A WIFE'S CONSCIENCE.

Early one dull October day a girl came quickly along the lanes toward Marldon. There had been much rain and little frost that autumn, so that the country had not quite lost its summer tinge of green, but winds had blown incessantly and given the foliage a tattered, disconnected look. Something of the same look, scared and uneasy, was repeated in the girl's face. Every now and then she glanced behind her, with a swift, involuntary turn of the head, as if she expected to hear footsteps or a call. Nothing came. The population in this country district was scanty, and she only passed a cart, driven by a man, and two or three children, truants from school, who were climbing the hedges in search of the few remaining blackberries. As she saw them in the distance the uneasy look in her eyes became more marked, and she scurried by them on the opposite side of the narrow, muddy lane without a question, although she was sure they could have told her what she wanted to know.

Presently she came upon an outlying whitewashed cottage, with a garden still full of chrysanthemums and geraniums, and smoke flying lightly out of a chimney. She paused, then closed her rather tremulous mouth determinedly. "No," she said, "I won't. I'll find the house somehow."

At last, seeing a man working in a field, she called to him over the gate!

"You needn't come no nearer, but I wish you'd tell me where the minister lives."

"I ain't coming no nearer," said the man, surprised. "See that little white house by the big ellem? Anybody'll show you."

She went away in the direction he pointed out. As she came near she heard the cry of a child on the other side of the wall and slackened her pace. "He's children, too," she said to herself. "Well, it's his place, he's got to come, and I was told to fetch 'm." She rang the bell and asked for the minister.

"I don't know as you can see Mr. Wood," said the girl who appeared in answer, "but if you like to step in, you can leave a message with the missis."

She hesitated. "I'll stop here," she said.

In a minute or two she heard a light footfall and Mrs. Wood came into the passage.

"You asked for my husband?" she said kindly. "I don't know your face; I think you must be a stranger?"

"We haven't been here long. We'm over to Allington."

"And do you wish to speak to him?"

"He's wanted to our house," the girl answered in a dull tone, as if she were repeating a lesson. "Johnny and Tom's both dead, and mother's dying. Father's down, too," she added.

The curate's wife turned white and stepped back.

"What is it?" she said faintly.

"Diptheery. Everybody's that scared of us they won't come nigh the house. The baker puts the bread inside the garden gate." She spoke stolidly, as if already the cutting off from human fellowship had become a matter of course, and she did not look at the shrinking figure of the wife and mother, who stood staring; but as no answer came, she added. "The minister's wanted."

There was a pause, and suddenly the wife sprang outside and pulled the door behind her. Her face, still white, had grown hard and resolute, and the nervous twitch was painfully apparent. A shout rose from the children in the garden.

"Why did you come here? Allington is not in this parish."

"There's no use going to Mr. James."

"You must try. Go back and say my husband can't come."

The girl glanced at her with dreary acceptance before she made a final attempt.

"Mother's awful bad. The doctor says her can't last the night."

The other stood stiffly, bracing herself to her words.

"It's terrible. Mr. Wood would be very sorry if he knew, but he can't come. He's away," she added. And taking out a purse as meager looking as herself, she dropped a few shillings into the girl's hand. "There, go," she said hurriedly, "and mind you don't speak to any one in the village."

"I ain't going to speak to no one," returned the girl, with a touch of indignation in her voice. She held the money in her limp hand without looking at it or thanking the giver; her eyes meditatively fixed upon the door, the handle of which the minister's wife was grasping as though fearful that she might force an entrance. Once more she vaguely repeated, "Her won't last the night."

"You'd better go back at once."

They heard a child, at that moment, call, "Mother, mother!" The girl lifted her heavy eyes and looked full in the wife's face.

"Yes, I'll go," she said briefly. Turning away, she went along the road by which she had come, and Mrs. Wood stood rigidly watching her, still holding the handle of the door. As the last flutter of the faded lilac print was lost round a corner the tension failed, and she leaned against the door with all her limbs trembling.

"What have I done? What have I done?" she murmured. "If John knew he'd never forgive me. What business had they to send for John, when they're none of his?" She paused, her sense of justice refusing to take shelter behind this thought. Allington was a tiny hamlet, lying strictly within the borders of another parish, where the vicar was very old and infirm, but the curate of Marldon had never shrunk from responding to any call which came from the two or three families inhabiting the poor, low-lying, damp, out-of-the-way cottages. Least of all would he have refused now; and, as she felt in her own conscience what his conscience would suffer for the act, she started upright and turned to run and tell him. But she had one of those strong wills which, from their very power over their possessors, are often unsuspected, and it rose up now like iron. "No," she said, "he shall not go. His throat is weak and he is so careless of infection that he would let the children play about him as they always do. If he had known that he was wanted I would not have tried to stop him; I wouldn't lay the sin of a refusal upon his shoulders; but if I take it myself, God cannot be angry with him. I will take it—I do take it." She lifted her gray face to the gray skies. "Good Lord," she said solemnly, "remember! The sin is mine." Then she opened the door and walked determinedly into the little room where her husband was writing.

"Who was that?" he asked.

"Only a girl," she replied, her heart beating.

"No one wanting me? Well, that's a mercy, for I've stuck at this sermon long enough."

She had gone behind him, and now stood looking over his shoulder.

"How you slave, day after day!" she exclaimed at last, with an impatience which surprised him. "If there's nothing else, there's always a sermon to be written, and they take so long! Other men don't spend so much time over theirs."

"I never was quick at that sort of thing," he admitted readily, "and I'm not sure I do much good by it. However, it has to be done."

"I wish you'd go away and take a holiday!" she exclaimed abruptly.

"Take a holiday!" he repeated in amazed ment. "My dear, are you mad? Pray what would the vicar say, and who woul do the duty?"

"Oh, I'd find some one, I'm quite certaig I could find some one; and you are lookinn so tired that you are very likely to break down unless you get change. If it were only to Donnington, John," she hurried on, putting up her hand to check his interruption, "it would be better than nothing, and you know that Mary has been worse, and it would be the greatest comfort to them!"

"My dear Louisa!——" She pushed his hand aside breathlessly.

"Come, say yes, say yes, just to please me! Let me go and pack your bag, and then you can start by the 3 train."

He began to laugh.

"What are you talking about? This is October, and we will discuss a holiday when August comes round, and the vicar has had his. I can't imagine how such an unreasonable idea got into your head! Pray take it away with you and leave me to my sermon." As she did not reply, he looked round and saw tears in her eyes. "My dear love," he said in a changed voice, "I shall begin to think it is you who are overdone and want the holiday! If you are really speaking seriously, recollect how much illness there is about; you know I should not like to be absent even for one night when it might be a sick soul was in sore need of help."

"Everything falls on you!" Her tone was sharp and resentful, for already she was fighting with remorse and a great fear.

"Well, well," he said, smiling, "we needn't grumble; hard work agrees with me, and, God knows, I'e more blessings than most men. Hadn't you better see what those children are after?"

Dinner time came, and she helped the children methodically, although she was more silent than usual; and if her husband had been an observant man he must have noticed it. His own thoughts, however, were busy with the possibilities of a village reading-room he was starting, and with setting a Latin exercise for his boy; he had no conception of the remorse with which his wife—brought up to feel duty the highest obligation of life—was battling. It struck him at last, however, that she looked even paler than usual, and, remembering with some uneasiness the little scene in his study; he said kindly, "I am afraid, my dear, that the children have tired you."

"No," she said; "no." Then quite suddenly, suddenly even to herself, for it did not seem to her that the thought had flashed into her mind until that moment, she added: "But if you won't go to Donnington I believe I shall."

"You!" he exclaimed in utter bewilderment, for his wife's reluctance to leave home had passed into a proverb in her family.

"Yes. Why not? Annie can manage for you and the children for a few days, or perhaps your sister would come."

"Mary is not really worse, is she?"

"No. But she feels seeing so little of us. If you don't mind, I think I will go—this afternoon.

As she said these words, she flung him a frightened look, but the amazement of her first announcement had swallowed up that of the second.

"Of course I don't mind," he said slowly. "I dare say you're right. I'm afraid I've been selfish in keeping you away from poor Mary. Won't you take one of the children?"

"Oh, no, no, no!" she cried, with a quick shudder.

John Wood was a man of easy adaptations, and by the end of dinner the first strangeness of her proposal had worn away. She was relieved from any fear of his wishing to see her off by his telling her that he was obliged to go immediately to a distant part of the parish, and would take the elder children part of the way with him. And when he offered to leave her bag at the station she said she would prefer to carry it herself.

"How long shall you stay?"

"Oh, perhaps a few days. It will depend upon what I find when I get there. You won't expect letters, will you, John? I'm going to have a real holiday."

"So it seems," he said, smiling. "But do just what you like, and by all means enjoy your holiday. I must be off. Goodby." And he kissed her.

She would have liked to have warned him against taking the children into any house where infection might lurk, but dared not. She felt as if the very word would betray her. Scarcely knowing what she was doing, she moved like a person in a dream, packed her clothes, took the pudding in a basket, saying she wanted it for a side woman, kissed the younger children, and went out of the house. As she passed the turning where the road branched to the station, her thoughts began again to follow, step by step, the girl who had walked along the green lanes that morning, unsatisfied. She had a quick imagination, and she pictured her dragging drearily back to the death-haunted house with no better message of comfort than that the minister was absent. Suppose she spoke to any one on her way home—it was only natural for a girl to talk—and learn the truth? Suppose—as she half fancied—the girl herself suspected the falsehood? The neighbors would rise and cry shame upon her husband—her husband, who would readily have laid down his life for his God and his people, and she would have brought it on him. It was this conviction which now carried her on her way. She could not have put her intention into words, but really she grasped at the idea of atonement which presented itself, fancying that if she went to tend the sick woman no one could complain and that her nursing might save the flickering life. Then in a day or two she would really go on to her sister's.

At the door of the first cottage she reached stood the girl who had come to her that morning, starting down the road. She might have been expecting the doctor or watching him depart. Although the cottage was close to the road, already it seemed to have put on an aspect of tragic forlornness.

When Mrs. Wood spoke the girl turned her face without showing any surprise. It was the older woman who trembled.

"How is she?"

"Weaker," said the girl laconically. The other turned pale.

"Has the doctor been?"

"Yes."

"I'm come to nurse her. I hope you won't mind, because I know a good deal about sickness, and you must have too much on your hands. Perhaps I can do her some good; at any rate, I'll try," she added humbly. "You know who I am."

"Yes," said the girl, half closing her eyes, and glancing at her visitor with what might have been indifference or contempt. "You can come up if you'm minded to."

She led the way, climbing a rickety staircase which led directly into a low room with one small window, set deeply under overhanging ragged thatch. The room felt dreadfully stuffy. On a truckle bed, beneath a gray counterpane, lay the sick woman; by her side, gaunt and livid, the husband sat leaning forward, his arms resting on his knees. As the curate's wife came nervously in he merely glanced at her without speaking; the tragedy of his loss, or his own illness, absorbed his faculties. She looked round upon the untidy, repulsive details and the disgust they caused sickened her so that she caught at a chair, as if the hold upon it would prevent her from running away. Then the stronger impulse swayed her again and carried her to the woman's side, although she saw it was useless to speak to her.

"Is there anything we could give her?" she asked the husband. He pointed to a bottle.

"There's some stuff the doctor left, but her can't swallow." His own voice was hoarse and raucous; to her it sounded like the voice of despair. Her heart sank lower as she began to realize her helplessness.

All through the time that followed, she fancied the dying woman's eyes, with an awful look in them, were fixed on her despairingly. Go where she would in the room they overtook her and asked why she had dishonored her God and her husband. For a time she fought them with the iron strength of her will, but they were stronger; one by one they broke down her defenses and left her shuddering. Yet it was night before she gave way altogether. The girl had gone downstairs, the man was sleeping, when she fell upon her knees by the bedside and cried out piteously: "Oh, don't, don't curse me any more! He shall come to-morrow!"

Was it fancy that the eyes which held her brightened? For a moment she thought so, and yet to her own ears to-morrow sounded like a mockery. Wild dreams of flying to fetch him were in her brain when a voice speaking to the girl below, a step on the creaking stair, made her heart stand still, for step and voice were her husband's. She sprang to her feet and shrank back, her thin hands nervously grasping each other, and as she was in the shadow he did not at first distinguish her. But as his eyes realized who it was he stopped in sheer amazement.

"Louisa?"

She came out trembling and grasped his arm. "Oh, John!" she sobbed.

"What brought you? I thought you were at Donnington."

"You'll never forgive me," she said, disregarding. "They sent for you to come here this morning and I was afraid to tell you."

"Afraid?"

"Because of the infection and the children. I said you were away, and then—then I grew so miserable, thinking what they might say of you if they found out that it was a lie, that I couldn't rest. I fancied I might come and do something to make up by nursing her, but I haven't. John, don't be too angry! I'll never be so distrustful again."

He made no answer to her appeal, but put her gently on one side and stepped forward to the sick woman, who lay more quiet. When he knelt and prayed there was a new fervor, a new tenderness in his dry voice. The girl came up, the man rolled off the bed and stood with his eyes fixed on his wife's ashen face. The other wife had her face buried in her hands. Presently her husband touched her on the shoulder.

"Go down," he said; "I will come presently."

Never before had she been afraid of him, but his voice sounded like the voice of a judge, and she said to herself that he could not forgive her for having kept him away until it was too late, and she did not dare disobey. She stood miserably at the open door looking out into the lane and at the light swaying of the trees against a windswept sky, and it seemed hours before he joined her there.

"She is gone," he said quietly.

"God forgive me!" she returned, with a shudder.

"Don't you think you had better go and see if there is anything you can do for them?"

"Oh, I can't!" she cried involuntarily, but the next moment she had left his side and was climbing the stairs. When she came down again the two went silently out into the lane. It was she who spoke first. "You need not be afraid," she said; "I shall never forgive myself." Then, as he did not answer, she put a question: "John, how did you hear?"

"They told me in the village this morning, that there was serious illness at Allington."

"Yes; but, of course, if I had let you know that a messenger had come to fetch you, you would not have waited."

"I came pretty soon."

"This evening, I know, but too late for that poor soul to say what was wanted. Oh, it was dreadful of me! Nothing that you can say is too bad."

"It was not like you, but, happily, it did not matter to her, for I walked here directly after dinner. I did not tell you where I was going, because you are so easily frightened about infection."

She stopped and held him from her with both hands. "You have been here before to-day?"

"Why, did you not know? Did they not tell you?" he asked in surprise.

"Not a word! But, John, I thought it was you—I don't understand—there was someone she was hungering to see?"

"Ah, yes, poor woman! They had but one other lad, and he has gone to sea. I suppose she knew more about the death of the two younger boys than they fancied, for she has been calling out for him all day. But there was no possibility of getting at him."

She drew a long breath of relief.

"And this was what you meant when you said you had some distance to walk?"

"And what you meant when you started for Donnington?"

"Yes—don't talk of it. I am so ashamed."

She was silent then, cried out suddenly, "The children! I am sure you did not even change your clothes when you goe home! Oh, John, how could you, how could you! And I not there to see after them!"

LICORICE HARVEST IN SYRIA.

Gathered in Sacks and Carried on Camels to the Seaboard for Export.

In a series of articles describing the planting, cultivation, preparation for market and transplantation of licorice root, appearing in the Pharmaceutical Era, there is the following interesting descriptive bit: In digging licorice root in Syria the usual way is to start a trench the length of the place to be dug over, about two feet in length, and work from that, each man placing in a pile the root he has dug, and at the end of the day or longer time it is taken to the scales, weighed and paid for at a specified rate per pound. An allowance is always made for the dirt that clings to the roots. The root is then spread out for a few days to slightly dry, and piled in stacks about three feet wide and four or five feet high, rounded off at the top in order to shed rain, and the piles are narrow enough to prevent heating. At the end of the rainy season the root is spread out to dry for about two months, being turned over from time to time, during which process all the adhering earth dries and falls off, leaving it clean and ready for transport to the point of shipment. It is then put into canvas sacks, each containing from 200 to 250 pounds, two sacks being a load for a camel or a mule.

For the transportation of the root from the place where dug to the port of shipment, varying from two to five days' journey, a contract is usually made with some Arab or Bedouin sheik for a certain amount of cantars (of about 500 pounds each) at a certain price, he to furnish camels and men and the owner to furnish and fill the sacks. About fifty camels go in one caravan or drove, for which five men are sufficient. Sometimes, if 100 camels are used, the caravan goes in sections; one man riding a donkey leads the first camel and the rest follow the leader, while the other men walk, keeping any camel from straying or lagging too far behind. They usually start early in the morning and go ten or fifteen miles, when a halt is made, the loads are taken off and the camels are allowed to browse on the thorn or other bushes for three or four hours, then loaded again and about the same distance travelled, when they are again unloaded and the night is spent in the open air and an early start made the next morning. And so on until the seaboard is reached, where they are unloaded, the root is weighed, the sacks emptied, and returned to be again refilled in the fields for another trip. On the Euphrates and Tigris the root is obtained near the banks of the rivers and, after being properly dried, is loaded in bulk on native boats called bugalows, carrying from fifty to 100 tons, which float down the river or sail if the wind is favorable, or at times are towed by men as far down as Bassorah, where the root is unloaded and pressed in bales ready for shipment.

Bibles in all Languages.

Some interesting particulars of that portion of the catalogue of the British Museum Library now in progress of publication, which is devoted to the sculptures, is furnished in the article on the Bible in the Library of the British Museum, in The Quarterly. At present, only Part I. has appeared, comprising complete Bibles in all languages. The next instalment is expected to contain the different editions of the Hebrew old Testament, together with issues of separate parts or of the whole, with and without commentaries. After this there will probably be a third part, given up to the New Testament and its various books, which it is supposed will be the largest and most important of the three, as its compilation will undoubtedly be the most laborious. It is curious to find by the first entry in the published part that the museum possesses only one issue of the Bible as a whole in its two original languages, Hebrew and Greek. This is the edition published by Michaelis at Leipzig in 1741. It is noted by The Quarterly reviewer that of the principal nations of Europe the number of columns occupied by German and Dutch Bibles is between 30 and 40, that by French about 12, by Italian 4, and by Spanish and Portuguese a column and a half. This, however, as might be expected, only approximately represents the numbers of editions of the complete Bible as published in the vernacular in these countries.

When the vote of a jury in Germany stands 6 to 6 the prisoner is acquitted.

Five thousand words are daily sent over the cable connecting Australia and Europe.

Sandwiches made by machinery are the result of a labor saving device just invented.

The oldest clergyman in England is Rev. Sir John Warren Hays, who was born in 1799.

Slag from blast furnaces is pulverized and used for fertilizing farming lands in Germany.

The tongue of a toad is attached to the front of its jaw and hangs backward instead of forward.

A Spanish musician has devised a system of musical notation by which the sharp-and-flat system is done away with.

Workmen boring an artesian well in Louisiana struck a maple log in a sound state of preservation 549 feet elow the surface.

Rubber trees come into bearing in about seven years after planting, and with proper care the tree is good for fifty years of production.

Mrs. Kenneth McLeod, of Crosswell, Mich., has celebrated her centennial. She was twenty years a maid, forty years a wife and forty years a widow.

Taking the earth as the center of the universe and the polar star as the limit of our vision, the visible universe embraces an aerial space with a diameter of 420,000,000,000 miles.

HEALTH.

Obesity.

A reader asks "are there no anti-fat medicines?"

We answer, yes; there are medicines which will cure obesity. We have known young ladies who have made themselves very pale, thin, and "interesting," as they thought, by drinking vinegar, eating pickles, etc. We are sure you have all known such young ladies. One young lady told me she had been taking half a glass of vinegar daily. She was thin, haggard, and almost as white as a corpse; she was in fact almost a corpse, as she had nearly killed herself in making herself thin and pale. She had destroyed her digestion, and by destroying her digestion she made herself pale, bloodless, and thin. In the same way, the person who is over-fat may destroy his fat by destroying his liver, by taking medicine which will destroy his digestion, which will render his liver inactive, and which will tear down his constitution. In this way he can render himself lean and poor, but he can't afford it. The remedy is worse than the disease. The same is true of the man suffering from diabetes. If he would become intemperate, and drink whisky enough, he could cure his diabetes, but it would ruin his liver. In the same manner a person may be cured of obesity, but it is at too great a cost. Anti-fat remedies are all of them damaging, that is those of them which have any effect whatever.

Some years ago a lady gave a physician some anti-fat pills as a specimen of what she had been taking for obesity. It was guaranteed that two or three of these pills taken two or three times a day for six months would cure the worst cases of obesity. Examination proved that they were composed simply of chalk—carbonate of lime—nothing more. Of course they were perfectly harmless; they were doing no harm, but they were doing no good, except as a mind-cure. But we imagine a mind-cure doctor would not like to undertake a case of obesity. We never heard of such a case being cured by Christian Science.

The natural remedy for obesity is exercise and restricted diet, and the reason that this disease has increased in America to a certain extent, is that exercise is so much neglected. As people at the present time ride more than formerly, as manual labor becomes less necessary, as labor-saving machines have been brought into use, exercise has become less and less popular, and the result is, that obesity has alarmingly increased.

One of the forms of exercise that we should perhaps speak of more at length, is bicycle riding. We could not recommend this exercise to a person who weighs a quarter of a ton, but an obese person who weighs 175 to 200 pounds will find it an excellent exercise, and one of the best means of combating obesity.

We will only add that cold bathing is an excellent aid to diet and exercise in reducing flesh; but hot baths are not to be recommended except occasionally. They only abstract water, which is quickly replaced. We say this as the result of much observation and twenty years' experience in treating cases of this sort. Exercise and diet are the great remedies,—as much as possible of the first without exhaustion, and as little as possible of the latter without starvation.

Corsets in Early Times.

In the letters of Synesires, Bishop of Cyrene, off the Greek coast of Africa, about four hundred years after the Christian era, is found one of the earliest references to stays. He tells us how, when he was shipwrecked on a remote part of the coast, and he and the rest of the passengers were starving on cockles and limpets, there was among them a slave girl from the East, who had a pinched wasp-waist, such as you may see on the old Hindoo Sculptures, or on any street in America. And when the Greek ladies of the neighborhood found her out, they sent her from house to house, to behold with astonishment and laughter, this new and prodigious waist, in which it seemed impossible to them for a human being to live or breathe; and they petted the poor girl, and fed her, as they might a dwarf or giantess, till she got quite fat and comfortable, while her owners had not enough to eat. So strange and ridiculous seemed our present fashion to the descendants of those whose glorious statues we pretend to admire but refuse to imitate.

THE HUNGER FOR GOLD

Continues to Tempt Men to Brave Many Terrors in Australia.

A Victoria, B. C., special says:—Australian advices to hand by the latest direct steamer show that the gold hunger continues to tempt men to face the terrors of thirst and heat in the attempt to cross the trackless and waterless waste guarding the treasures of the Coolgardie region. This is the centre of what is known as the Yilgarn district, which itself is but one of five gold fields that, although not worked, have already made a name for themselves. Though several thousand persons have gathered about Coolgardie so immense is the auriferous area that only the most cursory search has not yet been made. At points all over the territory of 13,000 square miles gold has been found, both alluvial and in reefs, and it is only the fatal absence of water which has prevented the establishment of the greatest mining camp of the world. Reports of finds by some explorers read like fairy tales. Almost the only means of separating the gold in the drifts has been by blowing, yet Bayley, the discoverer of Coolgardie, tells how in about a month his party collected nearly 200 ounces, and that at last coming on the reef they collected 30 ounces of gold in one evening. In another two days they took 600 ounces from the cap of a reef, and in still another 40 hours they gathered 528 ounces, the only means for extracting the gold being "to knock the stubb out and dolly it with a pestle and mortar." The want of water, however, surrounds the gold fields like a wall of fire, and efforts are being made by the Government of the colony to find subterranean reservoirs which will make possible the development of the continuous belt of gold territory connecting its southern with its northern boundaries, and embracing in the five fields of Yilgarn, Murchison, Ashburton Pilbarra and Kimberley a total area of 132,000 square miles.