

about it a month or two back. A few parties on the upper end of the terrace have given it best. Those on gold are doing fairly well, and as for many more, even if they should get anything like payable gold it will take them a considerable time to pull up back arrears. Two claims are reported to be on payable gold in a terrace in Nelson Creek district, and a good few parties are driving in the same locality. It is to be hoped their labours will be rewarded. The holders of extended beach claims are very quiet lately. The result of operations by the dredges erected down south is not reassuring, but with more powerful dredges and better appliances competent authorities assert that the beaches will pay handsomely. Two or three of our local companies intend to get dredges on their claims very soon, and from the result of the trial of those used south of Hokitika, they should form a good idea as to which class of dredges are suitable for their use. In the quartz districts shares are slowly but steadily advancing in many of these mines, which is a better and surer sign to bona fide investors than if there had been bogus rises and sudden collapses such as has often taken place in the past. A new quartz lease has been applied for in the Black-ball district, being the first in this locality. Good indications of payable quartz are often met with in the district, and, if thoroughly prospected, experienced miners are of the opinion that a payable quartz field will be found there.

The Grey District Education Board and the Greymouth School Committee are, for a long time past, on anything but friendly terms; indeed, were we to look back, the embroglio has continued for many years. The last *Carus belli* arose out of a desire on the part of the School Committee to remodel the teaching staff and raise the standard of the school. This they put into effect by giving the teachers three months notice, so that they may re-classify them and appoint others instead of those whom they thought incompetent. The head-master they particularly intended to get rid of, but having too many friends on the Board the Committee's recommendation was ignored, and this gentleman was again appointed. Since then it is a test question at each Annual School Committee election, as to whether this gentleman should not be removed. The two contending parties bring up their forces to try and obtain a majority on the School Committee. This year those unfavourable to the teacher won again, and consequently wanted to carry out their intention, but the chairman of the Committee, who happened to be on the other side, would not receive resolutions adverse to the master and questioned the legality of the Committee's election. The Committee applied to the Board as to whether they were legally elected, and that body declining to give them any information, the Committee resigned. Another meeting of householders was called to elect a fresh Committee, but this fell through, after some plain talk, as only three gentlemen were willing to be nominated. There is not such a rush to be on local School Committee's now as the funds are very much curtailed by the Board and the most of them are in debt. It is strange that the parents of State school children should refuse to contribute a few shillings yearly for firing and a few school repairs; whereas Catholics pay a heavy tax for the maintenance of their schools. It is indeed true that the more the State does for the people, the less they will do for themselves.

The Rev. Father Carew has paid over to the Church contractors the amount awarded them in the Arbitration Court with costs, which altogether amounted to over £1,000. Many of the Church Committee were against paying it, and had decided to apply to the Supreme Court to set the decision aside; had this been done, it is the opinion of many that the award would be set aside as exorbitant and that the contractors should pay the costs. The contractors being local men, a great deal of personal feeling was manifested in the case, and it was the general opinion amongst other denominations that the award should be abided by, and that it would not be felt by a large community, whereas it would ruin contractors to lose it. But that as it may, the Rev. Father Carew, who subscribed £550, and the other three or four gentlemen who contributed the balance, will have to wait some time for their money as by all appearances the large community are tired of subscribing for the present. It is to be hoped as it is now amicably settled, that all personal feeling will vanish, and that we all shall live to see the spire erected on St. Patrick's Church, Greymouth.

A N N A.

(By CATHERINE MACQUOID in *Leisure Hours*.)

THREE thousand feet up the side of a Swiss mountain a lateral valley strikes off in the direction of the heights that border the course of the Rhine on its way from Coire to Sangans. The closely-cropped, velvet smooth turf, the abundant woods, sometimes of pine trees and sometimes of beech and chestnut, give a smiling park-like aspect to the broad green track, and suggest ideas of peace and plenty.

As the path gradually ascends on its way to Fadara the wealth of flowers increases and adds to the beauty of the scene.

A few brown cow stables are dotted about the flower-sprinkled meadows; a brook runs diagonally across the path, and some freshly-laid planks show that inhabitants are not far off, but there is not a living creature in sight. The grasshoppers keep up their perpetual chirrup, and if one looks among the flowers one can see the gleam of their scarlet wings as they jump; for the rest, the flowers and birds have it all to themselves, and they sing their hymns and offer their incense in undisturbed solitude.

When one has crossed the brook and climbed an upward slope into the meadow beyond it, one enters a thick fir wood full of fragrant shadow; at the end is a bank, green and high, crowned by a hedge, and all at once the quiet of the place has fled.

Such a variety of sounds comes down the green bank: A cock is crowing loudly, and there is the bleat of a young calf; pigs are squeaking one against another, and in the midst of the din a dog begins to bark. At the farther corner, where the hedge retreats from its encroachments on the meadow, a gray house comes into view, with a sign-board across the upper part announcing that here the tired traveller may get dinner and a bed.

Before the cock has done crowing—and really he goes on so long that it is a wonder he is not hoarse—another voice mingles with the rest.

It is a woman's voice, and, although neither hoarse nor shrill, it is no more musical than the crow of the other biped, who struts about on his widely-spread toes in the yard, to which Christina Fasch has come to feed the pigs. There are five of them, pink nosed and yellow coated, and they keep up a grunting and snarling chorus within their wooden enclosure, each struggling to oust a neighbour from his place near the trough while they all greedily await their food.

"Come, Anna, come," says the hard voice; "what a slow coach you are! I would do a thing three times over while you are thinking about it!"

The farmyard was bordered by the tall hedge, and lay between it and the inn. The cow house, on one side, was separated from the pig styes by a big stack of yellow logs, and the farther corner of the inn was flanked by another stack of split wood, fronted by a pile of brushwood; above was a wooden balcony that ran also along the house front and was sheltered by the far projecting eaves of the shingled roof.

Only the upper part of the inn was built of logs, the rest was brick and plaster. The house looked neatly kept, the yard was less full of stray wood and litter that is so usual in a Swiss farmyard, but there was a dull, severe air about the place. There was not a flower or plant, either in the balcony or on the broad wooden shelves below the windows—not so much as a carnation or a marigold in the vegetable plot behind the house.

A shed stood in the corner of this plot, and at the sound of Christina's call a girl came out of the shed. She was young and tall and strong looking, but she did not beautify the scene.

To begin with, she stooped; her rough, tangled hair covered her forehead and partly hid her eyes; her skin was red and tanned with exposure, and her rather wide lips drooped at the corners with an expression of misery that was almost grotesque. She carried a pail in each hand.

"Do be quick!" Christina spoke impatiently as she saw her niece appear beyond the woodstack.

Anna started at the harsh voice as if a lash had fallen on her back; the pig's food splashed over her gown and filled her heavy leather shoes.

"I had better have done it myself," cried her aunt. "See, unhappy child, you have wasted food and time also! Now you must go and clean your shoes and stockings; your gown and apron are only fit for the wash tub! Ah!"

She gave a deep sigh as she took up first one pail and then the other and emptied the wash into the pig trough without spilling a drop by the way. Anna stood watching her admiringly.

"Well," Christina turned round on her, "I ask myself what is the use of you, child? You are fifteen, and so far it seems to me that you are here only to make work for others! When do you mean to do things as other people do them? I ask myself, what would become of you if your father were a poor man, and you had to earn your living?"

Anna had stooped yet more forward; she seemed to crouch as if she wanted to get out of sight. Christina suddenly stopped and looked at her for an answer.

Anna fingered her splashed apron; she tried to speak, but a lump rose in her throat, and she could not see for the hot tears that would, against her will, rush to her eyes.

"I shall never do anything well," she said at last, and the misery in her voice touched her aunt. "I used not to believe you, aunt, but now I see that you are right. I can never be needful to any one." Then she went on bitterly: "It would have been better if father had taken me up to the lake on Scesaplana when I was a baby and drowned me there as he drowned the puppies in the wash tub."

Christina looked shocked; there was a frown on her heavy face which was usually as expressionless as if it had been carved in wood.

"Eie!" she said. "Think of Gretchen's mother, old Barbara—she does not complain of the goitre; though she has to bear it under her chin, she tries to keep it out of sight. I wish you would do the same with your clumsiness. There, go and change your clothes; go, you unlucky child, go!"

PART II.

You are perhaps wondering how it comes to pass that an inn can exist placed alone in the midst of green pasture land, and only approached by a simple foot track, which more than once leads the wayfarer across mere plank bridges, and which passes only at long intervals small groups of cottages that call themselves villages. You naturally wonder how the guests at this lonely inn fare with regard to provisions. It is true that milk is sent down every day from the cows on the green Alps higher up the mountain, and that the farm boasts of plenty of ducks and fowls, of eggs and honey. There are a few sheep and goats, too; we have seen that there are pigs. Fraulein Christina Fasch makes good bread, and she is famous for her delicate puddings and sauces. The puzzle is, whence come the groceries, and the extras, and the wines that are consumed in the inn.

A mile or so beyond, on a lower spur of the mountain ridge that overlooks the Rhine, a gap comes in the hedge that screens an almost precipitous descent into the broad, flat valley. The descent looks more perilous than it is, for constant use has worn the slender track into a series of rough steps, which lead to the vine clad knoll on which is situated Malans, and at Malans George Fasch, the landlord of our inn, can purchase all he needs, for it is near a station on the railway line between Zurich and Coire and close to the busy town of Mayenfeld in the valley below.

Just now there are no visitors at the inn, so the landlord only makes his toilsome journey once a fortnight; but when there is a family in the house he visits the valley more frequently, for he cannot bring very large stores with him, although he does not spare himself fatigue, and he mounts the natural ladder with surprising rapidity, considering the load he carries strapped to his shoulders.