

HOW TWO SISTERS LIVE IN THE COUNTRY ON A POUND A WEEK.

By BARBARA MARSH.

CHAPTER I.

"God made the country, man made the town."



MARK my words, Bab, you won't be able to do it. Live on a pound a week! The two of you! It is an impossibility!"

This was what my cousin Camilla said, when she came to see us and hear what our plans for the future were; but then, Camilla had

extravagant ideas, and life would have been a misery to her with any income which had not three ciphers after the first figure.

"I quite agree that we could not live on such a sum in London, or in any town," was my reply; "but as I have told you, we mean to live in the country where it will be easy to economise."

"And be buried alive. I know what that will be; just fancy—you and Lois in a two-roomed white-washed cottage, living on bread and potatoes, doing your own work, seeing nobody, going to no concerts, having no amusements, but a little goody-goody work now and then perhaps under a prosy old parson. No, I can't fancy it. Better die at once, Bab, and let me pay for the funeral."

"Thank you, Camilla, you are very kind, but we won't put you to such an expense; besides, you have not given my idea of the sort of life we shall have to lead, either as regards the cottage or the menu; while as to friends and amusements, we hope to get both. You shall be the first visitor we put up, at the earliest date possible for results to show themselves, and the first meal you swallow under our rustic roof-tree shall consist of your own words."

"Now I call that a handsome offer," laughed my cousin; "but it strikes me I shall have to get my gowns taken in before I come down to see you, in anticipation of growing thin on the diet you propose. What does Lois say to all these arrangements?"

"We are of one mind about them, and, Camilla, I do hope you will not try to prejudice her mind by any of your alarmist fancies; for, to be serious and practical—as matters stand, there is no alternative left to us but to make the attempt, or for each of us to get some kind of situation and be separated. That course we have quite decided against. We would rather live in seclusion and poverty than that. But—" I added, as cheerfully as possible—"we shall not reckon ourselves poor, and we mean to lead a very happy life in our forced retirement."

"Quite idyllic, I have no doubt," cried the unconvinced Camilla. "Who was it said,

"They love the country and none else, who seek

For its own sake its silence and its shade."

But that is not me, my dear. Well, good-bye, Bab; my blessing go with you both, if it is of

any value. You may depend upon my sacrificing myself at the shrine of cousinship when the right time comes; meanwhile, I return to the enjoyment of the vain world which claims me for its own. Tell Lois I was very sorry not to see her before I left. By the bye, how will that little affair progress?"

"That little affair, as you delicately designate it, is necessarily over; please do not allude to it at all, Camilla," was my reply, given in such a tone that my irrepressible cousin deemed it discreet to ask no more questions. She placed a finger to her lips with a nod and a knowing look, kissed me affectionately, and took her departure.

Two years ago this was, and we have not seen her since, till a month ago, when she redeemed her promise of paying us a visit in our country retreat.

Her lot having fallen among the rich of this world, she had been pleasantly touring about with her father and brothers—restless men, who, weary of their own home and country, sought distractions in travel, and roamed the world over after change.

Meanwhile, we two had made our home, and have been as happy, comfortable, and contented as we had made up our minds to be. It was seeing and hearing from us, of the success of our scheme that astounded and struck Camilla. She was convinced but not converted.

"It may do very well for you, and for all circumstanced as you are," said she. "I believe you are right, and if I were you, I would write an account of how you manage to live on a pound a week, for I have no doubt there are plenty of poor gentlemen who would be glad to profit by your experience, and take wing towards some such nest as this. But please remember, I am not one of them. The town for me, the town for me."

It was after an interesting discussion with Lois upon the subject that I resolved to act upon Camilla's suggestion, and these short papers are the result of it. I hope they may serve the end for which they are intended.

CHAPTER II.

My sister and I have a fixed income of one pound a week, derived from the wreck of our fortunes, when affairs were settled after our father's death. How to make this sum go farthest, and where to make the experiment, was a matter for earnest thought and careful consideration. Our friends would have had us rent two rooms in London, that we might not—as they said—live quite out of the world. Probably they had not given a thought to the practicability of their advice, but the search after a suitable place, and all the enquiries we made with the object of finding out how to eke out the weekly expenditure to the best advantage, tended to convince us of the impossibility.

We turned away in disgust from the airless streets and small stuffy houses; our hearts sank at the prospect of living from day to day in a quarter that could be nothing less than a nest of lodging-houses, while the poverty we were reduced to seemed likely to assume hideous proportions when we reckoned up the various items that would have to enter into the accounts.

Health, too, was another important consideration. Lois was not strong; the doctor had always said, "You must breathe fresh air, and keep out of foggy atmospheres." How was that to be done in London? Above all, in an obscure and dingy suburb, for the scanti-

ness of our purses necessarily limited our researches to such neighbourhoods.

"It won't do," said Lois, in despair, and almost reduced to tears. "It is just horrid; and who would ever come to see us in such places as we have seen?"

"No, it won't do," I agreed. "We cannot stand six shillings a room. Why, when twelve shillings are deducted for rent, what is there left for everything else, dress included? Lois, we must turn our faces to the country, and seek some modest little home far away from this busy Babylon. Let us try; we must make up our minds to what would seem banishment to Camilla; luckily, we possess different temperaments to hers. We should breathe pure, fresh air, at any rate, and the poverty that grinds so hard in a town, would, I am persuaded, be almost unfelt where its shifts were unseen."

"Besides," added Lois, plucking up heart, "we might have a garden, and grow our own vegetables, and keep pigs and poultry like the cottagers do. There must be many of them who do not earn so much as a pound a week."

"True, but the lives they lead are so different. We will stop short of the pigs and poultry; at any rate, at first," I said, laughing. "And now that is settled, we will set to work at once to find what we want."

"My mind feels relieved of a heavy load, and I am quite looking forward to the charms of such a life as we might lead," cried my sister in more light-hearted tones than she had used of late.

The next thing was how to discover such a cottage as we had pictured to ourselves, and we wrote to several country agents, but without any good result. One day, however, it so happened that after a useless excursion made to a village about thirty miles from town, in order to view a cottage we had heard of, but which turned out to have had its rent raised in consequence of repairs and improvements, we were told at the village shop where we spoke of our requirements, that there was a little house which might suit us, if not too small and unpretentious, about a mile and a half from there. It consisted of four rooms, had a good-sized garden, and was to be let at three shillings a week. We looked at each other, but fearful of appearing eager, quietly asked if we could look at it.

"To be sure you can," said our informant. "It is empty, for Master Shaw went out of it last week, and it isn't promised to any one yet, for there's been no one after it, and I am the landlord. It's like to be dirty, ma'am; but you can look at it if you like."

We said we should, and as he could not leave the shop himself, gave us the key, and sent a little boy to show the way.

The urchin took us some short cuts across dewy meadows, through which meandered a narrow stream. Cattle were grazing in them, and their sweet milky breath was wafted to us as we passed. We emerged over a stile on to the main road, which was hilly, and much wooded on its upper bank. We asked if this were the high road to the village.

"Yes," said the boy; "she goes to the village and out on to the common up yonder."

"Are we far from the place we have come to see?"

"No, we're close there; you can see it now; that be Master Shaw's old cottage with the hill at back of it, and that little oak wood by the side which stretches as far as the common."

We looked eagerly in the direction indicated, and saw a cottage nestling on the slope

of the hill, in the midst of what was in our eyes quite a large garden enclosed by a rather rough hedge, through which a rustic gate opened on to a path that led up to the cottage door.

It was quite a small white-washed place with a couple of small lattice windows close under the roof, and two larger ones each side of the door, over which there was a rustic porch covered with a luxuriant honeysuckle not then in bloom, for it was early in the year. The floor of the porch was neatly paved with brick, and there was a rustic bench on each side of it.

We entered and explored the cottage, which did not take long, it being so small. On the right side of the entry was a brick-floored kitchen with a strip partitioned off at the back to form a pantry. On the left was another room having a large cupboard under the stairs, which went straight up in a short steep flight about three feet from the front door. This room had a wooden floor, and had, we imagined, been used as a bedroom. Upstairs were two rooms of the same size with very low ceilings sloping down to the walls. The cottage, we could see, had its possibilities, and if the village landlord would do a little in the way of white-washing and replacing of new boards for rotten ones, and attending to the condition of the weather-worn tiles on the roof, we felt that the place was made for our needs. We then took a turn all

round the exterior of the premises and found there was a waterbutt at the back, a tumble-down old woodshed in a top corner of the garden, and a picturesque well overshadowed by a gnarled old apple-tree. There was quite a large patch of ground sloping upwards; and the whole space, which might cover rather more than a quarter of an acre, was surrounded by a ragged hedge in which we counted five or six plum and damson trees. There were three apple trees besides the venerable one overhanging the well, and a few stunted ones near the road, which the boy, who sat waiting our pleasure on an old stump, declared to be sweets, and he evidently thought rather meanly of our want of knowledge when we asked what kind of apples those were.

"You makes cider out of 'em; they be'n't good for nought else," he explained, and we felt we had learned something.

Lois then discovered that a pear tree was growing against the end wall of the cottage, and at this we exclaimed as delightedly as a couple of children would have done. Of bush fruit trees such as currant and gooseberry there seemed no lack, for the path up to the door was lined with them, and they were also scattered irregularly along the grass-grown path that skirted round the hedge at the rear.

"Mister Shaw, he paid his rent a'most out of the fruit he sold," remarked our young friend, when he heard us making pleased comments on the show of blossom that was

appearing on the trees, and this gratuitous information had a satisfactory sound in our ears.

Our inspection being at an end, we took a last look in the kitchen.

"I made sure we should find an old-fashioned open fireplace with cosy chimney corners in here," said Lois regretfully, "and behold, there is only a common cottage stove."

"I am not sorry for that," replied I. "We might have found the other troublesome to manage, and see—there is a capital oven."

Locking up the cottage again, we took another lingering affectionate look at it and returned to the village shop, where we entered into particulars with the landlord, whom we found very amenable to reason. He seemed pleased that his cottage should have ladies for tenants, and agreed to do all we asked, which was not much after all, and we agreed to take it on his terms and enter into possession as soon as it was ready for us.

The deed was done, our home fixed upon, and the future lay before us to do the best we could with.

We both felt hopeful and pleased as we talked it over, and were brimful of plans, as we pictured, on our return journey to town, what our simple country life there might be.

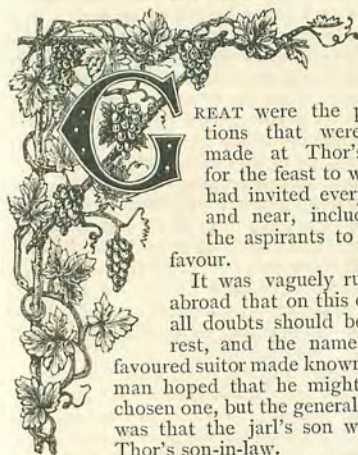
"It is Camilla's white-washed cottage, after all," said Lois laughing.

"So it is," I replied, "but we will hope for something more than bread and potatoes."

(To be continued.)

SIGRID.

CHAPTER II.



REAT were the preparations that were being made at Thor's gaard for the feast to which he had invited everyone far and near, including all the aspirants to Sigrid's favour.

It was vaguely rumoured abroad that on this occasion all doubts should be set at rest, and the name of the favoured suitor made known. Each man hoped that he might be the chosen one, but the general opinion was that the jarl's son would be Thor's son-in-law.

At last the eventful day dawned with auspicious brightness, and from an early hour all was stir and bustle in the house; long tables were laid down the spacious hall, and these not giving room enough for all the guests, the doors at the end of the hall were opened wide and the row of tables continued out into the open air.

At the appointed hour Thor Bonde took his place at the head of the hospitable board, which was laden with good things and ornamented by silver cups and flagons, whilst the walls were hung with handsome skins and rugs, and everything in the hall bore testimony to the wealth of its owner. Thor's simple white woollen garments contrasted very strikingly with the festive array of some of the guests, conspicuous amongst whom was the jarl's son in his scarlet robes adorned with golden chains and armlets. He sat at Thor's right hand, and the old man's piercing eyes shone with excitement and gratified ambition as they fell on his honoured guest's outward

signs of rank and wealth, which were however ill-suited to his naturally insignificant and plain cast of features.

Amidst mirth and revelry the feast was carried on, and it was not until the keenest appetites were more than satisfied, and the tankards had been rapidly emptied and as rapidly refilled, that Thor rose to speak. Every one turned his anxious gaze on the old man as he stood before them in all the strength and vigour of his gigantic form, his eyes sparkling with almost youthful vivacity.

"My friends," he said, "you all know how many have wished to wed my only child, Sigrid; but as only one can be successful in this matter, I have had many an anxious moment trying to decide who should be the chosen one. But the task was too much for an old man to undertake, and I have at last resolved to leave the decision to Sigrid herself. It is fair that in a matter which concerns her life-long happiness she should have a voice. I have therefore summoned her to appear and make her choice; and I call upon you all to listen and bear witness that in your presence I have sworn, that to whomsoever Sigrid shall give her hand saying, 'This is my chosen husband,' him shall she wed and no other. I have spoken."

There was a moment's silence when Thor ceased speaking, speedily broken by a noisy burst of applause and satisfaction, for each of the numerous suitors thought that whatever his chances with the father might have been, with the beautiful daughter he was sure of success, and each one seemed to hear those longed-for words which should pronounce him the chosen husband of the loveliest heiress in the land.

The uproar and mirthful din was at its very height when a door at the head of the hall was opened, and Sigrid, followed by some of her maidens, appeared in the doorway.

As if by magic, the tumult subsided and perfect and utter stillness and silence fell on the assembled guests, over whom a thrill of

breathless excitement passed. Every eye was eagerly turned on the beautiful girl who, with downcast eyes and heightened colour, stood motionless before them.

After a moment's hesitation she approached her father, and seizing his hand in hers kissed it passionately, then raising her eyes she glanced rapidly down the rows of guests, who, moved by the same impulse, had risen from their seats as an involuntary act of homage to Sigrid's youth and beauty.

The jarl's son gazed at her with admiration and approval, and his effeminately white hand was stretched confidently out to meet that of Sigrid, whom he, as well as Thor, considered as already his. But the girl's small hand hung motionless by her side, as without a look in his direction she moved on, her light firm step and the rustling of her blue silken robes on the sanded floor being the only sounds heard in that preternaturally silent hall.

Her colour came and went, and her eyes were never raised from the ground, as she passed down the room, and many of the guests, as well as Thor himself, thought she meant to leave the hall without announcing her decision.

But at the far end of the table, where the guests of least distinction were placed, Sigrid suddenly paused, and taking Asmund's hand in her trembling grasp, she spoke in a very low tone, which yet was perfectly audible through every corner of the hall, these words, "I, Sigrid, do now solemnly declare that I choose thee, Asmund, to be my wedded husband."

As the sound of her sweet clear voice died away there was a momentary hush of utter amazement and bewilderment, and then arose a din of angry voices and every hand grasped an axe or a dagger, as all rushed fiercely towards the lovers, who stood utterly regardless of the angry tumult.

Thor Bonde rose speechless with fury, and forcing his way through the clamorous crowd, he flung aside every obstacle in his path,

"Did He speak out of the picture?" asked Leslie in surprise.

"Oh, no; only the picture set me thinking, you see. It's the words under it that made me know I should go to heaven. See them? You'll go too, if you believe in them. Wasn't it a splendid thing that you should let me know I should have everlasting life!"

"Then it is like Moses in the wilderness, as the gentleman in the street said!" Leslie said, looking bewildered.

"I tell you what, Leslie," said Herbert,

with sudden energy. "You go down and get that large Bible with the pictures in it, and you shall show me Moses, and we'll go through the others together and learn all about it. I daresay there'll be some about Jesus Christ dying and being buried, and his friends being told by the two angels in shining garments that He was alive again, like Dr. Westwood read to us; and I'll read it all to you, shall I? But first, somehow, I should like to teach you those words under the picture, so that you can say them every night before you sleep, and

never forget them. Will you learn them? Listen—"

And little Leslie, running eagerly from the room to fetch his favourite book and exhibit Moses and the snakes at last to an appreciative companion, came gladly back for a moment to kneel on Herbert's bed, and spell out the beautiful words that his brother pronounced so reverently and thankfully:—"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." C. C. Y.

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By BARBARA MARSH.

CHAPTER III.



WE had sufficient saved out of the sale of our furniture to make Honey-suckle Cottage, as we called our little home, very comfortable and pretty. One can effect so much with refinement and taste to make the humblest home look charming.

We were also enabled to give the garden a good start, and to purchase all the necessary implements for its cultivation with some of the proceeds from the sale, without encroaching at all upon the sum from which we had to draw for our weekly expenditure, and we soon had the satisfaction of seeing the domain

around our dwelling look in apple-pie order, well stocked with seeds or plants of everything we thought we should require, while the fruit-trees all in blossom made the garden, both back and front, a perfect bower of pink and white.

Once fairly installed, and it did not take us long to get in order, we prepared to settle down, and made out our plan of campaign forthwith.

Our rent we had arranged to pay half-yearly; but the money for it was put by every week. Thus we had 17s. clear for all other purposes. It was very plain to us that we must do the household work ourselves, and not that only, but we must also turn to diligently and become the cultivators of our own plot of ground.

Lois looked at her pretty white hands. "What," said she—"wash, scrub, and dig? My dear Barbara, what would Camilla say to that!"

"She would probably faint with dismay; but I do not exactly propose that we should wash and scrub," said I. "We could afford to have a woman in to do that for us. I was asking about it in the village this morning, and find that the man Rose who did the garden lives with his sister in one of those cottages close by on the common; she is just the sort of person we want—very quiet and respectable. Her charge is 1s. 6d. a day, so if we have her two mornings during the week—once to do our washing, and once to do the hard and dirty work we do not care to put our own hands to—that would not be extravagant. Make a note of that, Lois. What have we left?"

"Just 15s. 6d.," said she. "But should we have to provide her with dinner?"

This I had not calculated upon; we both hoped not, and subsequently found that Miss Rose, who has come in "to oblige" ever since, had to be at home for the midday meal, which her brother came from his work to partake of.

It was quite clear that we must make up our minds to do everything else, both indoors and out.

"Well, then, Bab, you must be plain cook and I will be house and parlour-maid, while the garden will provide us with fancy work."

"Healthy work too," added I. "How thankful we ought to feel that we have the strength to do it. Now, look here, I have made a list of what I consider we shall require for our weekly housekeeping. I do not think I have forgotten anything, and the total amounts to 10s. 3d. It seems very little, but we shall have to make it do. You see I have only put down 3s. for meat, well, we can't afford meat dinners always, so I propose that on alternate days we content ourselves with —"

"Bread and potatoes?" laughed Lois.

"Well, vegetables and pudding, or, perhaps, we may indulge in eggs or a bit of bacon. An occasional vegetarian diet is exceedingly wholesome. Besides, you know, the families of cottagers living on 18s. or 20s. a week rarely touch meat except on Sundays. I believe cheese and bacon form their staple diet, and they are for the most part strong and healthy enough, so if they can go without meat, I presume we can sometimes."

"I suppose so," agreed Lois; "but," she added doubtfully, "you don't propose to put cheese on the table for every meal like they do?"

"Not exactly. Don't you see I have left it out of the list altogether? We neither of us care about it, so there is no need for our refined tastes to suffer. As to what we shall drink, the water from our own well sparkles like champagne; it is all we can desire. Some day, perhaps, we will make our own wines—rhubarb, cider, or currant—quite strong enough for feminine palates. Look at my list, and see what you think of it, Lois."

My sister complied, and said she thought it reasonable.

Then arose the question of fuel. Wood was cheap; coal dear. We found we consumed about three pennyworth of faggot-wood a week. We decided to do without coal altogether, for experience had taught us that we could economise greatly by burning coke. Servants object to using this because of the trouble it involves in breaking; but being our own managers with respect to the kitchen fire, we find coke answer all culinary purposes, and when broken small and mixed with cinders, it makes a hot and brilliant fire.

We calculated therefore that at 12s. a chaldron

we should consume for cooking purposes at the rate of 1s. 6d. worth a week during those months of the year when only a kitchen fire was needed. This we should let out in the afternoon, and boil our water for tea either over wood or on a small oil stove with which we had provided ourselves.

For the winter we intended to lay by 1s. a week in order to purchase a load of cord-wood, which we learned could be done for 7s. 1d.

Then came the matter of dress—not such a weighty one as it would have been in a town, where you must make more of an appearance, and keep closer to the too frequent changes of fashion, thus incurring far more expense. We felt that where we had elected to live, we need not be too particular about our costume, because we should be just as happy in last season's fashions without the too frequent criticisms of our neighbours; and this was well, for we found we could reserve no more than 2s. a week for clothes. This amounted to a total of 5s. 4s. a year between us—a startlingly small figure; but we had to congratulate ourselves that we should get at least one new gown a year, for which our dressmaking contrivances would be brought into requisition. Thus we calculated that we should have 7s. 1d. each in hand out of the allotted dress money with which to provide other necessities for the wardrobe.

The sum of 1s. 6d. still stood to the good for any sundries the week's housekeeping might require, including an occasional letter or newspaper to keep ourselves in the memory of friends, and in touch with what was going on in the busy world outside us. We resolved, however, to keep as strictly within the limits of the amounts we had set down as possible, and to keep a little box for what savings we could manage, so as to provide for any emergency that might arise.

As to a doctor—well, if we had been living in a town, the probabilities are that its atmospheric conditions would have necessitated provision for medical attendance. As it was, we hoped and prayed to be able to dispense with it.

"The garden," said I, "ought to pay for itself. We have stocked it and found out what that costs. A bushel of seed potatoes is ample to provide us with that necessary vegetable till the time comes round for another planting. Then peas, beans, and other seeds make the total 5s. 6d., while for three loads of dressing we have paid 18s., and half that to a man for digging it in. So far, then, our garden has cost us 7s. 12s. 6d., and I think it need cost us no more till it requires dressing again. We shall do all the rest, and enjoy it."

"And when that time comes?" said Lois.

"When that time comes," answered I, "we shall, I hope, have reaped sufficient profit from the sale of our surplus fruit and vegetables to enable us to pay for all the ground requires."

Master Shaw, remember, paid the rent out of his garden produce; and if he could find a market, why not we? There will be plenty for our own consumption to make our table bountiful, I hope."

CHAPTER IV.

LET me now describe our retreat as it was when Camilla came to see us a month ago. The honeysuckle over the porch was fully out, and filling the air with its subtle fragrance. We had plenty of old-fashioned flowers under our windows, that always stood wide open to admit not only the sweet scents from our little *parterre*, but also the delicious aroma of Nature's incense, that floated all about us from woods, and fields, and heathery common.

We introduced our fashionable cousin to our various vegetable borders—not forgetting the odorous onion-bed—and gave her quite a learned dissertation upon the capabilities of the soil, its produce, and the labour and management it required.

"You see," said Lois wisely, "we feed it well. We have found the ground and the plants require as much attention as a nursery full of children. If you want them to grow and be healthy, you must feed them properly, and never stint. So it is with the garden, which seems always hungry; so we fill it at right times, and it rewards us as you see."

Camilla laughed heartily at the mixture of vegetables and flowers that grew in such rich profusion in close proximity. There were wall-flowers and lilies rearing their heads as neighbours to the onions, rose-bushes rubbed against cabbages, and the evening primrose stood sentinel-wise side by side with the tall artichoke.

"Anyone may see that this is a woman's garden," exclaimed she; "it is all so deliciously quaint and out of rule. I wonder what our head gardener would say if he saw it!"

"I don't care in the least!" broke out Lois hotly. "We judge by results; and if they are good, what more do you want?"

Camilla put up her long-handled eyeglass and looked my sister comically up and down.

"I think you are changed, Lois," said she. "You used to be so pensive—not to say languid. Whence this energy, my dear? Your cheeks were lilies, now they are roses, and your eyes are brighter and clearer than I ever remember them."

Lois laughed good-naturedly.

"Then I am a living testimony to the advantages of living in the country—of breathing pure, sweet air, of rising early, of having my days full of useful work and rare enjoyment. Camilla, I am happy and contented."

"You are aiming a few shots at poor me, I suppose," said our cousin; "but they have passed harmlessly by. I grant that your life here seems one long tonic; but what suits you would not suit me. I should die of *ennui*! No amusements, no theatres, no concerts, no friends—"

She would have proceeded with the melancholy list if I had not drawn her to our favourite rustic seat, saying: "Let us sit here awhile and listen, Camilla."

"To what?" asked she; but I made a token of silence, and she leaned back submissively and closed her eyes.

We were protected from the north and east winds by the hill and woods that sloped away right and left of us. In front, below the road, the fields of grass, and corn, and clover

stretched away in varied tones of greens, and greys, and purple, over which the summer clouds swept shadows in endless succession. A gentle breeze fanned our faces, overhead carolled the larks, in the woods uprose the daily concert to which its feathered songsters treated us, unpaid and ungrudging, while every now and then the soft coo-cooing of the pigeons broke through the harmony without marring it.

"This is very sweet and soothing," remarked Camilla, at length; "in fact, the sounds and scents all around make me feel quite dreamy."

"Pastoral images and still retreats,
Umbrageous walks and solitary seats,
Sweet birds in concert with harmonious streams,
Soft airs, nocturnal vigils, and gay dreams
Are all enchantment,"

quoted I.

"Then, to be practical, in comparing the respective merits of town and country life, you reckon that what you gain by your life here, balances against what you have lost by leaving the great world?" asked Camilla.

"No," replied I; "the accounts do not balance. The charms and advantages of sylvan life and sylvan economy outweigh every other consideration."

"What—that of social intercourse as well, Bab? Are you not cut off by the kind of existence you have chosen from the society of your equals?"

"Of course we have not the same opportunities for forming friendships, neither can we afford the time or spare the means for cultivating acquaintances promiscuously; but we have friends—have we not, Lois? The country is not over-populated with gentle-folks hereabouts, and we only know, and care to know, those who think us worth the trouble of visiting. In that limited list we number the old rector and his wife, with whom we are always welcome, and who think it no condescension to come and drink tea at Honey-suckle Cottage. There are one or two other nice people besides who do not turn up their noses at us, and there are a few who do; but we can well afford to dispense with the—honour, shall I say?—of their acquaintance. Our poverty makes us proud, I dare say, but I don't think it is a pride that does us harm, because it partakes largely of the nature of self-respect."

Camilla nodded as if she approved; and Lois here took up the thread I had dropped.

"We have no reason to complain of dulness," said she, "for we find plenty of human interests outside our little domain, though our friends' houses do not stand shoulder-to-shoulder, neither are there any elbowing crowds in the lanes. We have a share of parish work to attend to which we find quite to our taste, and we have plenty of humble friends worth seeking out and cultivating; for, I assure you, Camilla, there is a great deal that is pleasant, entertaining, and instructive to be gathered from the sons and daughters of the soil, who have lived on it and by it all their lives, claim intimate acquaintance with all its varied moods and tenses, and with whom the love of the country-side is almost a part of themselves."

"You cannot have much leisure," said Camilla, glancing over the flourishing garden, "what with your indoor and outdoor occupations."

"That is true enough," I answered. "We often go to bed as tired as any labourer; but I have come to the conclusion that it is a

misfortune to have very little to do. Health suffers for the lack of work—besides, it is demoralising. We find it so delightful after a long day's satisfactory labour—and labour which is for ourselves, too—quite a different thing to working for other people—to take our well-earned rest in the depths of a favourite chair, with a book that is greatly to our liking."

"Tell me now," said Camilla, rising to face us, and looking very earnest and thoughtful, "does it pay? Are you quite satisfied with the results? Have you no secret reservations, no longings for a different kind of life than this spent in your Arcadia?"

"It does pay," we both replied. "We have had sufficient time in which to make the trial, and we have never once regretted it. We have been able to live more easily than we anticipated—quite within our modest income, and have, moreover, by dint of acting on the maxim 'Waste not, want not,' been able to put by—by dribblets, if you choose—what has helped to render the long months of winter less trying to go through. And not that only; but we have been so successful in the management of the garden that it has more than paid for itself. Why, we made £3 out of it last year, and we hope to do still better this year now that we understand better how to work it! Tell me now, Camilla," added I, impressively, "do you honestly think that we could have done better if we had decided to remain in London? What a miserable existence it would have been! How should we have dragged out the weary days, hardly knowing sometimes how to get a decent meal? Why, half the money would have been swallowed up in rent!"

"And I am sure," added Lois, "you would infinitely prefer coming to see us here to having to trudge into some horrid cheap neighbourhood such as we should have been forced to find lodgings in! A stuffy street, with houses all of the same pattern all let in apartments, a public-house at each street corner, no blue sky to be seen, no shady trees—can you fancy yourself, Bab, after this, shut up in such a hole, afraid to open the windows, to air the hot rooms because of the dust that blows in, and for ever worried by the noises incidental to such a neighbourhood? How we should pity ourselves!"

"And behold us here," concluded I, stretching out my hands to embrace the fair landscape. "We are mistresses of all we survey. There are woods inviting us to explore their leafy glades; there are hills that draw us nearer to the skies; there are deep embowered lanes to attract; there are birds and insects singing and humming all around, and all is ours to enjoy, while there is a dear little modest nest of a home just suited to our needs and our purses, where we can live free from embarrassments and unfettered by conventionalities. Who, after tasting the sweets of existence in the home of nature, could sigh after the pleasures that pall in a crowded town, or could breathe in comfort its smoke-dried atmosphere?"

"You have both grown too enthusiastic for me," said Cousin Camilla, stifling a yawn. "It is all very nice, and I congratulate you on your success and contentment. I think you are wonderful women, and I feel a most ordinary individual in comparison; but, oh, Bab, if you don't mind, I am so thirsty, that the only thing I can go into heroics over just now is a cup of tea."

Whereat we laughed and repaired indoors on hospitable thoughts intent.

(To be concluded.)



shoulders; and when she was convicted of being in the wrong by proof positive that I was in the right, she would make use of her own height to draw herself up till she appeared to tower above me, though in reality, when we were last measured—head to head and heel to heel—there was not above a straw's breadth of advantage on her side, and flounce away. As she flounced she would say disdainfully that I must know very little if I had never heard that the great Admiral Blake and Lord Viscount Nelson were both little men; and that Nelson, whom we had been brought up to adore—in common with the entire Navy—because he had the stoutest heart, the clearest head, and the quickest hand in the service, in place of merely having a hair's-breadth of difference between the height of his shoulders (caused doubtless by over-diligent application to his studies and duties) had an empty coat-sleeve fastened across his breast, and was blind of an eye to boot. By the time I came to be reminded of these trifling flaws, I was always heartily ashamed of myself for having been singularly ungracious in insisting with needless precision on small details. I admired our Sally for her staunchness to her colours. I felt how sensible, wise, and truly womanly she was not to dwell on externals, but to pin her faith to more sterling qualities, which would never fail her or perish, as all mere physical gifts perish, in the using.

I am now about to enter on a crisis in our family history, during which it is impossible for me always to write at first hand. I must write a good deal from hearsay; and even if I could, after a long interval of time, recall all the nautical terms proper for such vicissitudes, and accompany them with the explanations which skilled seamen might

furnish, the terms themselves would still be more or less incomprehensible to my readers. In the year to which I refer, when Jane and I were nineteen and eighteen years old, and when Sally was in her twenty-fifth year, when we were as usual at war with the French—which we had been, off and on, all through my youth—the *Sea Serpent* had separated herself from the main body of the Red Squadron, and had gone, with two sloops-of-war, in the direction of the Mauritius. I believe the object was to intercept and outwit any French ships bearing down with evil intent on the islands.

Not only were we engaged on this separate expedition, we had parted company with our small escort on a sudden alarm. Several small sail had been seen on the horizon, and they were conjectured to be the enemy for whom we were lying in wait. Accordingly, the *Hercules* and the *Oberon*, in our train, were signalled to give chase, while we awaited the result, prepared to follow if necessary.

The weather was bad; so bad with shifting squalls, a heavy sea, and sheets of blinding rain, that we, who were seasoned sailors, had seldom known it worse. Sally, Jane, and I had, of course, to keep under shelter, and not venture on the quarter-deck, where there was already enough for men to do. Our detention below was a grievance to Sally and me, who were glad, in the monotony (on our side) of life on board ship, to watch the war of winds and waves and have all the dust blown away from us, as we declared. Even Jane would have her deck-chair fixed in a sheltered corner, and so lashed to a stay that it could not slip or topple over, and would take her observations of sea and sky and stormy petrel—which were entirely distinct from

those of the man at the wheel—all to be carefully set down in a beautifully small and legible hand in what she called her log-book.

We submitted with a reasonably good grace, however, because we knew father was anxious and worried. He kept consulting the chart, and *sounding* continually. There was the threatening of no ordinary storm. We were out of our course and were in the vicinity of coral reefs and islands, while he did not feel at liberty to work the ship with the risk of leaving the *Hercules* and the *Oberon* behind us, possibly, if they had sustained a brush with the enemy, in a worse plight than we were.

We, in our cabin, felt nothing which could be called apprehension, though we were in a state of considerable excitement. We had known tolerably severe storms, while we had always come out of them more or less scatheless. It is burnt children who dread the fire. We had not been burnt yet. We had been remarkably fortunate and favoured, we gratefully admitted; for in all our sailing with father we had not suffered shipwreck. Once, in his youth, father himself had narrowly escaped from a ship which had foundered. He had been tossed about for days on a raft, with a scanty supply of provisions for himself and his companions. Tom had been in the *Gadfly*, which was burnt to the water's edge. He and the officers and crew had not quitted the vessel ten minutes when the powder-magazine blew up. Tom's hands still bore the scars of the burns which they had incurred by grasping at the red-hot stern-chains in letting himself down into his boat. But none of us girls had been in such deadly peril; we only knew enough of danger to be inured to it.

(To be continued.)

HOW TWO SISTERS LIVE IN THE COUNTRY ON A POUND A WEEK.

By BARBARA MARSH.

CHAPTER V.



under my notice, because I think it proves clearly how much larger, in many unlooked-for ways, the expenditure necessarily is; there are so many channels through which the contents of a slender purse may dribble away, not to speak of temptations to spend money on things

support of my theory that the choice of a life in London or in any large town for a poor gentlewoman is a mistaken one, I will instance a case that has lately come

which cannot well be afforded and could be done without, which frequently offer themselves to the eyes of the dweller among all that is rich and beautiful in the great mart of fashion and art.

Some are so constituted that residence in a secluded rural district would be a moral impossibility; some again may be so circumstanced that it would be an inconvenience. But exceptions aside, and speaking from the point of view of one who loves the country, who has made the experiment of living in the country and found it succeed, I raise my voice in its favour, and recommend the plan to all who have a certain fixed income, independent of the necessity of earning it, and who are at liberty to choose the spot wherein they will eke out their narrow means. The case I allude to was that of a poor lady who was not, as Lois and I, "passing rich on £52 a year," but poor on an annuity of £60.

She would not have been happy in the quiet retirement we have chosen, for all her interests and affections were centred in the great city, but she would undoubtedly have been better off.

As a matter of course, she could only afford to rent two rooms, and these were in the air-

less street of an obscure suburb. I am not quite sure what she paid for these apartments, but think it was something like £26 a year.

She had sufficient furniture to make these rooms comfortable, and she was a woman of so much ingenuity and taste that they never failed to look bright and pretty.

Fortunately, she had no necessity to spend much on dress, for she had kind friends who supplied many of her wants in this respect, and she always contrived to present as fashionable an appearance to the world as industry and clever management could accomplish.

The housekeeping for herself alone, however, was of a meagre description, subject also to the discomfort of having no kitchen accommodation and no attendance. That she could not afford it was partly due to three causes.

She loved to entertain her friends, of whom she had many; for living a lonely life in a home that was but a London lodging, she indulged her hospitable feelings as often as she could, and in order to do so pinched herself in private.

Then, she could never make up her restless mind to spend two or three consecutive days at home, unless compelled by illness or stress of weather. She loved to trot about London town; long distances on her own feet,

however, were beyond her powers, not being strong, so railway fares, omnibus and tram-car fares ran away with many a shilling, and her diet suffered in consequence.

Again, her health, as I have intimated, was bad. Frequently she had doctors' bills to pay; she was growing old, and was beset with a morbid fear that haunted her, poor thing, unknown to those who loved her, that she might be permanently laid up and have insufficient means to meet her expenses.

So, quarter by quarter, and year by year, as her annuity became due, she laid by something, stinting herself daily that she might be able to do so, and injuring the health, the loss of which she feared would be the cause of her impoverishment. At her death, her relatives accidentally found hidden away in an old box a savings-bank book which contained payments amounting to over one hundred pounds.

How sad to think that she actually half-starved herself to save for the needs of impending old age and illness, instead of enjoying the comforts God meant her to have, and which assuredly under different conditions might have been hers.

"Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof."

"Ah, poor dear," we said, on hearing the story, "if she could have been transplanted here we could have made room for her in our Honeysuckle Cottage; she need not then have lived and died almost alone, and her small income would have seemed comparative riches."

This suggests another idea, namely, that if some good agency were set to work to bring together poor gentlewomen similarly situated, but left alone in the world, how much easier and happier their circumstances might become. It would be a "mutual aid in country life society."

Since discovering and taking possession of our present home, we have, in our various rambles, come upon more than one little cottage in which ladies need not disdain to take up their abode, and on enquiry have found them all to be lower rented than ours is, and all have gardens.

Rents of course greatly depend on the neighbourhood, the distance from stations and populous centres, also upon the proprietor. It is true these cottages are all inhabited by labourers or cottage-farmers, and doubtless many of them have great inconveniences, but speaking from my own experience these are not insurmountable or unbearable, and, given

the chance of lighting upon such an opportunity as one of these rustic homes would afford, there would be no doubt in my own mind as to the folly of letting it slip.

"If I were a wealthy landed proprietor," said my sister Lois one day, when we had been discussing the subject much after the above fashion, "I would erect ever so many old-fashioned cottages after the pattern of some of those we have seen nestling in sweet out-of-the-way nooks, for the express purpose of sheltering poor gentlewomen. I would make them as convenient and comfortable as possible, and then I would make it known to all whom it might concern that they were to be had at such and such rents. I would not be greedy after any large percentage either, or consider that I was laying my tenants under any serious obligation."

The postman did occasionally visit Honeysuckle Cottage, for we had friends, though they did not often find their way down to our part of the country. One morning, not long after Camilla's visit, he brought a letter addressed to Lois in a handwriting we had not seen for more than two years.

That she recognised it at once was evident by the startled look on her face and the quick change of colour from red to white and white to red again. I knew who the letter was from, and a pang shot through my heart like a knife when I realised what it might mean. I got up and went into the garden to pick fruit and get in vegetables for dinner, determined not to intrude, but let Lois confide in me when she thought fit. My thoughts grew busier than my fingers; it seemed a long while that I was alone out there, but when at length my sister came walking slowly towards me, letter in hand, I had very little fruit in my basket. There were traces of tears on her face, but she was quite calm.

"Well," said I, trying to smile cheerfully as she approached.

Her answer was to place the letter in my hand and walk away down the garden.

I hardly liked looking at the contents, it seemed to me so like prying into what was sacred to another, but she wished it. I dare say it was the easiest method of making known to me what there was to be said.

The letter contained, as I anticipated, a renewal of the offer of marriage which Lois had received before the break up of our former home. When our reverses and great trouble fell upon us, she had written to set her lover

free, but there had come no reply from him, and I, indignant, had declared him utterly unworthy of further thought. That Lois had fretted in secret I knew, but when we disappeared from our former circle in London life and began the kind of existence which we have led ever since, she roused herself, and had by this time, I flattered myself, quite overcome the trouble.

This letter now explained his strange and as I thought, heartless behaviour. Her offer to free him from any tie had never been in his hands till a week ago; for in his temporary absence from home it had been mislaid by some member of the family locking it up with other papers by mistake. Business had called him away from England immediately after, and though he had written repeatedly, receiving no reply to any of his letters, he had at last, angry and disappointed, desisted. The news of our losses had never reached him, for his own family were not favourable to the match, and there had been no communications on either side. Our present home being known only to our immediate friends, his letters to Lois had been returned to him through the Dead Letter Office. Camilla and her family, who alone could have enlightened him, were abroad.

Finding his hopes shattered, said he in this letter now before me, he had accepted the offer of manager to a branch office of the business in which he and his father were engaged, a post which took him to the other side of the world, where he had remained till now. On his return, he had been brought in contact with Camilla once more, and she had enlightened his mind. Lois' letter had been found quite accidentally a few days before, and this had put him in possession of the true facts and enabled him to exonerate himself in her eyes.

Was it now too late? Might he not seek her again and offer the home he had always been longing to share with her as the wife of his choice.

The letter dropped on the ground from my trembling fingers. Would she leave me? Would she say yes, for I know she loved him once.

"Is it too late, Lois?" I asked, huskily.

She threw her arms round me saying, "Yes, Bab, it is too late. He need not seek me here. I could not leave you if I wished. We have been so happy here together, we will remain so, if God pleases, till the end."

BEETHOVEN.

By J. F. ROWBOTHAM, Author of "The History of Music."

PART II.

THE Fifth Symphony is the next one of note. This great work is the starting-point of Liszt's musical forms, its peculiarity consisting in only one leading subject being used as the material for treatment instead of two or more. Many are the fanciful explanations which have been offered of the objects and aims of Beethoven's symphonies by those anxious to expound them poetically. Critics allude to flowing rivers, to beautiful landscapes, to woodland scenery, to mountain scenes, to storms, to calms, to gales, to nightfall, to May, and to the hundred other objects of familiar nature which can by the touch of genius be idealised and raised into beautiful prominence and wrapped in the charms of music. Contrary to these multitudinous explanations which have thus freely been offered, Beethoven himself has only vouchsafed one explanation of any of his symphonies. It is the fifth symphony which he has explained. The leading subject in the piece we mention consists of a short phrase of four

notes, which is repeated in measureless force and fury all up and down the orchestra, with such titanic intensity at last that the listener's imagination reels under the fearful ideas which this phrase conjures up. Beethoven has explained the symphony by saying that this phrase is intended to depict "Fate knocking at the door." The impressive phrase is the terrible knocking, and certainly not even Gluck's representation of Cerberus barking in the lower regions is more terrible and realistic.

The next symphony in order, the Sixth, is the most tuneful, and, perhaps, the most generally popular of them all. In this symphony the composer essays to describe the impressions made upon his musical mind by a sojourn in the country. He depicts in the first movement his arrival among the realms of Nature; and then embodies in a wonderful way, in his music, the freshness of the feelings which such a visit induces. We wander through the country under Beethoven's experienced guidance, and ere long are arrested

by the babbling and gurgling of a brook, which strikes upon the ear with such realistic effect as if a veritable sheet of rippling water were playing through the orchestra. First one instrument in the band takes up the purling and prattling of the water, and then another renders it with equally life-like effect; the brook—like Tennyson's, purling prettily along—is heard quite distinctly amid the mass of sound that environs it, and, like the stream of the English bard, might "go on for ever," so far as the delight and appreciation of the hearer is concerned. We are never weary of its gurgle, we are never fatigued by its pretty and harmonious rippling. If painting can render the effect of a landscape with close resemblance and fidelity, music can reproduce, as no other art can, the effect of running water. Flutes with their trills, violins with their shakes, violoncellos for the deeper tones, clarionets for the higher and purer airs—by these instruments, and their cunning power of portraiture, the running of water can be