

shown to be finely chiselled; his hair and beard, divested of bergamot oil, shone gold.

"Little Cuckoo Flower favours her father," said Betty Brown, the village "middif"—who, thrifty soul, also earned an honest if perilous penny by "attending" the village corpse, and had laid out Jesse for inspection and burial.

Little Cuckoo Flower was one of Nature's surprises. Do you know the cuckoo flower? How transparently fine it is, how delicately pink, how it sways and flutters in an imperceptible breath of air, how soon it droops and dies in the human hand.

It was parson's wife—square, sturdy, childless creature—with her troubled well springs of maternity from which no life had leapt forth, who likened baby Martin to this ethereal bloom.

One breezy summer's morning she saw the child flitting round the green fairy rings in the pasture between the cottage and the wood.

Her little pink feet but glanced the ground—her pinny, like pink wings, floated around.

The child's mother piped a dancing tune.

"Little Cuckoo Flower," cried the parson's wife—"pinkie thing, pretty poppet," and she danced after her.

"That's her to the life," laughed Martha. The name clung to the child, and little Cuckoo Flower she lived and died.

* * * * *

Jesse was laid to rest with ceremony. There was a lavish display of funereal pomp. Bombazine and crepe—and rusty broadcloth in plenty, which in some instances had been fashioned from the Sunday go-to-meeting garments of grandparents. Tears and fearsome groans, all evidence of genuine feeling—echoed the solemn utterances of the parson at church and grave, and later in the flower covered cottage Martha provided cake and ale for all. There was also tea and red-nob wine "for them as preferred 'em." Martha sat in state in the best parlour in her highly polished Windsor chair, heavily laden with the trappings of woe, but remark was made (out of hearing, of course) "as little Cuckoo Flower pranked out in white muslin without a bit of black—not so much as a ribbon, showed but little respect to her poor dada's memory."

"Cuckoo Flower, she can't abear black," Martha had been heard to remark apologetically.

"Then I'd make her abear," outraged paternal discipline had replied out of hearing.

Yet only the eternal mother is all-wise, and Martha went delicately—strong woman as she

was—where this human floweret was concerned.

* * * * *

Parson and his wife came in the evening of that sorrowful day to comfort Martha. She still sat in her chair of state, very still and upright. Cuckoo Flower, in her little white nightgown—her golden head pressed to her mother's breast—was asleep on her knee.

The childless wife stopped in the doorway, and absorbed the beauty of the picture. Ringing deep down in her tuneful soul she heard the joybells of maternity—and the sound of the bells outrang the solemnity of death.

Later she joined in prayer for the consolation of the fatherless and the widow, and peeping through her fingers intercepted God's answer to prayer—a smile of complete understanding between a mother and her child.

Walking home arm-in-arm in the tender hush of the summer's night, the parson remarked to his little spouse:

"I could have wished for signs of deeper feeling upon the part of this poor stricken creature—the lot of the widow—"

"You see," interrupted his wife a little inconsequently, "there's little Cuckoo Flower."

ETHEL G. FENWICK.

(To be continued.)

COMING EVENTS.

April 25th and 26th.—Nursing and Midwifery Conference and Exhibition, continued, Horticultural Hall, Westminster, S.W.

April 26th.—Guy's Hospital Nurses' League. Tenth Annual Meeting and Fourth Annual Dinner. Annual Exhibition Nurses' Photographic Society.

April 26th.—Men's Society for Women's Rights, Public Meeting, "How Votes for Women will Affect the White Slave Traffic." Chairman, Mr. Joseph Clayton; Speakers, Miss Abadam, Dr. C. W. Saleeby, M.D., F.R.S.Ed. Grand Hall, Criterion Restaurant, Piccadilly Circus, W.

April 26th.—Northumberland and Durham Midwives' Association. Lecture on "Ethics in Midwifery," by Dr. H. Kerr. Council Chamber, Town Hall, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 7.30 p.m.

April 29th.—League of St. John's House Nurses' Meeting and Social Gathering, 12, Queen Square, W.C., 3 p.m.

April 29th.—Central Midwives' Board Examination, London.

May 6th.—Medico-Psychological Association. Preliminary Examination.

May 13th.—Medico-Psychological Association, Final Examination.

May 13th.—National Food Reform Association Conference. Diet in Schools. The Guildhall, E.C.

May 9th to 11th.—The Child Study Society, Annual Conference, University of London.

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