

MR. AND MRS. PIDGEON'S VISIT TO THEIR CITY FRIENDS,
AS RELATED BY MR. PIDGEON.

BY EMILY B. CARROLL.

I HAVE a snug little place in the country of about one hundred acres. It is easy of access by steamboats, which come within two miles of the place, and at the landing stages are always in readiness to convey passengers to a frequented hotel, the road to which passes in front of our house. Being thus easy of access, our house is filled with visitors from the first of June to the middle of September, and in fact it is more like a country boarding-house than a private residence, only we never get any pay from our boarders. One year we had as many as twenty visitors at one time, including children and nurses, and at no time in the summer do we have less than eight. At the beginning of May my wife commences her preparations: every room is made as white as water, soap, sand, and whitewash can make it; carpets are taken up and mattings put down; feather beds exchanged for mattresses, white curtains put up at windows and around bedsteads, and a general fixing up ensues. An order for groceries—one would think sufficient for an army—is sent to our grocer in the city, and the preserve closet undergoes a thorough examination. Our house consists of a parlor, dining-room, library, storeroom, and kitchen on the ground floor; four bedrooms on the second floor, and two neat attic rooms; and every room in the house has been crammed full. Let me give you an account of last summer's visitors, merely premising that it is a fair sample of the four preceding summers.

It was near the close of a warm day in the beginning of June, and the sun was slowly sinking to his rest (ahem! that opens fine, I think; now if I can only keep on this way), when the stage might have been seen (and *was* seen by me, to my sorrow) slowly wending its way to our peaceful domicile. It paused at the entrance to the grassy lawn that sloped gently downward to the road, the door was opened, the steps let down, and a lady, large and stately, descended, and advanced leisurely to our abode. Close following on her footsteps came a youthful throng, of various ages and of various size, from the fair babe lulled in the nurse's arms, to the brave boy just thirteen summers old. (Bless my soul! I'm a poet!) Nearer

she came, and looking on her face, I recognized fair Mrs. Spendergrass, and eagerly I ran to welcome her to our abode—the home of earthly bliss. I must give it up—I can't write poetry without telling lies to make up the lines. Truth to tell, Mrs. Spendergrass, with her tribe of children, was my special aversion. I don't believe a worse set of youngsters ever lived, and they made so much noise they nearly deafened one. However, I made the "best of a bad bargain," as the saying is; and forcing a ghastly smile, I escorted her and her army to the house, and went in quest of Rebecca. Now, Rebecca is one of the dearest little souls that ever lived, with not one particle of guile about her, and she is never happier than when she is entertaining a houseful of visitors, or *friends*, as she calls them; so, although Mrs. Spendergrass and her tribe had nearly plagued our lives out for two summers, yet she ran into the parlor and welcomed them all in a transport of joy, kissing every child twice, and giving a dozen extra ones to the twin babies. By the by, Mrs. S. only had one baby when she was here before; *this* time she has brought twins; I only hope that she won't bring triplets if she should chance to come again. Well, Rebecca flew about, had chickens killed and picked in almost as short a time as it takes me to write about it; and with her own dear hands she set out the table, and arranged the tempting fare upon it. Shall I describe one of our country suppers? Rebecca is a famous housekeeper, and rare suppers she can get, I tell you. We had snowy bread and light flaky biscuit, golden butter, broiled ham and chickens, with cream gravy, ripe red strawberries, with real cream to eat with them, and preserved peaches and honey, to say nothing of tea and coffee—such as one seldom gets—and the dearest little wife in the world to sit at the head of the table. The dishes were filled up when we began supper, but there wasn't much in them when we were done, for the Spendergrasses have famous appetites. It took two rooms to hold them at night. Mrs. Spendergrass, the twins, and two other little ones occupying one room; the nurse and the two boys in the room adjoining, a trundle-bed hav-

ing been removed to Mrs. S.'s room, and a cot put up for the nurse in the next room by Mrs. S.'s special request.

At breakfast, the next morning, she informed us that she wished her children to drink nothing but new milk, and as much of that as they wanted, as she had heard that it was so healthy, and she herself wished green tea in the morning and at dinner, black tea for supper, cocoa for luncheon at ten o'clock; and as she was nursing and very weak, she would like some of our currant wine every afternoon at four o'clock. Soup, she *must* have every day for dinner; but for the rest, she was very easily suited, and hoped that we would make no change in our domestic arrangements on her account. Now it was an easy matter to let her have as much tea, and cocoa, and currant wine as she wanted; but it was not quite so easy to manage about the milk and soup. We had four cows, but two of them gave very little milk, and the other two barely sufficed to keep us in milk and butter; and as for the soup, we were too far from the city to get fresh meat often, and it would not keep long in such warm weather.

Rebecca promised all Mrs. S. asked; but after breakfast she came to me in a great deal of trouble to know what she should do, as the young Spendergrasses would drink a gallon or two of milk a day. I told her to give them the skim milk, and they would never know the difference; and as to soup, she could give Mrs. S. chicken soup twice a week, and maybe she could concoct some kind of vegetable soup by the aid of the cook-books, and I would get fresh meat as often as I could. With a lightened heart Rebecca left me to attend to her domestic affairs; and I locked myself up in the library, hoping to have a little quiet, but every few moments there was an outbreak in the Spendergrass tribe, and at last I heard a scream from our own little ones, and heard our little five years old Freddy in high dispute with the Spendergrasses, and heard him say: "I'll tell papa you beat my little sister Minnie!" I hastened to the rescue, for little blue-eyed Minnie was the pet of our household, and I heard her sobbing violently—the little darling sunbeam whose every whim we had gratified. What was my astonishment to behold Mrs. S. sitting complacently in the midst of the tumult, and taking no notice whatever of the conduct of her children. Little Minnie held out her arms when she saw me, and I took her up and soothed her; but I saw red streaks all over her dear little fat arms, and saw a switch

in the hand of one of the boys; so I could guess pretty well what ailed my little one.

Mrs. S. looked on smilingly. "I never take any notice of children's quarrels," she said, with an amiable little laugh; "the little things can manage better without our interference. My boys are perfectly delighted with the country," she continued, "they are very lively, spirited children, but there is not a bit of harm in them. My Andrew Jackson is quite a hero, but Henry Clay is more devoted to his studies. In fact we have feared he would injure his health by such close application, but I am happy to see his spirits have been most excellent since he has been here. My girls are wild little pussies, too; but I don't care how much they romp in the country, there is no one here to be annoyed by their noise. Have you any fruit ripe yet, Mr. Pidgeon? Ah! yes, there is that tree of June apples—will you be so kind as to send a servant to gather some for me? I am so fond of apples." Thus the lady rattled on without pausing for an answer till her final request.

Now we kept but two servants, and one of them was rather old, so I ventured to hint to Mrs. S. that perhaps her boys might like the sport of gathering and bringing her a basket of apples, as the tree was some distance from the house, and Molly and Kitty were busy. The boys set off in high glee, and taking little Minnie with me I returned to the library again, locking the door. The poor little thing soon fell asleep, so I laid her on a lounge, and covered her with my handkerchief to keep off the flies. The library adjoined a store-room that opened into the kitchen, so I could easily hear what was going on, and finding that Rebecca had work to do up in the chambers, I called to her that Minnie was asleep, and I would take care of her till she came down again. Minnie was in the habit of getting ravenously hungry and thirsty, when her mother found it most inconvenient to attend to her. Rebecca was very glad to hear that there was a chance for her to go on with her work, without interruption from baby. She had scarcely got up stairs when I heard the smooth voice of Mrs. S., in the kitchen. "Molly," said she, "I have three thin flounced dresses I want you to iron for me this afternoon. I have brought them rough dried, for I knew they would get tumbled so they would not be fit to be seen, so it was folly to iron them; also the children's white dresses I want ironed, and there are a good many little things I want washed for the babies, as soon as you can get time, for the nurse has no chance to

do these things. And see here, Molly, I want the sheets, pillow and bolster cases exchanged on our beds twice a week, and let me have six clean towels every day—four fine, and two coarse ones, and put a large pitcher in my room besides the one that is there. Be sure to have my cocoa ready at eleven precisely," and the lady took her flounces out of the kitchen, leaving Molly to grumble after her for the next hour.

"Who she thinks goin' to wait on her, I'd like to know," quoth Molly; "you, white trash, thinks she can make me fly round arter her, but she's mighty mistaken—'deed is she. Why can't she iron her own fal-lals? She's none too good, dear knows she aint. Need n't think she's goin' to make this nigger fly round arter her, I've got 'nuff to do now, 'thout waitin' on her and her rips of chilluns. Catch me a roastin' my eyes out ironin' of her fooleries. I won't tech them, 'deed won't I."

"Shet up your mouth," growled Kitty; "'tend to yer own work, that's all you got to do."

"I aint agoin' to tech her things at any rate," persisted Molly; "didn't I work myself off'n my feet last summer, and what did she give me for it?—an old caliker bed gownd that I wouldn't bemean myself to wear. Poor, mean trash!"

I may as well say here that in the end Mrs. S. conquered, and the clothes were washed and ironed by Molly every week during her stay. Little Minnie at last woke up, and cried for her mamma, so I carried her to Rebecca, but she cried out, "For mercy's sake, Henry, don't bring that child here, for I'm too busy to attend to her now," so we wended our way back to the library, stopping first in the kitchen where we got a bowl of bread and milk, and for the first time in my life, I essayed to feed a hungry child. I succeeded beyond my utmost expectation, only choking Minnie twice, and not spilling more than half down her bosom, so, highly elated with my success, I began to feel amiable once more, and made no complaint at being kept waiting for my dinner, twenty minutes past the usual time.

After dinner was over I resigned my charge to Rebecca and settled myself down comfortably for the afternoon.

The next day Mr. and Mrs. Honeywell, and Mrs. Honeywell's two sisters came, and two days later Mrs. Register and her sick daughter. I engaged another servant, and every part of the house was crammed full, so we had to sleep on the parlor floor. Miss Register was

quite sick and very weak, so every day she had to have boneset tea made for her, a new laid egg beat up with port wine, and a boiled chicken for dinner. However, she showed some gratitude, which was more than any one else did.

At last the summer came to an end, the last carriage load left the house, and weary and dispirited poor Rebecca went to work to clear up the house after them. Mrs. Spendergrass and her children had a great knack at breaking china and glass, and you could generally guess pretty well as to their whereabouts by the crash that followed their footsteps. I never saw one of them take up anything choice without apprehending its downfall, and it was very rarely my apprehensions deceived me. But I cannot begin to relate the damage done by our visitors—how they inked and greased our carpets, and curtains, and broke everything of a breakable nature—the pencil of Hogarth could alone portray such a scene of confusion as our house presented, after the departure of our visitors. My carriage horses were lamed, and the carriage broken. I had a great variety of choice fruit trees, and a great abundance of fruit, and had calculated on making a considerable sum of money from the sale of it, but our visitors carried off all that they did not eat, except what was put up for next year's consumption in the shape of preserves and pickles. We had scarcely a fowl left on the place, none in fact, but those that were too old to be eaten. The servants were completely worn out with waiting on the numerous wants of our visitors, and poor Rebecca looked like she had had a severe spell of sickness. Our little Minnie, from having no one to give her proper attention, ate so much unripe fruit that it caused her a pretty severe attack of dysentery, which left her pale and languid, and very unlike the little, fat, rosy, dimpled darling she had been heretofore. On the last day of August I mounted one of the working horses, and took refuge at a neighbor's house for a couple of days, hoping the worst of the putting to rights would be over by that time, but I was wofully mistaken. For a week after that time I could not stir outside of the library door without stumbling into a pail of whitewash, or a tub of hot water, to say nothing of pitching headlong over mops, brooms, etc. I pass over the details of the house-cleaning, merely remarking that Minnie was twice fished out of a tub of soapsuds, and Freddy, trying to discover a passage through the front hall, stumbled over a broom, and took a seat in a pail of white-

wash, fortunately doing no damage beyond ruining a new pair of trowsers. At last order rose out of the chaos, carpets were tacked down, curtains put up, and once more I could go through the house without danger of breaking my neck.

Some time in September, I found that my business required my presence in the city, and as all our friends had given us pressing invitations to visit them, I concluded to take Rebecca and the children, and stay two or three weeks. Rebecca wrote to Mrs. Spendergrass, telling her she was coming to make her a visit, and would be there in two or three days. We went to the steamboat landing in our own carriage, because Rebecca had so many presents to take her city friends, I disliked filling up the stage with them. When we got to the landing Rebecca found an old friend of hers who resided there, and who insisted on our staying for the afternoon boat, instead of going in the morning as we had contemplated. She said the afternoon boat went for half-price. Now Rebecca is a great hand for saving a penny, so she at once set her mind on going in the afternoon boat, though it was much slower than the morning boat.

Well! we were now hospitably entertained, and at last safely embarked in an old rattle-trap of a boat, which, by the way, charged full price, having raised the fare that very day. We did not reach the city till dusk, and then a chilly, disagreeable rain had set in, but we took our seats in the hack with light hearts, feeling certain that in a few minutes we should be in the warm parlors of Mrs. Spendergrass, and partaking of a nice supper. I had an idea that the street in which the Spendergrass mansion was located was near the wharf, and so it afterwards proved to be, but the hackman, seeing we were from the country, had taken advantage of our ignorance of the city, to drive us through all the alleys and little streets he could find, till at last I poked out my head, and told him if he didn't take us to the place pretty soon I would get out and hunt it myself, so he pretended he had misunderstood me, whirled round two or three corners, and deposited us in front of a large, stately mansion where the Spendergrasses resided. To my dismay, the house was perfectly dark, and though I rang the bell till the knob came off in my hand, no one came to the door. At length an old woman who lived next door poked out her head, and told me there was no use in my "making that 'ere kind of a racket, for Mrs. Spendergrass had got a letter from

some place, and had gone off to New York to see her mother, and tuk the children along, and Mr. Spendergrass had got the house locked up, and never came home till arter midnight," and with this agreeable news, the head was popped in again, the window slammed down, and I went back to the carriage in dismay, and found Rebecca weeping, and Minnie fretting to be put to bed. Just as I had proposed going to the nearest hotel, I felt my arm touched, and looking around I saw a gentleman holding an umbrella over his head, but hatless. In courteous language he invited us to enter his house, stating that his wife had been a visitor of ours, and had recognized us from the window, and wished very much to see us. Rebecca saved me the trouble of replying by at once availing herself of the invitation, and our host soon ushered us into an elegantly furnished parlor, where we were met, and warmly welcomed by a pretty, bright eyed little woman, whom we both recognized at once as Mrs. Howard, a lady who had spent a few days at our house about two years previous, and a distant relative of the Spendergrasses. She apologized as well as she could for Mrs. S.'s conduct, but we both felt that the house had been shut up to get clear of us. We learned afterwards that Mrs. S. was a miser at home, and prodigal as she was in dress, her husband lived a dreadful life with her; for she hardly allowed her family enough to eat while she spent countless sums on her own person. This only confirmed my previous suspicions. Mr. and Mrs. Howard treated us with the greatest hospitality, and afterpartaking of a superb supper, Mrs. H. took Rebecca up to a bedroom, furnished with a crib, cradle, and every comfort needed. The children were unrobed, and laid in their comfortable beds, and Rebecca arranged her hair, washed her face and hands, and, rested and refreshed, prepared to return to the parlor. As they were leaving the room, Mrs. Howard paused awhile by Minnie's cradle. She stooped down and pressed a loving kiss on the round, rosy cheek of the little sleeper. "I have lost my little one," she said sadly, while a tear glistened in her dark eyes; "dear little lambs, we do not know how dear they are to us till we lose them."

It was a chilly, rainy evening, but none of the outward discomfort reached us, as we gathered around the pleasant fireside. It was an evening long to be remembered by all of us. Our kind entertainers insisted on our making our home with them during our stay in the city; but Rebecca was fearful our other friends

might feel hurt if we did not spend part of the time with them; so when we retired to our room that night, it was decided that I should go the next morning to call on our friends, and see who was most anxious to receive us, while Rebecca remained in her present quarters till afternoon. After a good night's sleep, and a first-rate breakfast, I started out on my expedition. The first place I went to was Mrs. Cameron's. I was admitted by a dirty looking girl, who ushered me into a small room on the landing, and just over the kitchen, as I discovered by the smell of cooking, and the sound of voices.

"Who is it, Biddy?" I heard Mrs. Cameron say.

"Here 's his name, mum, on this bit of paste-board," the girl replied.

"Mr. Pidgeon! oh, horrid! I do hope he hasn't come to stay here. I *do* hate to be plagued with company. Here, Biddy, just pin this collar for me, and bring me down my new cap—the one with the blue flowers."

I heard a door open and shut; but in a few moments I heard Mrs. Cameron open the door again, and say:—

"There 's nobody in the parlor, Biddy—where did you leave Mr. Pidgeon?"

"Sure I took him in the little room where the fire is; it was so cowlid in the parlor."

"Mercy on the stupid girl!" I heard Mrs. C. exclaim, impatiently. "Go, Biddy, and show him into the parlor."

Mrs. Cameron received me with a face full of smiles, and made many inquiries after her dear Mrs. Pidgeon and the sweet children; but I presume it is hardly necessary to inform my reader that I refused all invitations to stay with her, notwithstanding that they grew very pressing, when she found that there was no danger of my staying.

I next went to Mrs. Lander's. She, too, received me with many smiles, asked where Rebecca was making her home, and invited us to come and *take tea* with her before we returned home. From there I went to Mrs. Bradley's. She regretted very much that some friends of Mr. B.'s were coming to make her a visit; otherwise, they would be so happy to have dear Rebecca make her home there; but the *next* time we came, we must be certain to make them a good long visit. I will not bore my reader with a full account of my visits to some three or four more of Rebecca's *friends*, none of whom showed any desire for our company, and I resolved to try only one more place, and if I had no better success there, I would engage board at a hotel. But Mrs. Register and her

daughter at once insisted on our coming to them to make our home. Miss Register in particular seemed delighted to have the opportunity of returning our hospitality. She had regained her health, and looked so pretty and rosy, I scarcely knew her at first.

Mr. and Mrs. Howard were very sorry to have us leave them, and exacted from us a promise to spend a week with them before we returned home. In parting with them we presented them with some choice grapes and oranges raised in our own greenhouse, and some very fine peaches. We also carried a peck of the peaches to Mrs. Register, a bushel of very fine sweet potatoes, and a ham of our own curing. We were hospitably welcomed, and ushered into a handsome suite of apartments on the second floor, consisting of parlor, dressing-room, and bedroom. But our meals! Let me describe our first dinner, which was a fair sample of what was to come. It was set out in great style, and made considerable show, and we had five courses. In the first place we had a thin, watery kind of soup, tasting of nothing but salt and potatoes. A beef bone, with very little meat on it, and two dishes of watery vegetables made up the first course. Then we had a small piece of roast beef, or beef *à la mode* Mrs. Register called it; but it was so tough I gave it up in despair. There was a dish of pork chops, nearly all bone, a tough fowl, and some side dishes of badly-cooked beets and carrots, and sweet potatoes boiled till the water could be wrung out. Irish potatoes we had in various forms, omelette, balls, and plain mashed potatoes. The bread was sour—the butter strong. For our third course we had a hard, tough mass of dough, with raisins boiled in it, that Mrs. Register called cold plum pudding. The sauce tasted strongly of cheap brandy. Then we had rice balls, and some pies from the baker's. After these were removed, we had custard and cake—sponge cake like leather. To conclude, we had some of our own fruit, some bad almonds and raisins, and a bottle of cheap wine. Mrs. Register helped us with the greatest affability, and was as much at her ease as if everything was of the best. For supper we had smoky tea and weak coffee, some black-looking preserves, tough cake, a little cheese, sour baker's bread, and bad butter. But bad as the fare was, there was not enough of it, and I was obliged to go to an eating-house every day to satisfy my hunger. I smuggled in oysters to Rebecca every night, and kept her well supplied with cakes and crackers for the children. With many smiles and blushes Miss

Register informed Rebecca that she was to be married very soon to a young lawyer, and they were to spend a year or two in France and Italy. Her mother was to accompany them. I learned afterwards that they had been engaged for some time, but the mother had resolutely opposed the match on account of the poverty of the lover. This was what had affected Miss Register's health; and, fearing that she would go into a decline, her mother was at length forced to consent. From what I had seen of their mode of living, I had come to the conclusion that the Registers were in rather indigent circumstances, and really pitied Mrs. Register for striving so hard to keep up appearances, when she had not the means of living as she desired. Something of this I said to Mrs. Howard, when, to my great surprise, she told me that Mrs. Register was worth over a hundred thousand dollars, and had not a poor relative living. Her daughter had a snug little fortune, too, independent of her mother. So it was only meanness made her live as she did, for she did not spend one-third of her income, so Mrs. Howard informed me. "Her daughter is exceedingly mortified by her mother's conduct," continued Mrs. H.; "but see cannot get her to act differently. Her servants tell some ludicrous tales about her household economy." I felt really glad that her pretty daughter was going to get a good husband, for she is a good, sensible girl, and the Howards speak very highly of her lover. We spent a week with the Howards, and enjoyed ourselves extremely. In company with them we visited the different places of amusement, and went to see everything that was worth seeing. We parted from them with regret, for we had formed a strong friendship for them during our stay. We exacted from them a promise to return our visit next summer. With regard to our visitors of preceding summers, I fancy we shall not be plagued by many of them. We received a long and flowery epistle from Mrs. Spendergrass on our return home, expressing *her great regret at being compelled to leave home*, and thus missing our agreeable company. She sincerely deplored that she had not received our letter *soon enough* to delay her visit, and hoped that we would soon visit the city again, as she was very desirous to see us all. She would try to make us a long visit next summer—she enjoyed herself so much with her dear friends, Mr. and Mrs. Pidgeon. My sole answer was to send her an envelope containing the card of the proprietor of the nearest hotel, and a few lines saying that

it would not be convenient for us to keep open house for our *friends* any longer. I have never had any reply to it; but we don't look for the Spendergrasses this summer. Rebecca was a little worried about what I had done, but consented to let me take my own way. Taking all things into consideration, I don't think we shall have much cause to regret "Mr. and Mrs. Pidgeon's Visit to their City Friends."

THE CASKET OF THE YEAR.

BY WILLIE E. FABOR.

Pearl the Ninth.—September.

SERENE September, goddess of the grain,
 With stately steps precedes the loaded wain;
 The grapes that ripen in the grange repeat
 The sounds that float across the fields of wheat;
 The birds that linger, chat among the sheaves
 About the shortened days and lengthened eves;
 And so the birth-month of the autumn brings
 Something of shadow on its golden wings;
 Some sad reminders of meridians past,
 Of days that vanish, months that do not last;
 And of that sure declining plane of years
 That slopes to a peninsula of fears,
 While on the further shore the surges beat
 And echoes from the "unknown sea" repeat.
 First of the "embers" of the fading year,
 And empress of earth's cornucopian cheer,
 With sad forebodings we the coming greet,
 And shape our plans life's altered views to meet.
 At first a golden glory covers all
 The face of nature; then, a sombre pall
 All slowly drops, and cloud and wind again
 Betray the coming of the "latter rain;"
 While here and there the green leaves change to brown,
 In sign of autumn's coronal and crown.

MARY.

(*Resurgam.*)

BY G. H. S. HULL.

LIKE some gentle streamlet murmur'ing
 Softly o'er its pebbly bed,
 Like the timid violet drooping
 Mournfully its dewy head—
 As the cloudless sky of summer,
 As the stilly hours of night,
 Thus thy life-time—now thou 'st left us,
 Glorifying in eternal light.
 Yet it were not well to mourn thee,
 The surcharged heart its grief must bear:
 So pure thy life, so calm and holy,
 Angels love to have thee there.
 Then weep not, though the dearly loved
 Lies shrouded in the silent grave,
 Through life in Jesus' steps she moved,
 And worshipped him who died to save.