

chiefs to Major Graham, who had helped to pack them in, and who now stood smiling at the door.

As this very large vehicle was drawn by only one horse, it proceeded very slowly ; but Mrs. Darwin amused the children with several very diverting stories, and gave them a grand luncheon in the carriage ; after which they threw what was left, wrapped up in an old newspaper, to some people breaking stones on the road, feeling quite delighted to see the surprise and joy of the poor labourers when they opened the parcel. In short, everybody became sorry when this diverting journey was finished, and they drove up, at last, to the gate of a tall, old house, that looked as if it had been built in the year one. The walls were very thick, and quite mouldy with age. Indeed, the only wonder was that Ivy Lodge had still a roof upon its head, for everything about it looked so tottering and decayed. The very servants were all old, and a white-headed butler opened the door, who looked as frail and gloomy as the house ; but before long, the old walls of Ivy Lodge rung and echoed again with sounds of mirth and joy. It seemed to have been built on purpose for hide-and-seek ; there were rooms with invisible doors, and closets cut in the walls, and great old chests, where people might have been buried alive for a year without being found out. The gardens, too, were perfectly enchanting. Such arbours to take strawberries and cream in ! and such summer-houses, where they drank tea out of doors every evening ! Here they

saw a prodigious eagle fastened to the ground by a chain, and looking the most dull, melancholy creature in the world ; while Harry wished the poor bird might be liberated, and thought how delightful it would be to stand by and see him soaring away to his native skies.

“ Yes ! with a large slice of raw meat in his beak ! ” said Peter Grey, who was always thinking of eating. “ I daresay he lives much better here than he would do killing his own mutton up in the clouds there, or taking his chance of a dead horse on the sea-shore occasionally.”

Harry and Peter were particularly amused with Mrs. Darwin's curious collection of pets. There were black swans with red bills swimming gracefully in a pond close to the window, and ready to rush forward on the shortest notice for a morsel of bread. The lop-eared rabbits also surprised them, with their ears hanging down to the ground ; and they were interested to see a pair of carrier-pigeons which could carry letters as well as the postman. Mrs. Darwin showed them tumbler-pigeons, too, that performed a somersault in the air when they flew, and horsemen and dragoon pigeons, trumpeters and pouters, till Peter Grey at last begged to see the pigeons that made the pigeon-pies, and the cow that gave the butter-milk ; he was likewise very anxious for leave to bring his fishing-rod into the drawing-room, to try whether he could catch one of the beautiful gold-fish that swam about in a large glass globe, saying he thought it might perhaps be

a very good red herring to eat at breakfast. Mrs. Darwin had a pet lamb that she was exceedingly proud of, because it followed her everywhere, and Harry, who was very fond of the little creature, said he wished some plan could be invented to hinder its ever growing into a great, fat, vulgar sheep; and he thought the white mice were old animals that had grown grey with years.

There were donkeys for the children to ride upon, and Mrs. Darwin had a boat that held the whole party to sail in round the pond; and she hung up a swing that seemed to fly about as high as the house, which they swung upon; after which they were allowed to shake the fruit-trees, and to eat whatever came down about their ears; so it very often rained apples and pears in the gardens at Ivy Lodge, for Peter seemed never to tire of that joke; indeed, the apple-trees had a sad life of it as long as he remained.

Peter told Mrs. Darwin that he had "a patent appetite," which was always ready on every occasion; but the good lady became so fond of stuffing the children at all hours, that even he felt a little puzzled sometimes how to dispose of all she heaped upon his plate, while both Harry and Laura, who were far from greedy, became perfectly wearied of hearing the gong. The whole party assembled at eight every morning to partake of porridge and butter-milk, after which, at ten, they breakfasted with Mrs. Darwin, on tea, muffins, and sweetmeats. They then drove in the round open car, to bathe

in the sea, on their return from which luncheon was always ready; and after concluding that, they might pass the interval till dinner among the fruit-trees. They never could eat enough to please Mrs. Darwin at dinner; tea followed, on a most substantial plan; their supper consisted of poached eggs, and the maid was desired to put a biscuit under every visitor's pillow, in case the young people should be hungry in the night; for Mrs. Darwin said she had been starved at school herself when she was a little girl, and wished nobody ever to suffer as she had done from hunger.

The good lady was so anxious for everything to be exactly as the children liked it, that sometimes Laura felt quite at a loss what to say or do. One day, having cracked her egg-shell at breakfast, Mrs. Darwin peeped anxiously over her shoulder, saying,—

"I hope, my dear, your egg is all right?"

"Most excellent, indeed!"

"Is it quite fresh?"

"Perfectly! I daresay it was laid only a minute before it was boiled!"

"I have seen the eggs much larger than that!"

"Yes; but then I believe they are rather coarse—at least we think so when Mrs. Crabtree gives us a turkey-egg at dinner."

"If you prefer them small, perhaps you would like a guinea-fowl's egg?"

"Thank you; but this one is just as I like them."