

LITTLE BEL'S SUPPLEMENT.

BY HELEN HUNT JACKSON.

"**I**NDEED, then, my mother, I'll not take the school at Wissan Bridge without they promise me a supplement. It's the worst school i' a' Prince Edward Island."

"I doubt but ye're young to tackle wi' them boys, Bel," replied the mother, gazing into her daughter's face with an intent expression, in which it would have been hard to say which predominated, anxiety or fond pride. "I'd sooner see ye take any other school between this an' Charlottetown, an' no supplement."

"I'm not afraid, my mother, but I'll manage 'em well enough; but I'll not undertake it for the same money as a decent school is taught: they'll promise me five pounds supplement at the end o' the year, or I'll not set foot i' the place."

"Maybe they'll not be for givin' ye the school at all when they see what's yer youth," replied the mother, in a half-antagonistic tone. There was a continual under-current between this mother and daughter of possible antagonism, overlain and usually smothered out of sight by passionate attachment on both sides.

Little Bel tossed her head. "Age is not everything that goes to the makkin' o' a teacher," she retorted. "There's Grizzy McLeod; she's teachin' at the Cove these eight years, an' I'd shame her myself any day she likes wi' spellin' an' the lines; an' if there's ever a boy in a school o' mine that'll gie me a floutin' answer such 's I've heard her take by the dozen, I'll warrant ye he'll get a birchin'; an' the trustees think there's no teacher like Grizzy. I'm not afraid."

"Grizzy never had any great schoolin' herself," replied her mother, proudly. "There's no girl in all the farms that's had what ye've had, Bel."

"It isn't the schoolin', mother," retorted Little Bel. "The schoolin' 's got nothin' to do with it. I'd teach a school better than Grizzy McLeod if I'd never had a day's schoolin'."

"An' now if that's not the talk of a silly!" retorted the quickly angered parent. "Will ye be tellin' me perhaps, then, that them that can't read theirselves is to be set to teach letters?"

Little Bel was too loyal at heart to her illiterate mother to wound her farther by

reiterating her point. Throwing her arms around her neck, and kissing her warmly, she exclaimed: "Eh, my mother, it's not a silly that ye could ever have for a child, wi' that clear head, and the wise things always said to us from the time we're in our cradles. Ye've never a child that's so clever as ye are yerself. I didn't mean just what I said: ye must know surely: only that the schoolin' part is the smallest part o' the keepin' a school."

"An' I'll never give in to such nonsense as that either," said the mother, only half mollified. "Ye can ask yer father, if ye like, if it stands not to reason that the more a teacher knows, the more he can teach. He'll take the conceit out o' ye better than I can." And good Isabella McDonald turned angrily away, and drummed on the window-pane with her knitting-needles to relieve her nervous discomfort at this slight passage at arms with her best-beloved daughter.

Little Bel's face flushed, and with compressed lips she turned silently to the little oaken-framed looking-glass that hung so high on the wall she could but just see her chin in it. As she slowly tied her pink bonnet strings she grew happier. In truth, she would have been a maiden hard to console if the face that looked back at her from the quaint oak leaf and acorn wreath had not comforted her inmost soul, and made her again at peace with herself. And as the mother looked on she too was comforted, and in five minutes more, when Little Bel was ready to say good-by, they flung their arms around each other, and embraced and kissed, and the daughter said: "Good-by t'ye now, my mother. Wish me well, an' ye'll see that I get it—supplement an' all," she added, slyly. And the mother said, "Good luck t'ye, child; an' it's luck to them that gets ye." And that was the way quarrels always ended between Isabella McDonald and her oldest daughter.

The oldest daughter, and yet only just turned of twenty, and there were eight children younger than she and one older. This is the way among the Scotch farming folk in Prince Edward Island. Children come tumbling into the world like rabbits in a pen, and have to scramble for a living almost as soon and as hard as the rab-

bits. It is a narrow life they lead, and full of hardships and deprivations, but it has its compensations. Sturdy virtues in sturdy bodies come of it—the sort of virtue made by the straitest Calvinism, and the sort of body made out of oatmeal and milk.

It seemed but a few years ago that John McDonald had wooed and won Isabella McIntosh—wooed her with difficulty in the bosom of her family of six brothers and five sisters, and won her triumphantly in spite of the open and contemptuous opposition of each one of the five sisters. For John himself was one of seven in his father's home, and whoever married John must go there to live, to be only a daughter in a mother-in-law's house, and take a daughter's share of the brunt of everything. "And nothing to be got except a living, and it was a poor living the McDonald farm gave beside the McIntosh," the McIntosh sisters said. And, moreover: "The saint did not live that could get on with John McDonald's mother. That was what had made him the silent fellow he was, always being told by his mother to hold his tongue and have done speaking; and a fine pepper-pot there'd be when Isabella's hasty tongue and temper were flung into that batch!"

There was no gainsaying all this. Nevertheless Isabella married John, went home with him into his father's house, put her shoulder against her spoke in the family wheel, and did her best. And when, ten years later, as reward of her affectionate trust and patience, she found herself sole mistress of the McDonald farm, she did not feel herself ill paid. The old father and mother were dead, two sisters had died and two had married, and the two sons had gone to the States to seek better fortunes than were to be made on Prince Edward Island. John, as eldest son, had, according to the custom of the island, inherited the farm, and Mrs. Isabella, confronting her three still unmarried sisters, was able at last triumphantly to refute their still resentfully remembered objections to her choice of a husband.

"An' did ye suppose I did not all the time know that it was to this it was sure to come, soon or late?" she said, with justifiable complacency. "It's a good thing to have a house o' one's own an' an estate. An' the linen that's in the house! I've no need to turn a hand to the flax-wheel for ten years if I've no mind. An' ye can all bide your times, an' see what John 'll make o' the farm, now he's got where he

can have things his own way. His father was always set against anything that was new, an' the place is run down shameful; but John 'll bring it up; an' I'm not an old woman yet."

This last was the unkindest phrase Mrs. John McDonald permitted herself to use. There was a rebound in it which told on the McIntosh sisters, for they, many years older than she, were already living on tolerance in their father's house, where their oldest brother and his wife ruled things with an iron hand. All hopes of a husband and a home of their own had quite died out of their spinster bosoms, and they would not have been human had they not secretly and grievously envied the comely, blooming Isabella her husband, children, and home.

But, with all this, it was no play-day life that Mrs. Isabella had led. At the very best, and with the best of farms, Prince Edward Island farming is no high-road to fortune; only a living, and that of the plainest, is to be made; and when children come at the rate of ten in twenty-two years, it is but a small showing that the farmer's bank account makes at the end of that time. There is no margin for fineries, luxuries, small ambitions of any kind. Isabella had her temptations in these directions, but John was firm as a rock in withstanding them. If he had not been, there would never have been this story to tell of his Little Bel's school-teaching, for there would never have been money enough in the bank to have given her two years' schooling in Charlottetown, the best the little city afforded, "and she boardin' all the time like a lady," said the severe McIntosh aunts, who disapproved of all such wide-flying ambitions, which made women discontented with and unfitted for farming life.

Little Bel had, indeed, even before the Charlottetown schooling, had a far better chance than her mother; for in her mother's day there was no free school in the island; and in families of ten and twelve it was only a turn and turn about that the children had at school. Since the free schools had been established many a grown man and woman had sighed enviously at the better luck of the youngsters under the new *régime*. No excuse now for the poorest man's children not knowing how to read and write, and more; and if they chose to keep on, nothing to hinder their dipping into studies

of which their parents never heard so much as the names.

And this was not the only better chance which Little Bel had had. John McDonald's farm joined the lands of the manse; his house was a short mile from the manse itself; and by a bit of good fortune for Little Bel it happened that just as she was growing into girlhood there came a new minister to the manse: a young man from Halifax with a young bride, the daughter of an officer in the Halifax garrison, gentle-folks both of them, but single-hearted and full of fervor in their work for the souls of the plain farming people given into their charge. And both Mr. Allan and Mrs. Allan had caught sight of Little Bel's face on their first Sunday in church, and Mrs. Allan had traced to her a flute-like voice she had detected in the Sunday-school singing; and before long, to Isabella's great but unspoken pride, the child had been "bidden to the manse for the minister's wife to hear her sing," and from that day there was a new vista in Little Bel's life.

Her voice was sweet as a lark's and as pure, and her passionate love for music a gift in itself. "It would be a sin not to cultivate it," said Mrs. Allan to her husband, "even if she never sees another piano than mine, nor had any other time in her life except these few years to enjoy it: she will always have had these; and nothing can separate her from her voice."

And so it came to pass that when, at sixteen, Little Bel went to Charlottetown for her final two years of study at the High School, she played almost as well as Mrs. Allan herself, and sang far better. And in all Isabella McDonald's day-dreams of the child's future, vague or minute, there was one feature never left out. The "good husband" coming always was to be a man who could "give her a piano."

In Charlottetown Bel found no such friend as Mrs. Allan, but she had a young school-mate who had a piano, and—poor short-sighted creature that she was, Bel thought—hated the sight of it, detested to practice, and shed many a tear over her lessons. This girl's parents were thankful to see their daughter impressed by Bel's enthusiasm for music; and so well did the clever girl play her cards that, before she had been six months in the place, she was installed as music teacher to her own school-fellow, earning thereby not

only money enough to buy the few clothes she needed, but what to her was better than money, the privilege of the use of the piano an hour a day.

So when she went home, at the end of the two years, she had lost nothing; in fact, had made substantial progress; and her old friend and teacher, Mrs. Allan, was as proud as she was astonished when she first heard her play and sing. Still more astonished was she at the forceful character the girl had developed. She went away a gentle, loving, clinging child, her nature, like her voice, belonging to the order of birds—bright, flitting, merry, confiding. She returned a woman, still loving, still gentle in her manner, but with a new poise in her bearing, a resoluteness, a fire, of which her first girlhood had given no suggestion. It was strange to see how similar yet unlike were the comments made on her in the manse and in the farm-house by the two couples most interested in her welfare.

"It is wonderful, Robert," said Mrs. Allan to her husband, "how that girl has changed, and yet not changed. It is the music that has lifted her up so; what a glorious thing is a real passion for any art in a human soul! But she can never live here among these people. I must take her to Halifax."

"No," said Mr. Allan. "Her work will be here. She belongs to her people in heart all the same. She will not be discontented."

"Husband, I'm doubtin' if we've done the right thing by the child after a'," said the mother, tearfully, to the father, at the end of the first evening after Bel's return. "She's got the ways o' the city on her, an' she carries herself as if she'd be teachin' the minister his own self. I doubt but she'll feel herself strange i' the house."

"Never you fash yourself," replied Donald. "The girl's got her head, that's e'. But her heart's i' the right place. Ye'll see she'll put her strength to whatever there's to be done. She'll be a master-hand at teachin', I'll wager!"

"You always did think she was perfection," replied the mother, in a crisp but not ill-natured tone, "an' I'm not gain-sayin' that she's not as near it as is often seen; but I'm main uneasy to see her carryin' herself so positive."

If John thought in his heart that Bel had come through direct heredity on the maternal side by this "carryin' herself so

positive," he knew better than to say so, and his only reply was a good-natured laugh, with: "You'll see! I'm not afraid. She's a good child, an' always was."

Bel passed her examination triumphantly, and got the Wissan Bridge school; but she got only a contingent promise of the five-pound supplement. It went sorely against her will to waive this point. Very keenly Mr. Allan, who was on the Examining Board, watched her face as she modestly yet firmly pressed it.

The trustees did not deny that the Wissan Bridge school was a difficult and unruly one; that to manage it well was worth more money than the ordinary school salaries. The question was whether this very young lady could manage it at all; and if she failed, as the last incumbent had—failed egregiously, too: the school had broken up in riotous confusion before the end of the year—the canny Scotchmen of the School Board did not wish to be pledged to pay that extra five pounds. The utmost Bel could extract from them was a promise that if at the end of the year her teaching had proved satisfactory, the five pounds should be paid. More they would not say; and after a short, sharp struggle with herself, Bel accepted the terms; but she could not restrain a farewell shot at the trustees as she turned to go. "I'm as sure o' my five pounds as if ye'd promised it down-right, sirs. I shall keep ye a good school at Wissan Bridge."

"We'll make it guineas, then, Miss Bel," cried Mr. Allan, enthusiastically, looking at his colleagues, who nodded their heads, and said, laughing, "Yes, guineas it is."

"And guineas it will be," retorted Little Bel, as with cheeks like peonies she left the room.

"Egad but she's a fine spirit o' her ain, an' as bonnie a face as I've seen since I remember," cried old Mr. Dalgetty, the senior member of the board, and the one hardest to please. "I'd not mind bein' a pupil at Wissan Bridge school the comin' term myself," and he gave an old man's privileged chuckle as he looked at his colleagues. "But she's over-young for the work—over-young."

"She'll do it," said Mr. Allan, confidently. "Ye need have no fear. My wife's had the training of the girl since she was little. She's got the best o' stuff in her. She'll do it."

Mr. Allan's prediction was fulfilled. Bel did it. But she did it at the cost of harder work than even she had anticipated. If it had not been for her music she would never have pulled through with the boys of Wissan Bridge. By her music she tamed them. The young Mar-syas himself never piped to a wilder set of creatures than the uncouth lads and young men that sat in wide-eyed, wide-mouthed astonishment listening to the first song their pretty young school-mistress sang for them. To have singing exercises part of the regular school routine was a new thing at Wissan Bridge. It took like wild-fire: and when Little Bel, shrewd and diplomatic as a statesman, invited the two oldest and worst boys in the school to come Wednesday and Saturday afternoons to her boarding-place to practice singing with her to the accompaniment of the piano, so as to be able to help her lead the rest, her sovereignty was established. They were not conquered, they were converted—a far surer and more lasting process. Neither of them would, from that day out, have been guilty of an act, word, or look to annoy her, any more than if they had been rival lovers suing for her hand. As Bel's good luck would have it—and Bel was born to good luck; there is no denying it—one of these boys had a good tenor voice, the other a fine barytone; had both, in their rough way, been singers all their lives, and were lovers of music.

"That was more than half the battle, my mother," confessed Bel, when, at the end of the first term, she was at home for a few days, and was recounting her experiences. "Except for the singin', I'd never have got Archie McLeod under, nor Sandy Stairs either. I doubt they'd have been too many for me. But now they're like two more teachers to the fore. I'd leave the school-room to them for a day, an' not a lad'd dare stir in his seat without their leave. I call them my constables; an' I'm teaching them a small bit of chemistry out o' school hours, too, an' that's a hold on them. They'll see me out safe; an' I'm thinkin' I'll owe them a bit part o' the five guineas when I get it," she added, reflectively.

"The minister says ye're sure of it," replied her mother. "He says ye've the best school a'ready in all his circuit. I don't know how ever ye come to't so quick, child." And Isabella McDonald

smiled wistfully, spite of all her pride in her clever bairn.

"Ye see, then, what he'll say after the examination at New-Year's," gleefully replied Bel, "if he thinks the school is so good now. It'll be twice as good then; an' such singin' as was never heard before in any school-house on the island, I'll warrant me. I'm to have the piano over for the day to the school-house. Archie and Sandy'll move it in a big wagon, to save me payin' for the cartin'; an' I'm to pay a half-pound for the use of it if it's not hurt—a dear bargain, but she'd not let it go a shilling less. And, to be sure, there is the risk to be counted. An' she knew I'd have it if it had been twice that; but I got it out of her for that price. She was to let me have all the school over twice a week for two months before, to practice. So it's not too dear. Ye'll see what ye'll hear then."

It had been part of Little Bel's good luck that she had succeeded in obtaining board in the only family in the village which had the distinction of owning a piano; and, by paying a small sum extra, she had obtained the use of this piano for an hour each day—the best investment of Little Bel's life, as the sequel showed.

It was a bitter winter on Prince Edward Island. By New-Year's time the roads were many of them well-nigh impassable with snow. Fierce winds swept to and fro, obliterating by noon tracks which had been clear in the morning; and nobody went abroad if he could help it. New-Year's Day opened fiercest of all, with scurries of snow, lowering sky, and a wind that threatened to be a gale before night. But, for all that, the tying posts behind the Wissan Bridge school-house were crowded full of steaming horses under buffalo-robies, which must stamp and paw and shiver, and endure the day as best they might, while the New-Year's examination went on. Everybody had come. The fame of the singing of the Wissan Bridge school had spread far and near, and it had been whispered about that there was to be a "piece" sung which was finer than anything ever sung in the Charlottetown churches.

The school-house was decorated with evergreens—pine and spruce. The New-Year's Day having fallen on a Monday, Little Bel had had a clear working-day on the Saturday previous, and her faithful henchmen, Archie and Sandy, had been busy every evening for a week draw-

ing the boughs on their sleds, and piling them up in the yard. The teacher's desk had been removed, and in its place stood the shining red mahogany piano—a new and wonderful sight to many eyes there.

All was ready, the room crowded full, and the Board of Trustees not yet arrived. There sat their three big arm-chairs on the raised platform, empty—a depressing and perplexing sight to Little Bel, who, in her brief blue merino gown, with a knot of pink ribbon at her throat, and a roll of white paper (her schedule of exercises) in her hand, stood on the left hand of the piano, her eyes fixed expectantly on the doors. The minutes lengthened out into a quarter of an hour, half an hour. Anxiously Bel consulted with her father what should be done.

"The roads are something fearful, child," he replied; "we must make big allowance for that. They're sure to be comin', at least some one o' them. It was never known that they failed on the New-Year's examination, an' it would seem a sore disrespect to begin without them here."

Before he had finished speaking there was heard a merry jingling of bells outside, dozens and dozens it seemed, and hilarious voices and laughter, and the snorting of overdriven horses, and the stamping of feet, and more voices and more laughter. Everybody looked in his neighbor's face. What sounds were these? Who ever heard a sober School Board arrive in such fashion as this? But it was the School Board—nothing less: a good deal more, however. Little Bel's heart sank within her as she saw the foremost figure entering the room. What evil destiny had brought Sandy Bruce in the character of school visitor that day?—Sandy Bruce, retired school-teacher himself, superintendent of the hospital in Charlottetown, road-master, ship-owner, exciseman—Sandy Bruce, whose sharp and unexpected questions had been known to floor the best of scholars and upset the plans of the best of teachers. Yes, here he was, Sandy Bruce himself; and it was his fierce little Norwegian ponies, with their silver bells and fur collars, the admiration of all Charlottetown, that had made such a clatter and stamping outside, and were still keeping it up, for every time they stirred the bells tinkled like a peal of chimes. And, woe upon woe, behind him came, not Bel's friend and

pastor, Mr. Allan, but the crusty old Dalgetty, whose doing it had been a year before, as Bel very well knew, that the five-pound supplement had been only conditionally promised.

Conflicting emotions turned Bel's face scarlet as she advanced to meet them; the most casual observer could not have failed to see that dismay predominated, and Sandy Bruce was no casual observer; nothing escaped his keen glance and keener intuition; and it was almost with a wicked twinkle in his little hazel eyes that he said, still shaking off the snow, stamping and puffing: "Eh, but ye were not lookin' for me, teacher! The minister was sent for to go to old Elspie Breadalbane, who's dyin' the morn'; and I happened by as he was startin', an' he made me promise to come i' his place; an' I picked up my friend Dalgetty here a few miles back, wi' his horse flounderin' i' the drifts. Except for me, ye'd ha' had no board at all here to-day, so I hope ye'll give me no bad welcome."

As he spoke he was studying her face, where the color came and went like waves; not a thought in the girl's heart he did not read. "Poor little lassie!" he was thinking to himself. "She's shaking in her shoes with fear o' me. I'll not put her out. She's a dainty blossom of a girl. What's kept her from being trodden down by these Wissan Bridge racketers, I'd like to know?"

But when he seated himself on the platform, and took his first look at the rows of pupils in the centre of the room, he was near starting with amazement. The Wissan Bridge "racketers," as he had mentally called them, were not to be seen. Very well he knew many of them by sight, for his shipping business called him often to Wissan Bridge, and this was not the first time he had been inside the school-house, which had been so long the dread and terror of school boards and teachers alike. A puzzled frown gathered between Sandy Bruce's eyebrows as he gazed.

"What has happened to the youngsters, then?—have they all been converted i' this twelvemonth?" he was thinking. And the fitting perplexed thought did not escape the observation of John McDonald, who was as quick a reader of faces as Sandy himself, and had been by no means free from anxiety for his Little Bel when he saw the redoubtable visage of the ex-ciseman appear in the doorway.

"He's takin' it in quick the way the bairn's got them a' in hand," thought John. "If only she can hold hersel' cool now!"

No danger. Bel was not the one to lose a battle by appearing to quail in the outset, however clearly she might see herself outnumbered. And sympathetic and eager glances from her constables, Archie and Sandy, told her that they were all ready for the fray. These glances Sandy Bruce chanced to intercept, and they heightened his bewilderment. To Archie McLeod he was by no means a stranger, having had occasion more than once to deal with him, boy as he was, for complications with riotous misdoings. He had happened to know, also, that it was Archie McLeod who had been head and front of the last year's revolt in the school, the one boy that no teacher hitherto had been able to control. And here stood Archie McLeod, rising in his place, leader of the form, glancing down on the boys around him with the eye of a general, watching the teacher's eye, meanwhile, as a dog watches for his master's signal.

And the orderly yet alert and joyously eager expression of the whole school—it had so much the look of a miracle to Sandy Bruce's eye that, not having been for years accustomed to the restraint of the technical official dignity of school visitor, he was on the point of giving a loud whistle of astonishment. Luckily recollecting himself in time, he smothered the whistle, and the "Whew! what's all this?" which had been on his tongue's end, in a vigorous and unnecessary blowing of his nose. And before that was over, and his eyes well wiped, there stood the whole school on their feet before him, and the room ringing with such a chorus as was never heard in a Prince Edward Island school-room before. This completed his bewilderment, and swallowed it up in delight. If Sandy Bruce had an overmastering passion in his rugged nature, it was for music. To the sound of the bagpipes he had often said he would march to death, and "not know it for dyin'." The drum and the fife could draw him as quickly now as when he was a boy, and sweet singing of a woman's voice was all the token he wanted of the certainty of heaven and the existence of angels.

When Little Bel's clear, flute-like soprano notes rang out, carrying along the fifty young voices she led, Sandy jumped

up on his feet, waving his hand; in a sudden heat of excitement, right and left, and looking swiftly all about him on the platform, he said, "It's not sittin' we'll take such welcome as this, my neebors!" Each man and woman there, catching the quick contagion, rose, and it was a tumultuous crowd of glowing faces that pressed forward around the piano as the singing went on—fathers, mothers, rustics, all; and the children, pleased and astonished, sang better than ever; and when the chorus was ended, it was some minutes before all was quiet.

Many things had been settled in that few minutes. John McDonald's heart was at rest. "The music 'll carry a' before it, no matter if they do make a failure here an' there," he thought. "The bairn is a' right." The mother's heart was at rest also.

"She's done wonders wi' 'em—wonders. I doubt not but it 'll go through as it's begun. Her face is a picture to look on. Bless her!" Isabella was saying, behind her placid smile.

"Eh, but she's won her guineas out o' us," thought old Dalgetty, ungrudgingly, "and won 'em well."

"I don't see why everybody is so afraid of Sandy Bruce," thought Little Bel. "He looks as kind and as pleased as my own father. I don't believe he'll ask any o' his botherin' questions."

What Sandy Bruce thought, it would be hard to tell; nearer the truth, probably, to say that his head was in too much of a whirl to think anything. Certain it is that he did not ask any botherin' questions, but sat leaning forward on his stout oaken staff, held firmly between his knees, and did not move for the next hour, his eyes resting alternately on the school and on the young teacher, who, now that her first fright was over, was conducting her entertainment with the composure and dignity of an experienced instructor.

The exercises were simple—declamations, reading of selected compositions, examinations of the principal classes. At short intervals came songs to break the monotony. The first one after the opening chorus was "Banks and Braes of Bonnie Doon." At the first bars of this, Sandy Bruce could not keep silence, but broke into a low accompaniment in a deep bass voice, untrained but sweet.

"Ah," thought Little Bel; "what 'll he say to the last one, I wonder?"

When the time came she found out. If she had chosen the arrangement of her music with full knowledge of Sandy Bruce's preferences, and with the express determination to rouse him to a climax of enthusiasm, she could not have done better.

When the end of the simple programme of recitations and exhibitions had been reached, she came forward to the edge of the platform—her cheeks were deep pink now, and her eyes shone with excitement—and said, turning to the trustees and spectators,

"We have finished now all we have to show for our year's work, and we will close our entertainment by singing, 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled.'"

"Ay, ay! that wi' we!" shouted Sandy Bruce, again leaping to his feet, and as the first of the grand chords of that grand old tune rang out full and loud under Little Bel's firm touch, he strode forward to the piano, and, with a kindly nod to her, struck in with the full force of his deep bass, like violoncello notes, gathering up all the others and fusing them into a pealing strain. It was electrifying. Everybody sang. Old voices that had not sung for a quarter of a century or more joined in. It was a furor. Dalgetty swung his tartan cap; Sandy his hat; handkerchiefs were waved; staffs rang on the floor. The children, half frightened in spite of their pleasure, were quieter than their elders.

"Eh, but it was good fun to see the old folks gone crazy for once," said Archie McLeod, in recounting the scene. "Now if they'd get that way oftener, they'd not be so hard down on us youngsters."

At the conclusion of the song, the first thing Little Bel heard was Dalgetty's piping voice behind her:

"And guineas it is, Miss McDonald. Ye've won it fair an' square! Guineas it is!"

"Eh?—what? Guineas? What is't ye're sayin'?" asked Sandy Bruce, his eyes steady glowing like coals, gazing at Little Bel.

"The supplement, sir," answered Little Bel, lifting her eyes roguishly to his. "Mr. Dalgetty thought I was too young for the school, an' he'd promise me no supplement till he saw if I'd be equal to 't."

This was the sly Bel's little revenge on Dalgetty, who began confusedly to explain that it was not he any more than the other trustees, and he only wished that they had

all been here to see, as he had seen, how finely the school had been managed; but nobody heard what he said, for above all the humming and buzzing and laughing there came up from the centre of the school-room a reiterated call of "Sirs! Trustees! Mr. Trustee! Board!"

It was Archie McLeod, standing up on the backs of two seats, waving a white paper, and trying frantically to make himself heard. The face of a man galloping for life and death, coming up at the last second with a reprieve for one about to be shot, could hardly be fuller of intense anxiety than was Archie's as he waved his paper and shouted.

Little Bel gazed bewilderingly at him. This was not down on her programme of the exercises. What could it be?

As soon as partial silence enabled him to speak, Archie proceeded to read a petition, setting forth, to the respected Board of Trustees, that the undersigned boys and girls of the Wissan Bridge school did hereby unanimously request that they might have no other teacher than Miss McDonald, "as long as she lived."

This last clause had been the cause of bitter disputing between Archie and Sandy, Sandy insisting upon having it in, Archie insisting that it was absurd, because they would not go to school as long as Miss McDonald lived. "But there's the little ones, and the babies that 'll be growin' up," retorted Sandy; "an' there'll never be another like her: I say, 'as long as she lives';" and as long as she lives it was; and when Archie, with an unnecessary emphasis, delivered this closing clause of the petition, it was received with a roar of laughter from the platform, which made him flush angrily, and say, with a vicious punch in Sandy's ribs, "There; I told ye; it spoiled it a'. They're fit to die over it; an' sma' blame to 'em, ye silly!"

But he was reassured when he heard Sandy Bruce's voice overtopping the tumult with, "A vary sensible request, my lad, an' I, for one, am o' yer way o' thinkin'."

In which speech was a deeper significance than anybody at the time dreamed. In that hurly-burly and hilarious confusion no one had time to weigh words or note meanings; but there were some who recalled it a few months later, when they were bidden to a wedding at the house of John McDonald—a wedding at which Sandy Bruce was groom, and Little Bel the brightest, most winsome of brides.

It was an odd way that Sandy went to work to win her: his ways had been odd all his life—so odd that it had long ago been accepted in the minds of the Charlotte-town people that he would never find a woman to wed him; only now and then an unusually perspicacious person divined that the reason of his bachelorhood was not at all that women did not wish to wed him, spite of his odd ways, but that he himself found no woman exactly to his taste.

True it was that Sandy Bruce, aged forty, had never yet desired any woman for his wife till he looked into the face of Little Bel in the Wissan Bridge school-house. And equally true was it that before the last strains of "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled" had died away on that memorable afternoon of her exhibition of her school, he had determined that his wife she should be.

This was the way he took to win her. No one can deny that it was odd.

There was some talk between him and his temporary colleague on the School Board, old Dalgetty, as they drove home together behind the brisk Norwegian ponies, and the result of this conversation was that the next morning early—in fact, before Little Bel was dressed, so late had she been indulged, for once, in sleeping, after her hard labors in the exhibition the day before—the Norwegian ponies were jingling their bells at John McDonald's door; and John himself might have been seen, with a seriously puzzled face, listening to words earnestly spoken by Sandy, as he shook off the snow and blanketed the ponies.

As the talk progressed, John glanced up involuntarily at Little Bel's window. Could it be that he sighed? At any rate, there was no regret in his heart as he shook Sandy's hand warmly, and said, "Ye've my free consent to try; but I doubt she's not easy won. She's her head now, an' her ain way; but she's a good lass, an' a sweet one."

"An' I need no man to tell me that," said the dauntless Sandy, as he gave back the hearty hand-grip of his friend; "an' she'll never repent it, the longest day o' her life, if she'll hae me for her mon;" and he strode into the house, bearing in his hand the five golden guineas which his friend Dalgetty had, at his request, commissioned him to pay.

"Into her own hand, mind ye, mon,"

chuckled Dalgetty, mischievously. "Ye'll not be leavin' it wi' the mithers." To which sly satire Sandy's only reply was a soft laugh and nod of his head.

As soon as Little Bel crossed the threshold of the room where Sandy Bruce stood waiting for her, she knew the errand on which he had come. It was written in his face. Neither could it be truthfully said to be a surprise to Little Bel, for she had not been woman had she failed to recognize on the previous day that the rugged Scotchman's whole nature had gone out toward her in a sudden and overmastering attraction.

Sandy looked at her keenly. "Eh, ye know't a'ready," he said—"the thing I came to say t' ye;" and he paused, still eying her more like a judge than a lover.

Little Bel turned scarlet. This was not her ideal of a wooer. "Know what, Mr. Bruce?" she said, resentfully. "How should I know what ye came to say?"

"Tush, tush, lass! dinna prevaricate," Sandy began, his eyes gloating on her lovely confusion; "dinna preteend—" But the sweet blue eyes were too much for him. Breaking down utterly, he tossed the guineas to one side on the table, and stretching out both hands toward Bel, he exclaimed,

"Ye're the sweetest thing the eyes o' a mon ever rested on, lass, an' I'm goin' to win ye if ye'll let me;" and as Bel opened her mouth to speak, he laid one hand, quietly as a mother might, across her lips, and continued: "Na, na! I'll not let ye speak yet. I'm not a silly to look for ye to be ready to say me yes at this quick askin'; but I'll not let ye say me nay neither. Ye'll not refuse me the only thing I'm askin' the day, an' that's that ye'll let me try to make ye love me. Ye'll not say nay to that, lass. I'll gie my life to it;" and now he waited for an answer.

None came. Tears were in Bel's eyes as she looked up in his face. Twice she opened her lips to speak, and twice her heart and the words failed her. The tears became drops and rolled down her cheeks. Sandy was dismayed.

"Ye're not afraid o' me, ye sweet thing, are ye?" he gasped out. "I'd not vex ye for the world. If ye bid me to go, I'd go."

"No, I'm not afraid o' ye, Mr. Bruce," sobbed Bel. "I don't know what it is makes me so silly. I'm not afraid o' ye, though. But I was for a few min-

utes yesterday," she added, archly, with a little glint of a roguish smile, which broke through the tears like an April sun through rain, and turned Sandy's head in the twinkling of an eye.

"Ay, ay," he said; "I minded it weel, an' I said to myself then in that first sight I had o' yer face, that I'd not harm a hair o' yer head. Oh, my little lass, would ye na gie me a kiss—just one—to show ye're not afraid, and to gie me leave to try to win ye out o' likin' into lovin'?" he continued, drawing closer and bending toward her.

And then a wonderful thing happened. Little Bel, who, although she was twenty years old, and had by no means been without her admirers, had never yet kissed any man but her father and brothers, put up her rosy lips as confidently as a little child, to be kissed by this strange wooer, who wooed only for leave to woo.

"And if he'd only known it, he might ha' asked a' he wanted then as well as later," said Little Bel, honestly avowing the whole to her mother. "As soon as he put his hands on me the very heart in me said he was my man for a' my life. An' there's no shame in it that I can see. If a man may love that way in the lighting of an eye, why may not a girl do the same? There's not one kind o' heart i' the breast of a man an' another kind i' the breast of a woman, as ever I heard." In which Little Bel, in her innocence, was wiser than people wiser than she.

And after this there is no need of telling more—only a picture or two which are perhaps worth sketching in few words. One is the expression which was seen on Sandy Bruce's face one day, not many weeks after his first interview with Little Bel, when, in reply to his question, "An' now, my own lass, what 'll ye have for your weddin' gift from me? Tell me the thing ye want most i' a' the earth, an' if it's in my means ye shall have it the day ye gie me the thing I want maist i' the whole earth."

"I've got it a'ready, Sandy," said Little Bel, taking his face in her hands and making a feint of kissing him, then withdrawing coquettishly. Wise, innocent Bel! Sandy understood.

"Ay, my lass; but next to me. What's the next thing ye'd have?"

Bel hesitated. Even to her wooer's generosity it might seem a daring request, the thing she craved.

"Tell me, lass," said Sandy, sternly. "I've mair money than ye think. There's no lady in a' Charlottetown can go finer than ye if ye've a mind."

"For shame, Sandy!" cried Bel. "An' you to think it was fine apparel I'd be askin'! It's a—a"—the word refused to leave her tongue—"a—piano, Sandy," and she gazed anxiously at him. "I'll never ask ye for another thing till the day o' my death, Sandy, if ye'll gie me that."

Sandy shouted in delight. For a brief space a fear had seized him—of which he now felt shame indeed—that his sweet lassie might be about to ask for jewels or rich attire, and it would have sorely hurt Sandy's pride in her had this been so.

"A piano!" he shouted. "An' did ye not think I'd that a'ready in my mind? O' coorse, a piano, an' every other instrument under the skies that ye'll wish, my lass, ye shall have. The more music ye make, the gladder the house 'll be. Is there nothin' else ye want, lass—nothin'?"

"Nothing in all this world, Sandy, but you and a piano," replied Little Bel.

The other picture was on a New-Year's Day, just a twelvemonth from the day of Little Bel's exhibition in the Wissan Bridge school-house. It is a bright day; the sleighing is superb all over the island;

and the Charlottetown streets are full of gay sleighs and jingling bells: none so gay, however, as Sandy Bruce's, and no bells so merry as the silver ones on his fierce little Norwegian ponies, that curvet and prance, and are all their driver can hold. Rolled up in furs to her chin, how rosy and handsome looks Little Bel by her husband's side, and how full of proud content is his face as he sees the people all turning to look, and to look, at her beauty! And who is this driving the Norwegian ponies? Who but Archie—Archie McLeod, who has followed his young teacher to her new home, and is to grow up, under Sandy Bruce's teachings, into a sharp and successful man of the shipping business.

And as they turn a corner they come near running into another fur-piled, swift-gliding sleigh, with a grizzled old head looking out of a tartan hood, and eyes like hawks'—Dalgetty himself; and as they pass, the head nods and the eyes laugh, and a sharp voice cries, "Guineas it is!"

"Better than guineas!" answered back Mrs. Sandy Bruce, quick as a flash; and in the same second cries Archie, from the front seat, with a saucy laugh, "And as long as she lives, Mr. Dalgetty!"

THE HOME ACRE.

BY E. P. ROE.

PART II.

IT is a happy proof of our civilization that a dwelling-place, a shelter from sun and storm, does not constitute a home. Even the modest rooms of our mechanics are not furnished with useful articles merely; ornaments and pictures appear quite as indispensable. Out-of-doors the impulse to beautify is even stronger, and usually the purchaser's first effort is to make his place attractive by means of trees and shrubs that are more than useful—they are essential because the refined tastes of men and women to-day demand them.

In my former paper I endeavored to satisfy this demand in some degree, and now will ask the reader's attention to a few practical suggestions in regard to several of the fruits which best supply the family need. We shall find, however, that while Nature is prodigal in supply-

ing what appeals to the palate and satisfies hunger, she is also like a graceful hostess who decks her banquet with all the beauty that she can possibly bestow upon it. We can imagine that the luscious fruits of the year might have been produced in a much more prosaic way. Indeed, we are at a loss to decide which we value the more, the apple blossoms or the apples which follow. Nature is not content with bulk, flavor, and nutriment, but in the fruit itself so deftly pleases the eye with every trick of color and form that the hues and beauty of the flower are often surpassed. We look at a red-checked apple or purple cluster of grapes hesitatingly, and are loath to mar the exquisite shadings and perfect outlines of the vessel in which the rich juices are served. Therefore, in stocking the acre with fruit,