My cottage clients / [Royal Hospital for Incurables ; illustrated by C. Butterworth].

Contributors

Butterworth, C.
Royal Hospital for Incurables (Putney, England)

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183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
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My Cottage Clients

London 1886

MY

COTTAGE CLIENTS

"In many climes without avail,
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
Behold, it is here—in this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet with me but now;
This crust is my body broken for thee,
This water His blood that died on the tree
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share for another's need;
Not what we give, but what we share—
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,—
Himself, his hungering neighbour, and me."

Vision of Sir Launfal.

LONDON 1886

AN ANCESTRAL DWELLING (*see page* 40).

MY COTTAGE CLIENTS.

IN the summer of 1883, the writer was induced to visit, whilst on a short country tour, several of the out-door pensioners of the Royal Hospital for Incurables, residing in the east of England. A second opportunity having presented itself, he resolved to devote a few days to a like quest in the southern counties, accompanied by the young friend whose pencil rendered him good service two years ago. The cases, taken without selection, may, he believes, be accepted as a sample of the work done by the Institution; and he trusts that these brief notes will commend it to the reader, without the aid of comment or appeal.

FIRST DAY.——On a Monday in July, we took a morning train from Waterloo, for Gillingham, in Dorsetshire. We were committed to a journey of sentiment; it had cost an effort to free one's self from the mental habit of every day; the intervening Sunday, with its quiet ways, had helped to this end. I had taken a short pledge of abstinence from newspapers,—for the record of people's sins and selfishnesses were out of harmony with our errand to these wayside sufferers,—and allowed myself to fall into a state of kindly receptivity. Past Surbiton, preparing for trainloads of City men, Woking's breezy common, Salisbury's lofty fane, to our village destination. It was, no doubt, at one time, a picturesque spot; and here and there are still rude, thatched cottages, but the architecture has undergone a renaissance, and presents a style of what may be called debased suburban.

We found G. W., our first client, a man of thirty-three, living with his father and mother in a house by the high road, that could not,

G. W.'S HOME.

perhaps, be termed a cottage. His mother came along the bricked garden path to meet us; she led the way into a neat parlour, and there was her poor son. He was sitting in a wheeled chair, which he was able to propel after a fashion; the legs were twitching with motions beyond his control. He had been subject, in infancy, to convulsions, ending in chorea, with its distressing effects. His natural nervousness soon subsided, and we were presently all chatting away. Mrs. W. was a fair specimen of a thrifty cottager's wife, tall, and still good looking. I fancy she gave many a Dorsetshire swain the heart-ache, before deciding in favour of the stalwart young gardener, now a man of seventy, shyly waiting for us outside.

G. W. is very helpless; I observed a silver chain hanging from his waistcoat; it was attached to a whistle; for it sometimes happens, when he adventures alone into the garden, that his chair is upset, in which trouble he whistles for his mother. He does not dwell upon his affliction; he rather ignores it, keeps his own money, keys, and paper, and loves to be as much a man of business as circumstances will allow. He is, too, a ladies' man, and speculates on the kind of person he would choose for a wife; he showed us a handsome musical box, recently presented to him by a number of ladies, who, his mother said, were all married. Poor fellow, a child in affection, a man in years

a babe in helplessness! Some of us in health might weep for very shame.

G. W.'s parents were concerned about his future, when they should be no more; and we were able to give them a hope that he might then find a shelter in the Home at Putney. They thanked us for an evident relief to their frequent anxieties. Mrs. W. kindly offered us a lunch, wherein appeared a pitcher of refreshing cider, and gave each a bunch of roses from the many that were, not blushing, but rampant and laughing about the garden. The pension, in this case, has been received five years; and, with the payments by a lodger, forms the only certain means of the family.

We left the worthy trio, sped on our way with the keepsake of flowers and unmerited thanks. There was time for a stroll into the church, and a sketch of the old pulpit, astride the nave, soon to be replaced by one of orthodox build, and for a turn in the fields overlooking the town.

GILLINGHAM.

"THE OLD HOUSE," BLANDFORD.

SECOND DAY——The overnight trains had brought us to Blandford, where we had two pensioners. The evening sun lit up the quaint "Old House," and the severely classic gateway of Bryanstone Park; and the soft tones of the Cambridge chimes were dropping from the broad church tower. After an early breakfast, my companion had a couple of hours' sketching; then, presenting ourselves at the door of a plain brick dwelling, we inquired for Miss C. The advent, not unexpected, of two male visitors, somewhat unnerved her, but she was quickly reassured.

Unlike that of our Gillingham friend, the early life of S. A. C. had been one of activity, persisted in notwithstanding a weak constitution and frequent ill-health. Left fatherless, when a few months old, she was cared for by a good mother, aided by friends; and, after school days, cut short by the necessity of earning her living, she was put apprentice to the dressmaking business. At eighteen, when in her first situation, she was seized with epilepsy, destined to be the terrible shadow on her future life. She fought against her trouble, and was sometimes able, strange as it may seem, to ward off the attacks by a strong effort of the will. For five years she taught in a ragged school, and carried on a Christian work, seeking out the parents of the children from the worst haunts of poverty, and bringing them to a place of worship. At the age of twenty-four, S. A. C. lost her mother; and, for six years more, she continued the struggle for bread. Then came a

J. H.

breakdown; but hope, for a time, supplied a stimulus. "I was advised," she says, "by the doctor and friends to try private business; this, however, did not answer. I was brought very low; but God did not forsake me. He sent me one of His messengers, who instructed me how to obtain the out-door pension of the Royal Hospital for Incurables. I feel I cannot be too thankful to God for providing me with the necessary things of this life, as well as, through suffering, preparing me for the life that is to come. To His name be all the glory!" A practical sermon, truly, preached by a lone woman, living in a single room. We shook hands with her almost silently, and thoughtfully took our way in the direction of a new client.

It was a cottage, with a tiny general shop adjoining, in the high road. Inquiring for J. H., we were shown by an elderly woman into a living-room, and found a young man of thirty, half reclining on a wheeled couch at the window. They were mother and son. The man's face had a cheerful and intelligent expression; his hands were free, but the legs were gathered into a position that betrayed at once their complete helplessness. The mother told us his short, sad history. At eleven years of age, he went to a school-treat at Poole, and received a sun-stroke; for two years he lay insensible; during this time his mother nursed and tended the inert, unconscious form of her once bright, active boy. The circumstances of the family were straitened, the father being only a country carrier. Well-meaning friends advised them to send the lad to the parish infirmary; it would be all the same to him, and a relief to his parents. "No," said his mother, "he shall die at home." The weary months passed; gradually the faculties returned; but paralysis and disease of the joints had made him a cripple for life. Misfortune attended the father; his two horses died in one week; his occupation was gone, and he has since earned a precarious living, in which the little omnium shop bears a part. Some years ago, the mother fell ill; and, while a patient at a London Hospital, was informed of the Royal Hospital for Incurables; the lad was too young, being then under twenty; when he reached that age, nomination was obtained; and, in May, 1874, he was elected. The acquisition of the pension changed the face of things, it was a joy and a help, and rescued them from the double care of poverty and dependence.

J. H. is fond of music, he plays the zither and the violin, and has

a true taste; he told us that he had taken part at a public performance of the *Elijah*, "but," he added, "on account of my chair I have to be the first there and the last away." He has musical friends, and many a winter's evening is whiled away with a cottage concert. One pities profoundly the idle man without resources, vainly trying to kill time; here was a man, condemned to unwilling inactivity, finding means to make the best of his lot; the wind has indeed been tempered to the shorn lamb.

Mrs. H. took us into the garden at the back of the old dwelling, where an array of tall white lilies daintily tossed their fragrant heads, and a rude parrot greeted us with a shrill "Who are you?" Returning, to say good-bye, we found our friend deep in a game of draughts, with a young man who had run in during the dinner hour. We left, feeling that in the case of J. H., to use his own words, "the benefits of the pension were very great indeed."

GATEWAY, BRYANSTONE PARK.

WIMBORNE CEMETERY.

THIRD DAY.——It is pleasant, in the young forenoon, in the Cemetery of Wimborne; the land of graves lies high, in view of an expanse of the richest Dorset landscape; beyond, are wooded hills; in front, the warm-toned towers of the Minster, and, gliding like a silver snake in the lowland, is the Stour, whose last victim, a little boy of twelve, is to be buried to-day; it was, as the sexton, narrating a chapter of fatalities, informed us, "a very deceptional river." He was a man of histories: "There!"—pointing to a stone, said he,—"he was a strange old man, he was a walking postman, he belonged to the Wesleyans; he never would look back on his walk; if you wanted to give him a parcel, you had to overtake him, then turn round and meet him, and put the parcel in his hand; he did not stop or answer, but went right on; he was found dead, leaning against a bank by the roadside; the most extraordinary thing was, he never changed colour after he was dead; his face was ruddy to the last, and they had to send for another doctor before the funeral, to see if he was really dead." It was a parable, in fact—the unaverted eye, the unchecked walk, the translation in the midst of duty, the living hue on the countenance of death—thanks, good sexton. But H. has finished

his sketch of the avenue of clipped yews, and other clients are expecting us.

Mrs. M. G. was a widow, eighty years of age; occupying a room over a draper's shop; she was suffering from great debility and nearly total blindness; the nervous weakness was too apparent when we entered her room; she soon regained her equanimity, and entered into conversation. It is, perhaps, that one has a weakness for aged people, but I thought her the ideal of a good old lady. Mrs. G. early became a widow, and at once applied herself to the only calling then open for educated women, teaching; for forty years she kept a young ladies' school at Wimborne, and had as many as thirty-five pupils. On the failure of health she parted with her school, but, unfortunately, her successor came to grief, and one-half of the purchase-money was never paid. Then followed absolute poverty; her friends, gained by a loving disposition, did not forsake her; irregular help came from many quarters; one gentleman, in particular, a worthy son of a good man, stood by the widow in her trouble; former pupils, old servants, and even charwomen whom she had employed, sent her contributions; but something more was needed; and, in 1877, Mrs. G. was elected to the pension of the Hospital, now her mainstay. "Here," says her landlady, as she hands in the monthly missive from Queen Victoria Street, "is your love letter." Love is the life of this dear old lady; her fresh affection breaks out at every turn of the conversation; it has been the secret of her past success; "I love all young things," she said. It is her supreme comfort now; "He loves me," she cried, as she spoke of the goodness of her Heavenly Father; "I look at the mercies; there is always something to be thankful for; I am as happy as ever I was." It was her parting testimony, and we were not likely to forget it. I could have wished to possess her portrait; she could not give me that, but the likeness of her spirit will remain.

In the next road lived Miss M. A. S., a lady somewhat past middle life; her dwelling is a modern semi-detached cottage, with an air of what is termed gentility about it. We were admitted by an elderly person, who shares the house in the capacity of nurse-friend. The invalid, suffering from spinal complaint and internal trouble, was

reclining on a couch, and bade us welcome in a cordial, well-bred manner. The room was furnished, though scantily, with taste, some of the articles plainly telling of other days. One framed picture represented a broad-fronted house; this, we understood, was her birth-place, near Salisbury. Her father kept, for thirty-two years, a boarding school for boys, and was a respected, well-to-do man, and a scholar withal. To those who understand the work of education, such a career gives a title to honour, not excelled by any profession. He died suddenly, from heart disease. His son succeeded him, and his daughter, M. A. S., and a sister established, in the same premises, a preparatory school for little boys. Their brother's sudden death broke up the school. The two young ladies, with their mother and pupils, removed to an adjoining county; but, before long, the sister, the chief worker, died of consumption, and M. A. S. was left to continue what was no longer the work, but the struggle, alone. A few months of anxiety and over-exertion followed, then an utter collapse; the school was given up, and the invalid became dependent upon a surviving brother. In a short time he died, and M. A. S. was left entirely without resources. "Then," she says, "true and kind friends joined hand and heart in procuring for me the annual pension granted by your noble institution, which has proved a certain and great comfort, and for which I feel the deepest gratitude;" adding, "I pray that no deficiency of funds may deny to others that aid which I myself so heartily appreciate, for, next to health itself, there is no greater blessing than the alleviation of suffering."

The recital, a very *multum in parvo*, finished, we went off into a chat on books. She kindled into enthusiasm; we talked of George Eliot, and of Dickens, whose master-piece she pronounces "The Old Curiosity Shop;" but her delight is in the severer studies of philosophy and the mysteries of being. On wishing her good morning, we felt that the County of Dorset had given good evidence. As we left Wimborne, that sunny afternoon, the town was astir with a temperance demonstration; a procession of Blue Ribbon children, with flags and bands, had made a circuit of the streets and were marshalled in the Square, singing hymns, under the shade of the Minster, the 'busman of our hotel, hymn-book in hand, acting as fugleman. By-and-by we were skirting the New Forest, among whose thick trees played a swarm of happy children. The contrasts of life meet us at every turn;—do they teach us anything?

WATTS MONUMENT.

FOURTH DAY.——Southampton is not a congenial place to one

> "In quest of nooks where Nature, not unkind,
> Harbours within her leafy arms the child
> Of suffering."

It is a town of unrest; here is a tramcar, loaded to overflowing with ships' stokers; every other house in High Street, it seems, carries a flagstaff, significant of artificial rejoicing at dignified comings and goings; there are open spaces and statues; one of the latter is that of Isaac Watts, whose poetic being here first drew breath. Before the profuse hymnology of to-day began, how many a sick prisoner drank comfort at his well of sacred song, as in such a sonnet as this!—

> "Our journey is a thorny maze,
> But we march upward still;
> Forget the troubles of the way,
> And reach at Zion's hill.
>
> "There, on a green and flowery mount,
> Our weary souls shall sit,
> And, with transporting joy, recount
> The labours of our feet.
>
> "No vain discourse shall fill our tongues,
> Nor trifles vex our ear;
> Infinite grace shall fill our song,
> And God rejoice to hear."

In a humble street, not far from Dr. Watts' monument, lives H. H. D. We had hardly entered the passage when we were greeted by an elderly woman, who had seen us from her window, and concluded we were in search of her. Coming downstairs must have been a hazardous effort for a person of sixty-two, rigid with rheumatism, and partially paralysed. We mounted to her room, and a colloquy began, in which we heard a refreshing story of Christian kindness to a dependent. H. H. D. was the daughter of a clerk, a profession that notably wears the coat of respectability over the skeleton of poverty; so, when adverse times came, the girl of twelve, of delicate health, entered the service of a lady, who gave her a home for many years after she was unequal to any domestic duty, and left her a legacy of £100. "She was," said the narrator, "a Christian lady;" and we thought that went without saying. At the age of forty-four, H. H. D. was without means save the legacy, and that was disappearing by littles. At this juncture, we were told, a kind Providence raised her up friends, who procured for her the annuity of the Hospital; this she has received over sixteen years; and, except a shilling occasionally earned by making pincushions, is her all. "It was all the Lord's doing," she said. H. H. D. cherished grateful memories of ministers, spoke particularly of the Rev. Joshua Harrison, of whose church, at Camden Town, she had been a member, and who assisted in her election; also of the late Rev. Robert Vint, of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church at Southampton, who had been very kind to her. Her story seemed quite natural, for H. H. D. had a gracious disposition and a friend-winning face.

STREET CORNER, SOUTHAMPTON.

We had arranged to be at Newport in the afternoon; this left little time for my companion to add to his stock of 'bits,' of which he had noted several in the tumble-down parts of the town; so, in pursuance of an inflexible itinerary, we made for Cowes by an afternoon steamer; thence, after waiting awhile at the shabby railway-station, by a sluggish train, to Newport. This pretty country town, the metropolis of "The Island," was putting up Venetian masts, symptomatic of a gala day, to be kept next week, in honour of the nuptials of Princess Beatrice; men of the Sutherland and Argyllshire Highlanders, who, my friend cynically remarked, were mostly of London origin, were marching to and fro, and prepossessed the mind with an idea of mirth and merry-making. Nevertheless, after tea, we resolutely bent our steps in search of our next pensioner.

The door of a small house in Pyle Street was opened by a middle-aged lady in black; as we entered, another appeared, and then another; it was bewildering, but, recovering ourselves, we asked which was M. R. W. The third lady, sitting in an easy chair by the window, acknowledged the inquiry; a brisk conversation commenced, and was, as might be expected, well sustained. Gradually their story unfolded itself; the three single ladies in black were sisters, survivors of a family of eight; their father was, for thirty-seven years, a grocer and tea-dealer in Oxford Street, their house occupying the spot on which the Church for the Deaf and Dumb now stands. In the year 1858, he unfortunately became insolvent, and the Grocers' Benevolent Society, of which he was one of the earliest promoters, fitly granted him an annuity. For many years, they eked out a living by the usual forlorn expedient of letting lodgings; the father died, and the eldest sister, having succeeded in getting a small pension from the United Kingdom Beneficent Institution, they settled in their native island. M. R. W., who suffers from heart disease and nervous weakness, was elected to the pension of the Royal Hospital for Incurables; so with a total income of £45 per annum, supplemented by the trifling proceeds of a little needlework, the three ladies keep a home together. It is a cottage of six rooms, at a weekly rent of three shillings and ninepence, including a nice garden; less than the cost of a single room in London. A kind friend has given the invalid a Bath-chair, in which her sister takes her out for an airing. I was much struck with the cheerful spirit of this cottage home; and, before taking leave of the interesting trio, secured permission to retain, by a photograph, a memento of our visit.

M. R. W.

At the other end of the town, lives A. W., a namesake, and, in some way, a relative, of the lady we had last seen; she was the youngest on our list of Incurables, being only twenty-eight years old. Plurality seemed the order of the evening; for we were now admitted into the presence of four ladies, two elder and two younger, each a Miss W.: seeking two Miss W.'s, we had found seven, and we were afterwards facetiously told there were forty more in the Island. The humorous vein was not struck at first. To be young and a hopeless sufferer, makes a true call on pity; here was one already looking back on seventeen years of almost total helplessness. At seven left an orphan, at eleven attacked by rheumatism, which, after tantalizing its victim with hopes of amendment, fixed her, at sixteen, in its rigid ties! No wonder A. W. could not hold back her tears, in referring to the loss of her girl-day hopes, and the prospect, so full of bitterness to a sensitive heart, of a future of comparative uselessness. Not of actual uselessness, as it has turned out—far from it; A. W. is a good unit in the household; she helps one of her aunts to teach a little "preparatory" school in the house, and has two pupils of her own, in shorthand, an art in which she is self-instructed. I must remark that the other lady, also an aunt, keeps house, and cares for a pair of lodgers, helped by a slightly elder sister of the patient. This aunt has a pension from the Agricultural Benevolent Institution; so that the home is held together by a rope of four strands,—the two pensions, the lodgers, and the preparatory enterprise. It is altogether a house of industry, and a certain prettiness of exterior entitles it to rank as a "villa." My rude pen would fain describe our twilight chat; the tears soon dried up, and our friends showed themselves not inapt in the art of conversation; they made merry over the many spinsters of their name, rich and poor; the elder niece archly protesting, in the general behalf, "We do not marry." H. turned out to sketch the basket chair recently given to A. W., in which she takes her walks abroad. I left with her a copy of my late friend Paxton Hood's *Palace of Pain*, and have since heard from her; she says:—

"We have been much interested in the book you gave us, the perusal of which ought to make one contented with one's own lot in life, though it may not be so active as that of others. I can well imagine what a blessing it is to those great sufferers, that, in the midst of all their sorrows, they have not the added misery of knowing they are a burden to others. I try to make my life as busy and useful as my circumstances will permit, but not with what Mr. Hood jokingly

calls the 'everlasting knitting;' for at that I am not much of a hand, which is, I am afraid, giving myself a bad character, as he seems to think it such a womanly attainment."

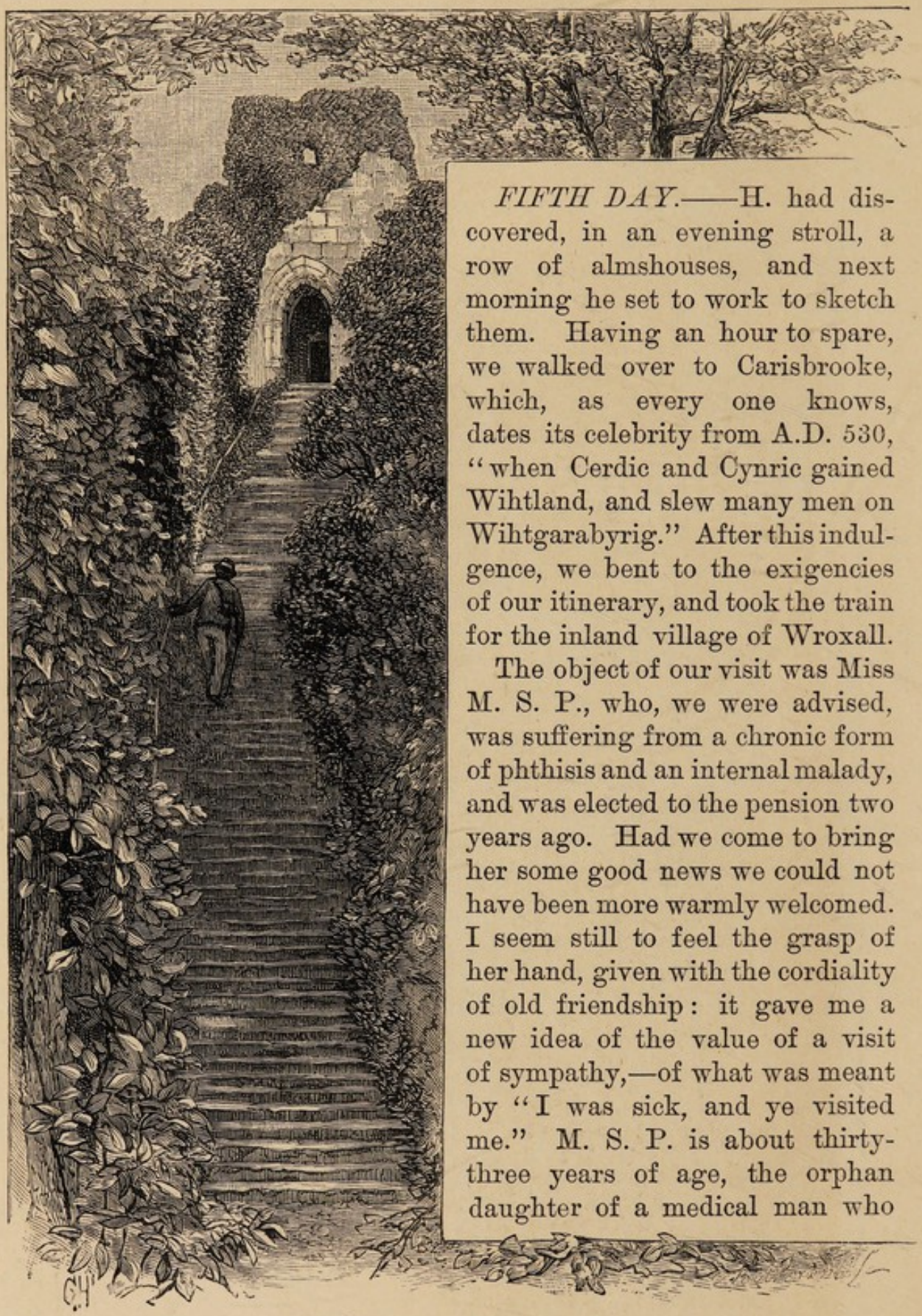
Brave heart! your sweet resignation and willing spirit are the compensation the Just One awards to the children of adversity.

"Thy love has many a lighted path
No outward eye can trace,
And my heart sees Thee in the deep
With darkness on its face,
And communes with Thee 'mid the storm
As in a secret place.

"When I am feeble as a child,
And flesh and heart give way,
Then on Thy everlasting strength
With passive trust I stay,
And the rough wind becomes a song,
The darkness shines like day."

ALMSHOUSES, NEWPORT.

A. W.



FIFTH DAY.——H. had discovered, in an evening stroll, a row of almshouses, and next morning he set to work to sketch them. Having an hour to spare, we walked over to Carisbrooke, which, as every one knows, dates its celebrity from A.D. 530, "when Cerdic and Cynric gained Wihtland, and slew many men on Wihtgarabyrig." After this indulgence, we bent to the exigencies of our itinerary, and took the train for the inland village of Wroxall.

The object of our visit was Miss M. S. P., who, we were advised, was suffering from a chronic form of phthisis and an internal malady, and was elected to the pension two years ago. Had we come to bring her some good news we could not have been more warmly welcomed. I seem still to feel the grasp of her hand, given with the cordiality of old friendship: it gave me a new idea of the value of a visit of sympathy,—of what was meant by "I was sick, and ye visited me." M. S. P. is about thirty-three years of age, the orphan daughter of a medical man who

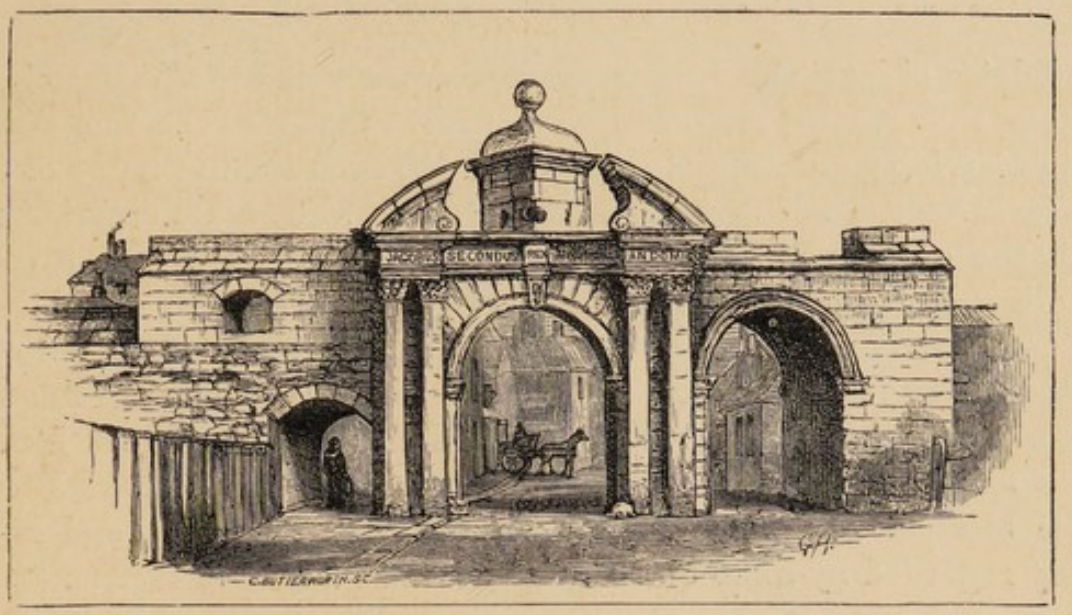
AT CARISBROOKE.

AN INVALID'S OUTLOOK.

practised, for many years, in the adjoining village of Godshill, and died, after a long illness, in impoverished circumstances, in 1870. Judging by the filial sentiment that marked every reference to him, the father and daughter had been all in all to each other: she accompanied him in his drives, acting, she said, as his page, assisted him in dispensing, and was his nurse and companion in his fatal illness. Mr. P. was one of those humane doctors, not rare, who "consider the poor and needy." He often refused to take payment from a poor patient, when in actual need of the money himself. No! he did not die impoverished, but rich towards God; and his child is not begging bread. For some time after her father's death, M. S. P. tried to do a little nursing, but her health gave way, and she had to look the future in the face. At this time, an unknown visitor, who had met with her at the Consumption Hospital at Ventnor, commenced sending her a weekly gift of four shillings, which is still continued. She is fortunate in finding a home with an old friend, whose living room she shares, "having," as she says, "my own corner in it, with a sofa, kindly given me by a lady friend five years ago, and a table. Here I lie, and write, and read, and do all I can to bear patiently all my heavenly Father sees fit to lay upon me; so that, with the God-sent gift of bright spirits, and the motherly care of my dear friend and all her household, I have so much to be thankful for that the tears of gratitude will often come."

M. S. P. is a member of the "Christian Workers' and Invalids' Mutual Help Association;" the "help" to her is the pleasure of corresponding with people like-minded; and there can be no doubt that, in this communion of spirits, many, known only by name, have been made glad by fellowship with her. M. S. P. calls the monthly allowance from the Hospital her "daily bread," for verily it is so; and she is without fear for the future, seeing that the rules allow of a pensioner entering the home, when friends and resources fail. M. S. P., coming to the front door, pointed out to us Appuldurcombe Wood, and the features of the scenery so familiar to her, dismissing us with a hearty "God bless you both."

A strange visit to the Isle of Wight! Of its natural beauties we had seen little or nothing: we had seen, what, perhaps, few pleasure-seekers find, the better side of human nature, the picturesque in character. We had learned something, too, to make us perhaps sadder, let us hope, wiser men.



WATER GATE, PORTSMOUTH.

SIXTH DAY.——We had run, the previous afternoon, from the interior village of the Wight, to Portsmouth, with little care for the garish architecture of the pier saloons at Ryde and Southsea, or ear for the military music at the latter, making unholy rivalry with the lapping waters. We were prepared for variety, perhaps contrast, in the case that followed on the list, that of a man in middle life, and of humble rank. Pursuing a straggling thoroughfare in the outskirts of Southsea, we stopped at a second-hand clothes shop, and were shown by a woman into a back parlour, where J. P. was evidently waiting our arrival. He was paralysed, and unable to walk without help. It appeared that, fifteen years ago, J. P. had the misfortune to meet with an accident at cricket, a fall, which resulted in paralysis. He was at the time employed in the Royal Mews at Pimlico, twenty-six years of age, an active, honest young man. Debarred from labour, without friends save a widowed mother, without such little resources as come to the relief of afflicted womankind, and without hope of recovery, it would have taxed a stout heart to contemplate the future. A providential circumstance now happened, that was to open a prospect of better days. J. P. went to live with his mother at Liphook, where a pensioner of this Charity was living; she informed him of her own good fortune, and put him in the way of becoming a candidate. Things were at the lowest ebb with mother and son, and the dread possibility of the workhouse confronted them, when a ray of hope appeared. One day, a strange gentleman appeared in the Hampshire village, asking for J. P.; it was a subscriber to the Institution who had assumed the task of helping

candidates of long standing (a practice commended to all subscribers). He saw the crippled man, and was satisfied that his case was genuine and deserving; and, in the course of a few months, the name of J. P. appeared on the list of successful candidates. The countryside rang with the event, which next week figured as an item in the county intelligence of the *Hampshire Post*. Our friend recalled, with hilarity, the fact that he was once suddenly and briefly famous. J. P. lost his mother three years ago; the poor soul, who was working her fingers to the bone for him, having been rewarded by sharing with him for three and a half years the regular and certain bounty, literally twice blessed. J. P. has a home with a married brother, and is probably regarded by some of his neighbours as a man of means.

The pensioner, to whose mention of the Hospital J. P. owed his good fortune, still lives at Liphook; so it was, that, on this Saturday afternoon, with our faces Londonward, we alighted at a platform luxuriant with rose-trees, and marched in quest of E. C. We had passed the cottage, and were making inquiry of a young lady on the opposite side of the way. "There she is," was the reply, pointing to a short figure at a garden gate looking after us. E. C. was not alone, a female friend having, since a recent serious illness, come down to stay with her. Her case is a very afflicted one; she suffers from a bending of the bones, accompanied by abscesses of a chronic nature, and presents an aspect of much weakness and deformity; she lives in a convenient cottage, with outhouse and kitchen garden, at a weekly rent of two shillings and fourpence. Until the timely visit of her friend, she lived here alone, having only the pension to depend upon. At the time of her illness she was sorely put to it, having to pay away her monthly cheque of £1 13*s*. 4*d*. for a brief period of medical attendance. E. C. lost her father, who was assistant to a medical man, by desertion when an infant, so that her whole life has been, with little exception, one of dependence. This is her story, as kindly furnished by her clergyman:—

"She is fifty-one years of age, and has suffered from her present disease since early childhood. At the age of two years, symptoms of hip disease began to manifest themselves. After her home was broken up, Miss C. tried to earn a livelihood by dressmaking, and

E. C.

continued to do so until the disease encroached too much on her strength. She was thus left without means, and dependent on the kindness of some friends in a humble station of life. She had, however, heard of the Hospital for Incurables, and determined to try for a pension. Mainly owing to her own courage and resolution (for she had very few friends among the subscribers to the Society) she at length succeeded in her object.

"She has often told me with what joy she received the telegram announcing her election; and, indeed, it has proved a great blessing and comfort to her. Till quite recently she has lived by herself; but now she requires some assistance in the house; and, for the last two months, one of the kind friends with whom she formerly lived has been with her, and done everything to increase her comfort and lighten her sufferings. Miss C. cannot now walk more than a few yards, and even then she has to use a crutch or stick. However, thanks to the aid of a little wheeled chair, she has been a very regular attendant and communicant at our church. It is pleasant to learn how she can see God through all her sufferings (which have been very severe), and how convinced she is that He has been her Guide throughout. She exhibits great pluck and cheerfulness under circumstances which would have crushed any but a brave heart."

E. C's. friend invited me into the garden to see her little crop of potatoes, strawberries, &c.; and, on re-entering, behold, a repast had been cunningly spread, of bread, butter, and fruit, and, to crown it, a champagne bottle of ginger ale; while, as if such good-natured hospitality was not sufficiently overcoming, E. C. pressed on each a beautiful nosegay, which, *pour comble de bonheur*, had been sent by a lady, in honour of the expected visit. In return, we held out a hope to her that, when she was no longer able to fight against her troubles in her country home, she might reckon on finding a retreat at Putney.

We travelled back to London in the evening, having completed the greater part of our task, to which three days had still to be given.

VILLAGE GREEN, BURBAGE.

SEVENTH DAY.——Again Monday morning; ag ain the 9 a.m. train from Waterloo. On the last occasion, a group of distinguished Chinamen were bidding farewell to barbarian friends; to-day, too, the platform had a stirring aspect; a group of merry children were off for a treat, a squad of convicts were being marched to their carriage, and a large party of men were leaving home for a distant destination; to these a number of women, their eyes red with weeping, were waiving adieu; it was touching to see them follow the train, as it moved away, to the last point on which they could obtain foothold; the iron steed, snorting contemptuously at its miscellaneous freight, carried us all quickly away through suburb, corn-field, and meadow.

We were bound for Burbage, in Wiltshire, and arrived at noon; it was, perhaps, the hottest day of the season. The various duties of the countryside station were in the hands of a young man with a turn for drollery; we asked the way to Burbage, about a mile and a-half off, and specially to the address given, viz., 67, High Street, near the *White Hart*. The youth evidently thought we had been tricked; he said there was no High Street, but he knew the *White Hart*, and also its proprietor; so, with plenary instructions, we were quickly upon the road, an inch thick with white dust of chalk. "High Street" was certainly a euphemism for the picturesque line of scattered cottages. The number, however, was fact; for the houses were figured with the regularity of a London street. There,

too, was our landmark, its sign bearing the ancient and nearly untraceable image of that forest marvel. No. 67 is the end cottage of a row on a high bank, with flights of brick steps reaching to a common footway, each having a garden overhanging the road, and a well, with wooden covering, windlass, and bucket, by the front door. The reader will pardon this preamble, for a single case is allotted to the day, and we had leisure to give our eyes a holiday. The tenement was a double one; its occupants, an aged couple, brother and sister, the latter being the object of our call. Turning in, we were received by Mrs. E. B., a lady of seventy-three, dressed in black, seated in arm-chair, from which she could not move by herself. To our surprise, a cloth was spread on the round table, and a meal was in preparation; an elderly woman, who answered to the name of Mary, was frying tempting slips of Wiltshire bacon, and eggs, and we were enjoined to postpone conversation till we had partaken of refreshment. This was served by Mary, after she had, in her eagerness, knocked her head three times on the projecting chimney-piece. There were new potatoes, and peas as large as marbles, from the garden, all helped down with a jug of Wiltshire ale. We were then free to talk.

And a right pleasant talk it was; for E. B. was a woman of culture. She was a native of Marlborough, and left early to her own resources. For five years she taught in the school of a Mlle. Règine Habermayr, at Ratisbon. She spoke with much affection of this period, and showed us a testimonial presented to her by forty-four fair *Schülerinnen*, with a handsome watch. E. B. was afterwards, for ten years, Matron of the Warneford Hospital at Leamington. The committee of that institution kindly made her an allowance until she was elected to the pension of the Royal Hospital for Incurables, nineteen years ago. E. B. suffers from an internal malady and disease of the heart; religion is her medicine; a calm and equable temperament is essential; and, when threatened with an access of her malady, she takes refuge in prayer, that quiets her and effectually wards off her trouble. Her Bible is her treasure; one text, in particular, she turned to on a well-worn page, "All things are possible to him that believeth;" the sacred legend was her comfort. She was thankful to say she was never depressed; she thought she could not weep.

Her brother, with the coyness of his sex, had remained in the other room; we sought him out. He was seventy-nine, and by trade a tailor, but failing sight had caused him to relinquish his trade; the pension

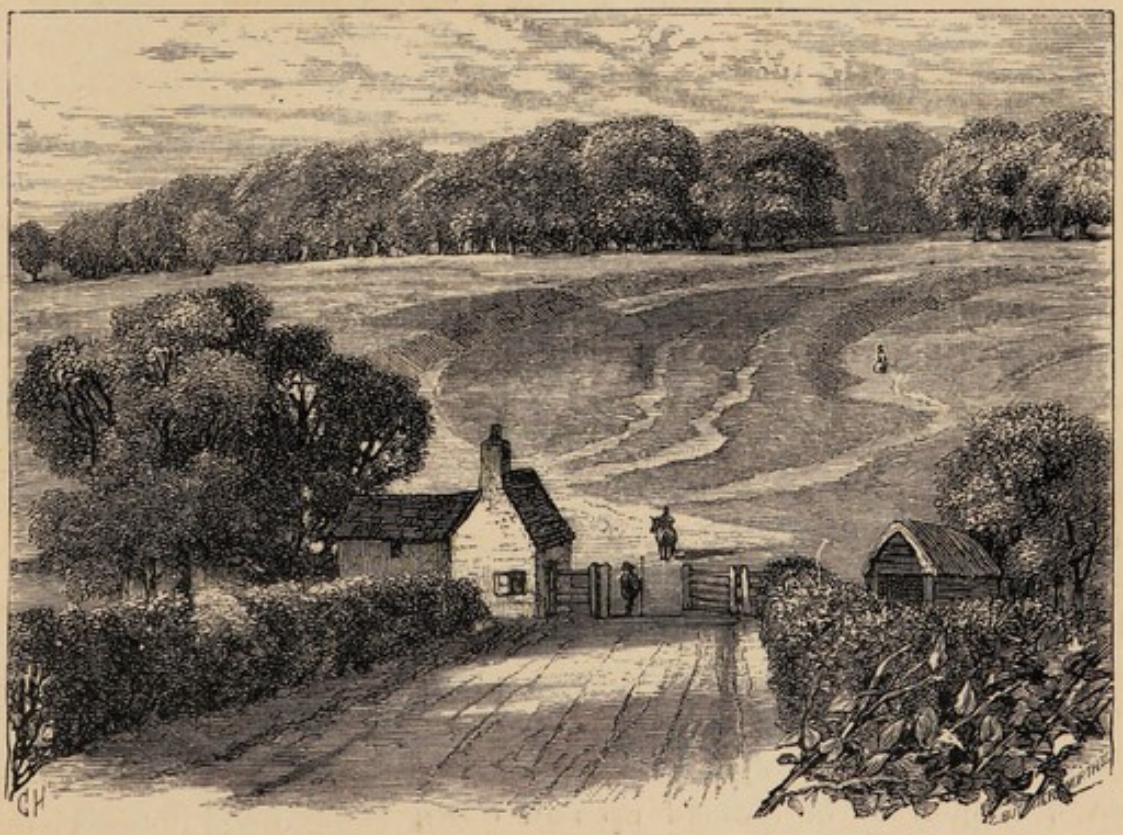
67, HIGH STREET, BURBAGE.

E. B.

is now the support of both. We took a turn in the garden and saw the one pig that paid the rent, a comely animal, soon, apparently, to fulfil that desirable task, and yield to a successor. The afternoon was advancing, and it was time to leave the aged pair, whom we could hardly persuade not to be mulcted in the cost of the dinner; so, after a draught of delicious water, fresh from its cool bed of chalk, we took our way, lingering for a sketch on the village green, where boys and girls were coming out of school; of whom a thirsty group were running to drink at a cottage that kept open house for young throats. At the station, we fell in with our genial youth, who was moving in an airy way about the signal-box, and descending, chatted with us intelligently till the train came up; he is clearly intended for better things.

This ride gave us a glimpse of the royal Forest of Savernake, dear to Marlborough boys, of whose history and Arcadian memories let others tell; also of the grand forms of the Wiltshire Downs, a panorama to feast the eyes of jaded Londoners. Our sleeping place was to be Wootton Bassett; so we alighted at Swindon Town. A railway unites the South-Western with the Great Western a mile away, but it is not now used. An omnibus runs between the stations, the most crazy and worn-out vehicle that ever plied along a high road; we were afraid of it, and preferred to walk the dreary length of the dreariest of towns.

At Wootton Bassett we had a new experience; very tired, we dragged ourselves up the hill, and selected as our resting-place an old hostelry, the *Angel*. The landlady was in her bar; her we confidently asked for a lodging. Yes, she thought she could take us in; but were we strangers, and how long staying? We frankly told her we were strangers, and staying one night. She replied, she always had a little reference. As we had none to give, we turned away, and found civility and comfort at the *Royal Oak*, which we desire to recommend to other tramps, unprovided with "a reference."

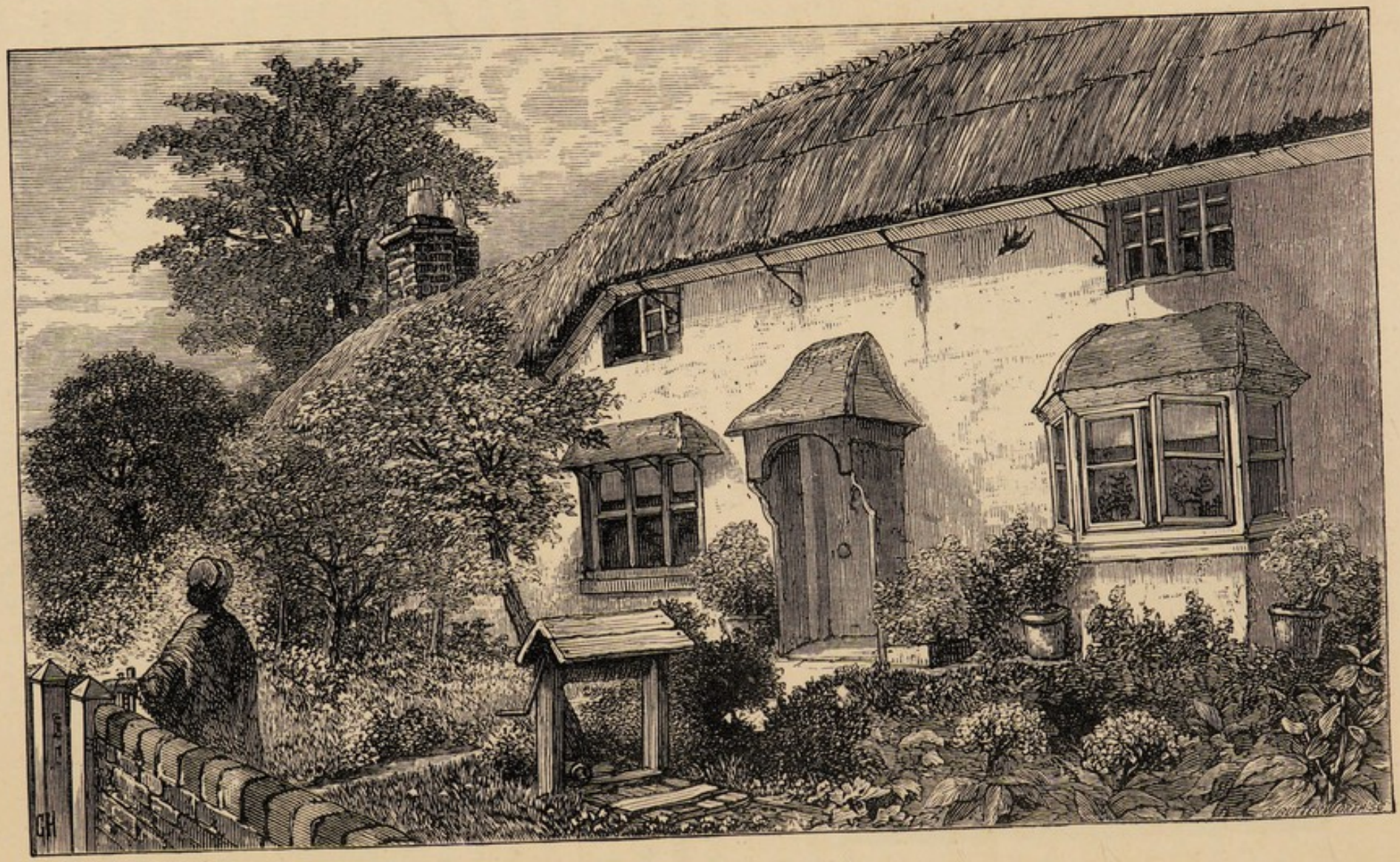


SAVERNAKE.

TOWN HALL, WOOTTON BASSETT.

EIGHTH DAY.——The aspect of Wootton Bassett, that evening, was not cheerful; the sky was clouded over; a high wind raised a white dust-storm, that obscured the ancient Town Hall opposite our window, and made the wide, treeless street look wintry. The morning was calm and bright, people were abroad, a party of adventurous pigs strolled along the road, small boys sported on an old cannon by the Town Hall, the air was exhilarating. We sought the cottage of Miss S. A. R., who, our notes informed us, lived in Wood Street. For the second time we found a family of three sisters; all were past middle life: the eldest was a confirmed invalid, upstairs, in bed; the second, the active person of the house, was partially blind from cataract; the youngest being our pensioner. She was suffering from a bad curvature of the spine, as well as an internal trouble; she cheerfully told us her story, which was substantially as follows:—

"My father, a dairy-farmer at Tockenham, died suddenly when I was between eight and nine years old, leaving my mother with eight children, two of them being younger than myself; she carried on the farm of 165 acres, and a dairy of more than forty cows; and, in 1874, died, having been paralyzed eight years. I was, at this time, an invalid, my health having failed in 1852; at sixteen, I had been sent, through the kindness of a clergyman, to the Training School for Governesses at Salisbury, but could only remain there half my allotted time, on account of my health. I came home, and having somewhat improved, I took charge of the Imber school for girls at Winchester; this had to be given up after a year. I tried another post, this time for only a few months. I was on my back for five years, having to be carried up and down stairs on a board. After our mother's death, my sisters and I kept on the farm, they working



S. A. R.'S COTTAGE.

early and late; but, in 1881, we were obliged to give it up, through the dishonesty of a near relative, which deprived us of all the money we possessed. No one can be more thankful for the pension than I am, and daily do I thank God, who put it into the hearts of kind friends and subscribers to help me to obtain it."

One has always regarded a 'broken-down tradesman' as a subject of pity—a man without capital, handicraft, or occupation;—the case of the once well-to-do farmer is still more to be compassionated; how much he leaves behind—homestead, cattle, fields, out-door life, market-days, giving of rural hospitality, circle of country friends!—We felt this keenly, visiting the stricken remnant of the Tockenham family, and hearing the story of other days—how they rose at three, to be early at the cheese-making, and how they used to send the cheeses to Reading Fair and Chippenham Market; then they showed us the round vats, once in daily use, now only relics; and old china, kept not without a view of turning it into money.

They invited me to see the invalid upstairs, to whom I tried to say some good words; it was sad, no doubt; but the clean rooms, the bright bits of old furniture, and the case clock that had struck happier hours, were signs that there was a spirit in these good women that has not shared in the ruin of their fortunes.

THE CHEESE VAT.

SHERSTON.

A cross-country ride in the early afternoon brought us to Malmesbury, encircled by the ribbon stream of the infant Avon; and a pleasant drive of five miles, to Sherston, a large village of a true Wiltshire type, with twisting streets, and vistas of thatched roofs and gables, to set an artist longing. In a two-roomed cottage dwelt Miss M. L., a crippled blind lady of sixty. One could see, at a glance, that the case was of peculiar interest; her face showed intelligence and refinement, and her cheerful conversation was something to listen to. A tall young girl, of gentle manners, her niece, daughter of the village blacksmith, comes in to see to her wants; she was only fifteen, though looking older. Mabel seemed devoted to her blind aunt, and the pair, in the plain little room, made a natural picture. Her story shall be told in the words of one who knows her well:—

"Miss L., now sixty years of age, was elected an out-patient of the Royal Hospital for Incurables in 1876. Her case is a sad and touching one, but full of instruction and encouragement for sufferers like herself, and for helpers of the afflicted. When only three years old, she lost her sight from an accident. After a time, friends, interested in her, obtained for her admission to the Bristol School of Industry for the Blind; there she was taught to play the organ and the pianoforte, and was much thought of for her singing, and for her wide range of memory of psalm tunes, chants, and selections from the

Messiah, the *Creation*, and other great oratorios. She remained at that Institution nineteen years,—during a considerable portion of that time in the capacity of a teacher—and, on her leaving, in 1856, the superintendent, Mr. Maddy, wrote of her, 'The affection and good feeling existing between her and her pupils I have seldom seen equalled, and never surpassed.' For some years her musical abilities enabled her to live among her friends, obtaining her subsistence as an organist; but, in 1874, she was unfortunately thrown out of a carriage, and one of her hips was dislocated. All means were used to set the joint, and she went through a long course of intense suffering in trying these; but they proved useless, and it became plain that she must give up all hope of being able to follow again the occupation by which she had been earning her living.

"In these circumstances, and struck by her wonderful resignation and patience, the then Vicar of Alderton—where she had been organist—and other friends, interested themselves warmly in her behalf, and, in the result, as has been said above, she was elected, in May, 1876, to one of the out-pensions in connection with the Royal Hospital for Incurables. This has enabled her to live a placid, tranquil life amongst her old friends and neighbours, who look on her with affectionate sympathy, and see in her an example of that bright, beautiful, patient, cheerful endurance which is so often a characteristic of the blind, but which becomes the more wonderful when the blind person is also an all but helpless cripple."

Miss L. asked if there was not, in the Hospital, a patient named Bessie P.; on being told there was, she said, "She was one of my pupils at Bristol." Poor Bessie is deaf, dumb, blind, and paralysed; but I must take means to let her know we have found her old teacher. Miss L. pays £3 a year for her cottage, leading a life of cheap content; the pension is her all. "What should I do without it? I have nothing," she said. But I must not go on, or I could tell of a long chat, lighted up, on her part, by many a laughing sentence. H. wanted to sketch, and, with Mabel as guide, we were led to the "Cliff," a green eminence overhanging the river, that threw him into raptures. We returned to take leave of our two friends, and of Sherston, with something almost of regret.

THE CLIFF, SHERSTON.

NINTH DAY.——The railway train-table, exacting as the limits of this narrative, allowed little time for noting the antiquities of Malmesbury; the abbey ruins, the market cross, the main street, one end hemmed in by buildings elbowing the said cross, all overtopped by the tall ruined archway, the other dipping suddenly out of sight; the opposite fields, separated, apparently, by a space to be leaped over, the crafty Avon being at the bottom of the illusion. At eleven, we alighted at Bradford-on-Avon, whose human nests cling airily to the sides of a steep hill. I had seen the spot many years ago, and been greatly struck with the panorama; houses of stone, mostly gabled, ascending, ridge above ridge, to the higher ground. Threading our way through the town, we reached the dwelling place of Miss M. E. C., perched on a windy hill. Her lodging consisted of a front room on the first floor, furnished simply, yet with taste. Miss C. has suffered for twenty-eight years from a protracted, weakening disease of the lungs. She is now fifty-one, a prisoner in her room, and any effort, even of speaking, tries her. I was, therefore, glad that she had prepared some notes of her case; they are, in style and spirit, so worth reading, that I give them literally:—

"When I was six years of age my father, a woollen manufacturer of Bratton, died, leaving my mother with seven children, of whom I

was the youngest. I was delicate from my birth, and never long without an illness of some kind. When twenty-three, I had an attack, of inflammation of the lungs, which threatened my life, and from the effects of which I have never recovered. Various doctors were consulted, and amongst them, the late Dr. Watson, of Bath, who pronounced me incurable; he gave me only a few months to live; but God has given me years; and, though they have been years of suffering, they have often been cheered with hope, and, through Divine goodness and mercy, they have brought with them many blessings.

"I lived with my mother till she died at the good old age of eighty; then came clouds of sorrow and distress. My dear mother had a trying illness for nearly four years; this, along with my own continued affliction for seventeen years, entailed heavy expenses. Her little property had sadly diminished, and what remained of it being equally divided among seven children, the shares were very small; my own, from unavoidable expenses, was almost sunk. I had to give up my home, and how I should live in the future I knew not; my brothers and sisters were all married, and had families, and only one or two were able to give me some assistance. For two or three years

A STREET IN BRADFORD.

BRIDGE ON THE AVON.

I struggled on, till my own little means had come to an end; and, at times, I was almost overwhelmed with sadness and despair at the thought of the future, and a dread of being a burden to others; till, one day, I was reading the *Sunday at Home*, and saw, in the list of contents, the word 'INCURABLES,' and I thought 'surely that must be something for me.' The article was 'Pencillings in June,' by Dr. Aveling. I here heard of the pensions granted by the Royal Hospital for Incurables, *i.e.*, such as myself, helpless and unprovided for. I had never known of this before, and it seemed to me a bright light in the cloud.

"I wrote to the secretary and stated my case, asking him for information, which he most kindly gave in a very encouraging way, cheering and making me hopeful; many kind friends assisted and canvassed for votes, and I was elected as a pensioner in May, 1880; then, the cloud of despair passed away, and the light of comfort remained. Words will ever fail me to express the gratitude I owe for such a benefit; the calm of mind it gives, and the rest to the suffering body, is of worth untold."

It gave a mournful pleasure to listen to these ditties of pain, as to a

minor chant, returning to the key-note of faith, to be changed, some day, into a new-born song, set to an unheard measure of painless joy. We had just time to call on the Rev. Mr. Beddow, a dear friend of M. E. C., a veteran minister, who added a willing confirmation of her story, and took train to Heytesbury, in search of the last on our list of cottage clients.

At the station we inquired for the village of Knook; the head porter indicated the direction, adding there was a way by the meadows, "but," said he, "they may be flooded, for it is an institution with us to have the meadows flooded in dry weather." Not understanding the paradox, and preferring to walk rather than wade, we went by a dry high road; and, at the distance of a mile, stopped at the garden gate of a long, low cottage, covered with a roof of thatch, whose dropping eaves described a considerable angle with the road; the builder, discarding the pompous notion of a front entrance, had placed two doors on the garden side. Passing a well at the end of the building, and turning the corner, we knocked at the first door; a little girl appeared, who bade us go "next door;" it was opened by Miss A. S., whom we had come to see. In her short, contracted figure and pale face, we recognized the description of a person afflicted with spinal disease, and its accompanying debility. She expressed herself glad to see us, and offered us a cup of tea, which was grateful indeed, after a hot journey, aggravated by a weary detention at Westbury, in view, on one side, of the famous White Horse, cut on the slope of the chalk downs, in memory of an ancient battle, and, on the other, of a smelting furnace and a row of coke ovens.

It was an ancestral dwelling; A. S. told us she was born here some fifty years ago, and her father and grandfather had lived here, not exactly 'before her,' as her father, seventy-seven years of age, lives here now; he was not in just then, but we should see him presently. The room was lighted by three windows, and had an air of culture seldom seen in a cottage; there were two nests of bookshelves, filled with prettily-bound volumes, a small harmonium, neat furniture, and, in the chimney corner, that perfection of comfort, a roomy wooden arm-chair. A. S. attributes her state to an attack of scarlatina, when a child. After trying several doctors, and the mineral waters of Bath, she had, at twenty years of age, to recognize the fact that she was an incurable, and fretted over the idea that, as she said, she should never

A. S.

be of much use in the world; and having an invalid brother, and a mother out of health, she almost lost heart. Still, she contributed her mite of help, assisting her mother in teaching the village children, and doing a little needlework, efforts aggravating a malady that, above all things, required repose of mind and body. She became a candidate for the Hospital pension; but, remote and unknown, her case lingered on without a near prospect of success; at length it was brought to the notice of a benevolent lady, Miss B., living in London, and, in less than a year after, she was elected.

"I remember," she says, "our clergyman came on the Saturday, the day after my election, and told me he had seen my name among the successful candidates in a newspaper. I recollect that I was very weak and poorly at the time, and he told me very gently for fear it would be too much for me. I cannot describe the rest and gratitude that came to me that evening. The thought that now I was so far provided for had a good effect on my health, for I certainly improved in strength, as I had perfect rest of mind and body; and my pension procured me many little comforts which are almost necessaries to one in weak health, and which I could not have before. Now I had the means, I took a journey to London, in the hope that the doctors there might be able to do something for me. But it was not to be, and I returned home very worn and tired, just to rest and be still. Since then, the years have flown very quickly by. My mother and brother have passed away, and my father is growing quite old, though still able to follow his work as carpenter on an estate. I am quietly happy at times, and have my pleasures, such as books and needlework, and being among my friends. My love of reading has soothed my life a great deal, and then Nature has great charms for me: a nosegay, a bunch of autumn leaves, or a fine sunset will make me glad for days. I should like those who are so nobly supporting the institution to know how my very kindest wishes and regards will ever go out to them for all that they have done and are still doing for me and others."

Such testimony speaks for itself; I will only add that A. S. was elected at twenty-nine years of age, and has received the pension nineteen years.

The father had come in from work and finished his tea in the kitchen (entered by door number one). He told us he had been a teetotaller forty-five years; when he first became an abstainer, he left off tea, and, for some time, drank nothing but water; his friends pitied

him, and warned him of the consequences; he has refuted his prophets by outliving them. On saying farewell to his daughter, Mr. S. offered to show us the way back by the meadows. Now, we understood the enigma of the railway porter; the clear stream of the Wylie rambles through the meadows; in some former age, a second channel was cut, making a loop with the main stream, and from this were dug, traversing the low grounds, sluices, which are drawn for irrigation. Some of them were open this evening; the newly cut grass was already suffused with water, and our pathway, in places, was overflowed. The old man left us on the highway, and the declining sun mellowed the near woods and distant downs, as we entered the train for the journey home.

MEADOW SLUICE, KNOOK.

[PLEASE TURN OVER.

THE ROYAL
HOSPITAL FOR INCURABLES,
WEST HILL, PUTNEY HEATH.

Instituted 31st July, 1854.

Patron: HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES, K.G.

President.
THE RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF ABERDEEN.

Treasurer.
JOHN DERBY ALLCROFT, ESQ., F.R.A.S.

This Charity was established to relieve and to cherish, *during the remainder of life*, persons, above the pauper class, suffering from incurable maladies, and thereby disqualified for the duties of life.

For persons *needing a home* an asylum is provided: medical attendance, nursing, and domestic comforts are supplied, and the endeavour is made to alleviate suffering, and to cheer the life from which health has departed.

To persons *having a home*, but without the means of support, a pension of £20 a year is given; thus the family circle is unbroken, and the invalid is relieved from the pain of dependence.

There are at present 197 Inmates, and 505 Pensioners. Total 702.

A temporary Sea-side House, receiving six inmates at one time, has been opened in St. Margaret's Road, St. Leonard's-on-Sea.

The Institution is open every week-day, for the inspection of Subscribers and Friends, between the hours of Twelve and Six.

Inmates' Visiting Days, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, from Two to Five.

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION.

An Annual Subscriber has One Vote for Half-a-guinea, and an additional Vote for every additional Half-a-Guinea. A Life Subscriber has One Vote for Life for Five Guineas, and an additional Vote for Life for every additional Five Guineas.

Subscriptions received at the Office, 106, Queen Victoria Street, by the Secretary, Mr. FREDERIC ANDREW, to whom all orders should be made payable; by the Treasurer; by Messrs. GLYN, MILLS, & Co., 67, Lombard Street; and Messrs. COUTTS & Co., 59, Strand.

OFFICES:—106, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, E.C.

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