MING AND MAGNOLIA

by

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CATHERINE I. DODD

MING AND MAGNOLIA

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MING AND MAGNOLIA

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TO

PROFESSOR MARGOLIOUTH

WHO LONG AGO DREW

MY ATTENTION TO THE SYMBOLISM

OF THE EAST

“Surely Love is a wonderful thing. It is more precious than emeralds, and dearer than fine opals. Pearls and pomegranates cannot buy it, nor is it set forth in the market-place.”

The Nightingale and the Rose

PEONY

“Life is a pure flame, and we live by an invisible sun within us.”

SIR THOMAS BROWNE

“Now the peony is an emblem of good omen, but with loosened and falling petals it is evil. The sixteen-petalled flower bodes good; incomplete with thirteen petals, it is an evil thing.”

SIXTEEN-
PETALLED FLOWER

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PROLOGUE

A young girl walked beside a shimmering pool, where the lotus gleamed. Above, the sky stretched like blue silk, and the swallows wheeled in rapid motion; beyond were rice fields. She was carrying fresh magnolia blooms and candles to her father who worked in the Royal factory. She crossed the moat and entered by the secret stair, and she found her father in his cell painting a blue vase. He was a great artist, and his mind was stored with ancient poetry from the *Book of Odes* and all the rich symbolism of the Chinese Empire.

In the decoration of a vase the Chinese artist expresses moral sentiments, congratulations, good wishes, as well as charms and symbols to avert evil influences. The vase was nearing completion, it was of an exquisite blue, shading off into white like fresh curd, a rare product of the Ming dynasty. The decorations this artist had chosen were the Ho-ho bird, a magnolia tree, a peony, fungus, and an indefinite kind of a flower with sixteen petals as a charm of good omen.

The artist took the magnolia blooms his daughter brought him, smelt them, and put them in a bowl of fresh water. The candles he hid among his tools. He loved to work in the golden circle cast by candlelight, for in that circle so little is seen and the detail is intensified.

To describe the delicate beauty of this vase in writing is next to impossible. The tenderness of the blue shading off into chaste and lovely white; the stateliness and beauty of the Ho-ho bird standing on a purple rock, the magnolia tree growing behind the rock rooted in the fungus, a branch straying over the body of the vase, and the flaming peony made an exquisite design, an inspiration suggesting simplicity and beauty.

The Ho-ho bird is the king of the feathered tribe; he presides over the heart of Man and of Summer; he is an immortal, beneficent; and his home is in the upper air. In this vase his long legs were yellow, his tail feathers green, golden, and blue, his comb scarlet, and his body variously coloured. In his archaic form he appears as one of the splendid pheasants of the Yangtse River valley symbolising beauty; later he assumes a blend of the bird of paradise and the peacock, he is also associated with the phœnix; the

broad part of the vase had the branch of magnolia blossoms chastely printed in white, each petal delicately outlined in black.

The young girl looked at her father's work in rapture.

"It is for the young Princess," her father said, "a betrothal gift."

The girl shivered. "They say the enemy will be here before the marriage."

"The chatter of fools," said her father.

The girl admired the elegance and beauty of the Ho-ho bird.

"He rarely comes to mortals, but his coming always brings happiness," the artist said.

"Did you ever see him, Father?"

"Child, no man has seen him since the days of Confucius."

The girl hung in delight over the magnolia.

"It is an emblem," her father said, "of sweetness and light; of the secret smiles that ever illuminate the heart of the maiden thinking of her lover."

"The peony is not finished, Father."

"No," he said, "I shall work by candlelight and I shall also finish the fungus."

"Fungus means longevity," said the girl, "the Princess should live long."

Late that night as the artist worked a fellow-artist crept in.

"Fly before dawn by the secret stair," he whispered, "the enemy is at hand to storm the palace and loot its treasures."

The heart of the artist died within him as he looked at his beautiful creation; he could not bear to part with it.

"Smash it," counselled his friend.

But the artist could not thus murder his own child. "It shall bring disaster to alien owners," he said. He took his brush and with tears streaming down his face he loosened the petals of the peony and allowed some of them to fall. Then he turned his attention to the indefinite flower. It ought to have sixteen petals; he gave it only thirteen. Now the peony is an emblem of good omen, but with loosened and falling petals it is evil. The indefinite flower with sixteen petals is a charm boding good; incomplete with thirteen petals it is an evil thing.

“Not even the Ho-ho bird and magnolia can avert evil to the foreign devils who get this vase,” he said. Then he sought the secret stair.

BOOK ONE

ISABEL INNES

"Days when the ball of our vision
Had eagles that flew unabash'd to th' sun."

MEREDITH.

THE HO-HO BIRD AND MAGNOLIA

"The Ho-ho bird is the King of birds, he presides over the heart of Man and of Summer; he is an immortal and beneficent; and his home is in the upper air."

THE BLUE MING VASE

CHAPTER I

SELF-EXPRESSION

"A story teller is born as well as a poet."—STEELE.

Had I never met Gussie Rosenkrantz at Oxford, I should never have seen the blue Ming vase, and if I had never seen the blue Ming vase this book would not have been written. But I did meet Gussie Rosenkrantz, and I did see the blue Ming vase and the book is written. It was a lovely vase decorated with exquisite magnolia blooms, and there was a Ho-ho bird with magnificent pinkish legs on a purple rock with the sad wisdom of centuries in his eyes, and he told me that in doing and creating lay the true riches of life. I wanted life's true riches; and my Aunt Dorothea wanted a safe and respectable career for me; and how is a girl of twenty to know much about the true values of life?

All this happened in the "old bad days," before women, like the meek, had inherited the earth: before equality with men opened up to spinster-women as well as wives so many ways of self-expression; before everybody had pensions, doles, scholarships and panel-doctors; before safety, mediocrity and the need of crowds had killed that selflessness which had inspired women to heroic deeds. Those were the days when women were unspoiled, useful and capable of deathless devotion; now as I watch the pensioned ladies of sixty retiring from safe and respectable professions and expressing themselves in the many and various ways open to them, I am breathless with wonder and admiration.

The daring fly to the other end of the earth, or take a trip round the world; the didactic sit on committees to reform the world or become magistrates or enter Parliament; the decorous do good works and write the lives of their grandfathers or great-aunts, or translate little pamphlets on education; the domestic build a little bungalow, and train a little maid to keep it tidy, then they grow mint and tomatoes and become spiritualists, Christian Scientists, or join a society which proves that Bacon wrote Shakespeare; the adventurous select a motor-car and go to Peace Conferences in it, they visit Geneva and get in touch with the League of Nations; the frivolous design a discreet wig, powder their tired skin, and in short skirts rival their great-nieces; the foolishly-reckless try to write plays and even novels; the truly-comfortable stay at home and knit knee-caps, talk to the cat, drowse over novels, and drop in to tea with their neighbours; the indolent live in hotels and boarding-houses—grumbling at stray draughts, the tough leg of a chicken, and the thinness of the cream with the porridge—

and spy out the follies of their fellows; then there are the shamelessly-modern who get their faces lifted and even skinned—should their pensions permit of this extravagance—then scented, painted, bewigged and almost unclad they flaunt in places like Monte Carlo and solace themselves with drinking cocktails, smoking, gambling, and dancing; often they pick up a husband even at the age of seventy, or gaily enter into one of these new companoniate marriages which leaves them free as air. Leisure and means enable us to indulge in the vagaries of self-expression, but earning a steady income is only for those who can perform adequately what is expected of them.

It was in the great days after the war that woman very properly emerged into the light of day, and as the discovery of sex synchronised with her emergence, many strange and delightful ways opened up in which she might wallow in self-expression. To complete her bliss she is no longer expected to suffer for her sins, for she hasn't any. Such things as temper, avarice, envy, jealousy, vanity, greed—in fact all the deadly sins of the old days—are dead; it is the thwartings and frustrations under which woman suffered in her childhood when people did not know how to educate that made these things possible. Released from all controlling forces, she has become like "gentle Jane" as "good as gold," and may follow her innocent and natural impulses with a glad heart, hence all these curious marriages and not-marriages, divorces, separations and what not!

The world has now become a woman's paradise. Should she be widow or spinster she has a pension, or if she be a wife she may get a separation allowance from her erring husband—all husbands are erring—and go on gaily expressing herself without shame or regret.

It was, as I said, the accident of meeting the Ming vase in my youth which caused me to adopt that heart-breaking, poorly paid, difficult, uncertain business of writing novels, which has no pension attached to it, neither has it kudos, comfort, self-indulgence, pleasure, leisure or other delightful things which come with a pension when one is sixty; rather it exacts laborious days and studious nights, the sweat of your soul and brain with often failure for your portion. It all came about in this way: Gussie's father was of an ancient Danish family—so ancient that Shakespeare borrowed the name for Hamlet's friend when one of Gussie's ancestors came over to the Court of Queen Elizabeth. Gussie's mother was English—she had always been connected with Embassies—and she lived in Rome. One Easter she invited me to spend the holiday with Gussie in the Eternal

City. I had never been abroad before, indeed I had never been anywhere but at my High School and Aunt Dorothea's cottage and Oxford.

Gussie's mother was the most gracious and beautiful woman I had ever seen; she was kind to me, and I reverenced her for her understanding and her wisdom; I never doubted that she was the cleverest woman I had ever met; it was unconscious concealed cleverness, not the product of the classroom and examination lists. She was a woman also of exquisite taste, and all the appointments of her house had a kind of dreamy refinement that made a great impression on me. It was in her drawing-room that I saw the blue Ming vase. It was a thing of beauty, a soft celestial blue on a kind of glazed white ground. It was decorated with a magnificent Ho-ho bird, magnolia blossoms, and other flowers. It was full of religious symbolism, for "every bird, beast, fish, reptile, insect, flower, fruit, leaf, and stone has in Chinese art its own supernatural meaning." The bird was standing on a purple rock, his scarlet comb erect, his gorgeous tail feathers shining. He seemed to turn his head to look at me, and the delicate magnolia blooms seemed to tremble tenderly. The Ho-ho bird has been called the Vermilion bird and the Fire bird, for he presides over the heart of man. He belongs to the Empress of China as the Dragon belongs to the Emperor. He is a stately creature, imperial, immortal, beneficent: he bodes good to mortals. The beauty of the vase bewildered me; my head seemed to swim as I gazed at it. It suggested poetry, romance, gaiety, laughter, life, effort, young meadows, springtime and the attainment of one's heart's desire. There was an odd attraction in the eye of the immortal bird. He seemed to hold me in his glance; to arouse in me a desire for effort—to create, to produce. It was not fancy, for every time I came near the vase the bird affected me in the same way, it was uncanny.

The thought remained with me; but what could I create? My memory was carefully stuffed with third-hand opinions about the works of great poets and teachers; and my fate in future was to drone out in dreary classrooms these opinions to prisoned children who didn't want to hear them.

I remembered a fourth-form mistress and a muffled lesson she gave on "An appreciation of Shelley's poetry"—these words were written on the blackboard. We had none of us heard one line of Shelley's poetry in our young lives, and she read to us *one* verse of "The Skylark" as an illustration, but I copied from the blackboard five reasons why I ought to appreciate the poetry of Shelley, and I remembered these reasons and was commended after an examination for my appreciation of some of the most exquisite poetry of the century.

The Ho-ho bird seemed to urge me to less deadening work, and somehow the vase suggested to me the beautiful things the Elizabethan poets saw and felt and wrote about instinctively; almost unconsciously I found myself repeating scraps of Elizabethan verse whenever I came near the vase.

"Her cheeks like ripened lilies steeped in wine,
Or fair pomegranate kernals washed in milk,
Or snow-white threads in nets of crimson silk,
Or gorgeous clouds upon the sun's decline,"

I muttered to myself. Gussie heard me.

"Do you say poetry to the vase?" she wanted to know.

"Scraps always come into my head."

"I do the same thing," she said. "Mine is Chinese poetry, what's yours?"

"That, oh, it's from Greene's *Song of Songs*."

"I wish I knew Elizabethan poetry," she said.

The Chinese artist had created a thing of beauty with his brush, as those Elizabethans had with words, but I was not a painter or a poet either, I could not create and I despaired. I felt the gaze of the Ho-ho bird upon me, and into my mind came the words, "With a tale he cometh unto you; with a tale which holdeth children from play and old men from the Chimney Corner." I had always wanted to write stories. Could I do so? That would be creating in a way, I supposed. How that Ho-ho bird haunted me; my heart died within me at his gaze. He seemed to reproach my inertia.

Before I left Rome I had a dream. The Ho-ho bird came to my bedside, and dancing behind him with all her petals a-quiver was the magnolia lady. They came out of the vase and stood before me as natural and real as the sausages for breakfast on Sunday mornings.

"By doing and creating," he said, "you will gain the true riches of life."

"What can I create?" I asked.

The magnolia lady came close to me. "Tell a story," she whispered.

"What story?" I asked.

"The story of a faithful love," said the Ho-ho bird.

"Why a faithful love?" I asked stupidly.

The Ho-ho bird grew stern. “Reverence is love, righteousness is love, and wisdom is love,” he said, “and a faithful love goes on to the end of Time.”

“What is Time?” I asked, but the Ho-ho bird had vanished.

Then I awoke. I was sorry to leave Rome and Mrs. Rosenkrantz: her conversation was a liberal education and her manners were exquisite.

Gussie entirely appreciated her mother.

“Mamma,” she said to me once, long after we had left Oxford, “is the most interesting woman I have ever met; she is wise too, but she never obtrudes her wisdom.”

“My wisdom I mug up out of books,” I said a little bitterly; “it is said to have a marketable value.”

“It is a bad thing for a woman or a man either to grow arid on dead learning,” said Gussie.

“But you went to College.”

She shrugged her shoulders. “I had to know the outlook of the modern young woman, it is singularly narrow.”

“It is,” I agreed.

Later, Gussie read Chinese poetry to me in my attic in Endsleigh Gardens, for she had lived in China as a little child.

“No man from any woman’s wit
Hath yet learned aught of any worth,
For wise is she, but unto ill,
To bring disorder on the earth.

“What doth she in affairs of State?
Her place is in the inner room.
Her wisdom doth least hurt in this,
To mind the silkworm and the loom.”

“Is that modern?”

“It was written in 785 B.C.”

“Do you think it is true?”

“I am sure of it,” said Gussie.

“Are there no reverse pictures? Have Chinese women never craved for power in the State?”

“Is there anything whereof it may be said, see, this is new?” quoted Gussie. “Listen to this:

‘I would have gone to my lord in his need,
Have galloped there all the way,
But this is a matter concerns the State,
And I, being a woman, must stay.

‘I may walk in the garden and gather
Lilies of mother-of-pearl.
I had a plan would have saved the State
—But mine are the thoughts of a girl.

‘The elder Statesmen sit on the mats,
And wrangle through half the day;
A hundred plans they have drafted and dropped,
And mine was the only way.’ ”

I laughed. “Is that modern?” I asked.

“It was written in 675 B.C.”

“They still sit wrangling,” I said, “but would she have helped?”

“Hindered,” said Gussie. “Have you heard women making election speeches?”

“I heard a woman Member of Parliament tell the people that her party had a plan to end all unemployment in three weeks.”

“Sapphira,” murmured Gussie, “there you are.”

“But China has had great women rulers: there was the Dowager Empress.”

“Yes, her spirit still watches over the Forbidden City; her power came through being a wife and mother.”

“The most picturesque female figure in the whole of ancient history is easily Magda, Queen of Sheba,” I said.

“And England has had her Elizabeth and Victoria,” added Gussie.

“Some women of all ages and nations,” I contended, have their

“Days when the ball of our vision
Had eagles that flew unabash’d to th’ sun.”

“Who is your poet?” asked Gussie.

“George Meredith,” I replied.

A YOUNG GIRL OF SPIRIT

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH WORK

"Those hopeful persons called Original Researchers."—BARRIE.

My name is Isabel Innes. I am an orphan with hardly a relation in the world except my Aunt Dorothea. At an early age she befriended me, and I was educated to become a teacher in a High School.

"It is a safe calling for a young girl," she said, "and very respectable."

So I went to Oxford, and she pinched, darned, and denied herself to keep me there.

I took the Honours course in English; much of the work was arid and dull, though a conscientious woman plodded faithfully enough to get facts into my head. There were moments of ecstasy to be sure, when alone I might plunge for awhile into Sidney, Surrey, Spenser, and Shakespeare and catch the spirit and beauty of the pagan renaissance and marvel at the boldness of the poet's fancy and the fertility of his nervous sensibility. I was placed in Class II and was well content, though the faithful tutor had hoped that I might have done better. I contemplated the future without elation. To spend my life in trying to put elementary knowledge into immature and often unwilling minds had no charm for me.

There were dreams in my heart, dreams of freedom, self-expression, and it might be glory, and I was ever too prone "to listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope." There were shining heights that might be scaled, but not if my days were to be spent in a schoolroom. I had only my pen to help me, and it is an implement that fails many mortals in the hour of need. I knew I was destined to write of a faithful love—the Ho-ho bird had said as much, and somehow the blue Ming vase was connected with the story; but I did not know the story. Besides, a story is but a small item in the making of a novel; we all have stories—scores of them—the difficulty is selection.

In my College course had been lectures on fiction writing, and scraps of instruction on making a novel recurred to me. There must be characters, prophecy, fantasy, colour, atmosphere, rhythm, shape, pattern, and perhaps plot; it is easy enough for a man to tell you how a novel ought to be written, but the test is doing it, and every writer must do it his own way, the way the Maker of the Universe ordained that particular writer's mind to work. The first difficulty is to get started; the second, knowing how and when to stop.

I comforted myself with thoughts of George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, Jane Austen, and Fanny Burney—brave names all—they brought a glow to my heart. Then I went home to Aunt Dorothea full of doubts and fears. She was a small spinster, though valiant, with limited means—the world is full of them. She lived frugally in a real cottage—not a bungalow—with a small maid, and she occupied her mind worthily in solving chess problems and in trying to mould her conduct on the patterns laid down by the philosophers and poets of ancient Greece; for exercise she digged and planted in her garden.

She was mildly elated at the successful termination of my studies, and she turned a deaf ear to my hints of a career of glory. "You are now twenty-one," she said to me impressively. "The whole world is before you, and let me tell you, Isabel, there is no being on this earth so respectable as a self-supporting spinster."

I faintly acquiesced; in the glare of her discerning eye I dared not do otherwise.

Thereupon my aunt began to defend the spinster's condition. "Marriage," she said scathingly, "rarely falls to the lot of a young girl who has neither means, influential connections, nor great beauty; you have none of these things, Isabel, nor would you desire to become a man's parasite; to owe him your board, bed, and raiment—such a position is a degrading thing to a young girl of spirit."

I laughed suddenly, overcome by the picture Jane Austen raises in her ingenious riddle:

> "When my first is a task to a young girl of spirit,
> And my second confines her to finish the piece,
> How hard is her fate! but how great is her merit
> If by taking my whole she effects her release."

The answer is Hemlock; and I visioned the imprisoned maiden condemned to hem hundreds of yards of a white fabric as she meditated on the drastic remedy.

Aunt Dorothea's eyes became hard.

"This is no subject for mirth," she said. I dutifully repressed my mirth.

"Many women marry," I urged.

"In haste;" she retorted, "to clutch the first man on your horizon in order to avoid the exertion of making an honest living is, I repeat, a degrading

position for a young girl of spirit."

"I won't clutch any man," I said indignantly, "and there isn't one on my horizon."

"Teaching is an honourable occupation," reflected my aunt.

"Teaching," I replied, "is dull work."

"So is keeping a man's house, bearing and bringing up his children, and putting up with his moods and savage outbursts, for men are often coarse creatures, Isabel; teaching is safe, remunerative, and unexacting; what with short hours and long holidays it is a kind of woman's paradise."

Aunt Dorothea had won the argument and I ventured no further protest; but all the vacation I was seeking a subject for the novel, and I sought it as arduously as I sought a situation in a school, for I had a pathetic belief that having once found a subject, the rest would be easy, and by considering the contents of my own mind, I could guess at the minds of others.

Then one blissful day came a letter from my College offering me a Research Scholarship for a year. It was a small scholarship, an irregular one, offered inopportunely by an eccentric lady with an ardour for encouraging young women to do research work on the meaning of Shelley's poetry. I accepted gladly, in spite of dissenting comments from Aunt Dorothea.

Following the advice of wise authorities, I began to research into a minor problem concerning Shelley. It was a blessed respite. I was fond of books, and I had a mild taste for learning; at first I was happy, for there is a glamour about research work to the young, and thousands of ardent ones see in this trite, tiresome, and somewhat dusty occupation a triumphant way to achievement and glory. It may be that I had no particular aptitude for this kind of work, or that the subject was unsuitable, anyway, I made little headway.

Day after day I sat in the library looking into grimy books and pamphlets, covering myself with the dust of centuries. If I found anything remotely connected with my subject, or what I conceived to be my subject, I made a note of it; if by rare good fortune I found a clue—this happened once—I followed it up. Usually I found nothing at all, and was glad when the clock indicated I was entitled to retire to wash the grime from my hands and solace myself with a bun and a cup of coffee, the viands which most often formed my slender lunch.

At the end of the year I had found enough material to produce a slim pamphlet, and I almost burst with pride when the College published it and

put a copy of it in a place where it might stay comfortably collecting dust until the trump of doom. Then came the inevitable, and I sought the aid of agents who would find me a distinguished position in a school. The results were disappointing.

The head mistresses who interviewed me were discouraging concerning my lack of practical details of the profession I sought to enter. Stung by one lady's scorn of my suitability, I mentioned the magnificence of the slim pamphlet on Shelley. She only laughed.

"Shelley research, however recondite, will not aid you in grappling with my Form III," was all she said. At a later date I learned the truth of her remark.

After a score or so failures I acknowledged myself baffled and defeated; I was advised on all sides to learn the practical details of class work in a Training College for Secondary Teachers. These institutions were not popular at that time, and people with first-class University qualifications avoided them. Great learning seemed to compensate for a lack of technical skill in teaching, and persons with lesser learning sought the aid of special training to obtain suitable appointments; besides, the term Secondary School to the vulgar mind seemed to smack of the second-rate, and of course everybody who was anybody desired *the best* for their children, and they favoured Public Boys' Schools and exclusive High Schools for girls uncontaminated by State aid, for true democracy is an unattainable ideal even now.

Aunt Dorothea was a little distressed and unwillingly consented to my further training, so again I found myself at College with a year before me in which to learn how to teach.

The Principal seemed a practical person with a straying twinkle in her eye. Very minutely she inquired into every detail of my learning; she seemed to be trying to make the best of a bad job. I, in an anxious endeavour to glorify my ability, urged a violent headache and a thunderstorm at the examination to justify my Class II. She seemed to have heard that tale before. I explained that my tutor expected me to get a First. She remarked that tutors sometimes erred in being too hopeful.

Somewhat irritated, I boasted about my year's research work, and confessed to the existence of the slim pamphlet. The twinkle strayed suddenly into her eyes.

“Keep it dark,” she advised, as though research work on Shelley was a shameful secret to be hidden away from the world of head mistresses.

I became scarlet with indignation. “I mean,” she added, “learn to handle a class before you indulge in further researches if you desire to earn your bread by teaching.” I realised my own inadequacy, and knew that I stood forlornly at the bottom of the ladder.

The year was full, various, and even delightful in some ways; but I longed to begin to earn my own living, for Aunt Dorothea was irked and restive.

The blissful time arrived when I received my first appointment, for then I could spend all my leisure and holidays writing my novel; the bliss was, however, short-lived for I was not even a moderate success in teaching. I could not keep order in the classes, and however interesting the lessons might be, and even had I been able to talk with the tongue of angels it would have availed nothing, the disorder was so great that nobody could listen. I hated and dreaded the girls, they seemed to me so many fiends and imps, as with innocent faces they turned the class into pandemonium before my eyes. Four times in ten months I was kindly but firmly urged to depart. “The harm you do in five days will take years to repair,” one firm lady with an adequate Roman nose told me.

Life became a terror to me: I thought desperately of becoming a lady’s companion, of travelling to enchanting islands in blue seas with some kind, large-hearted lady who would make life a paradise for me. I even sought such a position; but the only opening that offered was to become a kind of keeper to a sour, stubborn, aged, dipsomaniac lady whose old sister had recently fallen down stairs and broken her neck in her cups. The clergyman of the parish interviewed me. He looked at me kindly.

“Are you firm enough to keep your charge from the bottle?” he asked.

“Discipline is not my strong point,” I murmured.

So this avenue of escape fell through.

It was autumn; school vacations were ending. I had nowhere to go, I was desperate. My contemporaries were mostly settled in life—the less intellectual finding satisfactory husbands, and those with intellectual minds attuned to instructing working happily in schools. I was a square peg, with no hole, round or otherwise, to go to.

Aunt Dorothea talked accusingly of my wasted education; for, so deeply is it rooted in our minds and hearts that all education has a cash value and no

other. So great was my despair that I believe at that time I was ready to "clutch" any man who appeared "on my horizon" and become that creature despised by Aunt Dorothea, "a man's parasite," and would willingly have owed him "bed, board, and raiment" had anyone come forward to marry me, but no one did. I was a failure, and an expensive education had been wasted on me. I knew in a forlorn kind of way that I lacked what the world called common sense, which meant that my mind moved in dangerous border lines between puckish thought and reckless emotion; tears and laughter came readily to me, hope and fear alternated swiftly, and futile anger at trifles had a way of upsetting my apple-cart.

Then the war happened and our men became prisoners in foreign camps. Because I knew German, I was wanted to correspond and send parcels to those interned in Germany. I had a rich experience for nearly four years, and if there were not so many war books I should try to write one from my own side-light. My work ended with the war, and again I was faced with the necessity of earning my bread.

Then I met my old friend Avice Bates and learned her sad history; her artist father had been killed in the war, her mother had died of grief, and the artist to whom she was engaged to be married was killed in an air raid. Avice was left penniless. I met her in Oxford, and when I asked her what she was doing she replied:

"Research work."

"You cannot make a living researching in any University library," I said, thinking of the slender pamphlet on Shelley that was once to bring me fame, glory, and fortune.

"I don't research in a library at all."

"Are you doing scientific research?"

"I hardly think so; come and have tea in the Green tea-shop and I'll tell you."

The Green tea-shop was very green. All the lady-waitresses wore pale green flowing gowns with stiffened skirts giving a graceful and slightly crinoline effect; they also wore large darker green silk aprons.

"They are all ladies of education," Avice told me, "some of them University graduates; the war tended to make women practical."

Then she gave me details of the way to earn one's daily bread by research work.

She conducted her researching in the Caledonian Market in North London, and she sparkled with enthusiasm at the recital. The Caledonian Market every Friday is cleared of cattle, swept, and made ready to accommodate unconsidered trifles of every description. In its great spaces are the wares of small shop-keepers, costers, thieves, rag-and-bottle merchants and the like; the wares lie about on the stones where cattle are wont to congregate. “Buyers throng from all parts of London, nay, the world,” said Avice impressively.

Here one may buy antiques, sham-antiques, decrepid furniture, broken motor-cars, furs, lace gowns, old carts, carpets, china, carving-knives, donkeys, silver, flowers, old samplers, sewing-machines, soap, books, pictures, prints, and all sorts of desirable and undesirable objects.

Avice specialised in pictures and prints. Every Friday she went up to town by the first train and sat for hours on the stones turning over the contents of old portfolios, seeking, ever seeking for prints of value. Then she examined, cleaned, and pressed her spoils and sold them to great shops in London and Oxford. “Some weeks,” concluded Avice, “I make as much as twenty pounds, and rarely less than three pounds, and I am able to live as a scholarly lady in a tiny flat in Holywell doing research work.”

Her story fascinated me, but alas! I knew next to nothing of the value of prints.

“You know something of books,” suggested Avice.

In the end I took to research work in the Caledonian Market, and I sold my spoils in Charing Cross Road. My reward was scarcely so remunerative as that of Avice, but sometimes I had lucky finds among the incredible rubbish cast on those stones in the Caledonian Market. In time I became a half-day sales-woman in a Charing Cross book-shop, and later I became a free-lance to a popular London daily paper, where my efforts as a journalist were not always unsuccessful.

Among the finds in the Caledonian Market was an old manuscript concealed in a book, and it was this manuscript that gave me a subject for my first novel.

AUNT JUDITH’S NEAT MANOR-HOUSE

CHAPTER III

THE MAKING OF A NOVEL

"Do not grudge
To pick out Treasures from an earthen pot."
G. HERBERT.

It lay among a shabby collection of odd volumes in the glaring sun on the ground. It was a weighty volume of Sir Walter Raleigh's *Historie of the World*. It was not only torn, but some of the pages were missing; they were large pages of a convenient size for wrapping up kippers, and the book had lain in an ignoble fish-shop, its pages degraded to this sordid use. A wily rag-and-bottle merchant observing the date 1678 had cunningly acquired it for one penny and a bundle of clean newspapers. "Age," he said to himself wisely, "gives value to books, furniture, and some pictures," and he wished wistfully he knew which. The book was bound in brown leather, and a portion of the back binding had been torn away, but the front board was intact. I turned over its pages—many were missing, but what caused my excitement was the fact that the two fly-leaves had been pasted together, forming a kind of roomy envelope, and inside this was a packet of yellowing sheets of paper covered with close writing and some drawings. The name, written boldly, was Judith Hibband, 1689, and underneath in finer handwriting, Prudence Flowerdew, 1739. But what arrested me most of all was a description of a Ming vase—celestial blue—decorated with a Ho-ho bird and a branch of magnolia. It was the work of a great artist, the writer said, and it seemed to have played an important part in Prue Flowerdew's life. I was filled with an inner excitement. I knew without a shadow of a doubt that this was the identical blue Ming vase that belonged to Mrs. Rosenkrantz in Rome; how is it that we know so many things in this life with which our senses have nothing to do? Nobody can tell us, and we go on and on till life is sped in a maze of bewilderment and doubt. The crystal moment of my life was upon me, for I knew that here in these yellowing sheets was material for my novel. I remembered that Browning had picked up from a shabby collection on the old bridge crossing the Arno the ancient manuscript that gave him the story for the *Ring and the Book*. My heart throbbed; I was pale and anxious with excitement.

I indicated the old book, and asked the lively vendor, who was trying to sell an ancient perambulator to a wan woman, "How much?"

He glanced at his meagre collection of books lying in grime on the stones with a glaring sun upon them.

"The lot, fifteen shillings," he said.

I examined the lot:

Four odd aged copies of the *Mirror*.

Five old volumes of *Household Words*.

A torn copy of the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

Vol. III of an ornate and illustrated edition of Shakespeare's Works, very large and dingy, bound in green and gold.

I didn't want the lot, I couldn't carry them, and I said so. "I only want this one," I declared.

He looked at it carefully, turned over some leaves and tried to read the manuscript.

"This 'ere writing's old," he said, "and the book's old. Its price is ten bob."

I hesitated. I only had ten shillings in my possession.

"Take the lot, lady, the blooming lot for ten bob."

"I couldn't carry them," I urged.

"Ten bob's the price of the old 'un by itself; why, that ancient book's worth ten pounds to any bloke with brains."

"It smells of kippers," I objected disdainfully, "and it is incomplete."

"No extra charge for th' 'ancient fish-like smell, lady,' " said he smartly; "that's Shakespeare," he added. The man was a wag.

"Half the pages are missing," I grumbled.

"I'd be asking five pounds for that 'ere book if they wasn't."

"I've only got ten shillings, and I've got to get home and get some lunch," I said, counting my money.

"Nine and thruppence," he said magnificently. "My mate wif the stall there 'ull give yer sausage an' mash for fourpence, a penny for cawfe, and coppers left to get home."

I closed with his offer, and clasping my bulky and heavy treasure to my heart, went home.

I lived in an attic in Endsleigh Gardens, working in a book-shop in Charing Cross Road every afternoon and doing free-lance journalism when I could get it, as well as my "rag-and-bottle" research in the Caledonian Market.

Depositing my treasures in my attic and hastily making myself a cup of tea over my gas-ring and eating a couple of sultana scones, I made my way to my book-shop and worked there till six o'clock. I came home happy and exhausted, and while I waited for my seven o'clock supper to be sent up I went to sleep and dreamed a very vivid and curious dream about the making of a blue Ming vase. The dream is reproduced as the prologue of this book. My sleep lasted perhaps ten minutes.

After supper I carefully examined the yellowed manuscript. There was a kind of diary kept at intervals by Prue Flowerdew, enlivened sometimes by sketches; there was the horoscope of her mother, Rosalind Flowerdew; there were some letters from her aunt, Judith Hibband, together with accounts, chronicles, and domestic and herbal recipes from the same pen, and a letter from Prue to Dick Abbot, smelling of rose leaves; it was frayed and torn, and in the creasings the paper was worn through. I was thrilled. Here was material for the novel I knew I must write. The people were at hand, only the story and the plot were lacking; an echo of a bit of a College lecture recurred to me: "The story must arrange a slice of life in time-sequence while the plot stresses causality." An ecstasy was upon me; my heart thudded, tremors shot through every nerve, my spine turned to water. I was a person with "gifts," having been born between twelve and one o'clock on an Easter Sunday morning, therefore I could visualise ghosts and fairies; I could see visions; dream dreams of warning and future and past events. A vision came to me now, and I found myself in an earlier time—a time of "hood and hoop, of periwigs and patches." I saw things that serious philosophers say could not be there, but I *did* see them as clearly as I now see the garden through my open door as I write.

Through my attic window was a glimpse of St. Pancras Church with the grime of smoke from thousands of chimney-pots upon it; it was a depressing peep, for dust, glare, drooping plane trees, acrid smells of tar, staleness, heat, and incredible stuffiness are lowering to the bravest vitality. My glance now through my attic window was bewildering and amazing; there was dazzling light, great open spaces, emerald meadows where milkmaids milked red cows standing knee-deep in the green grass; there were scattered farms; two

or three noble mansions; a clear sun shining with glory in a cloudless sky; sunny gardens glowing with colour; ladies walking in the dappled shade of trees with soft purple blurs which I thought might be damsons, plump fashionable ladies who came to drink healing waters; there were fields of red clover; purling streams, and to the north wooded hills melting into blue mists. It was September, the sky was as exquisite, clear, and pure as light shining through opal. It was true, for I breathed the sweet air, smelt the clover, heard the ripple of the brook, and saw the ladies; I even caught the rustle of their silken gowns and saw the graceful flirt of their fans. I looked again: yes, St. Pancras Church was there, a clean and beautiful church and a rural churchyard. Then the clock chimed the hour. I gazed at the scene in awe, there were no chimney-pots anywhere, no houses, Endsleigh Gardens and Euston Station had vanished. I was conscious only of light, air, sun, space, and gracious gardens. Was it a memory, a vision, a waking dream? I never knew. My attic was now a kind of cage in the air from which I surveyed the country. Then all became darkened, degraded; the chimney-pots, the staleness, the acrid smells, the weary plane trees came back. I was gazing at them through the dirty glass of my window under the roof.

That night two ladies came to me in my dreams. They talked to me like old friends and showed me where they lived—one in London and the other in Lancashire, in a neat manor-house of charming appearance. I was permitted to examine their clothes, furniture, and to know their friends. The younger, with her ample skirts, her charming curls, her innocent eyes and pretty chin was Prue herself. Prue as she was at eighteen, perhaps; and the other was her aunt in panniered skirt, fan, and cap, a mirthful lady with capability in every line of her figure—a lady of mature age. She was as real as if she had just stepped out of her neat manor-house at Clinton Moor more than two hundred years ago; and as for Prue, I could smell the rose fastened at her breast. I see them clearly at this instant, Prue's white skin, her billowing skirts, and Aunt Judith's merry eyes. Each in turn bent over me. "The tragedy of two lives," sighed Prue, "in the rose leaves of the old Ming jar with the Ho-ho bird—two lives and life is as fleeting as a snowflake in the sun."

Then the deep voice of Aunt Judith murmured, "Sir Murdoch hath a fine leg, and a pretty taste in books; yet one husband is enough for any woman and often more than enough."

"And he never looked in the blue Ming vase because of the dropped peony leaves," wailed Prue.

“Sir Murdoch hath little persistence in his wooing; had he been bolder I might have been persuaded,” sighed Aunt Judith.

“The flower had only thirteen petals,” mourned Prue.

“Generous, though a trifle too intimate with his ‘coal-pit for her clean linen,’ ‘his sheep-shearing for her under-petticoats,’ ” said Aunt Judith between sighs and laughter.

“Life is short, but love is wonderful and everlasting,” said Prue.

Then the dream became confused and rambling, and before morning I slept deeply, dreamlessly, and awoke refreshed. The novel was steadily writing itself: the people, the fantasy, the atmosphere were crowding on me, and the plot had to do with the blue Ming vase. I pored over the old writings, and visioned Prue, a quaint person of seven, in long skirts and little cap playing sedately in her father’s garden, or reading her book with Mr. Richard Abbot, her father’s secretary. She lived in the later days of Queen Anne and on through the Georges in that curious old London which she so exactly described in the faded manuscript. Some of the people of my story were at hand, but the pattern I must supply myself and weave the whole into a fabric, for so it is in the making of novels as in the making of chintzes. Again, an echo of a College lecture recurred to me, “the strongest and most universal of human emotions woven in with the characters expressed through the writer’s personality.”

I considered the novel and its place in literature. There can be nothing new in the so-called novel, every thought, like a valuable horse, has its pedigree. All creative literature is an eternal blending and re-blending of the strongest and commonest human emotions, therefore the topics of a novel may be reduced to three:

i. The deadly sins that hover around the possession and acquisition of property.
ii. The relations of men and women.
iii. The conflicts in connection with religion.

These topics and the emotions concerned with them are as old as Noah and his flood, and every great writer from Moses to Sir James Barrie has made them eternally new by reason of his fidelity in depicting the emotion and the tenderness and truth of his pattern.

I meditated on Prue and her story. Had I the imagination, the knowledge of the world, and the mysterious something that gives truth, tenderness, and beauty to the pattern of a novel I wondered and doubted.

The fashion of my day tended to laud to the skies the sincerity and truth of what were called sex novels, and correspondingly to depreciate Victorian novels for their prudery and sentiment.

I read some scores of sex novels and found many of them a deadly weariness; they were platitudinous and dreary by reason of their dullness of pattern and the pathological details of perverted minds which belong rightly to medical textbooks.

I also read a score or so of great Victorian novels and found in them imagination, beauty, and sound workmanship. After all, I reflected, the business of the novelist is to amuse, allure, and delight, and it behoves him to be selective; to tell everything, to dwell on unpleasant details is as wearisome as a day spent in the police court. The novelist is wise to introduce and to dwell upon what refreshes the mind and pleases the ear; he may omit even essentials if they are unbeautiful, and it is well to revel in beautiful digressions if he contrives to conceal the artifice. The chief thing is to capture the senses and the hearts of the readers, and if he can do this powerfully and rouse their deepest emotions he is a great writer.

I had read many definitions of novels and had heard how literary critics define them, and these last often differ as widely as the poles. I liked best Smollet's definition:

> "A novel is a large diffused picture, comprehending the characters from life, disposed in different groups and exhibited in various attitudes for the purpose of an uniform plan . . . this plan cannot be executed with propriety, probability, or success without a principal personage to attract our attention, unite the incidents . . . and at last close the scene, by virtue of his own importance."

Was Prue important enough to attract general attention? could I reconstruct her vividly enough to make her live? the incidents would be domestic, often trivial, were these enough for a novel? Jane Austen had thought so, and her people are still alive, though the novels of her imitators are long ago lost in oblivion. Well, I could but try with hope and doubt in my heart.

It is Havelock Ellis who points put that the great art of the nineteenth century lay in fiction—though the value of fiction is insufficiently realised —"for fiction is contemporary modern history." Could Prue and Aunt Judith afford us a glimpse of the eighteenth century as they knew it?

I had what the critics call “spade-work” to do before I was ready to tell Prue’s story. I consulted old maps of London, old prints; I read old newspapers—there were eleven weekly papers in 1713—and I became acquainted with the events which stirred human emotions in those days; I read about old manors and villages, old houses and streets, old ballads and chap-books. This was interesting and smacked of the classroom, for I had been trained on academic lines, which isn’t always a bad training, though inimical to the making of creative literature, and often to making a living.

I read every word of the precious manuscript again and again, especially Prue’s chronicle. Women wrote better in those days and spelled worse, for her writing was distinct and clear as print and her spelling adorable though inaccurate.

She was a simple creature with a kind heart and some imagination, she had a puritanical bias which prompted her to scorn ease and rejoice in suppressing self; her keen joy in life came from her vitality, for vitality, be it known, really means passion—it is the quality which gives the energy to live joyously, to admire with enthusiasm, to be devout in worship, and constant and never-ending in love, for love—the real love of the poets—can only come once to any man or woman (some never know it), and only rarely does it end in marriage. Love is magnificent giving, a passionate desire to serve; it is to know that one person in your world is unique under the sun and cannot be replaced by any other; moderate and cautious loving often ends in marriage and may be satisfactory in a way, but as a modern writer says, “When you love recklessly and completely you tie your hands behind your back and leave yourself defenceless, exposed to whatever fate the loved one may choose to mete out to you,” and that was how Prue understood love. She hoped for something beautiful whereby her life would be transmuted, and ever afterwards all would be different, filled with rapture, and a new meaning would be given to life; but so do we all long for beauty which we interpret in our own way. And some few may find what they seek, either in Religion, Art, Thought, Books, Nature, in acquiring power, or in making money; but those who seek it in love may never find, for “to love by no means carries with it the certainty of being loved in return.”

AN EARTHEN POT

I began to write, often depressed by my inadequacy. In my rapturous moments I thought with pride of the women novelists of the nineteenth century; often they were unaware of their gifts, and it may be that others like them go to their graves with these unsuspected and unspent. Something from outside is frequently needed to call such gifts forth. The stimulant may be many things, though sometimes it has been a man's approbation. Would George Eliot have brought forth *Silas Marner* or *Adam Bede* had there been no Mr. Lewis? or would Charlotte Brontë have unfettered that soul of flame of hers and written *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* had there been no M. Heger? and perhaps that astonishing man may also have prompted Emily to write *Wuthering Heights*—if she did write it?

There was no man to encourage me, only a few fairy visions, and it is well to trust them.

"And yet in Fairyland I'm told
Dead leaves—as these—will turn to gold.
Take them, Sir Alchemist, and see!
Nothing transmutes like sympathy."

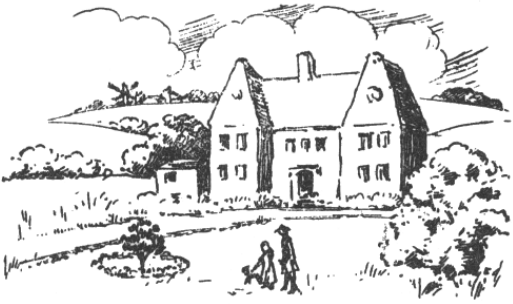
BOOK TWO

"HER YOUTH WAS SAGE"

"My true love hath my heart, and I have his,
By just exchange one for another given."
SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

PRUE

"For the real tragedies in this world are not the things which happen to us, but the things which don't happen."



CHERRY COURT

CHAPTER I

CHERRY COURT

> "It (Sweet Briar) groweth in a pasture as you goe from a village hard by London called Knightsbridge."—GERARD.

Prue lived in a house called Cherry Court, a charming old house situated between Knightsbridge and Chelsey. It was surrounded by gardens, trees, meadows, and orchards, and the grounds ran down to the silvery Thames.

Knightsbridge began at Hyde Park Corner, immediately after passing through the old turnpike. It was a picturesque turnpike with green trees about it, rural traffic, skylarks singing above, the clack of the windmill, and waving fields of corn, yet it had an air of magnificence, for great folk lived hereabouts.

There were three gates at the old turnpike for carriages and carts, and there were tall pillars surmounted by stone balls; there were also smaller gates each side and turnstiles on the footpath.

The turnpike-house had a pointed tiled roof, and its centre gate had a swinging oil-lamp. Lanesborough House was at Hyde Park Corner—on the site of what is now a hospital—and Lord Lanesborough had inscribed over his door:

> "It is my delight to be
> Both in town and country."

The picturesque glimpse of the old turnpike I got from a faded water-colour painted by Prue, for the turnpike was removed in early Georgian times and a more ornate and ordinary erection substituted. At the time of Prue's childhood Knightsbridge was quite out of London in the country; it was merely a hamlet with unpaved and unlighted streets and a maypole on the green. There were white hawthorn hedges, green pastures where the wild sweet briar with little pink roses scented the air, the songs of blackbirds, thrushes, and even nightingales, plashing streams, and pleasant copses.

Mr. Simon Flowerdew—Prue's father—used to say that Cherry Court was a hall long ago, one of the smaller country halls.

It had been known as White Hall, but when King Henry had chosen to call his new palace at Westminster by that name his loyal subject, the Mr.

Flowerdew of the time, had altered the name to Cherry Court, a suitable name, for the place was favourable to the culture of that juicy and toothsome fruit. In Prue's time, however, the cherry orchards and gardens abounded more plentifully in Chelsey itself, often facing the river. Mr. Simon Flowerdew had held office in Hanover, whither he had gone with his wife Rosalind to pay court to Sophia, the wife of the Elector and heiress-presumptive to the throne of England, and to find favour with her eldest son, afterwards George I, and when he returned to England he held office as treasurer in Queen Anne's household; and Prue's mother had been Rosalind Chesterton, the celebrated beauty and toast, also a Woman of the Bedchamber to Queen Anne in her early days at St. James's Palace.

There were two other Chesterton sisters, both beauties in their day, Cicely and Judith, but Rosalind was the fairest of them all. The sisters were said to have broken many hearts in those gay days of King Charles and to have caused many a sensation in the stately promenades in the Mall, where great ones of the earth walked daily to see and to be seen.

Cherry Court was a pleasant old house, beautifully proportioned, with deep pyramidal roofs, casement windows, honeysuckle running all over the porch and little round attic windows in the roof which Prue loved to call the rose windows. The door opened into the stone hall with great oak beams overhead, walls hung with ancient weapons, and pieces of old armour set up in the corners of the old place with its low hearth where burned a cheerful wood fire most of the year. The glory of the stone entrance hall was a lovely new red lac chest on a carved gilt stand which had been a present from Aunt Judith to Prue's mother on her marriage day, with suitable Chinese vases to grace it.

Cherry Court was a simple and rural abode, yet not without its touches of elegance, for, though far enough away from the din and cries of the city, it was near enough to Westminster and the Court to make it a fashionable residence.

The garden was country-like, with green lawns, gay flower-beds, shady trees, flowering shrubs, and a garden of pot-herbs, with a pool for young ducks near the grindstone where clouds of fennel and sweet balm grew profusely—these kitchen things were at the back of the house hidden by trees from fastidious ladies and gentlemen—and there were subtle touches of town elegance which gave distinction to the old garden, for it had a real modish fountain which plashed soothingly on hot days, the sound of it mingling sweetly with the smell of the roses, carnations, and honeysuckle.

The situation was alluring. It lay amid meadows, streams, and rural scenes, including cows, sheep, and even pigs—for Mr. Simon Flowerdew liked to eat of his own mutton, to cure his own hams, and provide his household with milk, butter, curds and whey and syllabubs. But the courtly visitor met with no offence at the sight of these homely things, for they were mostly hidden by groups of tall elms in which the rooks elected to live and build their untidy nests, chattering all the time like a waggon-load of monkeys. The rook is a selective, even an aristocratic bird, and it scorns to inhabit any but aged trees that have sheltered the home of good old families for centuries; it clings persistently to the trees of ruined monasteries lamenting still the vanished monks and priors. There was a windmill in the distance, and when the wind was favourable the clack clack sounded pleasantly, then there was a vista of the stately towers and palaces of Westminster, and from the last stile with the low wall at the boundary of Mr. Flowerdew's estate was a charming view of the river and the towers of Westminster with London city in the distance.

Mr. Simon Flowerdew had three daughters, Drusilla, Prudence, and Penelope, and it was the pretty fashion of those days to convert the stately names of gentlewomen into homelier forms for daily usage, therefore these ladies will be known in these pages as Drudy, Prue, and Pen; there were two sons also, Simon and Geoffrey. Mrs. Flowerdew—the beautiful Rosalind—was a lady of quality, she had been petted and praised all her life; in her youth she had been the loveliest Maid of Honour of her time; she was the friend and confidante in those days of the gay Lady Peggy, the finest lady in town. In her triumphant youth Rosalind had been surrounded by white-gloved beaux kissing the tips of their scented gloves to her. No water party to Jenny's whim or the bow-windowed tea-house at Chelsey with its cherry gardens was complete without Lady Peggy and the beautiful Rosalind when the company made merry under the trees beside the gleaming river while the tall trees dipped to the water, kissing their own reflection; the clarinets, violins, and hautboys made music for them, and the tall lacqueys, aided by a little black page-boy in silver and blue livery, brought the hampers with chicken, ham, tongue, sallets, and the choicest of fruits. Alluring were the ladies in peach-coloured silken gowns, Mechlin-dressed heads, handsome hoods and cloaks; and gay were the beaux with their amber-headed canes, their perfumed wigs. They read their witty and polished verses, and the ladies flirted their fans and were ever ready with an apt repartee, causing the company to burst into what the French called *des grands Eclats de Rire*.

Rosalind had been the youngest Maid of Honour to Queen Mary and, it was said, the handsomest, and even now she was as handsome as she was

popular; her hand and foot were elegantly formed, her shape fine and slender, her taste unerring, her wit pointed, her sallies mirth-provoking. She was a lady of fashion. Cicely was very elegant and fashionable likewise, and she had also been a Maid of Honour for a short time before her marriage; now she was an Ambassador's lady and spent much of her time abroad; she had no children, and was greatly concerned in the education of her niece, Drudy. Judith, the eldest sister, was married to a country gentleman in Lancashire, a squire, a spendthrift, and a rake; she had more intellect and practical sense than her two lovely younger sisters, but these things in a woman do not always make for success in matrimony. Drudy was twelve at this time, she gave promise of much beauty, and she seemed destined for a life at Court. At present she was under the care of Mrs. Ogden at Highgate. Of the lady's fame and pretensions we read in the *Gazette*:

"Mrs. Ogden continues to keep her school at Highgate where young gentlewomen of quality may be soundly and soberly educated and taught all sortes of Learning fit for a young Gentlewoman." Highgate at that time was a green and pleasant place, much loved by Mr. John Gerard for the butterfly orchis which grew there. "The Kind which resembleth the white Butterfly groweth . . . neere to a small cottage there in the way-side, as yee goe from London to Henden a village thereby. It groweth in the fields adjoyning to the field or pinfold without the gate, at a village called Highgate neere London," he tells us. I have searched these places but find no trace of these "rare and dainty" simples, only posters, and the dreadful sight of old bricks and housebreakers at work pulling down aged mansions, and plenty of little new houses.

The two boys lived in the country too, at Barnet "neere St. Albans," where they were "lerning French and all other Qualifications of a Gentleman" with a French Huguenot for "forty five poundes a yeare eache."

Drudy was soon to leave the sober instruction of Mrs. Ogden and the charms of Highgate; she was to go to Paris with Aunt Cicely and in Ambassadorial circles mingle with the great ones of earth, acquire other tongues and more polished manners than Mrs. Ogden could produce.

Prue was just seven. She never went to school at all. Her nurse, Mrs. Marjery Duff, taught her to hem and to say her prayers; and her father's secretary, Mr. Richard Abbot, taught her officially to read, write, and cypher —incidentally he taught her many other things as well.

From the gaiety of her mother's friends Prue crept out of the way as much as possible and spent many an hour with her teacher in the writing

closet acquiring wisdom and a love of learning. Little Pen was a baby at this time in charge of a respectable "wett nurse," one Mrs. Tryphosia Tibbs, an excellent woman and a widow.

One day in June Prue went with her nurse, Mrs. Marjery, to gather wild raspberries in the neighbourhood of the Kilborne Abbey near the old inn, The Bells, on the Edgeware Road. It was a rural spot with a little valley beyond, a place of wildness and beauty and not far from the Holy Well at the Priory. A study of maps, leases of land, old herbals helped me to vision the place and even to catch a visionary glimpse of Farmer Duff's barns and cattle from Kilburn bridge as I stood amid the roar of the traffic, the clang of buses, the coster's fruit barrows, the out-of-work loungers, the vendors of newspapers, I looked down at the grim railway lines and visioned woods, pastures, dragon-flies, and little blue butterflies of the far-away past, in spite of the clatter of buses, and the cutting wind whirling an incredible mass of waste paper around my feet, for in my zest to get the atmosphere of my novel my sin was not that of "the unlit lamp and ungirt loin."

The ruins of the Priory had long since vanished, also the Holy Well near which had dwelt Spenser's hermit; the ancient inn, the water-trough, and the old pump had likewise vanished, but on its site stood a modern public-house not lacking in customers, for it was midday. It was hard to vision in the sordid scenes about me the beauty and wildness of the place when Prue and Mrs. Marjery sought wild raspberries there.

CICELY AND ROSALIND AS GIRLS

THE QUEEN’S HEAD AND ARTICHOKE

CHAPTER II

WILD RASPBERRIES

> "Another auncient high waie which did leade to Edgeworth, and so to Sainte Albons was ouer Hampstead heath and thence through an olde lane called Hendon which it passed to Edgeworth."
>
> JOHN MORDEN.

John Gerard, delightful gardener and guide to localities in and about London where fruit and flowers grew wild, loved in his boyhood to pick wild raspberries, that delicious wildling—"the fruit in shape and proportion like those of the bramble, red when they be ripe and covered over with a little downinesse."

For mallows "white and red, now and then purple, you must seek hard by the place of execution at Tyburn," the blue bugloss was to be found in "the ditches of Piccadilly"; the sweet wild briar rose "in the pastures about the village called Knightsbridge"; for lilies-of-the-valley you must go to Hampstead Heath, where they grew "abondantly"; and for whortleberries "in a wood neer Highgate called Finchley Wood," and at Highgate also "Mulleins are to be found." Gerard's own garden where he grew about a thousand kinds of herbs, "many strangers in England," was in the suburb of Holborn, and Queens have admired "his double-flowered peach, his white thyme, his sweet Johns and wilde gillofloures" which he "grew more to please the eye than the nose or belly."

The north side of London was very pleasant in those old days with "fields for pasture, and a delightful plain of meadowland, with flowing streams, on which stood mills whose clack was pleasing to the ear." Prue with Marjery walked northwards amid tilled fields and pastures fairylike with lady smocks and buttercups, passing thickly wooded copses and a lodge where dwelt a keeper of Marylebone Park—a place which extended to Primrose Hill and on to Chalcot Farm. In the meadows were poor children gathering young dandelions and milk-thistles for sale in the herb market.

They halted at the Queen's Head and Artichoke, and after a drink of milk at the cow-house—a much vaunted remedy for delicate children—they met Farmer Duff, Mrs. Marjery's father, who brought a rough pony for the young lady to ride. First they went through a wild leafy lane—it is called Park Road now—and on through the field tracks to the Holy Well at

Kilburn. The fields of young wheat were green as gander grass, and the yellow crowfoot, purple orchis, and ragged robin mingled with the white and gold of the great ox-eyed daisies. And so to that "auncient high waie" leading to Edgeware and on to St. Albans, by the old Watling Street. They stopped at the old inn called The Bells—the very inn where Queen Elizabeth used to come with her maidens to drink milk warm from the cow, very strengthening for Court ladies. Prue was lifted from her pony and taken to drink of the healing waters of the well which bubbled up from the ruined Priory, then the three followed the track running through the fields and the streams of Kilburn to Martin Duff's little farm lying in the valley near a pond, and the farmer told them of the wonderful Hamsptead Woods which were the regular Royal hunting grounds when his father and grandfather were young. The great St. John's Wood was part of that immense forest wherein roamed the red deer, boars and wild bulls, and even in Prue's time the whole district including Abbey Road, Kentish Town, Belsize Park, St. John's Wood, and Kilburn was wild country thickly wooded in parts. After partaking of a dish of curds and whey, Marjery led Prue to a hollow near the pond, where the wild raspberries grew, scenting the hot air with their juicy smell. They filled their baskets with the pleasant berries, to be made later into a conserve against sore throats, for the garden variety of this delicious berry lacks the potency and healing power of the wildling. They lingered by the pond where great rushes grew, and dragon-flies with glistening wings flitted over the water. Marjery called these handsome insects Devil's darning needles, and she warned Prue to avoid them. There were dozens of dainty little butterflies, as blue as forget-me-nots flitting about among the dog-daisies and meadow-sweet; and when Prue cried out in rapture at the beauty of them the good-natured Marjery knocked one down and brought it to her. The poor little thing's exquisitely blue wing was broken and dust-soiled, and one tiny green leg moved feebly. Prue burst into wild sobbing. "You have killed one of God's little butterflies," she accused the contrite Marjery and the woman wept with her. They both prayed that God would make the delicate bruised insect into a butterfly angel, which brought some comfort to the child.

"God will make it into a butterfly angel," Prue said earnestly.

"God answers our prayers," said Mrs. Marjery.

"Blue," said the child solemnly, "is God's colour, Mr. Abbot says, and all blue flowers like cornflowers and forget-me-nots grow in heaven because they are so blue."

"Perhaps the blue bugloss too," Marjery said, looking at the blue sky.

“What’s bugloss?”

“A blue flower, a deeper blue than the sky.”

Prue wanted to see it, but Mrs. Marjery could not find any, to her annoyance.

“Tut! there’s plenty growing in the dry ditches in Piccadilly,” she said, and with that the child had to be content.

Both Nature and Man seem to be perpetually striving to achieve the lovely blue tints that tear the heart out of your body with the tenderness of their beauty. Nature does best; we get these intoxicating blues in the summer skies, in the sea, in the blue of the Italian lakes, in the soft mists of the mountains, in the heavenly blues of masses of delphinium, in the nemophilia, the forget-me-not, the bugloss, and in the wings of the little summer butterflies. Man strives too, and sometimes achieves loveliness in such colours as the China blue against which Della Robbia’s Madonnas kneel, the powder blue of a Chinese vase, the gracious blue of the Screen in Rossetti’s Annunciation against which the golden haloes gleam, the blue embroidery on a Chinese Mandarin’s robe, the blue glaze on the adorable Thuringian kitchen pots, the robe of the Dresden Madonna, the exquisite blue of the Edelweiss cups and plates of Switzerland, and the delicate blues of a Morris chintz. These blues uplift the heart, refresh the soul, and send little quivers through the nerves of the body; so tender is their appeal that a delicious excitement thrills through every nerve as one gazes at them.

They had mutton steaks for dinner with dumplings boiled in broth and mead to drink, but there was egg-nogg for Prue, who looked—as Granny Duff said—as if she could do with something “to strengthen the innards”; egg-nogg is an enticing drink made with an egg beaten in a little warm ale, then warm milk is added, and the whole is sweetened with honey.

Prue played in the forest afterwards in the cool depths of the great oaks; the scent of the pine trees rushed upon her; the sun shone through the green-fringed branches above. She played at being lost far in the wood as she lay down in the shady green depths and watched the shifting colours above her. The aged tree-trunks were knotted and lichen-encrusted, their mossy limbs spread low, and polypody fringed the distorted roots which they and the mosses strove to clothe. Remote and pleasing, sounds lulled her, the drone of far rooks, the bleat of sheep, the little tinkle of the chant of the wren, and the song of skylark; the forest music was drowsy and Prue slept. Here Marjery and Granny Duff found her, and the old woman warned her against sleeping in the open air. It appeared that evil spirits haunted the air, and

while she slept these spirits could steal in through her unclosed lips and transform her into a maniac; then Marjery told her of a fearsome man-creeper which lived under the moss of old trees—"a thing like a lizard, though not a lizard, slimy-like"; it crept into the "mouths of human critturs" and "ate away the inside."

GRANNY'S SPINNING-WHEEL

"Come thy ways, little lady, to the door and I'll show thee my spinning-wheel, it's safer for thee on the cobble stones." Prue followed her and sat on a little stool in the sun near the bee skep with the drowsy humming of bees in the air, and she listened to Granny's tales about the happy Restoration, when the gay King Charles came back. Granny had seen the maypole put up again in the Strand, and the old people with tears and laughter had danced around it. "Who pulled it down?" Prue wanted to know. "The black Oliver," said Granny grimly; "there's a many wicked things that bad man did to pluck all joy and gladness out of the hearts and lives of poor folks."

"Nay, Mother. Oliver was a righteous man in the ways of governing England," said Farmer Duff.

"A murderer, my son; he killed his thousands and tens of thousands, and your kin among them; he cropped the ears off our friends and cousins for making and eating plum puddings at Christmas, and he beheaded our blessed Martyr King Charles," and Granny wept with sorrow and anger.

To divert their little guest from sadness at these gloomy thoughts, Marjery brought out a bowl of black whortleberries and a dish of cream and Prue ate them and said she liked them.

"Folks in Cheshire and Lancashire eat them as folks in London eat strawberries and cream," Farmer Duff explained.

"They grow so thick in Finchley Wood and Hampstead Heath that nobody gathers them," said Marjery. "Granny makes them into jam."

"Ay," Granny remarked, "cookery was cookery in my young days; the black Oliver did his best to kill fine cookery," and she produced a much-treasured volume of Mrs. Hannah Woolley's *The Queen-Like Closet or Rich Cabinet* for the entertainment of the young visitor. Granny Duff had been

my Lady Stanhope's waiting woman in her youth and knew a great deal about the ways of gentlefolks.

"My mother has this book," Prue said. "Aunt Judith sent it to her from Clinton Moor."

The conversation reverted to Cromwell and his misdeeds later, and Farmer Duff—a half Puritan—explained that he was not to be judged by women. "Oliver wished the country well," he said.

"Good comes not of evil deeds, my son," replied the old woman. "The Royalists tore his bones out of the Abbey," grumbled Farmer Duff.

"His vile carcass had no call to be there," stoutly affirmed his mother, and she showed Prue her greatest treasure, a kind of medal in memory of the beloved King she always wore round her neck. "And wicked men cut his blessed head off," she wailed.

Granny Duff was ninety-two at this time, a sturdy and passionate Royalist.

" 'Twas politics, not sin, that made him do it, Mother."

"And he spoiled the Strand for ever," wailed the old woman. " 'Twere beautiful to behold afore he tore down th' Bishop's houses and Charing Cross."

"They be built up agen, Mother."

"A poor makeshift building," wailed Granny Duff.

Before they returned home they gathered simples to take with them: vervain which cures ague, goosegrass to sweeten the blood, wild thyme for giving pleasant dreams, woodruffe to cleanse the liver, camomile for toothache, and ash branches to fright away evil spirits.

"Good medicines," as Granny Duff said, "there's nowt for ails and aches but that a body can find in the fields and ditches, for those who buy from the Pothicary has got a poor leech in truth."

THOMAS AND THE MILKMAID

CHAPTER III

GOD'S BUGLOSS

"They who have skill
To manage books and things, and make them act
On infant minds as surely as the sun
Deals with the flower."—WORDSWORTH.

Mr. Dick Abbot sat in the panelled east closet of Cherry Court which was used as his writing-room. It was morning, and the sun was peeping through the diamond panes of the casement windows, causing the crystal globe of Prue's goldfish on the sill to flash like fire, and lighting up the purple fleur-de-lis in the green slip jar.

The gate-legged table was drawn up close to the window to enable Mr. Abbot to get all the available light; great brown leather volumes lay upon it, with rolls of household accounts on parchment, many in crabbed and eccentric writing. Before Mr. Abbot lay quill-pens and inkhorn, and at his elbow a kind of yellow glazed glorified pepper-pot containing the fine sand to act as blotting-paper.

Mr. Abbot was about twenty-two at this time. He had the face of a thinker, the oval, somewhat close face of the man who thinks secret thoughts which he seldom utters, so closely does he guard them. His skin was browned, his brow nobly arched, his eyebrows well marked, his nose almost straight, his kind dark eyes wide open, steady, and safe, and his dark brown hair abundant, unpowdered and long, in curling profusion about his shoulders. His coat was brown, trimmed scantily with gold braid, and his jabot and sleeve ruffles of plain cambric. Such was Richard Abbot, late of Oxford, secretary to Mr. Flowerdew.

Beside him was Prue in a tapestry chair of the period of Charles II. She was perched upon a leather book to raise her to the table's height, and her tiny feet, hidden in the folds of her long gown, rested comfortably on a high footstool. She was writing in a painstaking manner with a quill-pen that Mr. Abbot had carefully mended for her, and her delicate little face was flushed and anxious as she bent over her task, striving to win the approbation of her teacher. Occasionally Mr. Abbot with a grave smile glanced at the efforts of the little maid so valiantly wielding her pen, and occasionally he dropped her a word of encouragement or advice.

Prue writes:

"The one a fine and pretty boy
Not passing three years olde;
The other a girl more young than he,
And made in beautyes molde."

"What's beautyes molde, Mr. Abbot?" she asked presently.

"Beauty's form."

Prue knitted her brows.

"Does it mean that the girl was pretty?"

"Yes."

"Are girls prettier than boys?"

"Not always."

"I'd like to be pretty."

"To be good is better than to be pretty." The young man was sententious.

"I know that, but I'd like to be pretty as well."

"It may sometimes be possible," reflected Dick Abbot.

"Is there a story about the little boy and girl?"

"Yes."

"What is it called?"

"Mr. Addison calls it 'one of the darling songs of the common people and the delight of most Englishmen in some part of their age.' "

"Is it a song?"

"It is sung; it is called a ballad."

"Are you going to read it to me?"

Dick smiled. "You are going to read it to me," he said.

Then the books were put away and the two walked to the stile near the Windmill. Prue loved this daily walk. She was a quaint little maid; her long gown fell in folds to her feet, her cambric collar edged with lace was open, showing her childish throat, and the same cambric formed ruffles for her ample sleeves. The crisped ends of her feathery hair flashed like gold in the sunlight, and her head was covered with a little cap of cambric and lace tied under her chin after the stately though charming fashion of the times. She

gathered up her long gown and danced on in front of Mr. Abbot, a flickering, elfin thing, chanting:

"A girl more young than he,
And made in beautyes molde."

Then a butterfly attracted her attention.

"Do little blue butterflies go to heaven?" she asked.

"I don't know, Prue."

"Wouldn't you like them to go to heaven?"

"I'd like all God's creatures to be happy."

"Marjery and me prayed God to let the little butterflies into His heaven."

"Sincere prayers are always good," said Mr. Abbot.

"Why is blue called God's colour?"

"Because 'the sea is His' and the sky, and He made them the colour He liked best; then the sapphire is His jewel, it is a lovely blue."

"So is the blue bugloss; it's the bluest thing there is. I want to find it. Could we go to the river?"

"You would not find it there, but there are forget-me-nots; they are a darling colour."

"The blue bugloss is just as darling."

"It's a deeper blue, more like the sapphire."

Then Mrs. Marjery came and claimed Prue to go into the still-room to drink her curds and whey, and Mr. Richard Abbot returned to the writing closet and read thoughtfully an old copy of the *Babes in the Wood* called "The Norfolk gentleman's Last Will and Testament." "She'll like it better than the version in the older copy," he reflected.

He was a serious person, a scholar, and a poet in his leisure moments. He had a vital soul that ever protested against the narrow intellectualism of his age. His mind was romantic rather than realistic, and with a certain amount of original insight he strove to get behind the individualism of Locke and the sensualism of Hobbes. Vaguely he perceived that the mind of Man stands above the Universe with a power and dignity of its own. He strove to identify himself with the Spirit of the Universe which had set and shaped all things to build up the Soul, for Nature and life as it goes on around us are

continually playing upon us and tending to make us what we are. So Dick lived and thought and dreamed, and at intervals wrote poetry, and educating little Prue as he went about his daily work.

As Dick read the old Norfolk ballad he liked it, as much, perhaps, as Mr. Addison liked it, for it was a plain and simple copy from Nature, devoid of any graces of ornament or style, and the sentiments being genuine, the simple story made its way into the heart of humanity.

Prue was touched by the ballad; she cried a little, and asked a hundred questions about it.

Dick told her that the story had given Mr. Addison "the most exquisite pleasure," and he had written a letter to *The Spectator* about it.

"It gives me most exquisite pleasure too," said Prue, "and it makes me cry."

"Why does it make you cry?" he asked.

"Because it is sad."

"Do you cry because things are sad?"

"I think I cry because I am sorry for the poor little babes, and because I love the robins."

"Yes," said Dick Abbot.

"The next robin-redbreast that I find dead in our garden I shall bury in a pretty grave, and I shall plant blue bugloss on it." Prue had a graveyard of dead birds in the garden.

"Where will you find the blue bugloss?"

"In the ditches at Piccadilly," she said.

Of all the verses in the ballad, Prue liked best the following:

"Their prettye lippes with blackberries,
Were all besmear'd and dyed,
And when they sawe the darksome night,
They sat them downe and cryed.
No burial these pretty babes
Of any man receives,
Till robin-redbreast painfully
Did cover them with leaves."

And the young man told her to write these verses in her copybook.

It was three days later, and Prue's mind had been full of the blue bugloss. She must find it, for somehow it would bring her nearer to God; she would have to get to Knightsbridge; she knew the way there quite well. Mrs. Tryphosia's sister lived there, and there was a maypole on the green.

Then she would have to go through the turnpike gate at Hyde Park—it was a wide and difficult place—and people would perhaps ask her where she was going. This frightened Prue. She could not go in her brocade gown and lace cap, only people in carriages went so, or when walking in the Mall. She seized an opportunity when she ought to have been sunning herself in the garden, and wrapping herself in a hood that belonged to a kitchen wench, and leaving her long gown hidden in a chest, she covered herself with the kitchen-maid's cloak, then she ran out of the garden into a narrow lane where she grubbed up the earth to soil her hands; then she smudged her face and made her way easily to the green where the maypole stood, and turned towards the turnpike. The unfamiliar surroundings frightened her, and presently she overtook a pretty wench with a pail, who had been delivering a gallon of red cow's milk at a big house.

Prue asked her the way to Piccadilly very politely.

The pretty wench questioned her.

"Where art thee from?"

"From afar," said Prue, fixing her eyes on the northern hills.

"Whom seek ye in Piccadilly?"

"I seek the ditches in Piccadilly."

"What dost hope to find there?"

"The blue bugloss that grows therein."

The wench stared in amaze. " 'Tis but a weed; hath it potency in a charm?"

"It is the bluest thing God hath made, and blue is God's colour. It giveth me most exquisite pleasure." Prue was very solemn.

"Thou'rt a foolish one," said the girl in wonder.

"Take me, I pray thee, to the ditches in Piccadilly," pleaded Prue, following in the girl's footsteps.

“I will, then, though thou’rt a bit of a zany; hast aught to gie me for my trouble?”

“The blue bugloss from Piccadilly will open heaven’s gate to you,” Prue said with shining eyes.

“Is that so? Then I’ll take thee,” and she took the child’s hand and led her safely to the desired spot.

The north side was chiefly fields in those days, stretching on to the hills of Highgate and Hampstead, though Park Lane was there as a muddy road; neither Regent Street nor Bond Street existed, and streams where rushes grew wandered through the fields. What is now the Haymarket was truly a hay market, for farmers from the farms thereabouts came there to sell their hay.

They found the bugloss and gathered it plentifully, and then they rested in the dry ditch and talked. The wench said she lived with her granny in Hedge Lane, which ran into the Haymarket, and the old dame washed and bleached linen for the Quality; there was no place near London with finer bleaching places than the hedges around the Haymarket. Her granny was wise, like the witches they burned in days gone by: they even burned them now, so her granny had to be careful. She would give the bugloss to Granny to make charms with for ladies of Quality.

“Charms,” repeated Prue, “what charms?”

“Love drinks for ladies who have lost their beaux; to bring them the love of gentlemen.”

“The bugloss will bring the love of God,” said Prue.

“ ’Tis the love of man the ladies want,” said the girl, and she told Prue about Thomas Titmouse, her sweetheart, who came to sell hay. The wench was to meet him, and the two were to wander awhile towards Marybone, where sometimes with luck they saw a hanging at Tyburn. “Thomas do greatly like the hangings,” she concluded.

Prue turned pale.

“I don’t like ’em either,” said the girl. “Now I must go, Thomas be a-waiting. Thou’rt a stray fairy most like; and thank ye kindly for the secret of the bugloss.”

"DID COVER THEM WITH LEAVES"

Prue sat still awhile looking at the blue of the bugloss and thinking of God up there in the blue sky. But the sky was darkening; the trees in the park rustled angrily, then low thunder rolled and forked lightning tore the sky asunder. Then heavy rain came down in torrents. Prue lay very still in the bottom of the ditch clasping her bugloss in her arms.

"It is God's own blue," she said as the rain soaked her, "nothing can harm me." She was alone in the world with only God's sky above her and God's bugloss in her arms.

An hour later it was here Mr. Abbot found her when the storm was over, and beyond the fact that she was drenched to the skin no harm had befallen her. There was consternation at Cherry Court when Prue was missed and Mrs. Marjery was nigh distracted; but the first intuition of Dick Abbot was true, and he sought her in the Piccadilly ditch.

"It was naughty of you to go alone," he said as he put her into a hackney coach.

“But I found God’s bugloss,” was all Prue said, “and I knew you would come, for fairy tales come true.”

AUNT JUDITH

CHAPTER IV

AUNT JUDITH'S HUSBAND

"The manner of burial, the pomp of obsequies are rather a consolation to the living than of any service to the dead."—ST. AUGUSTINE.

Mrs. Judith Hibband was in London transacting business; she was a very capable and mirthful lady, with bright eyes piercing as knives when she was angry, and a tongue that could be bitter when she liked. She was accompanied by her waiting woman, Mrs. Haggy Sage, who adored her. Aunt Judith was a widow of two years' standing. Her son Cornelius was in Ireland with his grandmother, under the care of an excellent tutor, whither he had been sent to escape the contaminating influence of an idle and thriftless father, and when that father was by a merciful providence removed to a better world, Corney continued to reside on his father's estate in Ireland for the good of his health and the solace of his grandmother. Aunt Judith managed her estate in Lancashire and her neat manor-house with credit and economy. She attributed her business capacity to the fact that "itt has plesed God to bless me with an indolent and dellicate husband who used me ill, and left mee to my shiffts for months, yea even yeres together, the whilst he refresht himself in London, or in running aboutt the country, at my expence and to the impovisherment of my estate, or in recreating himself at Bath and drinking ye watters by wch he Found Greatt goode—iff stronger Drinks was neglected—for wch Mercie God be thank'd."

She had done the journey to London in five days, attended by her men-servants, the faithful Mrs. Haggy, and her gallant neighbour Sir Murdoch Sheepshanks, who accompanied the party on horseback, without experiencing agitations or alarms from highwaymen. She was staying for one week in Red Lion Square with her Cousin Bentley who sometimes advised her on business matters. In Red Lion Square were many handsome houses inhabited by gentry and persons of repute, with a fine watch-house built at each corner. It was true that the nobility and gentry tended more and more to reside on the Westminster side of Temple Bar, but Cousin Bentley was a plain man without ignoble affectations.

The relations between Aunt Judith and her husband had not been cordial, but she used to excuse him by saying "the poor man was an only child

brought up in a heathen country like Ireland by Puritan parents on ghosts, hell-fire, and the like."

He had always been "such a good boy," his fond mother once said to her.

"Indeed, ma'am," replied Aunt Judith. "Then I thank Heaven Corney never was good; good boys grow up to be fools. Now, Corney has a kick in him and he'll likely make a man." Corney was Aunt Judith's only child. Before her husband's final illness there had been a coldness between the married pair of some duration. "It was none of my doing," wrote Aunt Judith, "his dashing ways with monney was nott to be borne; I told him soe, gentlie and he ignorred my advice, I wrott a letter againe to him as I thought it my Dutty soe to do, to admonish him of his Errours. As usuall I hadd onley a Rude Answer to itt." For a space of three years the two did not meet. "In June he was taken violently ill of a sore throatt of wch thatt yeare Aboundance dyed, which turned him into a Violentt Feaver." The lady was sent for and came at once, "tho' nott well able, but heering he was lyke to dye att the Bath I came Above two hundred milles in Four dayes, where, tho' I found him verry ill, yett I humbly thank my good God hee was well enough to chide mee, and had not seen mee for neer three years; this tho' itt was nott kind I expected itt." The gentleman recovered enough to return to his home in Lancashire with his wife who nursed him devotedly till the end, with the aid of three doctors, two surgeons, and two apothecaries.

Details of the gentleman's last illness and his imposing funeral with a careful account of the expenditure appear in a letter from Aunt Judith to her favourite sister, Mrs. Flowerdew, from which the following is extracted: "Hee was in a sadd condition with his asthma; andd his dropsey growing grater and grater, alle meanes were tryed," but no amount of blood-letting, violent purges seemed to cure him. To complicate matters Aunt Judith managed to break her leg in two places and was for some weeks laid aside in her bed, and unable to see her husband, though she comforted herself with the thought that he was under the care of seven men of medicine, with an apothecary, one Mr. Turnbell, in constant attendance. During her absence from the sick room "the watter in his legg bruk with continual droping when it run for a month cleer watter about ten Gallons, and wen I vissited his Bedside, I found att my Returne his legg was gangreened all over by Mr. Turnbell's management andd his verdygreasse and Oyntments for which I payd him six poundes a week for neer 8 months. And now deer Sister comes the Dismallist and Fatallist Day of my life. Aboutt four a clock in the daye, which was Fryday, my deerest Husband Departed this Life to enter the Heaven abbove, and no Mortall with mee till I scrimed oute; and he left

miserable mee to lament him for evver. My deer husband lay for neer siven months under care of three doctors, two surgeons and three apothycaries who amongstt them murdered him at the cost to mee of neer three hundred pounds."

He had a magnificent funeral, and his wife spared no pains to testify to the loss she sustained; if ostentation and wealth of expenditure can be counted as a measure of her sorrow, he was a deeply loved man.

"Vast appeerance of companny, gentry, tennants and neighbours didd all attende him to his vault." Then follows the cost of such things as:

"Falce coffin and 20 yds. of Black Bays for the Coffin."

"Wyn drunk thatt daye with macroons and Biskets by the Gentlemen."

"20 dozen of Cakes and the Barrals of Double Beer and the Carriage of itt."

"The Minister's mourning and A Hatt and making itt."

"The Scarves the hatbands and the Bell tollers."

"35 Gold Ringes for Bearers and Gentry, and thee 6 dozen paires of Gloves."

"A velvett Pall and twelve black cloakes to do honnour to my deer Husband on this my Fatall day."

All this and much more Aunt Judith carefully detailed to her sister with the cost of every item, thus showing that the funeral alone cost about three hundred pounds. She adds with complacency, "Whatt I laid outt on Sickness, Death and Buriall of my deer Husband will prove to my deer sister thatt all was done in a propper and seemly manner for wch God be thank'd."

This melancholy incident had happened two years ago, and now Aunt Judith had recovered her health, her vigour, and much of her gaiety. Her woman, Mrs. Haggy Sage, was in good spirits too, for she loved her mistress beyond all else in the world, and reflected all her moods.

"Your mistress, Mrs. Haggy, is an angel," Sir Murdoch said to her on the journey.

"For sure she is, Sir Murdoch, with just the littlest touch of the Divvil in her too, to make her comfortable in this wicked world," replied the good

woman who had plenty of common sense but little religion, for as she said, "too much religion sours a body and crimps many a good laugh."

Sir Murdoch laughed. "She has a clever head for business," he said.

"For sure she has, Sir Murdoch, though a woman should not be clever in speech; the Master now could not abide a clever tongue in a woman; but for all the men's likings a woman needn't be exactly a fool."

Valiantly Aunt Judith strove in London to understand ecclesiastical law, and Cousin Bentley, though a lawyer, was unable to help her much. She writes:

> "From time immemoriall service has bin performed in ye church of Clinton Moor every Lord's Daye to whome has binn payd Twenty pounds perr annum by selfe and ancestors—I scarce think thatt any Person rightly understands the Ecclesiasticall Lawes of this Realme. In my opinion Clinton Moor is an Exemptt Peculiar; and thatt the parisheners have nott a Rightt to divine service and sermons every Lord's Day and the Bishopp has not a Rightt to licence the Curratte there; the Christennings, Burialls and Marriages was alwais my affaire."

She intended to get rid of a drunken Curate at Clinton Moor, for as she said he had caused her "trubble and worret enuff," and before doing so she wished to be credibly informed concerning her legal obligations.

Having finished with lawyers, leases, and ecclesiastical law for the present, Aunt Judith ordered her coach and drove to Cherry Court.

"Butt firste I tarried to buye at the Silversmiths a Large Silver Flagon for the Communion Table, mee having used Pewter for 20 yeares.

"Then I payd Twenty pounds in Crown pieces for Cord for toyles to catch deer with in the Park and gladd I was to be ridd of the bag of Crowns. Being ridd of the Citty wee drove into the Country thro' the plesent Strand to leafy Picadilla."

"The linen a-drying on the bushes in Hedge Lane is decent and white," quoth Haggy.

" 'Tis good bleaching air," said Aunt Judith, "tho' to be sure London and Westminster creep on and on into the country."

All was bustle in the Haymarket. Farmers were selling hay; vegetable and fruit sellers and milkmaids did a good trade, and men were carting away

the refuse of the city.

“The air smells nice after the rain,” said Aunt Judith as they drove into Piccadilly.

“It do, Madam,” said Haggy, gazing into the Park, “an’ a fine change for a body to see th’ grand folks an’ fine fashions an’ big turnpikes, there’s not the like in Lancashire.”

Then they passed through the old turnpike at Hyde Park Corner and entered the gates of Cherry Court and admired the trim clipped yews.

CHAPTER V

AUNT JUDITH'S PRESENTS

"God send every gentleman
Such haukes, such hounds and such leman."
Old Ballad.

Mrs. Flowerdew had lost none of her looks since when, as the youngest and loveliest Maid of Honour, she became the toast of the town, in the days when William of Orange was growing his tulip bulbs at Kensington, and smiling wryly with cynical humour at the plots he was for ever discovering against his life.

She was seated in her parlour examining brocades; she handled them lovingly; of their kind nothing handsomer had ever been made; the colours were exquisite, the quality superb, the designs delicate and beautiful, and remnants that remain of them now are as fresh in colour as when Queen Anne was on the throne, for the Spitalfields silk-weavers used the best possible materials and their fabrics were made to last.

Drudy was offering intelligent criticism; though not yet turned twelve, Drudy had finished airs, and much talent in matters of dress, fashion, and manners.

"Dress," reflected Rosalind, "has altered since the days when your Aunt Judith and I were girls."

"Is it prettier?" asked Drudy.

"In some ways," said her mother, fingering the rich thick brocade and thinking with aesthetic pleasure of the handsome petticoat it would make. "The good King William and his Queen altered fashions, and my mother disliked the stiffness of the Dutch influence."

It was true that the advent of William and Mary had a sobering effect on dress as on furniture, though for richness and quality fabrics improved under the rule of this sober and admirable couple. Court ladies began to hide their "shameless shoulders"; their gowns became looped and pannier-skirted, and demure crinoline effects coyly crept into favour giving a modest fullness to ladies' hips. Decorous pinners—pinafores or aprons—became fashionable, most exquisitely embroidered on lovely material, giving just that domestic touch which every true woman ought to cultivate, be she peasant, scholar, duchess, or even queen. Under William, too, men's dress lost some of its

foppishness and became more manly, for no longer did men wear those long lace frills at the ends of their breeches, but buttoned them plainly and firmly round their knees, and shorn of fripperies, men's nether garments of that age remained beautiful during the whole of the eighteenth century.

Mrs. Flowerdew hesitated over the choice of brocade for a petticoat; here was one of pale poppies broidered on a ground of faint gold with leaves delicately green as the youngest gander grass in spring; one of milk-worts, sky-blue, pink, white floating on a heavenly shell-pink; one melodious as a wood in June, of eglantine and a stray of golden ladies' slipper; and one of orchids like a May sunset, orchids pink and mauve with a blood-spatter in every cup.

"Your Aunt Judith will enjoy looking at these brocades," she said with a sigh of enjoyment.

"The folds hang beautifully," said Drudy, laying an adoring cheek against the delicious softness of the fabric.

Just then Aunt Judith was announced. It was an emotional reunion of sisters and a cordial had to be administered to both ladies to revive them after the tears and tenderness evoked by the meeting. Drudy was kissed and complimented.

"She grows more and more like you, Rosalind," said Aunt Judith.

"More like Cicely, her father thinks," was the mother's comment.

Cicely was an Ambassador's lady. She was expected in London in a few weeks and then Drudy was to return with her to Paris, and Drudy was eager to go. "Paris sets its mark on a young lady's manners, it gives her a finished air and worldly skill," declared Rosalind.

"We three sisters will meet again after years of parting," said Judith with sentiment and tender thoughts, old memories, and a few tears intruded as choice was made of the exquisite brocades.

Then Aunt Judith's woman, Mrs. Haggy, brought in the presents. She took from its wrappings a blue Ming vase, a lovely thing, exquisitely decorated with the king of birds, the Ho-ho, and delicate magnolia blooms.

Rosalind cried out in admiration.

"For you, Sister," Judith said. "I was fortunate to get it; my good neighbour, Sir Murdoch Sheepshanks, procured it for me at a sale of Oriental things in the City."

“It is a perfect piece,” pronounced Rosalind, “fit for a royal palace.”

“The work of a great artist,” said Judith, “made for a young princess, a betrothal gift,” and she told of the magnolia and the glory and wonder of the Ho-ho bird.

Then Prue was sent for to receive her present of a magnificent doll; she came in shyly.

The art of doll-making in the eighteenth century had reached perfection, and the *English Babie*, as dolls were called at that time, was a fine and very sophisticated lady. It was made by an artist, carved from wood and exquisitely painted, far more beautiful and life-like than the French dolls modelled out of wax. It represented a gentlewoman garbed in the fashion of the time—in spite of its name *Babie*.

The petticoat was of brocade on a ground of pale oyster shell, the flowers in delicate colours. A stomacher of black, neatly laced. Cloak and hood of purple silk edged with black lace. Gloves and shoes were perfect, for all the clothes were made by a skilled mantua-maker in St. Paul’s Churchyard. The lady smiled at them mysteriously with a Mona-Lisa smile, and she still smiles with that subtle smile, for she exists to-day in a great museum.

“Oh,” cried Prue in rapture, “my Babie!” She clasped the lady in her arms and kissed her.

Drudy examined the lady’s garments with a critical eye. “Everything in fashion and of the best taste,” she announced.

“Her name,” said Prue solemnly, is “Beatrice Judith Rosalind.”

“And you must call her Trix, ’tis a modish name,” declared Drudy.

To her eldest niece Aunt Judith presented a little pearl necklace, which was received with rapture and greatly admired, for Aunt Judith had the gift of selecting suitable presents.

Then Prue returned to her lessons, and the older ladies talked of their memories of the Court of William and Mary.

“The Court,” said Rosalind disdainfully, “had little elegance.”

“The King came out of Holland to England’s relief, Sister, to deliver us all from popery and slavery. God sent him when we were past all hope, to be our helper.”

“He was a good soldier, and skilled in strategy,” conceded Rosalind.

Later, the two boys came with their tutor to spend a holiday at home and to meet their two aunts. Geoffrey, the younger, had a curious antipathy towards the blue Ming vase; he said that strange pains came into his head when he looked at it. To pacify him his mother put it in a closet in the hall, and even then he shuddered violently whenever he passed the door of the closet.

"It's bewitched the young gentleman is for sure," said Mrs. Haggy wisely; "some evil person is doin' on him," and with the blade-bone from a shoulder of mutton and a little crystal ball Mrs. Haggy investigated the matter.

She searched the meadows for four-leaved clover and she stitched a leaf in a piece of skin of an unborn lamb, which Geoffrey wore round his neck, and though it soothed the pain it did not cure it.

With the key of a church door and a piece of the line on which the curate's garments were hung out to dry, Mrs. Haggy traced the source of the evil to the blue Ming vase.

"One of them Chinese divvils," said Mrs. Haggy, "has more wickedness than any ten proper divvils that comes out of a Christian Hell."

Nevertheless, she did her best to circumvent the foreign abomination. She cast a spell on the Ming vase, a powerful spell with vervain, a frond of Solomon's seal, and other herbs calculated to expel evil; but the foreign devil refused to budge.

Mrs. Flowerdew finally sent the Ming vase to her sister Cicely, who had a house in Paradise Row, Chelsey.

"It is the poor child's fancy," she said.

"Ignorant superstitions influence the mind and produce pains," said Aunt Cicely.

"Fancies if you will, Sister," declared Aunt Judith, "but curious influences sometimes abide in these Oriental things," and she went on to tell of a lacquer cabinet that was haunted by a powerful goblin. "Foreign spells only will exorcise foreign devils," she concluded.

But in spite of all these precautions little Geoffrey fell ill of a wasting sickness and died.

"A low fever," the doctors said, "bred in the marshes and brought out by the hot weather."

In the early autumn Drudy went to Paris with Aunt Cicely and Aunt Judith returned to her home.

Dick Abbot sat in his writing closet inditing letters and attending to Prue's education at intervals. He had read to the child "The Three Ravens" from *Musical Phansies*, published in 1611, showing how three ravens sat on a tree meditating where to find breakfast.

Then one of them spoke:

"Downie in yonder green field
There lies a Knight slain under his shiled;
His hounds they lie downe at his feete.
So well they their master keepe:
His haukes they fly so eagerlie,
There's no fowle dare come him nie."

THE SLAIN KNIGHT

Then comes his lady to him. She lifts up his head, kisses his wounds, and after some effort she gets him on her back and carries him to the earthen lake and there buries him; and in a short time she died herself of grief at the loss of him.

The story ends with the reflection:

"God send every gentleman
Such haukes, such hounds and such a leman."

Prue was in tears over the story.

"What is a leman?" she wanted to know.

"His sweetheart," replied Mr. Dick Abbot.

"That milkmaid who took me to Piccadilly had a sweetheart named Thomas; I wonder if she'd do that for him."

"Let us hope it will not be necessary," said Mr. Abbot. "Do you like the story?"

"Yes, but it makes me sorry," said Prue, sobbing afresh.

"Well, you can write a letter to me and tell me why you like it."

"Write you a letter?"

"Yes."

And this is what Prue wrote:

"Deer Mister Abot,

I like thee storie becaus the Knite had a hawk and a hound who wood not leve him for the ravens to eat; and he hadd a swetehart who burryed him and then dyed herself. I like his swethart."

When the letter was finished Mr. Abbot had been called away by Mr. Flowerdew, so Prue folded it up and posted it in the grinning mouth of the green glazed Dog of Fo where she was wont to post her exercises.

When Mr. Abbot returned Prue's letter with remarks on the spelling he read her the same story from the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, in which the actors behave differently. It was called "The twa Corbies." "Corbie is the Scottish name for raven," he explained. It pictured the birds talking of their dinner, and one says that a newly slain knight lies dead and nobody knows but his hounds, his hawk, and his lady, but:

"His hound is to the hunting gane,
His hawk to fetch the wild-fowl hame,
His lady's ta'en another mate
So we may mak our dinner sweet."

So the hawks pick out his bonny blue eyes and make their nests with his golden hair, and when his white bones are picked bare the wind blows them about for ever.

“Oh, but I don’t like it, I don’t like to hear it,” protested Prue.

“Why?” he asked.

“Because they were all unfaithful to him and they left him dead with the ravens to eat,” and Prue sobbed.

“You don’t like unfaithfulness?”

“No, no, I don’t.”

“Neither do I,” said Mr. Dick Abbot.

HOLBEIN’S GATEWAY, WHITEHALL

CHAPTER VI

SONNETS AND A STRAND MAYPOLE

"Where the tall Maypole once o'erlooked the Strand."—POPE.

The years passed quickly and uneventfully for Prue. She was now eleven, a child with a singular unfitness for childhood and childhood's ways; she craved only the society and approbation of her teacher, Dick Abbot.

There was a charming tenderness between the pair, the kind of tenderness which sometimes exists between teacher and pupil and is like nothing else on earth, especially when the latter is a girl child with an eager mind and the teacher is a genius. In spite of her youth, Prue was vividly aware that Dick was not as other men; his mind was of a finer make, and he had the gift of seeing what he wished to see and of making her see it too; often in talking with her he would forget that his listener was a child and talk to her as a poet talks to an equal. Sometimes he read bits of the Greek poets to her, translating as he read, and at these times Prue managed to learn something of the austerity of Greek ideals. He had been reading portions of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* with her, and Prue gloried in the world of delightful surprises it opened out to her—a world of light, gaiety, beauty, simplicity, and exuberant richness—a world where things happened as delightfully inconsequently as in a radiant dream, a world of stateliness and poetry where ladies trailed brocaded gowns in shining meadows, their feet sunk in daisies as they played sweet music on instruments of gold and silver, where princesses were shut up in dungeons by wicked spirits, condemned to marry ugly monsters, or perish by fire, where purple grapes ripened in yellowing vineyards under a golden sun, a world where the very trees weep in rhyme to sympathise with the lover who bids the ink to "mourne boldly my inke; for while shee looks upon you, your blacknesse will shine" and "your cries will be musicke."

The poet had written this romance to entertain his sister. "A trifle," he called it, "of which my young head must be delivered."

Prue found Dick one day reading Sir Philip Sidney's Sonnets. She wanted to read them too, but he said she was not yet old enough.

"What are sonnets?" she asked.

“Little poems written to the lady he was in love with.”

“Who was the lady?”

“Penelope Devereux, the sister of Essex.”

“Was she a very beautiful lady?”

“She was a little girl when he first met her at Kenilworth.”

“How little was she?”

“Twelve years old, I think.”

“I’m eleven. Did she understand them?”

“Perhaps he didn’t send them till she was older.”

“Did he marry her?”

“No, her family made her marry someone else; she became Lady Rich.”

“Can ladies never marry the one they wish?” she wanted to know.

“Not always; the lady may want to marry a poor man and then there are difficulties.”

“I wish there was no money in the world,” said Prue.

It was after this conversation that she made up her mind to write a sonnet to Dick. She was sure she could understand sonnets if Penelope Devereux could, and so she pored over sonnets to learn how to write them.

The sonnets of Shakespeare and Sidney furnished her with excellent models. She visioned her teacher smiling at her and she began:

“Thy brow well arch’d; a kind look in thine eyes,” and as she warmed to the work she glowed with pleasure. It was easy to write about him, she thought, because he was so different from other men, he somehow seemed to command situations; even her father did what Dick told him. It would not be easy to write sonnets to men like her father and his friends, but Dick was a creature apart, he was a poet like Sir Philip Sidney. She looked at the picture of Sir Philip Sidney with his large well-opened eyes and the curious ruff round his neck; she liked it better than the picture of Shakespeare, but Shakespeare had the kind of broad brow that poets ought to have. Dick had that kind of brow too; she wished she had a picture of Dick. Then Drudy came in, indolent, handsome, malicious, and in a teasing mood; she picked up Prue’s paper and read the sonnet aloud.

Drudy was now at Court, one of the Queen's Maids of Honour. At Prue's effort she fell a-laughing immoderately.

"La! child, 'tis indelicate in our sex to be-sonnet any man, and such a man as Dick Abbot—a mere writing creature," and Drudy laughed again.

Prue tore the paper from her and stuffed it into the fire with crimson cheeks and wild, tortured eyes.

"Nay, child, you are too young for love capers; your taste requires to be improved; begin higher up."

"Mr. Abbot is a poet like Sir Philip Sidney and Shakespeare," stormed Prue.

"A poet is he? He never wrote verses to me," and Drudy played crossly with her fan. "An uncouth creature. Should I acquaint my father of your sonnets to him he would soon send Dick Abbot packing."

Drudy strolled away laughing; and she made a jest with the other Maids of Honour about her little sister's verses.

Drudy was right in declaring that ladies did not announce their admiration for a particular man in verse, for initiative in such vital things is not the privilege of the lady. Even in these days one envies Mrs. Browning, not only for possessing poetic fervour and passion which enabled her to write sonnets, but also for having a poet to write them to. She put her felicity into her sonnets and screened them by pretending they were borrowed from the Portuguese. Even then her poet never saw them until after marriage; but Prue was only eleven and could not be aware of these veils of reticence which are often not there in childhood.

It was June, and Aunt Judith came again to London to see lawyers and to visit her sister, and before she came the blue Ming vase was brought from Aunt Cicely's house in Paradise Row and put in Mrs. Flowerdew's great parlour. Prue loved it, and she was never tired of looking at it and asking Dick Abbot questions about the Ho-ho bird and the meaning of the magnolia.

"It is bluer than the bluest bugloss," she said to him, pointing out the rock whereon the bird stood, "and it shades off into blues as fine as the little blue butterflies at Kilburn where the raspberries grow."

"Yes, the Chinese have excelled in producing fine colours."

“Tell me about the magnolia.”

“It means sweetness and beauty; its inner meaning is secretly smiling, the smile that lives in the heart of a faithful maiden.”

“Why does she smile?”

“Because she is always thinking of the man with whom she is in love.”

“But she must think of other things sometimes.”

“At the heart of her, behind all other thoughts, that thought is always there.”

“Like the faithful sweetheart who buried the slain knight?”

“Yes,” said Dick Abbot.

Mrs. Haggy came with Aunt Judith, and for her many accomplishments the household welcomed her. Drudy wanted her for her skill in washing fine lace, her exquisite stitchery, and her gift of knowing future events, and she graciously elected to seek Mrs. Haggy and discourse with her.

Drudy had hardly any imagination concerning other human beings; her wandering and shapeless thoughts were mainly about herself; to have all approbation and attention fixed upon herself she felt was her right. She knew, too, she was born for power and to rule in the great world, and she was shrewd enough to be aware of what was going on around her. There was Marlborough, the greatest General on earth, trafficking in political secrets and plundering his soldiers; he was rewarded with palaces and fabulous wealth; there was Bolingbroke, sceptic and cynic as he was, minister to the Queen and the Pretender and disloyal to both. Wars, politics, even the polished insincerities of Courts were merely a game of grab for the truly wise. What was it that the great Marlborough said: “Learn to please women, they may be of service to you, they often please and govern others.”

Drudy smiled, she must exert her wiles in proper places; select some handsome unscrupulous gallant, and make his fortune for him. This thing was done often, and Drudy loved intrigue. She was young yet, sixteen; before she was twenty Drudy meant to be a very great lady indeed.

Being bored one day, Drudy sought Mrs. Haggy.

“Tell me,” she said, “will my future husband be a marquis?” To obtain this information Mrs. Haggy required a glass of water and the white of the first egg laid by a white pullet. These things were not always easy to obtain, but having obtained them Mrs. Haggy became oracular.

She dropped the white of the egg into the glass of water and watched. “There’s high notions at you, Miss Drudy, and many’s the nets you’re casting for the admiration of the gentlemen. See the nets and schemes in your mind shaping in the water. It’s first you’re wanting to be in everything.”

“There’s no harm in that, Haggy,” pouted Drudy.

“There’s many fine gentlemen about you and they pass by. The man you marry has a heart of gold, a clever man too.”

Drudy laughed. “Has he sacks of gold and a great castle?” she asked.

“He has not.”

“Then I won’t marry him,” declared the Beauty with a set look on her angel face and a thrust of her chin which bespoke determination.

“You will, Miss Drudy.”

“Not unless I’m in my dotage. You can keep the man with the golden heart for Prue,” she said as she strolled off.

“Like a cherry nourished in the sun’s glare she is,” mused Haggy, “mostly stone inside her; the hard heart of her, and the selfish she is, but the handsome she is too; if little Miss Prue, the lamb, could learn to put on beauty ways she’d catch the eyes of gentlemen too.” So ran the thoughts of the astute Mrs. Haggy Sage. Then Prue came in with the News Sheet and read it to her. “Read the advertisements, Miss Prue,” begged Haggy.

And Prue read about the “frock shops,” and where to buy “Stript Dimmity” and “white stript Flanels in ye peece by Wholesale and Retale at Reasonable Rates”; and she read of Periwig Shops, and Negro Slaves for Sale, and where one could “get drunk for 1 penny, and Dead drunk for 2 pence.”

“ ’Tis shameful so ’tis, Miss Prue,” quoth Haggy, “and the sinful London is with helpless, drunken brutes, women too, a-lying in mud an’ gutters afore th’ eyes of decent folks.”

“They drink gin,” said Prue, “it costs very little.”

“There was no such thing when I were young. It were brought over in ships to muddle th’ brains of poor folks.”

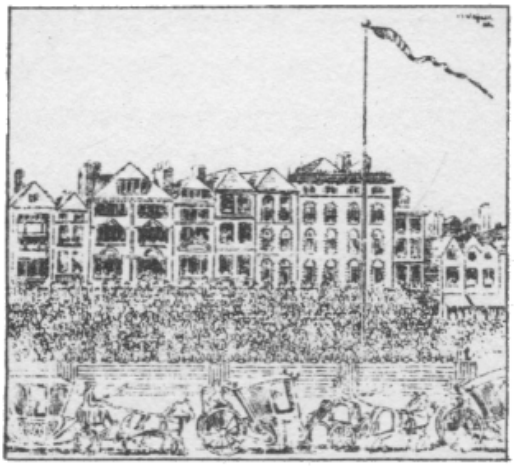
On the 7th of July Prue went with Aunt Judith to see the procession of both the Houses of Parliament to the Cathedral of St. Paul's to give thanks for the Peace of Utrecht. They sat with the party in a convenient window in the Strand immediately opposite the maypole around which were seated on ranges of seats one above the other some four thousand children from the "Charitie Schools being new cloathed," and during the whole procession, which was to last three hours, the children were to sing and repeat hymns which were prepared in expectation of Her Majesty's Royal Presence.

To Prue's infinite joy a little niece of Mrs. Marjery's was to be among the children, and Marjery had procured a copy of the hymns the children were to sing to greet Her Majesty.

Prue learned them by heart and went about the house singing them. The first began thus:

"Lord give the Queen Thy saving Health,
Whose Hope on Thee depends;
Grant her Increase of Fame and Wealth,
With Bliss that never ends.
Alleluiah! Alleluiah!" (Repeat 9 times.)

Mr. Dick Abbot smiled when Prue sang the hymn to him.



STRAND MAYPOLE WITH SINGING CHARITY CHILDREN

“She has Fame and Wealth enough, poor lady,” he remarked, “though the Bliss is wanting.”

And indeed that was true, for the health of Queen Anne caused much disquiet among the people at this time.

Very innocent and idyllic was the Strand on this occasion, though it was not always so, and although on the south side the Strand was decorous and even stately, the north side had queer inns and taverns where curious and doubtful folk congregated. An account from Prue’s own diary is given of this procession. “There were rejoyscings this daye in the Strande. The Houses of Parliament and Peers didd goe in Robes and fyne coaches with fyne footmen—all verry pritty—to give thanks to oure God for the Peece. Patty was there with the Charitie children singing. She satt neer to the Maypole wch hadd a ball and a long streemer. It was a sadd pittie that oure good Queen was too unwell to goe. It was a grande Procession and manny forriners and strangers sed they never behelde so grande a sight.”

Queen Anne was as famous for founding charity schools as for building churches. In all she founded fifty schools and very excellent institutions they were. The girls and boys learnt thrift and handiness in work, they also learnt to read, write, cast accounts and the elements of a trade.

On Prue’s birthday Mr. Dick Abbot took her to Whitehall to see Holbein’s gateway in front of the palace opposite the Tilt Yard, and Prue’s exercise on this visit is yet extant. It runs: “We wentt to Westminster to see the beautiful gatewaye built by Holbein. He was a grate paynter and he was staying att Sir Thomas More’s house at Chelsey when Henry VIII met him ther. When the King took the paynter to live with hym att Whitehalle it was then he thought of this gatewaye. Itt is the most beautifull thynge in London. Itt is mayd of litle square stones and sum flynte stones. The stones are glazed and shinning, and are sett to looke like a chess-bord. Ther are high Turrets crown’d by Battlements, all moste beautifull to look att, for it was alle done by a grate paynter.” This was duly written and placed in the mouth of the grinning Dog of Fo which Prue used as her post office.

AUNT JUDITH’S COACH

CHAPTER VII

SECRETS OF THE STILL-ROOM

"To raise flowers is a common thing, God alone gives them fragrance."—ORIENTAL PROVERB.

Many things seemed to happen in 1713 which attracted Prue's attention, among these were the death of two lions in the Tower and the strike of the silk-weavers at Spitalfields. Her diary records both these incidents.

"In the Gazette I redd thatt the two Lyons in the Tower be dedd. The dogs baitted them and they bledd to death. Thys seems to be a cruel sportt and sad for the lyons. The Lyon Tower was built by Henry III for lyons and beares to be baitted by dogs whc the King and Noblemen grately enjoyed seeing."

Prue seems to have been interested in the Weavers Strike at Spitalfields. Here are her comments and drawings:

"The weavers of Silke have been in grate uproar abbout silke from France comeing into the country. They made a pettition against itt. The French silkes are verry prettie, tho' the Spitalfields brocades are as goode. The weavers weave embroyderies as fyne as is done with a dellicate needel in a lady's fingers. The Spitalfields weavers saye iff the French Silk comes inn they will alle starve with a Loaf for twelve pence. They saye thatt the riche wish cheep silke to save their purs. Itt is od that we can nott do as we wish withoute itt being ill for others. I should like silke to be cheep, butt I do not wish the weavers to starve."

Prue was helping Mrs. Haggy in the garden, for in July, the very heart of the year, there were many practical details to be attended to. Mrs. Flowerdew was languid, she complained of headaches; and Aunt Judith undertook the care of her still-room, and Prue and Mrs. Haggy helped.

The full-blown roses had to be gathered each morning when the sun was on them; the sweet peas had to be cut and shredded daily; then there were lavender, balm, scented verbena, southernwood to be gathered and dried for their various uses. There were hedges of sweet peas in the herb garden, all of dark and speckled varieties, for they were grown for their scent rather than their decorative qualities; the fertilisation of these homely flowers was left

to the winds blowing where they listed, and to the wayward caprices of bees and other insects. Nature's methods seem to be haphazard, and in her haste to "multiply and replenish the earth" she troubles herself little with selection. In our day, owing to man's intervention and selection, sweet peas are among the purest and most entrancing of shades, and we grow them in our gardens for the sheer joy of the purity and variety of their colour, as well as for the subtle and piercingly sweet odour.

There were banks of snapdragons, that old old flower called long ago *Calve's Snout*. Gerard tells us: "The floures grow at the top of the stalks of a purple colour, fashioned like a frog's mouth, or rather a dragon's mouth"; he also speaks of those with "white floures," and those with "yellow floures"; these seeded themselves and grew luxuriantly, as they had always grown in "gardens aboutt London." Of late years man has intervened and improved the colours of these beautiful flowers too, and now they shine splendidly in every cottage-garden in gorgeous hues—pinks, orange, scarlet, rose, white, sulphur, flame, and primrose. Their careless profusion make the gardens into miracles of loveliness.

Prue loved the scents of the garden in July when the place was full of "the jewels of the air," as Maeterlinck calls garden fragrances, and the queens of all these "jewel scents" are the rose and white jasmine.

She often became faint with pleasure from the scents of sweet briar, pinks, mignonette, roses, jasmine and other garden fragrances. She even wept with the joy of it.

"Why do I cry when I smell the sweetness of summer?" she asked Dick Abbot.

He looked at her curiously. "Because you are capable of passion," he said.

She was downcast that he should think her such a baby. "I don't scream and fall into passions now," she protested.

He only smiled. He was destined by Fate, like "the lost wanderers from Arden," to sing the world's songs, a hard and thankless task. Imagination, the breath of his life, often caused him to see too vividly, to suffer too acutely, to enjoy too intensely, for imagination may be a hard taskmaster to its possessor.

One afternoon Dick Abbot escorted Aunt Judith and Prue to the gardens of Mr. Wise which lay between Brompton and Kensington. Mr. Wise had laid out the gardens for William III and Queen Anne at Kensington, and as

Aunt Judith said, never had she beheld so many beautiful and rare flowers in any collection. “Madam,” said Mr. Wise, “if all my plants were sold at one penny each the whole would realise over £40,000.” London was indeed in olden days famous for its gardens.

Mrs. Flowerdew desired the queen of all potpourris to fill the blue Ming vase. “I wish to have a scent so subtle and sweet that it will last for a hundred years,” she said, and Aunt Judith undertook to make it. The recipe came from Lancashire and was jealously guarded by the race of Greenmen that existed in that county, whose medicines, ointments, and perfumes were handed on from father to son. As the race of Greenmen has died out now I may safely give Aunt Judith’s recipe:

“Gather inn the morning drie and putt in the sun till nite.

Shredded leves from ful blowne Roses—mannie Red.

Jassamine floures, shredd—the white kinde—

Rubb purple floures of lavvender fine.

Swete floures of purple vetch,

Sage leves, Bay leves, Marjorim leves, Thyme, Rosemarie, Bergamot andd Baume—in smal quantities.

Add floures of pincks and carnations.

Mixe wel when drie.”

“Take ½-lb. Baye Salt, a handful of cloves, the same of Musk, Orris Roote, Sandal Wood, Ginger, and Powdered Cardamon Seedes, a Nuttmeg pounded, the rind of a lemmon dried and pounded.

Putt layers of floures and mixture in a wide bowle, Presse verry lightly and keepe for three months. Then putt in ye China jar and stirr sometymes.”

Prue helped Aunt Judith at every stage of this process.

The smell of the still-room at this time of the year was uplifting, and with Mrs. Haggy, Prue learned to make rose wash balls and violet water. The first were made of fresh rose leaves steeped in olive oil for six or seven

days, squeezed out into balls and dried until hard, then fresh leaves steeped in the same oil and the process repeated.

"Itt is goode for the Master to have fresshe Rose balls for his bath after a fitt of drunkenness, itt calmmeth his bloude," says Aunt Judith's recipe.

"Violett Watter" was simple. Mrs. Haggy steeped orris root in alcohol, put it in flagons, and shook vigorously often. Then she placed the flagons in the sun to ripen.

For the bath the two made canvas bags and filled them with verbena, bergamot, balm, thyme, lavender, syringa and "thinges of the lyke." These bags were to put in the bath of the Master, "after a drinkinge fitt"; they were also good for fevers and inflammations.

"Does the Master always have drinking fits?" Prue asked.

" 'Tis very customary in gentlemen," said Mrs. Haggy.

"Does the Mistress require the Bath Bags as well?"

"For screaming fits, temper, swoons they come in useful; after the Master's drinking fit the lady is subject to the like."

"They smell nice," said Prue.

"For young ladies they refresh the skin after dancing," said Mrs. Haggy. "They help to cure fainting fits, vapours, tempers, pains in the back and legs."

Truly, these bath bags had exceeding value in domestic life.

MRS. HAGGY

Mrs. Flowerdew drooped more and more during the hot July days, and Aunt Judith gave her soothing drops, powerful poultices; she also hung charms about her body, but these did not do her any good. Aunt Judith had much knowledge for she was learned in the power of gems as well as the planets. At that time gems had medical virtues, and it was believed they could scatter powerful healing corpuscles into the body; sapphires gave delicate people strength, coral purified the blood and regulated the action of the heart, and emeralds stayed sickness and produced eloquence; the planets, too, shed beneficent rains on earth charged with potent corpuscles which entered the body and cured its ailments; even Boyle

was of opinion that the planets affected the earth by means of the corpuscles in these beneficent rains. Aunt Judith exhausted all her gem lore before she sent for Dr. Meade and then she procured her sister's horoscope.

Dr. Meade came; he ordered a warm bath in which two large bags of sweet herbs had been steeped, and Aunt Judith studied her sister's horoscope for the names of the herbs of the planet under which she was born—for a chill, a surfeit or a fever these herbs are a certain and safe remedy—yet in spite of the herbs the lady's indisposition continued. Nothing seemed to move it, neither bleedings, purgings, herb baths, gem-craft, horoscopes, herb-mixtures, caudles, nor even dried toad-powder would touch it. Other physicians were called in and Hiera Picra was administered—a very ancient medicine used hundreds of years before Christ, consisting of aloes, saffron, mastic, Indian nard and canella bark—but it availed nothing. As a last resource Goa Stone was tried—a secret remedy of the Jesuits—a very costly mixture made of gum resins, pearls, coral, sapphires in powdered form, mixed with ambergris and gold-leaf; even this failed to move the disease and Mrs. Flowerdew grew worse. The poor lady had almost as many remedies as Charles II. The disease at last was declared to be a "sort of smallpox" or some obscure kind of plague.

Prue and Pen were kept away from their mother, which was easy, for they mostly lived in the garden during those hot July days. Everything was done for Mrs. Flowerdew that human skill could do, but it availed not at all. The end came swiftly and Mrs. Flowerdew knew it was coming.

"It seems that I have never been well since the blue Ming vase came into my room," she said.

" 'Tis a sick woman's fancy, Sister," declared Aunt Judith. "Be not superstitious."

"I'd rather die than be disfigured for life; I could not endure the pits of the disease on my face," she moaned. These were her last words.

After the funeral the two sisters, Drudy and Prue, saw more of each other, for of late years they had seen very little, and Prue stood somewhat in awe of the stately Drudy with her finished French manners and the airs of a Maid of Honour and the insincerities of Court.

"It is a dull Court," she grumbled, "with an ailing Queen and Lady Masham the prime favourite."

"She is like her mother, who was the fairest of the Chesington sisters," said her proud father to Aunt Cicely as he looked at his tall daughter; "she

would adorn any Court."

Beyond the accident of their relationship, the two sisters had little in common; they were bound together for life with the tie of birth, a strong tie which is rarely severed. To Drudy, airs of a great lady came naturally; she had been schooled in the manners of the French Court and had profited by the teaching. Her dreams were magnificent, her will imperious, her vanity rapacious; she always managed to be the centre of attention in her world. Her mind had a single track labelled self, and for self she lived, exacting the homage of her fellows. Drudy was subtly aware of her power, and she let no tittle of her tribute escape her. As for Prue, she was a simple soul; her mind had a single track also, but the thing she ever sought was beauty—an elusive thing, for it may assume so many forms of nature, of character, of thought, of words, and of plastic art.

In her heart Drudy scorned her sister Prue with her odd ideas out of books and her love for ballads and sonnets; she would never be fit to shine in Court circles. But what could you expect? She had been taught by that conceited creature, Dick Abbot, who thought he was a poet. She laughed scornfully. He had never written a sonnet to her or any other form of verse. He forgot what was due to her.

The household seemed broken up; Drudy was at Court, Simon was going to Oxford, and little Pen was still in the care of Mrs. Marjery. There seemed no place, as yet, in the home for Prue—she was too young to keep house, and when Aunt Judith suggested to Mr. Flowerdew that Prue should return with her to her Lancashire home the offer was accepted, for it was necessary that Prue should learn the practical methods of keeping house, and none was so capable as Aunt Judith for teaching her.

Aunt Judith remained at Cherry Court until November arranging everything creditably in her brother-in-law's household; then it was imperative that she should get home to attend to her affairs. Here are some entries from her diary at that time:

"The gratte Hurrycane of wind for a day and a night in wch the Wind did blowe downe manny of my Houses thatt wille putt mee to Above Six Hundred Pounds Charge, so Parson Chadwick says. Itt being the strongest wind thatt was ever known since Oliver Crumwel dyed. Yett have I also Trubble with three Farms in my Hand, neer a yeare and nott Let."

STRIKE OF SPITALFIELD WEAVERS. COPPIED BY MEE—P.F.

"The Citty this daye was in a turmoil. Itt being Queen Elizabeth's birthday ther was a mob a-Burning of the Divell, the Pope and the Prince of Wales—the Pretender—alle together. There was lyke to be an insurrection butt the Queen's Gardes came in time. So badd was itt thatt I never gott to St. Paul's Churchyard to buye the things wanted for Prue. Wee muste make shifft with the shopps at Puddlechester."

Prue was sad at parting with Dick Abbot, even the sight of Aunt Judith's coach and four horses failed to console her. On the last afternoon she walked alone to the stile and on to the Windmill. It was a golden afternoon with a clearness that made everything shining and dream-like; in patches the river ran like liquid gold. Prue stood weeping by the Windmill. Life would be desolate without Dick.

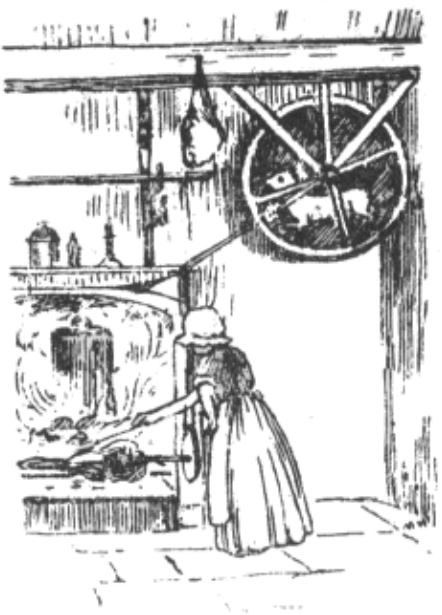
"Crying, Prue?" It was Mr. Dick Abbot himself who stood beside her.

"I don't want to go," sobbed Prue.

"Parting is always sorrowful, Prue."

"A year is a long, long time."

"A year soon passes," said Mr. Dick Abbot.



“THE TURNSPITT DOG”

CHAPTER VIII

AN ACCOMPLISHED LADY

> "She is a reading lady and fair gone in the pleasures of friendship, but, Sir, she goes no further."—*The Spectator.*

It was Dr. Johnson who said "Women can spin very well, but they cannot make a good book of Cookery." How I wish he had met Aunt Judith; she was one of those old-fashioned and accomplished women who flourished exceedingly in the seventeenth century, and Mrs. Hannah Woolley, that admirable, versatile, and amazing female, the compiler of an excellent cookery book, is an example; it was the artificiality of the eighteenth-century which killed these gifted women. Aunt Judith would undertake to cure leprosy or the plague as easily as she would make a venison pasty or roast a pike; she would compound "an exceeding fine Pill for Goutt," as surely as "an excellent conserve of rose leaves." Aunt Judith had written hymns, had set some of the psalms to poetry, had read and thought on many subjects; she was a thoroughly practical and very clever lady, moreover, she had a philosophic outlook on life.

Mr. Flowerdew gave up Prue to the lady's care with the utmost confidence, and, as he said to young Mr. Richard Abbot, "One daughter a Court lady, another a practical lady like her Aunt Judith, and a third to turn out as God pleases is enough for any man."

The events of the journey to Lancashire are given vividly enough in Prue's own words, illustrated in some instances by her own pen.

Prue's Journal.

Today being Monday we sett out in Aunt Judith's coach with four horses and two men; Parson Chadwick accompanied us on horseback and the boy Ned, who wore a fyne feather in his capp. Mrs. Haggy sat inside with fans, shawles and drops, shud we be fainte, and a sented pillow for slumber covered with purple silk. Elijah is most steddy on the road. He cud do the jornay in foure days tho' my Aunt Judith will nott have the horses overdrivn. Shee says five.

We came to nice inns. Att the George and Vulture, we got some plumbs, butt I liked best the *Falcon and the Four Swans* att Waltham with a pritty sign across the road and four black swanns sitting on itt.

Wee staid four nights on the road at inns wch I liked. The bustle is pleasant and I liked the bigg kitchens with a dogg turning the spit to roste

the mutton. They have two doggs, and itt is hard work. There is a poem about a turnspitt dog at Norwich:

> ‘he goes round and round,
> A hundred times, and never touches ground;
> And in the middle circle of the air
> He draws a circle like a conjurer.’

My brother Simon told me the poetry and didd the drawing of the picture.

We didd the jorney in five dayes withot mishapp for wch God be praised for this mercy to us, tho’ in a badd road the coache had a turne over and nott one Limb bruck.

In Lancashire the country is wild and not fyne like neer London. There are many big trees.

The towne of Puddlechester is pretty and on a river whereinn are troute and grayling and other fissch. Parson Chadwick like Sir Murdoch is a grate fissherman and he told mee about the fissch; wee had dinner att one o clock in the country att an olde inn, and then on thro’ grene lanes to Clinton Moor.

My Aunt Judith lives in a nice neatt Manor House in a park, nott grand, but rurall and black-and-white. There are manny such houses hereaboutts for grate oakes grow in plenty in the forests and wood is cheep. There was a badd high road and then we turned into the Court-yard wch is of cobble stones.

In the big Stone Hall grate, loggs lay a-burning on the hearth in all sesons of the yeare wch is goode for the house and bringeth luck.

Our cloakes and little muffs we layd on the oak chists and entered into the Grate Parlour. A nice sight to see was the China-japanned tea-table with a silver kettle bubbling and tea from China in a fine tea jar painted handsome with a gentleman in a blew robe scolding a boy in a pink shirt and yellow trousers, and a servant dresed in greene holding lilies. Ther was a red teapot, and little painted tea-cups and large plates with musk cakes, macaroons and French bread and butter. Alle very nice to see.

Aunt Judith told Mrs. Haggy to make Elijah Hincks a Cardus Posset at once, for he sufered with paines and a-tremblings since the Coach turn-over. “The man must to bedd quick and send for Doctor Jinks,” said Aunt Judith. While my Aunt Judith talked of oyles to rubb on Elijah’s bruises, I observed the room.

The walls were hanged with a tapestrie of green forrests and stags. The gilded sconces on the walls held candles and one shelf held fine porcelain from China, for people in our countrie know not the secrett of making porcelain and the Chinese will not tell, wch is selfish. A carved settee stitched in silk stood neer the tea-table and round the walls ther were ten nice caned chairs carved most handsom.

Ther are books in the parlour, Culpeper's Herbal, and Sir Walter Raleigh's Historie of the World, which my Aunt Judith grately likes. Then Aunt Judith came and I sate on the new settee beside her and drank a dish of tea, not very nice to mee, but ladies delite in it. The little cakes were nice, som hadd carroway seedes.

I am to sleepe in the grate Chamber, it is handsome butt lonelie, tho' Aunt Judith has put Mrs. Haggy's neece, Nessy to sleep in the Closset of my bedchamber for companie for mee.

Ther is a newe stairway made by Thomas Henshaw and costing more than fourty pounds, my Aunt Judith said, "it is a strait and steep," very nicely carved with Brambles and Blackberries twinning round the pillars.

Ther was chocolat at Breakfast for mee, and greene tea for my Aunt Judith. She says it puts heart into her. The fissh comes oute of her own river, sometimes ther is young salmon. The bread is brown and crispp and the eggs newly-laid.

The Herb Garden hath four paths cobbled and a Sun diall to mark the Hours, and on itt is writ:

Ut umbra. Sic. vita.

which means Shade be life's pattern.

Parson Chadwick was curious to know how I had lernt Latin and I told him aboutt good Mr. Abbot my master who has made me lerne many things.

Aunt Judith tho' older than my dear Mother and older than Aunt Cicely, is gaye. She sings to me:

"Madam wol ye stalk
Prively into my garden."

The Herb garden always has a murmuring of manny bees, and they buzz about like little black clouds, it is a pretty sight to see them. Bees are my favorite insekts.

In the Herb garden are growing mintes of manny sorts, butt I like beste the purple Cat-minte; ther is allso Thyme, Furmitory, Sweet-Woodruff, Scarlet Bergamont, Lavender and such things that Bees like well. Neer the Apple Trees are straw skeps for the Bees and pink Hollyhocks grow aboutt them.

In the evening before we hadd prayers the men and maids came in to joyn; Aunt Judith satt among her bookes. She has a grate many and some of them very big. Sir Walter Raleigh's Historie of the World is her favourit. "I learn aboutt other lands in itt," she said. Her father gave it to her when she was sixteen she told mee, because she liked so much to read it.

In London Aunt Judith dresses verry fine like a Court lady. Here her attyre and her manners are rurall, tho' gracious and mirthfull when Sir Murdoch comes heer; manny ladies are mirthfull when gentlemen come to vissit. She says thre things in lyfe give her grate delite.

i. Oriental porcelaine wch wee cannot make, only Delph tho' pritty is not dellicate; and porcelaine is verry deer to buy.

ii. Books of wch shee has manny. She has writ poems and psalms, as good I think as Davidd's, butt she says nott. She can write hyms too, andd sermones as good as anny parson.

iii. Attyre. She has a grate manny close; A closset quite full of them, andd I am to help her in the cold dyyes of winter to make listes of her porcelain, bookes and attyre, for she says "A true gentlewoman kepes her possessions in order and knows whatt she hath," soe I amm making a liste of my close and books.

The house hath grate rambling passages, wyde chimneys, dorres and windows that creek; loose Tyles slyde downe the roofe in a grate wind; and olde boardes on the floors start in the night with frightfull soundes. Swallows build nestts in the chimneys and make od sounds at midnightt, and the wynd whistles thro' the Keyholes and waills like badd ghosts. Haggy tells storys of the dayes of the Cavaliers and Roundhedds, when the bigg Kitchen was ful of the King's army and the hogsheds of ale thatt was brewedd and drunk by soldgers. Ther are ghostes in the hous wch wail and lamment wishing to reepent and itt is too late.

There is a ruinned Abbey neer the Manor-House, with no roof to itt, but bits of walls and bigg windows. Nettles grow where the monkes used to praye by the Altar, and ravens croke and rooks caw in the trees. The wind

howls and a milkmaid withoutt a hedd comes in the dark night weeping and wailling; shee carries her head in her hands and they are all wett with her tears. The mayds and men are much affrighted and my Aunt Judith is trubbled at these tales. “Ghosts and gobblins,” shee says “do nott torment rightous people onley sinfull folk.”

Haggy told mee how the Milkmaid was Kiled by a priest, and he hidd her head in a pott under the altar; and the milkmaid comes and findes itt on dark nights and weeps til her hands are wett, thenn she shrieks with frightfull skretches.

Att night when the wind howls wee hear the weeping and Nessy who slepes in the Closset of my bedchamber, covers upp her hedd.

My Aunt Judith’s naybour Sir Murdoch Sheepshanks comes often to see her, and to-day he redd to her oute of the book of a writter named Mr. Locke to show her thatt gobblins are onley false tales. This is whatt Sir Murdoch read: “The ideas of goblins and sprights have really no more to do with darkness than light; yet let but a foolish maid inculcate these often on the mind of a child, and raise them there together, possibly he shall never be able to separate them again so long as he lives; but darkness shall ever afterwards bring with it those frightful ideas.”

My Aunt Judith said that God sent spiritts and ghosts to frighten sinners and make them repent, and so, they talked of religion and vane imaginings of ignorant people.

“Haggy Sage,” said my Aunt, “hath seen the hedless milkmaid, and on a dark night I have herd her wails.”

“Vane imaginings, Madam,” said Sir Murdoch.

I sat quiett and copied bits oute of Mr. Locke’s book to show to my master Mr. Dick Abbot for he liketh nott to think thatt gobblins and ghosts are true.

Wenn Sir Murdoch saw what I writ he complimmented my Aunt on mee.

“Miss Prue will be as learned as her Aunt in time,” he said with a bow to her.

Noboddy ever complimmented my mother about mee, tho’ the Beaux and fyne gentlemen often said thatt Drudy would one day be as handsome as her mother. Drudy has manny compliments.

I said soe to my Aunt Judith, and shee said:

“Drudy hath, indeed, a grand air and pleasing looks and she hath arts to enhance them; butt if you are nott as handsom as she, you can be good, for a girl mustt be one or ’tother.”

That nite I satt in my Aunt Judith’s chamber drinking my caudel and eating plum cake whilst Haggy brushed Aunt Judith’s hair wch is longe and fyne and she relatted alle the gossipp abbout Sir Murdoch.

“Folks do be a’ sayin’, Madam, thatt he’s a-courtin’ the Lady o’ th’ Manor.”

Aunt Judith was gaye and mirthfull, she larfed and was plesed.

“Nay, good Haggy, Nay, Nay, tho’ he be truly an agreeble gentleman, and as the *Spectator* sayeth ‘men are the tamest and moste humane of brutes,’ yett a brute, Haggy, like all the men.”

“Lord bless us: ’tis yure ladyshipp as knows men,” said Haggy.

“Thatt is trew, Haggy, marriage is a desperatte undertaking for a poore woman; to have men’s company somtimes, and children without the riske of marriage wld be a comely thing.”

“Yes, your ladyship, yett to be a lone spinster is a desperatt thinge too, as desperatt as marriage.”

“That is soe,” said my Aunt Judith, “tho’ men be ille to live with, evven the best of them. God help them—the creatures—Knaggy, rasping as an ill-oyled doore. Marriage is too seriouse a business to be undertaken twice,” then she sed to mee:

“Looke at yure father, child, instructious as anny pedagogue; dictatorial, crotchety, and interfering alle the time. The worlde is theirs and they gruge women an inch of itt.”

“They do thatt,” agreed Haggy. “It pleased the Lord, Madam, to take my poore man inside two yeares. Praised be to the Lord for his mercies.”

“In a truly comfortabel World,” sighed my Aunt Judith, “it would be a nice and respectable thinge, iff God hadd permitted the women folk to be borne widdows with two children.”

Mrs. Haggy fell a-larfing, and my Aunt Judith larfed too.

“ ’Twould be a goode thinge for manny a poor woman if the goode Lord soe ordered itt, Madam.”

“Yett,” mused my Aunt, “men are plesant enuff to talk to when you are nott obligated to them, nor they to you; obligations betwix folk cause truble.”

“Ay, Madam, my Jake were as nice a man as the Lord made, wen I were a lass; butt sour and ruff with a wife, tho’ thank God I’d a tonge of my owne.”

“Its a badd thinge to be alwais agreeable in speech,” sed my Aunt Judith. “Keep a stinge in yure tonge and use itt, then folks wont encroach and impose.”

“Them meeke wimmen thatt cant saye ‘Boo’ to a goose be a cross to manny a poore man, too, Madam.”

“Maybe, Haggy, well well, twelve yeares with Mr. Hibband was a trew education for anny woman. Often hee left me to my shiffts for months on ende and even yeares. I kept the estate and the parson, and the tennants in order and brought upp my son Corney wch he left me to do, thank God! while he was running aboutt the country spending whatt I saved. Then it pleased my God to take him, and I became a free woman; no more marriages for mee, Haggy.”

“No, madam, nor me neither,” quoth Haggy.

In his tapestry-hung chamber, whereon was depicted an all-wise Solomon directing the child to be divided in twain, the shadow on him cast by a fine piece of old armour, sat Sir Murdoch reading and musing over his *Spectator*. His thoughts dwelt on his fair neighbour, Mrs. Judith Hibband.

“She certainly has the finest hand of any woman in the world,” ran his musing, “and her widow’s habit well becomes her, though she is as perverse as Sir Roger de Coverley’s mistress,” and he read: “She is one of those unaccountable creatures that secretely rejoice in the admiration of men, but indulge themselves in no further consequences.” Then he fell to thinking of his estate. Like Sir Roger, he would willingly have sacrificed a hundred acres for a diamond ring for this perverse woman; he would have given a coal-pit also to keep her in clean linen, and the profits of a windmill for her fans, and once in three years the shearing of his sheep for her under-petticoats. Money spent on such a woman was well spent, and he sighed.

Thus ran Sir Murdoch’s musings, and very proper too for a gentleman contemplating matrimony with a handsome widow in the early forties. He felt himself quite able to care for her comfort and humour her fancies, yet

she did not seem to want these things and he marvelled greatly. What did she want?

It is hard to guess. She was a reading woman, a woman of wit and ability. They were the hardest to woo; and you never knew how to please them, or to keep them in their proper place when you had got them. They would interfere in affairs of the estate, the church, the village, and the bench; and the jades were often right too, which was awkward for their lords. Sir Murdoch scratched his wig and sighed. A really comfortable wife should be a bit of a fool, yet fools were often boring with their weepings, their vapour and hysterics. He thought thus ruefully for ten minutes. He would send Madam Hibband those numbers of the *Spectator* containing those prose portraits of Sir Roger de Coverley and Will Honeycomb and the rest. He chuckled at the thought and reached for his snuff-box.

He sat for an hour thinking on the virtues of Madam Hibband. Finely she had managed the estate, and sent her boy Corney to his grandmother in Ireland so that he might not be contaminated by his father's bad example; and a fine funeral she had given her husband, everything done in grand style. She was a woman in a thousand, and he, a sour-complexioned man, and a fool in his cups. She was well rid of him. Then he sighed. Judith was her name, too high-sounding for him, he would like to call her Judy; a pity it was that she was so quick-witted, for wit spoiled the best of women. He arose and examined the armour of his ancestor. He had been a fine fellow and tall. The rascal had married four wives and buried them all. Sir Murdoch wondered how he had managed it. Women must have been easy to woo in those days.

Sir Murdoch was tall himself and sturdy though agile enough in mind and body; he was in the early fifties and had kept his warmth of heart and the energy of his youth, as well as his love of outdoor life. He carried his handsome head well, and though he had fine wigs yet in his own study he often discarded such an appendage. His hair was thick and growing grey, his eyes of hazel-brown lighted up when he was moved by emotion, indignation or anger. He was a fisherman, a lover of Izaak Walton, a good landlord, and a kind friend. Why was his fair neighbour so coy and distant at times?

He had married the lady of his choice in his youth and she had died six weeks later, and ever since the gentleman had apparently been content with the bachelor estate until the death of Aunt Judith's husband. Since then his thoughts were often centred on the clever lady.

On the morrow he carefully selected certain books to send to Aunt Judith, and among them were those numbers of the *Spectator* containing an account of Sir Roger de Coverley.

A FINE PIECE OF OLD ARMOUR

It was night at the manor-house and Mrs. Haggy was brushing her lady's hair. Prue sat gravely taking her caudle and Aunt Judith was reading the *Spectator*. Presently she fell a-laughing.

"Harken," she said, "Sir Roger would give his lady a coal-pit to keep her in clean linen, the profits of a windmill for her fans, and every three years the shearing of sheep for her under-petticoats."

"It do take a lot, Madam, to keep a lady starched, clean, and with things handsome about her," quoth Mrs. Haggy.

"I've all that I want, thank God," said Aunt Judith, "and the man's hint about clean linen is overbold, though to be sure he only sent me Mr. Addison's story of Sir Roger, a sweetly pretty story; and the perverse woman he favoured with his attentions had a wit and a will of her own—a widow too; 'tis a fine thing to be a widow, Haggy."

"It is so," agreed the waiting-woman.

"Still," mused Aunt Judith, " 'tis a lack of delicacy for Sir Murdoch to be a-thinking of my linen and my under-petticoats and the cost of them," and she laughed again.

"I thought," chimed in Prue, "that it was Sir Roger in Mr. Addison's story who thought about these things."

"It is the same thing," said Aunt Judith, "he sent it to me to read, 'twas a broad hint," and both mistress and maid fell a-laughing merrily.

"A gentleman who's a-thinking of such things is very deep in love," quoth Mrs. Haggy wisely.

"Love!" said Aunt Judith. "Can love exist for ever between man and woman as a pure sentiment?"

“There’s a-many things, Madam, mixed up with marriage bells,” said Mrs. Haggy darkly.

“There’s love of dominion, greed, jealousy, hatred, neglect, anger, and all uncharitableness,” said Aunt Judith.

“There’s men a-turning theirselves into pigs with drink an’ cussing shameful; and kicks, an’ his fist in your face if you be his wedded wife,” said Mrs. Haggy ardently.

“There’s love between parent and child and between friends, tho’ between husband and wife it is so rare as to be almost non-existent,” went on Aunt Judith.

Prue flushed with excitement. “The poets, Aunt Judith,” she cried, “wrote beautiful sonnets about love. Shakespeare did, and so did Sir Philip Sidney.”

“Child,” and Aunt Judith laughed, “these poets never wrote sonnets to their wedded wives; Shakespeare’s sonnets were to a dark lady with black hair like wire; she could not speak truth and the poet had to pretend he believed her though he ‘knew she lied,’ and Sir Philip Sidney’s sonnets were to a child, who married someone else when she was old enough.”

Tears were in Prue’s eyes. “But he was poor,” she said, “and they made her marry a lord.”

Again Aunt Judith laughed. “A husband is a vain and a very instructious person. He is for ever at your elbow to point out your faults, to read your letters, to tell you what to wear, what to do; he advises you without reason, he chides without sense, then he runs after some other woman and leaves you to your shifts.”

“Some men wouldn’t do these things,” urged Prue, “they have sense and kindness.”

“Lud, child! you seem to favour the men. How would you like a husband to chide and instruct you and point out your faults when you were a grown woman?”

“I should like all these things from the man I would marry,” said Prue stoutly.

“Child! you speak without experience,” said Aunt Judith.

THE CURATE’S COTTAGE WITH A “NEWE THATCH”

CHAPTER IX

“THE FAULTS OF MAN”

“Never wed unless you can
Bear with all the faults of Man!
Men sometimes will jealous be,
Though but little cause they see.
Men when their affairs require
Must awhile themselves retire;
Sometimes hunt and sometimes hawk,
And not ever sit and talk.”—J. Campion.

Aunt Judith had no desire to burden herself further with matrimony; she had borne with “the faults of Man,” and had suffered under the burden. In her early married life she had left her husband in haste and anger and taken refuge with her sisters, declaring her intention of joining the Roman Catholics and becoming a Nun, for she could no longer suffer a husband.

“Be not rash, Sister,” counselled Cicely. “It is better to suffer with a husband than to suffer with an Abbess.”

“It is honourable and virtuous to bear with the faults of a husband,” said correct Rosalind.

“With an Abbess you never get your own way; there is nothing but abject submission to another woman,” said Cicely pointedly.

“To pretend to submit to a man is easy enough,” advised Rosalind; “even with the worst of them, in nine cases out of ten a woman can twist men round her little finger.”

“It is the clever, self-willed women like you, Judith, who fail to manage men. Like Queen Elizabeth, you should have remained single,” remarked Cicely.

In the end Aunt Judith went back to her husband—like many another woman—and she made the best of it; not a good best, she was too critical, too passionate, too little inclined to wheedle him for that, and as we have seen, he often left her, unable to endure her chidings and admonitions.

In her journal she rarely mentions him, though sometimes when burning with injustice and anger she writes bitterly. Here are examples:

“He is a soure complectioned man with a dulle soule, and doth require constant change of place to keepe his minde from putrefaction. An ille and incompetente judge of cards, cattle and companie.”

His friends she describes as “cunninge, carpinge and credulouse; it irkes my soule to see them use him as a ninny—more’s the pitty—and he, poore foole, wots nott of their artfull wayes.”

His heart she says later, is “a bitt of hard flesh; to mee in nothing tender, because, forsooth, I evver saved his pockett, yett got no thanks, it is pritty fooles men seke who waist monney that bask in his affection.”

Her own portrait is sketched gaily enough; despite her touch of stateliness she had her mirthful moments and “craved a frolic to take the sournesse oute of my harte.” And she writes exultingly, “Freedom is verry lightsome to a woman.”

She loved her home and her possessions, which she strove to keep in order “for my son Corney, and I pray my mercifull God thatt he may be a better man than his poore father.”

She reads the poet Donne with approval, and we find her copying these lines:

> “Be then thine own home, and in thyself dwell,
> And seeing the snail . . .
> Carrying his own home still . . .
> Follow (for he is easy-paced) this snail,
> Be thine own Palace, or the World’s thy jail.”

When her heart inclines her towards Sir Murdoch she resolves firmly: “I will dwell in myselfe and mannage my owne affairs even as thatt snail. Yett Sir Murdoch is a kinde neibour and wood help me, and I like the companie and talk of a man of the worlde, butt I deny myself, for men are an encroaching sex.”

Sir Murdoch once wrote of her to a friend, “She is competent in affairs, and very fragrant with propriety.”

She delights in reading John Selden’s Table Talk, and quotes frequently from it:

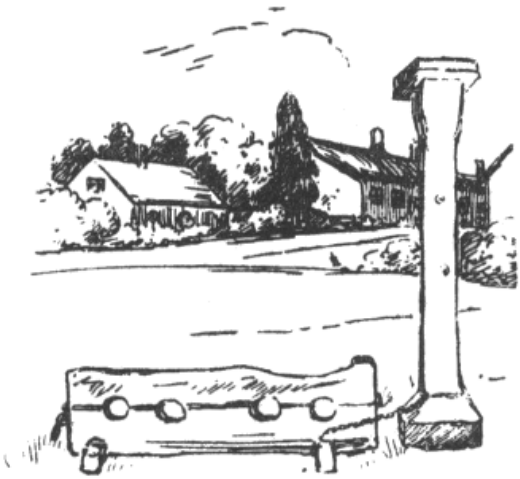
“Preaching for the most part is the glory of the Preacher to show himself a fine Man. Catechising would be much better.” She comments on this during her troubles with the drunken parson: “It is nayther preaching nor

yett catechising thatt Mr. Bowker is goode for, butt fuddling in a pot-hous and I am weake and endure his Drinking Habbits for the sake of his Wife and children, I must make an ende to itt." Which threat she kept, for we read later, "I hadd this daye to discharge Mr. Bowker for Debauchery, I, haveing putt up too long with his Quarrelsome and Drunken Habbits, and alle his promises of Amendment to no purpose. So he is now hence from evver supplying againe my Church at Clinton Moor and Mr. Chadwick for the pressent for Christenings and Buriells, and I will give him for an abbode the Curate's Cottage with a newe thatch."

In other extracts we read of her tribulations:

"Itt being Sunday morning, God gave me yett more trubble, tho' I were att the Sacramentt. On ye 3rd of the month all the clothes and linnen was stole from mee by the carelessness of the Washinge Maid. It were a good five weeks' wash. Peg owned to her greatt fault in leaving it oute to bleech on the Lord's Day. The close and linnen being worth neer £20. Bess Lamb was turn'd away for robery by mee a week before the washing were stolen, and I offered a rewarde to find the thief, for in my minde was suspicion of Bess Lamb. And lo! on the Monday morning itt was alle found oute."

Mrs. Haggy discovered the thief by the occult means of which she was master. In this instance the Bible, the church door-key and a length of stout twine were the means she employed. Aunt Judith writes:



WHIPPING-POST AND STOCKS

“Bess Lamb is a wicked wench. She stole all my Washinge; it was hid under the bed where her dead grandmother lay. She was ordered a goode Whipping at the Whipping-Post, tho’ I like not this punnishment for the bad wench, yett it may save her from the Gallows. Haggy and the others saw the whipping. Haggy said the bloude streemed down butt little; and well Bess Lamb merrited it, tho’ a man be always soft-hearted with a maid and the strokes was light; Silas Urwin did the Whiping and the whip was made of platted rope verry much frayed; the strokes was nott hard enuff to brake the wenche’s skin but in one place. ’Tis said Sir Murdoch told the man nott to hurt the wench, he hath evver a kind harte for a lass with a bright eye.”

In domestic matters and medical lore Aunt Judith, as we have seen, excelled. She was born in the seventeenth century, at a time when cookery flourished on a lavish scale; a time when cookery books were written by artists in what has been called “broidered language.” Even Cromwell and all his Puritans could not kill in the hearts of the people the joy they had in exuberant cooking; and next to eating these mighty feasts they took pleasure in reading and talking about them. It pleases me to think of the buoyant Pepys enjoying himself in his rollicking way, on a fine summer’s day—when his wife was safely out of the way in the country—taking the ladies he liked best to the King’s pleasure-boat, and then down the river, “all the way reading in a book of Receipts of the making of fine meats . . . which made us good Sport.”

Thackeray seems to be of like opinion. He writes: “Next to eating good dinners, a healthy man, with a benevolent turn of mind, must like to read about them.”

Sir Murdoch loved cookery books as he loved fishing, and he knew a great deal about both; he came one day with a fine salmon-trout as a present to Aunt Judith.

“Did you catch it with a fly, Sir,” she asked.

“Nay, Madam, ’twas Tim Bagshaw, the rascal, catched it in his net. It weighs twelve pound and one ounce, and I gave him one shilling for his pains.”

“It would make a famous pie,” said Aunt Judith.

“With oysters, pick’t lobster, plenty of good butter and an excellent crust, Madam.”

Aunt Judith agreed. “If no lobster can be obtained we must do without,” she said, and that is what happened; and Sir Murdoch came to supper and

partook of it, “admiring greately the waye it was dressed.” It was a most excellent pie.

Further extracts of Aunt Judith’s diary show her skill and learning:

“Oysters being cheep as goosberries, onley twelve pence a peck, and I have a fine receit from Lady Usher for makeing Oyster pye. ’Tis thus: Season a quart with herbes, pepper, salt, nuttmeg, mace, throw into boyling water and boyle a little. Putt in pye-dish with lemmon, marow from Marrow bones, roll eache oyster in whit of egg, and the yolks in whole with Butter. Make a Caudle of Butter, Sugger and Vinegar and putt in your pye. Itt is fitt for a King, and Sir Murdoch to supper sed so.”

“For drying Toads I do thys way. Take Greatt Toads, tye a pack thread to hind leggs and hang them upp to dry, and let them hang till quite dryed. To hang abbout the neck, a dryed toad stops bleeding, cures vommit, and panes in the stumach. Itt also cures dropsey. Thys from Mrs. Peters.”

The following items were written in her husband’s lifetime:

“My trubbles make mee verry ill and weary. I gott Mr. Winch the Apothecary to Lett me Bloode and Cutt of my hair a few inches—butt it failed to give me ease of bodie or minde.”

An entry when Corney was a small boy.

“My deer Son, Corney complayned sorely of panes in his heed and stumach. He was putt to bed and Haggy made him a possett; we gave him dropps every houre butt it did not move the disorder. Ye nexte day Smalpox appered on him and Doctor Dimsley attended him, and Mr. Winch Let him Bloode, between the doctor and apothecary they nerely kild my deer son by giving him a vommit when the Smallpox was coming out. Corney hadd a dangerous fitt of vommit in soe violent a manner that we dispair’d of Life for him. The humours wentt to his hedd, wch Martha Biddolph dyed of, when the Smalpox was coming out by reason of a vommit, butt I hung a dryed toad aboutt his neck and Haggy put fresh periwynkle between his teeth, and by these means, and my God’s greatt mercie, he is nowe like to recover, butt no thanks to the doctor and apothecary who so weakened him, thatt we expected his Last everie hour.”

She is mindful of good and ill luck:

“August has unluckie days in it: ye 3rd, ye 7th, and ye 9th are alle greviously unlucky and thinges with mee have gone sadly awry on all the unluckie days of this month.

"The tenth of August is the daye of Sainte Laurence and Haggy would nott have beef or mutton steaks cooked on ye gridiron becaus the Saint dyed on this daye by roasting on a kinde of yron grate in Rome; meat roast on this day is ill for the Hous; Though itt was not roast, yett itt was ill for the hous for in the greatt heat the mutton and the beef wentt bad with maggots and hadd to go to the pigs. There be manny Popish relicks among the people. Folks say that Cain kild Abel on the 2nd Monday in this monthe wch is the unluckiest day of all."

During her husband's lifetime she sometimes complains of the unhappiness of her lot and her ways of escape. She writes: "In everie life be smal secrett doors and stairwaiyes to freedom: my stairwaye lies in reading goode books wch brightens the tedium of life and soe I dele with my trubbles."

She speaks approvingly of the letters of the Duchess of Newcastle whose "writtings be as entertaining as anny thing in the *Spectator*," She also delights in Mrs. Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*, and marvels that savage folk can be virtuous without religion. Mrs. Haywood's *New Atlantis* also affords her entertainment. Truly these ladies, in spite of the odium later critics have meted out to them, may be praised as the inventors of the English novel, and in spite also of Swift's bitter denunciation of the last lady as "a stupid, infamous scribbling woman." Another book which gave her joy was *The Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle*, by Dame Juliana Berners, printed in 1496.

She used to declare to Sir Murdoch that this last lady, who was Prioress of Sopwell, had said everything to be said about fishing and making flies, and that Izaak Walton had only copied from her with some "man-like reflections."

Aunt Judith hoped much from women.

"With the examples of Queen Elizabeth, the Duchess of Newcastle, Mrs. Aphra Behn, and Mrs. Haywood before us," she often said, "women of the future will shine in statesmanship and letters for manny women have grater sense than men."

As we have already seen, she was capable in keeping her accounts. The following entry concerning the roofing of the Manor Farm shows the very practical side of her nature: "The newe Reeding of the Manor Farme and the Smal Barn being finished I payd Tom Cross the Reeder for his work Twelve pounds six shillings. I likewise payd for rush-Rope and Splints and 5000 Reeds and carridge and Bridge Money and Men's drink, and a Lode of Rye

Straw to ooff them wch cost me £32.17.9 and nott 40 Reed left for mee with suche wasteful rogues at work."

It was early on a Sunday morning in August that Queen Anne died, and it was Wednesday when Sir Murdoch received the news from London. He hastened to Aunt Judith's manor-house at Clinton Moor with the tidings.

The bell of the church was tolled and the people assembled in the courtyard at Aunt Judith's house, while Sir Murdoch, standing on the steps at her front door with Aunt Judith and her household around him, read the news to the people who came from all parts to Clinton Moor to hear it.

In the great parlour afterwards the gentlemen were refreshed with cherry brandy and macaroons and the Quality from the neighbouring halls joined them, while Mrs. Haggy and the old steward served the people with mead and cakes.

"They say th' Dutchman is crown'd a'ready," volunteered Enoch the coachman.

"And th' young King across to be crown'd in Paris," said Giles the farmer, who had been with the troops of William of Orange "down wi' th' Papists."

"The Dutchman George ain't no Papist, that's why he's crown'd," said Enoch.

"Why can't he speak English, then?" demanded the Reeder, Tom Cross.

" 'Cause he's a Dutchman," muttered Enoch.

"Miss Prue Flowerdew's mother was Maid of Honour to Queen Anne," said Mrs. Haggy, "she were a fine lady with a skin like curd and teeth like pearls."

"An Miss Prue to be Maid to the new Queen when she's growd up," remarked the farmer's wife.

"Nay," contradicted Mrs. Haggy, " 'tis her sister, Miss Drudy, that's Maid of Honour, an' beautiful as a picture."

And so the gossip and the wonder of the event went on in both kitchen and parlour, and slowly the news that Queen Anne was dead penetrated throughout the country.

Prue sat in the Park on a bank near a hedge covered with wild clematis with its pale starry flowers giving out a faint odour; over the low wall was a busy stream, its little ripples all fire-tipped with the sun. She loved to listen to the little song of the rippling water, and where the stream grew broader big trees like alders, willows, and twisted hawthorn bushes and brambles lined its banks. She saw in a quiet spot near the deep pools Sir Murdoch with a can beside him for his live bait. He was plunged in a profound meditation as he fished. A woodpecker was calling loudly, and a kingfisher flashed by but the fisherman never stirred.

Prue was reading the advertisements in the *Daily Journal*, a two-page news sheet which her father had sent to Aunt Judith. She read: "To be sold a black boy about 14 years old. Enquire Ned's Coffee House in Birch Lane," and she paused to wonder about him, and who his parents were, and how he became a slave. Drudy wanted a black page-boy, but he must not be more than ten years old. Drudy wished to dress him in blue and silver and always to have him stand behind her chair to attend her. Dick Abbot did not approve of slavery and neither did Prue. She read further: "Pleasant diversion. A mad bull to be dressed up with fireworks, and a live cat to be tied to his tail and be turned loose in the Game Place with the dogs after him." People were to pay sixpence to see this spectacle.

She wondered about it. It seemed very cruel, but all sports were cruel, even fishing. She was sure that Mr. Abbot would tell her that such sports with mad bulls and cats ought to be forbidden by law. Then she saw a young gipsy girl coming out of the wood, a fine buxom wench with black eyes, a pointed hat, and a basket full of apples on her arm.

The gipsy wench eyed Sir Murdoch, who was a very presentable man, with a handsome wig, a fine leg, and most beautiful braid on his coat. Then she slowly approached him, with a sly smile that showed her pretty teeth. Sir Murdoch, unconscious of her presence, fished on.

"Maybe your Honour's a-thinking of the pretty woman that's a-dreamin' of him," said the wench, boldly.

"Begone, baggage," said the Knight, rousing himself. "I'll warrant it's stolen apples you have in that basket."

"Nay, yer Honour, 'tis but bran to make a poultice for Jake's sore leg, and a few worm-bitten windfalls." She smiled roguishly. "He's my sweetheart is Jake; and from the glint of heaven's own blue that's a-shining in the bright eyes of yer Honour it's plain that you're a-thinkin' of the pretty lady that dreams o' ye."

"Tut, tut," blustered Sir Murdoch; "go, go, woman."

"You haint got that light in yer eyes for nothing," wheedled the gipsy. "Show the poor gipsy your hand then."

"Pish, foolish wench!" said the Knight, but he was mightily pleased all the same, and a further dose of flattery from the wench induced him to hold out his hand.

"There's a pretty woman on yer heart-line, master, she's a-dreaming of you. She'll come into yer life sure enuff."

"Go, go, baggage, don't steal apples I tell you," and the Knight with a broad smile gave her half a crown.

A GIPSY WENCH

"It's luck you'll have with the fishing; and luck you'll have with the pretty lady—if you get her—but there's many a slip, yer Honour."

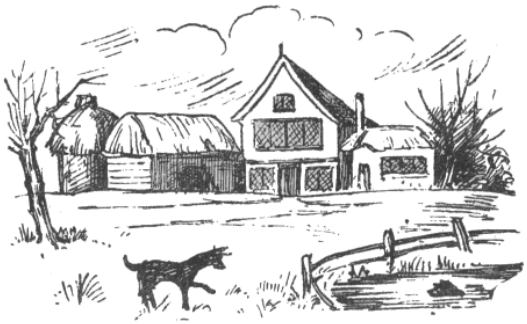
"Ay!" agreed Sir Murdoch. "Will it all end in dreams?"

"Dreams," said the gipsy, "fill many a lone widow's heart; and widows will dream and dream and go not one step further."

The Knight laughed, and when the gipsy girl went on her way Sir Murdoch put away his flies and strolled on up to the manor-house.

SIR MURDOCH IN THE GARDEN

Prue sat for awhile marvelling; she had thought that love was only for young people like Drudy and Dick Abbot, and Aunt Judith and Sir Murdoch were both old; it was very mysterious that they should think about love. She walked towards the manor-house with the news sheet in her hand, and there at the great garden gate stood Sir Murdoch, hat in hand, watching Aunt Judith attending to her roses, while Aunt Judith's dog Fido sat beside him.



“A NEATT PICTURE OF THE FARM AT KENSINGTON”

CHAPTER X

CHAP-BOOKS AND BALLADS

> "With a tale forsooth he cometh unto you; with a tale which holdeth children from play and old men from chimney corners."
>
> SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

Prue was now about sixteen, capable enough in ruling her father's household, though inadequate she often felt in teaching her little sister Pen.

A sonnet which Dick Abbot addressed to her in her eighteenth year enables me to describe her as he saw her in her youth.

She is graceful and moves easily, and her eyes are clear as brook-water, in colour like honey dripping from comb, they are deep-set, wide apart, and beautiful; beautiful too is the short upper lip drawn into a cupid's bow, her light brown feathery hair is touched with gold, and carnation flushes come and go in her cheeks. The poet describes her as "unfrivolous and sedate," and he speaks of the "curious flame-like quality" of her. She must have been an arresting person for he says she gave the impression of movement and change, as in a dancing flame there was in her, a rising and falling, sparkling, glowing, smouldering, springing, you saw it in the shine of her eye, the flash of her teeth, her light footstep, in her quick anger and her quicker repentance, in her passion for beauty and her impulsive tenderness, and the poet finishes his sonnet by declaring that her nature was "sweet as an apple." This was Prue as I visioned her through Dick Abbot's eyes.

Drudy was a Maid of Honour to the first lady in the land, the King's daughter-in-law. He was a boorish person this George I, with little taste in anything, and being drunk every night he must have been a dreadful companion for any lady though he seemed satisfied with the ugly lady companions he brought with him. Here is Prue's account of some of her own activities:

"My cossins Matthew and Hester Barnes came oute of Ireland in a Ship of War to Bristol. Itt being a troublesome jorney and they like to have been drowned. They abode in Bristol untill they got a coach to London and they found the Customs were unkindlie to them.

"My cossin Hester is skilled in distilling plesant Cordials which make the bloude race swiftly in the boddy. She has a curious still for this purpose,

the like of which is nott in this country. One strong Cordial—the flavour of which is most plesant to my father is called *Us-quabath*, indeed, the hot aromatyk taste of it delights all my father's friends. The Highland sort of this agreeable Cordial is hotter to the taste, and in the country of Scotland it is called Whisky.

"My cossins brought XII botles of this Cordial as a pressent to my father, and it was got safely on the shore, then, sad to relate, it was taken by the Customs and forfeited to the King, and a fine of five pounds to the Customs. It is odd thatt country's make laws about the making of Cordial waters.

"My father bade me lern from my cossin Hester how to make this drink, but we have no such still and Hester says it requires to be made secretely, and is most troublesome, for the mild damp air of Ireland assists the singular flavour wch can nott be got heer. I was sorry to disoblige my father.

"I went a-shopping with Cosin Hester, who is my father's Cosin and of sedate age. We had a pleasant time in St. Paul's Churchyard where the best brocades are sold. Then we went to London Bridge where are manny fine shops of note, and book shops with a swete allure for mee.

"Cosin Hester was kind enough to buy a book for me and one for little Pen.

"My book was about old London gardens by John Parkerson. He hadd a most fair garden in Long Acre all bordered with Thyme, Cat-Mint, Sage and Rosemarie and such sweet-scented things which on hot days make the aire of London a joye to breathe, and helps to keep away the Plague.

"For little Pen, Cosin Hester bought a Book of Fables with manny pictures easie to draw; also manny fables from Holy Writ such as:

The Cedar and Thistle. Chron. XXX, 18.
The Bad Shephards and Sheep. Ezekiel XXXIV, 3.

Also fables from Greece and Rome, such as Æsop's Fables with good lessons to be learned therefrom.

"One fable called the Two Dogs has a very neatt picture with a nice farm, a crooked chimney, a pond and one dog in the water having fallen through ice and the other dog admonishes him which is nott kind when help is needed.

"The farm is in Kensington on the hill behind the church, and a good picture of it. Thus did an artist draw it, who is one of the Summer vissiters; for Kensington is a cool country place for Town vissiters in hot Summer.

“Cosin Hester told me about the joyfull days when King Charles came back. She was taken to an upper shop window on the London Bridge and she sawe his Majesty ride by. He rode most gallently between his two brothers the Duke of York and the Duke of Gloucester from Southwark to the city of London and the people shouted and cheered madd with joy until the Bridge shook.

“Cosin Hester desires me to chose Chap-Books for her little grandchildren in Ireland so that they may lerne History in plesent stories.

“My kind master, Dick Abbot, taught me to shunn all Chap-Books dealing with Diabolical and Superstitious things, also those wherein are founde silly Joax and Lewd tales.

“Mr. Steele advises Chap-Books about St. George of England, Guy of Warwick, The Seven Champions and the like, for giving ideas of honour to the young, and when Pen was smal I read to her The Children in the Wood, Robin Hood and the Blinde Beggar of Bethnall Green which Dick used to read to mee and I loved exceedingly.

“Cosin Hester and I looked at the beautiful Chap Books published in Aldermary Churchyard, alas! it is sadd that so manny Chap-Books are in vogue that have no beauty and they do but corrupt ignorant folk.

“To teach historie Cosin Hester chose the following:

i The surprising Marriage of Lewis XIV with Madam Maintenon.
ii Lyfe and Death of Faire Rosamond.
iii Historie of Sir Richard Wittington.
iv Historie of Wat Tyler.
v Historie of Patient Grissel.
vi Historie of the Royal Martyr Charles I.

“These Tales are underlaine with true historical facts and they teache patience under trialls; how to suffer injustice; and the evills wrought by the uprisings of greedie and wicked men.

“Some of the pictures in these books made us larf.”

Prue wrote at some length on these chap-books, and she copied some of the illustrations, which are characteristic and quaint, indeed the eighteenth-century chap-books are insipid without the original illustrations.

The great Monarch of France on one knee before the lady of his choice, with his wig of untidy make surmounted by his kingly crown, and Madame

in her curious head-dress demurely casting down her modest eyes is a delightful spectacle. The lady in the background receiving a bag of gold is probably one of the Monarch's cast-off mistresses.

The drawing of the farm at Kensington—a winter scene—was also copied by Prue herself. The farm existed: it was known as "Green Thatches."

Prue, even before she was sixteen, was acutely conscious of the debt she owed to Dick Abbot for introducing her to great books; and in teaching her little sister Pen she tries to hand on his instruction. She says:

"My master, Mr. Dick Abbot, who is a poet yet a poore man, for Poets seeke the riches that are costlier and more enduring than Gold, used to read to me the gracious wordes in Sir Philip Sidney's *Apologie* for Poetrie, and the habitt is in me, so that I read this grate book as often as I read my Bible.

"Sir Philip Sidney Telleth us how the poet cometh into oure hearts, thus —'He cometh to you with words set in delightful proportion either accompanied with or prepared for, the well enchanting skill of Musick; and with a tale forsooth he cometh unto you: with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner. And pretending no more, doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to Virtue.'

"In teachinge Pen, faine would I come to her with a tale which holdeth her from play and winneth her minde to Virtue; yet, suche a tale is hard to finde; for, to teach virtue demands deep knowledge of grate books as well as some of the skill of Socrates as a teacher of men.

"Sir Philip advises those who teache to go to the old heroes of the Greeks, not only would he teache children but also men so they may lerne goodness thereby.

"He writes: 'So it is in men most of which are childish in the best things till they be cradled in their graves; glad will they be to hear the tales of Hercules, Achilles, Cyrus, and Æneas; and hearing them, must needs bear the right description of wisdom, valour and justice; which, if they had been Philosophically set out, they would swear they be brought to school again.'

"I have writ to Mr. Abbot for bookes not too hard, about Hercules and Achilles for the instruction of little Pen."

Mr. Dick Abbot at this time was much occupied in political matters, being Secretary to the Duke of Wisteriam, and Prue saw very little of him.

Prue seems to be troubled later at Pen's delight in chap-books of a kind of which Mr. Abbot would disapprove. She writes:

"The farmer's wife at 'Green Thatches,' where Pen goes sometimes to see the ducklings, has given Pen a Chap-Book of much vogue called 'The Lyfe and Adventures of Miss Francis Davis.' The story is unedifying. She was a bold bad wench tho' handsome and but 18 years olde. She robbed a Gentleman of Gosfield in Essex of Eleven Hundred Poundes and she tooke her triall at Chelmsford Assizes, and was hanged to a Gallows Tree in sighte of a grate multitude. I dislike my little sister's Choyce: Stories of crime, lewdness and ille-judged marriages of Kings sett ill-examples and jarr on finer tastes.

"Mr. Dick Abbot has brought me a Booke of Ballads called 'Strange Histories or Songs and Sonnetts of Kings, Princes, Dukes, ladies and Knights.' He would have me rede the Ballads of Fayre Rosamond, with Pen and the old heroic Ballad of 'Chevy Chace.'

"My dear Master came himself tho' his time is in grate request, and he read to me how Sir Philip Sidney wrote about the last, thus: 'I never heard the olde song of Percie and Douglas, that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet; and yet it is sung by some blinde crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style; which beeing so evill apparalled the duet and cobweb of that uncivill age, what would it work trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindare.' And Dick Abbot drew me a picture in words of the blinde minstrel standing att the foot of the market Cross reciting noble Ballads to the people crowding around him and hanging in the balconnies of the preety houses with pointed roofes. 'Suche instruction,' said my Master, 'moulds the sentiment and touches the heart of the people.'

"The nexte daye I read to Pen from the 'Ballad of Fayre Rosamond,' I read some of the beautiful lines, yett I have not the skil in reading of Mr. Dick Abbot.

"Thus I read:

'Her crisped lockes like threads of golde
Appered to each man's sight.'

"And again:

‘The blonde withyn her chrystal cheeks
Didd such a colour drive
As tho’ the lylle and the rose
For mastershipp did stryve.’

“Then I finished with:

‘Her bodie then they did entombe
When lyfe was fled away,
At Godstowe neare to Oxford Towne,
As may be seene thys daye.’

“Pen listened and said she knew the storie and the Chap-Book told it better.

“ ‘The Chap-Booke,’ I told her, ‘jarrs on fine taste.’

“ ‘But, Sister,’ said Pen, ‘the Chap-Book hath odd pictures. Do but looke, Rosamond makes a face most funny; as if she would be sicke,’ and Pen larfed.

“It was not thus I listened to the instruction of my Master, but with joy and reverence.

“ ‘The Ballad,’ I told her, ‘moulds the sentiment and touches the heart.’

FAYRE ROSAMOND

“ ‘If Rosamond wont drink the poyson,’ larfed naughty Pen, ‘the dagger will soon touch her harte for the Queen hath a strong arme,’ and she ran oute

into the courtyard to show the Chap-book to the Dairymaid who milked oure red cow.

“I am at my witt’s ende. Itt was so easie to teach mee, and so hard for me to teach Pen. I was sad and I wept a little for I do nott like to be a failure.

“Then after a while Drudy came with Aunt Cicely, both verry fine and modish, they came from St. James’ Palace in Aunt Cicely’s grand coach.

“ ‘La! child,’ quoth Drudy, ‘you look a Cindrella, so unmodish and rumpled.

“ ‘And red eyes, chided Aunt Cicely, ‘ ’tis bad for a lady’s skin to weep over it.’

“I told my woes and how I was unfitt to teache Pen.

“ ‘I will ask my father to sende her to Mrs. Ogden,’ I sobbed.

“ ‘Goosey-gander,’ mocked Drudy. ‘Polished manners lie not in Ballads.’

“Aunt Cicely larfed, for she is a gaye and witty gentlewoman.

“ ‘Not in Ballads, or reading of Battles and dwarfs and giants, but in writting oute receipts for Broths, Possets, Caudles, and Surfeit-waters as become a good Country gentlewoman,’ she gibed.

“ ‘Fie!’ said Drudy. ‘You are quoting from Mr. Steele’s play.’

“ ‘Get yourself into respectable condition, child,’ advised my Aunt, ‘and walk with us in the Mall.’

“And I hadd to go, for in truth my manners are nott polished and Drudy says I am not fit for Court Society.

“Later, I told my father with shame that I had no aptitude in teaching; ‘Mrs. Ogden is a verry respectable woman, and she taught Drudy,’ I told him.

“Butt my father disliked respectable women who borded and taught young gentlewomen.

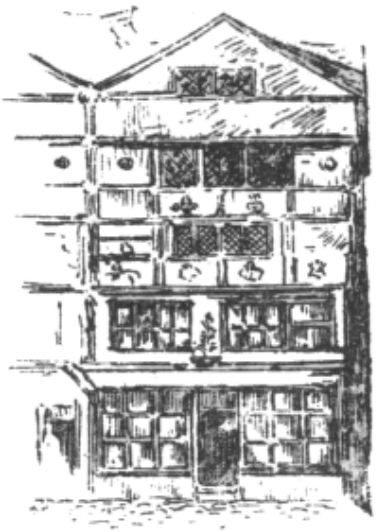
“ ‘My mother and grandmother lernt breeding and all sortes of Learning at home,’ he said, ‘and so shall Pen.’

“ ‘I cannot teach her Court manners,’ I said.

“ ‘To perdition! with Court manners,’ he said. ‘I’ve had enough of them.

“Truly, ’tis a hard task to teach the yonge, not having the skil of Dick Abbot, and nott being fit for Court and great Society, for to rouse in my little sister Pen what he did rouse in me I cannott, nott being a poet with lively imagination and a mirthfull temper to represent things to his scholler as they are to him.”

LOUIS XIV AND MADAM MAINTENON



THE HOUSE IN BUTCHER’S ROW

CHAPTER XI

’TWIX COURT AND CITY

“If that gate be pulled down, ’twix Court and the City,
You’ll blend in one mass, prudent, worthless and witty.
If you league Cit and Lordling, as brother and brother,
You’ll break order’s chain, and they’ll war with each other.
They’ll destroy in one sweep both the Mart and the Forum,
Which your fathers held dear, and their fathers before ’em.”

I sat in a Lyons’ tea-shop by an open window in Holborn in the upstairs room at my simple lunch—poached egg and a cup of delicious tea.

I was thinking of Prue and the London she lived in, and contrasting it with the London I saw through the window. Holborn is a hugger-mugger place of shops, crowds, offices, and a chaos of buses which never seem to stop at the stated places; there is nothing in it now to recall the enchanted days of the past, when that gay Thames tributary—the Fleet—rushed gladly down from the northern heights to join the silvery Thames, and I almost saw its banks fragrant with meadow-sweet, water-mint, and sweet-smelling rushes, for does not Gerard tell us in his delightful inconsequent fashion that “it—the mede-sweet—groweth in the brinkes of waterie ditches and riversides in London and almost everywhere”? In those days there were pleasant gardens in Holborn, where grew strawberries and “warden pears,” and many a quaint gable was covered with vines, where one might pluck bunches of little honey-coloured grapes which the thrifty folk of those days made into an agreeable sweet wine. Gerard himself had a lovely garden in the suburb of Holborn with over a thousand different kinds of flowers: there were “gilliflowers, violets, and carnations”—the “yellow sorte called Sops-in-wine,” and “the Ruffling Robin” which once grew in Master Tuggie’s garden in the Strand, also “white thyme and double-flowered peach,” which Anne of Denmark greatly admired, for Queens and Princesses visited that garden and talked to him about his flowers, and the talk of Gerard was a rare delight. The glorious Strand, too, is just as hugger-mugger, traffic-ridden, unsightly, and chaotic as Holborn, with only a few names remaining like Savoy, Cecil, Arundel, and Essex to remind chance souls affrighted by its hideous traffic of the stateliness of its past. I meditated on these things as I gazed through the open window, while my tea grew cold and the toast sustaining my egg soggy.

Even in Prue's day the grim monster called Progress was stirring, and both the city and what Fielding calls "the polite end of the town" was beginning that gradual transformation from fields, pretty gabled and timbered houses, to correct squares and houses like those built after the Great Fire, unpicturesque though possibly more convenient than their predecessors. Yet the human heart is ever wayward, blinded by sentiment, and it clings passionately to aged things and aged customs.

It was that arch-fiend Cromwell who set the monster astir, Cromwell, who wanted a great mansion for himself in the fairest part of London, Cromwell, who devastated more completely than any plagues and fires, Cromwell and his Puritans, who tore down the ancient Inns of Bishops, the Strand Maypole, and the beautiful Charing Cross set up by King Edward for his Queen, leaving bewildered folk who could not ". . . find the way to Westminster now Charing Cross is downe," Cromwell, who left the Strand a bereft and desolate thing, a prey to money-makers and bricks and mortar. Was his hatred for what he called "Popish relics" as passionate as his desire for mansions, power, and self-glorification? Who can tell?

It was Temple Bar that divided the city from Westminster in the olden days—even my Aunt Dorothea remembered Temple Bar, I reflected—its removal was one of the multitude of evils which fell upon the Strand in later times.

I longed to see the fair city of London as it was in days gone by, and after tasting my tepid tea I looked towards Farringdon Street at the drab streams of people—pert little girls by thousands, all legs and convict-cropped heads—issuing from offices and seeking their lunching haunts, the horrible traffic, the din, the stuffiness; my soul ached at the ugliness of it all. Suddenly these things vanished; I seemed to float on soft clouds in a world of space, light, strangeness, and beauty; blotted out were the mean crowds, the sordid sights, and I saw that gay little river, the Fleet, rushing enchantingly down from the hills beyond towards a picturesque London. I saw a charming green valley and the stream broadening as it skipped and rippled over a clear bed of brown pebbles with patches of forget-me-nots lying like wood-smoke on green banks at the water's edge; there were water-mills too, and I heard their clacking; I saw the upward pasture lands with their trees, swine, cows, sheep, birds, blue skies and the wooded hills of Highgate and Hampstead. Miraculously I found myself in the street out-of-doors mingling with a strangely archaic crowd pressing on—so it seemed, to the Strand—a faintly familiar crowd, such as Henry Irving could produce with a startling fidelity in the acting of Henry VIII. The people pressed

about me and I moved as in a dream. The beauty of the swinging signs which seemed to make the city into a picture gallery fascinated me; their flashing colours under the blue sky glorified London. Addison lamented the passing of these gay signs, for he, too, loved these green dragons, blue boars, red lions, flying pigs, and hogs in armour, though Steele complained that from them he learned ill-spelling. Then I became aware that I was one of the crowd watching the spectacle of Queen Anne Boleyn on her way to Westminster, she had ridden through the city of London after her Coronation. She, with her company, rode through Temple Bar, which shone bravely in the sun, having been newly painted and repaired for the occasion. Divers singing men and children stood at intervals by the way all along the route, greeting her with glad bursts of song.

Once through Temple Bar, I found myself in a noble and lovely street with gabled houses which led to Charing Cross—the real Charing Cross—the ancient inns of the Bishops of Exeter, Bath, and Chester, the Savoy Hospital, the Strand Inn, and the old Maypole, all beautiful and fresh in honour of the young Queen. Thus was the Strand before the Protector had wrought his evil will upon it. I longed to talk to the people about me, who thronged so closely that I was urged onward, but as in a dream I was unable to utter a sound; then without rhyme or reason I found myself again in the window in Lyons' tea-shop with my cold tea before me and the din, the sordidness, the stuffiness all around me. I sighed for the London of other days with the white-and-black houses, fair gardens running down to the river, and the great spire of the famous church shadowing all. Those ancestors of ours who had made that Tudor London could never have imagined the dreary miles covered "with hideous hovels big and little" which to-day—God forgive us—we call London.

That night I sought among Prue's records for some details of Holborn and the Strand in the days when Temple Bar stood " 'twix the Court and the City"—and Holbein's wonderful gateway at Westminster still adorned a lovely London. Her own diary gives some interesting details with some grim sidelights of gagging and ducking women, of city persons desiring more Quality—which could be purchased—cruelties, superstitions, vulgarities, and vanities, which we were led to believe would vanish with democracy; yet the cruelties, inequalities, vulgarities, and vanities are still with us, and ignorance is rife: while beauty has been driven from our midst, for this is a sad world of trial, experiment and much failure.

Prue's Diary.

“I didd goe this day to the city to vissit oure Cosin Betty. She lives in Plumb Tree Street, Holborn. Betty’s mother my Aunt Eleanor being sadly in helth, could not be encumbered with the care of her, so Betty went to a Bording School at Bethnal Green, and she lerned to be a lady of fashion, tho’ nott of the best kind. Betty married a worthy man who brewes good ale; and those who brew ale make money quickly. Betty thinks that riches, fine attyre, and grate mansions to live in, with many servants are the best things in this world; but it is not so: Betty tho’ riche lives on the east side of Temple Bar and this galls her sore. To satisfy her longing for more Quality her husband, Timothy Tutchin, did Purchase the patentts of a Barronett from the Queen and payd for it above Five Hundred Pounds and Fifty Guinnys to Mr. Morton for his trouble in getting it through. Now, Betty is my lady, and still she is unsatisfyed; for, she is irked by living neer shops. She desires a nobler abode in the Strand or some other polite place. There are, in verity, many grate mansions to be hadd, for grate gentlemen do constantly build fine town houses. Sir Christopher Wren hath designed on a site in St. James’ Park, a house for the grate Duke of Marlborough, and the Duke of Buckingham has a princely place in the Park set in a courtyard neer a wildernesse full of blackbirds and nightingales. The fashion of building fine Squares such as St James’ Square is good fashion, and other squares like Leicester Square and Soho Square are full of very fine houses.” (And the houses built in Queen Anne’s time, stretching out a hand to Gothic times, certainly had a satisfying picturesqueness, especially when placed in beautiful surroundings.)

“At Plumb-tree Street, I found Betty nott at home, she had gone in her chaire to the Church at Covent Garden, nott that she is devoute but suche is the fashion. Manny wives who love to gadd goe daily to this Church, tho’ it is to be feered, they goe to ogle Beaux and not to worshipp.

“Betty says it is dull to be a wife shutt up in a city parlour, while her husband has adventures in the city and is makeing money all the time. Mrs. Bab, Betty’s woman, refresh’d mee with wine made from Cowslipps pluckt in Chelsey fields where they grow in abundance. Mrs. Bab told me how unseemlie folks thought it, for the wife of a Barrenet to dwell in Plumb-tree Court among City folk and Shopkeepers; yet there is a swete look-out on the river, the aire is fresh and the sky is as blew as in places where persons of more consequence do dwell. I said this to Mrs. Bab, who pursed her lips and said City folk was rough and unpolish’d. Betty soon returned; and I saw the fine liveries of her Chairmen. She browt a piece of Rosemarie, a sprig of Lavender and a handfull of Sweet Bawme from the market.

" 'The praiers of the Church clense my hart,' she said, 'and the scent of the Herbes dispell vapours in the Hedd.' Betty has manny new clothes of fine brocades made by Spitalfield weavers, and fashioned in the newe way. 'The newe brocades do well become the wife of a Barrenet,' she told me.

"The dinner we ate at three o'clock was thus: Two porringers of Potage, in silver porringers. A boyld leg of Mutton, a tongue and a paire of larded Pidgeons served properly with vegetables in Season, and peares and plumbs to follow. The wine was goode.

"Betty talked about the fine newe House she desires. She show'd me in the Gasset one at Number X Austin Friars; handsome and almost new, with the date 1704 on the watter spout. Such a house would coste abbout 30 l a yeare. In the Gasset a person writes thus:

SILVER PORRINGER

" 'A Gentleman has occasion for a lightsome fashionable House in a genteel part of the town. Iff accommodated with Coach House and Stabel it will be better liked, of about 30 l a year rent.'

"Betty decides to put her needes in the Gasset."

A week later Mistress Prue writes:

"There hath been grate trubbel with the wench in the Kitchen who stole oure mutton steaks, and my father turned her oute; I wrote to Jinny Thwaites to come to assyst us in lieu of the thieving slut. Jinny was allways a goode serving-maid, and long ago she was with my mother untill she married a cruell drunken knave who ill-used her. She chidd him with bitter words for

an idle drunken rascall; and the wicked man hadd her lock'd in the Scolde's bridle and druv thru the towne. She was thus ledd with a chaine on the bridle and the people larfed and mock'd. She yett beares the cruell marks on her mouth. This is a badd custom; poore women are punnished by lawe for using the natural weppon God did give them aggainst men's brutality; for what weppon has shee but her tongue. The ill-looking iron crowne was lock'd on poore Jinny's hedd and the gag with a sharpe pointe was put in her mouth wch pierced her tongue sadly. She fell in a fainting fitt and the bloude gushed forth from her mouth. It is evill for women, that the men make all the lawes to punish them.

"LOCK'D IN THE SCOLDE'S BRIDLE"

"At last poor Jinny's woes are over for the badd husband dyed in a drunken fitt, and I sent to her to come to us. She came in a waggon with her things; it was a slow jorney and now she is safe with us.

"Pen show'd me a chap-book that Drudy gave her about the woman of Highgate Hill who was ducked in the river for scolding a badd Husband. It hath a curious picture, here given: The bad rascall lifts his hand and tells his wife's fault to the crowde. He is a hypocrite, a whited sepulchre. I show'd it to Dick Abbot when he came to see my father. He says these bad laws made by men to punnish women will in time be changed tho' reforms come slowlie.

“The poore woman at Highgate Hill was like to die of fright and no wonder. It is easie for men to putt the blame on the wife and so escape from punnishment of their evill deedes. It was so in the garden of Eden when Adam putt the blame on Eve, and said she beguiled him to eat of the aple. Itt behoves all women to know well the kind of men they marry, for some men are cruel and vicious, wch qualities they hide when they goe a-wooing.

“Betty took me in her newe coach to see the house uppon which she has sett her hart. It is nobel and quite beautiful. It is situated in the Straits of St. Clement often call’d Butcher’s Row. It is a larg Mansion call’d Beaumont house or more common the Duke of Sully’s House. There are manny fine and beautiful houses in this vicinity. On the exterior are carved roses, crowns, draggons, fleur-de-lys and other ornaments. Inside are manny rooms with low ceilings, and very well lighted by casement windows. It is truly a facte that the Duke of Sully lay heer with his retinue til the Palace of Arundel was made reddy. Manny grate Nobels abode in this parte in the olde days.

“Sir Timothy consents to this hous, and Betty is rejoyced. She hath now a smal black boy dressed in scarlet with gold lace. He attendes her allwais and carries her packages. He is a little slave and she bought him.

“ ‘La child!’ she chid me. ‘Let Pompey carry yure bookes. It is vastlie ungentele to incommode yourself.’ ”

“DUCK’D IN THE RIVER AT HIGHGATE”

AUNT JUDITH AS “A YOUNGE LADIE OF SEVENTEEN”

CHAPTER XII

TUNBRIDGE WELLS.

"Order is Heaven's first law; and this confest,
Some are, and must be greater than the rest."—POPE.

From Prue's Diary.

"I was upp betimes and with Marjery to the Herbe Market buying fine Cabbidges and herbes grown by Surry gardiners. Then in the gardens with Pen gathering Marigolds of wch are manny. This plante springs upp in grate abondance and itt hath more household uses than anny other.

"The poet saith of it: 'Fair is the marigold for pottage meet.' The marigolds are shredded and dry'd in the sun. No broth hath full measure of goodness withot this pritty flower and marygold tea cures bile in the stommach as well as ringworms in the hedd.'

"We beginn to make reddy for oure visset to the Wells. My father needs the cure for it corrects the excessive drinkinge of wine in wch gentlemen of fashion muste indulge, and the waters drunk daily in prodigous quantities have grate virtue.

"Aunt Cicely told me abbout the newest fashions in attire. Thus:

i The Aprons grow larg.
ii The Newe Hoop becomes Bigger.
iii Trains grow less and less.
iv For the Hedd short curls and caps of lace or linnen are much worne.

"Fans and snuff-boxes are grately decorated. One lady of Court has the portrait of Titus Oates painted on her snuffe-box, and on the stickes of her fan; butt for younge gentlewomen like me, Aunt Cicely advisses flowers or cupids or birds.

"My father has bought a newe Ramillies Wig. Itt is moste graceful. The white hair is puffed arround the ears and puled back from the brow in a nobel fashion. The longe queue is platted and tyed with a smal bow at the ende and top. A tyed wigg is most neatt.

"The newe coat my father has bought is very elegant; made of plain thick silke with fine buttons. The waistcoate is longe and embroidered in a handsome manner. The Coat and Wig give him a moste nobel aire.

"I have bowt for myself a newe Brocade Mantua which is linned with Changeable and 3 newe Aprons.

"Betty's Mrs. Bab is obliging, she has instructed Marjery in coppying Betty's latest hoops tho' nott so bigg. Aunt Cicely says a handsom petticoat with whalebone hoops is verry graceful on a young gentlewoman wen the figger is goode and if she be of a tall make.

"Betty and Mrs. Bab lent propper patterns being kinde and affable tho' verry fashionable.

NEWE RAMILLIES WIG

"Sadd it is to relate thatt my father's newe Ramillies Wig was stole from his hedd, in a bolde and wicked manner. Sitting in his owne coach in Chancery Lane it was pluck't suddenly from his hedd. A wig-stealer hadd cut through the leather at the back of the Coach and clutched the wig in the darke and ran. My father is gauled at the loss of his newe Wig."

Wigs in those days were valuable, they cost any sum from five to fifty-five guineas, and a real gentleman could always show his wealth in the costliness of his wig and his waistcoat. Wig-snatchers had many dodges, and in Prue's day a favourite trick was that of "the honest baker." Masquerading as a baker, the thief carried on his head the great basket which ought to contain the loaves, but instead a small boy was concealed therein, covered with a white cloth; and at favourable moments the small boy grabbed the wigs of his choice while the honest baker went on his way.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS IN 1709

"Before quitting my home for ye Wells I hadd the yellow pear-plumbs, and the Spicng apples gathered, and I slipt the Gilly-flowers and Carnations. Ther are iv dozen sortes of Carnations. The prittiest are the golden Sops-in-Wyne and the Ruffling Robin that used to growe in Mr. Ralph Tuggies garden.

"We had a safe jorney to ye Wells in oure own coach. My father rid beside us, and Giles came behind with Marjery pillion. Aunt Cicely and me inside. Oure Summer habitation is a nice neatt Cottage nott a grate way from the Pantiles.

"The company att Tunbridge Wells is very sellect for manny Royal personages have vissited itt and made it the vogue. When Charles II came back he vissited the place and made itt more than evver the mode. Life at ye Wells is simple butt verry gaye. The companie walk in the fine public paths and drinke the waters in grate quantities as manny as XII pints for a Morning dose. The long Walk is nicely shaded by grene trees and on the other side is a row of shopps wher vissiters may buy eyebrows of mole skin, masks, dyes for the Hair, toys, washes to make the skin soft and faire, and other vain thinges. Heer, too, raffling takes place wch people enjoy grately.

"Among the trees is a smal market and prettie young countrie girls come and sell eggs, and fruit, and fressh vegetables and they make Syllabubs for the Companie as in the Mall, and we come here to shopp and meete oure friends as we buye oure own vegetables, all very friendly and pleasant; and in the evening we dance on the turf wch is rurall, and agreeable, for the gentlemen are all politeness and gallentry. The Companie is sellect; there are grande Coaches comeing and going and manny great personages for the

surroundings are pritty with verdant pastures and winding roads up and downe the hills. Our good Queen Anne often came hither with her little son the Duke of Gloucester. Once the little Duke slipt on the walk after rain, the Queen was sadd at the axident and she gave a hundred guineas to have the walk paved. This was nott done, and when the Queen came again she was ful of wrath at the omision. She nevver came again for soone after the litle Duke sadd to saye died. The walk is now paved with a red tile baked like bread called Pan-tile, verry pritty to see. The water has a brakish taste from yron and steel butt my father makes no complaints for itt is a goode Medycine.

"The place is verry fulle of people and the companie varrious. Ther are Roman Catholics, Jews, and soberly atired Puritans in search of high Society: ther are fine Beaux in splendid cloaths, slender Court ladies with French scarffs, aprons, and French complections. The Equipages are most handsome.

"My cosin Betty with Sir Timothy is heer. She is most fine and modish and a sadd Coquette. She foregathers dailly with the gaye laidies and prettie romps who meet their Beaux under the trees where are swings of rope tyed to branches. The Beaux swing the romping ladies, and 'tis said they thus show their leggs even to the colour of their garters. My father forbadd me to swing thus shamelessly with Betty.

"My father is as fine as anny gentleman heer and he has a nobel and distinguished aire in his newe cote and waistcoat not that cloaths alone make a gentleman, butt my father hath fine manners and features nobly-fashioned.

"A very primm madam writ a letter to the 'Spectator' abbout the pert creatures with ill-breeding who seeke to attrackt the male vissiters at the Wells, andd the scandall is on all tongues. Thus doth she chastise the prettie romps who are swung on ropes like children by their Beaux grately to the delite of these gentlemen, for in verry truth, they shew much of their leggs even unto the knes wch is indellicate. She thinks ill of conduct in decente Societie. Our Cosin Betty is grately enraged and her husband, Sir Timothy, censures her in these 'ribald revels.' Mr. Addison is more lenient, he contends that amid gentlepeople manners are easie, and 'there is no more in itt than innocent freedom.'

" 'Innocent enuff among gentlepeople,' quoth Aunt Cicely, 'tho' these hussies are not gentle nor simple either, they are but milliners, and ladies' women even kitchen wenches uprisen. Oure own Court, Brother Flowerdew

hath harboured such who have risen to floutt Duchesses.'

A VERY PRIMM MADAM

" 'Hush, Sister Cicely,' said my father, 'talk no scandle of our Court.'

" ' 'Twould not be hard to find scandle,' quoth Aunt Cicely, 'with Geordie drunken and fuddled eache night, and two monstrous uglie Mistresses, andd his rightfull Queen shutt upp in Hanover for Lord knows what?'

" 'His weakness in carrying wine, is nott a crime, Sister; manny admirable gentlemen are foolish in their cups' said my father, who in his heart was a Jacobite, though his reason convinced him that a Roman Catholic could not occupy the throne of England.

" 'True,' said Aunt Cicely, 'the wise man who knows his weakness drinks moderately, tho' itt is idle to expectt moderation in a Court like ours.'

" 'Go, go,' said my father; 'be nott seditious, Sister, nor captious aboutt the wayes of Kings.'

"And he spoke wisely for he hadd a good office in the Court and there was much intrigue ammong gentlepeople to secure good offices.

" 'He lowers the Court and setts an evill example to the people, brother.'

" 'God made him a King; rebell not at Heaven's decree; what says Mr. Pope: "Some are, and must be, grater than the rest," ' chided my father.

"Aunt Cicely was silentt, tho' I knew she was thinking of Lady Masham, the erstwhile Abigail Hill and humble serving-maid to Queen Anne who hadd risen to floutt the grate Duchess of Marlborough herselff, for so muche did Queen Anne esteem her. Aunt Cicely sayth that manners were more gentil when she was a girl. She show'd mee picturs in little of herself andd my mother, and shee did give me one of my Aunt Judith when a young ladie of seventeen, in a prittie hat and feather wth loose hair for she knows how much I esteme her."

“A PRETTIE ROMP”

AUNT CICELY WAS NOW A WIDOW

CHAPTER XIII

PARADISE ROW

> "But oh! this pretty Chelsey! What daisies! what buttercups! what joviall swarms of gnats! The country all about is as nice and flat as Rotterdam."—Erasmus to Sir Thomas More.

Little is related about the career of Prue's brother, Simon Flowerdew. After leaving Oxford we find him busy about Court, always with some lucrative appointment; later he became Gentleman of the Bedchamber to the Prince, who afterwards was George III.

Aunt Cicely lived in Chelsey in a house in Paradise Row, and Drudy usually lived with her. A charming and rural place was Chelsey, spreading along the clear shining Thames, a place where one might gather simples in the meadows or nosegays to deck the parlour, for by the water, purple loosestrife, codlins and cream, scorpion-grass, and sweet-scented flowering rushes abounded.

Originally Chelsey was a little riverside hamlet with a ford across the Thames; it was here that the fierce struggle between Britons and Romans took place.

After Sir Thomas More settled in Chelsey its importance increased from a mere agricultural village to a place of residence for people of wealth and distinction. Even to this day Rosemary grows in many a garden about Chelsey, and I always think of Sir Thomas More as I see it. "As for Rosemarie," he says, "I lett it run alle over my Garden Walls, not onlie because my Bees love it, but because 'tis the Herb sacred to Remembrance, and, therefore, to Friendship."

In the early eighteenth-century, when London was growing rapidly, Chelsey also began to develop. Bowack speaks of it as a place "where a man may perfectly enjoy the pleasures of Country and City together and when he pleases, in less than an hour's time either by water, coach or otherwise, he may be at Court, Exchange or in the midst of his business. The walk to town is very even an pleasant."

And the walk through the five fields from Chelsey to Westminster was pleasant. Snipe were plentiful enough in those fields; and in the rivers roach, dace, barbel and salmon abounded.

To take that walk now one passes the old Chelsey bun shop (where Swift says he bought a bun which he didn't like), and then go through Pimlico, Eaton Square, and across Jenny's Whim Bridge to Westminster.

It was in 1719 that Sir Robert Walpole settled in Chelsey. His house and gardens of over four acres, the conservatories, and famous octagon summer-house have often been described; and in that house much of the political history of England was made.

Sir Robert was a rough country gentleman with little originality, learning or imagination; he made a study of commerce and finance, and successfully he governed the country by a system of bribes, for he brought bribery to a fine art.

Mr. Flowerdew, Prue's father, proved himself useful to George I, and in consequence he obtained a position at Court which satisfied even his desires, and in course of time Mr. Richard Abbot, owing to his influence, became one of Sir Robert Walpole's secretaries.

Aunt Cicely, who was now a widow, had a beautiful house in Paradise Row; formerly her house had been inhabited by that charming and witty lady Hortense, Duchess of Mazarin, who by the greed of her uncle, the great Cardinal, just escaped being Queen of England, for when Charles II was in exile he sued for the lady's hand; and on account of the uncertainty of his prospects was spurned by the lady's uncle, though after the Restoration Cardinal Mazarin would have opened the matter again, but the King's Ministers held other views. The beautiful Hortense was wedded to the Duc de la Meilleraye, and he took possession of the lady's great fortune and adopted the title of Mazarin. He was a bigoted hypocrite, who robbed his wife of jewels and fortune while preaching to her the austerest morality. Trouble ensued, Hortense ran away from him and was shut up in a monastery in consequence. Finally, after many adventures, she fled to England, to the delight of Charles II. She was installed in St. James's Palace and provided with a secret service pension of £4000 a year.

This was a story that Aunt Cicely often retailed to her niece Drudy, a story of which Drudy approved. She wished the Stuarts on the throne with all her heart, with their fine gallantry and quick eye for fair ladies; the dull "Geordie" she held in contempt.

The beautiful Hortense lived for twenty-five years in Paradise Row, and we get charming pictures of her sweetness, her grace, her beauty, her humanity, her pastimes through the pen of her devoted old cavalier, St. Evermond, soldier, philosopher, poet, who had accompanied an embassy to

England to congratulate Charles II on his accession. He attached himself to the service of the Duchess of Mazarin, whose advent in England added much to the comfort and sweetness of his life. It was Charles II who gave him the distinguished post of Governor of Duck Island (in St. James's Park) with a generous official salary attached to it, and Drudy admired his devotion to the lady as much as she admired the stairways and carvings which the fair Hortense had put in the house in Paradise Row.

Aunt Cicely delighted in the writings of the old poet and philosopher, for he was never tired of displaying to the world the joy he took in his lady's friendship. He celebrates in a thousand places "her incomparable beauty, the agreeableness of her wit and the charms of her conversation."

In her youth Aunt Cicely had seen the lovely Duchess and she considered that the old man had not exaggerated. He wrote pages about the lady's eyes, nose, mouth, the colour of her hair, the proportion of her body, and the delicacy of her shape. Of her eyes he writes: "You never saw anything more lovely and generally more pleasant and more apt to inflame, and yet nothing more serious, more severe, and steady when her thoughts are taken up with any grave subject."

Aunt Cicely was reading this description aloud to her niece, and Drudy asked, "What colour were her eyes?"

"I should have called them gray," said Aunt Cicely, "but not so St. Evermond. Hear him: 'The colour of her eyes have no name; they are neither blue nor gray, nor altogether black, but a mixture of all three, which participates of all the excellence that is found in them.' "

"Were her eyes large; could they roll and languish like the eyes of Court beauties now?" Drudy wanted to know.

Again Aunt Cicely turned to her book: "Her eyes are large and well-slit, and decently rolling, full of sprightly life and fire, and yet with all these beauties they have nothing of languishing nor passionate, as if nature maliciously had contrived them only to give Love and Veneration and to be susceptible of none."

Drudy sighed and wondered if Dick Abbot could write like this about her eyes and graces; he was a poet, and clever, people said, why did he not admire her beauty? The beaux and wits who flattered her never expanded thus, and Mr. Swift who went about with Mr. Pope and Mr. Gay was often unpleasant to ladies. Clever poets were often unpleasant; Mr. Swift was so clever that he could make Lady Hester Clematiss cry with a mere word or

look. She had gone to him more than once about a heathen god or goddess in her tapestry, and the scorn with which he repulsed her made her hysterical for days, but she was a poor fool and in love with him.

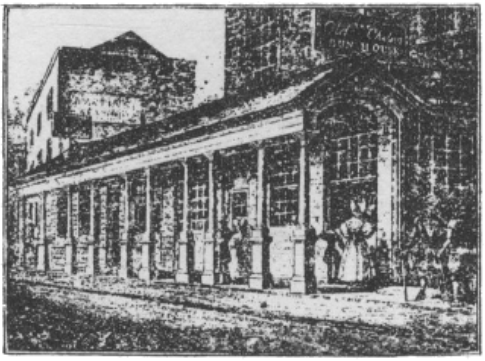
"I had only whispered to my beau that writing men were poor and uncouth," Lady Hester had confided to Drudy, "and Mr. Swift overheard me and was wrath; he concealed his spleen and wooed me with his conversation and his great wit until I was passionately in love with him; then he took pleasure in spurning and humiliating me. Wits and poets are cruel and revengeful," and Lady Hester wept.

Drudy meditated. Was Dick Abbot clever and revengeful? she wondered. He was always kind to silly Prue.

She reflected on writing men. It would be agreeable to have one attached to herself, if he everlastingly wrote about her beautiful complimentary verses and praises like the old St. Evermond wrote about the lovely Hortense, then she would go down in history to posterity as a beautiful and charming lady. People said Dick Abbot was as gifted as Mr. Gay; it was a pity he was poor, but with "Geordie" on the throne clever men could easily become rich.

Aunt Cicely knew many other tales of the early inhabitants of Chelsey. Nell Gwynn herself had lived there, "pretty witty Nell," indiscreet, wild, agreeable, and a charming dancer. She could get anything out of Charles for he was royal as a lover. Life was gayer in the old days, reflected Drudy, and Kings were no longer what they once were; and she sighed over the blond pale monarch from Hanover with his stiff side curls and his two frightful mistresses. He couldn't speak a word of English; he was in the hands of his Ministers.

They could rule and enrich themselves as much as they pleased. She must marry a Minister and become very rich, though it was a pity that Ministers were no longer poets and soldiers, as in the glorious days of Queen Elizabeth, so ran Drudy's musings as she dreamed her tinsel dreams of wealth, power, and the admiration of poets in the pretty, panelled parlour of the gracious and lovely Hortense the Duchess of Mazarin; and she looked through the window at the silvery Thames while enjoying what the old St. Evermond called "le bon air de Chelsey, et le repos de la solitude ne laissent douter ni de votre santé, ni de la tranquillité de votre âme."



CHELSEY BUN SHOP

AUNT JUDITH

CHAPTER XIV

THE BLADE-BONE OF A SHEEP

"This dish of meat is too good for any but anglers, or very honest men."—Izaak Walton.

From Aunt Judith's Diary.

"I am trubbled abbout my son Corney. Hee has mett Lord Colcad oute of Wales who desires my son Corney to make a match wyth his daughter, Clarinda. I like nott the match; the young lady is butt fifteen and she is cloyed with nine brothers and sisters, and a Bride's relations are a clogg on anny Bridegroom. Lord Colcad payed mee a vissit and talked in mealy wordes abbout the younge Clarinda. Hee said shee was the aple of his eye. Nowe my son Corney has gone into Wales to visset att Lord Colcad's Castle. I praye my good God thatt the girl will nott attractt him. Hee is but eighteen, too yonge for wedlock, yett the yonge are stubborne and selfe-willed. Corney is nott softe like hys father, tho' like moste men hee has little sense where oure sex is concerned.

"I talked privately to Sir Murdoch abbout this newe trubble. Hee didd nott like Lord Colcad and neyther didd I. He advises mee to trye to gett Prue to vissit mee for Easter to cheere me. Att times like Easter young people are useful and verry cheerfull.

"As I satt by myself in my Chamber awrighting and the doore shutt I herd a noise at the window and ther was thatt prison-rascall Job Shaw, climbing upp by the ivy with intentt to robb. I signed to Haggy who was a-sewing in the little closett, and she gave the alarm. The rogue was catched red-handed andd I trust Sir Murdoch will deal with him hardley."

Later entry.

"My niece Prue is heere. Shee has growne handsome, her cheeks bloom lyke peaches and her eyes are bright beyonde common. Drudy andd my sister Cicely have bene schooling her. Inn sport she affixed a little half-moone of black plaister in juste the right spott. Itt made her moste modish andd gave her eyes an

archness uncommon. Shee sanke in a prettie curtsey before Sir Murdoch with floating wyde skirts and hoode drawn over her pritty curles. I thoughte he looked att her more than was becoming for a man of his sober yeares."

Haggy came to her mistress in the afternoon as Aunt Judith sat reading out of Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World* to her niece.

"The man writes some of the best prose in our language," she was remarking as the waiting woman entered.

"A fine pike, Madam, with Sir Murdoch's compliments, and he hopes as you and Miss Prue will have it for supper."

It was indeed a fine pike, thought Aunt Judith, surveying it. "He has had luck in fishing," remarked the lady. "I'll write a note and bid him come to supper with us; and you, Prue, find me old Izaak Walton, he is most instructive about Pike and tells you how to cook it. Bid the messenger wait, Haggy."

Alone, Aunt Judith read to her niece old Izaak on the cooking of the fish, and this is how to do it:

"First, open your Pike at the gills, and if need be, cut also a little slit towards the belly; out of these take his guts, and keep his liver, which you are to shred very small with Thyme, Sweet-Marjoram, and a little Winter Savory; to these put som picked lobster, oysters and som anchovies . . . you must add also a pound of sweet butter, which you are to mix with herbs that are shred . . . being mixed with a blade or two of mace, must be put into the Pike's belly, and then his belly so sown up as to keep all the butter in his belly if it be possible; if not as much as you possibly can, but take not off the scales; then you are to thrust the spit through his mouth out at his tail."

"A very excellent dish," remarked Aunt Judith, "if well basted with plenty of Claret and butter, with the juice of four oranges, and at the very last minute a stick of garlic pushed in his innards. Sir Murdoch ought to eat it with a relish; for as old Izaak says at the end, 'This dish of meat is too good for any but anglers, or very honest men.' "

Haggy cooked the pike in the way Aunt Judith directed, and Sir Murdoch pronounced it a royal dish.

After supper Sir Murdoch taught Prue to make a Green Drake for his fly fishing; he complained bitterly all the time of the trouble old Walton put him to in order to obtain the materials.

“Here, Madam,” he explained to Aunt Judith, “are bits of the fur of your Dido—the black spaniel—which I got from Jabe Stringer, the stableman, then I have the down of hog’s bristles; to obtain it my man shaved the oldest hog.” Here Sir Murdoch triumphantly showed the contents of a little silver snuff-box. Lastly, there were the hairs of the whiskers of a black cat.

Prue benefited by his instructions and tied a fly for him most beautifully.

Then Aunt Judith produced one of her treasures, the first printed book of angling literature, *The Treatyse of Fysshing with an Angle*, by the Prioress of Sopwell, Juliana Berners, who knew so much about the songs of birds and the flowers of the meadows as well as the fish that lived in the streams. She had wisdom as well as fishing lore, for she says, “Open ye, no mann’s gates, but thatt ye shutt them againe.” So the evening passed profitably and pleasantly with such talk and references to books.

From Aunt Judith’s Diary.

> “Ther was much bussel preparing alle for Easter. Wee bak’d ten score smal spic’d bunns mark’d with the Cross in the brik oven of the Brewhous. They was light and wel done. Prue says they was as good as those in the Royal Bun House at Chelsey where King William hath eaten buns. The service in Church was sollem. Master Timon Ladbrook preech’d of the Crucification. After Church Prue tooke crossed bunns to alle olde and fraill persons in Memory of the passion of Jesus our Lord and Saviour.
>
> “Haggy browt to me three loaves of bread bak’d this daye—Good Fryday—to be stor’d in the Dole Chest to keepe for a yeare. Everie ailment and ille can be cured by a bit of thys bread crumb’d and putt in water, drunk fastinge. Prue help’d mee to sow the parsley in the Herbe bed. Only when sowne on Good Fridaye by the Master or Mistress wil it come upp andd keep alle its virtues. Saturdaye a verry busie daye. Prue help’d Haggy in boyling the pace eggs. They was boyl’d hard and colour’d red and yellow. Cochineall and gorse blooms make fyne dyes; Haggy favoures onion skinns to gett a deep yellow. They dyed 12 dozen in Memorie of the Passover.
>
> “Thee Church was made gaye with flowers for the joyful daye on wch Christ was risen.”

Prue sat in the manor pew worshipping with her whole heart on Easter Sunday. She felt vividly the beauty of the Atonement—that selfless sacrifice to redeem mankind seemed to her like a shining jewel lighting up all the dark places of earth. Her eyes were humid with tears. Presently she thought of Dick—he was rarely out of her mind for a whole hour—and her face became radiant as the dawn of spring, for all pure and true love delicately changes even a plain face into a thing of beauty as the sacred flame behind it irridates and flickers through. She was as feminine a creature as was ever taken from the ribs of a man; she sat wide-eyed, softly smiling, enfolded in rosy dreams of her future life, a life coloured always by the presence of Mr. Dick Abbot.

At that moment Sir Murdoch looked at her, and he fell suddenly chastened, intoxicated, humbled. There is something very exquisite, elusive, and altogether bewildering about youth, beauty, and innocence. Sir Murdoch had no words of his own to express what he felt, and during the sermon his mind was straying after images of Ben Jonson's lady redolent with youth in a car drawn by swans and doves. He repeated again and again to himself "the wool of beaver," "the bag of the bee," "so soft, so sweet is she."

After church in his library he sought out Ben Jonson and read aloud with enjoyment:

"Have you seen but a bright lily grow,
Before rude hands have touched it?
Have you marked but the fall o' the snow,
Before the soil hath smutched it?
Have you felt the wool of beaver?
Or of swan's down ever?
Or have smelt o' the bud o' the briar?
Or the nard in the fire?
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?
O so white! O so soft! O so sweet is she!"

"The fellow might have seen her in church this day," was his comment. "O rare Ben Jonson!"

He had selected his Easter gifts for the lady of the manor and her lovely niece with care, and put them in his pocket, then he carefully placed his newest wig at the most becoming angle on his head and donned his finest brocaded coat and betook himself to the manor-house to dinner as he was bid.

Sir Murdoch when he looked at Prue in church that Easter morning was sweetly wafted upon gentle rose-coloured dreams into an adventure of sentiment; a radiant adventure that took him into primrose-tinted clouds upon a winged horse, a horse that pranced gaily the unsubstantial and filmy ways of those regions. It is true that Prue was barely sixteen and he was forty-nine and a half, but age has nothing whatever to do with the glorious lives we live in dreams, indeed, the older we grow the sweeter and rosier become our cloudland adventures, and Sir Murdoch's dreams put a fine sparkle into his eye and brought a flush to his cheek as he trod his way to the manor.

Aunt Judith's Diary.

> "Easter Daye. Sir Murdoch and the curate came to dinner after service. Sir Murdoch seemeth to admire Prue, he look'd long att the childe in Church. He browt Easter giffts; to mee a snuff-box molded oute of horne and silver with the hedd of oure good Queen Anne on the lidd; and to Prue he didd give a silver mount'd hedd of oure blessed King, Charles the Martyr.

A GIFT FROM SIR MURDOCH

> "The yonge Lamb was verry tender with a fine flavour, it being fedd in the South meadowe by the River in wch Sir

Murdoch catches his fishe.

"The Tansie pudding wch is right and meete for Easter daye being a symbol of the bitter Herbes of the Paschal feaste, was goode butt bitter. Itt is made thus:—16 yokes of eggs butt onley 6 whites. Beatt well, putt in some suggar, and sack, then ad a pint of boyl'd cream. Collour with juce of Tansie and juce of turnipp tops. Cooke a long tyme, frye in swete butter. When enuff, strow with suggar and sprinkle dropps of lemon. Sir Murdoch look'd odly at Prue and he look'd long.

"Easter Monday. The Bishop came to dinner, and after drinking to the King over the water wee wente to the Common, alle the people was oute on the Common playing ball with Pace Eggs wch Prue didd give them. The Bishop, Sir Murdoch and Master Ladbrook play'd too, with zest.

"Prue very pritty, was with mee at the open window a-watching the plesant sportt. Shee grows more pritty, and has no thought of Sir Murdoch in her hedd, tho' hee has of her.

"The broken eggs the children didd eat with yong leves from the hawthorne bushes. Afterwards alle dance'd and alle was joyfull and happy because oure blessed Jesus was risen from the Dead. Easter is a healing Season. Itt bringes us alle together olde, yong, riche and poore, with giftes, blessinges and sweete thoughtes of our Saviour."

Prue lay in bed with a violent colic, and Mrs. Haggy sat beside her and gave her proper remedies, including fifty drops of Aunt Judith's famous "Lodinium," daily. We may learn how to make this Lodinium from Aunt Judith's own directions:

"Take II oz. Opium
I oz. Saffron.

"Cut opium thin and smal and put saffron into lytle pieces. Infuse the mixture in a quarte of goode sack. For a Colike take 50 dropps a daye."

To cheer the young lady, Mrs. Haggy sat reading the mysteries of the future from the blade-bone of a sheep, for the things Mrs. Haggy could do with the blade-bone of a sheep filled ordinary mortals with wonder at her skill and cunning.

“No, Miss Prue, Mr. Corney won’t marry the young Miss Clarinda in Wales, stands to reason. She is but fifteen, and a young gentleman like Mr. Corney wants an older lady, one as can twiddle him round her little finger, flatter him, and never, never tell him the truth about himself. No man can stand the truth from the lady as marries him. The Mistress—God bless her—was too truthful with the master. She could see all his faults in a flash you may say, and the poor gentleman had a-many faults; then she must always be a-telling him about them. Many a poor gentleman goes to destruction both in body and soul through a-hearing of the truth constant.”

“But good men, Haggy, love the truth.”

“A man, Miss Prue, is weak; and the wiser the woman is that marries him the more she pretends to be an owl or a bat. Bless you, Miss, if you never see a man’s faults you can do most anything with him. I was young when I married Jake Sage. He were too fond of tippling and talk. Gin were his fault at ‘The Pig and Bottle.’ I always told him all the fool things he did, and what folks said about him. That were the end of our little home, and comfortable enough I were if I had but known it. Jake had his cottage and his rye bread and nine shillings a week, and his pigs a-eating of the manor acorns; he were as much master of his home as the Duke of Marlborough in his grand palace with his bags o’ gold wrung out of selling places and getting pensions, but I were allays a-naggin at him for a-getting gin-silly, and that were the end.”

“Corney is eighteen,” said Prue; “it is young to marry for a man.”

“Just the age for an artful woman of twenty-nine to get hoult of,” here Haggy examined her mutton bone. “That Miss Clarinda be the youngest o’ nine sisters, most of them unmarried, and my stars an’ green garters! if here isn’t one a-getting him. Yes, yes, he’ll marry right enough, but not the young one.”

“Aunt Judith wouldn’t like it, Haggy.”

“That she won’t, bless her heart; but there’s many a thing wives an’ mothers have to lump. There’s trouble a-coming to her, twice I’ve dreamt o’ muddy water, and I knew it were more trouble for th’ mistress.”

“Marriage,” said Prue, “seems to be a risky thing,” and in her heart was a smile as she said it, for she knew she would some day marry Dick Abbot and there would be no risk at all, only content and great happiness.

“There isn’t real love in the world nowadays,” said Haggy, shaking her head; “folks marry in haste for ill-reasons. Not one marriage in a hundred is

as you may say happy. There's Sir Murdoch now, still hankering afther th' mistress, and she'll never have him, she's too independent like, and she might do worse. He's a kind gentleman and soft to womenkind. He'll cast his eye one day on some young thing like yourself, Miss Prue, and the mistress won't like that I'll be bound."

Haggy ceased, and gloomily examined her mutton bone with minute attention, and Prue blushed, for it seemed indecent for a man of Sir Murdoch's age marrying someone like herself.

"Young Mr. Corney will end by breaking the heart of the mistress," said Haggy sourly, "and she's had enough to bear a'ready."

Then Aunt Judith came in bearing a fine bunch of grapes on a silver dish. "From Sir Murdoch, for you, Prue," she said, "and a honeycomb from his bees." Aunt Judith sat down and Haggy left the room. "I'm troubled," said Aunt Judith, "I've had a visit from Sir Murdoch, and he's been talking about you."

"Me, Aunt Judith?"

"Yes, child, he's thinking of marrying and he would like to have you."

"But I couldn't marry, Aunt Judith, I couldn't, I couldn't."

"Not ever, Prue?"

"There's only one man in the world I could ever think of marrying," and Prue with a blushing face began to cry.

"I thought it was so." Aunt Judith was kind. "Sir Murdoch won't trouble you, and we need not tell your father. You are young, Prue, to be in love like that." Prue hid her blushing face. "Love," went on Aunt Judith, "isn't real, not once in a hundred times, and when it is real it always means pain; as to Sir Murdoch, he's bewitched with your youth, he'll get over it. It's best for a man to marry level in age."

"Yes," said Prue, and she closed her eyes when Aunt Judith left her, glad to be alone and dream of Dick, for in him she had an abiding secret store of happiness.

Before Prue's visit to Aunt Judith ended Corney returned from Wales. The match with Clarinda was not made. The girl proved to be a great hoyden. When Corney first saw her she was playing at marbles in the yard with the stable boys. Later, she got into sad disgrace with her father for

putting a string across the stable door to trip up a young groom who refused to let her have the grey mare to go to a village fair. The groom broke his arm, and Miss Clarinda was kept shut up on bread and water for a week. These matters interfered with the wooing, though Corney, nothing loth, turned his attention to one of the oldest sisters, Henrietta Maria, whose age, as Haggy had foretold, was twenty-nine. Corney brought his bride to his mother's home and some trouble ensued. The lady was loud, affected, shallow, and really silly, but as yet Corney saw no fault in her.

In secret Aunt Judith wept. She was more tender with her son than she had been with her husband. She even consented to the request of the young couple to buy the title baronet for Corney, for, like Cousin Betty, the young people were desirous of more Quality. Then she sought consolation among her bee-skeps, murmuring to herself, "Bees in the flower-grown meadows take the sweets of all the flowers." Sir Murdoch used to quote it to her and finish up with the golden sayings of some Latin poet.

As to Sir Murdoch, he left his filmy ways in cloudland as time went on, and resumed his fishing and reading, for time cures most things, even dreams, and discreetly his devotion to Aunt Judith continued for the rest of their days, sometimes to the lady's chagrin, for often "the phantoms of hope" failed her, and age refused to "perform the promises of youth," and at such times, she craved a closer union.

"SOUGHT CONSOLATION AMONG HER BEE-SKEPS"

PHILIP IN DEEP MEDITATION

CHAPTER XV

“THE WINE OF PAIN”

“It hath been hinted,
Some Spark at Bath—as Sparks will do,
Inscribed a song to ‘Lovely Prue’
Which Urban printed.”—AUSTIN DOBSON.

Prue was nearly eighteen, and quite unfit for society, such, at least, was the opinion of Aunt Cicely and Drudy. She had disgraced herself at her father’s dinner-table by making a scene when Lord Cragfell had humiliated his wife, and Prue had burst into tears.

Manners were often unsqueamish in the eighteenth century and humour unrefined. Lord Cragfell was a very great personage indeed, and Mr. Flowerdew had been paying court to him. After dinner the ladies remained to drink the toast to the King over the water, and when this was done and they were about to retire Lord Cragfell, like the coarse buffoon he was, suspecting that his meek, pale wife had used a little red to brighten her wan cheeks, accused her of it before the company and chased her round the dinner-table; then he grabbed her, and in spite of her protests rubbed her cheeks with his dinner napkin.

“Faugh! ’tis raddled,” he declared, “thou whey-faced jade; up to Jezebel-like tricks.”

The poor humiliated lady had tears in her eyes, which she strove to hide with a brave smile, and pretended to take the matter as a jest. Prue wept outright.

“For shame, my Lord!” she cried indignantly as she escaped from the room and took the lady away to repair the damage done to her head-dress.

“My lord was in a merry mood,” said the lady, “and he greatly mislikes the painted faces of ladies of fashion, though indeed my poor cheeks were innocent of the red of raddle.”

“Of course,” agreed Prue. She thought often over this incident and she no longer marvelled at the severe opinions held by Aunt Judith and Haggy about men and she wondered less at their disinclination for a second trial of matrimony. Men’s taste in what they chose to consider jests was horrible. “I could never forgive a man who was so boorish to me,” she told herself, thinking of poor Lady Cragfell. Her thoughts flew instantly to Dick. She

would forgive him anything, of course, but then Dick was gentle, he was always good, always right, it would be impossible for him to act thus. She admired him ardently; his thoughts and actions were oh a higher plane than that of other men. Mr. Flowerdew was annoyed at Prue's outburst. "Childishness," he called it; Lady Cragfell was a woman of the world, she understood her husband's jests. Prue was unfit for society, so he consented to Aunt Cicely's plan of a season in Bath for her and afterwards a year in Paris. "Her mind requires to be informed and her manners improved," Aunt Cicely told him, "and with the example of Drudy constantly before her she ought to do well for herself in life."

So to Bath Prue went to be schooled and fashioned.

Drudy was now a handsome lady about town, a lady with high ambitions, so high that her schemes for a desirable alliance had twice fallen through. It was an age for self-seekers. King George spoke little English, and the policy of directing the country was in the hands of a few powerful families; Drudy made friends with members of these families. Sir Robert Walpole was Prime Minister who ruled and acted upon the principle that "every man had his price." Votes were to be had for cash down; and Walpole was ready to pay for them. Leaders paid themselves royally with dignities, with sinecures, with titles for themselves and their friends; and astute persons acquired great wealth. To procure a vacancy for a sinecure office to give to a deserving partisan Walpole was willing to award the holder a liberal pension to vacate it; and pensions of five thousand or seven thousand pounds were not uncommon. It was an intriguing age, and women were sucked into the giddy and unrighteous whirl. It was the great Marlborough who said at this time, "Pleasing women may be of service to you, for they often please and govern others," and Drudy as office-seeker was not unskilful. The finest and cleverest man of Drudy's circle was Philip Redmayne; he was important, she decided, and she admired his piercing eye, his hard, determined mouth, with the thrust-forward jaw. He was of good family, though a younger son, and Drudy determined to cast in her lot with his and help him to fame, wealth, titles, and power. She loved intrigue, and she had intrigued a great deal for Philip; Dick Abbot was Walpole's secretary and she used him when it served her, whom in days gone by she had despised; sometimes she got items of information through him and sometimes she reached the ear of Walpole. She did it all very skilfully and gracefully and Dick was unsuspicious by nature.

She sought him again and again; she used to ask him about the gods and goddesses she worked in her tapestry. Dick came willingly at any request of

hers; he wanted to know all about Prue and her doings in Bath with Aunt Cicely. The merest detail about Prue interested him, like Sir Philip Sidney's impatient lover to whom he likened himself, no incident concerning her was too small:

> "I would know whether did she sit or walk;
> How clothed; how waited on; sighed she or smiled;
> Whereof, with whom, how often did she talk;
> With what pastime, time's journey she beguiled,"

he told himself. Drudy had always disliked Dick for his indifference to herself; she was a beauty, a toast, a woman worth pleasing because of her influence, she knew all this, yet Dick never troubled to please her; he was always too much concerned with the welfare of that silly Prue—an unformed creature without manners. Drudy made up her mind to pay Dick out for his inattention to herself. "Prue is becoming the rage in Bath," she told Dick one day.

"In what way?" He was alert in an instant.

"Urban has printed a song to 'Lovely Prue,' written by a great admirer of hers."

"She will always have admirers," was all Dick said, but the information rankled.

Meanwhile, affairs were progressing favourably so far as Philip Redmayne's fortune and promotion were concerned, for Drudy had redoubled her efforts on his behalf. Although Drudy was passionately in love with herself, yet she loved Philip in so far as a nature like hers was capable of love, but she was never certain of his feelings for her. This gave her a sense of insecurity. She wished he would declare himself openly and decidedly. He stood beside her one day at the fountain in the garden at Cherry Court, and she listened to him talking of himself and his prospects. She knew it was strength to listen, as it was often weakness to talk, for Drudy was an astute person, and it always pleased Philip to be listened to. She was acutely aware of every line of him, of every cadence in his voice, of every change in his countenance; she felt satisfaction, even joy, at the mere fact of being with him alone in the garden, yet there was pain in it too, the pain of uncertainty, insecurity.

A strange new uplifting feeling arose in her, "something within her sang"—that was one of Prue's sayings. This she felt was love, for she was aware of the capacity within her for love as well as for hatred and jealousy.

How she had worked and intrigued for Philip, and her reward was at hand. That very day, nay, at the very hour, Walpole was offering a pension of five thousand pounds to obtain office for Philip, such an office as would enrich him beyond measure. She was certain of this without a shadow of doubt; and when Philip was aware of his good fortune her happiness would be complete; then she would show him how to turn events to his advantage. Meanwhile, Philip talked on and Drudy listened. She was almost happy; she felt almost certain that Philip returned her love; the moment had come when her wave was at its highest and most delightful crest. She experienced bliss, intoxicating bliss—that pale Lady Mary of whom she was jealous, with her dove's eyes and marble complexion was nothing to him; he almost admitted as much. The western sky was a flood of gold, clear and pure as cowslips; amethyst patches were changing to a deeper purple. Philip looked at Drudy; she felt herself enfolded in his admiration, it was intoxicating. She laughed in his face with joy and triumph. That night as Philip sat in deep meditation his cousin Lady Mary came to him and somehow she pleased him better than Drudy; she had pleased him for years.

It was three weeks later, and Drudy sat alone in her chamber tearing a delicate lace scarf to pieces; there was hatred in her heart—hatred for Lady Mary and fierce contempt for Philip. She felt herself falling, falling through a great void that could never be filled. The pain at her heart was intolerable, and the taste of life was bitter. "The wine of pain, the wine of pain," she moaned through pale lips.

Lady Mary with her mild countenance and statuesque figure was to be married to Philip Redmayne; and she, Drudy, had schemed, courted wire-pullers and intrigued to secure the great position for him. He had accepted the office—which would make him famous, honoured, wealthy—he had thanked Drudy gracefully, and now she was left out in the cold. She had been used and cast aside like an old shoe. Men were like that. Drudy gritted her teeth as she hated all men, and she looked with miserable eyes at the dying sunset.

Her mind was a grey blur of unhappiness. "Love," she told herself, "is a consuming flame, pile icebergs upon it, yet the flame is not quenched; inundate it with streams of reason (crystal clear as the spar called Irish diamond), yet it remains unstifled; the flame consumes me, ravages my heart, there will be nothing of it left but a pile of white ash."

But the passions that raged within her were not even akin to love, they were hate, rage, jealousy, and humiliation, and her hurts were but wounds in her self-esteem.

Then Prue returned from Bath, happy to be home again, and very impatient to see Dick, for in three days she was starting for Paris with Aunt Cicely and she would be away for a year at least. She did not want to go to Paris; she knew it would be a time of weariness to her, and she wondered what Dick thought of it.

Dick was depressed in these days. He hated to think of Prue as the toast of Bath, with songs written about her by brainless fops. She would be spoiled by the frivolous life in Paris, with Aunt Cicely to train her to be like Drudy.

The day after Prue's return he called at Cherry Court to see her father, and he found Prue alone in the writing closet. He was polite and she was shy. Men and women seldom read each other correctly—and when they do it is only at rare moments—and in so far as their deepest and holiest emotions are concerned they are oftenest tongue-tied.

"I saw your sonnet that Ogden printed," said Dick.

"My sonnet?" Prue looked up quickly.

"Well, the song to 'Lovely Prue,' not a sonnet."

She laughed. "That was to Lady Prue Greensleeves, I was not the only Prue in Bath."

"I thought it was you."

"I was an inconspicuous person in spite of Aunt Cicely's efforts to make me a figure in society."

The depression fell from Dick instantly as a garment. "I must see you," he said, "before you go to Paris."

"Yes," said Prue.

"Beyond the stile, in the little copse near the windmill to-day."

"Yes," said Prue.

"I'll finish with your father in half an hour."

She looked at Dick; her eyes said "Yes" once more. At that moment Mr. Flowerdew entered.

“I hope I haven’t kept you waiting,” he said to his visitor.

“No, sir,” said Dick Abbot, his eyes straying after Prue.

Drudy came in with her father. Her heart was heavy with thoughts of revenge and hatred. She glanced at Dick, and became suddenly aware of his good looks. She saw his eyes straying after Prue, and a curious excitement came upon her. He was in love with Prue, “that silly chit, all eyes and fairy-tales, without manner, style or fashion. What could any man see in a little fool like Prue?” Her heart was bursting with anguish; she must hurt somebody to ease her pain. She would hurt Prue and steal away Dick. It would serve to wile away the time and perhaps afford her amusement. He was insensitive to her wiles, but she could melt his insensitiveness if she tried seriously. Then Drudy called for her chair and went to Paradise Row to hear from Aunt Cicely all the Paris arrangements.

THE DOG OF FO

CHAPTER XVI

A THREE-CORNERED NOTE

"The ladies of St. James's
You scarce can understand
The half of all their speeches
Their phrases are so grand:
But Phyllida my Phyllida!
Her shy and simple words
Are dear as after raindrops
The music of the birds."—AUSTIN DOBSON.

Prue sped through the garden, thence to the stile near the river, then to the left to the little copse by the windmill. Her feet seemed winged as she trod the lichen-encrusted path. Wild briar roses and honeysuckle scented every inch of the way, and the smell of Farmer Timkins' turnip fields was fragrant. Beautifully clear was the light around her; the sky was at its brightest with swift-scudding silver clouds; the sea-gulls on the river were wheeling and screaming in play; and the water heaved and rippled in the clear silvery light.

Here she waited with a beating heart; her thoughts were full of Dick Abbot, and she wondered with sweet excitement what he was going to say to her. Her face became lovely, illuminated from within, for love itself is beauty; the sacred flame flickering and shining in the soul transforms even a plain face into a beautiful one. Love works other miracles too, it releases creative energy which makes all work a joy and a song of praise, it is a source of goodness and inspiration.

Then she heard his tread, and they stood face to face under the spreading oaks.

"So there were no beaux in Bath writing songs to you?" he said gravely, questioning her.

She laughed, tinkling laughter like fairy-bells, elfins' lovely laughter, happy laughter, for here was Dick standing before her and talking to her. How she loved his soft voice with its deep tones, and the dreams in his eyes, and the curious radiance which seemed to light up his face.

"The beaux belonged to Prue Greensleeves," she said.

"So Bath hasn't changed you?"

“Nothing could change me.”

“And how did you pass the time?”

“Learning deportment, and having my hair dressed in the French fashion.”

“Your hair was all right before the Frenchman frizzed it.”

“But I needn’t have it frizzed any more.”

“Did you do nothing else?”

“I danced at the balls, sometimes I read novels, and I read Sir Philip Sidney too, then I had an Italian master, and I had to go to classes about Art. Tell me, Dick, what is Art?”

“Didn’t you learn?”

“They talked a lot of words, and I didn’t understand half of it.”

“I think Art is just the truth and simplicity of Nature which has passed through the mind of mortals.”

“Oh!” said Prue.

“So you are going to Paris with Lady Cicely?”

Prue sighed. “Yes, I must acquire finished manners like Drudy. Do you think my manners very bad?”

“Not very,” said Mr. Dick Abbot. “Don’t learn to be artificial.”

“Oh, I won’t, I promise,” then they laughed together, and Prue told him about Aunt Judith and Sir Murdoch and Mrs. Haggy, for these personages had also been in Bath.

“You will come back in a year?” he questioned.

“In a year; I shall be nineteen then, and very well finished, I hope.”

“Pen will be old enough then to look after your father.”

“Yes,” said Prue.

“When you come back I shall want to marry you, Prue.” He looked into her face as he said this; her eyes were downcast and a lovely carnation came and went in her cheeks.

“I could never marry any other man in the world, Dick,” she said, deeply moved, as tears slowly filled her eyes.

God and Nature are always making miracles somewhere, and love between a man and woman is a never-ending miracle. It is a fragile and exquisite thing, and when there is no obstacle and no shadow of doubt on either side it is too serious for any trifling.

Dick looked at her; to him she was a miracle, an inspiration, and she raised her eyes and looked into his and he saw her devotion a thing too deep for words. What mortals are ever seeking is not bread but life, and he knew he had found it and he marvelled at the radiance of her face—it was as though a lovely flame ran through her veins and transformed her.

At that moment Marjery's voice was heard calling: "Mistress Prue, Mistress Prue."

"I must go," she said, Aunt Cicely will be waiting. "I'm to dress and go out with her."

"With a frizzed head?" he queried, smiling into her eyes.

"No, Dick, never, I promise," she said. She loved to obey him, every gentle imposition of his will thrilled her. Obedience to him had always been her delight; and in truth the joy of obedience is the highest felicity of love, it is obedience which makes the bliss of saints, obedience to the Unseen which cannot be put into words; it is worship, reverence, adoration which make obedience a rapture, thus the asceticism of the saint becomes bliss unspeakable.

Marjery approached, still calling "Mistress Prue."

Dick took her hand and kissed it; and both of them trembled as the gods drifted them together.

"We must meet to-morrow before you go," he said, as Mrs. Marjery stood still at a little distance, "when Prue, and where?"

Prue thought rapidly. "It must be early," she said; "I'll find out when we start and write you a note, but how can I send it?"

"I'm coming to see your father," he whispered, "before nine o'clock to-night."

"I'll leave the note with Pen," she said. "I shall be at a masquerade with Aunt Cicely. We go at eight," and Prue sighed.

Then Marjery claimed her, for it was time to begin the dressing and Mr. Abbot sought Sir Robert Walpole at Westminster and attended to his duties, while Prue with a buoyant step and happy heart went about glorifying God.

As Marjery dressed her she learned they were to make an early start next day in Aunt Cicely's yellow chariot, which would leave the house at ten o'clock. Prue hated the parting with Dick; why was life so hard? She resolved to have one hour with him in the copse before she started. She must write a note and tell him to come at eight o'clock. It was the first love-letter she had ever written. She was full of fragrant and loving thoughts as she wrote:

DEAR DICK,

My hart is like a tree full of singing birds evver since you said what you said, yes, yes, yes, is my answer to you. I could writte itt one thousand times. I kiss the hand you kist over and over, and think of you. Sillie Dick to think of mee with Beaux in Bath. Aunt Cicely cud tell you. She chidd me oft for not deliting in Beaux. Miss Prue Greensleeves had a grate manny, and they said her hair was like gold, but I hadd rather the touch of your finger tipps, than all the gold in the world. Your words are more precious to me than jewels. Everie minute in Paris I shall have swete dreams of you. Bath didn't change mee, nothing can change me. Come in the morning at eight o'clock to the Copse by the windmill. I shall be there for then Aunt Cicely has Chocolate in bed. My hart is ful of singing birds because you said what you said.

Always your owne,

PRUE.

She was flushed, eager, and lovely as she twisted her letter into a three-cornered note which could not be tampered with unknown to the owner; then she kissed it many times. No, she would not give it to Pen; nobody should touch it till Dick held it in his fingers. She looked at the Dog of Fo with his wide grinning mouth. No, she could not put it there, she must cover it from sight; then the blue Ming vase attracted her, she fancied that the Ho-ho bird looked at her with a threatening look as she plunged her hand into the delicious scented rose leaves which filled the jar. She had helped Haggy to compound that sweet-scented mass when she was a little girl, the year her mother died. She would make a fragrant nest and put the note there out of sight till Dick found it.

The Ho-ho bird seemed to look entreatingly at her as though he didn't want her to leave the note there.

"You silly bird," she said, "nothing is too good to hold my note to Dick."

So she buried it among the rose leaves and covered up the top of the vase with an embroidered mat. The Ho-ho bird looked fixedly at her as though trying to warn her.

"Take care of my note, dear Ho-ho bird," she whispered; "let nobody find it but Dick."

She thought that the Ho-ho bird seemed to hang his head and the petals of the magnolia blossoms trembled.

"Dear Magnolia," she said, "my heart is full of secret smiles because I shall have Dick always when I come from Paris."

She softly kissed the magnolia and the Ho-ho bird. Then she caressed the head of the Dog of Fo.

"You have held many exercises for him," she said, and she put her little hand into his great mouth.

"My little, little note would be lost in your mouth, Dog of Fo," she whispered, "but you have always carried my exercises safely, and I thank you."

She pressed her lips on the top of his head.

It has been said by Fielding that "There are moments in life worth purchasing by the world," and this was one for Prue, the glory of sunlight was upon her, sweet trembling music filled her heart, tenderness and fire were in her eyes. She would serve Dick faithfully till death and serving would be her supremest joy.

Then she sought her little sister Pen.

"I want you to do something very important for me," she said.

Pen looked up from her tent stitch.

"What is it?"

"Dick Abbot comes to-night to see Father at nine o'clock."

"Yes," said Pen.

"Wait till he comes, and tell him from me to look in the blue Ming vase."

"Is it an exercise?"

"No, no, he will understand. To look in the blue Ming vase."

"Yes," said Pen. "Is he your beau?"

“Don’t say so, don’t tell anybody.” Prue blushed furiously.

“But is he?” persisted Pen.

“Perhaps, when I come from Paris. To look in the blue Ming vase; don’t forget, the blue Ming vase.”

“I won’t forget.”

“And don’t tell anybody, it is a secret and very important.”

“I won’t tell,” said the child.

Prue went to her room. Marjery waited for her.

“It is time to friz and dress your hair, Miss Prue.”

“It is never to be frizzed again, Marjery.”

“My life! Madam! What will Lady Cicely say?”

“She may say what she likes,” said Prue.

Then she sat in her closet reading the Elizabethan poets while Marjery laid out her gown and hood.

> “Happy the bonds that hold ye:
> Sure they be sweeter far than liberty.
> There is no blessedness but in such bondage:
> Happy that happy chain; such links are heavenly.”

She trembled with joy. Those old poets, Beaumont and Fletcher, knew just how she felt, so did Sir Philip Sidney and Donne and Ben Jonson. The poets were wonderful, and Dick was a poet. She wondered how he felt. Perhaps he would tell her when he met her in the copse in the morning. The caressing sweetness of the starry-eyed jasmine around her window affected her like a love-potion—such fragrant revelations from the outer world only served to intensify the tenderness of her thoughts of Dick.

It was a brilliant assembly in Soho Square which she went to with Lady Cicely. The great house was lighted by flambeaux. Orange trees in wooden tubs stood among banks of flowers in the ante-room; the gorgeous rooms beyond were hung in blue and silver, in amber satin and gold, and magnificent tapestries made the walls into broidered things of beauty. Prue passed through the hours as one who dreams. She remembered nothing of the events of that night; fragrant, beautiful, and exalted were her thoughts of Dick; all else was excluded.

“Child,” urged her aunt, “you look like an enchanted princess, rouse yourself, flirt your fan, and talk to your next partner in a sprightly and bantering fashion.”

“I cannot, indeed I cannot,” said poor Prue.

“Drudy had a better manner when she was a child of twelve,” grumbled Aunt Cicely.

It was early dawn before they departed. Through the rabble of chariots, chairmen, link-boys, hackney coachmen Prue moved as in a trance. A fine rain was falling, the pavements shone like glass. Her heart sang, for in a few hours she would see Dick.

“Get some sleep before we start,” cautioned Aunt Cicely.

But there was no sleep for Prue; only ecstasy, as she lay waiting for the time when she would meet her lover, and counting every chime of the clock which brought him nearer. Romance appeals to us all in different ways; to Prue it became the very life and soul of her.

THE WINDMILL

DICK’S SILVER AND GREY BROCADED COAT

CHAPTER XVII

CUPID'S CURSE

"There is a pretty sonnet then, we call it 'Cupid's Curse,'
They that do change old love for new, pray gods they change for worse."—
GEORGE PEELE.

Dick had just finished writing a sonnet to Prue, a polite eighteenth-century sonnet neatly trimmed, a sonnet with carefully turned phrases and proper compliments. There was no fault in it at all, yet it did not seem to express exactly what he wanted to say. He sought to mend it, but that seemed to make it worse, more artificial, forced, and manufactured. Poetry cannot be manufactured, it must come of itself like a spring bubbling up pure and spontaneous from a mountain side. He tore it to shreds and thought over it; then he tried again, but the results still did not please him; he frowned, somehow his verse did not express Prue. It was correct, the images were poetical enough, but it was not like Prue, simple, natural, and unartificial. It lacked spontaneity; he seemed hampered by the laws of verse for:

"With slower pen men used to write
Of old, when letters were polite
In Anna's or in George's days,
They could afford to turn a phrase."

Yet polite phrases could not call up the image of Prue with her elusive flame-like quality. He tore it up again, and turned to Sir Sidney for inspiration; Sir Philip's sonnets ever rang true. Presently he laughed aloud as he read:

"Biting my truant pen, beating thy heart in spite,
'Fool!' said my Muse to me; 'look in thy heart and write.' "

He seized his pen again and wrote what was in his heart; it was filled with the image of Prue, and he wrote what he saw and felt. He smiled, for it expressed Prue exactly; he was satisfied. He carefully arrayed himself in his silver and grey brocaded coat, and putting the sonnet in his pocket, he went on his way to Cherry Court. He had to see Mr. Flowerdew, but first he would meet Pen; she would be waiting for him with a letter or message from Prue. He hoped it would be a letter; it would be the first love-letter she had ever written to anybody; he smiled as he thought of it.

Pen was hanging about the writing closet pretending to look at the Ho-ho bird vase, in reality she was waiting to give Dick her sister's message. Why was Dick to look in the Ming vase? she wondered. Prue was always full of mysteries. Suddenly the beauty of the vase came upon the child. The Ho-ho bird was a fascinating creature, somehow he seemed to change, for when Drudy came into the room he looked quite angry; his handsome comb became erect, his eye seemed to flash fire.

"What are you doing here, Pen?" asked Drudy.

"I'm looking at the Ho-ho bird, Sister," faltered Pen.

"It is your bed-time; be off with you."

"Look, Sister, the Ho-ho bird follows you with his eyes."

"Don't tell stories; get off to bed with you."

"I can't go yet."

"Why not?"

"I must wait until Dick Abbot comes to see Father."

"Well, you cannot wait; got to bed, I tell you."

"But I must, Sister, I must." There were tears in Pen's eyes.

"Why must you."

"I've got a message for him."

"From whom is your message?" Drudy searched Pen's face with cold eyes.

"I'm not to tell."

"Don't be silly; your message is from Prue, of course, she always makes mysteries, leaving papers for Dick in the mouth of that hideous china image, bothering the man with childish nonsense."

"It isn't in the mouth of the grinning Dog of Fo."

"What isn't?" asked Drudy sharply.

"I oughtn't to have told you." Pen bit her lip.

"You've told me nothing, child. Run away to bed. It is very unseemly of you to be here waiting for a young man who comes to see Father."

"I can't go till I've given him Prue's message." Pen stood in awe of Drudy, and tears filled her eyes and ran down her cheeks.

“I’ll give him the message for you.”

“You will truly?”

“Of course I will.”

“Cross your fingers and say ‘Faith.’ ”

“Faith,” said Drudy, doing as she was desired. “Now tell me the message. What is it?”

“Tell him to look in the Ho-ho bird vase.”

“Is that all?”

“Yes.”

“It’s only Prue’s nonsense. Now go to bed, and don’t tell Prue you told me.”

“Why not?”

“You broke your promise to her, that was very dishonourable of you,” and a guilty Pen crept miserably away.

Then Dick Abbot entered. He chatted to Drudy for a moment, and she arched her eyebrows at his grand coat and asked him why he was so fine. “To call on ladies,” he said. Then he asked for Pen.

“She’s gone to bed.”

“She had a message to me from Prue.”

Drudy laughed. “She told me; it was some nonsense about the Dog of Fo, you were to look in it. That is where Prue posts her love-letters.”

“Love-letters?” Dick looked straightly at Drudy.

“Well, her fairy-tales then, or sonnets or whatever it is she writes to you,” and Drudy laughed again, and picking up her skirts she flitted from the room. Alone, Dick searched the mouth of the Dog of Fo; his fingers traversed the throat and gullet of the monster, but there was nothing there. What did Prue mean? The Ho-ho bird seemed uneasy, his tail feathers seemed to shake, his eye was full of ire. Then Mr. Flowerdew entered and bore the young man away. A little later Drudy stood in the light of a single candle with her fingers among the scented rose leaves in the blue Ming vase. Triumphantly she drew out the three-cornered twisted note. She knew the trick of opening it. She read it and laughed aloud. So that was it; that baby-faced Prue fancied herself in love with Dick Abbot. What could she know

about love? Drudy carefully refolded the note and put it in her bosom. Suppose Prue looked in the vase, she should find it gone. She brought her work—the picture she was making in tent stitch—and sat in the writing closet until Dick Abbot passed through to the hall. It was near eleven o'clock. "Can I give Prue any message?" she asked.

"Do you know what time she starts to-morrow?"

"At ten-thirty, I think."

"Tell her," said Dick, "I'll call to see her at eight. I'd be here to see the carriage off but I have to be with Sir Robert Walpole at nine."

Drudy smiled. "You are an early bird," she said.

Prue arose and dressed soon after seven. She was too impatient to remain in the house and she made her way to the copse by the windmill, where she could sit with her dreams, her hopes, and glad expectations of seeing Dick for a blissful half-hour. Her heart was fluttering like a bird.

Drudy also was alert early.

She sent Marjery to the shop at Chelsey to buy cappins, sealing-wax, and embroidery silks for Prue. "I'm packing her a case of useful things," she said. "It is so difficult to know where to get these things in Paris."

"She told me not to call her till nine," said Marjery as she prepared to do Drudy's bidding.

Drudy was careful to be on the alert to meet Dick when he called.

"I'm sorry," she said, "Prue is asleep; she was very tired when she got home at dawn, and she had a soothing draught; she is not to be called till nine."

"Did you give her my message?"

"She was too tired to understand, she fell asleep in the chair."

Dick fidgeted. "Could I see Mrs. Marjery?" he asked.

"She's gone to do some shopping for Prue."

"Where has she gone?"

"To the city, I think, she went early."

"Is Pen anywhere about?"

“Pen is still a-bed, the little sluggard.”

“You can send Prue a letter to Paris,” Drudy suggested.

“Yes,” said Dick doubtfully. The Ming vase seemed to make him suspicious, it seemed to suggest evil things of Prue. He walked away slowly. Why had she behaved so strangely? It was not like her. Yet it might be that Bath had changed her, young girls easily got their heads turned in Bath. So he brooded miserably.

Eight o’clock struck; Prue, with expectant starry eyes, counted every stroke, any second Dick might appear, but the seconds dragged on and he never came; slowly the seconds became minutes and Prue was feverish with anxiety as the minutes passed, then the first quarter chimed; the precious minutes were slipping away. Prue wept forlornly. Would he never come? Perhaps he was ill, or there might have been an accident. Another agonised quarter of an hour crept by, it was now half-past eight. Prue could bear it no longer, she ran through the fields and garden to the house, and in the hall she met Drudy.

“Why, Prue, where have you been? Marjery said you had a sleeping draught and were not to be disturbed till nine.”

“I did not drink the sleeping draught. Has Dick Abbot been here?”

“Yes, he came to say he had to be with Sir Robert Walpole and could not see your coach start.”

“When did he come?”

“About a quarter of an hour ago. Why, Prue, you look pale.”

“I am tired, Drudy; it was lack of sleep that tired me. Did he leave me a note?”

“No.”

“Nor a message?”

“No.”

Prue went to her room, stunned, dazed, and heart-broken. She would not see Dick again, and in an hour or so she was starting to Paris. Why did he not say just a word in answer to her note? Why did he not seek her for just a few seconds in the copse by the windmill? She wept miserably.

Then Pen came to her room, hovering around with help, and shedding tears at her departure.

“Don’t cry, Prue, a year will soon pass,” she said.

“You gave Dick Abbot my message, Pen?”

“Yes, Sister.”

“What did he say?”

“Just ‘Good night’; it was my bed-time and Drudy sent me away.”

“Was Drudy there?”

“She came and made me go.”

“Did he look in the blue Ming vase?”

“Sister, how could I tell?”

Prue went to the writing closet and looked at the blue Ming vase; she knew exactly where she had put the note, a little to the right, just under the fragrant leaves. She poked about, the note was gone. So Dick had found it. She sighed, and she fancied a tear formed in the eye of the Ho-ho bird.

Drudy watched the coach start with a triumphant heart; Prue was out of the way for a year. It would be odd if in that time she could not capture Dick and work her will with him. Her spirits rose and her intriguing soul plotted honours for him and wealth for her; a man like him would be wasted on a silly creature like Prue; he would know how to appreciate her abilities. She read the note again and laughed, then she poked it deep amid the rose leaves in the Ming vase.

And Prue, with a heart hungering for one word from Dick, went listlessly with Aunt Cicely to Paris to learn fine manners. Did he mean what he said to her? Was her letter too forward? She was broken-hearted, but loyal to Dick. It was Dick, she reflected, who had taught her all she ever knew of the great things of life: honour, courage, selflessness, and now he had somehow failed her. What had she done to change him, was her note overbold? She remembered when she was a child Drudy had rebuked her for trying to write a sonnet to him, and Drudy knew the ways of the great world which she seemed unable to learn. She had always loved him; as a child there was always passionate adoration for him in her heart. Often in solitude Prue wept and tried to construct the fault in herself that had turned Dick’s heart against her. She knew that if she had sinned she had done it unconsciously.

And though Drudy exerted all her fascinations and wooed Dick in the subtlest way she did not find it so easy to bend him to her will as she had

imagined. She would meet him in the garden when he came to the house, where he would find her gathering roses and jasmine as Prue used to do.

She would jest with him playfully, show him her tapestry, crave information about the gods of Greece, and laugh with amusement of his stories of goddesses.

"They were all imaginary beings, none were real?" she would question.

"The wisest man cannot tell where reality ends and imagination begins," he would tell her.

She studied his looks and appearance with a critical eye. His figure was vastly genteel, she concluded, and in his silver and gray brocade coat, which he kept for stately occasions, he looked handsome and distinguished; he could easily be turned into a fine Court gentleman. It was hard to bend him to listen to her worldly wisdom when the "poet's truth" in him was uppermost; Drudy found him cold and resistant out of doors, but in the writing closet there seemed some influence that made him easy to deal with.

"It is the Ming vase," thought Drudy, "there was always something uncanny about it."

She thought of poor Prue's three-cornered note lying there amid the rose leaves unheeded and she smiled triumphantly. Dick Abbot, she told herself, was "meat for Prue's betters."

It was in the writing closet under the unhappy influence which emanated from the Ming vase that Drudy's wooing succeeded. Dick was essentially a dreamer and an idealist; to a nature like his there was surely to come to him a kind of crisis in his life when the world showed to him its bleak ugliness, when stripped of dreams and beauty he saw it stark and hideous. Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister* and Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus* show something of this struggle. When Dick found himself in a grim world of passionless reality the "poet's truth" no longer availed him, and Drudy was ever of the world, whispering to him of power, high places, wealth, the honour that comes from successful intrigue and all the gauds beloved by many mortals, and Drudy was beautiful, she was accomplished, she had a shallow and effective wit, and she beguiled and captured him, as such women usually capture their prey.

Dick fell a victim to her worldly wisdom when the thinking heart of him was atrophied within him, and doubtless the evil influences of the blue Ming vase were powerful on Drudy's side; so they were married, and in a few short weeks Dick seemed to awake out of a dream, and he found a millstone

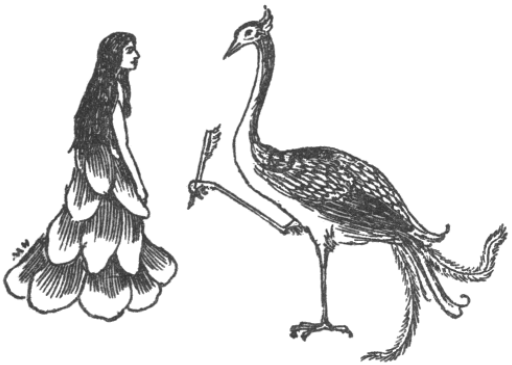
about his neck from which there was no escape, for thus does it happen when marriages are entered into for motives of gain rather than truth and faith. Prue heard of the marriage, and she lived through agonising months, but never for a moment did Dick sink in her esteem; she had lost the one love of her life, but she experienced no revolt against fate; she was not given to self-analysis. Drudy was handsome and clever and could help him to success. The curious Puritanical bias in Prue prompted her to suppress herself. She must suffer, it was the common lot of mortals—all the good people in the Bible suffered, and the Almighty permitted it. You became more perfect through suffering. By pain the heart was refined, and perhaps she herself would only have been a hindrance to Dick. She knew that she could never cease from loving him, and a numbed sense of loneliness seemed to stretch endlessly before her, but that she must endure.

BOOK THREE

“HER AGE WAS COMELY”

“For her e’en Time grew debonair;
He, finding cheeks unclaimed of care,
With late-delayed faint roses, there,
And lingering dimples,
Had spared to touch the fair old face,
And only kissed with Vauxhall grace
The soft white hand that stroked her lace
Or smoothed her wimples;

So left her beautiful.”—Austin Dobson.



HO-HO BIRD AND MAGNOLIA LADY

“Lo! there is a quill-pen and an inkpot; etch in quickly the missing petals.” The Ho-ho bird smiled. “Man thinks he knows, but woman knows better,” he said, quoting a Chinese sage.

SIR ROBERT WALPOLE’S VILLA AT CHELSEY

CHAPTER I

DICK'S PICTURE BY KNELLER

"You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still."
MOORE.

And the years went by, and the people in my story died in due course or lived on and endured.

Sir Murdoch died a bachelor some years after Aunt Judith, to whom he always remained discreetly devoted, except in that mad moment when he dreamed of the child Prue. He fished a good deal from the old arched bridge which crossed the river at the north of Clinton Moor; and Aunt Judith used to come and read to him when he had gout in the winter months, for it soothed him to listen to her voice. She read the literature he loved. *The Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle*, by Prioress Juliana Berners, who also wrote *The Boke of St. Albans*, which Boke contains articles on Hawking and Hunting; Prioress Juliana was an out-of-doors lady with a seeing eye and much wisdom; she also read *The Compleat Angler* and that oldest fishing story in the world, the story of Tobias; and in the spring when Sir Murdoch brought her the earliest strawberries grown in heat in the greenhouse he always quoted from old Izaak: "We may say of angling as Dr. Boteler said of strawberries, 'Doubtless God could have made a better berry but doubtless God never did'; and so if I might be judge 'God never did make a more calm, quiet, innocent recreation than angling.' "

In his age, when Aunt Judith was gone, Prue used to come to Clinton Moor to care for Corney and his family and she visited Sir Murdoch during his attacks of gout. She made for him very deftly the flies that he loved, with names like Blue Dun and Bright Brown, requiring things like "the down combed from a black greyhound's neck with a fine-tooth comb," "the hair from an abortive calf," from a squirrel's tail, a peacock's feather, and the "shaved root of a barbary tree."

Aunt Judith had many trials in her old age, for Corney's marriage was disastrous enough, and in spite of their quality Corney and his wife came to something like poverty through extravagance, and though Aunt Judith had little patience and tenderness with a weak and foolish husband she had much more of both with an equally weak and foolish son. In her last years it was the devotion of Sir Murdoch and the affection of Prue that solaced her. She used to say ruefully:

“It is hard to know how to bring up children; my dear husband was brought up on ghosts, psalms, and hell-fire by Puritan parents and it spoilt him. For Corney I had a clever tutor, and gave the boy happiness and freedom and he turned out a worse dupe than his poor father. Now you weren’t brought up at all, Prue, and look at you.”

Prue’s eyes grew soft. “Dick Abbot taught me,” she said.

“And then he went and made a fool of himself with Drudy. Men are poor fools when left to themselves, and worse with a woman at their elbow to tell them their faults.”

Prue was silent, she had acquiesced without murmur when she lost Dick; perhaps she was not worthy of him, and perhaps Drudy was, so she said nothing; she never met Dick after that last meeting in the copse near the windmill. He and Drudy were in Italy when she returned from Paris, and shortly afterwards Dick died. Prue’s life thenceforth lay in shadows; no glad pattern was woven into her existence. She spent herself in the service of others, and she won happiness, for the only self-fulfilment on this earth is the suppression of self. Even in old age she retained a touch of her childlike outlook; it was, perhaps, her imagination which gave her a whimsical way of regarding things.

She could not help her passion for Dick Abbot any more than she could help the colour of her eyes; her love in time became a manifestation of energy of various kinds, and energy has attributes ascribed to God.

Prue had to make her own life, but so do we all, for nothing vital can be given to us by another, however close the intimacy. Her thoughts were her own, her books and her friends; her very solitariness seemed to bring her nearer to Dick. She had cared for her father until his death; she had educated and cared for Pen until she had married; she had looked after Corney and his children, and she had brought up Simon’s daughters—for his wife had died when his children were young. Now she was old and the friends of her youth were gone, but Prue was content with the constant companion of her thoughts, for the memory of Dick Abbot was all that life left her; she was old and very happy.

She had sought beauty in renunciation, in devotion to others, and she had found a chastened, serene happiness which was almost holy. She smiled when she thought of her youth with its golden visions, for visions lie in the inmost heart of all of us, lovely and enticing in their opal-tinted mists of illusion. She marvelled at the change in herself, and how it came about that life, that glowing, teeming, glorious life, was suddenly behind her instead of

spreading its wealth of promise before her feet. All her life love had been denied her, yet she had thrived, she was nourished on dreams and memories. Now the music in her heart was never-ending, the rhythm of it satisfied her. Her mind had never rusted for want of use, for, as Johnson has said it is "our own fault, if from want of use the mind grows torpid in old age."

Drudy had married an Ambassador after Dick's death; she had been courted and flattered almost to the end; she had intrigued, shone in society, and dressed beautifully always. When her Ambassador was dead she came back to England and the sisters met after many years. Drudy was tearful when she met Prue, for she saw in her that young self of long ago. It is always so when we meet in age the friends of our youth; it is our young selves we meet, and we are stricken at the sadness of it.

Drudy was thin, discontented, with discreetly concealed grey hair; her manner was lofty and faintly condescending; in a way she was beautiful with the beauty that powder, patches, old lace, flashing gems, costly fans, elegant hoops, rich brocades lend to advancing age. She was conscious enough that she never had been the romantic and beautiful figure she had pictured to herself, that figure of grace, wit, and charm that every woman feels she ought to have been, in order to enjoy triumphs and dazzle all beholders. She came in her chair one day to see Prue, and the sisters talked of bygone days.

"Life," sighed Drudy, "is romantic in youth."

"Also in age," Prue reminded her.

Drudy laughed with a bitter mirth.

"Age is unromantic, unbeautiful," she insisted.

"Age brings great happiness, Drudy."

"Unhappiness rather, we are but fretful ghosts of other days."

"Golden ghosts," said Prue.

"You are stupidly, incurably romantic," said Drudy irritably, "you always were, so was Dick. It is a pity he didn't marry you instead of me; we never suited each other."

A dagger's point seemed to turn in Prue's heart.

"He was a poet," she said.

"Poets are impossible to live with; they never see their advantages, and when you trouble to show them they deliberately turn the other way. Dick

had brains, he might have made a vast fortune if he had chosen."

"He never condoned bribery," said Prue.

"Who does? He lacked diplomacy. With Walpole in the days of Queen Caroline, when she and he ruled the land and 'dapper George' was the merest cypher, Dick might have risen to any height, and acquired wealth and power," said Drudy fretfully, "but he wouldn't, he made a hash of life."

"Of course he wouldn't." Tears were slowly cutting their way into Prue's eyes.

"There, I told you so, Dick wanted a hermit's life; he would have lived on pulses and wild honey, but I had no stomach for such fare. He was a difficult man to live with. He made a wreck of my nerves."

So Drudy rambled on, never troubling to think of the pain she gave to her sister, but she was a person of little imagination, so she may have been unaware of it.

Prue understood so well the whole situation. She knew that his was a "thinking heart," that the intrigues in high places were gall and bitterness to him; that goodness and the simple beauty of the world sufficed him, and his entanglements with Drudy's desires and evil opportunities were as a millstone round his neck.

Drudy died before she was seventy of aimlessness and discontent. She was elegant to the end; in her flaxen wig dressed with diamonds, her China crepe shawls, her jewelled snuff-box, her exquisite lace, her handsome rings she looked distinguished; she spent her time turning over her jewels and mourning her lost youth.

"There's a picture Kneller painted of Dick somewhere in the attic, Prue," she said one day. "Would you like it?"

"Yes," said Prue. "I've never seen a picture of him."

"It is quite a good picture, he looks like a poet in it."

"He was a poet, Drudy."

"He never wrote any poem about me."

"He wrote little, he died young."

"Diplomacy and Court intrigue are not subjects for poetry," yawned Drudy.

And thus it was Prue became the possessor of Dick's picture by Kneller. It was one of her treasured possessions, she always had it in her room in company with the Dog of Fo and the Ming vase filled with fragrant rose leaves.

"Your room always smells of rose leaves," Drudy said to her, sometimes.

"They are in the Ming jar, they must never be disturbed, then the scent lingers hundreds of years. I helped Aunt Judith to make it when I was a little girl," said Prue.

Drudy wondered what had become of the three-cornered note. "Has it never been emptied?" she asked.

"Never, sister," said Prue.

DRUDY CAME IN HER CHAIR

THE RED LACQUER CHEST

CHAPTER II

“ ’TIS ALMOST FAERIE TIME”

“As the clear light is upon the holy candlestick, so is the beauty of the face in ripe age.”—*Ecclesiasticus.*

“I can tell thee where
Full eighty years stand upright, look as clear
As some eighteens.”—Barnabas Oley.

Prue sat alone in the candlelight on Christmas night reading Sir Walter Raleigh.

“It is God that puts into man all the wisdom of the world without speaking a word.” She mused on this sentiment. Of course it was true. Aunt Judith used to read it, and she remembered Sir Murdoch saying that man stood alone in the universe as the highest intellect, and in “his mind was also the minds of beasts, birds, fishes, trees, and flowers,” especially fishes; Sir Murdoch always knew a great deal about the minds of fishes.

She stopped reading and thought of the past, smiling tenderly at the little romance between Aunt Judith and Sir Murdoch which always stood still and never advanced. The affairs of men and women were tangled and inexplicable. Why couldn’t those two have married and increased their happiness? and why couldn’t she have married Dick? It was as though mortals were put on earth to be tried and tested; perhaps the life Beyond was happy. She read further: “It is Death alone that can make a man know himself.” She was always troubled about the death of Raleigh; it was a shameful death; never had a man who loved his life as ardently as he met death so blithely and with so much dignity; he was basely betrayed by his King and his kinsman, and she shivered as she thought of dread Tudor times.

Prue was an old woman now, though her mind had the alertness of youth; she had a kind of wistful spiritual beauty which gave her a dignity which perhaps is only acquired “through pain and constancy, for constancy is a virtue as surely as charity and faith.”

Dick was still the companion of her thoughts, her secret store of happiness, she adored him with an exalted passion, for the mystic strain in her increased with years; and all love is a wonderful thing, a miracle, it sets alight the flame that makes for goodness, it releases energy which turns work into a joy, and labour into a song of praise. Her devotion to Dick

Abbot's memory was a reality to her, and its sacred flame sometimes illuminated her face, and then she looked like "a saint in Paradise," so her nieces and great-nieces used to say. One of these illuminations came upon her now, for Dick seemed to stand before her in the glory of his youth; somehow she could never think of him as dead. An odd feeling took possession of her; she knew that Dick was coming, it was as though she were eighteen again and going to meet him in the copse near the windmill. The candle flickered—there must have been a gust of wind—and her face shone with inward happiness and beauty, for there is no light so mellowing, so kind to age as candlelight. The old are always happy—if they have caught life's secret—it is very simple, it is only self-forgetfulness having no wants; the young who have so many wants find it hard to understand this. She went to the window, drew aside the curtain and looked out, the moon was shining on the river—she lived in Chelsey—and the sky and the river are eternal things, they satisfy the soul and teach us tranquillity. Again the candle flickered, there was an eerie feeling in the room, and Prue thought of an essay in an old *Spectator* that Aunt Judith used to read to her. It began: "There is a kind of writing in which the Poet loses sight of Nature and entertains his readers' imagination with characters and Actions of Persons as have no existence but what he bestows upon them. Such are Fairies, Witches, Magicians, Demons, and Departed Spirits." Her room seemed peopled with these uncanny creatures.

The wood fire shot up brilliant blue flames, yet the air became chillier and chillier. Something alive and dear to her was with her, and her thoughts centred round Dick Abbot with a thrill of ecstasy.

Suppose dead people could come back at midnight on Christmas Day as Haggy used to tell her? Suppose she could choose who was to come? She would of course choose Dick; it would be a comfort to talk to him. She glanced at his picture, then the bell rang and her maid ushered in her two great-nieces. They had come for an hour to cheer her.

"You look very happy, Aunt Prue," said Cicely.

"I am happy, my dear."

"You look as though a vision had passed over you," said Rosalie.

"Maybe our life is just a vision," said Prue dreamily, "and when it ends we enter into reality."

Cicely, who had recently become engaged to Sir Seton Monkhouse, and had a thoughtful and inquiring mind, suddenly asked: "Is it true that there

are no women of genius?"

"Seton told her that," said Rosalie.

"Genius is a masculine quality like beards; women are better without them," Prue said quietly.

"Does that mean that men are better than women?"

"In love, women have a faithfulness which perhaps men never understand," said the great-aunt, "though in understanding men excel women."

"The preacher said something like that to-day, he said that religion is love," went on Cicely.

"All religions that are pure at the source must be based on love, for love is the original substance which shines in all human virtues," said Prue. "It is like Charity, it 'never faileth.' It 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Then Simon Flowerdew came in to fetch his young daughters and Prue was left alone.

The clock struck twelve.

The shadows in the dim corners of the room deepened; the fire made a singing noise as it burnt with that strange blue flame.

"Old apple wood," reflected Prue as she watched it. Her face was pale and serious as the winter moon in the sky and her chiselled profile just as pure; into her eyes came the searching look of one used to scanning the distance, a strange look of one who has lived much apart.

It was a pretty room; faded brocade curtains looped back showed an inner room where hung the portrait of Dick. Beside it a pair of wax candles burnt in silver sconces. It represented Dick as she had known him, in his silver and gray brocaded coat kept for important functions, fresh ruffles at his wrists, and a paper in his hand, it was Dick in his youth. His dreamy poet's eyes looked into hers. "Dick," she murmured softly, "Dick." He seemed to smile; it was almost as if he were about to speak. She was strangely moved, her heart went out to him. Low and clear the blue flame burned; the silence was uncanny; Prue *knew* Dick was there.

Her eyes searched his pictured face, and the silvery, feathery hair framing her own face seemed to ruffle as by a mild breeze.

Now, after the clock has struck twelve on a Christmas night any strange thing may happen; it is the time when the spirits of the past may come back, even our own ghosts—the ghosts of our youth. Mortals in pictures may step out of their frames and walk and talk, and great artists who love the landscapes they have painted may step into them and wander at will; but there is risk in these things, for in both cases they may never be able to get back again. Prue continued gazing at the picture. "Dick," she called. "Dick." So strange and unnatural was the light that it dazzled her eyes and for a moment she closed them.

The pictured Dick smiled. "I'm coming," he whispered.

Very slowly he moved; very gently he stepped out of the picture-frame and stood on the carpet, but in spite of his care the ruffle of his left wrist caught on a little nail and was torn. He moved softly towards the sleeping lady. In the window stood the lac chest adorned with the green-glazed grinning Dog of Fo, while the blue Ming vase stood on a table beside it. Dick's eye fell on these familiar things with pleased recognition.

"I am here, Prue," he whispered.

She opened her eyes, and then she cried gladly.

"You, Dick! Have I been dreaming? I thought you were gone, and I was old."

"You will never be old."

"You didn't come to the copse, and I had to go to Paris without seeing you."

"Yes, Prue, you went to Paris."

"But I wrote to you and asked you to come to the copse early that morning."

The Ho-ho bird seemed to stand more erect and his comb trembled.

"I never got the letter, Prue."

"I sent a message by Pen, and I told you to look in the blue Ming vase; I put the letter in there among the rose leaves."

The magnolia seemed to flutter all its petals, and from the blue Ming vase came a sweet and a faint fragrance of old rose leaves, as piercingly sweet as it was faint and elusive.

“I never saw Pen, and Drudy told me to look in the mouth of the Dog of Fo.” Dick said this as in a dream and he glanced at the Dog of Fo.

“Oh, Dick!” wailed Prue. “Pen must have forgotten the message.”

“I came early the next morning and tried to see you and Drudy said you were asleep.”

“But, Dick, I was waiting in the copse; I waited until I thought you had forgotten me. I asked you to come to the copse.”

“I never forgot you, Prue; ever were you in my thoughts.”

“And you married Drudy.” There was a faint tinge of reproach in her voice.

“My marriage was the strangest thing I ever did, I seemed to have no will of my own. I never wanted to marry Drudy.”

“And I had to go on living without you.”

“We all go on living.”

“They said you were dead, Dick.”

“There is no death.”

“And now you are young and I am old,” sadly she said this.

“There is no age.”

“But see how Time has whitened my hair.”

“There is no Time.”

“But sundials measure Time.”

“Time,” said Dick, “is only ‘a conventional sign.’ ”

“And do you live in the picture,” Prue glanced at the empty frame, “or do you live in—in—Space?”

“There is no Space,” said Dick, “that is an exploded fallacy: but take this, Prue, it is the sonnet which I had to hold in my hand all these weary years until I might meet you.”

“What sonnet?”

“It was to you,” he said, and he laid it on her lap. “You will soon come to me, Prue, as young as when we parted.”

The fire grew dim, the candlelight fell on the Ming vase, the Ho-ho bird waved his magnificent tail feathers.

Very slowly Dick faded away, and Prue closed her eyes and slept.

The clock struck one, and then Prue opened her eyes.

"Such a sweet dream," she murmured. "Dick was here, he was young, and I am to go to him and I was to be young."

She looked at the picture and Dick seemed to smile at her. Then she looked at the paper he had given her. "Dick's handwriting, he said it was a sonnet to me. Nobody ever wrote poetry to me; the song was to Prue Greensleeves in Bath." She read the sonnet, and then she sat and cried softly. "Was I ever like that, 'lovely, young, with beautiful lights in my eyes'? Dick thought I was like that sixty-five years ago, I was young then, and he says I am young now. How strange it is."

She got up and went towards the Ming vase, her old face radiant as pure melody.

"I put it among the rose leaves in there, and Dick looked for it in the dog's grinning mouth." She sighed softly. "Ah! if it should be there." She put her hand in the jar, down right to the bottom, stirring up every rose-leaf. She drew out a shabby, stained, three-cornered note that was falling to pieces. Somebody had played her false—this came upon her like a revelation. Could it have been Drudy?—but perhaps she had searched among the rose leaves carelessly that fateful morning long ago, the note might have stuck to the bottom of the vase, thus thought Prue in her charity.

She carefully unfolded it and tears half blinded her as she read: "My hart is like a tree full of singing birds, evver since you said what you said." Dick never got it, he never knew. Did he know now? She went to the picture and held it up. "Here it is, Dick, let me read it to you," she said, and in a clear voice she read every word; she thought he heard and understood for he smiled.

"It cannot be real," she said aloud, "I must have been dreaming; he could not come out of the picture." She went to the picture and examined it carefully. The pictured Dick had held a paper in his right hand; now the paper was gone and his fingers were touching a button of his waistcoat. Then she picked something off the little nail by the candle sconce, it was a torn bit of Dick's ruffle, it was white and fresh as if newly laundered. Where had it come from?

She looked again at the picture—the left-hand ruffle was freshly torn.

She came and sat down in her chair to think. It was a tapestry-covered chair, she suddenly remembered Aunt Judith working the tapestry long ago at Clinton Moor.

She was dazed, bewildered, yet radiant; suppose it were true, and suppose she would go to Dick and be happy in a place where there was no Death, no Age, no Time and live for ever and ever.

"It is true," she murmured as she stroked tenderly the torn bit of Dick's ruffle. "I shall go to him soon now."

Dick was alive, his immortal spirit was alive, it was a miracle; yes, love was a miracle too, for why should mortals love one another with a passion stronger than anything else on earth? stronger, perhaps, than death? She closed her eyes and meditated on the strangeness of it.

Then Martha, the waiting-woman, came in softly.

"The warm posset is taken to your chamber, madam."

"Thank you, Martha, it is past my bed-time, put out the lights."

"Yes, madam."

"Christmas is a blessed time, Martha."

"It is, madam."

"Our dearest friends come back at Christmas."

"Sometimes they do." Martha seemed doubtful.

"Even friends who left us sixty-five years ago; ghosts, perhaps, Martha, but radiant golden ghosts."

"Don't talk of ghosts, madam, they remind a body of death," and she shuddered.

"Martha, he told me there is no Death."

"It seems too good to be true, madam. We ageing women know that our time is short."

"Martha, there is no Age, and there is no Time, he said so."

"He was a very hopeful gentleman, madam."

She gave her mistress her ebony stick and Prue walked slowly to the door, pausing to look at Dick's picture. A beautiful radiance overspread her face, it seemed alight with joy.

"As a white candle
In a holy place,"

is a poet's expression of the beauty of an aged countenance illuminated with love.

"She's getting nearer to heaven every day," thought Martha, watching her.

"Put out the candles, Martha," said Prue.

Martha obeyed and followed her mistress.

THE TAPESTRY CHAIR

EPILOGUE

Lower and lower burnt the fire; the shadows in the room deepened. There were strange influences astir; the Dog of Fo opened his mouth and yawned, then he uttered a low growl; the miniatured face of Aunt Judith sighed and then smiled; the pictured lady in tent-stitch on the wall picked at her skirts and danced demurely, she even tried to sing an old-world song. The room grew chilly, the Ho-ho bird solemnly stepped down from his purple rock and fluttered to the lac cabinet, where he strutted up and down with a dignified mien, emitting that soft wailing sound characteristic of the immortal king of birds. It was a cry that heralded good fortune. Now the laws of mortals are made only for the world of men. Birds, fishes, and insects obey other laws, so do creatures who live on vases and pictures as in the fairy world.

The magnolia lady heard his cry. She stirred, adjusted all her petals, stepped stiffly off the Ming vase, slowly approached the Ho-ho bird, and sank in a deep curtsey before him.

He smiled benignly upon her.

"It is long, madam, since we abode in the land of Confucius."

"It is, my lord Ho-ho."

"The women in this land are faithful in love," he said, "and that is well."

"They suffer for their love, my lord," said the lady.

"Suffering refines mortals."

"But the Lady Prue had great sorrow."

"She laid up treasure," said the Ho-ho bird.

"She had the faith of a child, my lord Ho-ho."

"It is only the truly great who throughout life keep a child's heart," he quoted from a Chinese sage.

"She was kind to all," said the lady.

"To love all things and to treat them well that is goodness and equity," said he, again quoting from the sage.

“The wicked Drudy stole her lover.” Here the magnolia lady wept.

“ ‘Evil also comes out of the heart, passion breeds it,’ and the worst passions are greed and vanity.”

“The young poet was a victim to the fallen peony petals and the imperfect flower; the vase is curséd, my lord.”

“Evil is ever intermingled with good.”

“Why should the good suffer? The Lady Prue was good, beautiful, and modest.”

“Yes, she kept her place in the inner room; not unskilled in ‘the ways of the silkworm and the loom,’ these things become women.”

“But why then should she suffer?”

“All mortals suffer; thus they learn to be gods.”

“Stop the curse the vase brings to mortals, I cannot bear to live on this vase and see mortals suffering.”

“Inasmuch as the Lady Prue has a spark of the Divine fire, and by reason of her constancy, we will avert the curse put upon the vase by the Ming artist, for as one of these heathens has well said: ‘There is surely a piece of Divinity in us; something that was before the elements and knows no homage under the sun.’ ”

The lady dried her eyes.

“The religion of these heathens,” she said, “resembles that of our master.”

“The Lady Prue perchance had strayed into this mortal world from other planes and knew other religions. This happens by mischance, for she was more than most mortals in her constancy and purity of heart.”

“Is the spark of Divinity called Love, my lord?”

“Love is the basis of all religions, lady, and all great religions founded on love and pure at the source are alike,” he said. “Let us first deal with the erring peony. Call her,” he commanded.

“Peony, sister Peony, come forth,” called the magnolia lady.

The peony stirred, shivered, and tried to come off the vase. She was clumsy, unhappy, untidy, and confused by reason of her looseness and

scattered petals. The magnolia lady helped her, picked up her petals, and placed them properly in their places.

"Peony," said the Ho-ho bird, "pull yourself together."

The peony tried to stiffen herself, but she was in truth a rather helpless and shapeless bundle.

The magnolia lady smoothed her rumpled petals.

"I've been loose like this for centuries," wailed the peony.

"I will give you of my sap, Sister," said the magnolia, and she scratched a small wound in her arm, and from it poured her sap into the heart of the peony.

"Peony, pull yourself together," said the Ho-ho bird again.

The peony did her best, and she looked quite respectable when she climbed to her place on the vase, and wept silently. Then the Ho-ho bird looked at the incomplete flower.

The flower wriggled. "Let me come off," she squeaked.

"No," said the Ho-ho bird firmly. "I cannot permit a bit of evil like you to run about the world," and he sharpened his claw on the purple rock.

The flower writhed as in anguish. "I did not make myself," she wailed.

"We can all make ourselves if we will. You have chosen to be evil," and he continued to sharpen his claw.

"See," he said to the magnolia, "I will scratch the erring flower out with my strong claw."

"That would injure a work of art, my lord. Lo! there is a quill-pen and an inkpot; etch in quickly the missing petals."

The Ho-ho bird smiled. "Man thinks he knows, but woman knows better," said he, quoting a Chinese sage. So he took the quill-pen and etched in the three missing petals. "Behold," he said, "it is now a good omen; evil has been frustrated."

The magnolia lady clapped her hands.

The indefinite flower writhed again.

"You have crushed the heart out of me," she squeaked.

"You have resilience enough to recover from my crushing," said the Ho-ho bird steadily.

“One more boon, my lord,” begged the magnolia lady. “Will it please you to annihilate but Space and Time and make two lovers happy.”

“How so?”

“Let all be as it was when the Lady Prue was eighteen, and let him find the note—then will they find happiness.”

“Happiness is enfeebling,” said the Ho-ho bird.

The lady sighed.

“The events of sixty-five years have got into Time, they cannot be taken out,” he added.

“What is Time, my lord?”

“It is the Soul of Space.”

“He said there was no Time and no Space.” The magnolia lady was tearful.

“He is mortal; mortals err through ignorance; to tamper with Time would reduce the universe to chaos.”

“Is Time in the universe or is the universe in Time?” she asked.

“That,” he said, “is a matter of no importance.”

“How do philosophers define Time, my lord?”

“They cannot define it.”

“Has Time never been defined?”

“Irrational beings like poets have defined it.”

“What do the poets say of Time?” she asked.

“They call it a ‘gentle Deity,’ a ‘mighty preacher,’ a ‘grand instructor,’ a ‘great physician,’ a ‘man’s angel,’ a ‘part of eternity,’ the ‘greatest innovator,’ a ‘breaker of youth,’ a ‘devouring cormorant,’ ‘leaden-footed,’ ‘an ever-rolling stream,’ it is ‘counted by heart-throbs,’ it ‘softens grief,’ it ‘destroys all things,’ it is ‘still a-flying,’ it ‘wipes out fancies,’ and its ‘glory is to calm contending Kings, to unmask falsehood, and bring Truth to light.’ ”

“It is indeed perplexing, my lord. He also said there was no Age and no Death.”

“On the immortal plane it is so.”

“Will those two find that plane?”

“It may be, in a million years or so.”

The magnolia lady sighed.

“Your kind heart, lady,” said the Ho-ho bird, “shall be rewarded, for has not our Master said, ‘Blessed is he who is kind even to a weed’? You may therefore choose a boon.”

The lady meditated. “My lord,” she said at last, “I find life on a vase shattering to the nerves, it is likewise precarious; should it be broken I perish. I would be immortal.”

“To become immortal you must first be mortal and suffer with mortals.”

“How can I become mortal?”

The Ho-ho bird made calculations with mystic numbers. “In thrice three years,” he said, “I will help you off the vase; you must then wander on earth and never return to the vase.”

“Will not my absence spoil a work of art?”

“I can etch your blossoms on the vase.”

The lady was mollified. “And what must I do on earth, my lord?”

“Partake of the sufferings of mortal women.”

“Then I must marry,” she said, and she shed tears as she thought of Aunt Judith’s marriage.

“Women may suffer in other ways,” he said. “The Lady Prue suffered enough and she remained unwed.”

“True,” acquiesced the lady, “and how shall I become immortal?”

“Man is mortal, and therefore unselective in the matter of food.”

“Food, my lord?”

“Food, man is what he eats. His wisdom, his philosophy, his poetry, his discoveries, his crimes, his follies, his self-deception, his vanity are merely the result of his unselective diet. Lady, you must eat the food of gods.”

“Eve ate an apple,” mused the lady.

“A forbidden apple, and thereby immortality and Paradise were lost to the world.”

“Newton saw an apple fall, and from that fall good ensued.”

“When Newton saw the apple fall he did not *eat* it, but discovered gravitation from it; had he gone further in resisting tempting morsels he might have discovered the food of the gods,” said the wise Ho-ho bird impressively, “and thus conferred immortality on human kind.”

“But it might have been a bad apple, with a worm at the core,” said the lady, “therefore, Newton forbore to eat it.”

“It was sound and rosy, madam, as are the apples in Paradise; his mind inclined him to discover gravitation from it.”

“Then apples are forbidden?” queried the lady.

“Many other things likewise. Virtue, wisdom, immortality are but the result of selective diet.”

“Will all mortals one day be virtuous, wise and immortal?”

“They will, madam, when they learn true values.”

“Will that time come soon, my lord?”

“Centuries of error and trial lie ahead,” said the Ho-ho bird gloomily. “In the next century mortals in their unwisdom will discover steam and create appalling ugliness which they will call modern towns.”

“Why should they do that, my lord?”

“They will seek wealth, dross, gold, and so destroy the green earth with fire-machines and abominations called factories.”

The lady shuddered. “Will they repent?”

“When it is too late, and then in a mistaken effort to make all mortals greater than God made them, and manufacture wisdom, an unwise State will impose forcible education on everybody.”

“Does not education make men wise?”

“Wisdom, madam, cannot be manufactured. It is a gift from God.”

“That is true,” sighed the lady.

“Forcible voting will be a further folly. In a frantic search for wise men to govern the State the worthless and unfit will be set to vote in the vain effort to find them,” and the Ho-ho bird uttered a note of lament.

“But worthless and unfit mortals cannot choose wise men, my lord.”

“They cannot,” sighed the Ho-ho bird. “In politics such folly is called democracy.”

“What is democracy, my lord?”

“It is compelling infants to rule the households of wise men.”

The lady plucked one of her petals to wipe tears from her eyes.

“Are all brands of politicians so unwise, my lord?”

“All,” said the immortal bird gloomily.

“Can nothing save the world from man’s unwisdom?”

“Greater than education, greater than democracy, greater than reason is man’s imagination; that alone can save the world.”

“How are men to get this gift of imagination?”

“It comes from God,” said the Ho-ho bird, “and He gives to it His fittest and best.”

“How can men be made fit and good enough to recognise this?”

“By selective diet. Some day a Saviour will arise who by a proper diet will purge man of his crimes and follies. Then will come a State wise enough to impose forcible feeding, and then men will become as gods.”

“All men, my lord?”

“All,” he replied, “it will take millions of years.”

The lady smiled. “A happy time, my lord, but must I suffer with mortals all through these weary millions of years?”

“Nay, I will whisper a secret in your ear. When you have suffered as a mortal for a season, wander apart on the hills, reject mortal food, and nourish your body with the *powder of mother-of-pearl*, then will you become immortal.”

The lady curtseyed. “Thank you, my lord, then shall I know heaven.”

“Heaven is the peace of a heart free from passion, and Hell is the trouble of a heart filled with remorse.”

“The immortals know not that Hell, my lord.”

“The immortals are made of the stuff which makes the universe,” he said.

“And what stuff is that, my lord?”

“ ’Tis made of the minds of philosophers, discoverers, poets, and of women who have loved much.”

“And are the minds in the universe or the universe in the minds?” she asked.

“Leave such matters to the philosophers, madam, and rejoice that you will one day join the immortals.”

The lady smiled, and began to dance a stately dance for joy. She danced slowly and rhythmically as is meet for religious occasions.

“Lady,” said the Ho-ho bird, “ere we resume our places on the vase let us tread a measure together.”

She picked up her skirts deftly and they danced decorously as gods and goddesses.

Meanwhile the peony was weeping silently, and the new sixteen-petalled flower was murmuring sullenly.

The dance being finished, the immortal bird admonished both with kindness.

“Weep not,” he said to the former, “brace yourself to participate in goodness,” and her tears ceased to flow.

“Cease repining,” he commanded the latter, and she became silent at once, for the extra three petals had begun to work.

“Your acquiescence I regard as the basis of pacific relations restored,” he said to her. “Let us henceforward do as much good as we can for as long as we can.” Then after helping the lady into the vase he stepped in himself.

The clock struck two and in the distance a cock crowed; the firelight faded to white ash, and all was still.

Now I, Isabel Innes, in a vision had been permitted to see the things as I have recorded; and a few days later as I sat among a gathering of those pursuing philosophical studies I thought of Prue’s story in those far off times. Mortals are hardly aware of life as they live it, and when it is lived it never changes; it lies there like Time, in a series of pictures fresh and clear from a master’s hand. Then I became engrossed in the things around me.

An aged scientist and a wise archbishop were speaking of Science and Religion.

The scientist, silver-haired, dome-like brow, and frosted beard—beautiful as age and thought could make him—spoke in low tones weighted with wisdom; and the archbishop—a great silver cross gleaming on his breast—talked with crystal clarity and vision of the things discussed by

Chinese sages in ancient days. They told of Time, Space, Reality, the Universe, and Man's awareness of the Unseen; and again and again their words sounded like echoes of the immortal bird's rendering of the utterances of his Master, so little have—even the wisest of earth—advanced in great problems since the days of Confucius and Aristotle; yet it would appear that modern thinkers are finding new approaches to old problems, and that material and spiritual things are less divergent than was formerly supposed. Among the questions one seeker after truth asked: "Is Time in the Universe or the Universe in Time?" and the archbishop replied that he did not know, but the matter was unimportant; the aged scientist said nothing at all, yet his eyes, full of vision, were fixed not on the Earth or the countless millions of stars, but on lives beyond into which he had penetrated, for Science clear-eyed and more aware of great mysteries than in past days is humbler than it was, and Religion is shedding many ancient wrappings which hid its glory, and the two may yet walk hand-in-hand on shining heights when men have become as gods.

And as to the Ming vase, those who wish may see it, or one almost exactly like it, in the British Museum; and the truly interested—if they can contrive to stay alone all night in the Chinese room on Christmas night—may, after midnight, witness many singular things, as strange as are here set down.

AT THE STILE NEAR THE COPSE

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *Ming and Magnolia* by Catherine Isabella Dodd]