

The great joy of Anna was to meet her father at the top of the pass and persuade him to lighten his burden by giving her some of it to carry; and to-day, when she had washed her face and hands, and had changed her clothes, she wished that he had gone to Malans; his coming back would have helped her to forget her disaster. Her aunt's words clung to the girl like bars; and now, as they rang in her ears again, she went into the woods to have her cry unobserved.

She stood leaning against a tree; and, as the tears rolled down her face, she turned and hid it against the rough red bark of the pine. She was crying for the loss of the dear, gentle mother, who had always helped her. Her mother had screened her awkwardness from public notice that Anna had scarcely been aware of it. Her aunt Christina had said, when she was summoned four years ago to manage her brother's household: "Your wife has ruined Anna, brother. I shall have hard work to improve her."

Anna was not crying now about her aunt's constant fault-finding; there was something in her grief more bitter even than the tears she shed for her mother; it seemed to the girl that day by day she was becoming more clumsy and stupid; she broke the crockery, and even the furniture; she spoiled her frocks; and, worst of all, she had more than once met her father's kind blue eyes fixed on her with a look of sadness that went to her heart. Did he, too, think that she never would be useful to her self or to any one?

At this thought her tears came more freely, and she pressed her hot face against the tree:

"I wonder why I was made?" she sobbed.

Then came a sharp crackling sound, as the twigs and pine needles snapped under a heavy tread.

Anna caught up her white apron and vigorously rubbed her eyes; then she hurried out to the path from her shelter among the trees.

In another minute her arms were round her father, and she was kissing him on both cheeks.

George Fasch kissed her and patted her shoulder; then a suppressed sob caught his ear. He held Anna away from him and looked at her face.

It was red and green in streaks, and her eyes were red and inflamed. The father was startled by her appearance.

"What is the matter, dear child?" he said. "You are ill."

Then his eyes fell on her apron. Its crumpled state, and the red and green smears on it, showed the use to which it had been put, and he began to guess what had happened.

Anna hung her head.

"I was crying, and I leaned against a tree. Oh, dear, it was a clean apron! Aunt will be vexed."

Her father sighed, but he pitied her confusion.

"Why did you cry, my child?" he said, half tenderly, half in rebuke. "Aunt Christina means well, though she speaks abruptly."

He only provoked fresh tears, but Anna tried so hard to keep them back that she was soon calm again.

"I am not vexed with Aunt Christina for scolding me," she said; "I deserved it; I am sorry for myself."

"Well, well," he said, cheerfully, "we cannot expect old heads on young shoulders." His honest, sunburned face was slightly troubled as he looked at her. "You will have to brush up a bit, you know, when Christina goes to Zurich. You are going to be left in charge of the house for a week or so."

Anna pressed her hands nervously together. She felt that the house would suffer greatly under her guidance; but then she should have her aunt's absence, and she should be free from those scathing rebukes which made her feel all the more clumsy and helpless when they were uttered in her father's presence.

George Fasch, however, had of late become aware of his daughter's awkwardness, and secretly he was troubled by the prospect of her aunt's absence. He was a kind man and an affectionate father, but he objected to Gretchen's unaided cookery, and he had, therefore, resolved to transact some long deferred business in Zurich during his sister's stay there. This would lessen the amount of his badly-cooked dinners at home.

"I shall start with Christina," he said—"some one must go with her to Fardista; and next day I shall come home by Malans, so you will have to meet me on Wednesday evening at the old place, eh, Anna?"

She nodded and smiled, but she felt a little disappointed. She reflected, however, that she should have her father alone for some days after his return.

Christina was surprised to see how cheerful the girl looked when she came indoors.

PART III.

Rain fell incessantly for several days, and, even when it ceased, masses of white vapour rose up from the neighbouring valleys and blotted out everything. The vapour had lifted, however, when Fasch and his sister had started on their expedition, and Anna, tired of her week's seclusion, set out on a ramble. A strange new feeling came over the girl as soon as she lost sight of her aunt's straight figure. She was free, there would be nobody to scold her or to make her feel awkward; she walked with delight, and with an ease that surprised her, over the fence that parted two meadows, she looked at her skirt, and she saw with relief that she had not much frayed it, yet she knew there were thorns, for there had been an abundance of wild roses in the hedge.

A lark was singing blithely over head, and the grasshoppers filled the air with joyful chirpings. Anna's face beamed with content.

"If life could be always like to-day," she thought, "oh, how nice it would be!"

Presently she reached the meadow with the brook running across it, and she gave a cry of delight. Down in the marsh into which the brook ran across the sloping field she saw a mass of bright dark blue. These were gentian flowers, opening blue and green blossoms to the sunshine, and in front of them the meadow itself was white with a sprinkling of grass of Parnassus. Anna had a passionate love of

flowers, and, utterly heedless of all but the joy of seeing them, she ran down the slope, and only stopped when she found herself ankle deep in the marsh below, in which the gentian grew.

This sobered her excitement. She pulled out one foot, and was shocked to find that she had left her shoe behind in the black slime; she was conscious, too, that the other foot was sinking deeper and deeper in the treacherous marsh. There was nothing to hold by; there was not even an osier near at hand. Behind the gentian rose a thicket of rosy-blossomed willow-herb, and here and there was a creamy tassel of meadowsweet, but even these were some feet beyond her grasp. Anna looked round her in despair. From the next field came a clicking sound, and as she listened she guessed that old Andreas was busy mowing. He was old, but he was not deaf, and she could easily make him hear a cry for help; but she was afraid of Andreas. He kept the hotel garden in order, and if he found foot-marks on the vegetable plots, or if anything went wrong with the plants, he always laid the blame on Anna. He was as neat as he was capacious, and the girl shrank from letting him see the plight she was in.

She stooped down and felt for her shoe, and as she recovered it she nearly fell full length into the bog; the struggle to keep her balance was fatal; her other foot sank several inches; it seemed to her that she must soon be snaked down by the horrible black water that spurted up from the marsh with her struggles. Without stopping to think, she cried as loud as she could: "Help me, Andreas! Help! I am drowning!"

At the cry the top of a straw hat appeared in sight, and its owner came up hill—a small man with twisted legs, in pale, clay-coloured trousers, a black waistcoat, and brown, linen shirt-sleeves. His wrinkled face looked hot, and his hat was pushed to the back of his head. He took it off and wiped his face with his handkerchief while he looked round him.

"Pouf!" He gave a grunt of displeasure. "So you are once more in mischief, are you? Ah, ah, ah! What, then, will the aunt, that ever to be respected Frauchin, say when she hears of this?"

He called this out as he came leisurely across the strip of meadow that separated him from Anna.

She was in an agony of fear lest she should sink still further in before he reached her; but she knew Andreas far too well to urge him even by a word to greater haste. So she stood shivering and pale with fear while she clasped her bog-stained shoe close to her.

Andreas had brought a stake with him, and he held this out to Anna but when she had tried to draw out her sinking foot she shook her head, it seemed to be stuck too fast in the bog.

Andreas gave a growl of discontent, and then went slowly up to the plank bridge. With some effort he raised the smaller of the two planks and carried it to where Anna stood fixed like a statue among the flowering waterplants. Then he pushed the plank out till it rested on a billock of rushes, while the other end remained on the meadow.

"Ah"—he drew a long breath—"see the trouble you give by your carelessness."

He spoke vindictively, as if he would have liked to give her a good shaking; but Anna smiled at him, she was so thankful at the prospect of release.

The mischievous little man kept her waiting some minutes. He pretended to test the safety of the plank by walking up and down it and trying it with his foot. At last, when the girl's heart had become sick with suspense, he suddenly stretched out both hands and pulled her on to the plank; then he pushed her along before him till she was on dry ground once more.

"Oh thank you Andreas," she began, but he cut her thanks very short.

"Go home at once and dry yourself," he said. "You are the plague of my life, and if I had been a wise man I should have left you in the marsh. Could not your senses tell you that all that rain meant danger in boggy places? There'll be mischief somewhere besides this; a land slip or two, more likely. There, run home, child, or you'll get cold."

He turned angrily away from her and went back to his work.

Anna hurried to the narrowest part of the brook and jumped across it. She could not make herself in a worse plight than she was already; her skirts were dripping with the black and filthy water of the marsh.

(Concluded in our next.)

CHRISTCHURCH.

(From our own Correspondent.)

JUPITER PLUVIUS and the power which poets name "Old Boreas," took a terrible revenge upon holiday makers in Christchurch last week. Showers and east winds nearly took all the pleasure out of our great carnival time. On Cup day the morning was beautiful, bright and sunny, and at twelve o'clock thousands of people thronged the railway station waiting to be taken out to the racecourse. Carriage after carriage was added to the long train and still people were unable to obtain seats. At last everyone was got on board, and the train, the longest, some people said, which ever left the Christchurch station, crept on its way and deposited its gay, eager freight of human beings at the entrance to the Riccarton course. By various other means numbers of people arrived at the same destination, some in traps, others in cabs, trams and busses. About one o'clock the course wore its usual spring-meeting appearance. Outside of the lawn there was the usual crowd and the usual number of itinerant shows. There was the long line of carriages and private traps, with the laces of the many coloured parasols of their fair occupants fluttering in the breeze. In the saddling paddock "spoils" and other interested persons thronged, in order to get a last look at the favourite or the horse which carried their money, in order to discover if he was as "fit" as when he took his last gallop upon the tan. Round the to-alsator, people pushed and jostled each other to get putting their ponies upon the machine. A study of that crowd around the totalisator revealed the fact that the gambling mania is very wide spread indeed. There you see all sorts and con-