

The Daily Reporter.

D. C. IRELAND & CO. PUBLISHERS.

McMinnville, Or. Feb. 8, 1887

THE HALF-CASTE.

AN OLD GOVERNESS'S TALE—
FOUNDED ON FACT.

BY MISS MULLOCK.

"We know what we are, but we know not what we may be," as my quaintly clever niece and name-child, Cassia, a great reader and quoter of Shakspeare, would say. And truly, who could have thought that I, a plain governess, should in my old age have become a writer. Yet I cannot invent a plot—I must write nothing but truth. Here I pause, recollecting painfully that in my first sentence I have sinned against truth by antithesizing Cassia my "niece and name-child," when, strictly speaking, she is neither the one nor the other. She is no blood-relation at all, and my own name happens to be Cassandra. I always disliked it heartily until Mr. Sutherland called me—But I forgot that I must explain a little.

Mr. Sutherland was—no, thank Heaven!—is, a very good man; a friend of my late father, and of the same business—an Indian merchant. When in my twenty-fifth year my dear father died, and we were ruined—a quiet way of expressing this, but in time one learns to speak so quietly of every pang—Mr. Sutherland was very kind to my mother and to me. I remember, as though it were yesterday, one day, when he sat with us in our little parlor, and hearing my mother calling me "Cassie," said laughingly that I always put him in mind of a certain Indian spice. "In fact," he added, looking affectionately at my dear, gentle, little mother, and approvingly—yes, it was approvingly, at me—"in fact, I think we three sitting thus, with myself in the center, might be likened to myrrh, aloes, and cassia." One similitude was untrue; for he was not bitter but "sweet as summer." However, from that time he always called me Cassia. I rather like the name, and latterly it was very kind of him to—There I am forestalling my history again!

When I was twenty-five, as I said, I first went out as governess. This plan was the result of many consultations between my mother and myself. A hard thing was my leaving home; but I found I could thereby earn a larger and more regular salary, part of which being put by, would sometime enable me to live altogether with my mother. Such were her plans and hopes for the future. As for my own—But it is idle to dwell upon things so long past. God knew best, and it all comes to the same at the end of life.

It was through Mr. Sutherland that I got my first situation. He wrote my mother a hurried letter, saying he had arranged for me to enter a family concerning whom he would explain before my departure. But something hindered his coming; it was a public meeting, I remember; for, though still a young man, he was held in much honor among the city merchants, and knew the affairs of India well, from early residence there. Of course, having these duties to fulfill, it was natural he should not recollect my departure; so I started without seeing him, and without knowing more of my future abode than its name, and that of my employer. It was a Yorkshire village, and the gentleman whose family I was going to was a Mr. Le Poer.

My long journey was dreary—God knows how dreary! in youth one suffers so much; and parting from my mother was any time a sufficient grief. In those days railways were not numerous, and I had to journey a good way by coach. About eleven at night I found myself at my destination. At the door a maid-servant appeared; no one else; it was scarcely to be expected by "the governess." This was a new and sad "coming home" to me. I was shown to my bedroom, hearing, as I passed the landing, much rustling of dresses and "squitting" away of little feet. (I ought to apologize for that odd expression, which I think I learned when I was quite a child, and used to

go angling with my father and Mr. Sutherland. It means a scattering off in all directions, as a shoal of minnows do when you throw a pebble among them.) I asked if the family were gone to bed, and was informed "no;" so I arranged my dress and went down-stairs, unconsciously reassured by the fact that the house was neither so large nor so aristocratic as my very liberal salary had inclined me to expect.

"Who shall I say, miss?" asked the rather untidy servant, meeting me in the lobby, and staring with all her eyes, as if a stranger were some rare sight.

"Miss Pryor," I said, thinking regretfully that I should be henceforth that, and not "Cassia;" and seeing the maid still stared, I added, with an effort: "I am the new governess."

So under that double announcement I appeared at the parlor-door. The room was rather dark; there were two candles; but one had been extinguished, and was being hurriedly relighted as I entered. At first I saw nothing clearly; then I perceived a little pale lady sitting at one end of the table, and two half-grown up girls, dressed in "going-out-to-tea" costume, seated primly together on the sofa. There was a third; but she vanished out of one door as I entered the other.

"Miss Pryor, I believe?" said a timid voice—so timid that I could hardly believe that it was a lady addressing her governess. I glanced at her: she was a little woman with pale hair and light eyes—frightened-looking eyes—that just rose and fell in a minute. I said, "I was Miss Pryor, and concluded I addressed Mrs. Le Poer." She answered, "Yes, yes;" and held out, hesitatingly, a thin, cold, bird-like hand, which I took rather warmly than otherwise; for I felt really sorry for her evident nervousness. It seemed so strange for anybody to be afraid of me. "My daughters, Miss Pryor," she then said, in a louder tone. Whereupon the two girls rose, courtesied, blushed—seemingly more from awkwardness than modesty—and sat down again. I shook hands with both, trying to take the initiative, and make myself sociable and at home—a difficult matter, my position feeling much like that of a fly in an ice-house.

"These are my pupils, then?" said I, cheerfully. "Which is Miss Zillah?"—for I remembered Mr. Sutherland had mentioned that name in his letter, and its peculiarity naturally struck me.

The mother and daughters looked rather blankly at each other; and the former said: "This is Miss Le Poer and Miss Matilda—Zillah is not in the room at present."

"Oh, a third sister?" I observed.

"No," rather pertly answered Miss Le Poer; "Zill is not our sister at all, but only a sort of distant relation of papa's, whom he is very kind to and maintains at his own expense, and who mends our stockings and brushes our hair of nights, and whom we are very kind to also."

"Oh, indeed!" was all I said in reply to this running stream of very provincially-spoken and unpunctuated English. I was rather puzzled, too; for if my memory was correct—and I generally remembered Mr. Sutherland's letters very clearly, probably because they were themselves so clear—he had particularly mentioned my future pupil, Zillah Le Poer, and no Miss Le Poer besides. I waited with some curiosity for the girl's reappearance; at last I ventured to say: "I should like to see Miss Zillah, I understood"—here I hesitated, but thought afterward that plain speech was best—"I understood from Mr. Sutherland that she was to be my pupil."

"Of course, of course," hastily said the lady, and I fancied she colored slightly. "Caroline, fetch your cousin."

Caroline sulkily went out, and shortly returned, followed by a girl older than herself, though clad in childish, or rather servant fashion, with short petticoats, short sleeves, and a big brown pinafore. "Zill wouldn't stay to be dressed," explained Caroline, in a loud whisper to her mother; at which Mrs. Le Poer looked more nervous and uncomfortable than ever.

Meanwhile I observed my pupil. I had fancied the Zillah so carefully entrusted to my care by Mr. Sutherland to be a grown young lady, who only wanted "finishing." I even thought she might be a beauty. With some surprise, I found her a half-caste girl—with an olive complexion, full Hindoo lips, and eyes very black and bright. She was untidily dressed; which looked the worse, since she was almost a woman grown; though her dull, heavy face had the stupidity of an ultra-stupid child. I saw all this; for somehow

—probably because I had never or never before—I examined the girl rather closely. Zillah herself stared at me much as if I had been a wild animal, and then put her finger in her mouth with a babyish air.

"How do you do, my dear?" said I, desperately, feeling that all four pair of family-eyes were upon me. "I hope we shall be good friends soon." And I put out my hand.

At first the girl seemed not to understand that I meant to shake hands with her. Then she irresolutely poked out her brown fingers, having first taken the precaution to wipe them on her pinafore. I made another remark or two about my being her governess, and her studying with her cousins, at which she opened her large eyes with a dull amazement, but I never heard the sound of her voice.

It must have been now near twelve o'clock. I thought it odd the girls should be kept up so late; and began at last to speculate whether I was to see Mr. Le Poer. My conjectures were soon set at rest by a loud pull at the door-bell, which made Mrs. Le Poer spring up from her chair, and Zillah vanish like lightning. The two others sat cowed, with their hands before them, and I myself felt none of the bravest. So upon this frightened group the master of the house walked in.

"Hullo, Mrs. Le Poer! Cary! Zill, you fool! Confound it, where's the supper?" (I might have asked that, too, being very hungry.) "What the deuce are you all about?"

"My dear!" whispered the wife, beseechingly, as she met him at the door, and seemed pointing to me.

Certainly I could not have believed that the voice I just heard belonged to the gentleman who had now entered. The gentleman, I repeat; for I never saw one who more thoroughly looked the character. He was about fifty, very handsome, very well dressed—his whole mien bespeaking that stately, gracious courtliness which now, except in rare instances, belongs to a past age. Bowing, he examined me curiously, with a look that somehow or other made me uncomfortable. He seemed viewing over my feminine attractions as a horse-dealer does the points of a new bargain. But soon the interest of the look died away. I knew he considered me as all others did—a very plain and shy young woman, perhaps lady-like (I believe I was that, for I heard of some one saying so), but nothing more.

"I have the pleasure of meeting Miss Pryor?" said he, in an ultra-bland tone, which, after his first coarse manner, would have positively startled me, had I not noticed that the two are often combined in the same individual. (I always distrust a man who speaks in a very mild, measured, womanish voice.)

I mentioned the name of his friend, Mr. Sutherland.

"Oh, I recollect," said he stiffly; "Mr. Sutherland informed you that—that—" He evidently wished to find out exactly what I knew of himself and his family.

Now, if being always my habit to speak the plain truth, I saw no reason why I should not gratify him; so I stated the simple facts of our friend's letter to my mother—that he had found for me a situation in the family of a Mr. Le Poer, and had particularly charged me with completing the education of Miss Zillah Le Poer.

"Oh!" said Mr. Le Poer. "Were those all your instructions, my dear Miss Pryor?" he added, insinuatingly.

I answered that I knew no more, having missed seeing Mr. Sutherland before I came away.

"Then you come quite a stranger into my family? I hope you have received the hearty welcome a stranger should receive, and I trust you will soon cease to merit that name." So saying, he gracefully touched the tips of my fingers, and in mellifluous tones ordered supper, gently reproaching his wife for having delayed that meal. "You know, my dear, it was a pity to wait for me; and Miss Pryor must be needing refreshment."

Indeed I was being literally famished. The meal was ordinary enough—mere bread, butter and cheese; but Mr. Le Poer did the honors with most gentlemanly courtesy. I thought, never did a poor governess meet with such attention! The girls did not sup with us; they had taken the earliest opportunity of disappearing; nor was the half-caste cousin again visible. We had soon done eating—that is, Mrs. Le Poer and I; for the gentleman seemed so indifferent to the very moderate attractions of his table, that from this fact, and

from a certain redness of his eyes, I could not help suspecting he had well supped before. Still, that did not prevent his asking for wine; and having politely drunk with me, he composed himself to have a little confidential talk while he finished the decanter.

"Miss Pryor, do you correspond with Mr. Sutherland?"

The abruptness of his question startled me. I felt my cheeks tingling as I answered most truthfully, "No."

"Still, you are a dear and valued friend of his, he tells me?"

I felt glad, so glad that I forgot to make the due answer about Mr. Sutherland's being "very kind."

My host had probably gained the information he wanted, and became communicative on his part. "I ought, my dear young lady, to explain a few things concerning your pupils, which have been thus accidentally omitted by my friend, Mr. Sutherland, who could not better have acceded to my request than by sending a lady like yourself to instruct my family." Here he bowed, and I bowed. We did a great deal in that way of dumb civility, as it saved him trouble and me words. "My daughters you have seen. They are, I believe, tolerably well informed for such mere children." I wondered if I had rightly judged them at thirteen and fourteen. "My only trouble, Miss Pryor, is concerning my niece." Here I looked surprised, not suspecting Zillah to be so near a relative. "I call her niece through habit, and for the sake of her father, my poor deceased brother," continued Mr. Le Poer, with a lengthened and martyr-like visage; "but in truth she has no legal claim to belong to my family. My brother—sad fellow always—Indian life not over-scrupulous—ties between natives and Europeans; in fact, my dear Miss Pryor, Zillah's mother—You understand?"

To be Continued.

SEVENTH ANNUAL



FIREMAN'S FAIR

—OF THE—

McMinnville Fire Department,

—AT—

Garrison Opera House,

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday,
February 22d, 23d and 24th,
1887.

LIST OF PRIZES.

There will be prizes given on the following named exhibits:

1st and 2d prize for best and 2d best exhibit of Kensington painting.

1st and 2d prize, for best and 2d best exhibit of Kensington embroidery.

1st and 2d prize, for best and 2d best exhibit of outline work by a child under 14 years of age.

1st and 2d best, for best and 2d best exhibit of work of any kind by a boy under 14 years of age.

1st and 2d prize, for best and 2d best exhibit of crayon work.

There will also be a prize given for the heaviest, lightest and prettiest baby under 1 year of age.

Following is a list of prizes offered: For the prettiest baby, gold necklace; lightest and heaviest baby under one year of age, each a gold ring; outline work by a child under fourteen years, first prize, ear rings, second prize, a rap book; Kensington embroidery, first prize, napkin ring, second prize, box writing paper; Kensington painting, first prize, manicure set, second prize, bracket; crayon work, first prize, paper holder, second prize, pitcher; boy's work, first prize, paper holder, second prize, inkstand.

Parade of Firemen Tuesday afternoon.

Doors will be open at 7 o'clock, p. m. daily, during the

Fair.

—All are invited to Attend—

Admission 25 Cents.
By Order of COMMITTEE.