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LITERATURE.

A LITTLE COUNTRY GIRL.

It was a shame, I thought, that Aunt Mary, having promised to make me one of her heirs, should expect me to pay her a fortnight visit, at the same time issuing commands to my partner in the estate for her presence at Deerford. Now, I had nothing against Milly, though she was caroty headed and freckled, but Aunt Mary's shrewd old head was running in a matrimonial groove, and the idea of entering the harness with a young woman—I beg the sex's pardon with such a tendency to ugliness was not agreeable to a young man with a professed abhorrence of anything in petticoats.

Behold me, Jack Minton, thirty, good looking of course—what man of thirty thinks he is not!—settled in the small-sized farm house, smelling strongly of whitewash, soap, and paint. I mentally resolved, then and there, to use the old house for fire wood, once it came into my possession, and erect on the grounds, which cover some thirty acres of valuable land, a substantial stone residence, a country gentleman's it would be, completely fitted for a country bachelor of social habits and Bohemian existence.

My castles in Spain were knocked on the head by the entrance of Jane, the hand-maid, propelling an endless array of pails and brooms enough to satisfy the cleanly instincts of Old Mother Goose. My masculine soul recoiled in horror. The window stood temptingly open, and I made a bolt, jumping lightly the six feet to fall into a trap little inferior to the one I had just escaped, namely, the hands of co-partner in law, and willing to be by marriage. Fastening herself on me, she gave me a ravishing look, meant to bring me to her feet, but failing in its object through a most adorable squint.

How splendid of you to come and resurrect me. Do you know what you remind me of?

I confessed my inability to call to mind anything I resembled but myself by stupidly staring into space.

A breath of pure air, she gurgled, after being immured in a stifling atmosphere, and I stood transfixed with another look.

This struck my fancy, and I grimly thought of the country air, flower-laden and sweet, in comparison with the atmosphere of the clubs. I whistled softly to hide the laugh her foolishness provoked.

Now, Cousin Jack, and she purred gently against my elbow; we are a sort of cousin, you know. I suppose you don't mind the relationship.

Being wise in my generation, and acting on the practice of never contradicting a woman, I continued my whistling, softly, of course, so as not to interrupt

the flow of language. She blushed frightfully, and the horrible thought took possession of me that she intended asking the question. How can I accept mentally I inquired. Shall I falter or run? But she found her voice before I could put the latter intention into execution.

Do you know I heard a great many good things said about you last year? You can be very amusing when you want to, but the girls all voted you a trifle.

A trifle! Miss Andrews, do I deserve this of you? very sadly.

You know that I don't mean that, she gushed. Smoke, if you want to; I like it in the open air. What I meant was that you were a trifle eccentric. But I like eccentric people. Now I—

Jersualism! the proposal is coming. I won't have you, for my *preux chevalier* if you don't amuse me, too.

That's just it, I gasped triumphantly. You are so clever, Miss Andrews, that when you are near I can't possibly do anything but listen, you know, gazing lovingly into the watery blue eyes, which every instant threatened an overflow.

Don't flatter, she lisped, while the awful look of some object in view made me tremble. Would I, or would I not be a happy man before the night? It was June—the very month for love. If she would but speak!

What are you going to do, this morning? my tormentor asked, sweetly.

A walk, promptly, as I caught sight of the very frail, high-heeled, French slippers that my goddess wore.

Then I'll go with you. You walk along the road slowly, and I will catch up with you.

She didn't. When next I saw her she was flying along the road, raising a terrible dust, and uttering all sorts of things, my deafness—I'm afflicted a little that way sometimes—made it impossible to hear, and of course I haven't eyes in the back of my head. She limped *solus* homeward, with a far-away-to-scratch-him expression in her eyes.

Laughing and puffing, I hurried along, fearing she might get a lift and overtake me on the road, passing jolly farmers with empty wagons coming from market, and three urchins, dirty, but happy as lords, bent on plunder. I betted mentally. I accosted the eldest, asking where the cross road led to.

Jes on! and, pulling his ear for the information, I went jes on!

Here was something I had not bargained for; the road ended suddenly, as country lanes have a knack of doing, leaving me staring blankly at the big farm-house at my right, and catching a glimpse of the village road, I jumped the low fence, thanking Heaven there was no convenient bull dog in sight.

Another obstacle! I groaned, before I reached the road. Sitting on a gate, sitting and swinging, with her big yellow sun-bonnet dangling loosely from her neck, all unconscious of an observer, was a young country girl. As she turned, I made a sweeping bow, likely enough to bring a nod of approbation from Lord Chesterfield, and very sweetly explained the situation I rather expected to see her limp with surprise and bashfulness, but was mistaken. The big brown eyes regarded me with suspicion, I fancied, and I began to feel discontented. She was piquant and pretty. I noted great masses of bronze brown hair, falling in distracting little curls over the broad, white forehead. Without a word, she sprang lightly to the ground and opened the gate.

Do you live there? pointing to the big house in the distance.

A nod of assent.

Pretty place.

A nod.

This road goes to Deerford, doesn't it?

Another nod.

Are you deaf? I asked of my nodding mandarin.

The pretty lips widened and she burst into a merry laugh; then, the ice being broken, we got along famously.

Meg, her name was, and her manner, in contrast with Milly's, seemed perfectly divine, so free, so natural, yet without so modest; and I, the professed woman-hater, sighed that she was only a country girl. Her grammar, to be sure, had the fault of getting a little mixed, but for all that I enjoyed her breezy little anecdotes, her quick repartee, and witty replies, and the fun she made of the ways of city folks. I was fast falling in love, but of course the thought was absurd. She amused me, that was all.

Shall I see you again, Meg? as she bade me good-by.

Well, really, that is not the first time I've been asked that same question, and it depends, with an arch look.

Depends on what? I asked, smiling.

On whether I want to see you again, and—well, I wouldn't feel sorry if I never did. You're such a greeny, you are, not a—verdant, I think the city folks call us; but you're a little green, anyhow, and you're fun, so if you're passing this way and I'm here I reckon you can see me.

But her smile was so winning, and her eyes so coquettish, that I could not take offence, and with a parting nob she danced light as a fairy over the velvety grass, and was lost to sight.

I had to bear averted looks and pouts of Milly, who felt I had run away on purpose, and wished to punish me. Bright and early the next morning I was on my way up the road to the trysting place, as I called it, by the swing gate. Milly was still in the sulks, so I got away easily. As I neared the gate I caught sight of the yellow sun bonnet, and as I came within hearing, Meg sent her little companion up the road at a rapid pace; it was the urchin who had directed me jes on, the day previous. She smiled a welcome, and I fancied she looked pleased to see me; that I felt glad to see her again I had not the faintest doubt.

The road became my daily walk. Sometimes I saw Meg, and other times I had to go home with a strange feeling hard to define at my heart, bitter disappointment. I was not in love with the little country girl; that I repeated over and over again; but the mere repetition gave me no assurance.

One day I missed her, and the next she was not visible, and then the fact stood before me in characters that I could not but understand—the little country girl was necessary to my happiness, I loved her; and then came a terrible struggle between my heart and intellect. Could I face my fashionable friends and introduce a girl wholly uneducated; but far superior to many of them in intellect. With Eugene Wrayburne I weighed the pros and cons of the case. Society, versus Meg; and finally my heart conquered, I would ask her to be my wife.

Fortune favored me. Meg was in sight, and came forward as I reached the gate. I plunged boldly into the subject, and asked her to be my wife.

Do you love me, Mr Finton? she asked with a blush, looking down.

Eor answer I caught her to my heart and kissed the rosy lips.

And you won't feel ashamed of me?

Ashamed of you! I exclaimed. My darling, I will be proud of you always.

You need not be ashamed, Jack. I am your equal. When you came upon me so suddenly, while sitting on the gate, I thought I knew you, and then it flashed across my mind that I had met you before. You must have thought me rude to stare as I did, and then I remembered.

Remembered! I ejaculated, in amazement.

Yes: Ada showed me your picture once—in fact it hung in our room for a year—so I couldn't very well mistake you.

Then you knew my sister?

Yes; we were room-mates in Madam D's Academy, she answered, smiling. Great Heavens! You are not Meggie Reeves? I managed to ask.

Yes; I am Meggie Reeves.

And you are not a country girl?

No, indeed, she retorted. Mother sent me up to Farmer Gray in May to regain my health—I had malaria last winter—and thanks to the farmer and his wife, I am wholly recovered.

Then, I said, after wooing a little country maiden, I find a city belle on my hands; how am I to manage it?

I am afraid you will have to turn Mormon, Jack, she said saucily, and keep us both.

I am no longer a bachelor. In private I persist in making love to a little country maiden, but of course my city belle knows nothing of it.

SUBJECTS FOR THOUGHT.

The culture of imagination is worthy of a more prominent place in the training of youth than it has ever yet received. We must regard it, not merely or chiefly in its intellectual capacity, or as a promoter of good taste and refinement, but as a moral and ethical educator. We should take care that the ideals they form are noble, the desires they cherish are pure, the examples they look up to are sound and true, the heroes and heroines they admire are worthy of respect. This

can be done only through a loving sympathy and a tender care that provides for, not crushes, their eager and ardent enthusiasms. The examples we set them, the companions we find them, the books we furnish them, the moral atmosphere in which we place them, should all combine to purify and enoble their imaginations, and, through them, to enrich and exalt their lives. If we neglect these things, or leave them to chance influences, no amount of effort to control their actions, to regulate their words, even to form their habits can compensate. It is what each one aspires to become that will form the great motive power to decide what he may become.

Acute sensibilities are intended as a direct means of inspiring generous impulses and cultivating a benevolent character. To him who is always sensitive for others as well as for himself they are not a torment, but a blessing. The pleasure and pain he feels and the sources to which he traces each are his continual guides to show him how to diffuse the one and to mitigate the other in his intercourse with mankind. Nothing is more selfish than a narrow, self-pitying sensitiveness, nothing more ennobling than a sensitive spirit keenly alive to all good and kindly influences.

When you have fixed upon a plan, even in comparatively trivial matters, do not reverse or vary it, except for good reason. Decision of character will thus in time become habitual; and habit has well been described as second nature. The power of the will can be cultivated; and there is nothing more deserving the attention of young men. At the same time, decision of character should not be confounded with the unreasoning obstinacy which is rather the characteristic of the donkey than of an intelligent human being.

Every man has his own wall to build. After some pattern that we don't know, as likely as not. We are working most according to some rule that's above our work perhaps, when we think most we're having our own way, or taking our chance. I can't make out an architect's plans, and I don't know as I'm meant to. I am only a journeyman builder and the stock's furnished. I must take it up as it comes.

I would have inscribed on the curtains of your bed and the walls of your chamber. If you do not rise early you can never make progress in anything. If you do not set apart your hour of reading, if you suffer yourself or any one else to break in upon them your days will slip through your hands unprofitable and frivolous and really unenjoyed by yourself.

Temptation is fearful word. It indicates the beginning of possible series of infinite evils. It is the ringing of an alarm bell whose melancholy sound may reverberate through eternity. Like the sudden, sharp cry of Fire! in the night, it should arouse us to instantaneous activity and brace every muscle to its highest tension.

Hate keeps the heart always at full tension. It gives rise to oppression of brain and senses. It outwits the whole man, it robs the stomach of nervous power, and, digestion being impaired, the failure of life begins at once. Those therefore who are born with this passion should give it up.

NOTHING MERCENARY ABOUT HER.—If keep this diamond engagement ring she said in breaking the engagement. I'm surprised, remarked the male member of the social contract, that you should wish to keep anything that will remind you constantly of me.

I keep it she continued as she toyed with the gold band and its sparkling setting, not for its intrinsic value, but simply as a reminder of how big a flirt a man can be.

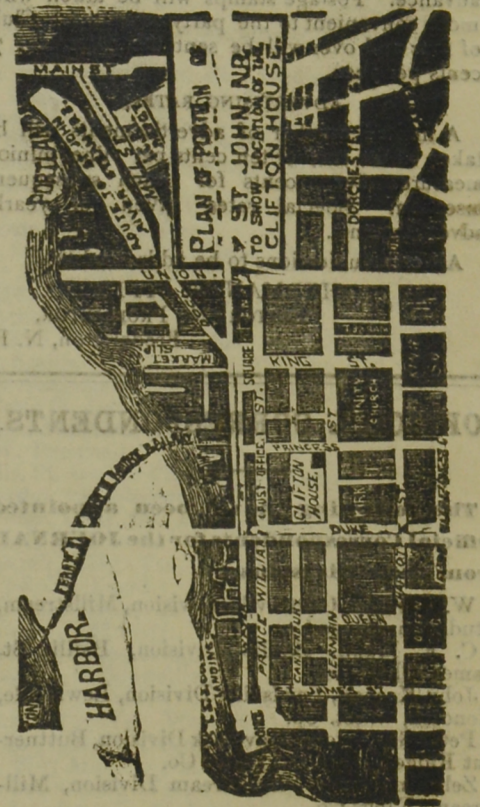
If that is the case, said he, and you don't want it for its value, I will exchange it and give you a cheaper keepsake—one that will not tempt you to wear, but will keep just as well as a genuine diamond.

IT MADE A DIFFERENCE.—Job Shuttle sat by the open grate upon which the first full blaze was burning. He was in a pleasant mood, as all men are when they are comfortable. I suppose, said he to Mrs. Shuttle, that the children were all at school today?

You suppose so? Why don't you know they were?

No, not exactly. I met Charles down town about an hour after school began.

Oh, he was carrying a note from the teacher to her best young man. That's pretty business. But she marks him up ten points in his studies for keeping mum about it. Oh that makes a difference.



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