

It was a critical moment in the progress of the game which Craven Black and Lady Wynde were playing, and these newcomers had arrived in time to give a turn to it.

For Nova recognized them as the three guardians of her property—Sir John Freise, Mr. Atkins, and the young Lord Towyn!

(To be continued.)

THE VINERY.

If the weather has been mild, a certain moist plumpness may have been observed among the buds of the vines. Silently and slowly, but surely, they have begun to grow. Were our ears attuned to finer sounds, we might already have heard the gentle ripple of the rising tide of life, and a rushing movement among the scaly envelopes of the buds. They have begun to throw off their winter robes, and to prepare spring fashions in which to greet the rising sun.

It is our business to wait upon and assist this general awakening of the powers of life, quietly and carefully to lead, rather than force it on. Progress without exhaustion must be our aim, and on no account must we verify afresh the old proverb, "the more haste the less speed." This is often the cruel fate that overtakes the lady or amateur horticulturist. In a fit of enthusiasm life is whipped on at express speed. It is so pleasant to note its progress, to see how much we can do, and how soon. But, alas, Nature will assuredly have her revenge. And swift and crushing, even unto death, the avenger too often is. By pushing the spurs of heat and moisture sharply into vines or other plants, the rate of growth is tremendous, till exhaustion overtakes it, then all is over. This impatience is as surely fatal to vegetable life as to rush blindly down an incline ending in a precipice would be to ours. If we would be refreshed, gladdened with rich, fine clusters by-and-by, let us move our vines gently at first. Coax them with our sympathy, excite them by our tears. In other words, envelop them round with a gentle, genial warmth of from 45 to 55 deg. In such an atmosphere they will grow and carry their strength with them.

In warm weather change the air of the vinery daily by several hours' ventilation. At all times shut up the house early, say about three o'clock. A penny saved is a penny earned, and the more of the sun's heat you can bottle away in your vinery early in the afternoon the less coal will be needed from your cellar at night. The sun's heat not only is free of cost, while coals are dear, but its warmth is better far for the vines than fire heat. This early closing is of immense importance in horticulture, but singularly enough it is difficult to render it popular with villa gardeners. It is to be hoped that the recommendation to close early and save your coal and strengthen the vines may do something to popularize the early closing of all plant houses.

A TWO-HORNED RHINOCEROS.—A female rhinoceros, singularly remarkable for bearing two horns one above the other respectively on the forehead and nose, has arrived in England, for the Hamburg Zoological Society. The species is known in zoology as *Rhinoceros bicornis*. This novel living specimen is a native of Sumatra, and estimated to be of great value. The animal is about the height of a small horse, but more bulky, and is apparently so healthy, happy, and tame that (says the *Times*) any one having the courage may safely not only place his hand in its huge, ungainly looking mouth, but may leisurely take it out again.

A SETTLED PLAN OF LIFE.—There are some who have no settled plans of life to follow, no determined purpose to fulfil. They are deficient in firmness, and unwilling or unable to persevere in what they undertake. They enter upon schemes without a clear conception of what their ends should be, or how they should be accomplished. They are often weary of their purpose, and leave it even when it may be approaching a successful issue. Wanting a balance-wheel in their mental machinery, they are gormed at one time by one motive and at another by a different one; or, undecided which of two or more diverse motives to obey, they follow one in part, and another in part, but yield fully to and derive advantage from neither. In their indecision they sometimes adopt several contradictory or irreconcilable plans, and of course they fail in all. Thus they are turning from purpose to purpose, floundering amidst difficulties and unyielding circumstances, striving in vain, to make opposing plans and conditions harmonize together.

A WONDERFUL CARRIER-PIGEON.—From New Jersey we have a marvellous story of a carrier-pigeon, which we (*Nature*) commend to the notice of Mr. Toetmeier. It performed the journey from Sopus-Farm, Warren Co., N.J., to Sandusky, Ohio, a distance of 300 miles, in exactly an hour, and its condition on its arrival at the latter place is thus described:—"I found the greatest excitement had

followed the arrival of the pigeon. Mr. Smythe told me that at precisely two o'clock the bird came like an arrow into his house. His movement was more like a blue streak than a well-defined bird. He seemed but little exhausted, although nearly all the feathers were off his body, except the small patch held on his back by the gatta-percha which fastened the note. A few miles more would have worn every feather from his wings, and then he would have to depend upon the momentum already acquired to carry him on his journey, and to steer without a tail, and perhaps be killed in attempting to alight." No wonder the owner offers to match this pigeon, "when he has grown a new suit of feathers," for 1,000 dollars against any carrier-pigeon that has not done this distance in an equal time.

THE HEAVY BURDEN.

A LIFE SKETCH.

"RATHER a heavy burden, isn't it, my boy?"

Clarence Spencer, to whom the words had been addressed, turned from his ledger and looked towards the speaker.

Clarence was a young man—not more than five-and-twenty—and was book-keeper for Mr. Solomon Wardle. It was Solomon Wardle, a pleasant-faced, keen-eyed man of fifty, who had spoken.

"A heavy burden, isn't it, Clarence?" the merchant repeated.

Still the young man was silent. His look indicated that he did not comprehend. He had been for some time bending over the ledger with his thoughts far away; and that his reflections were not pleasant ones was evident enough from the gloom upon his handsome face.

"My dear boy, the burden is not only heavy now, but it will grow heavier and heavier the longer you carry it."

"Mr. Wardle, I do not comprehend you."

"Ah, Clarence."

"I certainly do not."

"Didn't I call at your house for you this morning?"

Clarence nodded assent.

"And didn't I hear and see enough to reveal to me the burden that you took with you when you left? You must remember, my boy, that I am older than you are, and that I have been through the mill. You find your burden heavy, and I have no doubt that Sarah's heart is as heavily laden as is your own."

Then Clarence Spencer understood, and the morning's scene was present with him as it had been present with him ever since leaving home.

On that morning he had had a dispute with his wife. It had occurred at the breakfast-table. There is no need of reproducing the scene. Suffice it to say that it had sprung from a mere nothing, and had grown to a cause of anger.

The commencement had been a look and a tone, then a flash of impatience, then a rising of the voice, then another look—the voice rose higher; reason was unheeded, passion gained sway, and the twain lost sight of the warm, enduring love that lay smitten and aching deep down in their hearts, and felt for the time only the passing tornado.

Clarence remembered that Mr. Wardle had entered his house, and had caught a sign of the storm.

He thought of one thing more—how miserably unhappy he had been all the morning; and he knew not how long his burden of unhappiness was to be borne.

"Honestly, Clarence, isn't it a heavy and thankless burden?" continued the merchant.

The book-keeper knew that his employer was his friend, and that he was a true-hearted Christian man, and, after a brief pause, he answered:

"Yes, Mr. Wardle, it is a heavy burden."

The merchant smiled and sat down. His face beamed with goodness, and an earnest light was in his calm blue eyes.

"My boy, I am going to venture upon a bit of fatherly counsel. I hope I shall not offend."

"Not at all," said Clarence.

He winced a little as though the probing gave him new pain.

"In the first place," pursued the old man, with a quiver of emotion in his voice, "you love your wife?"

"Love her?"

"That is enough. I know you love her."

"Oh! Mr. Wardle—I—I—"

"You love her as well as you did when you married her?"

"Better! better! I love her more and more."

"Do you think she loves you in return?"

"Loves me in return?"

"Ay—what do you think about it?"

"I don't think anything about it—I know."

"You know she loves you?"

"Yes!"

"You know that deep down in her heart she holds your love as a most sacred treasure?"

"Yes, I know it."

"Then you must admit that the trouble of this morning came from no ill-feeling at heart?"

"Of course not."

"It was but a surface squall, for which you at least are very sorry?"

After a moment's hesitation he replied:

"Yes, yes—I am heartily sorry."

"Now mark me, Clarence, and answer honestly. Don't you think your wife is as sorry as you are?"

"I cannot doubt it."

"And don't you think she is suffering at this time?"

"Yes."

"Is she not probably, in the seclusion of her home, suffering more keenly than you are?"

"I doubt that, Mr. Wardle. At all events, I hope she may not be suffering more."

"Very well. Let that pass. You know she is bearing her part of the burden?"

"Yes—I know that."

"Now, my boy, do you realize with whom the heavier part of this burden is lodged?"

Clarence looked upon his interlocutor wonderingly.

"If the storm had all blown over, and you knew that the sun would shine when you next entered your home, you would not feel so unhappy?"

Clarence assented.

"But," continued Mr. Wardle, "you fear that there will be gloom in your home when you return?"

The young man bowed his head as he murmured an affirmative.

"Because," the merchant added, with a touch of parental sternness in his tone, "you are resolved to carry it there!"

Clarence looked up in surprise.

"I—I carry it?"

"Ay—you have the burden in your heart, and you mean to carry it home. Remember, my boy, I have been there, and I know all about it. I have been very foolish in my lifetime, and I have suffered. I suffered until I discovered my folly, then I resolved that I would suffer no more. Upon looking the matter fairly and honestly in the face I found that the burdens which had so galled me had been self-imposed. Of course such burdens can be thrown off. Now you have resolved that you will go home to your dinner with a heavy heart and a dark face. You have no hope that your wife will meet you with a smile. And why? Because you know that she has no particular cause for smiling. You know that her heart is burdened with the same affliction which gives you so much unrest. So you are fully assured that you are to find your home shrouded in gloom. Furthermore, you don't know when that gloom will depart, and when the blessed sunshine of love will burst in again. Why don't you know? Because it is not now in your heart to sweep the cloud away. You say to yourself—'I can bear it as long as she can!' Am I not right?"

Clarence did not answer in words.

"I know I am right," pursued the merchant; "and very likely your wife is saying to herself the same thing. So your hope of sunshine does not rest upon the willingness to forgive, but upon the inability to bear the burden. By-and-by it will happen, as it has happened before, that one of the twain will surrender from exhaustion, and it will be likely to be the weaker party. Then there will be a collapse, and a reconciliation. Generally the wife falls first beneath the galling burden, because her love is keenest and most sensitive. The husband, in such case, acts the part of a coward. When he might, with a breath, blow the cloud away, he cringes and cowers until the wife is forced to let the sunlight in through her breaking heart."

Clarence listened, and was troubled. He saw the truth, and he felt its weight. He was not foolish, nor was he given to falsehood. During the silence that followed he reflected upon the past, and he called to mind scenes just such as Mr. Wardle had depicted.

This brought him to the remembrance of how he had seen his wife weep when she had failed and sunk beneath the heavy burden, and how often she had sobbed upon his bosom in grief for the error.

The merchant read the young man's thoughts, and after a time he arose and touched him upon the arm.

"Clarence, suppose you were to put on your hat and go home now. Suppose you should think on your way only of the love and blessing that might be, and, with this thought, you should enter your cottage with a smile upon your face, and you should put your arms round your wife's neck, and kiss her, and softly say to her, 'My darling, I have come home to throw down the burden I took away with me this morning. It is greater than I can bear.' Suppose you were to do this, would your wife repulse you?"

"Repulse me?"

"Ah, my boy, you echo my words with an amazement which shows that you understand me. Now, sir, have you the courage to try the experiment? Dare you be so much of a man? Dare you thus try