

his wife. He took her from her fickle friends to London; there she was introduced to his family, and there she was married. I had the honour of giving her away, and that was the pleasantest event of the day for me—the affair being of a very stately and grand kind—much too grand for a simple old lawyer like me. I think Redlands himself was glad when the ceremony was over, and he whisked his dear little wife away from the artificial conditions to which she was as little accustomed as I. They went to Italy for

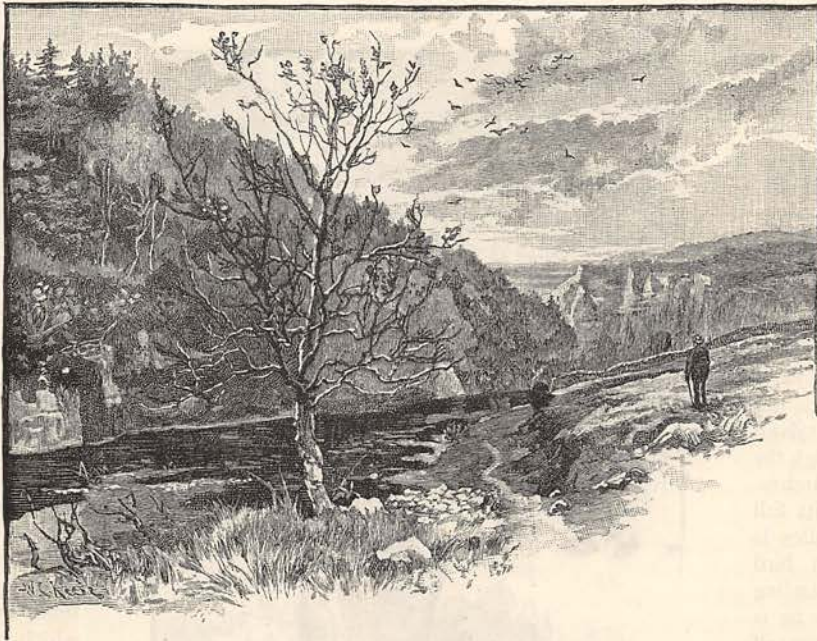
the rest of the winter, and while they were away the dismal old Court was pulled down, and a wooden chalet set up for their home while the new house is being built. They live in the pretty little box now; their new home is to be called by its older name—Redlands Court.

THE END.

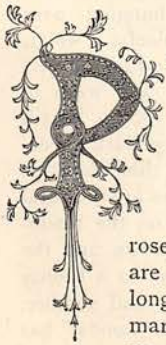
* * * Next month will be commenced a New Serial Story
by L. T. MEADE.

VOICES FROM THE VALLEY.

“FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD.”



“ITS PICTURESQUENESS IS PATHETIC.”



I.

PEACEFUL as a child's dream this Derbyshire valley is in the slanting autumn sunshine. It might be an enchanted enclosure, guarded by the sentinel hills, austere and morose, that rise above and beyond, where the heather bells are fast fading from rose-colour to pale lilac, and the brackens are becoming rusty and yellow, amid the long coarse grasses, the silvery mosses, the marshy rushes, and the inky rills of these moorland wilds, broken here and there by lonely whitewashed farmsteads, and half-cultivated patches of fallow field, that lend human character and a semblance of life to the savage, wind-scoured soli-

tude. So still the afternoon is in this rocky glen, where the wooded heights—their precipitous terraces broken here and there by grey limestone crags, that rise like steeple spires and pinnacles—draw so close to each other on either side that there is only a niggard space for the little river to pass between the impending banks. If the picture is poetical it is pensive, and its picturesqueness is pathetic. For to-morrow will be the First of November; and it is only the young who are careless of the flight of time. But to most of us, to those who have grown grey in the distracted fight, who are richer only in regrets, and to whom remembrance is sometimes only another name for remorse, anniversaries are so many milestones, telling that the end of the chequered journey is drawing near, while the crowning victory has not been achieved. The

young look with audacious confidence to the future, the old live in the past, and happy are they who can say—

“Our yesterdays look backward with a smile,
Nor, like the Parthian, wound us as they fly.”

Spring is crowded with the delights of anticipation; autumn fills you with retrospective thoughts, vague and vain. It preaches a sermon half pleasant, half painful, a sermon in a sad minor key. The text of the subdued discourse is decline and decay: fading flowers, falling foliage, fleeting light, fancies that are fled, friends that were fickle, affections that were false.

Few wild flowers remain in this Derbyshire valley. The summer birds of passage have migrated. Gone are the chiffchaff and the whinchat; the wheatear, the cuckoo, the night-jar, and the corncrake; the willow, wood, or sedge warblers; the wagtail, the swift, the swallow, and the house and sand martins; the redstart, the whitethroat, the wryneck, and the blackcap; gone to sunny lands across the sea, to the palms and temples of the South. But when April is verging into May, you will hear in the dim grey light of early morning the whisper of their wings in the air, as they pass soft and silent overhead after their long voyage, and return to their old haunts in this sylvan solitude. Although the ornithological orchestra is not at its full strength, the valley is still vocal with bird music. The starling has not left, for he is chattering to himself as if he enjoyed the soliloquy. The jackdaw and the jay are noisy in the clefts of the limestone crags. The thrush yet sings with bluff heartiness, and elicits, as if in

rival response, the full, flute-like notes of the black-bird. The linnet says “chuck-a-chuck-a” from the furze-bushes. The male chaffinch sings with unconstrained gaiety. His wife and family have left him, and gone to winter on the banks of the Nile; but he stops at home and keeps house cheerfully for her and them. The lark takes up its clear, ecstatic note to the silvery blue above, where the white clouds are blown like argosies of pearl before the western wind. There is the “rat-tat-tat” of the spotted woodpecker’s beak on the hard bark of a fallen tree, followed by

its laughing “yaffa, yaffa, yaffle.” The cry of “pee-wit, pee-wit” takes you to the moors above the valley, where the lapwing is wheeling round his nest among the ling and heath, and the grouse and blackcock bask in the sunshine on some weather-beaten crag that peers above the moss and turf-like bastions of a ruined fortress. Returning to the haunted valley, and to the river that runs like a ribbon of trembling light down the deep and devious defile, let not that cheerful chorister the robin be forgotten. He is no fine-weather friend. His sweetly modulated voice is heard warbling when the songs of other birds are hushed, and his red waistcoat gives a gleam of warm colour to woods that are depressing in their dripping decay.

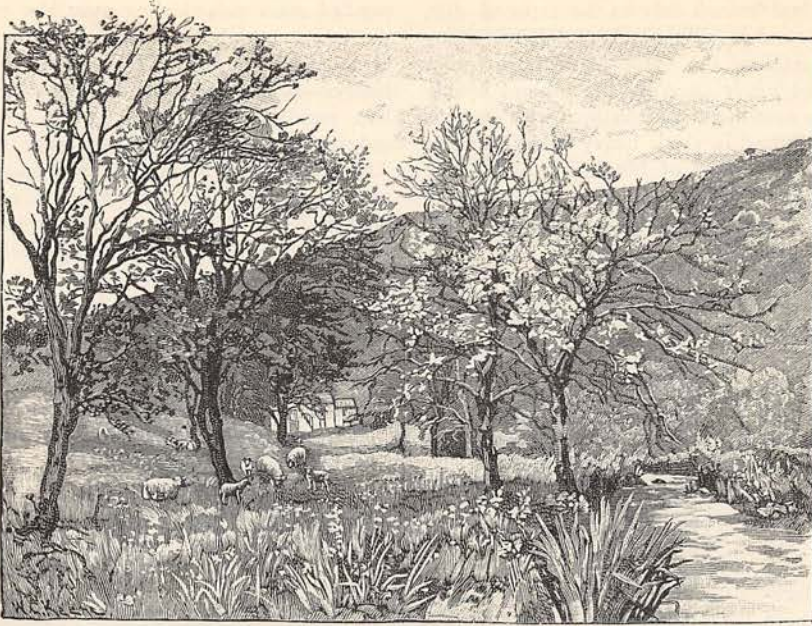
The woods that seem to reach to the sky-line on either side of the hidden valley are opulent enough to suggest the chromatic combinations of a painter’s palette. True, there is not that bewildering con-

flagration of colour, that gorgeous blaze of swift and sudden splendour, which distinguishes the “fall” in America; yet there are more tints than you can count in this Derbyshire valley in the shimmering light of this autumn afternoon: vivid reds and ruddy oranges, rich yellows and lustrous crimsons, toned down with gentle greens and greys, russets and maroons, dark purples, dull bronzes, indigo blues, and burnt umbers, all combined in a pastoral symphony of colour. Most intense are the beeches, which are of a vivid golden-red; the oaks are a dull yellow. The alder, hanging over the voiceful water, where it waves through the warp of feathery weeds, is still of a deep dark green. Redder than the hips and haws are the coral berries on the moun-

tain ash. The sycamore is a russet-brown, and the ash is changing from a lustrous yellow to a bronzy greenish-black. The larches are sere and sombre, and the silvery birch, “the lady of the woods,” has lost her flounces of green. The firs and pines are of that opaque blue which Turner loved to introduce into the shading of his perspectives. A soft brown are the nuts on the hazel; purple-black the berries on the



“THE HAUNTED
VALLEY IN MID-WINTER.”



"SPRING IN THE ENCHANTED VALLEY."

elder ; a bright, translucent, cornelian-red those of the honeysuckle ; a deeper red the "haws" ; a glossy black the bilberries. The blackberry-bushes in the brake are loaded with fruit that rings the changes of colour from a raw green, through various shades of red, to a luminous purple-black.

The placid, pensive afternoon wanes with the westering sun, whose fan-shaped fire burns the ridges of the moorland heights in a glow of dusky redness. The stream whispers a soft "sh—sh—sh" between the contracted banks. The faded leaves dance fitfully in the air, and fall with a musical sigh at your feet. In the fleeting light the inspiration of the scene has a melancholy power. The rising wind chases the sere and yellow leaves. They cover the grave of Summer. The sound of a lonely church-bell comes down the valley. Its slow and solemn tongue proclaims that "one of the children of the soil is returning to the earth whence he came." Tender and subdued are the surroundings, and by some subtle influence they translate themselves into your thoughts with suggestions of wider life and more reverent thought. Shelley must have felt this indefinable heart-yearning aspiration when he spoke of—

'The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow.'

II.

THE haunted valley in mid-winter. The Derbyshire uplands have been blanched with snow for some weeks past. The sky is of a clear steely-blue. The sun lights up a world of white. The wind seems to blow direct from the heart of an iceberg. It cuts as keenly as

Shylock's knife. Nature has ceased to be a painter. She has left the glowing canvas and warm colours for the cold white marble and the sharp-edged chisel of the sculptor. Snow in the tainted town is an uncomfortable compound that makes the dingy streets look more dolorous ; but in this Derbyshire valley, and on the ocean-like moorlands above it, spotless, stainless, silent, silvery, it is the picture of purity, and transforms commonplace scenes into landscapes of wondrous beauty. Of all the forces of Nature, snow looks the most soft and gentle and innocent. There seems no strength in this ethereal, fairy-like, feathery, and fantastic thing. Yet it is the most powerful and aggressive of the elements. It is a scene-shifter that moves with muffled feet and insidious tread ; but it obliterates an Alpine village without warning in the twinkling of an eye. It performs its destructive work without noise, breaking down the telegraph wires and arresting the lightning-flash with its imperative messages of life and death. Unassuming, unostentatious, hushed and still, there is no swagger or bluster in its voice ; but it blocks the railway, chokes the cutting, and stops the flying express. Snow is an anomalous union of feebleness and force, of peace and power, of innocence and invincibility, of unsleeping activity and apparent tranquillity, of nullity and ubiquity, of insignificance and strength.

The snow-scenes in the hidden valley are never the same two days together. Nature delights in varying her picturesque effects. She composes her effects in "black and white" in the spirit of caprice. To-day, steel-blue and sunny, the ground is just whitened with the tiniest pilules of snow, smaller and whiter and harder than the first bud of the hawthorn ; to-morrow comes a wild and withering "blizzard" from the west,

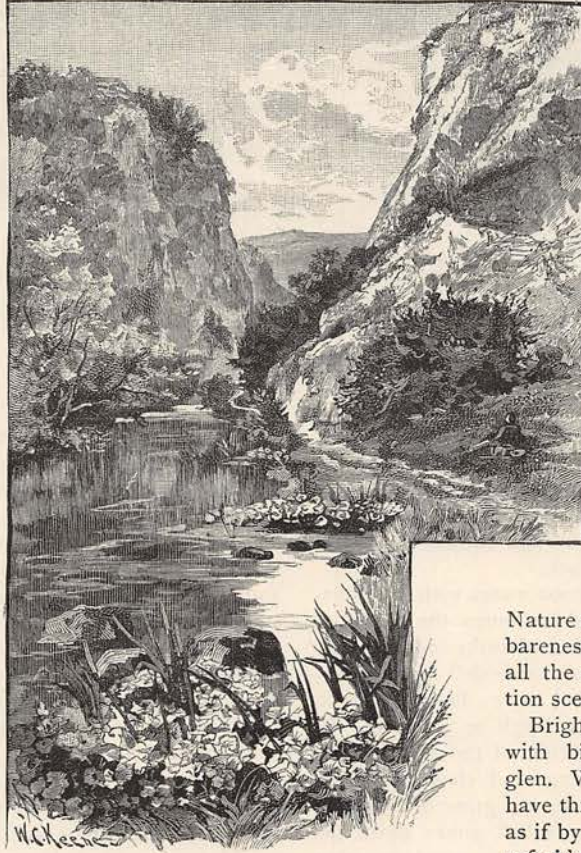
blanching bole and branch only on the exposed side, and leaving the other side black and bare, ebony against ivory—sending the snow in drifts, irregular and bulging, and never covering the ground openly and evenly; the next day the air is thick with snow as the wind drops, falling in thick heavy flakes that blot out everything in a whirl of blinding white. The ragged edges of the hills are rounded, and folds of snow rise from the valley in undulations of white.

Next to the snow, the hoar-frost presents the most fascinating pictures in the wintry landscape. It idealises everything. It paints its pictures on the window-panes of the keeper's isolated cottage in the valley. Delicate are the designs, tender is the tracery, lace-like the lines. There are architectural inspirations of spire and minaret, tower and dome, cathedral and castle. The flowers and fern-fronds and foliage might be the flora of a poet's dream. It is fairy-land on frozen glass. Finer than filagree, more fantastic than fretwork, every twig is crystallised; every tree is laden with rich ice-jewels, that glitter and glisten in the sparkling sun-burst like diamonds, whilst the prismatic icicles hang like gleaming spears on the limestone crags.

The river flows icily between the withered banks. It no longer laughs in its radiant course. It brawls. There is snow-broth on its swirling surface. In the little back waters, where the current is not swift, the water is frozen, and the little tributary water-threads are covered with a surface of thin transparent ice, under which the water is as restless as quicksilver. The chaffinch, despite the numbing cold, is taking his bath, and now, with a jovial note of "pink, pink," flies away to preen his plumage in some sheltered bush and brae. In the woods there is the crow of the cock-pheasant, his showy plumage shining against the black trunk of a tree. The myriads of rabbits that honeycomb the haunted valley have betrayed their footprints in the snow. A kestrel hangs sus-

ended upon poised wing over the scene, watching the movement of some starved field-mouse or a small bird below. The last of England's wild beasts—the badger—is still to be found in the valley. The moorhen paddles about amongst the frozen reeds and sedges, and occasionally dives under the chill surface. There is the "sceap, sceap" of a snipe, rising in zig-zag flight; but with the exception of the robin, the only wild birds that are active in the valley to-day

are the missel-thrush and the tom-tit. Stay! was not that weak little note the "tsit, tsit" of the golden-crested wren?



"THE FOLIAGE OF FULL SUMMER IN THE FERTILE VALLEY."

III.

SPRING in the enchanted valley, with white clouds sailing in a lambent, lapis-lazuli sky. The rigid and relentless winter was loth to leave, and tenaciously held the land, even in April, in its iron grip. Suddenly, however, came the warm south-west wind and the nourishing rain, and

Nature seemed changed from bleak bareness to an emerald-green with all the swiftness of a transformation scene.

Bright with flowers and blithe with bird-music is the beautiful glen. Woodland, heath, and hedge have thrown off their chrysalis case, as if by magic. All around are the soft, idyllic influences, the delicate sweetness, the passionate blossoming, the peaceful gladness, fair-hidden, yet full-confessed, trembling

and pure, of the English spring-time. All the wild flowers seem to have concentrated themselves in this narrow valley, and all the wild birds seem to have congregated their song. Violets hide among the old mossy stones; primroses star the tangled undergrowth in the wooded slopes above, where the lily of the valley, the purple orchid, the wild pansy, the wild strawberry, the blush-tinted anemone, the pink-varied wood sorrel, the cowslip, the celandine, the daffodil, and the curious cuckoo-pint run riot among the yet bronzed bracken and the uncurling scrolls of fern. The trees are tinted in every chord of green and gold and chrome and yellow. High above the winding roadway by the river are silent woodland paths among the rocks, that reveal perfect wastes of wild

flowers—vistas of forget-me-nots, speedwells, and wild hyacinths that cover the green undergrowth like patches of fallen sky. The gorse looks as if Midas had been flinging at random coins of gold over its prickly bushes. The bosoms of the blithe birds seem bursting with melody.

IV.

THE foliage of full summer in the fertile valley. The twilight glades of the wooded banks are now clothed with the rich panoply of July. The trees wear their richest liveries. The drowsy heat drives you to the margin of the river, that seems to send its current of crystal coolness through the tired brain to refresh the weary life. A liquid looking-glass, the water reflects the hanging greenery on its banks, save where the surface is hidden by water-lilies, the white stars of the flowers shining here and there among the broad green floating leaves. The water-ouzel, or "dipper," curtsying on a mossy rock, displays his white bib and tucker, and then dives into the river and disappears. A rat swims across the stream with a young one in its mouth. It is, no doubt, a mother teaching her offspring the art of natation. A kingfisher shoots like a blue arrow across a mimic cascade, wild and musical, as the water tumbles over the lichened boulders into a deep pool that mirrors the sky and the moving white clouds. The river is haunted with trout. It is a classic stream. Izaak Walton and Charles Cotton fished in its running waters more than two hundred years ago. But these fine speckled fish are full of endurance and daring, and defy the fly-fisherman. Local satire describes the trout and grayling of this valley as having passed the "sixth standard," and being able to tell at a glance from what Man-

chester or Liverpool fishing-tackle shops the gay flies and gossamer-like gut have been purchased. Instead of the angler decoying the trout, it is the trout that decoy the angler. The water is so pellucid that the fish have the sport, and not the fisherman. One "Judicious Hooker" has suggested that, in fishing this wide-awake little river, "a visible fly attached to an invisible hook, on an invisible line, should be thrown with an invisible rod by an invisible piscator." But, after all, fishing for the sake of filling your creel is only a secondary consideration. The river is the objective point that transports the rodster from the mercenary, struggling, unsympathetic world into the country, to be taught the lore which Nature brings. It is an excuse to get by the side of the soliloquising stream. It takes him from the sordid surroundings and poisoned air of the town into a land of green beauty, to the sound of wild songsters, and the smell of opening flowers; to the flow of the responsive river, the flash of the kingfisher, the flight of the swallow, the flutter of wings and leaves. For him is the music of merle and mavis, the perfume of meadow-sweet and snowy elder-tree, and the soothing wash-wash of the eloquent water.

While the waves splash pleasantly, and the wild birds build in the boughs by the river, and we "read Nature like the manuscript of Heaven, and call the flowers its poetry," you may listen to the mysterious talk of the Voices of the Valley. What is the vibrating refrain in the touching old German song that Madcap Violet so tenderly recalled?—

"Far away—in the beautiful meadows—is the house of my home. Many a time I went out from it into the valley—O you beautiful valley—I greet you a thousand times—Farewell—farewell!"

EDWARD BRADBURY.

SOMETHING MORE THAN A SYMPTOM.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



HERE is a scene from life, reader—from my own life, in fact. The time is eighteen hundred and fifty something, and I am standing in a row of about a dozen other not-too-happy urchins, being examined on the work of the week, for it is Saturday fore-

noon. The school is one of the best in the far north of Scotland, and the teacher is admitted by all parents to be a "tickler," for it is generally believed that the depths of his erudition are unfathomable. We boys consider him a "tickler," too, but one of a different sort. The words of wisdom, "Spare the rod and spoil the child," he construes in a painfully literal sense. The meaning he attaches to the verb "to live"—that is, as far as little boys are concerned—is "to be and

to do and to suffer," and he exemplifies it in the persons of his pupils every day in the week. He has a "pointer" to probe us in the ribs, a thin rattan cane for light work, and a piece of old bridle, with two fingers on it, to "pandé" us on the open palms—a dire and dreadful punishment in frosty weather, when the hands are blue with cold—and he has also his fist with which to box the ear. Let me take this opportunity of telling parents that boxing children on the ears has often led to deafness, and to disease of the brain, which has in time ended fatally.

You may guess how I loved that teacher! I used to long for some miracle of the Jack-and-Beanstalk order to take place. "Oh!" I used to think, "if some good fairy would come behind me, and touch me with her wand, so that I might grow up into a man with a sudden bound! I should not want to be a man for more than five minutes," I thought.