

and I think I was not the only one to whom it seemed even more pathetic than usual.

There was still a fire in the chilly evenings, and Helen and I sat over it long after John had gone, not speaking much, but clasping each other's hands. The moonlight came brightly in through the uncurtained windows, and the house was very still, for the others had gone to bed as soon as John left.

"Will you be as sorry to leave us as we shall be to lose you?" I said, caressing the fair, shapely hand that lay in mine.

"Do not talk of it," cried Helen hastily. "Indeed, Cousin Alice, you cannot be as sorry as I am. You will go on living here just the same—here, where everything is so sweet and beautiful."

"In the Fens!" I could not help exclaiming, and I smiled in spite of my sorrow. "Beauty is the last thing they are generally supposed to possess."

"They seem beautiful to me," said Helen, with grave simplicity, and I did not argue the point.

I knew, or thought I knew, through what sweet glamour my young cousin looked on our homely flats. Did she know, or guess, herself?

"You leave us as you came to us, Helen?" I said, with tender anxiety—so much might have happened on that homeward drive, or later on the Bank by Westrea Mere—"You leave us as you came to us, dear, except that we have learnt to love each other?"

And then Helen looked at me with eyes that shone with a happiness that startled me, although they shone through tears, and said "good-night," and fled away up-stairs. I followed more slowly, staying to put away the scattered music left as John and she had left it, with that plaintive parting song still on the piano.

When I opened our room door Helen was standing at the dressing-table, with her favourite book of devotions in her hand. But I saw her face in the glass,

and I did not think she was reading. Not for her to-night were pious aspirations after a selfless holiness, and a life of renunciation and sacrifice. Divers are the praises and the needs of men, divers the voices they lift to the Eternal Throne, and the steps by which they reach it! Could I blame my fair young cousin that her pious book was held in heedless hands, while her whole face was moved and stirred with a gladness that was in itself a thanksgiving, even as are the songs of birds?

As I closed the door she started and shut the book, placing something hastily between its leaves, and then turned to me with a shy and startled look.

I had seen what the something was—a slight pale green stem with a brilliant turquoise crown—and my heart leaped at the sight.

An impulse I could not resist sent me to the cabinet where my few treasures were. I unlocked it and took out the little prayer-book Robert gave me when he went to sea. It held another gift of his, and by long usage opened at the place.

I laid the open page before my cousin, with the poor faded flower lying brown and sere upon it.

"What is it? Why do you show it to me?" she whispered, with reddening cheeks.

"It is only a faded relic now," I answered, looking her full in the face. "Once it was one of the large blue forget-me-nots that grow by Westrea Mere. It was the first thing Robert ever gave me."

I do not know if I should have said any more if Helen's face had borne out the studied unconcern of her attitude; but it was far enough from doing that.

The soft, dark eyes fell under mine as a bird falls when the arrow has pierced its breast; and such a blush flamed over cheek, and neck, and brow, as stopped my lips in very pity.

END OF CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

THE CHILDREN'S ROOM.

BY A MOTHER.

IN all houses, except very small ones, where there are children, there ought to be a room especially devoted to the use of the little folks. This, I fear, is very often the most neglected of all the rooms in the house. I do not know why this is, but it certainly ought not to be. There is assuredly no other room of so much real importance, for is it not there that our wee pets receive their first impressions and ideas? and I am afraid we shall find it almost impossible to instil into their little minds proper ideas of neatness and order, if all their early surroundings are of an opposite character.

The nursery, or children's room, ought not to be, as many people make it, an attic, or room at the very top of the house, used also as a repository for all odds and ends of furniture which are not considered suitable for any other room. I think this a

very grave mistake indeed. Let the nursery be up-stairs by all means, as the air is fresher, and circulates more freely there than on the ground floor; but let it be a nice, bright-looking, good-sized room, with, if possible, a southern aspect. Have a light cheerful paper on the walls, and plenty of simple pretty pictures hung round them. Many of the pictures given with the illustrated papers, if simply pasted on the walls, will serve the purpose. For a floor-covering, I should recommend linoleum as by far the best. I have tried it myself and found it to answer admirably. It is very much warmer than oilcloth, and decidedly cleaner than carpet. It is nice and soft for the feet, and easily kept clean.

The articles of furniture in a nursery need be very few and simple, but let them at all events be suitable. A model nursery, which is in my mind as I write, was furnished in the following manner. Floor and walls



THE CHILDREN'S ROOM.

were covered as already recommended ; a large table stood in the centre of the room, with a pretty, cosy-looking cloth upon it. A smaller one was placed in front of the window, forming a stand for some plants and nurse's work-basket. This I thought was a very good idea ; the plants were a source of interest and instruction to the children, and the table being in front of the window, prevented them from leaning out, which is at all times a very dangerous practice. A large toy-cupboard was in one corner, into which the little ones were taught to put their playthings

every night when done with : a habit not easy for children to learn, but one which they cannot be taught too early. Some half-dozen neat, polished wooden chairs stood round, with one, rather larger than the rest, for the mother when she went to sit with her pets. The windows were draped with gay-coloured curtains, which not only gave an attractive appearance to the room, but helped to keep out those tiresome little draughts which are always to be felt at the chinks of a window, and which do so much damage to our little ones, almost before we are aware

of their existence. A high, strong guard stood in front of the fire, and this completed the furniture of as cosy a children's room as I have ever seen.

It will be understood, of course, from what I have said, that the nursery which I have been describing was not made so much a "living-room" as a "play-room" for the little folks. The practice, so prevalent in many houses, of keeping the children constantly shut up in the nursery, when not out of doors, is, I think, a very bad one indeed. How should we, their elders, feel if we were compelled to spend so many hours every day in one room? Yet children require even more liberty than we do. I do not mean for a moment that they should be allowed to run wild all over the house; but the plan I myself followed, and which I have found to answer admirably, was this: whenever I had half an hour to spare, the children were brought down-stairs to me, and allowed then to have a good romp, if they felt so inclined, or sometimes we would have stories, after which they would

return to the play-room quite refreshed and happy. Their meals, too, I always had laid down-stairs, where I could superintend them myself. Who so fit, or able, to teach the little ones gentle and proper behaviour at table as the mother? Surely no servant, however good and faithful she may be, can have the future interest and well-being of the children at heart so sincerely as the mother; and it is only by beginning at the very commencement, to teach them what is right and proper, that we can reasonably expect them to turn out well afterwards. Another advantage of having meals down-stairs is, that it gives time for the nursery to get properly aired, and "put straight," before the children return to it. This will be found a much healthier plan than having all the meals up-stairs.

There are many points of interest respecting the little inmates of the nursery themselves, upon which I should like to say a few words, but space will not permit.

AN EVENING IN A NORWEGIAN VICARAGE.



IF you will take the map of Scandinavia before you, you will discover, some hundred miles beyond the Arctic Circle, a myriad of islands of all sizes and shapes, extending as a tapering barrier deep into the Arctic Ocean, and separated from the mainland by the turbulent Westfjord, of which every traveller in the north of Norway has woeful experience. These are the Lofodden Islands.

For thousands of years the icy waves from the Pole have been shivered to spray against their granite sides, which often rise perpendicularly some 3,000 feet out of the sea, with hardly a vestige of flora or fauna. Bold, and gigantic, they stand here as a bulwark in the ocean, where hardly a sound is heard but the monotonous sigh of the wave as its force is broken on the rock, or the plaintive cry of the eider-fowl and the sea-eagle—whose favourite haunts these islands are—as they call their young to the nest.

But some of the larger of these islands offer, nevertheless, an inhospitable abode for a hundred souls or so, and as these people must be christened, married, and in rare instances, when the ocean refuses to do it, buried—besides, of course, requiring spiritual guidance—they are endowed with a church and a clergyman; and it is a visit to this worthy functionary—who toils here by the sweat of his brow for a scanty compensation, and with the prospect before him of some day laying his limbs to rest in the depths of the terrible fjord—to which I invite you.

The family in the vicarage have just finished dinner,

and are now taking coffee. It is only two o'clock, but being mid-winter, it is already dusk in the room, and were it not for the windows facing in three directions, lights would be necessary. From the windows can be scanned the vast Westfjord, separating the Lofodden Islands from the mainland, where terrific gusts of wind sweeping down from the mountains are lashing the enormous waves into drifting froth, accompanied by the melancholy howl of the storm. From time to time the house is shaken by a squall, as if it were in the grasp of a giant; and an Arctic cold cuts through the cosy drawing-room, in spite of the enormous log-fire blazing on the hearth.

But why this anxiety depicted on everybody's face? Why this constant peeping through the windows, as if somebody were expected? Yes, somebody is expected, has been anxiously expected for the last three weeks—the post. "The post is coming!" is the magic sound which causes the blood to roll faster through the veins here in the Arctic north. The post is the connecting link between the small community here and civilisation without. Europe may be in flames without the fact being known here. The post brings news, but whilst perusing the newspapers or scanning the lengthy letters from friends outside, one forgets that the events which for the moment excite the reader have taken place weeks before, and are almost matters of history to the world down south, while others are at that moment agitating the mind.

On the ottoman the clergyman and the only merchant on the island, the chief dignitaries, are in conversation as to the probabilities of the post arriving that day, the merchant having for the last fortnight paid daily visits in anticipation thereof. This post is also awaited