but I now wished that it had been much nearer. Since his wife's death, Sir Philip had shut himself up more than ever. Sometimes he did not appear from breakfast to dinner. It was useless for Gabrielle to offer to write letters for him, or to read to him. He simply did not want her help or sympathy. She was quite alone.

One morning in the autumn she came to me unexpectedly. Directly I saw her I felt certain that something was wrong. "What is it, Gabrielle?"

"Will you do me a great favour? Will your husband spare you? Grandpapa has arranged for me to go abroad with Mrs. Gorman for six months. Think what a long time! And he never asked me whether I wished to go or not. I have no choice. He says that he gave way to me in a matter of greater importance and that I must give way now. I am to start for London to-morrow. Cyril is at the Court. He will take me up to town. They have settled every detail. Will you come and help me pack?"

Of course I went. Sir Philip received me very politely. He was so talkative and cheerful, evidently rejoicing in Gabrielle's departure, that I determined, if I had an opportunity, to speak out and tell him all that I had in my heart.

My opportunity did come sooner than I had anticipated. Something was said in the course of conversation that was very disparaging to old Mr. Beechworth. Both Cyril and Sir Philip Tregaron were in favour of preserving very strictly, and they agreed in disapproving of their neighbour's "idiotic leniency" towards poachers. Gabrielle bore it in silence for a time, then she remonstrated with her cousin.

"You must remember, Cyril, that the Beechworths have always been good kind neighbours. Mr. Beechworth is immensely popular with his tenants, and it is hardly fair, is it, to abuse people behind their backs?"

"Perhaps," suggested Cyril, with a sneer, "*you* are hardly a fair judge of the merits of the Beechworth family?"

It was a great breach of good manners, especially as Gabrielle's engagement was not as yet fully sanctioned, and the whole affair was supposed to be a secret. She looked at him in stately disdain, vouchsafed him no reply, but walked into the adjoining room. Mr. Tregaron took up a book and began to read.

Sir Philip, who was sitting near me, had been a spectator of this little scene. "Gabrielle's temper does not improve with increasing years, Mrs. Evelegh," he observed.

"Mr. Tregaron did his best to provoke her—surely you heard that!"

"I should be sorry to contradict you, Mrs. Evelegh," said Sir Philip, with such provoking indifference that I gained courage to speak out.

I told him that he had always been unjust to Gabrielle; that if he would let her she would gladly be a loving grandchild to him; that even now, she was going abroad to please him, much against her will; that she was true and upright, and that it was cruel to treat her so harshly as he had done. I wound up by saying, "You have kept her at a distance ever since she was a little child, and you never give her a chance of showing her affection for you, and you *must* know how warm-hearted and tender she is!"

Sir Philip folded his hands and listened. Then he said, "I had no idea, Mrs. Evelegh, that you could be so violent a partisan."

Gabrielle went early the next morning. One of the maids had sat up during the greater part of the night sewing and packing her boxes. It was all I could do to pacify Blacker; she was so indignant that her young lady should be sent away unceremoniously at a moment's notice. "Just as if, Miss Nellie," she said, falling back on my old name in her excitement—"as if she was being got out of the way on purpose, and her grandpapa was glad to get rid of her!"

It was a cold, rainy day. Gabrielle showed no sign of weakness, but the lines round her mouth were hard, and she looked as if she had not slept. She was waiting on the doorstep while the gentlemen exchanged farewells. The walls of the house were covered with fine pointed ivy. She gathered a long spray and put it carefully in her travelling-bag—the old home was very dear to her.

"It is not very long to wait till April," I whispered. "Be brave, my darling!"

"God bless you, Nellie. You are dearer to me than any sister could have been!"

* * * *

A week after Gabrielle's departure, my husband lost his appointment as agent to the Veryan estate. No reason was given for his dismissal except that Sir Philip Tregaron wished to economise, and that for the future he would look after the property unassisted.

"It is all my fault!" I cried, when I had read the letter. But Walter would not suffer me to blame myself. He said that he was glad that I had spoken the truth. "I shall soon get another appointment, Nellie; and if not, we must manage without. We sha'n't have so much to spend, but the farm will support us. I am proud of my brave little wife!"

It was not difficult to be content with such a husband, was it? We were obliged to be careful, and Walter could not afford to buy the new horse that he wanted; but these things did not damp our spirits.

We heard very little of Veryan Court nowadays, for Walter would not allow me to go there. Blacker had been sent away; and report said that the old squire had grown more morose than ever. Sometimes he went up to London for a few days, sometimes Mr. Tregaron came to the Court, but the drawing-rooms and the western wing (where our old schoolroom was) were closed, and more than half the servants dismissed.

Gabrielle went to Paris and Vienna and Berlin. She went out a great deal (that was Sir Philip's wish); perhaps that was the reason that she gradually left off writing long letters. Now and then I received a few hasty lines begging for news. She never complained, and I tried to believe that she was well and happy After Christmas she and Mrs. Gorman went to Italy, where they lived in hotels, and saw a great many English people.

Gabrielle did not mention Harry Beechworth's name, but I often wondered how he bore the long separation. Of one thing I was certain—that he would come and claim her on her twenty-first birthday!

(*To be concluded.*)

INVALID AMUSEMENTS.

SOFA-GARDENING.

WHO is there that is not possessed of a basket, or a basin, or a box? And if you have them, or can get them, and have a taste for fresh greenery, you have within your reach a fund of interest and occupation within the compass of the very weakest invalid. Should you wish to try your hand at *very* miniature landscape gardening, and find yourself possessed of the aforesaid articles, or can obtain them, then see if you can procure a hand-glass and an old tea-tray, for thereby your landed estate will be vastly extended, and its capabilities also of additional interest; for now you can grow rock and bog plants, ferns, bulbs, etc., not forgetting the pretty little miniature hyacinths and tulips.

Now are you fortunate enough to have any country cousins—able-bodied creatures, active, and with eyes, who would now and then send you a box of moss, and trails of ivy and twigs with just opening buds? Yes. Then, let me tell you, you are rich indeed. Now to proceed to business, for I know what I am talking about, having practised these precepts for years, though mercifully not as an invalid, but solely for the love of having something growing—not in a pot, nor belonging to any earthly thing but myself, a domain in which I can landscape-garden to heart's content, and change the scene as often as I please, with no gardener looming in the background to complain of me. We will presume that you possess, or can obtain, an old, say strawberry-basket, or a box, and a basin—say a discarded wash-hand, or round yellow or brown larder basin (brown is best), and an old tray—if they can have a table to themselves near your sofa so much the better: and a hand-glass large enough to cover the basin would, by keeping the dust away from the plants, and the atmosphere a little moist, add considerably to the success of your undertaking. Now get some charcoal, or charred wood, and with scraps of broken china, or clean stones, or clinkers, pile up a foundation for your basket to stand on. Having all in order, write to your friends in the country to send you pieces of good moss off stone walls, with soil attached (as a mat); also bits of red twigs out of the hedges, flowers, particularly daisies or marsh plants. Get a few bulbs of small plants, or any low-growing thing; put some moss on its face downward at the bottom of the basket; the least green piece will do. Now, if you have bought the bulbs in a pot, turn out as many as you require into the basket, arranging them according to taste, and if possible plant a few ferns or green things through them. Press the earth well to the roots, and set it aside. Now look out some small medicine bottles (vials), and see how you can arrange them round the basin without their standing too high, but the necks must be easily "getatable," in order to re-fill with water when necessary. It is a good plan to get small zinc tubes to fit them. Place these in the places where the bottles are to go. These prevent the earth from rolling in when they are removed, by keeping the space open. Now fill up the space between the basin and the stones with earth, putting a little charcoal at the bottom, and then sand (if you have it), and then earth; if you have none, fill up with charred wood alone, so as to prop the zinc tubes which hold the bottles. Finally, place the basket on the top, and see that it stands steady. You will now have two stages. Now stand the basin on the tray, and in the place it is to remain; take the hand-glass and see what circumference it covers, and arrange the inside circumference so as to hide the basin's

edge. Place stones and moss, ivy and bulbs, etc., and some bottles, if there is height enough. Now survey your garden from an artistic point of view, and having filled the bottles with water, stick in bits of flowers, or twigs, or ivy, as you see the shades or forms harmonise. All the surface is now to be covered with the moss and *well* watered, to make all damp. The water should be a little warm, so as not to chill the plants. The bulbs do better planted in groups not fewer than three, and will do quite well even in water alone; but in that case it is sometimes necessary to pour off the extra water from the basin and add a little *weak* solution of Condy, in order to sweeten everything again. However, if all decayed scraps are carefully removed at the first, there seldom is any scent. Should your plants get thin and pale, a little "Flora Vitiæ," to be had from any seed shop, or from Sutton's, at Reading, will generally pick them up, and leave no smell.

Should you at the first start be disappointed with the general effect of your gardening, do not be depressed. The plants hardly ever at first "set" well. That will mend itself from day to day, and every day you will find something to do or admire, or have a fresh idea causing some alteration or improvement to be effected; and in this will lie your enjoyment, for there will hardly be a day in which you will not discover something to occupy and interest you, particularly if your friends take an interest in it also, and bring you scraps of plants. The writer used to put in hers any unknown caterpillars, placing a few twigs of what it fed on into one of the bottles, and in this way hatched all kinds of entomological treasures; for a butterfly, or a moth, or a lizard is as great an addition to the plant case as the living creatures were to the newly-created world in the days of its youth; and one can arrange the basin as a pond for the lizards' benefit. However, should you keep one, see the glass keeps him at home, as the race are fond of travelling at some seasons of the year, and your friend may go miles away from home, happening to turn up in the most unexpected places at the most inopportune time, causing scenes amusing enough to recount, but disastrous to the contents of, say, an afternoon tea-tray, and most trying to the temper of—somebody. Also, great care must be taken not to overstock the domain, for lizards must eat, and breathe, and walk; though in a good-sized globe—say fourteen inches in circumference—there will be air enough, as a rule, for one or two, if it is not pressed down close.

J. L. Hope Johnstone.

A GREY DAWNING.

By ALICE LOCKWOOD KIPLING.

CHAPTER V.

The years passed tranquilly and uneventfully, and nothing was changed in the doctor's house except Venetia herself, as on the morning of her fifteenth birthday she stood before the cracked mirror, gazing intently upon her own reflection, with eyes that would fain have pierced the veil by which the coming years were hidden. There was nothing in her life to keep her young or make her joyous. Her uncle grew colder and sterner in his manner as he grew older, and Mrs. Piggott, in spite of a real affection for the girl, was yearly more exacting, and less able to sympathise with the sensitive, imaginative nature which formed its greatest enjoyment in a world of its own creation.

Not that Venetia had grown morbid or melancholy. She retained her childish brightness of manner, and if her merry laugh was heard less rarely, it was not that her natural love of mirth had diminished, but that as she grew out of childhood she found fewer occasions for mirth in her narrow surroundings than she had done in the days when the gambols of a puppy or the tricks of a kitten sufficed to provoke it.

For four years she had taken care to remind Mrs. Piggott betimes of the approach of the important date, and the good woman had celebrated it by the preparation of a birthday cake of yearly increasing dimensions, on the sugary crust of which a rose-coloured inscription, cunningly wrought in sugar also, set forth the date and number of the little maiden's years. This year, however, Venetia had refrained from any mention of the approaching birthday, and Mrs. Piggott had evidently forgotten it, for no cake had been made.

It was not easy to reconcile the fact that she had purposely avoided any reference to the day because she felt as though the baking of a birthday cake was a childish proceeding for which she was now too old, with the pang of disappointment which she experienced as she realised that no one but herself knew or cared that on this day she was fifteen years old. Even a cake, she thought, now that it was too late, would have been better than no recognition at all; and she wondered if in the distant world to which her mother had withdrawn herself, any instinct would awaken to remind her that this June day was the anniversary of her daughter's birth.

Not a word had come from Lucile during the last five years; but the hope of a meeting which the child had originally held had grown with her growth, and was now as strong and vital as her very existence. The talismanic patchwork quilt had grown too, and assumed really handsome proportions, though, as Mrs. Piggott did not fail to remind her from time to time, "being half finished was a long way from being all done." Venetia, however, refused to be discouraged, and protested that "some day the quilt would be finished," adding inwardly, "and some day I shall give it to my mother."

She could see its reflection in the mirror that birthday morning, for she had spread it out the better to admire and appreciate its rate of progress. It had in her eyes a value far beyond its actual worth, for to her it represented the hope of her life; and though anyone might see and appreciate the dainty stitching that joined the mosaic of the pattern, she alone knew how richly it was overlaid with fancies and imaginings which sprang like delicate flowers from the sweet summer of her loving heart.

She made a calculation. It was four years since she had begun the work, the completion of which she had persuaded herself would be signalised and glorified by her mother's return; and it was now about half done. In another four years then she should have finished it, or in five at most, so that when she was twenty, perhaps on her twentieth birthday, she would be able to give it to this new-found mother.

She turned from the shadow to the substance as this thought lightened her heart and brightened her eyes, and kissing the brilliant fabric, she carefully folded it up and laid it aside.

Then she went downstairs and out into the summer garden, where the sunshine and the dew fought afresh their old battle over bud and leaf; and forgetful alike of the importance of the day and the absence of the accustomed cake, she gathered a handful of flowers and laid them carefully in the skirt of her dress, a fold of which she had thrown over her left arm to form a convenient pocket. She gathered flowers now whenever she cared to do so, for in this old-fashioned garden they bloomed in lavish abundance, and each day's growth repaired the losses of the day before.

It pleased her to put a spray of blossom or a half-opened rose-bud in a little glass before the miniature of the young grandmother which was still a highly-prized possession; and though her uncle had contemptuously ordered off the breakfast table a little vaseful she had once ventured to place there, he had taken no notice of her nosegays in other parts of the room, so that it had become almost a habit on fine mornings like this one to return from her stroll in the garden with flowers heaped up in the folds of her dress. Her young spirits, which had been depressed by the memories and hopes which had, by turns, occupied her mind a short time before, rose even higher than their ordinary level as she felt the sunshine and enjoyed the perfume of the flowers. She flung a mocking echo to a blithe bird that whistled on a rose bush, and