

own; yes, she must go, and Dorcas must choose between her and her father.

Mildred had not much doubt as to which Dorcas would choose, in her heart of hearts, though she dared not be too sure, lest she should be disappointed.

How long she sat in her own room she never knew; she was interrupted at last by the visitors' bell, and, disinclined as she was to receive visitors, she was forced to go down to the drawing-room.

There she found Mr. Gilbert, the most welcome guest possible; for she was intimate enough with him to tell him her trouble, and was certain of meeting with sympathy, so she told herself; but "it is the unexpected which happens," and to her amazement, when she told her friend her father was about to be married, he exclaimed—

"I am delighted to hear it! The very best thing he can do."

This was destined to be a day of surprises to Mildred. Here was another surprise; here was the friend on whose sympathy she would have staked all she possessed, failing to see what a trial had befallen her. She had such respect for Mr. Gilbert's opinion, that she began to think she was very wrong to take the matter so much to heart.

"Am I very selfish to mind so much?" she said.

"Selfish—you selfish! it is I who am selfish. Don't you know why I am glad at this news?" said Mr. Gilbert, moving closer to Mildred.

"No, indeed I don't," said Mildred simply.

"I will tell you. Because it sets you free, and makes me hope perhaps you will listen to

my proposal. Mildred, I know your worth, your unselfishness; I know no other woman I dare ask to be a mother to my children; I know none for whom I have such admiration as for you. Will you be my wife?"

Another surprise for Mildred. Happiness beyond anything she had ever dreamt of cast at her feet. What a day of surprises! And they were not over yet.

But meanwhile there was Mr. Gilbert waiting for his answer; and the answer, when it came, was what he wished it to be; and Mildred was too happy to talk of her happiness directly; she could only allude to it indirectly, as we must ever do to our greatest joys and greatest sorrows, if we can even allude at all to these last.

"There is no doubt what my mission in life is," said Mildred.

"What—to soothe, to comfort, and to bless?" said Mr. Gilbert.

"No; to bring up other people's children. I tried my 'prentice hand on my own brothers and sister; now I shall have yours to experimentalise on."

"I am not afraid of the result," said the rector.

That evening when Dr. Duncan came home he was somewhat surprised to find Mildred looking brighter and happier than he had ever seen her; but he soon learnt the cause.

"You will not miss me so very much now, will you, father?" said Mildred shyly.

"Oh, I don't know about that. I am delighted that you have found a husband worthy of you; but of course I shall miss you," said the doctor.

"I could not have lived at home after what you told me this afternoon, you know, father," said Mildred gently.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, you told me you were going to be married—"

began Mildred.

"No, my dear, I did not—excuse me. I said I was thinking of marrying. So I was; but it was you I was thinking of marrying, not myself."

"Me?" exclaimed Mildred.

"Yes. Mr. Gilbert had told me he was going to ask you to be his wife, and as I thought you would probably sacrifice your own happiness a second time for my sake, I played a little trick upon you."

"Oh, father, how could you do it? And how could I have been so silly as to believe it? Oh, you little know what a terrible quarter of an hour you gave me, sir! But, father"—seriously—"how will you get on without me?"

"Very badly, I fear; but Dorcas must do her best; and you will live close to me; and when I get too old for work, perhaps Gilbert will find a corner for his old friend by his fire-side. You have been an excellent daughter, Mildred—God bless you!"

"I am the happiest woman on earth," said Mildred.

She was very happy; for she was one of those fortunate people who get their reward in this life. Many there are who need longer discipline, to whom the best which is yet to be does not come this side the grave; the comfort to all is the same. God planned the whole life; therefore, when things look darkest, "Trust Him, nor be afraid."

THE BUTTERFLY.

By SYDNEY GREY.

CELIA, through the cornfield straying,
Of the morn so fair a part,
Step and face alike betraying
Sunshine too within her heart,
Smiled to see a butterfly,
Softly on her outstretched finger,
Fold his wings of purple dye,
Quite content to linger.

How his royal raiment glistened
In the sweet September haze!
Celia felt assured he listened
With approval to her praise.
Borne away on pinions swift,
Thus he left the maiden musing—
"Best of all is beauty's gift,
If one had the choosing."

By-and-by, when evening shadows
With the sunbeams strove again,
Celia wandered through the meadows,
Cool and fragrant after rain.
What was that she chanced to spy,
Bruised and battered by the shower?
Just a gorgeous butterfly
Crushed beneath a flower.

Ah! fair Celia, life means trial,
Many a shock and rude alarm;
And in struggle and denial
Quickly lost is outward charm.
Then, since beauty flies so soon,
Ere delight has lost its savour,
Seek, dear maid, a nobler boon—
Heavenly grace and favour.

TWO WAYS OF LOOKING AT IT.

By A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN.

I AM not as young as I was, and live at present in a picturesque cottage in a remote country village; but my brother is the rector of the parish, and his family is large, so I hear a good deal about the outside world, though I do not often get a peep at it now that I am not strong enough to travel.

My favourite nieces are Ethel and Flora. They are just eighteen, and twins. Ethel is fair as a lily, slender and graceful, with soft grey eyes, and a low, sweet voice. Flo has merry black eyes, a profusion of glossy dark

curls, and more colour and animation than her sister; she is not quite so tall, and certainly less graceful. They are both good, conscientious girls, and very useful in the Sunday-school and parish. They have lately been to London on a long visit, that they might have some music and drawing lessons, and "see the sights." They knew I should miss them sadly, and promised to write me one long letter each. I told them not to do more, because I should see their home letters regularly, and I knew their time would be

much occupied; besides, I should look forward to hearing about their adventures by word of mouth on their return. I think some of "our girls" may like to see the letters, and possibly find them suggestive.

ETHEL'S LETTER.

"MY DEAREST AUNT KATE,—I hope you have not been expecting to hear from me sooner. I had no idea how pressed for time I should be when I left the dear old home, or I should not have been so pleased at the

notion of coming to London. I never have a moment to myself; but I must not grumble. The journey here seems so long ago now that it is hardly worth while to tell you about it; but I know you like particulars, so I may as well say that we were ten in the carriage—five on each side—and Flo and I were not fortunate enough to get a window. It was very warm and disagreeable, and our fellow-travellers—mostly children—were very noisy and troublesome. We were truly thankful to reach London, and see Aunt Constance waiting for us on the platform. She lives, as you know, in an old-fashioned part of London; but I fancy the neighbourhood must have changed for the worse since you saw it. The house is in a square—at least, it is called so—but it is really no more than a wide street, with a strip of garden up the middle. It seems to lie in the direct route for one or two stations, for morning, noon, and night cabs piled with luggage are rattling through it. The garden is badly kept, and shabby-looking children haunt it, with dirty faces, pinafores to match, and voices that are anything but 'sweet.' I hear yells at the present moment; but they are half drowned by a noisy piano-organ which has established itself opposite, and drives me nearly distracted. The asphalted road outside the garden palings is the favourite playground of boys from the mews behind, with roller-skates, bicycles, and tricycles. The noise they make on summer evenings is really appalling. Aunt Constance is obliged sometimes to close the front windows and open the back; but squalling babies, whiffs from the stables, and expressions more forcible than polite from the ostlers, compel us to submit to suffocation or return to the amenities of the skaters!

"Aunt Constance says this is a very healthy neighbourhood. I daresay she is right, but the air feels very heavy and close to us after our dear moorland breezes. I assure you sometimes when the wind is in one particular quarter, we are quite nauseated with the cooking odours from an American boarding-house a door or two off. We always know what they have for breakfast—herrings and bacon alternate, but onions are a daily luxury!

"Aunt Constance is most kind. We have our lessons in the morning, and practise then; the afternoons we devote to sight-seeing. We have been to the Tower; but I was very much disappointed, because since the dynamite scare they have shut up the most interesting part of it. We went one Sunday to hear Canon — at St. Paul's; but though we were very early, we had to put up with a place where we could only hear by standing; and as the sermon was an hour long, we were dreadfully tired when we got back. Of course we went to St. Paul's on a weekday too, and I shall never forget the fatigue of climbing the steps to the Golden Gallery. Still, I was rather vexed not to be able to go up to the ball and cross. They used to allow it when father was a boy, but it seems they don't now. We went to Westminster another day. Aunt Constance took us to see the wax effigies, but we could not go into the triforium, which was what we had set our heart on. The Abbey is truly fascinating, but they had no music the day we were there. We could not ascertain why.

"One objection to this neighbourhood is that it is so far from the Park. We have had one or two drives in it, and saw the Prince in the Row one day, and the Princess driving another afternoon. It was very provoking; we had settled to go the very day the Queen was there; but Aunt Constance thought it would rain, so we perforce stayed at home. It turned out perfectly fine, and we might have seen her Majesty! However, we did see her another time near Paddington Station.

I must not forget to tell you of the bazaar we saw opened by the Princess Beatrice and her husband. We stood quite close to them and heard their remarks; but though we helped to sell, we were not allowed in the tea-room, where Prince Henry handed the cups to the ladies, and the Princess made one of the party. It would have been rather a joke to have tea with the Royalties. Catherine Sinclair was one of those who did; but of course it did not really matter.

"I expect Flo will tell you about the Exhibitions. They say it is a good year at the Academy. Of course I am no judge, never having seen it before; but I thought there were a great many uninteresting pictures, portraits of ugly women and commonplace men, unknown to fame, or, at all events, anonymous in the catalogue. The rooms were dreadfully crowded on each occasion that we visited them; it was almost impossible to get a good view of the most popular pictures. I had no idea before, how trying looking at paintings is to the head; both Flo and I were quite prostrate when we got home. The German Exhibition is very dull; we thought nothing of it. I suppose the band is the great attraction, but we spent most of our time at the cheap jewellery stalls. Aunt Constance had a fancy for choosing a brooch there for a friend, though she found afterwards she might have got it just as well at the shop she usually patronises. We liked the Naval Exhibition better. We passed most of the day there. Uncle Edward took us, and we had a famous view of the fireworks. We went to the top of the Eddystone Lighthouse, and into the iceberg. We had to stand for the fireworks, and for nearly an hour before they began, which was a little tiring. The crowd was so great, however, that it was quite necessary to get a good place. The illuminations were very pretty, but I suppose they will not bear comparison with those in the Colonial or Health Exhibitions, which you used to talk about.

"We have not been to one dinner-party, though we are supposed to be 'out.' Aunt Constance has given one since we came, but she said she could not make room for us, and we were too young for it to matter. We had no reason to grumble, because the guests were all married people and rather old; and Aunt Constance arranged for us to spend that evening with the Simpsons, who had invited us *en famille*. Cousin Elma went too, and we enjoyed ourselves immensely.

"Flo and I have been helping at the temperance entertainments at the schools. The lady who generally plays has been ill, so they say we are useful. Flo says she quite enjoys them, except that she cannot get over the fear of breaking down. I am not troubled with nervousness, and of course I like to be of use; but the room is badly ventilated; the old ladies will have the windows shut, and you can guess the result! We have some distance to walk to our church (which, by the way, is a very ugly one). I should like to wander sometimes, for the choir sing flat, and the vicar is by no means eloquent; but Aunt Constance quite agrees with father about the duty of regularity at one's own church, if only for the sake of example, and I believe she likes Mr. Smith's sermons too. No doubt they are very good, even if a little heavy. I shall be very pleased to see our own beautiful old church again, with its arches, and windows, and brasses; to hear mother at the organ and listen to father in the pulpit! You must not imagine I am not enjoying myself in town. I am, very much, and everybody is most kind to us; but I own I am just a little disappointed. I suppose I expected too much. Fondlest love, dearest Auntie,

"From your ever-loving

"ETHEL."

FLORA'S LETTER.

"MY DEAREST AUNT KATE,—I am ashamed not to have written sooner; but I waited at first on purpose that I might have more to say of interest; and then we had got into such a whirl of studies and amusements, that it really was difficult to find time for more than the regular home letters. We are having the most delightful visit you can possibly imagine. Nobody could be kinder or more unwearied in finding entertainment for us than dear Aunt Constance. She could not do more for Elma than she does for us. But the pleasure of our trip began before we saw her. We stopped in our journey at Canterbury for two hours, and saw the Cathedral. We were so fortunate; we got a most intelligent and amiable verger, and saw everything. It would have been worth coming away from home if only for that. I have got a model of St. Augustine's chair, which I bought for you at a little shop just outside the cathedral. It was so kind of father to arrange for us to have this treat on the way. Aunt Constance met us herself—was it not good of her? I need not describe her house because of course you will remember it. We have a delightful room looking towards the front, with two windows full of flowers in pots. The musk and sweet peas almost cheat us into the belief that we are still in the country; and, indeed, the air, in the evening especially, is often deliciously sweet. I suppose the hay-fields at Hampstead have something to do with it. The square garden, when we first came up, was full of lilac, laburnum, and may trees in blossom; they are all over now, but the beds are still gay with annuals, and the grass green and refreshing to look at.

"Our masters come in the morning, and we do most of our preparation then, so as to have the afternoon free. I think we must have been almost everywhere now. The Tower was deeply interesting. We saw the very spot where Lady Jane Grey and so many others perished, and St. John's Chapel, with its massive pillars and arches, and the Crown Jewels—oh, how exquisite they are! and so many other curious and interesting things. I shall always be glad to remember that I have stood on Tower Hill; it makes history seem so much more real. We saw the Egyptian Hall another day, and the Post Office, and the Exchange; and last, not least, St. Paul's. We went twice there—on a week day to explore, and on Sunday afternoon to gratify our great desire to hear Canon —. Aunt Constance was very kind to take us, for it is a long way, and she is not strong. We had to hurry rather over luncheon to be in time to secure a place where it was possible to hear. We were successful, for we did not miss a word. The sight of the vast crowd was most impressive. The Wellington monument and Gordon's tomb interested us very much when we went in the week. We went down to the Crypt, and up to the Whispering Gallery, as well as outside. We were greatly pleased with the view of London. Our guide told us we were singularly favoured in the weather, for it was an unusually clear day.

"But delightful as was St. Paul's, it must yield in attraction to the Abbey! Dearest Auntie, how I wish you could have accompanied us there! It was solemnising to see the place—

"... Where the end of earthly things
Lays patriots, heroes, bards, and kings."

We thought of you when we saw your favourite, Livingstone's, grave. But the part I think we cared for most was Edward the Confessor's Chapel, and Henry VII.'s. Aunt Constance told us that, when she was a girl, the coronation chair, with the stone of Scone (which tradition says is Jacob's pillow), was allowed to be fingered, and even sat upon. It is protected now. The service was plain that day, the lessons were beautifully and most

impressively read by the Canon in residence, and the Dean was present.

"It would make my letter too long if I tried to tell you about all the Exhibitions. I think we enjoyed the Royal Academy as much as anything. Aunt Constance tells us we could hardly have had a better year. Evidently the public are of her opinion, for it seems always full. I was very much amused at some of the remarks I overheard about the historical pictures. The landscapes are lovely—many of them, at least; and some of the portraits of celebrated men and famous beauties very interesting. I think Ethel and I like groups best—pictures that tell a story, I mean; and there were a large number of them. We were so engrossed the first time that we stayed too long, and paid the penalty of a slight headache; but it was entirely our own fault, for Aunt Constance warned us. It was a very thundery day, too, so perhaps after all the Academy was not altogether responsible.

"The German Exhibition was not quite so nice as the Academy: but of course it was so different that I ought not to compare the two. The sham scenery in the garden was very realistic. An avenue especially struck us as natural, when seen from a distance; but I think we admired the pictures, glass, and china more than anything. Aunt Constance gave us each a lovely little specimen of Bohemian glass to keep as a souvenir of our visit; and we enjoyed helping her choose a moonstone brooch for a birthday present to her cousin at the brilliant jewellery stalls.

"The Naval Exhibition was really enchanting. Uncle Edward took us with Elma because we wanted to stay for the fireworks, and Aunt Constance was afraid of being overtired. It was a delightful day. I am sure Ethel has told you about the wonderful Arctic lights exhibited inside the iceberg, and the explanations of the phenomena so clearly given. The view of Chelsea Hospital from the top of the Eddystone Lighthouse, too, was most interesting; so was the model of the *Victory*, with the death of Nelson, and that of the *Great Harry*, our first great warship. It looked very antique and cumbersome. The lifeboat was a great centre of attraction; the people would climb into it and over it, which of course is not allowed. But oh, Aunt Kate, the fireworks! If you had but seen them! Elma laughed at our ecstasy, and said she had seen as good and better at the Crystal Palace—so perhaps you have too. There was a gigantic sea serpent, as well as the most lovely designs with Catherine wheels and other exquisitely-coloured fireworks, and a naval encounter. The comic element was introduced by a bicycle race. Everything was reflected in the water, which of course doubled its beauty. We had such a good view, too, for Uncle Edward took us

into the grand stand, where we escaped all crowding and squeezing, and chose the best place of all for seeing. One more pleasure that day included. We saw the Princess of Wales and her daughters, who were paying a private visit to the Exhibition. We stood quite near them, and happily Uncle Edward knew them; if he had not been with us we should have missed them, for Elma is too short-sighted to have recognised them even if she had happened to notice their faces. The Princess is very like her pictures. We have been very successful in seeing our Royal family. Even the Queen herself gave us an opportunity one day, near Paddington Station. She sat our side of the carriage, and we had a famous view. Then Mrs. Sinclair was so kind as to give us tickets for the opening of the bazaar at Kensington, where Catherine had a stall, so that we saw the Princess Beatrice and her husband quite close; and Aunt Constance took us to the Park twice that we might have a chance of meeting the Prince and Princess there. Again we were fortunate—the Prince was riding in the Row, and the Princess driving in her victoria.

"We have had some pleasant private entertainments too! Mrs. Simpson had a large garden-party, to which we were asked. It was quite fine—for once this summer; there was a good band, and we had strawberries and cream. Don't think me greedy to mention this, but I fear Ethel and I are still babyish enough to feel our enjoyment enhanced by the combination. Aunt Constance had a musical party, partly to please us, I think, which we greatly appreciated. Some really accomplished musicians played and sang. The violins were beyond praise! A great many people came, and we had a very pretty supper, with ices. On Elma's birthday we went up the river with a party of friends. You know how fond we are of rowing, so you can guess what a treat it was to us. We filled several boats, and everything went off to perfection. Another time we went with Professor — and a party to the British Museum after dinner. It is lighted by electric light, and the effect is very pretty; besides, it was such a privilege to hear the Professor's explanations. He dined with Aunt Constance first, and was very kind to us, giving us all sorts of hints as to what to look at. We went by daylight afterwards over the same ground, and tried to recall all he had said. We met him once more at a promenade at the Botanical Gardens. He was very amusing that afternoon. He told us he did not know whether he hated the band or the thunderstorm more. That was the only one of our pleasures which threatened to be a failure, for just as we arrived at the Gardens in our smartest frocks and prettiest hats, down came a deluge of rain! Fortunately

we found refuge in the conservatory before even our light sunshades were damaged. The band soon followed the rest of the people, but it was not quite so pleasant to hear as in the open air, though not really 'detestable' and 'deafening,' as the Professor would call it. If we had not met him I think we should have found it a little dull that day; but he made us laugh so that we were quite glad we had come, rain notwithstanding. He is a dear old man, and got us tea, and escorted us to our carriage—or, to be accurate, secured a cab for us—in the most gallant and attentive manner.

"I am afraid you will think we have been very dissipated, and thought of nothing but amusing ourselves, so I will just add, that we have gone with Elma regularly to the vicarage working party for foreign missions, and that we have undertaken the management of the music at the temperance entertainments at the school. This Elma could not do, as she is not musical; but she always goes with us, and helps to keep the children in order, as well as in many other ways. We like these evenings very much. It is so pleasant to see people evidently enjoying themselves, and to feel that we are allowed to be the means of bringing even a little brightness into lives shadowed by deprivation and poverty.

"The vicar is quite old; his eldest daughter, who manages the parish affairs, is older than mother, I should think. He is very kind and gentle, and his sermons are very nice, if one really listens to them. I am afraid when we first came I used to let my thoughts wander a great deal, being accustomed to father's bright striking manner; but now I am used to Mr. Smith I pay more attention, and he often says things that help me in the week afterwards. The church is a Georgian one, as no doubt you remember, and very good for seeing and hearing. Aunt Constance has a pew in the best part.

"And now I must really leave off. I hope I have not tired you, but you asked for 'details.' We are very, very happy here; no girls could be happier, I am sure. I am very glad we came, and it has all been far nicer than I expected; but still it will be delightful to come home again, and see you all. I can hardly believe that we shall have been four whole months away from the sweetest, dearest home in the world, and yet not have been miserable! You were quite right, Aunt Kate; you said I should be surprised to find how fast the weeks passed. We hope to bring Elma back with us. She sends her love to you, because she says she has heard so much about you from us that she feels quite fond of you already. I hope you are careful about draughts, dearest Auntie, and remain,

"Your most affectionate niece,
"FLORA."

VARIETIES.

ANGELS ON EARTH.

What though no more in human guise,
On radiant pinions borne,
Are angels seen of mortal eyes—
Earth is not left forlorn.
Some bird that sings in hopeless hours
God's messenger may be;
And I have seen in primrose flowers
God's angels smile on me.

SILVER PLATE.—The silver plate possessed by the Lord of Burghley in the days of Queen Elizabeth weighed from fourteen thousand to fifteen thousand pounds. And this was not considered extraordinary for a man of his position.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ART.

Customer (to photographer): "I don't think the photograph does me justice."
Photographer: "My dear sir, if photography did justice to everyone who had his picture taken, the art would soon grow unpopular."

THE DAY OF REST.—If the Sunday had not been observed as a day of rest, but the axe, the spade, the anvil, and the loom had been at work every day during the last three centuries, I have not the smallest doubt that we should have been at this moment a poorer people and a less civilised people than we are.—Lord Macaulay.

THE STRENGTH OF LOVE.

There is a comfort in the strength of love;
'Twill make a thing enduring which else
Would break the heart.

ANSWER TO TRAVELLERS' TALES (p. 459).

Solution. (The letter A.)
At dark Madagascar Sam saw palms fall,
Sharp catamarans flash past at Madras;
At Allahabad Mark sprang at a wall,
And at warm Salamanca sang bass at grand mass.
Balthazar at Agra saw Abdallah's hall;
At Malaga Kaspar was drawn at a ball.