

A CHILD OF THE MANSE.

(By Gertrude Cockerell.)

(Continued.)

The morning light was struggling past its obstacles into Pearl's room, when a gentle knock aroused her from her sleep. Thrusting into her hands a cup of tea and some bread and butter, Sarah whispered, "Jest to put a little heart into yer, yer know," and withdrawing almost as quickly as she had entered, with the parting injunction, "Yer needn't say nothin'; she wouldn't like it."

Pearl warmly thanked the intruder for her thoughtful act, though she did not approve of the deception, and was loath to receive such favour. And Sarah, who always made use of the housetop to proclaim her virtues, only got from her mistress a stern rebuke for "interfering with her intention to begin with Miss Wilson as she intended to go on."

As Pearl hastily dressed, her sweet, clear voice rang out in tuneful praise, with her new-born resolution, "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praises shall continually be in my mouth."

"Who's that, my dear," Mr Avis asked.

"Oh! I suppose Margaret," Phyllis replied with irritation.

"Why, what a good voice she has," he exclaimed, with appreciation.

Phyllis vowed that this remark should never reach Pearl's ears, and on a subsequent occasion, when her husband found her an intelligent critic of the work on which he was engaged, she made up her mind the two should meet as little as possible.

Whether wilfully or otherwise, there always followed aloofness, if not separation, on the part of any one inclined to favour Pearl. It was the policy of Phyllis, in her immediate circle, though never outside that circle, to withhold the kindly word or message that would have cemented friendship, or the explanation that would have saved heart-ache, or the acknowledgment of suffering. She acted on the assumption that to ignore inconvenient facts made them non-existent. "You needn't tell her that her voice is good, or you will make her vain." "Don't take notice of her, or she will think herself ill," and so on.

Occasionally Phyllis had qualms of conscience over some fresh havoc her tongue had caused, but her admirers immediately checked any personal blame. "You should not blame yourself." "How humble." "How sweet." "How just you are."

"Sarah has a great deal too much to do. Evelyn was such a comfort, and did so much," was dinned into Pearl's ears from morning to night. And ignoring the fact of Pearl's delicacy, she would add, "And she was not strong." "As for myself, I am a veritable slave. I have no time to live," as like one demented she rushed at the last moment to overtake some trifling duty, her long absence at the 'phone indulging in social gossip, or watching her neighbours from the window, made overdue.

As to Sarah, her service was "eye service," and "down tools" was her invariable rule in the long periods when her mistress was not in evidence. It was when the neglect of common cleanliness was only too patent that Phyllis ventured to address Sarah on the subject, sheltering behind Pearl as the one "dissatisfied." Sarah's ire knew no bounds, and she entered on a course of persecution that did much to embitter Pearl's existence. Mistress and maid now made the adverse discussion of Pearl's ways and methods their constant theme, and so the fires of bitterness and resentment were kept burning. The most flagrant neglect of Sarah's work was met with, "You are too particular, Margaret," though Phyllis took no pains to verify her charge. Lamentably weak where she should have been strong, Phyllis was masterful enough where she should have been yielding. Whatever mishap occurred in the home, she made Pearl the scapegoat. Was Sarah in a bad humour, it was, "What have you been doing now to upset my woman," and despite her explanations and attempts to put the crooked straight, Pearl was always made to appear in the wrong. Her work was at a discount, and her efforts to bring order out of chaos were called "interference." Taking every advantage of the position, Sarah became rude, and even insolent in word and deed, despite Pearl's efforts at conciliation. Sometimes Phyllis, sometimes Sarah, would suddenly pounce down upon Pearl in the midst of her thankless tasks, with "You

should not do this," "What are you doing," and both would watch her like a child-criminal whose every act had to be controlled.

It was not long after her arrival, that Pearl was pouring forth her soul in sweet refrain, revelling in the beautiful organ the home possessed, when she was startled in the midst of her sublime exercise by her cousin madly rushing into her presence.

"Surely her clothes must have caught on fire," was Pearl's first thought. But no, facing her with flaming cheeks and flashing eyes, she exclaimed, "What are you doing? You will ruin that beautiful instrument," despite the fact that Pearl was a musician of no mean order.

Another day Pearl was attacking a pile of household mending with a worn-out sewing machine, when the irate Phyllis, whom Sarah had secretly called upon the scene with frantic, mysterious gestures, burst forth in fury with, "What a liberty to use my machine, Margaret," as she snatched it from her.

Pearl found it hard to realise, after her free life at the Manse, and its responsibilities, which she had so long shouldered with competency, that she was not to have a free hand in her cousin's house. "How long, O Lord?" was a cry often on her lips. And then she thought of Him, "despised and rejected of men," and "considered Him" and was comforted.

(To be Continued.)

ANNUAL MEETINGS.

Several enquiries have been made by officers of Unions as to the necessity of advertising their annual meetings. The majority of our Unions are unregistered, and therefore they may call their annual meeting either by advertising or by sending post-cards, with time and place of meeting, to every member. Those Unions which are registered under "The Incorporated Societies Act for 1908," must have rules, and in these rules must provide for the mode of summoning and holding general meetings of the Union. It is therefore necessary for these registered Unions to consult their rules, and comply with the terms of the rules on calling meetings.