

## XIV.

How quickly flies time with us! We can scarcely realize that the bright, beautiful summer which has been so pregnant with events conducive to our happiness, has almost gone. Yet so it is.

Frank has performed wonders at Briar-cliff with his stout Hibernian aids. The house has been repaired and repainted, the garden cultivated, the walks freshly gravelled, and the whole grounds put in complete order. The old man's cottage too, stands at the gate, remodelled and quite ornamental, much to the delight of its inmates. Frank and Blanche have spent several days in the city, selecting furniture and decorations which are rapidly arriving and arranged according to Blanche's fancy; for her brother has given her sole charge of this department. In a week or two, all will be finished and the house ready to receive its new mistress, whom we have none of us seen, excepting Frank, of course.

The hall of the mansion is very fine and capacious, as that of all country houses should be. It is panelled with polished oak, and all the rooms on the first floor

open into it. Frank's taste is manifest in its decorations, we can plainly see. As you enter the door from the portico, two knights clad in mail, which Frank picked up in some antiquarian museum abroad, standing on massive pedestals, confront you. On brackets along the wall are placed beautiful models in plaster bronzed, of classic and historical figures, male and female, draped and undraped, whilst over the library door is a finely preserved deer's head and antlers, a trophy from the Adirondacks.

The library—for Frank is a great reader and has a literary turn too—is a *bijou* of a room, not large, but roomy enough and right cozy. It is finished and furnished in oak, with book-cases built on the wall and surmounted with busts of the great and wise. His paintings, some of which are very fine, are not yet hung, neither are his books unpacked, of which he has a valuable collection. He opened a case yesterday packed in Rome, and showed me a "Beatrice Cenci" copied from the original by Mazzolini, as fine a copy as may be found anywhere. "But Harry," he says, "next week you shall see a gem not inferior to La Solitaire's, though a different subject; it is not unpacked yet."

"Ah, Frank, I expect your choice things will draw us here often; Briar-cliff will be the magnetic pole to Hermit's Dell, and I am afraid your grand establish-

ment will make us dissatisfied with our little unpretending cottage."

Then, in his stable, is a pair of spanking blacks, which think nothing of accomplishing the distance between our places in half an hour, though the road is hilly. They do it nearly every day, now that we go back and forth so much.

Frank has his hands full of employment, but does not want for assistants. Minnie and I are only lookers-on; Blanche, like one of old, "is careful after many things;" but in addition to her, there is another helper who has offered his services to Frank, when not engaged with the duties of his vocation. This is a young man, whose sphere of action is in the school-house by the dusty roadside about half a mile distant.

He dropped in to see Frank the other day and welcome him to the neighborhood, at the same time tendering his services in any way that might be acceptable. Seeing that he felt the need of more congenial society than he has for most of the six days in the week, Frank has taken quite an interest in him. His occupation is probably followed more from necessity than choice, for he is evidently a young man of talent and refinement, fitted for a different position than the one he occupies.

There are many such sons of New-England—for he is one—scattered throughout the country, and laboring

for a subsistence which is often begrudged by those who little know the self-denials and struggles which the dependent often knows.

Frank says that he stopped in the school-house a few days ago, after the rude troop were dismissed, for the purpose of ascertaining, in as delicate a manner as possible, how the young teacher was domiciled; for he had an idea that his accommodations were not the most fitly chosen or agreeable, though perhaps equal to his means.

It proved to be so, and Frank has now provided him with a snug little room in the cottage at the gate, for the present.

I have frequently passed the school-house, and noticed some inscription over the door that I could not decipher from the road. I asked Frank if he had ever observed it.

"Why yes, Harry, and a very appropriate motto too, '*Hoc opus, hic labor est,*' but whether it was put up by the present incumbent or not I am unable to say; it is quite an original idea, is it not?"

Frank is superintending the erection of a grapery in addition to his other improvements, and when that is done, I cannot see but that he has all that heart can desire to make a country residence perfect.

"Yes, Harry, by the middle of September I hope to be through with masons, carpenters and all super-

numeraries; then for the weddings—Blanche's and mine; after that, we will have a grand reunion here and settle down to the calm duties of life, like you and Minnie, hey!"

"I trust all your anticipations may be answered, Frank; we shall be happy in your happiness."

So we pass many days, partly at Briar-cliff, partly at Hermit's Dell. Frank lodges with us at night, driving to his place every morning, and returning here in the evening.

Minnie and Blanche find abundance of work to employ them, so that they can hardly spare time to sail with us occasionally; and as for music, the piano has been unopened for a month; our musician has too much else to think of.

There is little for me to look after at this season, as Teddy is diligent and keeps everything in good order, so I amuse myself in "taking notes" of all that passes here and at Briar-cliff.

Suppose I should take a notion to "prent em!" but that is not very probable.

## XV.

MINNIE and I are alone again for a day or two; and employing our time in returning some visits to our neighbors, whom we have neglected amidst the excitements of the summer. Our social intercourse is limited, however, for the country is not yet thickly settled, and the "places" of our friends are widely scattered. When the projected railroad is in operation, we may expect many additions and acquisitions to our circle.

This afternoon we paid La Solitaire a visit, the first for weeks. She was happy to see us, and we sat a long while with her, gleaning from her memory many incidents of her past life. She loves to talk of her native village, and more especially when she knows that I have been there, and through all that picturesque country which lies between Amalfi and the Doric temples of Paestum, those wondrous ruins

"Which stand between the mountains and the sea,  
Awful memorials, but of whom we know not."

She is a woman of no common mind; not one of those

ignorant Calabrian peasants which you often meet in their hovels over the southern part of Italy. The associations amidst which her husband's employment had thrown her have had their influence on her mind and heart. She reads the books we lend her and takes good care of them. She instructs her child, and is training him to follow his father's profession, for which he begins to show a taste.

She talks often of her lost husband, Pietro; of those days when, a happy peasant girl, she knew no care, except of trailing vines and trees burdened with golden fruit; when love, wakened in her heart by the voice of the dark haired painter, ripened into devotion, and they were wedded. She speaks of the blue sea and the sunny bay over which they often sailed in the swift felucca, and how

"On the sea-shore

They watched the ocean and the sky together,  
Under the roof of blue Italian weather;"

then of their after trials and his death, and now of the hope she cherishes that one day she may be able to return and see her old father and mother, who may yet be alive, though she cannot tell.

There is a certain charm in the intercourse with her which we cannot define, and we wonder not that the young people love to visit her sometimes and call her a "fortune-teller."

I tell her, if she ever leaves us and returns to Italy, she must let me make her an offer for "the Magdalen" we love to look at so much. "Ah, Signor, you have been so kind; if ever I part with it, it shall be yours." I tell little Pietro, that if he will continue to improve in his sketches, I will give him a paint-box with brushes and paper all complete. It is really a joy to see his dark eyes dance with delight at the promise; but he shall have it at any rate.

We return home by the way of farmer Mead's, and sit awhile with the old couple; for it is a long time since Minnie was there.

The thrifty dame, good natured and gossiping as she is, keeps Minnie entertained in the best room, whilst the farmer and I walk over the pasture-lot to look at a famous cow he has, that gives twenty-two quarts of milk a day, and ten pounds of butter a week then I must see his wheat, which is especially fine and promises a good yield. He is very busy now, trying to reclaim a large piece of swamp land, which has long been worthless, but he expects not to live to see it done. He says he cannot get any one to work now as he used to in his young days.

When we reach home, Frank and Blanche, who have been at Briar-cliff since Monday, greet us on the porch, and ask how we have got along without them so long?

Frank says he can now receive us at Briar-cliff; the furniture has all arrived and been arranged; carpets down, pictures hung, and everything in order, but one thing wanting to make the house complete—servants; and he is going to the city to-morrow to get them.

We chat on topics connected with his plans, over our tea-table, on which is a goodly bowl of peaches and cream, the products of our orchard and old Brindle. Frank has brought a basket of peaches from Briar-cliff too, which are very fine, though he says most of the fruit has been appropriated by others.

“When I get back from my city expedition,” says Frank to me, “I want you to spend a day with me at my place, and give your opinion of the *tout ensemble*. There are some little matters to be considered yet; and then, next week, you must all come over and dine with me, a sort of house-warming you know.”

“Now Frank,” I say, “you have everything around you so choice and elegant, go over some time and buy our neighbor Mead’s great cow that I saw to day. I do not know whether you can or not, but if you offer him an hundred dollars, I do not believe he will hesitate.”

“I will try any how, Harry; you have a *penchant* for fine cattle, and you know what is good. How many quarts does she give?”

I tell him what I have heard from the lips of her owner, but he does not believe it, although he is unwilling to impeach the good farmer’s veracity.

“I have heard of such things, Harry, but have never been able to see for myself; but now I have an opportunity, and will embrace it.”

It is a clear, breezy evening, just the one for our little “Glide” to prove her sailing qualities. Minnie and Blanche are fairly caught idle, so they have to join us. Frank pockets his flute, which from its long inaction requires a good soaking, and away we go for the river.

The tide is very low, and we find some trouble to work our vessel out of the creek and through the grass on the flats; but after hoisting her broad sail, and getting away from the shoals, we fly through the water at a glorious rate before the ten-knot breeze. Our destination is a cove on the other side of the river, some three or four miles below. It sets in between two high mountains, from which the echoes are very fine. It is not our first visit there, and as we cross the river, Frank plays, whilst Minnie and Blanche accompany him with their voices. By and by, the echoes are wakened, and we lay motionless on the smooth waters of the cove, listening to the prolonged answers of imaginary Dryades. We are told that from the summit of the mountains, the view is very extensive,

reaching to the valleys of the Delaware and Connecticut; but the fear of rattle-snakes, which are also said to abound upon them, has prevented our going thither.

On our return, we stop a few minutes at the lighthouse, where the Dutchman and his family live the year round, isolated and lonely enough, rarely seeing any one, but those who take pity on them and drop in as we have done.

The old fellow has had an eventful life, incidents of which he frequently tells us. He ran away from his father's house in Holland, when a boy, and became a sailor. There is hardly a part of the world he has not been in, even to the arid isles that lie under the Equator, and away north amidst Arctic icebergs. Now, he has a quiet berth, with nothing much to do but light his lantern at night, put it out in the morning, and spend the rest of the time in smoking his pipe, making nets, and dreaming over his past freezings and scorchings. I do not wonder he is satisfied with his situation, for he has probably seen as much of the world as he cares to for the rest of his life.

There is little excitement in his vocation. It is not like being on an ocean lighthouse, where the waves make continual dash, and sometimes thunder against its base with fearful violence. Here there are no breakers, no noble ships sweeping by before the gale, no roar of winds and waters. But once has any inci-

dent of exciting nature happened since he has been here, and that was some years ago.

During a violent squall, which are not unfrequent on the river, an Eastern sloop with a cargo of brick became unmanageable, and ran head on against the stone abutments. She was shivered into fragments, and two of her crew drowned. "I shall never forget it," said Diedrich, "how wicked she pitched on; it most made the lantern crack, when she struck; the poor fellers hollerin too for me to put out my boat; two on em never came up alive, they got mashed in the brick."

We always take the old fellow some tobacco, which is his greatest comfort, and occasionally the children, now growing to be boys and girls of ten to fifteen years, get some acceptable gifts.

A few minutes more, and the "Glide" is moored by the dock, and we sauntering up the long avenue, weary and sleepy.

Frank says I must have him up bright and early in the morning, to take the boat which stops at our landing by eight o'clock. So we go, now here, now there; it is the way of life

## XVI.

"THERE, Harry, is not that a superb copy? Look at the eye and the tint of the hair—is it not life-like?" We are sitting in the library at Briar-cliff, before the painting Frank calls "his gem;" and it is indeed a treasure: not a copy either, but an original by some unknown master.

The subject is Judith and Holofernes, never a pleasing one to me; but as a picture, equal, except in age, to the great original. It came into his possession merely by accident; for Frank is one of those "lucky dogs," who always appear to be under the tutelage of dame Fortune. Diving into the shop of an old virtuoso in Rome one day, this picture caught his eye, peeping out from a heap of other rubbish, as if for his special benefit. The owner was miserably poor, and it was not long before a bargain was struck, the picture cleaned of dust and in Frank's possession. He had it revarnished and framed in the heavy Roman style, and sent out of the country as soon as possible, for fear of losing it. He has a copy of the "Cumæan Sibyl" too, from that in the Borghese palace, which is

very beautiful, with about a dozen others of lesser beauty and merit.

Then he has a parcel of old manuscripts, black-letter volumes, and ancient prints; a copy of Tasso published in Venice 1670, and a history of the sacred wars of Jerusalem, published in 1562—pretty venerable books of their class. I can find nothing to criticise in any of my friend's arrangements; everything is in good taste, plain, substantial and for use, not show. His grounds look in fine condition too, though the season is too late for a great display of flowers in the parterres, but there is fruit in abundance.

"Now, Frank, for the wife, and you will be settled for life as comfortably as any one I know. When does the wedding come off?"

"Next week," replies Frank, "I shall go away again to-morrow and be back with my wife in a fortnight from to-day. I will write you in a day or two concerning my arrangements. Come this way and see what I purpose doing."

The face of the cliff in the rear of the house is too precipitous for any one to descend without considerable agility; so Frank intends building a staircase, with one or two landings, from the lawn above to the shady depths of the glen, through which are winding walks of miles, pleasant views, a stream, and the pond mentioned before. These little valleys, hemmed in by

wooded hills, are frequent features of our country here-about, and some of them are very lovely; a few trees cut away to make winding walks, and Nature does the rest for your pleasure ground.

"It will be an improvement, Frank, but let me suggest an addition. Over the commencement of the stairs—here, where we stand, build a tower twenty or thirty feet high, with an ascent to the top inside. See what a splendid view you will have—the river there, mountains here, and the depths below—I should think five hundred feet from the top of the tower."

"A good idea, Harry, but I cannot do it this year, my purse is not long enough; another season we will think of it again. You had better sell out at Hermit's Dell and build on that lot south of my garden. I won't charge you much for the ground, in fact I have more than I really want. Come now, think seriously of it; how pleasant it would be to have you so near—and we could improve together; have a Paradise here one of these days. I guarantee Minnie would approve of it; you know she will be very lonesome after Blanche leaves."

"I will say as you do, Frank—I will think of it. We have not lived long enough at Hermit's Dell to become very strongly attached to it, though it is very pleasant, and I have no doubt it would bring a good price, if put into market. I agree with you that it

would be delightful to live so near each other, especially on Minnie's account, and I shall hardly dare to broach the subject to her; but I will as soon as I get home."

We spend the afternoon at the pond, fishing, and take some fine lake bass which have been bred here, originally transported from the northern lakes. The old man tells us afterward, that his boy has caught them weighing seven pounds. Frank will not have to depend upon the river for fish. Then the streams abound in trout, though not very large.

We take a basket full with us in my wagon, for Frank returns home with me to-night, wishing to see Blanche before his departure South. He says it is the last drive he will take with me as a single man; for he does not like to be called or to call himself a bachelor. He thinks he is too young for that.

"Yes, Frank, but I hope we shall have many more rides and walks together, and hunts too. I was in hopes we would have been able to go to Indian lake or the Adirondacks this fall, and revive some of our old memories. I often think of old 'Uncle Josh,' don't you? and 'little Kate,' as we used to call her. How time does go? just think how long ago that was. But I cannot ask you to go deer-hunting this fall; but in June, if we all live, we might go to the Saranac lakes, trout-fishing, and bring home a can full to put in your pond. They would thrive here famously."



"I should like nothing better, Harry, if it can be so arranged; as for deer-hunting, that last tramp we had through the snow in those swamps and over the "wind-falls" about Indian lake, I am almost sick of it; but we were too late that season. Do you remember Bill Tanner, and "Ike" as the loggers called him? What a genius he was! that fellow would have made something more than a hunter, if his opportunities had been good. And don't you often think what a trick that crack-brained Tim played us, the time we treed a bear after he had killed one of the best dogs. How true is that saying the Chinese have, I saw translated the other day—

'To place in danger's foremost rank  
A feeble man,  
Is but to use a locust's shank  
For your sedan.' "

"To change the subject, Frank, I have a promise from La Solitaire—I cannot help calling her by that title—that if she parts with that "Magdalen," I shall have it. She appears to have a fancy to go back to Italy again, and I do not blame her; if she could afford it, I think she would sail to-morrow. I have an idea of sounding her a little farther on the subject, and if her poverty is the only hindrance, why we could soon make up an hundred or two dollars in the neighborhood, and that, with what I would give her for the

picture, would make her comfortable till she reached home."

"I will do my part towards it, Harry, for I think the woman is deserving of sympathy and aid, and she always appears grateful for any little attention shown her; I hope you may get the picture, but she idolizes it so, I doubt if she will part with it. She has had temptation enough to induce her to sell it, if her story is true, which we cannot doubt."

We are home already, or nearly so. The ladies are on the look-out for us from the summer-house; though they know very well from past experience, that when Frank and I get off together, there is little calculation to be made concerning our movements. "However, this time we are home in good season, are we not Minnie?"

"Very dutiful young men," she replies, "and how have you spent your day? charmingly, I presume."

Of course we have to enter into all the particulars and descriptions necessary to the edification of our friends till we are "spun out," and even then Blanche asks, "Have'nt you something more to tell us?"