

## III.

As in city, so in country life, day after day brings its employments, duties and pleasures. They err who say, that out of cities and towns, in the wide domain of woods and fields, existence is lazy and selfish.

True, that contact with our fellow men is less frequent here, and that our sphere for well-doing unto others is far more limited; but the poor and suffering are everywhere; all over the world reigns the curse for sin, in the "hedges" as well as the "highways." There are some who everywhere wrap about them the impenetrable cloak of selfishness; but to him of willing heart and hand, occasions for kindly words and deeds are never wanting.

There are many too who have had their share of the jostle and hurry which characterizes city life; it is perhaps uncongenial to their natures, and when the object which stimulated their endeavors is acquired, they look about for rest. Beautifully has some one written,—

"One does not want for ever to contend with the mad race of waters, and the arm longs to put out of the cur-

rent into some quiet cove where sunbeams glitter in golden rings, and overhanging trees make green shadows and soft whisperings—it longs for a *rest*."

Some such thoughts had I this morning as a poor, travel-worn stranger stopped at the kitchen door to crave a mouthful of food. After he had eaten his fill he came to the garden, where, like the child I have read of, I was examining some of the seeds we had planted, to see whether they were growing. He wanted work; for he says he is poor, and has no home or friends, but is willing to work. He is a Pole, and having vainly tried to find employment in the city, has started, he knows not whither, in search of a living. I question him a little, but he hardly understands me, nor I, him. Yet I gather enough to know that it is the same tale we often hear: a recital of oppression, cruelty and suffering, of family ties rudely sundered, and warm hearts ruthlessly broken. He is a strong man, but weeps like a child as he strives to tell me his history. Poor fellow! he has probably pawned all the clothing that is not absolutely necessary to cover him; yet he still wears his braided coat, now sadly out of repair, and destined soon to be cast aside. I find something for him to do and promise him a shelter for the night, and he almost overpowers me with gratitude.

Teddy brings me word that Brindle, our choice Devon, has a calf an hour old, but unfortunately it is

of the male gender, at which I am greatly disappointed, for I had hoped to raise a heifer from her this season. The butcher from the village reaches us three times in the week, and brings, for our convenience, whatever letters or papers come for us by the mail of the previous night; as yet the terminus of the railroad running from the city is many miles distant, and our only communication is by steamboat and barge.

But the butcher's red wagon is at the door, and Blanche is on the piazza, holding up a letter for me. It contains, as I expected, notice that the Shetland pony which Birdie has been looking for so long, was shipped, no not "shipped," but "barged," last evening from the city. It must have arrived at the Point this morning, and I forthwith despatched Teddy after it on old Charley, a ride of three miles.

Poor Teddy! he does not want to go, for he is planting with great care a large bed of early beets, and is afraid that "Polaski," as he calls the poor fellow, his co-worker, will destroy it, but I promise it shall not be disturbed, and he is off to the stable as fast as his short legs can carry him.

He is a perfect jewel in his way, that same Teddy, as honest and faithful an Hibernian as ever lived; there is no pretension in him either, though he can do almost anything, and what he undertakes, he does well. Grooming Charley, milking Brindle, chopping wood,

making the garden, and running here and there, keep him busy; but he is never behindhand, and never tired. Where could I get such another? I endeavor to show Pulaski what I wish him to do, and not to do, then go to the house and sit awhile with Minnie and Blanche, perusing the papers which came this morning.

The steamer is to sail day after to-morrow, and this fact reminds me that I must write to Frank, but I put off the task till evening, when there will be nothing to interrupt me. We pass away an hour in pleasant talk on subjects domestic and foreign; though there is one domestic topic broached by Minnie, not very pleasant to me. She says, I must search for a cook; and if I cannot find one here, why, I will have to go to the city for one. I protest loudly against this innovation of marital duties, but Minnie's persuasive powers carry the day, and I promise to try: Blanche roguishly saying, "Only think, cousin, what an amusing little story you might write, called, 'Harry C—— in search of a cook.'"

Twelve o'clock comes, and soon after Teddy passes the window, leading as diminutive and shaggy a specimen of horse-flesh as I ever saw. We all run out to see him, and some one calls Bridget and tells her to bring Birdie down, and even Pulaski ventures to leave his work and draw nearer. Birdie cannot get down stairs fast enough, so Bridget must carry him, and

when he reaches the scene, what an impersonation of delight he becomes. The pony is a perfect stoic; he allows all sorts of liberties from us. Teddy opens his mouth to see how old he is. I look at his unshod feet. Blanche handles his long mane; while to crown all, Birdie is placed upon his back, switch in hand, and wonderfully brave, till Teddy leads his charge a step forward, upon which the young novice utters piteous cries for papa, mamma and Bridget to take him down. This done, Shag is led to the stable to get a good mess of bran and rest after his long journey, for he is still on his sea legs.

Whilst we are at dinner, the ladies propose that I take them a drive this afternoon. There are necessary purchases to be made at Hillsdale store, and we can get the morning papers from the post-office. I acquiesce if they will go in the box wagon, as it is lighter than the other, and the roads are not yet in order. In an hour Charley is at the door, and though he is pretty well advanced in years, yet when well groomed and harnessed, there are few nobler looking animals; and then he is so gentle and fast, and knows so well the gait he is to travel. We drive slowly down the road which winds along our hill-side, and crossing the creek that bounds our domain upon the north, we enter the river woods, beneath whose overarching branches, the road is always damp and shadowy, even

in summer. Here and there, where the high ground commands a fine river or mountain view, or both combined, the forest has been long since cleared away, and tasteful dwellings with velvety lawns and well kept enclosures, mark the hand of wealth and taste. They are the abodes of those upon whose intercourse and society we are dependant for much of our present and prospective pleasure. Keeping the river road, which runs northward for many miles some distance farther, we diverge into a narrow lane cut through the woods, and intersecting the level turnpike leading from Hillsdale to the river. This is skirted by large and fertile farms, mostly grazing land, and is much travelled. We have taken this roundabout way to our destination merely for the drive, and shall return by a more direct road. Reaching the village which, as its name implies, is embosomed amidst the hills, I discharge Minnie and Blanche at the main store, and then tying Charley under the tavern shed, I stop at the post-office and getting my papers, sit down to chat awhile with its sociable and news-burdened functionary.

When the ladies' shopping time has expired, and I rise to leave, a flaming yellow handbill posted on the wall attracts my notice. It is to inform the public that an itinerant lecturer "will address them to-morrow evening at the meeting-house in Bridge Valley, on

Animal Magnetism, illustrated by subjects." We will go, thought I, it will just suit our dreamy Blanche, and if we do not become converts, it will be a pleasant moonlight ride at least! By the time I reach the store and the assiduous clerk packs away the various sized straw-papered packages, Minnie and Blanche have finished their business with the dressmaker who lives adjoining the store, and we are soon on our way homeward. The road now lies over and between the ridges of hills which run parallel with the river, and break the force of those chill easterly winds so prevalent in our latitude. The sun is nearing the horizon; and, as we follow the inequalities of the road, sometimes we are in sunlight, sometimes and oftener in shadow, so like—

"The lights and shades, whose well-accorded strife  
Gives all the strength and colour of our life."

We reach home in time to give Birdie his good-night kiss, and take tea at the usual hour. Teddy has made Pulaski an odorous bed in the hay loft, and the poor wanderer has gone to it, perhaps to dream of his country and her wrongs.

When the astral is lighted and a fresh stick put on the fire, we dispose ourselves as best pleases us. I take my book till Blanche finishes her two pages to Frank at the *escritoire*, whilst industrious Minnie

opens some of her many bundles, which perfume the room with a mingled scent of coffee, cinnamon and sugar, to find buttons and cord for that frock which is to display her darling's charms so becomingly. It is soon finished, and Bridget is summoned to take it to the nursery and put it on the child when he is dressed for dinner to-morrow. Oh! a mother's vanity! but it is akin to her love.

Blanche is a ready writer, and has spun out three pages, from which she reads us occasional passages and then gives me her seat. I have much to write about, so I hunt up some Paris post paper that has been reposing in my drawer for years, and shall probably indite six or eight pages of it.

As I write, Blanche opens the piano and plays the serenade from "Don Pasquale," for, ever thoughtful as she is, she knows it is a favorite air of mine, and that music is always suggestive to my pen.

Minnie tells me not to forget to thank Frank for that case of anchovies and basket of Florentine oil he shipped from Leghorn, and which are now in our larder. No, my friend, those choice and spicy fish keep you in eternal remembrance; as for the oil, we will prove its delicacy when my lettuce is well up and before it has headed, I assure you. When I reached my third page, Blanche says she forgot to tell Frank not to fail bringing her the coral and lava sets

from Naples, and if he should go to Constantinople, "he must bring her a pair of Turkish slippers, the handsomest blue and silver ones he can find." By and by, I am in want of a sentence, and I ask Minnie if she has any commission for Frank to fill. She says she will think, but as the thought does not come very soon, I have to think of something I would like for myself, a chibouque perhaps, if he goes to the East, or a Damascus hunting knife.

But at last I reach my eighth page of desultory matter, and looking over what I have written, I believe I have touched on every topic that could interest my friend. He has never been here, and has no idea of our location except from the description I wrote him after we came. I tell him of Charley and Brindle, Shag, Birdie and Teddy, and of ourselves, our quiet home pleasures, our hopes and fears; I speak again of La Solitaire, but can tell him little more than I did at first; then I close with wishes from all of us for his safe and speedy return. No, there is a P. S. to be crowded in; it is Minnie's wish that has reached her lips at last. Well, Minnie, what is it? "Why just ask Frank, if it is not too much trouble, to bring me a fine Scotch woollen plaid to make Birdie a coat next Fall, he knows my taste." Oh, Minnie, Minnie, you will spoil that boy!

Blanche's sweeping fingers stop for a moment in the

middle of a passage from "Sonnambula," as though a sudden thought had struck her, and she wishes to express it; but it is only for a moment; she restrains it and her hand sweeps the keys again.

"I know you are wishing for something more, Blanche, but I think you can do without it. Frank's trunk is over-burdened already, and will hardly pass the custom-house duty free."

I enclose Blanche's letter in mine, seal it and direct it to his banker's at Paris; he will open it within thirty days, and in less time than that, he will be with us I know, if I mistake not the influence of his sister's letter. Will she postpone that eventful day to which she is looking forward, if he is not here? her own heart can tell.

But it is nearly midnight, later by two hours than we generally sit up. Books, paper and pen are laid aside, the piano closed; and lighting their chamber candles, my companions quietly vanish. I turn down the wick of the astral till its flame expires, and then heap ashes on the smouldering embers of the fire, which,

"Just glimmering, bids each shadowy image fall  
Sombrous and strange upon the darkening wall."