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SUSAN HOPLEY:

OR,

THE ADVENTURES

OF

A MAID SERVANT.

BY

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ETC. ETC.



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SUSAN HOPLEY.

CHAPTER I.

WHICH INTRODUCES SUSAN TO THE GENTLE READER.

WORTHY, excellent Susan! methinks I see her now, in her neat, plaited cap, snuff-coloured stuff gown, clean white apron, and spectacles on nose, plying her knitting needles, whose labours were to result in a comfortable pair of lamb's-wool stockings for my next winter's wear, or a warm waistcoat for poor old Jeremy; or in something, be it what it might, that was to contribute to the welfare and benefit of some human being; and I believe, if it had so happened that the whole human race had been miraculously provided to repletion with warm stockings and waistcoats, that Susan, rather than let her fingers be idle and not be doing something for somebody, would have knit jackets for the shorn lambs and blankets for the early calves.

Excellent Susan! she is dead now; and sadly, sadly I miss her; for when, by the death of my wife and the marriage of my children, I grew a lone old man, she became my companion as well as my housekeeper. During the day, whilst I looked after my farm, or wandered over the fields with my gun in my hand, or wrote or read in my library, she was engaged with her household affairs, and superintending the servants; but with the tea-urn, in the evening, came Susan, so neat, so clean, with her honest, benevolent face, which although it was not handsome, was the pleasantest face I ever looked upon; and whilst she made my tea—by the bye, the flavour of teas is sadly falling off, I observe; it's nothing like what it was in Susan's time—but whilst she poured me out the pleasant beverage, and sweetened it exactly to my taste—it's very odd; one would think a man ought to know his own taste, but I always put in too much sugar or too little; and in trying to repair the error, I regularly make things worse—but, as I was saying, whilst she presided at my tea-table, or plied her knitting needles, sometimes I read aloud, but more generally we used to talk over old times and past adventures—and pleasant chat it was! Some people, if they had listened to us, might have thought there was a sameness in our conversation—a repetition of old stories—but they never wearied us; I think I liked them better every night; and so did she.

At length, one evening, it occurred to us that what amused us so much, might perhaps amuse other people. "Suppose, we write our histories," said I, "Susan; I think we could make out three volumes of adventures before we settled down into this quiet life, which furnishes nothing to tell. In the evening, we can collect our materials and arrange our plan: and on wet days, when I can't get out, I'll put it all on paper: and we shall then be able to judge how it reads. I've a notion it wouldn't be a bad story. The world don't want extraordinary events, and improbable incidents, to amuse it now. They have found out that, 'the proper study of mankind is man;' and he who can paint real life and human nature, has the best chance of being read. It has often been said that few biographies would be uninteresting, if people would or could disclose the exact truth with all its details. Let us make the experiment, and relate simply, without addition or subtraction, the events of our early years. Nearly all are dead now who would be pained by the disclosures; and we have but to conceal the names of places and of people, and wait a few years, and perhaps when you and I are both gone, some kind friend may revise our manuscript, and give it to the world; and we may thus, by furnishing our quota to the amusement of mankind, pay back some part of the pleasure we have derived from the excellent tales that have cheered our evening fireside."

Susan liked the idea; and accordingly we lost no time in putting our plan into execution. Whether the result of our labours will ever see the light—whether it will be considered worth publishing "by the trade," or worth reading by the public, is more than I can foresee; but this I know, that the occupation it furnished, afforded Susan and myself many a pleasant hour: and that come what may of it, it will not be all *lost labour*.

HARRY LEESON.

CHAPTER II.

WHICH GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF SUSAN'S BIRTH, EDUCATION, AND FIRST SERVICE.

SUSAN HOPLEY was a native of the village of Mapleton—in at least so we choose to call it—in the south-eastern part of England; where her father was a day-labourer on the farm of a Mr. Whitehead. He was an industrious sober man, his wife a worthy woman, and their family consisted only of Susan, and a boy named Andrew, who was a few years younger. But the mother was weakly, and unable to undertake anything more than the care of her house and children; and the father's wages was only just sufficient to supply his family with the necessaries of life; leaving nothing to spare for education, which was then much more expen-

sive and of much more difficult attainment than it is now. So Mrs. Hopley brought up her children in the fear of God, taught them to spell out words in the Bible, and to be honest and true, and love their neighbours; and trusted in Providence for the rest.

Thus they lived happily enough till Susan was thirteen, and Andrew ten: but then the always infirm health of the mother began to give way; and with the expense of doctors, and one thing or another, the family were beginning to fall into difficulties; when the cleanly appearance and orderly conduct of the children at church, happened, fortunately, to attract the notice of Mrs. Leeson. This lady was the daughter of a former curate of Mapleton, where she had been born and bred; and when very young, had fallen in love with an officer of the king's troops that were quartered in the village. As the regiment was ordered abroad, and the young lady could not part with him, they were married; and she followed him about the world for several years, and was near him in many battles. It was even said, that she had once saved his life, by seeking him out amongst a heap of bodies where he had been left for dead. He had been desperately wounded, and was lying there so far gone, that he could never have survived the night, had she not stretched herself beside him on the ground, and, by folding him in her arms, contrived to keep some warmth in his blood, till she could get assistance in the morning.

At length, Major Leeson, who was a good deal older than his wife, beginning to feel some effects from the hardships he had undergone, they resolved to leave the army, and set themselves down for life in the village where they had first met. They had not much money; he had his half-pay, and she had two hundred a-year allowed her by her mother's brother, Mr. Wentworth, of Oakfield; but as they had no children, and a great deal of love for one another, they had enough. However, after they had lived in this way for some time, Mrs. Leeson, to her own surprise and that of everybody else, found herself in the family way, and was brought to bed of as lovely a little boy as eyes ever looked upon. Great was the joy at his birth, and a happy family they were till the child came to be about six or seven years old; but then the expenses of his education, and the means of setting him afloat in the world began to be thought of; and after much deliberation, and many hard struggles, it was resolved that the major should apply to be placed on full-pay again, in order that, at the end of a few years, he might obtain leave to sell his commission, and thus secure something for little Harry against his parents died.

Sad, sad was the parting, for the husband and wife had never been separated before; and they still loved each other as they had done in their young days. But they trusted in God and their constant love; and the major sailed for the West Indies, where the regiment he was appointed to was stationed.

He had been gone some time, when the illness of the labourer's wife, and the consequent distress of the family, reached the ears of Mrs. Leeson; who thereupon went to the cottage to see how