

"The question is rather—what does Guy contemplate?" she said, quickly.

"Oh, as to that," said her uncle, coolly, "where could he find a more charming wife than Aldyth would make him? And would it not be the best thing possible for her?"

Miss Lorraine did not reply. As she followed her uncle across the wide oaken hall she said to herself that many women would like to be the mistress of such a fine old house. What better position could she desire for Aldyth than that which she would win if she married her cousin, the heir of Wyndham? And yet there was something repugnant to her in the idea. Guy did not seem to her to possess the qualities that could make him a good husband for Aldyth.

They went back into the dining-room. It was a large, handsome room; but its dark oaken furniture, dark hangings, and dark carpet made it appear gloomy. The whole house, indeed, had the dingy, uncared-for look that a home generally gets that has no lady as its presiding genius. The drawing-room, a long, narrow room facing the garden, was rarely used.

Old Stephen stirred the fire into a blaze, seated himself in his armchair, folded his hands before him, and looked deliberately at his niece.

"You do not like the idea, it seems; but what better thing could there be for Aldyth?"

"That depends on how she would regard it," said Miss Lorraine, drily.

"She has no fortune," he continued, without heeding his niece's words. "Her mother has given her up; but if she had not done so, she has nothing to leave her daughter."

"Aldyth will not be penniless," said her aunt, quietly. "All that I have to leave will be hers when I am no more."

Stephen Lorraine made no comment on this statement. Evidently he thought

the £300 a year Miss Lorraine had inherited from her father a poor thing in comparison with the joint possession of Wyndham and the fortune he had accumulated.

"It seems to me," said Miss Lorraine, with sudden boldness, "it seems to me a dangerous thing to make plans of this kind. If the two are drawn to each other, all well and good; but you cannot be sure that Aldyth would be Guy's choice, or, supposing it were so, that she could love him."

"Nonsense!" said the old man sharply. "I tell you she does love him. She'll be all right if you do not stuff her head with rubbish. What's all this about the literature lectures? Who's that young fellow they tell me is constantly at your house?"

Miss Lorraine coloured.

"Oh, Tabitha Rudkin!" she said within herself, "this is your doing."

But she replied calmly—

"I suppose you mean Mr. Glynne, the gentleman who is giving the lectures. He is not more often at my house than he is at other people's. He is a young man of good family, well bred and highly cultured. I went to school with his mother."

"Whose nonsensical idea was it, having these lectures? What good can they do?"

Miss Lorraine thought it vain to argue that question with her uncle.

"Aldyth enjoys them," she said; "she is very fond of poetry."

"More's the pity," returned the old man. "I don't approve of stuffing a girl's head with poetry and rubbish! There's Byron, for instance. Now what good can it do a girl to read Byron, I should like to know."

Miss Lorraine was silent. She thought it probable that Byron was the only poet with whose writings her uncle was acquainted; but she did not dare to hint that he was perhaps hardly

competent to judge of the value of poetry.

"No," he added; "I object to those lectures. They will do her no good. Tell her so from me; tell her that I wish her to give them up."

"Uncle!" His niece looked blankly at him. She could hardly believe that he was in earnest.

"I mean it," he said; "I wish her to give them up. Guy does not care for them; he does not attend them, and I would rather she did not."

"But Aldyth cares very much for them," said her aunt. "You cannot think what a disappointment it would be to her."

"Nonsense!" he said impatiently; "Aldyth is a good girl; she will do what I wish. You tell her what I say—do you hear?"

"I hear, certainly," said Miss Lorraine, greatly annoyed, "but I think you had better speak to her about it yourself."

"You refuse to do so?"

Miss Lorraine hesitated.

"I would rather not," she said; "but if you insist upon it I will."

"Very well, then; I do insist upon it. Now I shall see whether Aldyth really cares to please me. There has been talk about her at Woodham, which has displeased me. I wish to put it down."

"Oh, Tabitha Rudkin!" inwardly groaned Miss Lorraine.

Stephen Lorraine said little more to his niece as they sat together. Presently he took up his newspaper, and nodded a little behind it, though he would have scouted the idea of sleeping in the afternoon. She sat knitting diligently, but stealing many a glance the while at the clock on the mantelpiece. She hated the disagreeable task imposed on her. What would Aldyth say? At last the long, dull afternoon wore to its close, and she heard Aldyth's happy voice as she dismounted at the front door.

(To be continued.)

ON THE ITALIAN RIVIERA.—OSPEDALETTI.



is the opinion of the most eminent and widely experienced of our Riviera medical men, that to maintain a high standard of hygiene along the Mediterranean littoral, winter visitors should tend rather to spread themselves in a number of small or medium-sized stations than to concentrate their numbers in one or two fashionable and already overgrown towns. The difficulties of drainage make this apparent. The Mediterranean is an almost tideless sea, and to make it at any one or two points the receptacle for the refuse of a large community cannot but tend to seriously impair the healthfulness of the immediate neighbourhood. There is another evil attendant upon the increasing and fashionable resort, which is a question of importance to many whose health necessitates or inclination suggests a sojourn on the Riviera, and that is

the constant upward movement of hotel prices. The good old days when the inns of Mentone received their guests *en pension* at five francs a day, *vin compris*, are, alas! thirty years behind us. The guest of to-day in Cannes, Nice, or Mentone will find that in decent hotels his most modest requirements, and a south room, will not be satisfied under twelve francs a day, *vin apart*. The advantages, therefore, of constantly breaking new ground are apparent; and if the would-be denizen of the Sunny South has a soul capable of soaring above hotel waxworks, lounging on the Boulevard des Anglais or des Etrangers, as the case may be, he or she may be safely promised, that in addition to the suggested advantages to health and pocket, time will never hang heavily, but a constant source of enjoyment be found in delightful rambles through olive and lemon groves; in the exploration of the courses of mountain torrents, with their picturesque tumble-down olive-mills, or in more ambitious excursions to the top of neighbouring hills or villages.

Such at least was the writer's experience of last winter at Ospedaletti. Health necessitated

a warm, dry climate, and desiring to avoid the older resorts, I came by chance to try Ospedaletti. Its geographical position seemed all that could be desired—it was not too far west, and so exposed to that uncomfortable wind known as the mistral, nor too far east and so exposed to the biting *tramontano* so rife in the neighbourhood of Genoa, and to too high a degree of humidity, for the rainfall is much heavier on the eastern than on the western Riviera. It was not unduly isolated, being midway between San Remo and Bordighera; and lastly, it possessed a comfortable and clean hotel, with an obliging Swiss host and hostess, capable of making their guests very comfortable at seven francs to eight francs a day.

A French banking company seems to have first conceived the idea of converting the quiet little village of Ospedaletti into a winter health station. This company purchased a large area of land in the rear of the old Italian village, and, at an enormous cost, laid out some miles of new roads, built bridges, three rows of buildings to be used as shops, a large hotel, and a magnificent building for purposes of

recreation, and passing under the name of a casino. The Corso Regina Margherita, a deviation from the old Corniche Road, is planted with rare and beautiful palms, and plentifully supplied with seats, making a delightful resort when the weather is hot, or the mood too lazy to prompt a stroll in the olive woods. But the reader may object that she has been led to expect a quiet rural retreat, and is here confronted with a casino, rows of shops, and the like. Let her not be dismayed. The doors of the casino have never been opened. It stands there with its mosaics and golden frescoes lighted up by the bright sunlight, and its white walls, graceful columns, and gilded pinnacles glistening in the pure atmosphere, in the charge of one sad custodian; a fitting reproof to the men who would have converted this peaceful spot into a second Monte Carlo, a resort for the gambler and the dissolute. The shops, too, are without shopkeepers, and are mostly let out as apartments, and the foreign population perhaps seldom exceeds one hundred, all told. But this is not the fault of Ospedaletti, for its situation and surroundings are, perhaps, unsurpassed at any other point on the Riviera. Its site is on a sweet little bay, bounded on the west by the point of land on which Bordighera is situated, and on the east by Cap Nero, a huge block of rock running down to the sea, and shutting off even a view of San Remo, which is only distant three miles.

This bay is said to have been an old resort of the Knights of Malta, who used it as a sanatorium, and they are also credited with the foundation of the quaint little mountain village, Col di Rodi, perched on the hill above. From the centre point of old Ospedaletti, a paved mule path leads up a valley, luxuriant with lemon trees, to Col di Rodi. What delightful reminiscences this old pathway revives! It is always out of the wind, and the bright sun is tempered, but not too much shaded, by the overhanging olives and lemons. Here and there quaint shrines, built in the walls by devout peasants, attract attention; a brawling mountain stream rushes down the valley below. Numberless little aqueducts convey the water of this stream for purposes of irrigation, or to turn the wheels of the primitive olive-mills that extract the sweet olive oil from the olive-berry. No prettier point is there on this old path than at the bridge which spans the stream. Seated on its ledge

you look down upon an aqueduct connected with the olive-mill before you—a tumble-down, picturesque building covered with tangled, matted briar, the water rushing over its crazy mill-wheel in a delicious white foam. Behind is a series of large stone-built water tanks, for what purpose I could never discover, but pleasantly imagined they were used by the monks of the little ruined monastery, which stands hard by, to keep their fish in. Now they are the home of the little green frogs, whose welcome croak is the sure signal of approaching spring. And the scene never wants life. From Col di Rodi, driven by olive-skinned, dark-eyed maidens, or by their more swarthy and bronzed brothers or sires, come the mules laden with sacks of lemons or other produce of the land, and men and maidens smilingly bestow upon the stranger their salutation, *Buono giorno!*

From Ospedaletti the same beasts toil slowly back up the hill, urged on by the shouts of their drivers and an occasional resounding whack from the driver's stick. In the olive groves, on either side, the voices of men and women engaged in olive picking are heard, whilst here and there some solitary labourer croning over a lugubrious ditty (the songs of the peasantry seem to be always Gregorian in character) adds a variety to the sounds which reach the ear.

But the Coli road is only the beginning of most excursions. Soon some tempting path draws the wanderer from the highway into the byways. Clumps of sweet violets are met with, and in the early days of January the hands may be filled in a few minutes. Under the dripping archway of the old mill the maidenhair fern is seen in profusion, and when we get down to the little stream, and cross the stepping-stones, a few roses may be gathered from the deserted garden of the house and mill that were ruined in the earthquake, and, further on, the ground is covered with wild lavender and thyme.

Do we wish to quit these sylvan nooks and gaze upon scenes more majestic, we must climb higher. Until a height of nearly a thousand feet above the sea level is reached, the way, of necessity, lies through lemons and olives; for so warm and sheltered is Ospedaletti that these delicate trees grow luxuriantly to the elevation mentioned. But at length the open ground is gained—a dry, sterile mountain slope; but what a view meets the eye! The still blue

Mediterranean lies at our feet, glistening tranquilly in the afternoon sun; the horizon has been pushed back by our elevated standpoint, till the great flat expanse of blue water looks twice as broad as it did from the village. Half a dozen steamships may be seen (English, of course) making steadily for the port of Genoa, and occasionally one is so close in shore that signs of life on deck are apparent. To the east the mountains beyond San Remo are plainly visible. But these are best seen from the Corniche Road, and a twelve minutes' walk to Cap Nero, after coffee in the morning, is repaid by a view of these mountains steeped in a soft azure-tinted light, a light whose softness and beauty are purely Italian. We can never descend from these heights without taking the old monastery on our way. Service is still held in its church once a year, but as this is in summer, it is only given to us to look through open windows upon the interior.

This, however, is not what brings us to the old monastery. It is the quaintness of the building, and the view. The tower of the church is built so as to span the road on a vaulted arch. A charming panorama of lemons presents itself on either side, and from the stone seat built into the arch this may be pleasantly contemplated. On the road home it is impossible to resist another halt at the house presently reached. The lemon grove there is of exceptional luxuriance, the trees literally groaning under the load of their golden-tinted fruit. The vista of blue sea seen through the leafy foreground never loses its beauty, and never fails to secure a visit as we pass down the old mule path to the road below. Before regaining the Corso Regina Margherita, we come upon a characteristic flock of poor, thin, hairy rather than woolly sheep. Their shepherd, clad in picturesque rags, with his knee-breeches and rough yarn stockings, keeps them slowly moving through the olive groves, picking up the scant herbage that grows there. On the road we meet another old friend, the San Remo and Bordighera omnibus, with its two poor, decrepit old horses, painfully but patiently transporting the creaking, rattling, wheezing old vehicle back to the latter-mentioned place whence it came. But the sun is fast sinking behind the old church at Bordighera, and we hurry home to watch it disappear like a ball of fire in the blue waters beyond.

WORK, WAIT, WIN.

By RUTH LAMB, Author of "One Little Vein of Dross," "Only a Girl Wife," etc.

CHAPTER XXV.

FORTUNE SMILES.—AN ADVENTURE WITH BURGLARS.

IF misfortunes seldom come singly, it is equally true that fortune's gifts often arrive in pairs, or close on the heels of each other.

On the day after old Mr. Burford's funeral, a most astounding piece of news reached me—news which I hardly dared to believe, it seemed so utterly incredible. The loss of means and the clouding over of my early prospects did not unhinge me more than this did, in spite of the fact that good news is said never to harm the recipient.

I longed to tell mine; but to whom must I speak, seeing that I wished to confine the intelligence to a single friend, and to pledge that one to absolute

secrecy? Betsy and Jabez had enough to think of already, and besides, it would have been so hard for them to carry such a weighty burden, and be compelled to bear it alone.

There was only Mr. Burford, and yet how could I trouble him on the day after his father's funeral, and when he must be overweighed with business that had accumulated during his absence? However, I remembered his words, spoken that day at the station: "I would never defer any business that was of real consequence to you, Jack."

He would know how unwilling I should be to trouble him at such a time, so I sent a line to the office, and asked him to see me for a few minutes, adding that the matter was indeed urgent, or I would not ask him. I had a prompt

reply, bidding me come to him at a time when I should have an hour free.

"What is it, my boy?" he asked, after a shake of the hand.

For answer I placed in his hand a letter I had that morning received from a firm of solicitors in London. Mr. Burford read the contents with no less surprise than I had done, then said: "My dear Jack, how wonderful this is! I could not have believed it, though, as I told you, such things have been brought about by a superstitious fear, when conscience had long lost its power. I congratulate you with all my heart," and again he grasped my hand with a friend's warmth, whilst his face expressed the genuineness of his pleasure.

"Do you think it is true?" I asked.

"True! Of course it is. I have had