The Old Village Depot.

There stands the old station-house out in the rain,
A stone's throw away from the door,
With its wind-beaten wall and its weather-racked pane,
And its rickety rat-haunted floor;
Its sashes are seamed and its lintels are gashed
With the jack-knives of twenty long years,
And the eaves where the wings of the swallow once flashed
Are touched with the kinship of tears.

Old home! it looms up like a ghost in the gale,
And gibbers and groans in the blast,
And speaks, with a weird and a weariless wail,
Of the dim, irrepealable past.
On the old, dingy platform that girdles it round,
The wealth of the prairie once poured;
And daily the carriage of commerce came down
With the wares of the merchant aboard.

'Twas here where our brothers went off to the wars;
We blessed them and bade them adieu;
And we welcomed them here, 'neath a banner of stars,
When the terrible conflict was through;
And here where the bare-footed boys are at play
The war trumpets thundered of yore;
And here came the coffins in ghastly array,
Of the dear soldier dead to our door.

'Twas hear the young bride, in her beauty and bloom,
To her cheek felt the parting kiss prest;
And here beat with rapture the heart of the groom,
As he crushed her form on his breast.
And here in his squalor the mendicant crept,
To shelter himself from the blast,
In the merciless midnight, and dreamed as he slept
Of the happier days of the past.

And here came the message, more fleet than the dove,
O'er the wandering, wavering wire,
That filled us with grief, or thrilled us with love,
As we peacefully sat round the fire.
Ah! the old station-house! it will soon tumble down,
Its timbers are crumbling away,
But its record is writ on the heart of the town,
And its glory abideth for aye.

J. N. Matthews in Toledo Blade.

PRUDENCE HART.

BY GEORGIANA M. CRAIK.

"Well, she is a demure little soul," said Keith Verner, "and not much of a beauty certainly."

Upon which Mrs. Verner replied with decision: "She is quite as much of a beauty, my dear, as there is any need for her to be." And the young man at that response laughed.

They were speaking of some one who had just left the room—Miss Prudence Hart, a young person who had entered the Verners' family only two days before to fill the post of companion to Mrs. Verner's only daughter, Mabel. Mabel Verner was 19, and was in not very robust health. She was a little fanciful too, and had of late developed a certain fretfulness, with which her mother, who was an active and cheerful woman, had not much sympathy.

"The child tries me exceedingly," she had often said to her husband. "She has everything to make her happy, and yet she is not happy. I wonder," she had suggested one day, lately "how it would answer to give her some companion of her own age?"

"What, another girl?" asked Mr. Verner. "Well, that is not a bad idea."

"I have had it in my mind for some time," continued Mrs. Verner thoughtfully, "The only objection is that there might be some difficulty with the boys."

"Oh, not the least fear of that!" exclaimed her husband in a tone of amazement. "The boys, you may be sure, would like it."

"I have little doubt that they would like it," Mrs. Verner answered shortly. "What I fear is that they might like it too well. If it were not that they are so little here——"

"Ah, yes, that makes all the difference," he assented.

"If they were living at home I should not think of such an arrangement for a moment, but seeing how much they are away I am disposed to think that the plan might be tried; especially if we could fine some nice, quiet girl, not very good-looking," said Mrs. Verner.

And then something in the nature of a protest rose to her husband's lips; but, on reflection, he did not utter it.

Soon after this, Mrs. Verner, having consulted with her daughter, and received Mabel's assent to her scheme, began to make known amongst her acquaintances that she wished to receive into her house some young person of a modest and staid demeanor in consequence of which numerous young persons were proposed to her, and from amongst these various candidates she finally selected one who seemed in a happy degree to combine the several qualifications that she most desired to secure. For, by the lady who recommended her, Prudence Hart was certified to be cheerful, clever, domestic, of a sweet temper, and with regard to propriety and modesty of deportment, all that the most anxious mother could demand.

And then, to sum up all, she was not handsome. Mrs. Verner saw her with her own eyes, and could testify to the fact.

"A pleasant face: yes, I should call it decidedly pleasant, healthy and fresh, but no pretentions to good looks," she stated with decision to her husband, speaking of Miss Hart before the young lady took up her abode with them. "A nice, plain, retiring, lady-like looking girl—just the sort of person I had in my mind. Mrs. Prescott speaks of her in the warmest way. She says we shall find she will be a comfort to us all."

"Well, that is, I suppose, assuming we shall be in need of comfort!" suggested Mr. Verner; but his wife did not respond to this uncalled-for remark.

It was turning dark on a spring evening when the fly that had brought Miss Hart and her luggage from the station drew up before Mrs. Verner's nail door.

"Will you take my two portmanteaus in, if you please? The fare is three-and-sixpence," said the young lady, and paid the money and entered the house.

The next moment she saw Mabel coming across the hall to meet her, and she put out her hand with a little smile.

"How do you do?" Mabel said. "I am afraid you are cold. We had hoped you would come by an earlier train, you know."

"This has been a very nice train," answered Prudence, "and I like arriving at places in the evening."

And then Mabel took her to her mother, who was waiting to receive her in the drawing-room.

Miss Hart was a young woman of apparently two or three and twenty, with a placid, rounded face, and glossy hair, divided in the middle and put smoothly back from a broad, low forehead. The forehead and head were good, and the eyes fairly handsome, but the rest of the features were homely enough.

"I call her plain, decidedly," Mabel said, after she had been in her company for an hour.

"Yes, my dear," replied her mother, "I told you she was plain, but I don't consider that that is any drawback."

And then Mabel said, "Perhaps not," but thought at the same time in her heart that it *was* a drawback, for Mabel was pretty herself, and cared enough for her beauty to fancy that life would not be worth much without it.

The day after Miss Hart's arrival the girls spent a good deal of time together, and Mabel found her new companion pleasant enough. "She talks a good deal when she is alone with me," she told her mother, "and she can be amusing too. I rather like her. I dare say, you know, she feels less shy with me than she does with pap and you."

"Very probably," answered Mrs. Verner suavely. "That is only natural." And she went presently to her desk, and wrote a grateful note to Mrs. Prescott, telling her that Miss Hart had arrived, and that so far she gave entire satisfaction.

"And certainly I have every reason as yet to be pleased with the result of our experiment," she said complacently to her husband at night.

To which Mr. Verner replied, "H'm—she is an odd little person. She won't contribute very much, I suspect, to the general liveliness of the house."

"She will contribute probably quite as much to it as it is at all desirable she should do," replied Mrs. Verner with emphasis. "A prominent, showy sort of girl would not, I consider, have been at all the kind of person to suit us."

"Well, no—no, I dare say not," assented Mr. Verner. "I only meant to say that she was not particularly attractive."

"And is there any necessity," inquired his wife, "why she *should* be particularly attractive? It seems to me that there is every reason, on the contrary, why she should be rather the reverse. There is Keith, remember, coming out to-morrow night——"

"Well, my dear, you need give yourself no concern about Keith. *He* won't be smitten with her," replied Mr. Verner, and went his way laughing.

And in fact, when Keith Verner came out the following evening, he was certainly *not* smitten with her.

Keith was the eldest of Mr. Verner's two sons; the other was named Godfrey, and they were both at this time walking the hospitals in London. But though they lived in London, they came down nearly always once a week to their father's house at Tunbridge Wells, and sometimes even more frequently.

On this occasion Keith had come out by himself, and before he took his leave next morning he said to his sister Mabel, "I don't think much of your new friend."

"I believe she returns the compliment," replied Mabel, "for to judge by what she has said, I should not imagine that she thought much of you."

"What do you mean that she has said?" inquired Keith, pricking up his ears at this, and rather taken aback, for the young man set some store on himself.

And then Mabel laughed, and informed him by degrees that Miss Hart had asked if he was not conceited, and rather idle, and had also implied a suspicion in regard to the depth of his acquirements—which, with sisterly frankness, Mabel remarked that she did not consider ill-founded by any means.

"Well, upon my word!" exclaimed Keith, with what was, perhaps, in the circumstances, not unnatural warmth.

"Oh, she is very acute," said Mabel. "You would not think it, but she notices a good many things."

"And apparently she imagines a good many more," retorted Keith; and then, having no more time to spare, he curtly bade good-bye to his sister, and hurried to his train. But as he walked hastily down the road he did not forget Miss Hart. "The impertinent little minx!" he said to himself. "That is the worst of these half-bred people; they mistake flippancy for wit; and, now that Mabel has got it into her head that this girl is clever, I foresee there will be no end to the way in which she will encourage her. But wait till I see her again!" And with this vague menace, which conveyed a certain sense of satisfaction to him, Keith bent his steps back to town.

A couple of days afterwards, at the end of the week, the two brothers came down to Tunbridge Wells together.

"I don't think much of that girl my mother has brought into the house," Keith had already said to Godfrey. "I don't know how others may feel, but to me she seems no lady."

"Well, half the governesses going are not ladies, you know," returned Godfrey. "This girl is not a governess exactly, I suppose; but it's all one."

"I think they should have been more particular in their choice," said Keith. "There are plenty of nice girls they might have got. Miss Hart, to begin with, is as ugly as sin."

"That is a bad business any way," replied Godfrey.

And impressed by this fact, when Saturday came he went down to his father's, not expecting to experience much delight from his introduction to his sister's friend.

But Keith, on his part, felt a decided curiosity to see the young lady again. It had become quite clear to his mind that a girl who was capable of speaking about him to Mabel in the way which Mabel had asserted she had spoken, was a girl who required to be taken down, and he was eager, with the natural eagerness of a virtuous mind, to set himself about this necessary work. So he began by greeting her when they met in the most chilling way, and then kept his attention on the alert, that he might be ready, whenever the first opportunity offered, to put her down as she deserved.

But the hours passed, and Miss Hart was so quiet that the opportunity for which he watched was slow to come. She sat at the dinner table, and in the drawing-room, the most unobtrusive of women, hardly speaking unless she was addressed, and speaking then only in the most modest way. She was bright and alert, but her alertness showed itself in acts, not words; she was quick to perform little services, to bring a footstool to his mother's feet, to place his father's newspaper beside him, to play Mabel's accompaniments when she sang, and set in order the things Mabel left awry: but all this was done in the quietest way, and accompanied for the most part only by little deprecating, inquiring, grateful, or kindly smiles, that it would have been next to impossible for any one to take offence at.

"She seems to get on very well with them all, certainly," Keith thought to himself, "and to be very amiable and well-meaning. If it were not that Mabel is a girl who tells the truth——"

But then Mabel essentially was a girl who told the truth, and so Keith was perplexed.

Late in the evening he came suddenly on Miss Hart standing alone out of doors by the verandah, looking at the stars. This seemed to him odd, for he was not romantic, and never went star-gazing himself; in fact, her occupation appeared to him so queer a one that he peeped at her inquiringly when he came upon her in the dark, and said, "Hallo!" He had come out to smoke a cigar, and was not thinking of the stars.

"Why—I say, aren't you cold here?" he exclaimed the next moment.

"Cold in this sweet air?" she asked. She looked at him and laughed. "I have been fainting indoors with your closed windows all night."

"Well, you have not looked like it then," he replied bluntly.

"You are saying that at hazard. You don't know how I have looked," the young lady rejoined.

"Why should I not know? Do you think I have not eyes?" he asked.

And then she laughed again, very softly and with a peculiar tone, and made no other response.

She was rather a small woman, with a firm rounded figure, not slyph-like, but pretty in its way, and she dressed well. She had been standing in the shadow when he first spoke to her, but she came out a step or two beyond the verandah after his last question, and, as the night was not a dark one, he could see something of her face then.

He waited for a few moments after she had laughed, looking at her as he waited with some attention, and then—

"I don't see the fun," he abruptly said.

"Very likely not," she answered. "I did not expect that you would."

"Well, upon my word!" said Keith.

Perhaps as Prudence Hart had chosen to say, Keith Verner was conceited, but there were enough good qualities in him, in spite of his conceit, to make him likeable. He was tall and well-looking; he was in general kindly and pleasant. It was, to tell the truth, something rather new to him to find himself snubbed, and above all it was new to find himself snubbed by a girl whose natural attitude toward him ought, as he considered, to be one of deference and respect. He looked at her for a moment, and then he made up his mind that the thing must be put a stop to. She mistook her place. He was a gentleman as he was abundantly aware, and she was—not quite a lady; he must therefore give a lesson to her.

So he let the better part of a minute pass, and then, having taken that time to arrange his words, he delivered himself of a grave and, as he flattered himself, a rather dignified speech.

"I don't know from what you draw your conclusions, Miss Hart," he said, "but, seeing that you have only been acquainted with me for a very short time, will you allow me to say that I think you assume in yourself a power of judging me that I am obliged to request the liberty to dispute?"

"What makes you suppose that I assume any power of judging you?" she replied to this address, composedly, but bringing her eyes as she spoke with rather a sudden movement down to his face from the stars.

"You did it just now," he said quickly; and then he added, not perhaps quite wisely, "and you have done it before."

"Indeed?" she returned inquiringly.

"I think you can hardly deny it?" he said.

"If you will tell me to what you refer"—she spoke quite pleasantly—"then perhaps I shall be able to understand you."

"I refer to the opinion which you did me the honor to express about me to my sister a few days ago."

"And which she has repeated to you?"

"Yes, she has repeated it to me."

"As she has also to me repeated yours about myself, Mr. Keith, I am very happy to be able to meet your charge with a counter charge." And then Miss Hart softly chafed her hand, and laughed in his face.

Keith, who did not relish being made ridiculous, felt very hot while Miss Hart's mocking little laugh rang on the air, and if he could have said something to silence her he would unquestionably have said it with a will; but sharp edged words, unhappily, will not always come at need, and so in the sudden pause while he remained discomfitted, Miss Hart first amused herself with her mocking laughter, and then, being for her own part quite cool and mistress of herself, proceeded quietly to make another speech.

"I always find that it is wisest to have very clean hands before I indulge in accusations," she said. "But, perhaps, Mr. Keith, you are too young to have learnt that lesson yet? If so, you ought to be grateful to me for teaching it to you. And now I will go in, and leave you to smoke your cigar in peace."

And she went accordingly, quite unmoved by the clumsy, "Oh come! I say!" which were the only ejaculations that the exigency of the moment had power to force from Keith's unready lips.

He said to himself presently, "I'll be even with her yet!" But, for the remainder of this evening, at any rate, she gave him no chance of being even with her. When he saw her next, she was kneeling at his mother's feet, picking up a stitch that Mrs. Verner had dropped in her knitting, with such an expression of sweet absorption in her face that she looked an incarnation of all the domestic virtues, and never until she bade him good-night, either purposely or by accident, did she allow herself to come within speaking distance of him again.

He, on his part, however, was pursued a good deal by the thought of her, and found himself watching her almost against his will. Also, which was curious, when Mabel spoke to him next about Miss Hart, as she did upon the following morning, expatiating on her character with much frankness as she walked by his side to church, he made no return of confidences, and Mabel remained in complete ignorance of the little passage at arms that he and Prudence had had together the previous night. In fact, he made no mention at all of that encounter in the garden.

"You have seen so little of her yet," Mabel said to him: "but in spite of her plainness, I do really think you will like her in time, for I am sure she is clever. You have no idea how observant she is! I am afraid to tell mamma, for I am not sure if she would like it; but she is such a mimic that she sometimes makes me die of laughing. It is a pity she is not prettier, is it not? I think sometimes that if she were nice looking she might be very effective. You consider her quite plain, I suppose!" said Mabel, looking up inquiringly to Keith's face, and perhaps not longing very ardently to hear her suggestion disallowed.

But Keith hesitated a little.

"Oh, well, I don't know, I thought her plain at first," he said. "But she has got good points, you know."

"She has good eyes," said Mabel dubiously.

"Yes, and she knows it," exclaimed Keith, with enough fervor to make Mabel open her own fine orbs.

"What makes you think that?" she asked rather quickly.

"Oh, I meant nothing. I thought she played them off a little—that is all," he said.

"You don't mean in a coquettish way?" asked Mabel severely. "If you think that you are wrong altogether. Oh no," and she shook her head with decision; "she is no coquette. She does not care about men a bit."

"Has she told you so?" asked Keith bluntly.

"Yes, of course, she has," said Mabel. "But I should know it even without her saying anything. She is always laughing at them. She does not care in the least about getting married. Perhaps, to be sure," added Miss Verner reflectively, "that may be partly because she does not think she is likely to have any lovers."

Keith did not have any talk with Miss Hart during the morning of this day, but rather late in the afternoon, as he happened at one time to be crossing the hall, he heard a sound of singing coming from the drawing-room, and putting his head cautiously in at the half-open door, he perceived Prudence's small figure seated on the music stool. On which, he debated with himself for two or three moments, and at the end of that time entered, and listened till the song ceased.

He had come in, as he thought, in the most noiseless way, but yet the young lady, by the time the performance ended, seemed to be quite conscious of his presence, for, without turning her head, she said, as she struck the final chord—

"That is Handel: But I don't sing well. You ought not to listen to me."

"Then you should not sing in a room with the door open," he replied.

"I left the door open in order to keep people away," she said.

"Well, you see," he answered, "it has had the opposite effect." And then, as he moved a little nearer to her, he laughed, and added, "Which perhaps does not surprise you very much."

But if he had had any hope that this retort would embarrass her, he was disappointed. She merely looked at him for a moment with, apparently, an entire want of comprehension in her eyes, and, then, vouchsafing no reply, rose up and began to survey her hands.

"I shall never play well. I can't, you see," she said "They are too small."

"They are very small, certainly," he answered. And then he looked at them too. "Very small, and—very pretty."

"They are like my mother's," she said pensively.

"Have you got a mother?" he asked.

She shook her head and sighed.

"Oh, no; I was unhappy enough to lose her long ago," she replied. "She died when I was quite a child. And I have lost my father too. I am both fatherless and motherless."

"Oh, dear," exclaimed Keith sympathetically.

He did really for the moment feel sorry for her. It was so clear that she needed somebody to look after her, he thought.

She had folded her hands and was standing gazing thoughtfully on the ground. They were both silent for a few moments, during which he occupied himself in regarding her, and then, beginning to find the silence a little awkward—

"Well, I hope you will be comfortable here," he said, abruptly and good-naturedly. "It won't be my mother's fault, I think, if you don't soon feel at home."

"Oh, no, I don't think it will; I believe that thoroughly," she replied with earnestness. "Your family have been very kind to me, Mr. Keith. Your mother, and your father, and Mabel have all been kindness itself. Even your brother Godfrey was good enough to talk to me for a quarter of an hour last night quite affably."

Poor Keith's blood mounted to his face. If the soft little fingers had slapped his cheek he could hardly have felt more hot.

"Now—I say!" he broke out, stammering, "upon my word that's too bad! And so you mean to say that *I* am the only one—that *I* treat you differently from all the rest?"

"Oh, no—I am saying nothing about *you* at all," she replied, lifting up her eyes suddenly with a smile in them that seemed to him as cold as a steel blade. "That would be a piece of presumption, after your rebuke last night, that I should be sorry to be guilty of."

"Miss Hart, you are an awfully sarcastic woman!" he exclaimed. "How is one ever to know how to have you? To say such a thing as that to a fellow is enough to knock him down."

"There is not the least fear of your being knocked down," she replied, with a little sudden, scornful laugh. "Some people's words, I dare say, might have an effect of that kind upon you, but not mine."

But all at once, as she made this answer, she smiled, and the smile had a curious, unexpected sweetness in it that struck the young man with surprise. For a moment, the face that he had been calling plain looked, to his eyes, almost beautiful. And then, before he had more than half recovered from this first change in her, there came a second, which completed his amazement.

"You seem to look upon me as a very designing person," she said abruptly, with her eyes full of their new expression, fixed on his face, "and instead of that I am only a lonely girl, who has been left to herself a great deal, and who has no home except what your people give me, and no friend except——" And then she stopped, and the pause and the unfinished sentence were very eloquent. But before he could reply she had suddenly passed by him, and slipped through the French window, and was lost to view.

After this Keith spent a quiet evening. The girls went to church again, but he did not go any more to church. They did not, however, lack an attendant on their way back, for Godfrey, when the service was over, appeared at the church door, and escorted them home. "I thought you were going over to Mr. Marshall's, Godfrey?" Mabel said to him, when he met them, but the young man only laughed, and answered that he had changed his mind. And then he set himself at Prudence's side, and talked to her, and Mabel took her walk home, listening, and, perhasp, in some surprise.

The next morning, as the two young men went back to town, Godfrey said abruptly to his brother, with a laugh—

"Well, I think my mother has caught a Tartar. Of all the uncompromising flirts I ever came across, I have never known one to beat that girl!"

"Oh—what—*you* think that too, do you?" said Keith. "Why? has she been talking to you?"

"Talking to me! I should just think she had," answered Godfrey.

"But I don't know when you were together," said Keith, quickly. "I never saw you with her."

"What does that prove? I never saw *you* with her," retorted Godfrey.

And then Keith, knowing that undoubtedly, as far as he was concerned, that fact proved nothing, held his peace.

"I think certainly she is a flirt," he agreed, after a few moments' silence; "and it is a pity, for the others don't seem to have a notion of it."

"Well, it will do them no harm not to know. Don't you say anything to them," exclaimed Godfrey, "for she is splendid fun. What a pretty little minx she is, too! I thought with you at first that she was plain, but, by Jove, she knows how to make the most of herself."

"She is a very odd girl," said Keith gravely. "I am afraid she is not a very good companion for Mabel."

"Oh, Mabel can take care of herself," answered the younger brother carelessly. "Besides, she wants shaking up, and Miss Hart is just the sort of person to give her a fillip. There is no real harm in her—at least, I don't think there is. She is a thorough-paced flirt, that's all."

"Well, but that is bad enough, I suppose," said Keith.

Keith was a little uneasy as he went to his work that day. He had a strong suspicion that he ought to give his mother some hint of the special proclivities that he and Godfrey had discovered in Miss Hart, and yet he could not bear to hurt the girl by doing it. Mrs. Verner would have her out of the house at once if she knew, he thought. And then he remembered how Prudence had said to him that she had no other home than this one, and how she had said that she was lonely and friendless, and he felt that he could not do it.

So he made up his mind that he would say nothing, and that till the end of the week, at any rate, he would put the matter out of his thoughts; and accordingly, to the best of his power, he did this; but yet before the week ended he found himself becoming very curious to learn how she would conduct herself to him when he saw her next.

With a certain undeniable interest he waited for Saturday to come, and to tell the truth, when it arrived, and when, as he entered in at the gate of his father's residence, he recognized at some fifty paces from him a small grey figure flitting amongst the trees, the first impulse unquestionably was to bend his steps in its direction, for the small grey figure was Miss Prudence Hart taking solitary exercise in the sunny afternoon. But, after a little pause, he continued his straight walk to the house. Godfrey, in his place, would have done differently; but Keith had scruples that were ignored by his younger brother.

(To be continued.)

How to Live on Sixpence a Day.

Mr. T. R. Allinson writes to the London *Times* to give the result of some experiments which he has just made with the purpose of solving the difficulty of feeding the poor in London. The cry is that food is so dear that the poor cannot live. This is only true, Mr. Allinson says, if they want luxuries. On plain and wholesome fare they can live very cheaply. This the writer proves by experiments that he has made in his own case. A month ago he determined to live without flesh of any kind, milk, butter, eggs, cheese, tea or coffee. After a month his weight had increased 3½ pounds. The following passage explains the diet, which cost sixpence a day: "Breakfast consisted of a basin of porridge, made from a mixture of oatmeal and wheat meal, which I found more palatable than either singly. This I usually ate with bread to ensure thorough insalivation. Then came bread fried in refined cotton-seed oil or fried vegetable haggis; for drink I had a cup of cocoa or fruit syrup with warm water and sugar. The cocoa used was an ordinary one with plenty of starch in it, which makes a thick drink, and no milk is then required. Dinner consisted of a thick vegetable soup and bread, potato pie, savoury pie, vegetarian pie, vegetable stew, stewed rice and tomatoes, etc. For a second course I had bread, plum pudding, stewed rice and fruit, baked sago, tapioca and apples, stewed prunes, figs, raisins and bread. Tea meal consisted of bread and jam, stewed fruit, or some green stuff, as watercress, celery, tomatoes, etc. I had only three meals a day, and frequently, when busy, I had only two, and a cup of cocoa and a biscuit for supper."

A tramp who had been given a hearty meal in Nathan Tailor's house in one of the deep cuts at Turkey Hill, Pa., hurried back breathless half an hour later and gave the family warning of a terrible snow slide that was moving down the hill behind their home. A few valuables were taken out just before the avalanche with a mighty roar swept over the house.

John S. Redding, the Hoosier giant, died at Markle, Ind., on Wednesday. His weight was 408 pounds. It took 114 feet of lumber to make his coffin, which was 7 feet 2 inches long, 34 inches wide and 24 inches deep.