think we should get on better without him?’

But Annie and George would not hear of such an ungracious refusal, and George’s proposal was considered the proper way of treating their friend.

It was a very sorrowful parting ; for Adelaide was in such a state that those who left it were uncertain as to their ever seeing it again. Grace, calm as she generally was, could not see the three dearest objects on earth leaving them for a life of hardship and danger without most unwonted tears. Annie cried a great deal, but that was nothing so uncommon. Margaret shook the tears from her eyes as she bade them good bye, and said, without much faltering—

'Don't forget that there are other things better than gold, wherever you may be. God bless you, and keep you, and send you back to us with the same hearts, and we shall not mind whether you are any richer or not. Write soon, and write often. Good-bye—good-bye!'

Clara saw the party set off on their way to the port, in their Guernsey shirts and belts, with green veils tied round their cabbage-tree hats, and wished them success with all her heart. She felt the young ladies next door drawn closer to her in their sorrow and solitude than they had ever been before, and determined to apply to them for advice as soon as she could get an opportunity. Mrs. Bantam was in miserable spirits, and her temper was not so even as it had been; so that Clara shrank from asking her where or how she was to get another place, when her master had gone to Melbourne.

The only conversation she heard was about the universal distress in Adelaide, and how this man had failed, and that stopped payment,—how one lady had parted with her governess, and another dismissed her servant; so she supposed that it would be impossible to get a place without strong recommendations, and Mrs. Bantam was not likely to give her a high character. Sorrow is often selfish, and Clara felt that she was now regarded by her mistress as a mere appurtenance to her house, which did not interest her half so much as the house itself.

Clara fancied, after her long course of suffering, that her uncle must surely relent, and that his letter would be kind. Perhaps, if Adelaide were ruined, it would be excusable in her to go home, even at his expense; but she was startled one day to hear Mr. Bantam tell his wife at dinner that Mr. Campbell had sailed for Melbourne. Of course he had been too much engrossed in his own affairs to have thought of hers at all; but to whom could she apply now in her threatened destitution? She had thought of Mrs. Handy, but her husband had been very unlucky at Ballarat, and by

the last accounts he and Haussen had left the diggings there for Mount Alexander, with only ten shillings between them; Mrs. Handy's house was almost empty, and her spirits much depressed by difficulties of many kinds, particularly the task of managing Mrs. Haussen, who was either very merry and flighty, or in the depths of woe.

The only person in the colony who was at once willing and able to assist her, was Mr. Reginald; but her heart beat too strongly to allow her to ask even advice from him; and the idea of applying to the Elliots seemed more natural and pleasant to her than any other.



CHAPTER XXI.

CLARA IS OFFERED A HOME.

‘CLARA,’ said Mrs. Bantam, one day, ‘has the waterman gone to the diggings, that he has never been to fill our cask?’

‘I don’t know, ma’am,’ said Clara; ‘but he seems to have forgotten us. If he meant to go, he ought to have told us, that we might apply to some one else. We have no water for tea, and this is miserable weather to be without it.’

‘Will you give my compliments to Miss Elliot, and ask her if she would be good enough to lend us some for the present; and to tell her man to bring us a load the first opportunity; but perhaps, though he is a German, he may be off too.’

Here was an opportunity for Clara to speak to one of her neighbours; and when Margaret opened the door, and said Mrs. Bantam was heartily welcome, and that they would let their waterman know as soon as they saw him, she took courage, and asked if she knew any one that wanted a servant.

‘Then you do not go to Melbourne? We all thought you would accompany Mrs. Bantam,’ said Margaret.

‘Oh no, ma’am, though I almost wish I were going, for I like my mistress, and I have one friend there.’ Poor Miss Waterstone was now looked on as a friend.

‘You are a Scotchwoman. What part of the country do you come from?’ asked Margaret.

‘I was born and educated in Edinburgh, and have not been quite a year in the colony,’ said Clara.

‘Yes, I thought you had a smack of Auld Reekie about you,’ said Margaret. ‘Were you ever at service before you came out here?’

‘No, Miss Elliot, I was brought up very differently; but I can work very tolerably now. Could you not

take me? I do not mind about wages; I only want a home, till I can hear from my friends, which must be soon now.'

'What is your name? I don't mean your Christian name, which I know is Clara, but your surname.'

'It is Morison,' said Clara.

'Morison!—and your mother's name before she married, what was it?'

'My mother's name was Agnes Somers,' Clara answered, wondering at Miss Elliot's questions.

'And your father's name was William Morison, and you lived in Inverleith-row, did you not?'

'How do you know so much about me?' asked Clara, with increasing surprise.

'A friend of ours in Edinburgh wrote to me to befriend a Miss Morison, who had gone to Adelaide as a governess; and I suppose you are the person I was requested to take an interest in,' said Margaret, kindly; 'which I do the more willingly, now that I have seen you, as you are a second cousin of my own, and have a resemblance to my dear mamma. Her name was Agnes Robertson, and her mother was a Somers, and therefore she was a cousin-german of your mother's. I suppose you never heard of us, because there was a quarrel between our grandfathers about some money that was left them by our great-grandfathers; so there was no intercourse between the families. But we must forget old quarrels in this new country, and be glad to find relations. Grace!—Annie! come and find a cousin; this is the Miss Morison whom we have been puzzling ourselves to find out, who has been living next door to us for all these many months.'

'She has quite a look of mamma's family,' said Grace Elliot.

'No wonder Minnie said she thought you must have been a lady; and I, like a silly thing, would not listen to such an idea,' said Annie. 'I must write to her how good a judgment she had. How hard it must

have been to you to go to service, and to be tormented by Minnie's griffin, as she told me you were!

'My worst misfortune is not in having had to go to service,' said Clara; 'it is in having to seek another place, and not knowing where or how to get it in these dreadful times; and Mr. Campbell has gone out of the colony, so that I cannot go home, at least till I hear from my uncle—'

'That is, Mr. James Morison,' answered Grace. 'I wonder at a man who has such a high character sending you out here, so young and friendless; for a recommendation to Mr. Campbell was a very insufficient introduction.'

'I had a recommendation to Mrs. Campbell, too; but from all that I hear, that would have done me very little good,' said Clara.

'I understand it all perfectly,' said Margaret; 'Mr. Morison is a respectable man of the world, and so is Mr. Campbell, and you have had but a poor chance between them. But what has become of your sister—despatched to Melbourne or America, I suppose?'

'No, Susan stays as a governess to my uncle's family. She is so much more accomplished than I am, and has a better temper,' said Clara.

'So it was convenient to keep her, but not you, poor child! There is very little generosity among those respectable people,' Margaret said. 'And of course you kept your name and position as secret as you could, that nobody might be able to ask at Mr. Morison's evening parties how his niece likes being a maid-of-all-work in South Australia. However, we need not disturb his sleek repose, and it would do you no good either. You see, Grace, that Clara is losing her place, and wants another. I hope she may find one more suited to her rank and education when the colony has shaken itself into some kind of order; but in the meantime she need only leave Mrs. Bantam's to live next door; and, poor as we are, we can surely afford food

and house-room to so near a relation ; and warm hearts too, which I suppose she will prize still more.'

Clara could not thank her cousins in words, but her face was sufficiently expressive. Though Margaret had made the proposal, it was evident that all three were of one mind in the generous offer ; and Clara was almost thankful for her late distress, since it had impelled her to take a step which resulted in so much good.

'Now, Clara,' said Grace, 'Mrs. Bantam wants her tea, for this is dreadfully hot thirsty weather ; so you must not delay taking home your bucket of water. Tell her that you have found relations in us, and keep your spirits up, for as the old Scotch proverb says, 'Tine heart, tine a'.' And Clara was kissed by the three cousins she had so unexpectedly found, and told to come again soon, if Mrs. Bantam would let her.

Clara could scarcely wait till she had filled the kettle, before she told her mistress the joyful news. She burst into the parlour, and started to find Reginald talking earnestly to Mrs. Bantam.

'What has come over you, Clara, that you look so happy?' said Mrs. Bantam. 'I think everything is miserable now, and your mirth is surely very ill-timed.'

'I have found friends,' Clara answered, 'and cannot help looking pleased. The Misses Elliot are cousins of my own, and have been so very kind as to ask me to stay with them till I can get a situation. It has relieved my mind greatly, for I really did not know where to turn.'

'The Miss Elliots your cousins? Why, they are ladies, Clara,' said Mrs. Bantam.

'And so was I once,' said Clara, 'and had quite as good a position as they had at home ; but I was sent out here with very little money, and preferred going to service to going into debt ; so, of course, I am no lady now.'

'I met Miss Morison at Mrs. Handy's,' said Regi-

nald, coming to the rescue, 'and I assure you that I was very much surprised to find her in the position she holds here. If it had not been that I have heard you say that you never had a day's comfort while you had a Miss Gibb, who wanted to unite in her own person the incompatible offices of lady and servant, I could have told you that your maid of all work was both educated and refined.'

'But Miss Gibb made me wait upon her,' said Mrs. Bantam, 'and flew into a passion with me, because I happened once to call her Mary. Clara, to be sure, was the most helpless creature I ever saw when she came to the house; but she gave herself no airs, and dressed so plainly, that I never thought of her being used to anything higher. Well, I have taught her a good many useful lessons, and now I am obliged to part with her; but really, Clara, I rejoice in your good fortune. There is no home that could be so safe or comfortable, or where you would have a better chance of getting a better situation than you have had with me.'

'I never could have met with a kinder or more patient mistress,' said Clara, 'and I run no risk of ever forgetting you. Not an article of furniture or cooking utensil, but will remind me of how much you taught me.'

'Well, Clara, I hope you were not too overjoyed to fill the kettle, for I feel quite parched. Do get me my tea as soon as possible, there's a good girl.'

When Clara brought in the much wished for tea, Mrs. Bantam made a heroic effort, and roused herself to say, 'Since you are an equal of Mr. Reginald and the Elliots, I cannot consider you beneath me, so you must sit down and make tea to-night; and for this week, the last week I have to remain in Adelaide, let us be friends, and nothing more distant.'

Clara saw that her mistress was in earnest, and did as she was bid. Mr. Bantam was at the port, choosing a cabin in a vessel bound for Melbourne, and his wife

did not know whether to expect him home or not that night. She was very dull, and could scarcely speak at all, so that Clara, uncertain of her position, felt much embarrassed when she found that all the conversation must lie between herself and Reginald. At first she could scarcely raise her eyes to his, to make the most common-place remark with regard to her tea-making duties, but when he began to speak frankly and cheerfully to her, and to tell her all he had seen and heard of her cousins, she soon felt at ease. They began to talk as they had done at Mrs. Handy's, and Clara, seeing no disapproval in Mrs. Bantam's face, threw herself into the various subjects which Reginald started, with an enjoyment that was so keen as almost to be painful. She displayed so much information and such various reading, as well as fluency in expressing her thoughts, that Mrs. Bantam could not help staring at her servant, and wondering what Mr. Bantam would say. When tea was over, and the tea-things cleared, Clara asked Mrs. Bantam for a piece of needlework, which that lady provided for her speedily and gladly, as she was then busied with a sort of outfit for Melbourne. And while she sewed she listened. How pleasantly the needle went through now, when Reginald was recounting his troubles with his shepherds, and the absurd shifts he had been put to when ten of his men gave notice in one week, and how he had been compelled to come into town to supply their places, if possible.

'I mean to get men with wives and large families,' said he, 'for it will surely be hard for them to go off as the single men do.'

'Shall you not find that an expensive plan,' inquired Mrs. Bantam, 'with so many useless mouths to feed?'

'I do not mind that, if I can retain their services, for unless these diggings raise the price of provisions very much, the rations will not cost a great deal. If there is a boy of twelve in the family, he could take out a small flock of sheep; the wife might act as hut-keeper, though sometimes shifting hurdles is heavy

work for a woman ; and we should gladly feed the younger children for the sake of three available labourers. Digby has got five children who can do nothing, and Escott four, without grumbling about it at all. Wheat is very cheap yet, for the farmers are all so eager to raise money to take them to Mount Alexander, that they will not wait for a rise in price. I have got enough to last all my stations for twelve months, and I hope the millers will condescend to grind it for fifteen pence the bushel.'

'The colony is ruined, that is clear enough,' remarked Mrs. Bantam. 'To be sure I am going out of it, but I know I shall never like Melbourne as I have liked Adelaide, or ever have a house I shall be so fond of as this cottage. My children have been born here and buried here, and you cannot think, Mr. Reginald, what a wrench it gives me to leave the place where my darlings' graves are.' And Mrs. Bantam's eyes swam in tears.

'The colony may revive yet, and you may return,' said Clara ; 'let us hope that this panic is but temporary. With a fine climate, a good soil, and inexhaustible copper mines, I cannot believe that South Australia has received its deathblow.'

'I have always had quite a contempt for the Swan River settlement, but we are sinking even lower than it, when everybody that can raise a few pounds leaves the colony as if the pestilence was in it,' Mrs. Bantam complained.

'I am an exception,' said Reginald ; 'for I intended to go to England this New Year, and what has driven so many people away has kept me here. Sheep farmers dare not leave their flocks, if they mean to save any property at all. My neighbour Escott was saying to me yesterday that, whatever property we reckoned ourselves to possess a month or two ago, we must reduce the value of by one-half ; but I am glad that we trust to an English market for our produce, for it is not so fluctuating as these times show colonial mar-

kets to be. How Miss Withering would delight to enlarge upon the dreadful uncertainty of all things in this wretched colony if she were among us now ; there would be enough of truth in her remarks to make them doubly bitter.'

'I may be thankful for one thing,' exclaimed Mrs. Bantam, 'and that is, that I am going out of that woman's reach, for in my state of mind she would drive me crazy. Mrs. Denfield has kept her much longer than I could have expected ; she must have been four months at Langley, and luckily has not thought of giving me a visitation these Christmas holidays.'

'What is Mrs. Denfield's character ?' asked Reginald. 'I suppose she must be very yielding, to have borne so long with Miss Withering ?'

'Not at all yielding ; no, Mrs. Denfield is far from that ; but I suppose she has made such an idol of firmness all her life, that she cannot help admiring and worshipping it when it comes to her in a bodily shape. I wonder how Mr. Denfield's affairs are standing, for if he has difficulties about money, and Miss Withering in the house, I should not be surprised at his going mad or blowing his brains out.'

'I suppose nobody's affairs are very flourishing just now,' Reginald said ; 'the Gazette is full of bankruptcies, and three are tottering for one that has fallen. I do not remember the first Australian panic, for I was not in the colony at the time ; but does this strike you as being worse, Mrs. Bantam ?'

'I think it is a great deal worse,' was the answer ; 'for though people were poor then, they had no inducement to leave, and accordingly they worked hard in the colony, and brought it to rights again ; but now there is no chance of our doing any better in South Australia, so I must leave along with others. I hear that the markets at Melbourne are brisk enough, and the prices at the diggings shameful. What a pity that we have not succeeded in finding gold here ! The thousand

pounds reward offered by government has not been claimed yet, but it would have saved the colony.'

'I am not so sure of that,' said Reginald; 'let our neighbours dig for gold in Victoria, but if we supply them with food, we may make that as profitable as the other. If our farmers are rational enough to return to put in their crops in time, I feel sure that they will get higher prices for their produce than they have got these seven years I have been in the colony.'

Clara began to fancy that the colony was not in such a very hopeless condition; and though one might suppose she had very little reason to like South Australia, she still rejoiced when she thought of its revival.

When Mr. Reginald took leave of Mrs. Bantam and Clara, he promised to come again on the following evening, as he wished much to see Mr. Bantam before the latter sailed for Melbourne. He also determined in his own mind that he must call on the Elliots; ostensibly to see how they were now they were left without their brothers, but really to discover if Clara would be happy with them, and to express his interest in her welfare. He left Mrs. Bantam and Clara sitting at the open window, with no light but that of the moon, for it was a hot night, and they had given up sewing, and were talking of the preparations that must be made for the voyage. Clara was willing to do anything, and spoke so gently and cheerfully, that Mrs. Bantam gladly threw the whole matter on her hands, and proposed that she should make all necessary purchases next day; 'for,' said Mrs. Bantam, 'I cannot bear to go out, when I may meet people who will only vex me with questions; perhaps I might even see Miss Withering. By the bye, Clara, is not the attic upstairs very hot to sleep in? Miss Withering went up one day, and called it a miserable hole.'

'Yes it is very hot indeed; my ears tingle and smart when I go up to dress in the middle of the day, and when there is a hot night I feel suffocated in it.'

'It is dreadful to-night, so don't go up; take the little room downstairs so long as you stay in the cottage.'

'I shall write to my sister to-night, before I go to bed,' said Clara. 'My last letter was so gloomy, that I must not delay communicating good tidings.'

So Clara sat down in the little room to write to Susan. Among all the miserable letters that were dropped into the Adelaide post-office next morning, hers, if it could have been seen, would have shone like a sunbeam. Had not the bad times and the general distress given her a home and friends, and hope and sympathy again? and, as she scarcely whispered to herself, had they not kept Mr. Reginald in the colony? She had seen him once more as an equal; she had a prospect of seeing him again, for he knew and liked her cousins, and he would visit them when he came to town; his eyes had lighted up as she spoke, and there had been a smile in them whether his lips had smiled or not; his voice had grown animated when he addressed her; they had agreed on all matters of taste and opinion, and Clara suffered herself to hope that if they met often, she might become nearly as dear to him as he was to her. Who could sleep with such thoughts? And as she sat remembering all that had been said, and thinking on what might have been said, she saw the red and grey streaks in the east promising as hot a day as the preceding one. She roused herself from her reverie, and putting on her morning dress, proceeded with a light heart to do her ordinary work. It seemed to be done in half the usual time; and she surprised Mrs. Bantam shortly after breakfast, by saying she was ready to execute all her commissions. She asked leave to call on Mrs. Handy, and explain her new prospects; and no objection being made, she dressed herself with particular care, and set out.

When her shopping was accomplished, she went up to Mrs. Handy's front door, and knocked without much timidity. Mrs. Handy was busily preparing lunch for

Reginald and Humberstone, who were both going down to the port in quest of shepherds.

'I tried the labour office this morning, Miss Morison,' said Humberstone, 'but there is nobody there worth their salt. A parcel of old weavers and factory men, who don't know a sheep from a cow, and who would lose the sheep in the scrub if you trusted them in their charge—to ask employment from me! The most senseless blockheads I ever saw!'

'How does Mr. Blinker get on?' asked Clara. 'I hope he has not deserted you in this emergency.'

'Blinker is a trump,' said Humberstone. 'Not a word from him either of going or asking for more 'screw.' He goes on with his dampers and puddings as if there was no turning the world upside down. Escott is going to raise his wages upon principle, but I don't think he will be any the happier for it. But these are ticklish times, Miss Morison; it does not do to be so very short of hands. I wish, Mr. Reginald, we could get those lazy natives to mind the sheep; they will do it by fits and starts, but there's no stability about them.'

'In the Tatiara country,' said Reginald, 'they are very serviceable; and it is a good thing, for that is the district of South Australia which lies nearest the diggings, and which is sure to be soonest deserted by white men. A friend of mine has a flock of three thousand under a black man and his two wives; they camp out with them all night, and never need to put up the hurdles. He gives them plenty of food, blankets, and tobacco; but is obliged to get white men to cook for them, for not even the women are fit for hut-keepers.'

'It would be too bad to make poor Mr. Blinker cook for natives,' said Clara.

'Yes, Miss Morison,' said Humberstone, 'good fellow as he is, there is a pitch beyond which he would not go. But that plan of having native shepherds is much better than Stone's plan of making a man on

horseback take care of so large a flock as three thousand. The sheep are driven too fast, and have not room to disperse or time to feed.'

'Time to feed!' exclaimed Mrs. Haussen, who now entered the room. 'I am sure that you always take time enough to do that, whatever else you neglect.'

'I was not speaking of myself, ma'am,' said Humberstone, 'but of a very different set of animals—sheep, in fact.'

'I do not see so much difference between you,' returned Mrs. Haussen. 'You are both very rough to look at, and as for manners, one is quite as good as the other.'

'That is the unkindest cut of all,' said Humberstone.

'Shakspeare!' said Mrs. Haussen. This was her favourite joke, whenever any quotation was made.

'I don't know where it came from at first, but I found it on a jug in the bush,' said Humberstone.

'I have told Mrs. Handy,' said Reginald to Clara, 'of your finding cousins in the Elliots; but, of course, you have a great deal to explain to her yourself. Is not this your writing, Miss Morison?' continued he, taking up the blank book which Clara had filled. 'I opened it last night, and read it through before I slept; for besides many old favourites which I never tire of reading over again, I met with many new poems which were quite as beautiful. I received a book the other day, which I had written to England for, of which I want your opinion, and your cousin, Miss Margaret's, too. It is Mrs. Browning's poems—have you seen them?'

'Not her whole works,' answered Clara, 'only copious extracts, and I should like to see all that such a woman has written. What do you think of them yourself, sir?'

'You wish to entrap me into giving my opinion of a woman's writings, before I know the decisions of her own sex. I think the poems feminine without being feeble, and musical without being over smooth, and

really admire them more than any I have read for years. But you must not tell your cousin Margaret what I think ; for she is so fond of contradicting, that she will take a prejudice against them, because they please me. I will send you the two volumes by the first opportunity, and I hope they may give you as much pleasure as this little book has given me.'

'That is Reginald all over,' said Humberstone. 'He can't talk of anything else but books ; do not you think he might find other subjects to entertain young ladies, Mrs. Haussen ?'

'You read nothing yourself,' was the answer, 'and don't understand a refined taste. I am *so* fond of reading myself ; I have just finished Valentine Vox and begun Mortimer Delmar, and I find them very interesting indeed. I need something to keep up my spirits now. Heigho !'

'Those books have not names like Christians at all,' said Humberstone. 'I should like to see books called John Smith or James Watson, or even such a respectable name as William Humberstone. I like a thing to be real and natural. I was induced to read a book about Pisistratus Caxton, for they said there was something about Australia in it ; but I would advise the man who wrote it to take his passage for one of these colonies as soon as possible, if he means to write any more about us ; for in all the sixteen years I have been in them I never heard of a damper being *turned* till I read it in that precious book. And after reading through hundreds of pages of rigmarole, to find such ignorance on the only subject I cared about ; it was a shameful imposition—in fact, too bad.'

'Really,' said Clara to Reginald, 'could any one go through a work so full of wisdom, of kindly feeling, and of poetical fancy, with the impression that it was only a rigmarole ; and blame a man who knows the human mind by heart, because he does not know how a damper is baked ?'

'We must be off now,' Humberstone said. 'Good

bye, Miss Morison. You must tell your friend, when you write to her, that I did not expect her to go and marry, before the year and day I promised to wear the willow for her were expired.'

Mrs. Haussen was decidedly very pretty ; she had a pretty face and a pretty figure, and she was very prettily dressed ; but Clara did not think the German gentleman's English wife was either clever or sensible. Her manner wanted repose, and she spoiled the effect of her good looks by her restless endeavours to make the most of them. Mrs. Haussen talked of her husband's absence and her anxiety about him with tears in her eyes, and immediately afterwards began to laugh at Humberstone's clownishness and Reginald's grave airs. Clara managed to get a few minutes to tell Mrs. Handy of her good fortune, and that lady sympathized as heartily with her in joy as she had done in sorrow.

'It is a good thing for you, Miss Morison, to get among friends who are not such great people as to hold themselves above you, and disown you on account of your having gone through so much ; and yet who are so respectable and well thought of, that they can carry you through anything. If that uncle of yours had given you letters to them, instead of Mr. Campbell, you would not have needed to go to service.'

'Better go to service than meet with such a dreadful fate as that of poor Miss Ker,' said Clara. 'I cannot get her story out of my head, and I am very anxious to know where she lives and how she is. Mrs. Bantam has lost sight of her for some months ; if you could find out, I should feel much obliged to you.'

'I will try what I can do,' said Mrs. Handy. 'I have more time to go about now, for there is very little doing in the house. All my old stagers are gone but Mr. Brown and Mr. Green, and I do not think they will stay long. I expect two birds of passage from the ship that came in from England on Tuesday last, but they wont stay more than a week or two ; and you know that Mr. Reginald and Mr. Humberstone

are but chance people. As for Mrs. Haussen, I shall never get any board for her, unless her husband is lucky at the diggings; and then I shall not need it so much, for, of course, Handy will have got gold too. Just now I am at my wit's end for money; but I should not like to give up the house, for things may take a turn.'

'I am sure they will,' replied Clara, 'but I must really go now, or Mrs. Bantam will think I have been unreasonably long. Good bye.'



CHAPTER XXII .

SWEET AND BITTER.

MR. BANTAM was not much surprised to hear that Clara was superior to her station, but took the news very pleasantly, and was glad to have her in the parlour to cheer his wife and help her preparations; and she showed such foresight and quickness, that her aid was invaluable. She seemed to fall into her proper place in the household at once, and was a strong-minded as well as a kind-hearted friend to her late mistress. When Mr. Reginald came in the evening, Mr. Bantam told him all his plans, and relieved his mind of a good many floating ideas, which he had not liked to tell even to his wife, but which looked very feasible when they were fairly expressed. Reginald gave him a letter to an old friend and school-fellow of his, who was doing well as a merchant in Melbourne, which he said he hoped would benefit him more than letters of introduction in general.

‘I will give you a commission, too, to begin with,’ continued Reginald. ‘If Campbell settles in Melbourne, and gets his head up again, you will be able to recover the three hundred pounds he owes me, and charge me the commission current there upon it. I hope that you will have more important business soon, but you must not scorn small things.’

‘Have you any message to Mr. Campbell, Clara?’ asked Mr. Bantam. ‘He was a sort of patron of yours.’

‘I have no message, except that I can do without him; but I am very wrong to say so, for he certainly got me the very best place in Adelaide, and gave me a great deal of good advice,’ said Clara.

‘Mr. Campbell is a very worthy man,’ said Reginald; ‘but I do not think him very well qualified to give advice to you. He was always so conscious of his posi-

tion, and so condescending, that it must have been painful to have felt under obligations to him. Was it not so, Miss Morison ?

‘ I did not feel it so ; I was only *comfortably* grateful ; but lately I was inclined to forget all he had done for me, in my disappointment at his leaving the colony without inquiring at all about me, when he knew that he was the only channel through which I could get any assistance from my uncle, and that I was likely to need it in the universal distress.’

There was something so delightful to Clara in having her imaginary conversations realized—in being actually speaking on equal terms with her master and mistress and Mr. Reginald—that she felt unusually placid and contented. Mr. Bantam seemed quite pleasant ; opinions, from which she had dissented when she stood behind his chair, she readily adopted now that they sat side by side ; Mrs. Bantam’s commonplaces appeared new and startling ; and, of course, Reginald, always delightful, seemed now to surpass himself. As Clara’s needle went through her work with outfit rapidity, the sparkle in her eye, and the flush on her cheek, made up for the effects of months of slow suffering, and she looked lovelier than ever. She caught Reginald’s eye resting occasionally on her face, and saw in its expression something that might well give new life to her half-conceived hopes.

Mrs. Bantam’s spirits had gradually risen from the time that she had discovered a friend in Clara, and she was beginning to look upon her departure from Adelaide with tolerable resignation ; and even talking of the time when, if they prospered, she would send for Clara to join them, not as a servant, but as a cherished guest. Mr. Bantam liked her very much, and as they were sadly afraid that society in Melbourne was in a wretchedly disorganised state, it was the more necessary to make a society for themselves.

The morning after Reginald’s farewell visit, Mrs. Bantam and Clara were both busy with needlework,

when a short, decided double knock was heard at the door.

‘That is Miss Withering—shall I say that you are particularly engaged?’ asked Clara.

‘It is useless to say it,’ Mrs. Bantam answered, ‘for she is determined to come in to triumph over me; but as it is the last time, we had better submit with a good grace;—but stay with me, Clara; I need all the help you can give me.’

‘And that is but little; I wish you had Miss Minnie instead,’ said Clara, as she went to open the door.

Miss Withering, who, to Mrs. Bantam’s great joy, was alone, sailed into the parlour with more than her usual importance, and was greatly surprised to see Clara follow her, and taking a seat near Mrs. Bantam, quietly resume her work.

‘I could not let you leave the colony, my dear Mrs. Bantam, without coming to bid you farewell; and I have hurried Mrs. Denfield sadly, that I might get to town in time to see you before you sailed,’ said Miss Withering. ‘Mrs. Denfield and myself were very much shocked to hear that you were actually going to accompany Mr. Bantam; we anticipated your remaining here until Mr. B. had in some measure settled himself, for, as you have not sold your cottage, you might as well occupy it, as house-rents are enormous in Melbourne, I understand.’

‘So I believe,’ said Mrs. Bantam; ‘but wherever my husband goes, I must go too, and of course I am glad to go, even to Melbourne, with him.’

‘Of course,’ answered Miss Withering. ‘Mrs. Denfield was saying to me this very morning, when we were talking about you and your affairs, that she was thankful Mr. D. had no intention of leaving South Australia, for she should have been so divided between her duty to her husband and her duty to her children, that even her strong mind must have had a long and painful struggle. But Mr. Denfield is determined to see this colony through its difficulties; and indeed his

property is so valuable that it would be folly to leave it without a master's care. He purposes having a great breadth of wheat sown this year, even though he and his boys have to put it in themselves; for he is sure more is to be made in that way than by gold-digging or gold-broking. Does Mr. Bantam go to the diggings, or does he mean to settle in town?

'It depends entirely on circumstances; I think our prospects are tolerably bright,' was the answer; but the tremor in the speaker's voice belied her words.

'Will you be good enough to hand me the scissors, ma'am,' said Clara; 'I am ready to begin the sleeves now.'

'I see that you are preparing for Melbourne in many ways, and are initiating yourself in the general leveling of ranks which pervades that town,' observed Miss Withering.

'When people are quiet and agreeable, there is no hardship in having their company; if they are not, it is indeed a penance,' said Mrs. Bantam.

'You cannot look for much quiet in Melbourne,' remarked the visitor; 'but I suppose you take Clara with you. It is just the place for a girl like her; she will be very soon marrying some fortunate digger, and leaving you in the lurch.'

'I do not take Clara with me at present,' replied Mrs. Bantam; 'she is going home to her friends for awhile; but if we succeed, as we expect to do, I may send for her to join me; for she has been quite a comfort to me, now that I know her value; and perhaps I may want a friend.'

'That is indeed a sad want,' said Miss Withering, pathetically. 'Mrs. Denfield can never feel the want of a friend in future, for, as we often say, we were formed for each other. She half reproached me to-day for leaving her to the care of servants, as she has not been confined above ten days, and has not yet been up. She has got a most lovely boy—so large and strong, and so like his papa! I have taken the whole charge

of the house during her illness, as well as my ordinary scholastic duties; this, I hope, will serve as my excuse for not paying you a visit at Christmas; we have thrown the holidays a month forward, and as I fear that then you will be out of the colony, I must delay my visit till you return to Adelaide.'

'I see that you have no intention of going to Melbourne, Miss Withering,' observed Mrs. Bantam, hopefully.

'Certainly not,' answered Miss Withering. 'I have seen one Australian colony, and I have no desire to see any other, particularly Victoria, where vulgar wealth is so completely in the ascendant, and where talents, education, and refinement are trodden under foot. I think that Melbourne seems to have all the evils of Adelaide, without any one of its advantages.'

'There is more money and more prospect of doing business in Melbourne than in Adelaide at present,' Clara said, quietly.

Miss Withering stared; but made no remark for a minute or two.

'I should like to know how I could serve you in any way, Mrs. Bantam,' she then said. 'Mrs. Denfield is of opinion that you might find keeping a boarding house very profitable; and, as I know your active habits, I think it would suit you. If any advice from me could benefit you, you are most welcome to it; and I understand how these things are managed, for I lived a long time at an establishment of the kind in Liverpool, and was the landlady's right hand. I should, indeed, be glad if you would point out how I can serve you in your present difficulties.'

Mrs. Bantam could make no reply to this impertinence; but Clara said—

'Since you are so kind as to offer assistance, I wish you could put this dress together; for Mrs. Bantam and I have been puzzling ourselves over it all this morning, and cannot get it to come right. Do you think it can have been properly cut?'

‘I know nothing whatever about dressmaking,’ said Miss Withering, ‘and think time too valuable to be frittered away on the adornment of the person.’

‘I beg your pardon, ma’am,’ said Clara; ‘but I really thought you could do everything, and that your time was at the service of your friends.’

Miss Withering turned round to address herself to Mrs. Bantam.

‘I think I saw Mr. Bantam in King William-street to-day; but he is so changed that I scarcely knew him. He looks very much thinner and older than he used to do. Are you sure that he is well enough to undertake a sea voyage? He did not recognise me at all; but he is always so absent that I did not mind. Mrs. Denfield gives me this character, which I am proud to think I deserve—that I do not take offence at trifles. Miss Hodges would have frequently offended me, and Mr. Reginald still oftener, if I had not been very lenient to their *étourderies*. But I had made up my mind that such a thing as good society was not to be found out of England, and consequently was surprised at nothing. Ah! here is my old friend,’ continued she, taking up the book of chips. ‘I have ransacked Mr. Denfield’s library in vain for this valuable work; and he has endeavoured, without success, to procure a copy at Platt’s, and other booksellers’ in town. But really the supply of books is shamefully limited in Adelaide. Such a work as this ought to be procurable wherever books are sold at all. Where was the copy purchased, may I ask, Mrs. Bantam?’

‘It was bought by auction many years ago. But you are heartily welcome to it, for no one in the house ever reads it,’ answered Mrs. Bantam.

‘It is not attractive to people who read only for amusement; but to those who are desirous of information it is invaluable. As a text book, I shall find it of the greatest service; and Miss Denfield will thank you as well as I do for it. Did I leave a pocket-

handkerchief and a silver thimble about my room, Clara ?

‘No, ma’am,’ was the answer. ‘There was nothing left in the room belonging to you. I found some knitting-needles, which Mrs. Bantam has in her work-box now ; but I think they belonged to Miss Hodges.’

‘Then they must have been picked up by the servant at the boarding-house I went to from here. The girl denied it flatly ; but I suppose she must have been guilty, nevertheless. There is very little truth in colonial servants, as I have found out by sad experience. Mrs. Denfield always keeps them at a distance ; but yet she watches them narrowly ; and I think she manages them much better than any one I have yet seen in Australia.’ And Miss Withering looked as if she was determined to drive Clara out of the room ; but Mrs. Bantam’s appealing face kept her in her seat.

‘Was not Christmas week excessively hot ?’ continued Miss Withering. ‘I never felt anything so prostrating as such a continuation of hot winds. I suppose we must expect a great deal of such weather before summer is over. You will not like being boxed up in the miserable cabin of a coasting vessel for three weeks, Mrs. Bantam, with the thermometer at 100 degrees, or higher. I believe it is no uncommon thing to be three or four weeks on the way to Melbourne, unless the winds are favourable.’

Here there was a knock at the door ; and Clara was glad of the interruption, for she hoped that a new comer might divert the current of Miss Withering’s eloquence. It was Grace Elliot, who thought she would call to see if she could do anything for Mrs. Bantam.

‘I do not like to force myself upon people, Clara,’ said she ; ‘but Mrs. Bantam is in trouble, and if I offer to assist her, I can, at the most, only be refused. I can, at least, show my good will.’

Clara came in with Miss Elliot, who immediately seemed to change the aspect of affairs. She asked the name of the vessel Mrs. Bantam was to sail in, and praised it highly, saying that both the captain and his lady were considered attentive and agreeable. She offered to put the dress to rights, and took her thimble out of her pocket in a business-like manner that was delightful to behold; spoke of Melbourne as a wonderful place, where people with talents and energy could not fail to get on well; was sure that Mr. Bantam would get into a first-rate business as a bullion-broker; and thought there was no doubt that Mrs. Bantam would at once take her place in Melbourne good society, which every one knew was reckoned superior to that of Adelaide by English people.

Grace talked in a continuous stream, which Miss Withering could not interrupt, till it had made a pleasant way to Mrs. Bantam's heart. Miss Withering felt greatly shocked at the very low people Mrs. Bantam was associating with; and, as she told Mrs. Denfield when she got home, felt it due to herself to leave the house. When she was fairly gone, Mrs. Bantam sighed, Clara smiled, and Miss Elliot laughed outright.

'Is not she a dreadful woman, Miss Elliot?' said Mrs. Bantam. 'Though she did not say much while you were here, you could see by her face what a disagreeable creature she is. Your friend Minnie used to fight regular battles of words with her; and I must say that, clever as Miss Withering may be, she never had the best of it.'

'I understand she is quite a character,' Grace answered. 'She did not think it worth while to open upon me, and I am afraid I shall never have an opportunity of seeing her again. Minnie will be quite disappointed that I have not seen her griffin to advantage.'

'Be thankful, Miss Elliot, that she takes no notice

of you, for she has nearly upset me to-day,' said Mrs. Bantam.

'Well, I dare say, she might have made me very uncomfortable by talking of midnight robberies and bowie-knives at the diggings, and about the slight chance we have of seeing our dear friends again,' said Grace. 'How glad you may be that you are going with your husband to Victoria; for I can assure you, that all the widows I know are inconsolable. There is poor Mrs. Reid, with her five children, whom I never see smiling; and Mrs. Brown has only been married three months, and Mrs. Trueman five, and they are all so anxious and miserable. They fancy every gale is going to wreck their husbands' vessel; and if the wind is still and the sun hot, they can think of nothing but sun strokes. We ourselves are far from comfortable in the absence of our brothers and poor Henry; and if the diggings were not a very unfit place for single ladies, we should have been strongly tempted to accompany them. Any hardship or sorrow is endurable if it is shared with those we love; but when our friends are so far away, and the post-office so ill conducted, that we cannot trust to receiving the letters they write, we cannot feel at all easy about them. I hope, Clara, that you will be able to enliven us a little, for you have no dear friend at the diggings to pine after.'

Mrs. Bantam began to perceive that her situation was comparatively enviable, and thought Miss Elliot was a most sensible girl. Clara lifted her eyes from her work occasionally, and examined more minutely than before her cousin Grace's appearance. The features were not regular, nor their expression very intellectual, and the first bloom of youth was over; but still, Grace Elliot, at eight-and-twenty, was a very comely and joy-giving woman. Her eyes were very gentle, and her voice soft; and though she was tall, and rather stout, her step was light as a fairy's. She

was what every one called the best creature in the world, and was applied to in times of sickness and distress by all her acquaintance. Mrs. Bantam reproached herself for never having called, and thanked Miss Elliot again and again for having overlooked etiquette in this well-timed visit.

The days went swiftly by, which intervened before the vessel sailed. All preparations were completed on the previous evening, and Mr. Bantam had gone to bed, leaving his wife sitting with Clara, and telling her all she meant to do or to try to do in Melbourne.

‘I felt quite pleased at Mr. Bantam’s single commission from Mr. Reginald, for it may lead to more, and he is so admirable in this line of business, that he cannot fail to succeed if he only gets a fair start,’ said she. ‘It was very friendly in Mr. Reginald to put a little work in his way. What do you think of Mr. Reginald, Clara? I am very anxious to know your opinion of him.’

‘I esteem him very much,’ answered Clara, hesitatingly.

‘I knew you must esteem him, for he is just the sort of man whom one would like to see always, and not merely now and then,’ said Mrs. Bantam. ‘It is plain that he takes a great interest in you, Clara, from all he has said to me—you must feel quite flattered by his good opinion.’

Clara’s eyes were turned away; her heart fluttered; but she gave a silent assent to what was said, and fell into a pleasant reverie.

‘I have been wondering,’ Mrs. Bantam continued, ‘how to account for what he said to me the other day, before you came in with your joyful face. You must know he asked me if I meant to take you with me to Melbourne, and I said that I did not think of doing so, and he said, with some emphasis, that perhaps you would be more happy and comfortable here. I thought

at the time that his idea was that Melbourne was an unfit place for such a young and pretty girl as you are, but now I think he meant something more than that.'

Mrs. Bantam here subsided into silence ; Clara dared not make any inquiry, but wondered if her mistress was ever going to tell what she conjectured. The lady proceeded.

'Now, Clara, I had a letter a month or two ago from a Miss Leicester, in England, which told me a piece of news as a secret. Of course, I have told nobody about it ; but I think, for the sake of all parties, I had better read you some part of the letter, and you will see if my idea about Mr. Reginald is not borne out by it. Miss Leicester lived for several years in Adelaide, and was a fellow-passenger of Mr. Reginald, as well as an intimate friend of Mr. Bantam's and myself ; so you must feel an interest in her.'

'Was she young?' asked Clara.

'Oh, no! she was ten years older than I am, I dare say, but a delightful creature ; and though she was fond of a gossip, she never exaggerated, or told what was not true ; so I trust entirely to what she says. I have the letter here, so you must listen.'

'MY DEAR MRS. BANTAM,

'You will see that I have not forgotten you or old days in Adelaide when you open this, for it requires some courage in me to commence a correspondence, and I have not heard from you yet. Don't wish to come back to England, for you have forgotten how fearfully cold it is ; and after being twice as long in South Australia as I have been, you are likely to suffer still more from the change. I overwhelmed myself with clothes, and kept quite close to the fire all last winter, but I never could keep myself warm.'

'Well,' said Mrs. Bantam, interrupting herself, 'after some more of the same gossip, Miss Leicester goes on

to say how she went to the Exhibition, and also to a ball in the country, and how at the last she met a gentleman formerly of this colony.

“Who,” she writes, “should be leaning over the sofa I sat upon but Robert Dent? He did not dance, but looked very well as a wallflower. He paid me a few compliments, not quite so stiffly as of old, and introduced me as an Adelaide lady to Mrs. Reginald, an old lady, and Miss Marston, a young one. Of course, I knew Mrs. Reginald at once, and I had no sooner seen Miss Marston than I was convinced Charles Reginald had very good reasons for his coldness to all the young ladies I ever saw him in company with. I never beheld a lovelier creature; her hair and eyes are very dark, and her complexion brilliant; and she is so tall and elegantly proportioned, that she moves like a queen among her subjects. I fancied Dent was smitten, but my hints did not seem to affect him, and soon I learnt the truth from the old lady. She told me that Julia Marston had been engaged to her son since the summer he left England, and that she expected him to come home in the course of a year, if things went rightly in the colonies; but that Julia did not like it talked of, as was very natural. Mrs. Reginald seemed to love her as a daughter, and assured me she was the most amiable and affectionate of girls. I judged for myself of her talents, for I talked a good deal to her, and found her remarkably intelligent and well-informed. She asked me some questions about the colony, and, wishing to teaze her, I told her it was a horrid place, and that I never meant to go back again, at which Miss Marston looked delightfully annoyed.

“Dent told me that she was very highly accomplished; and I, remembering that he did not care much about accomplishments when you and I knew him, gave him a slight hint of his more humble tastes, which he did not like at all. One has only to remind him of the existence of a certain Miss Margaret, to

make him look quite miserable yet. How silly she was after all, for he has a clear three thousand a-year, and a beautiful house and grounds ; and I am sure it will be long before she has such another offer.

‘ You must address me . . . ’

‘ But the rest is of no consequence,’ said Mrs. Bantam, folding up the letter. ‘ The Miss Margaret mentioned here is your cousin, who was foolish enough to refuse Mr. Dent with three thousand a-year. I am sure the elder girl has far more sense. But what has struck me, Clara, in putting what Miss Leicester says and what Mr. Reginald says together, is, that his sheep station being a very dull place for his beautiful young wife, he thinks you would make a cheerful companion for her, and will be able to do many things which, of course, a lady brought up as she has been knows nothing about. It is a great compliment to you, and I hope that what I have told you will quite set you at your ease with Mr. Reginald, who is all the same as a married man ; and any favour he may wish to do you, you need have no scruple in accepting, for you can thank his wife for his kindness, and return it to her in some way or other. Still, Clara, if I can make you as comfortable as they can, remember I have a prior claim upon you. And now good night, child ; for it is twelve o’clock, and we must be up early to-morrow.’

Mrs. Bantam left the room, but it was some time before Clara could move. When she had recovered in some degree from the stupor occasioned by this unexpected news, she rose languidly, and went to her bedroom.

‘ She pitied her own heart
As if she held it in her hand.’

Reginald was then altogether out of her reach—all the same as a married man, Mrs. Bantam had said—and she felt sure that Miss Leicester’s intelligence was true, from many little incidental expressions she had heard him let fall, which memory called up sharply

before her again. His betrothed was so beautiful, so accomplished, and so amiable. Clara looked herself all over in the mirror, and quite scorned her pretensions to beauty. She took a mental inventory of all she could not do, and thought she must have been mad to hope ever to win the regard of one accustomed to qualifications so much higher than her own.

‘I have only seen him in company with Miss Waterstone, Mrs. Handy, and Mrs. Bantam,’ thought she. ‘He finds me more agreeable than they are, but that is no criterion; for, oh! how inferior am I to Miss Marston, and how completely I should be neglected if she were in his company! If he expects me to become a companion to his wife, he will be disappointed; for I could not live with them, and be a constant spectator of her happiness and his love. I am not good enough to wish only for his happiness; I cannot see my own life withered, and only smile over the wreck of hope and happiness. Why—why did I regard him, when he could not care for me? Did he not himself say of our first meeting that it was a pleasant passage, which led to nothing—nothing, alas! to him, but much—how much!—to me.

‘A week ago, and the prospect of a restoration to my own position, and the discovery of such kind and excellent friends, would have seemed like a fairy vision, too bright to be realized; now I overlook all in the certainty that my affection is hopeless, as I might always have known it would be.

‘How Mrs. Bantam would despise me if she knew the suffering caused by the news that was to set me at my ease with him, she thought, for ever! And he would scorn me, too, for he never gave me any reason to think he cared at all for me. He was merely finding out if I should be a suitable companion for his lovely Julia; and I fancied that he was interested in my opinions and pleased with my tastes.

‘Oh! why did I come to this miserable Australia?—to be forced into love from utter vacuity of heart and

life, and to find now that no good fortune, no employment, no friends, can ever compensate for the pang of having my love thrown back upon me as a thing valueless and vain. I am glad that I wrote cheerfully to Susan; she will not get such a joyous letter again, and I hope it may make her happy for months. God grant I may overlive this blow in time!

END OF VOL. I.

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