

at the woman for some moments; then she said, bending out of the window, which she had opened that they might talk more easily,—

"I am so very sorry Bessie is worse; but, tell me, Mrs. Bryant, what is this you say about my having sent you some things? I don't understand!"

"Why, Miss Ruby, I mean the large brown paper parcel which you sent by a boy this forenoon, full of more nice things than I knows the names of; I laid them all out on the table before Bessie, until our house looked, for all the world, like one of them stores my brother in Australia do write about. She did smile so pretty as she took everything up one by one. I declare my head felt quite confused while I was putting it all away; it was such a lot of it; I was just like a monkey in a toy-shop."

"But I have not sent anything to your house to-day," cried Ruby, in great perplexity.

"You did not send anything to our house to-day!" repeated Mrs. Bryant, her round, good-tempered face looking like a full moon, in her extreme wonder. "But, Miss Ruby, dear, you can't know what you are saying. The parcel came just as I was taking up the knife to peel the potatoes for dinner. Bessie will tell you the same, and so would little Annie if she could but speak plain, pretty dear."

"It must certainly be some mistake," said Ruby. "What did the person say who brought the parcel you speak of?"

"Why, he just said it was sent by Miss Stanton. What should he say else?"

"It is very strange. What sort of a person was it that brought it?"

"It wasn't a person at all; it was only a little monkey of a boy. One of they rogues you do take such delight in teaching at the school, Miss Ruby, I suppose."

"Do you know which of the boys it was?"

"Well, I can't say as how I did know his face; but there be many of them about who lives at the other end of the parish I can't put a name to. It's only a year or so that we have been in Larcombe, you see; and I was never one to run about to other folk's houses all over the country. Besides, I didn't look much at the boy, for I was just then in a way lest, while I went to the door, little Annie or the cat should get at the brown sugar, which I had left out on the table."

A thought crossed Ruby. Could Mr. Lindhurst have sent these things in her name to Bessie? He had been very kind in his manner to her during these last few days which had passed since that long walk of theirs together. Though he had not spoken a single word to her again on the subject of that strange mystery, might he not very possibly have meant to give her a pleasant surprise in giving the sick girl a present in her name? With this idea in her head she asked Mrs. Bryant to wait a moment at the window, and ran across the hall into the old gentleman's study.

"Guardian," she said (Mr. Lindhurst

had told her that he wished her as well as Ella to call him guardian, though Miss Nancy strongly objected), "how kind and good it was of you to send such a lot of things to poor Bessie Bryant this morning in my name. I don't know how to thank you."

"I send things to Bessie Bryant!" repeated the old man, looking up at her with a very puzzled face. "Ruby, child, I don't know what you are talking about."

"But you must have done it," persisted Ruby. "A great parcel of things was left at the cottage, and the boy who brought it said Miss Stanton sent it; and, as I did not send it myself, who could it have been except you?"

A singular momentary gleam of intelligence flashed across Matthew Lindhurst's face as she spoke those last words. Ruby noticed it, and said,—

"I see you did send it after all, guardian. You were just pretending that you did not to mystify me a little."

"I tell you, child, I know nothing at all about it," answered the old man somewhat shortly and testily. "I have never so much as dreamed of sending an ounce of tea to an old woman. I gave you that money that you might attend to the poor people for me, as you know; and, if you had any sense, you would think that I should not trouble myself to do anything more. Now go away, and don't bother me any longer, for I am sleepy, and want a nap before I go to dress for dinner."

The old gentleman's manner admitted of no further questioning, and Ruby retired more perplexed than ever, and went back to Mrs. Bryant at the open window.

"I thought that Mr. Lindhurst might have sent it in my name," she said, "but I have been to ask him, and he says he certainly did not; I can't make it out at all."

"Well, it is odd, sure enough," answered the woman, "I can't understand it no more than you Miss Ruby; if you did not send it, I can't sense it at all; but I mustn't be standing here all night in this fashion, there's the pig to be served, and the supper to get, and who do know how it may be with poor Bessie while I am away? Miss Ruby, dear, I must be going, but do 'ee come after me as quick as you can, for Bessie be maze to see 'ee."

With that the good woman turned and went, holding a highly coloured pocket-handkerchief to her eyes.

"I will be there almost directly," Ruby called after her.

"What's it all about?" asked Ella, roused by the raised tone of Ruby's voice and by the entrance of afternoon tea, always a most interesting event to the young lady.

"Bessie Bryant is worse, and wants me to go and see her. I sha'n't be away above half an hour or so, the cottage is so near."

"But, gracious me, Ruby, what will Miss Nancy say to your being out so late alone? And then you will find it so cold, and here is the tea, and such a

nice new cake not yet cut; I am quite sure you can't run away from it, Ruby."

"You must eat my share of cake this evening, Ella," answered Ruby with a quiet little laugh. "As for Miss Nancy, if she is angry I can't help it, I think I can bear a scolding for doing right; it must be right to go to poor Bessie."

"Well, I could never take the trouble to make a fuss about doing right when there was any strong opposition against it," said Ella, cutting a thin slice of the cake before named, and putting it on her own plate, "that was always more than I could manage; I remember at school, when the little ones were naughty, I never could be bothered with keeping them in order."

"Oh, Ella, it is so cowardly not to stand up for what is right and true."

"Well," said the young lady composedly, "I suppose I am a coward, but it's a very comfortable thing to be. I'm very sorry, though, that that poor girl is so ill; and, Ruby, if you will insist upon going to see her this evening, do just drink this cup of hot tea before you go, dear, and put on my fur cloak, it is hanging up in the hall."

Ella's good nature sometimes got the better of even her indolent selfishness for a few moments.

"What was that you were saying just now to Bessie's mother about something which had been brought her in your name?" asked Ella, while Ruby was drinking her tea.

"I can't make it out myself. There must be some great, strange mistake in the matter," answered Ruby, thoughtfully.

A few minutes after that she was hurrying down the avenue.

(To be continued.)

MOTHER SHIPTON AND HER PROPHECIES.

FOR some months past we have received various anxious inquiries from "our girls" respecting a so-called prophecy which has been extensively circulated within the past few years, and which has struck terror into the hearts of not a few credulous people by winding up a catalogue of fulfilments with the one unfulfilled couplet:—

"The world to an end shall run
In eighteen hundred and eighty-one."

This prediction is asserted to be the utterance of the renowned Mother Shipton, and to have a place amongst the manuscripts in the British Museum.

Nothing of the kind, my dear girls. The manuscript prophecy in the library of the British Museum is of a widely different class, and contains nothing to link it with the present century or with Mother Shipton.

"But was there no Mother Shipton?" methinks I hear you ask.

Oh, yes, there was a child born at Knaresborough, in Yorkshire, a little above the celebrated petrifying spring known as the Dropping Well, in the year 1488, and as Ursula Sonthill she was baptised by the Abbot of Beverley. She was afterwards married to one Tobias Shipton, a builder, of Shipton, near York, and it is said she delivered her prophecies into the keeping of the Abbot of Beverley. Be this as it may, a builder whose name has survived to the present time, and

who lived in a place bearing his own name (whether town or village), must have been a man of importance, an eminent architect in fact, whose workmen might be busied with additions to the minsters of Beverley and York, and the honourable architect's wife would be addressed as "Dame" (an equivalent to our "Lady"), as a matter of courtesy. That she



No. 1.

was a person of repute and sagacity there can scarcely be any question, or her name would not have been remembered, or of any value to the astrologer Lilly, in 1682, or to those who professedly put forth her life and prophecies in 1663 and 1667. The first of these "lives" is the wildest of wild romances, in which a demon is represented as the father of Mother Shipton, and she as a hideous old hag, whose wisdom is the result of demoniac possession, and whose ugliness as pictured on the face of the pamphlet we reproduce here for the behoof of our girls, it being the reputed likeness of a statue erected



No. 2.

to Mother Shipton in the vicinity of York. Merely premising that statues were not erected to nobodies, and that the very *hat* upon her head *proves the portrait to be spurious*, unless she lived to see one of her own predictions verified—(Women wore hoods in her day, and she prophesied that "the time would come when women would wear *hats* like men.")—

I pass on to the second pamphlet, which discards the supernatural rhodomontade of the former, records Ursula Sonthill's courtship and marriage at the age of twenty-four, and her remarkable prophecies delivered as Dame Shipton to noblemen and others concerning Cardinal Wolsey, Henry VIII., Anne Boleyn, the noblemen themselves, and the destruction of London in 1663. How far these were genuine predictions there is no contemporaneous evidence to show. The downfall of Wolsey, the marriage of Henry VIII. with Anne Boleyn, and all the incongruous etceteras, political and historical, down to the great fire of London, *had already* taken place when this book of "Mother Shipton's Prophecies" was published in 1667. The more credible of these so-called lives also displayed a portrait of the prophetic, which, as you may see from her attire, was that of a person of distinction, there being at that time laws (called sumptuary) for the regulation of attire, prohibiting the use of certain materials and trimmings by certain classes of the community. From the ruff and other decorations in this portrait it would appear that Dame Shipton was a person of good position and of middle age; and I may add that only so recently as eight or ten years back there was a portrait of her in oil extant and in good preservation in the house of a descendant of the same name in North-London—the picture of a remarkably intelligent and clear-eyed woman above the common order.

So far it is evident that Mother Shipton herself is no myth. Prophecies, in the true sense of Divine revelation or superhuman knowledge, no longer exist. But some persons possess sagacity and wisdom, with knowledge of life and character, which enable them to give shrewd guesses about people and things, and Dame Shipton may have had reputation of this sort in her day. Of the ancient prophecies put forth in her name we cannot be so certain; but of the recently published doggerel there can be no doubt. *That* is a modern concoction and an imposture got up for sale. Moreover, neither Mother Shipton, nor the necromancer Lilly, nor any other human being can predict that terrible hour of which Christ himself hath said, "no man knoweth."

ISABELLA BANKS.

OUR PATTY'S VICTORY; OR, A WHITE HAND.

A TALE IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

By FAIRLEIGH OWEN, Author of "Her Sweet Revenge," "When I Was a Girl," &c.

CHAPTER III.

A SUBSTITUTE PROVIDED.

THOUGHT of sharing these beautiful shells with some of my friends hereabouts," said Aunt Barnet to her nephew one morning about ten days after his arrival.

She was engaged in sorting over some treasures, marine and otherwise, which the young sailor had brought as an offering to the good-hearted relative, who had been almost a mother to him since the death of his own.

"That is if you have no objection," she added, looking across the room to where Tom was engaged in assiduously drilling the poodle in martial exercise.

"All right, aunt, they're yours."

"If you have nothing very particular in view this morning," Mrs. Barnet went on, "perhaps you would like to conduct me as far as Greendell? I think poor Mrs. Blake might like a few of these."

"I shall be very glad," was the rejoinder. "I have nothing at all to do that I know of, very particular. Greendell? I was there the other evening; Jemmy Smart's father used to live there, but no trace of them could I find."

"They went to America two years ago. Did I not tell you?" said Mrs. Barnet. "The Blakes live in the old house. It has been altered a good deal—I can't say improved."

"There are a great many alterations, unfortunately, since I was young here."

Tom was barely twenty.

"Yes," was the rejoinder in a regretful tone, from the lady. "But you found some of your old haunts unchanged, I think."

"Oh, yes, a few, and all the better they seem by contrast. Are you ready, aunt?"

Mrs. Barnet assented, and the two passed forth into the bright autumn morning.

Their road lay in much the same direction as that which Patty Holme had taken on the day of her first lesson, except that, as haste was no object with the aunt and nephew, they took a longer detour for the sake of a path which skirted a wood where the birds were warbling in contented harmony, and the varied tints of the trees, touched by autumn, gratified the eyes and raised a feeling of thanksgiving in the soul for so much peaceful loveliness.

A few yards further they walked in silence. Suddenly the youth lifted his hand.

"What is that?" he exclaimed.

Music floating out on the still air, a young voice singing to a soft accompaniment a plaintive song.

"It is Amy Blake, no doubt," said Mrs. Barnet; "she has a sweet voice."

"Is that the girl I saw the night I came home, aunt, at the cottage?" queried the young man, eagerly. "She with the fair hair, and hands like a statue's?"

"Miss Blake, yes; she lives here with her mother. This is the house."

"This Smart's old place? Why, so it is; but how altered!"

"Yes, it has been modernised outside, but the interior is much the same."

"I did not know it was she whom we were coming to see," said young Barnet in a low voice, as he ran his fingers through his hair and set his cap straight.

Truth to say, he had forgotten Amy in the occupation of renewing old friendships and revisiting the scenes of his boyhood's escapades. But the musical utterances had recalled the impression of the lovely girl upon his mind, and, all pleasant expectation, the young sailor now followed his relative as she led the way with the freedom of a privileged visitor.

Amy rose upon their entrance, and welcomed them with an excess of demonstration.

She made, as usual, a very pretty picture. Her dress was of some pale blue material, made up in fanciful style, decked with lace and ribbons. Her hair was arranged in the latest mode which had penetrated to Greendell. She had a symmetrical figure, and would have been graceful had she not tried to be so. When desirous of appearing to advantage she was apt to attitudinise to a painful extent.

"My nephew is on familiar ground here, Miss Blake," said Mrs. Barnet, when the first greetings were over.

"Yes, many a good time I have had in this old parlour," said Tom. "How well I remember it, though it looks very different in some way. And the garden," he added, walking to the window, "there it is, just the same! Do you call to mind, Aunt Charlotte,