

THE CHILDREN'S FRIEND.

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King Alfred and the Orphan.

King Alfred sat in his palace hall,
And thanes of high degree,
Were crowding round, to prefer him
Service on bended knee.

"Where's the brave Earl of Holderness?"
The good King Alfred cried.
"King, knowest thou not last Martinmas
He and his lady died?"

Said Wright the strong arm, "Therefore
grant
To me his town and land;
Then knowst me well for warrior bold,
Unmatched my lance and brand."

"Nay, king, remember when I went
Across the seas for thee.
My wisdom, more than strongest arm,
Was felt; so grant them me!"

Thurstan, the wise, thus spake: when lo!
Swift through the gathering throng,
A worn pale woman pressed, who led
A little child along.

A little child of five years old,
A little child most fair;
"Justice of King Alfred," thus she cried,
"Behold thy good Earl's heir!"

No one bath'd her by word or word;
To win his birthright lands:
Friendless and motherless, to thee
He left his little hands.

"Oh, heed his claim—the orphan's
claim!"
His claim! right scornfully
Cried the warlike thanes; our king needs
men,

Not babes on their nurse's knee,
Bold hearts, stout arms—what could
that child?
If the lands to him were given?"

The child looked up with bright blue
Gaze,
"I would pray to God in heaven."

King Alfred gazed upon the boy,
Full long and earnestly;
And then upon his angry thanes,
Who watched him eagerly;

At length the good king rose, and thus
With solemn voice spake he:

"All praise unto the statesman wise,
Praise to the warrior too;
Right gladly to each faithful thane
Will the king yield guerdon due;
But to this child—this little child—
Must his birthright lands be given;
For the orphan's claim is the weightiest,
His father is God in heaven."

MISS LAWRENCE.

MARY AIKEN.
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO LIT.
THE SISTER LOUISE.

By Mrs. Cicero W. Harris, of Wil-
mington, N. C.

CHAPTER I.

Several years ago, in the northern part of Granville county, North Carolina, stood an old-fashioned farm house. The owner of the farm was Mr. Edward Ridley, who lived in the house with his wife and four children, two girls and two boys. Mrs. Ridley was a thrifty house-keeper, a good wife and a faithful mother. Her early education had been in a measure neglected. She could manage to read her Bible on Sunday, and knew

enough Arithmetic to keep her own accounts. She knew little else beyond her chicken-coops, her dairy, her vegetable garden, her husband and children. When she was a girl the neighbors paid more attention to their looks than the piano, harp or guitar; they frequented the kitchen oftener than the parlor, and nearly all the spare time of the ladies of even the wealthiest household was consumed in cutting out garments for their slaves, and in attending to the necessities of the sick and superannuated blacks, who looked to "master and mistress" for everything.

Mr. Ridley was better educated and was certainly more progressive in his ideas. He was a first-rate farmer. His stock was the fattest and best in the vicinity. His fences were always in repair, and his crops seldom failed. The war had injured him very little, and found he lost nothing by losing the useless portion of his colored household, and by suspending for good wages his experienced field hands. In the course of time his children became old enough to go to school. Mr. Ridley had always acknowledged the importance of education. He was too sensible a man to deny the fact that it was the richest legacy he could leave his children. Edward Ridley, Jr., was twelve years old, and his father determined that when the next court was held at Oxford he would get some of the lawyers and "smart folks," as his wife called them, to procure a teacher for his children. There were no good schools near the Ridley farm, and Mr. Ridley decided to have one in his own yard if it cost him a "thousand dollars a year." He immediately commenced to build a neat little room, with a huge fireplace, in the corner of his front yard under an old oak tree. When the school house was finished he bought one dozen chairs and as many small tables and placed them around the room. On the next Monday of court week he trotted off to Oxford in a more comfortable state of mind than ever before.

Strange to say, for the first time in his life he felt he had business at court. It is true, he had travelled the same road with the same destination in view every court week, since he arrived at that independent age, twenty-one years. But hitherto he has gone be-

cause he had felt it is duty as freeborn American citizen to be there and see the thing through! And what other good citizen for ten miles around has not felt the same impulse of patriotism? What hard-working farmer of Granville has not often felt the necessity of taking his only available horse out of the plow, in order to add one to the promiscuous crowd which throngs the pretty little country-seat during court week, whether he has any other business or not?

But Mr. Edward Ridley felt he had a two-fold object in view. The hilly and rocky road, the crops on the way-side, even his brother travelers were scarcely noticed, so absorbed was the worthy farmer in his new scheme. As he rode on he even dared to hope this smart teacher in the prospective would learn his modest hopeful, Edward, Jr., to make as big speeches as some of the "gentlemen of the Bar." And his little daughter would soon know how to read the newspaper to him, and may be, in the course of time, play on the piano! The thoughts swelled in his fatherly bosom, and he gave old Toby, his faithful horse, a sharp touch of his whip in order to carry out his grand design as quickly as possible.

The teacher was secured. She was recommended by a legal friend who undertook to engage the lady, and see her safely at the Ridley farm for a small fee. She came from another state. Mr. Ridley had neglected to ask the name of the state and drove back home, rejoicing in the certainty of having "a young and very accomplished lady" added to his family in a week or two.

In due time she arrived. Mr. Ridley met her at the gate with a most cordial welcome, and Mrs. Ridley kissed her cheek when she entered the house. The children were shy at first, but the pale, pretty face and gentle manners soon won them. They came up and shook hands with her, and little Annie Ridley threw her chubby arm around the stranger's neck. When the greetings were over, Mrs. Ridley arose and said to her,

"My dear, you must not go to your room until you have had a nice hot cup of coffee and a lunch. When the bell rings, husband, bring her in the dining room.

The active housewife was busying herself preparing the

table. When her husband stepped in a moment to see if the lady's trunk had been carried up, she called him to her a moment and asked,

"What did you say her name was, Ned?"

"Miss Mary Aiken," he answered, "but wife you had better call her Mary. It might make her feel more home-like."

"Certainly, Ned. Aiken," she repeated slowly to herself. "Poor dear, she looks like she's got an aching heart—poor child—yes, I'll call her Mary. Come here, Becky," she continued in a louder tone to a colored girl

in the corner of the fire place who stood looking on while Mrs. Ridley did the work,

"When Miss Mary goes up to her room after dinner, you go and wait on her. Tell her you are to be her maid."

"Yes'm," she answered courte-

sying.

Mary Aiken enjoyed the luncheon for she was cold and tired, and almost wondered at the hospitality of the quaint, old couple. If she had been their own child, she could not have been treated more kindly. After lunch she took a long nap in her own, pleasant, fire-lit room, while Becky obeyed Mrs. Ridley's orders by nodding in the corner as her now mistress slept.

Just before tea, Miss Aiken came down in a bright merino, with her wavy yellow hair coiled around her fair, shapely head. Mr. and Mrs. Ridley were in the front room waiting for her. The former in one corner reading a paper a month old, and the latter quietly knitting. The children were in the midst of a romp in the lumber-room, and a faint peal of silvery, rippling childish laughter sometimes fell on their parents' ears.

Neither one of the worthy couple could conceal their surprise and admiration when the lady entered. Mr. Ridley quickly arose and handed her a rocking chair, and seated her in front of the blazing oak and pine fire. Good Mrs. Ridley sat and silently admired. Her knitting needles flew on, but her eyes rested on the sweet face to which the red light from the fire lent a healthier hue. At last she asked:

"And you have rested from your long ride, my child?"

"I am entirely rested thank you ma'am."

"Glad to hear it. It was a cold day for you to be out. If

Ned had known it he would not have allowed it."

"I am glad I came. I do not mind the weather."

"Ah, but you must mind the weather. I would no more let you expose yourself than I would let my granlings stay out all night. No, no, child, your own mother would not allow it."

"My mother and father are dead."

"Poor little thing! and you are alone in the world?" asked the tender-hearted housewife with a dimness in her eye.

"I have a few distant relatives who educated me. I scarcely remember my parents," replied the girl looking affectionately at her new friend.

"Well, well, don't grieve over it. You know, Mary, the Good Book tells us of the Orphan's Friend. And you know you have friends here. I mean to be a mother to you while you are here. Can you play on the piano?" she asked, wishing to change the conversation.

"Oh yes! I am very fond of music."

"And you know Arkansas Traveller, Fisher's Hornpipe, Greenland's Ley Mountains and all such tunes?"

"I can play almost any thing if I have the notes."

"Any thing and everything, eh?" asked the old lady delighted.

"Not quite, madam," she answered smiling. "I expect I shall be able to please you."

"Please," interrupted Mr. Ridley. "Please! Why, Miss Mary, you are sure to please us. Where were you educated?"

"In Baltimore," sir.

"Well, then, you just write to Baltimore and buy me a piano. My wife never had a chance to learn how to play, or I would have had one long ago. Send for books for the children too—and while you are getting ready to commence the school you can look around and enjoy yourself."

"Thank you, sir."

"That is the tea bell. Walk in the dining room. Just listen how those children are running. Mary, I am going to get you to teach them better manners."

The good old lady said this to Mary as she walked towards the dining room where they found a tempting meal already spread, and four bright, rosy faces anxiously awaiting them.

(Continued.)