

verge of her first baby. When it was born, poor ineffective Nellie and the child died, and Robert, who had a passion for fatherhood, considered the baby's death of the greater importance.

Robert lived at Beanstalk—half farm, half manor.

Martha's godmother, who preferred being called Sarah to Dorothy (her proper name), was typical of the old heaven and the old earth; she was the affable exponent of that idle grace which is gone for ever.

Martha, after many preliminaries, recovered her health and mental balance, both of which had been severely shaken, and came to stay with her godmother at The Grange, a house that had a chapter to itself in the guide-books.

Before long she met Robert Shoosmith, and she met him on the Sussex Downs, of which a charming picture is drawn. Poor little bruised Martha, with a heart still aching badly! He took off his cap with a friendly gesture, dignified yet also sheepish—the greeting of a man who welcomes the stranger.

Soon, quite naturally, they were walking along together. He sensed in her a curious sadness. He was sad himself. A lonely man. She also was lonely. They approached a flock of sheep.

"Know how to count sheep?" asked Robert, his face lighting up.

"One, two, three, four."

"Not a bit of it. Onetherum, twotherum, cockerum, quetherum, setherum, shatherum, wine-berry wigtail, tarry diddle den."

"Onetherum." Martha's round face was laughing.

The hedges stirred and twittered.

"Bedtime for birds," he said laughing, and Martha could see his even, white teeth. He lifted his cap, and with a queer mixture of the kingly and clownish, he went away as he had come.

To make a long story short, Martha married him, and despite their social difference they were a passionately loving couple.

The real tragedy of the story comes when Martha learns from the London specialist that as a result of her accident her chance of bearing children is very remote.

Robert's longing for fatherhood wages war with his devoted love for Martha, and she on her side is willing to forgo even her rights as a wife in order that he may have his heart's desire. But Robert, though sadly tempted, is too honourable and fine a man to accept the sacrifice she so desperately offers him.

At last she decides to go away for a period, and returns with the illegitimate child of a village girl which she and Robert agreed to adopt and pass off as their own.

He was a lovely child, and at eighteen months had completely absorbed his foster father and mother, who never admitted even to each other that he was not their own.

"He's getting heavy," said Robert, "but he can't grow too fast for me. I could do with twenty like him."

She and Robert idolatrously watched him carried away, and at the turn of the stairs he looked back, waving his fat hand.

That night the blow fell. The baby's real mother, in spite of her bargain, came to claim him.

Martha concealed successfully the child's disappearance with the same adroitness with which she had managed his advent.

He was taken suddenly ill; she had taken him to London to see a specialist; he had died, and was buried there; and the true facts of the case were still between her and Robert.

After all, the story ends happily, and our readers must discover for themselves the reason that it so does.

H. H.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

Whilst cordially inviting communications upon all subjects for these columns, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not in ANY WAY hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.

THE DEGRADATION OF THE STATE REGISTER.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

We received the following copy of a letter sent to the Hon. Sir Arthur Stanley by Dr. Chapple, M.P., too late for insertion last week, in which issue Sir Arthur Stanley's letter to Dr. Chapple was published.

Our readers may remember that in previous letters which passed between these gentlemen they arranged together in December last to degrade the General Part of the Nurses' Register, and break faith with the nurses who had registered under the then existing Statutory Rules, by providing a new Rule to admit untrained women to all the privileges which trained nurses had worked and paid for, in their demand for the protection through State Registration, of the public, from exploitation by ignorant untrained women, and of trained nurses who had conscientiously qualified themselves for their very responsible duties.

LETTER FROM DR. CHAPPLE TO SIR ARTHUR STANLEY.

House of Commons Library,
July 9th, 1923.

DEAR SIR ARTHUR STANLEY,—I thought I made it clear in my reply to you that I took your views and your letter to the G.N.C. to be the official attitude of the College Council on the question of existing nurses, and I was at some pains to justify my quotation from that letter. I had nothing whatever before me to indicate that you had changed your personal attitude, nor that your Council had changed its own, merely because the G.N.C. had turned the College down. I was at equal pains to show that all the nurses on the deputations took a wrong and selfish view, quite contrary to the one you yourself had made

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)