

"They are! they are!" he cried out, vehemently, as he tasted the grapes. "I could swear to the bloom, to the flavour, to the leaf. Oh, Suzanne! they are my own beautiful St. Girons. I believed my vine to be dead—perished, Suzanne; but these are my own fruit, I am certain."

The old man's eyes sparkled and his cheek flushed as he gazed with looks of positive affection on the purple bunch, and handled it with tenderness that seemed to grudge even the gratification of his longing appetite.

Susan heard his words with amazement, then she recalled certain significant phases in her father's demeanour of late.

In truth, John Field had grown remarkably tolerant, for him. He appeared to have found more demand upon his time at the plots, had even taken to going out at sunrise and working some hours before breakfast, when he would return home beaming with a half-suppressed exultation, attributable, so his daughter had supposed, to the success of his roses and the prospect of a complete triumph over all rivals. But now she began to form other conjectures, which, however, were far from arriving fully at the truth.

(To be concluded.)

A TALK ABOUT THE CAMBRIDGE LOCAL EXAMINATIONS.

It was the prettiest and daintiest of rooms in which Aunt Mercy was sitting—Aunt Mercy, as everyone called her, perhaps because her name of Miss Cross was so ludicrously unsuitable. Her house was the centre for all the girls of the neighbourhood, who used to come to learn new patterns of fancy-work and tell all their little troubles and receive cordial sympathy and very good advice. Aunt Mercy was alone now in the large airy drawing-room with its French windows opening on a pretty lawn that rippled away between arbutus and laurel and lost itself in a green path under an arch of roses. The furniture was by no means "high art"; the walls were covered with a light paper, panelled out with a French design of birds and roses, and the carpet and all the cosy chairs and little tables, covered with knick-knacks, had stood there from a date long prior to the present style of dull greens and straight-legged furniture. But the whole struck an observer as refined and graceful and suited to the mistress of the place.

It was a charming summer day, and she sat by one of the open windows, knitting. She was of middle age, rather too rosy, rather too stout for elegance, with a comical *nez retroussé* and considerable humour lurking in the corners of her mouth; a little white cap covered her greyish hair, and yet, though all about her was so simple and plain, she wore a happy, comfortable look, which explained why May Alder used to call her "the fairy godmother."

A tap at the door raised Aunt Mercy's eyes from her work and preceded the entrance of that very May Alder, a tall, brisk girl, with sparkling brown eyes and a look of general capability.

"Good morning, dear Aunt Mercy. I have brought Janet Ray with me, for we want to consult you about a little plan."

Janet Ray, a smaller, older girl than May, with a somewhat troubled, shy look, came up behind her livelier companion, as if she almost doubted

her welcome. That was warm enough and ready enough, however, and the girls were soon seated opposite their older friend, May explaining and chattering for them both.

"Now, you see, Aunt Mercy, this is my idea. I am, as you know, a very idle girl, and am forgetting all I ever learned as fast as possible; and poor Janet, who is so busy and good, teaching those horrid little Morrisses for a mere nothing, would be glad to improve herself, so as to take a situation of a superior sort. We should both like to study; but in this out-of-the-way place we do not know how to set about it nor what is best to do. We have both a fancy to try for the Cambridge Local Examinations, but we know nothing whatever about them, and as you know everything, Aunt Mercy, we have come to you for advice and information."

Janet Ray put in a timid "We know so very little about it. I am afraid the work is quite beyond me."

Aunt Mercy put down her work, smiling, and, leaning over to a writing-table which stood near, she took some papers from a drawer.

"You are always so keen with your new plans, May," she said, "that the wonder is that you carry them out as often as you do. But I am not sure if you have counted the cost in this instance. Going in for an examination in good earnest means declining many an invitation to lawn tennis and afternoon tea; many a piece of self-denial when a charming new book comes from the library."

"You don't mean that one must do *nothing* but study for months and months!" said May, rather dismayed.

"By no means. Home duties, and even social duties, need not be neglected; but a girl reading for an examination cannot give so many hours a day to tennis and visiting as some seem to consider necessary."

"As for me," said Janet, "I fear you will say I have neither time nor ability for it." She spoke despondingly.

"No, no," said Aunt Mercy, cheerily. "For you the certificate would have a real practical utility, and, I may say, a money value, which is not to be despised. For May it would probably be solely a moral and intellectual discipline. But I should advise you, by all means, to *make* time for the work, and you can do it with more ease if you teach your pupils the very subjects you have to study."

"They are so small and such stupid little people."

"All the better. The more need you have to explain and illustrate your subject, the better you are forced to learn it."

"Will you tell us the rules of the examination, please?" said May.

"Here they are in this paper, which is called the syllabus. If you want one, write to the Rev. G. F. Browne, St. Catherine's College, Cambridge, enclosing a halfpenny stamp for postage. By the way, I only speak now of the higher examination for students over eighteen. The junior, for those under sixteen—and the senior, for those under eighteen, are in December, and neither would suit your age."

"I should like to know the rules of those examinations, however, for a girl of my acquaintance," observed May.

"You can get the syllabus at the same address; you will find the subjects differ from those set for the higher examinations and, I think, the work is required to be rather more exact because from older students a wider grasp of the subject is demanded."

"Our examination is in the summer, is it not?" asked May.

"The next begins on Monday, June 20th, 1881, and is open to all who have completed the age of eighteen before July 1st, 1881. The fee is £2."

"To whom is it paid?"

"You send it up with the form which you must fill in to request admission, and this you can get from the secretary of the local centre which you choose. Here in the syllabus is a list of all local centres and the address of the secretary for each."

"Will you tell us the subjects in which one is *obliged* to pass?"

"You mean you wish to know with how little work you may gain a certificate. *Lazy May!*" May laughed.

"Well, not exactly. I only mean that the less I do the more chance there is of my doing it correctly."

"And without correctness in your work you cannot possibly pass. Well, for an ordinary certificate, you must satisfy the examiners in group A and in elementary arithmetic and in two other groups. Group A consists of English history, comprising (for 1881) a general knowledge of the whole subject, with special information on the century from 1715 to 1815—that is, to the Battle of Waterloo. Also English literature, comprising Shakespeare's 'Coriolanus,' Pope's 'Satires and Epistles,' and Burke's 'Thoughts on the Present Discontents,' and the 'Two Speeches on America.' For honours, a knowledge of early history, or an essay on the general literature of England, especially of the eighteenth century, is required."

"You said one must also pass in two other groups; what are they?" asked Janet.

"You may make a selection from group B, languages ancient and modern; group C, higher arithmetic and mathematics, &c.; group D, political economy, logic, and the constitutional history of England; group E, natural science; group F, music; and group R, religious knowledge."

"I should like to take religious knowledge, certainly," said Janet.

"I am glad to hear you say so," replied Aunt Mercy, "for the work seems to me utterly unconsecrated if a girl rejects the highest study of all because it is not necessary for the certificate. Of course, in the case of Jews, or those whose parents abjure any essential point of our faith, the case is different; but for girls professing to be Christians, the study which alone can elevate the soul should surely go hand in hand with that which elevates the mind."

"What are the subjects in religious knowledge this year?"

"Kings 1 and 2; Psalms xlii. to lxxii; St. Luke's Gospel, II. Corinthians and Acts xx to end. Credit is given for a knowledge of the Greek. Also it is required to study two out of the three following:—Butler's 'Analogy,' introduction and part ii; Hooker's 'Ecclesiastical Polity,' book 5, paragraphs 50 to 68; and Paley's 'Horæ Paulinæ,' chapters 1, and 6 to 16."

"These last works sound very dry," said May.

"They are not amusing, certainly, but deeply interesting in a literary point of view; and in regard to theology they give a steadfast hold on many points of faith which all—women, especially—are too apt to miss."

"And then one could take French or German for the other subject."

"Yes. A good grammatical grasp of the language and power to translate it are essential."

"But if one has not time to work up all these subjects, may one not go in for the examination at all?"

"Yes. The syndicate, or committee who manage these affairs, have mercifully decreed of late years that one may go in for group A (history and literature) and arithmetic alone, and take the other subjects in succeeding years, to accumulate for a certificate."

"That would suit me best," said Janet; "for after lessons are over I have generally a

headache which I never lose till I have had a walk, thus I have only about two hours in the day which I can reckon on for study."

"I think, after all, I would rather take all the subjects for a certificate at once," remarked May, "so as to force my lazy self to work. But, Aunt Mercy, *how* is one to study? I never worked at school, to my shame be it said, and how am I to begin now? I fear I should not know how to set about it."

"I cannot give you exhaustive directions at one sitting, May; but, generally speaking, I may say that each group should be taken in its separate component parts, one by one; as, for instance, each reign in history, each book set in literature (and in the latter let me add that knowledge of grammar and analysis are included). First read each, then make an abstract of it, adding notes on every obscure point, obsolete word, remarkable expression, &c. And then, if you can, get someone to set you a paper of questions on it."

"You are the only one who can or will do it for us, Aunt Mercy."

"I fear, with however good a will, I have neither power nor time. You can learn by correspondence from Cambridge professors,

for which purpose write to Mrs. Peile, Trumpington, Cambridge; or from ladies authorised for the work, whose addresses you will get from Miss A. Shore, Orchard Poyle, Taplow, Maidenhead. If you cannot afford or do not wish for this help, all I can say is, set the best questions you can for one another. There are, indeed, books of questions to be had, but the living teacher is so much better as a flint to strike sparks from the steel of your memory that I strongly advise the 'co-operative system' of teaching one another."

"Are there any prizes to encourage us?"
 "Yes, several; but especially valuable scholarships. For these, I refer you to the syllabus which, of course, you will get from Mr. Browne if you think seriously of going in for the work. All I can say is, *begin to study early*. Do not think two or three months will suffice; and, above all, do not think because you did sums pretty well at school that you can pass in arithmetic without further study. More girls fail in arithmetic than in any subject, and even some who pass with distinction in other respects. All the newest and best methods are required; and in

this subject, if in no other, I advise you to have a teacher."

"You told us what was necessary to obtain an ordinary certificate. Is there another kind?"

"Yes, the *honour certificate*, which is gained by those who also obtain a first or second class in two of the groups other than group A."

May rose and gave herself a little stretch.
 "Well, Aunt Mercy, best thanks," she said. "My brain feels like a sponge quite full of water, so much valuable information have I taken in. I don't suppose I shall retain it, but one practical resolution remains—namely, to send for the syllabus. Come, Janet, poor Aunt Mercy looks quite exhausted, let us leave her in peace, more especially as I see visitors coming up the walk."

"I hope I may have given some information which will be useful to you, my industrious Janet, at any rate," said Aunt Mercy.

"I am sure you have. I feel more courage about the matter now," answered Janet Ray; "and in these days no governess can get on, or perhaps *ought* to get on, unless she can bear the test of an examination."

The visitors here entered, and the girls left.
 ANNE MERCIER.

THE QUEEN O' THE MAY.
 BY ANNE BEALE.

CHAPTER VII.
 THE FIRST PENNY.

THE following morning May was again seated on Aunt 'Lizbeth's lap in the beehive chair. It pleased Uncle Laban and comforted his wife to see her there. They breakfasted at peep of day, and all the family happened to be present. The events of the previous evening were freely discussed, and May, understanding intuitively what they were talking of, listened, and took in much through her sharp little ears. Laban said decidedly that he would take her back to his father, since Meredith declined to do so; while 'Lizbeth urged that she should remain



"I AM SORRY IF I WAS NAUGHTY," SHE SAID."