

PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF A PRIVATE GOVERNNESS.

By the Author of "Mind whom you Marry."

INTRODUCTION.

It had been snowing all the day, and weary with books, I resolved to quit my study, and spend the evening with my wife and children. We had one visitor, an intelligent governess, whom we all much esteemed. I do not know how it was that our memories there were so full of other days, but so it was; and as the fire burnt brightly, we all had our tale to tell of what we had heard and seen long ago. Our visitor, at the request of my wife, told us the story of the first family she entered as governess in London. I listened with strange interest, and thought, at its conclusion, I would take the first opportunity to write it, according to the best of my memory, as she told it. This I have done in the following chapters: and having now introduced the reader to the narrator of the tale, I should display bad taste did I not immediately retire.

CHAPTER I.

In which I first become a Lady Governess.

"Paint me a picture—happyless
Shall be the unshowered theme;
Nor be the shadows more or less,
Nor the tints brighter than they seem.
Is it not a sorry dream?"

It was in the summer of 18— that, on leaving an engagement in Bath, I entered resident governess into the family of T. Huddersfield, Esq. This gentleman had previously been described to me as a man of large fortune, which he possessed partly from his father, partly from business, and partly from his wife. The letter I received from Mrs. Huddersfield, engaging my services for her two little girls, gave me the impression that I was about to be associated with an earnest, intelligent, and affectionate mother. Nor was this impression in the least degree weakened by my first interview with her. The day had been unusually warm; a long journey had fatigued me, and I was suffering a little from nervous excitement—wondering whether the change would be for the better; whether London would agree with my health; whether with an increase of salary there would be an increase of comfort; whether the gentleman would turn out to be one of the purse-proud race; whether mamma would be everlastingly interfering in the school-room; whether the little girls would have anything in their brains to develop at all; and whether my bright hopes were only castle-building in the air. With these thoughts, the cab brought me and my box from Paddington Terminus to a handsome house in the neighborhood of Hyde-park. A man in livery opened the door, by whom I was shown into an elegantly furnished drawing-room. The chairs, tables, mirrors, vases, carpets, &c., all indicated that the proprietor either had money or ought to have it. In about ten minutes Mrs. Huddersfield entered.

"I am pleased to see you, Miss Tyler," she said, extending her hand in a most cordial manner, "you look tired."

"Rather so," I observed, much relieved by the kind smile that lighted up her beautiful countenance; "but a night's rest will, no doubt, set all to rights again."

"I have ordered tea for you in the library, thinking you would prefer being alone after your journey; if you'll follow me I'll introduce you to your little pupils, who, of course, are most anxious to see their new governess. Of course you understand all about that."

The two young ladies were already in the library. The eldest was a fine child of about seven years of age, and the other two years younger. Both beautiful; yet the beauty of each arose from different causes. Clara, the eldest, had light hair, blue eyes, with a general expression of premature thoughtfulness; while that which charmed you in Isabel seemed to be the earnest intelligence of her dark eye, that revealed a mind which, if properly cultivated, might result in a character capable of doing, or bearing, all that might rank her with the truly great women of the present or past.

"Now Clara, my dear," said Mrs. Huddersfield, after a few words between me and my little charge, "we shall show you to Miss Tyler, if we leave her quite alone."

"Couldn't we have tea here too," said little Isabel, casting a timid and affectionate glance toward me.

"Miss Tyler is tired, my dear."

"If the young ladies would like it," I replied, "I think their company would rather refresh me than increase my fatigue."

"O yes, mamma," added Clara; "we won't make much noise, and we can show Miss Tyler which is her bed room, and all about the school-room."

"I am sure, if you all desire, I cannot possibly have any objection; and so I have an engagement this evening, I'll leave you, Miss Tyler, in the hands of these small ladies, who, I daresay, will not treat you very badly."

"Very badly! I should think not," said Isabel, drawing much closer to me, as if anxious to prove that the thing in her loving heart was an utter impossibility.

Mrs. Huddersfield leaving, we commenced tea. I had not much difficulty in feeling quite at home with the two little girls; especially with Isabel, whom I found, after she had thoroughly shown, very anxious to tell me all at once everything she knew about every one in the house.

"Have you a billiard-room at home?" she asked.

"Not exactly," I replied, much amused by the question.

"We have, upstairs," Clara said; "and after tea, if you like, I'll show it to you."

"You're very kind; but you two little girls play billiards?"

"Oh no!" said little Isabel. "Papa does though; and mamma says she don't like it."

"Do you like billiards, Miss Tyler?"

"I don't know anything about them," I replied.

"O, I do. Papa showed me a little the other day," said Clara.

"Now, do you think that was fair, Miss Tyler?" said Clara; "for when I asked papa to show me, he said 'cards and dominoes were good enough for me!'"

"I don't know how to play cards, but Clara does; but you don't eat anything, Miss Tyler! I've been looking at that little piece of bread and butter such a long time, and I don't think one bit of it is gone!"

"This cake, Miss Tyler, is so nice," observed Clara, handing it over to me so kindly, that I felt sure there were materials before me which might, by proper training, form a beautiful character.

"Shall we go into the school-room?" asked little Isabel, still desirous of pleasing, if she knew how.

"Wouldn't you like to come out in the garden? We've such a beautiful summer-house there," said Clara.

"I think I would rather if you'd go with me to my bed-room," I replied, "and as I have my box to unpack, if you would send a servant to assist me I shall be very glad; and then to-morrow you can take me about and show me what you like."

"There are many things that are shown to our hopes until we have attained them, and afterwards arrive to our hearts' desire."

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