

“Which of you suggested this mad piece of folly?” asked the master sharply, looking up for an instant, though without pausing in his work.

“I, sir,” replied Robin, without a moment’s hesitation.

“Ah; I thought as much. If White dies—”

He broke off abruptly. A glance at the lad’s white, agonised face told him that there was no need to point a moral.

Robin’s remorse for that night’s work was poignant enough to change the young master’s righteous anger into pity.

“You had better go home at once,” was all he said; but Robin still lingered. He could not go until the awful suspense was put an end to one way or the other. Half-an-hour passed, and still the two worked on without bringing a sign of life into the awful stillness of Arthur’s face; then Mr. Langley happened to look up, and his eye fell on Robin, whom he had imagined safe at home by this time.

“Why don’t you do as you are told, sir?”

he said sternly. “Do you want to get your death of cold? Here, Dobbin Major, you don’t seem to have distinguished yourself so far”—for the master’s keen eye had taken in the significance of that figure on the bank—“come and take Hume’s place, and you, Fergus, take that shivering idiot home, and tell his mother to give him a hot bath. I’ll send the doctor round to have a look at him, when he’s done what he can for poor White.”

There was a hopelessness in Mr. Langley’s tone as he said the last words, which went to Robin’s heart, as he set off for home with Fergus.

“We’d best run,” said the elder boy, but Robin shook his head.

“I can’t, I’m half frozen,” he said, through his chattering teeth; and Fergus grasped his arm, and never let go till he saw him safe in his mother’s arms.

Half-an-hour later, when he had had his hot bath and a warm drink, and, safe in bed, was at last beginning to feel warmer, he heard the doctor’s step on the stairs.

“Mother! mother!” he cried, in an agony,

“go and ask him—I daren’t—if Spider’s dead!”

He buried his face in the pillows: the suspense was more than he could bear.

“It’s all right, my lad,” said the doctor kindly, and Robin burst into tears. “We’ve brought him round,” the doctor continued; “but I can’t, of course, say what the effects of the chill may be. He hasn’t your cast-iron constitution, you know.”

But Robin could take in nothing beyond the fact that his little friend was alive.

“Thank God! Oh, thank God!” he said.

Arthur White did not die, though for some days he was very ill; and as soon as the danger was past, Robin was his bright, merry self again.

Nevertheless, the lesson of that night was not quite lost on him. One of its results was to change the half-contemptuous protection, which he had hitherto extended to little Arthur, into a warm and lasting friendship, which was of service to both boys in more than one episode of their future life.

(To be continued.)



“WILLOWS AND WATER.”



WE are well into the month of December, but no snow has come yet to put a pall of pearly white on the year’s dying face. Still the touches of colour have gradually been growing rarer, and there has come a look of quiet maturity into the features of the scene.

“Nor spring nor summer beauty have such grace

As I have seen in an autumnal face,”

said old John Donne of his friend Mrs. Magdalen Herbert, and so we think of December’s self as we watch these quaker greys and gossamer trappings of the year’s close. The prevailing pearl and russet tone, like the sober wedding attire of Jane Eyre, is a very fitting background for the few gems of bright colour that still remain, as was Jane’s serene calm face for the ardent heart beneath. From the top windows of the house the eye wanders to the red-tiled roofs

of the upper village, across the sage-sere network of that which as we look down upon it might be called the orchard-roof. How bright saffron those branches of mistletoe are with their pale berries in the dark bare branches of the apple-trees. Brighter still looked three red and yellow apples still hanging on the bare boughs in the last three days of November. What a joy it is, in our walk to come on a great withy-bed with the yellow twigs tinged with red which swell almost imperceptibly to the breeze, and remind us of the freer motion of the summer’s corn-field. The vivid green of those strips of cabbage in the cottage-garden paint the brown face of the earth with hues as gay as a gipsy’s scarf against her sun-burnt cheek.

The raven-black of the privet-berries peeps from the winter-hedge and studs its dull surface with countless little eager eyes that give more brilliancy for all their blackness than the rarer treasure-trove of the lurking deepest-purple sloe.

Heavy rain descends and soon lies on the surface in this flat willow-land, and then the high road gleams like a silver stream, or a milky way in the surrounding dun. Evening falls and Hesperus shines in a pale gold sky that has that intense pure thrill of rarity that only winter air possesses.

The days pass on and it is little more than a week to Christmas and yet no snow has come. But other hands than those of frost have been at work to shift the scenes for us. Water has risen in all the low places, and our rich meadow-land has become a world of meres taking all the colours the sky paints upon it, gleaming blue and silvery white and sullen leaden grey. Not many years since our little country town became a tiny Venice, with

the poor flooded folk skilfully threading their way in boats to the windows. Things are not as bad as that this year, but enough rain has come to give a subtle touch of romance to our home-landscape, like the light in the eyes of some village Hester on her marriage morning. The withy cutters are sore at being swamped out of their winter work of withy cutting, but for all that the rain will in the main be a blessing to the country-side.

At any time the walk by the disused canal has an especial Dutch charm of its own, but now that the waters have overflowed the banks the young willows stand nearly mid-stream, and in the clear crisp air with no breath of wind they seem to bend lightly over, like Tennyson’s “straight staff bent in a pool” to look at the curving sister-willow in the water-world below, making a soft flush of winter colour where their bare red plumes touch the pale blue sky and the clear water. Across the canal the hedge that runs up between those two fields meets the towing-path with a hawthorn that has been allowed to grow at its own sweet will. Look what heavy-laden boughs of dark red fruit it sprays out on every side. How they take up the tender yellowish red of the willow-heads and give it a deeper note. A plain black bridge that spans the stream with no suburban attempt at so-called ornament ends the harmony of hue with its still form reflected in the stream.

This winter the very hedge-rows have been orchard-ranks of dark-red hawthorns almost plum-coloured, and the holly has given a Christmas look already to all the hedges where it gleams and puts forth its sturdy brilliant fruit. The little birds are very happy over the frequent pools. We see them fluttering their little feathers in them and



then lifting their tiny heads, and think of dear old Herbert's quiet eye that watched them long ago and wove them into the patch-work of "Man's Melody"—

"Not that he may not here

*Taste of the cheer,*

But as birds drink and straight lift up the head  
So must he sip, and think  
Of better drink

He may attain to, after he is dead."

Though no snow has come the thick frosts in the morning make a very brilliant whiteness, and the sunrise over it in its opal glory has a grand and awful look that reminds us of the sky in Holman Hunt's great solemn picture of the scapegoat. We shiver as we draw the curtains and look at the familiar landscape in this sad wraith-like majesty of dawn. A touch of sorrow and a thought of doom always have a majesty of their own,

"Here I in sorrow sit, this is my throne,  
Let kings come bow to it."

In the green mid-day the line of the low horizon-hills is straight and homely, and seems to frame a Dutch scene with Cuyplike cows of red and black. The one round hill with its one tree that rises from the ridge calls for a touch of tower or turret to fulfil its beauty. But now in the freshness of the dawn, with the silvery whiteness of the frost distinctly pencilling the tree and bringing it out in delicate relief against the sky of gold and rose, we see in these hills all the beauty of Perugino's landscapes in the background that so intensify the pure stillness and holy grace of his Madonnas in the foreground.

Christmas with a singular feeling of untimely spring in the air, has come and gone with snow as far removed as ever. The year's stores

begin to stir in the fields, the honeysuckle over the porch has put forth blue-green feelers and the barberry quite hopeful little perfect leaves, as though assured that winter's cruel fang is drawn. This is the time to delight in all the curious shades of difference in the green of the young crops. On a pale afternoon when the trees on the far ridge stand very lonely and silent but for

"The little noiseless noise among the leaves,  
Born-of the very sigh that silence heaves,"

when the sky withholds her treasures of colour and light and seems to muse on the sun she veils in her impassive whiteness, we are keen to note the deep emerald of that field of thick young rye which shows so bright and clear against the neighbouring hedge. The little separate blades of wheat in the next field that come up in timid rows have more grace, though their pale green, as of the chrysopraxe, does not add such rich colour to the canvas. The horned sheep with their white faces in that pasture-field of dingy grass all moist and rooted by the flock, look grey and rough beside the one snow-white lamb nestled by its mother. On the other side of the road the unhorned black-faced sheep have lambs that are dull and rough in aspect. There are the two old types, always old and always new: the pure white lamb, "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," and the other homely one, the shayed lamb footsore and weary that the shepherd finds and puts upon his shoulder. As we watch closely the monotony of country life these old types live afresh.

The afternoon grows paler still. How warm that spot of colour is where the great red-brown cattle slowly chew the cud as they lie near together in the dark madder-brown

of the farm-barton. There is still enough light to distinguish the graceful bird that shoots swiftly from the hedge and sails so near the ground, "a lady wash-dish," my country friend tells me, "a terrible proud bird, two parts like a tom-tit." We are far indeed from the train-whistle in these quiet lanes, the musing-ground of silver-tongued Sydenham, that ancient Commonwealth divine, and the birds seem to know it; in a few more minutes a lovely white-finch with many bright touches of red and yellow in its wings, flies across the road as we take a sudden turn, to find ourselves, before evening sinks, in a very parliament of rooks cutting the air with level flight or cawing hoarsely as they settle to their unknown business in that Runnymede that lies beneath the ridge crowned with thick Scotch firs. "If you see one rook it's a crow," is the old country saying, and crows are far enough if that be true!

A wealth of berries that has given the lie to the saying that many berries mean a hard winter, have made that bright-eyed robin with his resplendent waistcoat so fat and impudent, that even the shake and rattle of the donkey-cart over the newly-mended road does not disturb him from taking stock of us with his bead-like eye.

Let no one imagine that the country is dull in winter. The winter-scents of earth and rotting leaves are keen and bracing, the winter-sights may "take their colour from an eye that has kept watch o'er man's mortality," but without them all the wealth of summer's glory would be in vain, and would only leave us, like the "brown faces" in Giorgione's great pastoral,

"Sad with the whole of pleasure."

## "THE KING'S DAUGHTERS": THEIR CULTURE AND CARE.

By LINA ORMAN COOPER, Author of "We Wives," etc.

### PART II. IN HEALTH.



N the set of sumptuary laws given us by the King for our guidance in the care of His daughters a good deal is said about dress. As we read, our hearts re-echo the old cry for lovely things. We still admire "bells and pomegranates" on the hem of garments made for glory and beauty. We still count the "fringes" on border and seam. We still show our parental love by making robes of many colours and pieces (Gen. xxxvii. 14). We still give goodly raiment to our

beloveds (Gen. xxvii. 15).

No less strict and abundant are the dietetic rules laid down. As far as a difference in climate will permit we should follow these rules. It has been truly remarked, that amidst every surrounding of neglect and privation the Jews are essentially a healthy people. If we want our girls to be equally so, we must exercise care and forethought about their food. We should consider individual

taste in the matter. Though it may be, and is, scientifically true that "a fresh herring offers the largest amount of nutriment, for a given sum of money, of any kind of animal food," it would not do to restrict our daughters to an entire diet of such fish. We should soon find that the halfpenny herring, though containing 240 grains of carbon and 36 grains of nitrogen, would cease to nourish. Then again, though beans and lentils may be the richest of all foods in certain constituents, yet a small appetite and weak digestion cannot assimilate enough of them to grow fat thereon. We need common sense so much in catering for our households. Highly seasoned meats are rightly condemned (by thinking housewives) for their growing families. Yet condiments are of extreme value in rendering food more palatable, stimulating a jaded appetite, supplying a necessary substance, and assisting in the due mastication of food. Salt, again, is eagerly sought for by animals and men. The saline earths called "saltlicks" are the greatest attraction to the wild beasts of the desert. Yet, though it immediately stimulates the sense of taste and increases the flow of saliva, we would not condemn our households to a continual course of salted meat. How to give, when to give, why to give, must be learned carefully by every guardian of the King's daughters. In this connection it would be useful to read prayerfully and carefully the fourteenth of Romans. The wisdom of St. Paul is even more in evidence therein than his principle.

I have begun this chapter upon the health of our girls by talking of food, as cookery has a great deal more to do with health than many persons imagine. It has much to do also with their moral and spiritual development, of which more anon. The chief object in cooking food at all is to render it more promotive of good health. Digestion is so much impaired by unskillful handling of meat. Heavy, half-baked bread, cannon balls of boiled puddings; badly made pastry; half fried vegetables, are more than "misfortunes." They are culpable failures, bringing in their train delicate health.

In ordering the menus for our households, we should remember that our bodies need flesh-forming, heat-giving, and mineral matters in the food. All animal food, cheese, eggs, fish, peas, beans, and lentils, strengthen and toughen muscle and bone. Dripping, butter, sugars, treacles, jams, are so much carbon to keep the fire of life alight. Potatoes, all green vegetables, bread and fresh fruits supply potash, soda, iron and phosphates. Now, in different ratios, every girl requires all these constituents in her daily food. But remember, the volatile, active, energetic maiden needs a great amount of both nitrogenous and carbonaceous matter, otherwise her body would quickly wear out. On the other hand, our studious, indolent, peaceful daughter would only accumulate "too solid" and too much flesh if urged to share the quantity of her sister's feasts. Appetite must be regarded and