

LAST LEAVES FROM LEAH'S DIARY.

3d of June.--Our stories are ended; our pleasant work is done. It is a lovely summer afternoon. The great hall at the farmhouse, after having been filled with people, is now quite deserted. I sit alone at my little work-table, with rather a crying sensation at my heart, and with the pen trembling in my fingers, as if I was an old woman already. Our manuscript has been sealed up and taken away; the one precious object of all our most anxious thoughts for months past--our third child, as we have got to call it--has gone out from us on this summer's day, to seek its fortune in the world.

A little before twelve o'clock last night, my husband dictated to me the last words of "The Yellow Mask." I laid down the pen, and closed the paper thoughtfully. With that simple action the work that we had wrought at together so carefully and so long came to a close. We were both so silent and still, that the murmuring of the trees in the night air sounded audibly and solemnly in our room.

William's collection of stories has not, thus far, been half exhausted yet; but those who understand the public taste and the interests of bookselling better than we, think it advisable not to risk offering too much to the reader at first. If individual opinions can be accepted as a fair test, our prospects of success seem hopeful. The doctor (but we must not forget that he is a friend) was so pleased with the two specimen stories we sent to him, that he took them at once to his friend, the editor of the newspaper, who showed his appreciation of what he read in a very gratifying manner. He proposed that William should publish in the newspaper, on very fair terms, any short anecdotes and curious experiences of his life as a portrait-painter, which might not be important enough to put into a book. The money which my husband has gained from time to time in this way has just sufficed to pay our expenses at the farmhouse up to within the last month; and now our excellent friends here say they will not hear anything more from us on the subject of the rent until the book is sold and we have plenty of money. This is one great relief and happiness. Another, for which I feel even more grateful, is that William's eyes have gained so much by their long rest, that even the doctor is surprised at the progress he has made. He only puts on his green shade now when he goes out into the sun, or when the candles are lit. His spirits are infinitely raised, and he is beginning to talk already of the time when he will unpack his palette and brushes, and take to his old portrait-painting occupations again.

With all these reasons for being happy, it seems unreasonable and ungracious in me to be feeling sad, as I do just at this moment. I can only

say, in my own justification, that it is a mournful ceremony to take leave of an old friend; and I have taken leave twice over of the book that has been like an old friend to me--once when I had written the last word in it, and once again when I saw it carried away to London.

I packed the manuscript up with my own hands this morning, in thick brown paper, wasting a great deal of sealing-wax, I am afraid, in my anxiety to keep the parcel from bursting open in case it should be knocked about on its journey to town. Oh me, how cheap and common it looked, in its new form, as I carried it downstairs! A dozen pairs of worsted stockings would have made a larger parcel; and half a crown's worth of groceries would have weighed a great deal heavier.

Just as we had done dinner the doctor and the editor came in. The first had called to fetch the parcel--I mean the manuscript; the second had come out with him to Appletreewick for a walk. As soon as the farmer heard that the book was to be sent to London, he insisted that we should drink success to it all round. The children, in high glee, were mounted up on the table, with a glass of currant-wine apiece; the rest of us had ale; the farmer proposed the toast, and his sailor son led the cheers. We all joined in (the children included), except the editor--who, being the only important person of the party, could not, I suppose, afford to compromise his dignity by making a noise. He was extremely polite, however, in a lofty way, to me, waving his hand and bowing magnificently every time he spoke. This discomposed me a little; and I was still more flurried when he said that he had written to the London publishers that very day, to prepare them for the arrival of our book.

"Do you think they will print it, sir?" I ventured to ask.

"My dear madam, you may consider it settled," said the editor, confidently. "The letter is written--the thing is done. Look upon the book as published already; pray oblige me by looking upon the book as published already."

"Then the only uncertainty now is about how the public will receive it!" said my husband, fidgeting in his chair, and looking nervously at me.

"Just so, my dear sir, just so," answered the editor. "Everything depends upon the public--everything, I pledge you my word of honor."

"Don't look doubtful, Mrs. Kerby; there isn't a doubt about it," whispered the kind doctor, giving the manuscript a confident smack as he passed by me with it on his way to the door.

In another minute he and the editor, and the poor cheap-looking brown paper parcel, were gone. The others followed them out, and I was left in the hall alone.

Oh, Public! Public! it all depends now upon you! The children are to have new clothes from top to toe; I am to have a black silk gown; William is to buy a beautiful traveling color-box; the rent is to be paid; all our kind friends at the farmhouse are to have little presents, and our future way in this hard world is to be smoothed for us at the outset, if you will only accept a poor painter's stories which his wife has written down for him After Dark!