by LADY FRANCES CHARLOTTE BOUVERIE

MARY HARMS was the eldest child of a most respectable drover and his wife, who lived in Surrey. They brought up a large family in the fear of GOD . and in the endeavour, by His help, to perform all their duties in the station of life in which He had " placed them. There is nothing particularly new or striking in the events of Mary's life, but there may be often good derived from observing how little circumstances, which appear trifling at the time, are overruled by Providence to fit into each other and work round for good, to those who set out with a firm determination of doing their duty in the path before them, praying to be guided step by step and casting their care on Him, Who cares for us. So it was with Mary. She was little more than twelve years old when she went to service at a farm-house where she had the care of a little girl. Her mistress was a person of excellent character, and very kind to Mary, and when the child was old enough to run alone, she did her best to recommend her as a useful servant in another place, where she would have better wages; but the people she now went to live with were not only careless themselves about their religious duties, but gave their servants no time for attending to them; so the first time Mary had an opportunity of speaking to her parents, she begged them not to let her stay in that place. was not long before a circumstance occurred, which by the direction of an All-wise Providence influenced her after life.

A very kind and excellent gentleman and lady, who were in the habit of renting some small place in the country as a summer residence, chanced (or appeared to chance, for all is directed to work together for good to those who love GOD) to fix themselves that year in the parish where Mary's parents lived. They always made acquaintance with their poorer neighbours, and the family most respected in the parish was soon noticed by them, and Mary taken to assist in their kitchen. At this

fime one of their sons was about to marry, and a question having arisen as to whether his wife should have a girl to wait upon her, it was decided by Mary's mistress naming her as one, whom, as far as a short time had enabled her to judge, she could recommend for steadiness and good conduct.

Mary now for the first time went to a distance from home. She passed through London, stayed a fortnight amongst strangers in the house of the bride's mother, and then found herself behind a travelling post-chaise and four, (for there were no railroads in those days) on the way to a large house lent to the new married pair for a few days. Poor Mary was very shy, but the servants were old and respectable, and made allowances for her shyness, and she was happier when they arrived at the little Vicarage, which was to be her home for so many years. Here, however, she found some rubs. The upper maid servant, who had lived some little time with her master, was a woman of a peculiar temper, and not always very kind to her, but Mary did hor duty, her mistress was satisfied, and so she was satisfied too.

In a few months, however, her mistress told her that she must make a change in her establishment in the autumn, as she would probably take an older person for her maid, who could also take charge of a baby. The housemaid's place was vacant, and Mary had her choice of taking that, or seeking a new situation. Hany and many a pretty young girl of sixteen (for Mary was no more) would have thought the situation of housemaid beneath her, after having been about her mistress, and would have gone home to be perhaps long out of place, and possibly might have been glad at last to take any inferior situation that offered itself. But Mary had too good sense to fancy herself capable of a regular lady's maid's place, and she only said that she did not know a great deal about housemaid's work, but was ready to be shown. She had a slight increase of wages, and cheerfully did her best, in the lower situation to which she was now consigned.

The baby was scarcely more than two months old, |

when the second of two nurses, who had successively undertaken the care of it, went away, and Mary's mistress, tired of beginning with strangers, considered that a steady girl, who had been used to a large family of younger brothers and sisters, as well as to a little charge in a farm-house, might be of more use to her in their quiet way of life, than a more experienced person, who might give herself inconvenient airs, especially as their principal journey from home was to visit in a house where a most excellent nurse could give her any hints that might be required. She therefore proposed to Mary to undertake the situation, telling her to think of it, and give her answer the next morning.

When Hary came in the next day, she said, "I have thought about the place, ma'am, and I should like to undertake it if you please". Her mistress reminded her that she would have the child with her at night. "Yes, ma'am, but I shall always have it upon my mind", was Mary's quiet but confident answer; and many a night was Mary's rest disturbed by that child, but never did her mind wander from her charge, nor have between thirty and forty years lessened their mutual affection. Every spring they made their visit, where for some years Mary had the advantage of many hints in both her capacities of nurse and lady's maid, and she learned gradually to make all that her mistress required, and though she often felt that she did not understand all the little turns and art in the "mystery of dressmaking (as it is termed in indentures) which apprenticeship gives, never was any work put out of her hands which was not finished with the most perfect neatness and exactness. She was besides very handy in everything that she tried to do, and every year as her little charge arrived at the day so important to a child, which seems at once to have added twelve months to its age, Mary had prepared a garland in which the little girl was to appear before her parents, and generally some other little novelty to be shown and admired as a proof of her skill.

L Years passed on, and before the little girl was-

quite grown up, the upper servant married a man who lived in the neighbourhood, and her situation as housekeeper was offered to Mary, who had so well fulfilled all her previous duties. Some time before this, one of Mary's younger sisters had been named by her mistress as a nurserymaid to a friend who lived a few miles off, and whilst in this place she had engaged herself to a man, whom she afterwards married. Soon after her marriage, one of her sisters, who had been born after Mary had left home, but whom she had seen in the annual visits which she had been allowed to make there, came to stay with her married sister. Whilst she was there, Jane's husband suddenly resolved to go and live in London, where he was offered work, and what to do with little Sarah became a difficulty. Mary mentioned the circumstance, and was desired to invite the little girl to her master's house, to stay till the family should go to town in the spring.

Sarah was at this time between eleven and twelve years old, an obedient, intelligent girl, who gave no trouble in the house, but helped her sister in many ways; and when the time came for the visit to London, it was proposed, and gratefully acceded to by Mary, and by her parents also, that Sarah should pay a visit in Surrey, during the stay of the family in town, and then return with them to be a little work girl under her sister, from which nominal situation she very soon gradually slid into being "young lady's maid".

Mary had for some years been engaged to one of her fellow servants, a most simple-minded, honest gardener, who was warmly attached to the family, but before this time they had mutually discovered that they were not quite suited to make each other happy, and it was to the credit of both that this discovery caused no interruption in their steady friendship; but when after thirty-two years of faithful service, poor Robert was carried off by a very short illness, no one in the house lamented him more sincerely than Mary, then living in it as a married woman. But many other things had happened before that time.

Various changes in the household under her, and for a short time even the cooking department was placed in her hands, and in this, as in her needlework, her light hand, her valuable habit of entirely giving her attention to the duties before her, and her extreme cleanliness, enabled her to fulfil her task to the entire satisfaction of her master and mistress; but there were inconveniences in this arrangement, from her having such various duties to perform, and latterly she held only the situation of lady's maid and upper servant.

In the meantime a most respectable man had come to live in the family as footman, who afterwards became butler: and it soon became evident that Mary who had refused many offers, at last thought of the only change for which she would have left her mistress, and her dear young lady, though it was with difficulty that she brought herself to make known her intentions. As they were resolved not to set up, as so many servants do, in a public house, it was veryldifficult to find anything which would exactly suit both their means and inclinations; and the parting, dreaded by all, was delayed till this should be accomplished. In the meantime, however, they were allowed to marry; and as the winter was coming on, it was settled that they should remain till the spring, when they might be more likely to meet with what they sought for.

Sarah, who had grown up into an excellent and valuable character, and had gradually become a very good lady's maid, was to take her sister's place, and wait on both mother and daughter, with some alteration as to the other household arrangements. In the course of the winter, however, it was seen how true it is, that indeed "Nan proposes, but GOD disposes". Mary had accompanied the family on a visit, and Sarah, who was left at home, had gone meanwhile for a day or two, to see a former fellow-servant, about five miles off. There she was seized with so severe an attack of paralysis, that when the express which was sent off, reached her sister, she hastened to her, with scarcely a hope of finding her alive. She did live, however, not only to

see and know her sister and brother-in-law, and to receive with gratitude their devoted attention, con tinued to her night and day for many weeks, even after she was able to be moved home, but so far to recover as to be able to resume, in great measure, her former duties, though her severe illness had left her in a state which still required the watchful eye and care of her sister, who, from the difference in their age, considered herself almost more as a mother, to ward off any return. It was now therefore settled that the married pair should remain where they were, and all should go on as it had done, Sarah doing all that she was able for her young lady, and not being expected to take any part beyond her strength.

Most joyful was this result to those who had for so many years been accustomed to the having a 'friend' about them, that the idea of being waited on by a stranger had been very painful, and for a few years the prospect of a change was almost lost sight of. But the husband, who had got latterly much out of health, began in consequence to wish for the independence of a home of his own, and again the looking about for some employment commenced.

At lenght, when their places were supplied as servants, (for as friends they never could be) they were allowed to live, at a low rent, in a small house in a neighbouring village, which had been for some time uninhabited, with an understanding that should a tenant be found for it, who should take it for the rent originally asked, they should immediately turn out. Here they passed some months, and Mary was often visited by her dear young lady as well as by Sarah. Still they had no employment to bring in anything, and it was expensive to live on the interest of their savings. It so happened that the village in which they were living belonged in great part to a gentleman, whose wife was actively kind in doing good, and having set up a school of about five-and-twenty girls, she was at a loss for a schoolmistress at that time. As she was about to leave home she asked Mary, of whom she had heard a good report, to take charge of it during her .

absence, meaning on her return, to look out for a permanent mistress. Mary, however, fulfilled her duties so well that after a few weeks, she found herself installed in the office of school-mistress, with a comfortable salary and a house to live in, rent free. She had always been fond of children, and had an excellent manner with them, and she soon became greatly interested in her employment, and a great favourite with her kind employer. Her husband assisted in the writing lessons, and being a very ingenious man, he found full employment for his time in making various things for his house, which saved the expense of buying. He besides got employment in waiting at table, and made himself useful in various other ways to the different inhabitants of the village. It had been at first intended that when they found a home, Sarah should live with them, but as they were happily fixed so near that Mary could at any time be with her immediately, in case of any return of illness, this idea was given up, and she continued with her "young lady".

The new lady's maid was no stranger, but a person long known to all parties, and was kindly willing to assist in any way, by exchanging with her in any work beyond her strength. Two others of Mary's sisters had in the course of these years found places through her, and one of them had married, and become the mother of a large family, and had now the satisfaction of seeing one of her children also placed out, through a link of the same chain; whilst Jane and her husband had returned to the neighbourhood where they first married. father had long been dead, but the excellent mother who had twice visited her two daughters in their master's house before Mary's marriage, still lived in Surrey, where some of her numerous family were settled near, though none with her, and twice she had been presented with a sum of money from the Agricultural Society; once for having placed out so many daughters, who had kept their places so well; and the other time, for having brought up such a large family in so deserving a manner.

If anyone thinks this little history of Mary Harms devoid of interest, of which the writer, who

has known and loved her for nearly forty years, is no competent judge; let them remember how many young girls, beginning life with the same advantages, would have thrown them away and destroyed their future comfort, by a foolish pride, or a conceited opinion of their own merits. It is certain that Mary met with many friends, but sooner or later friends will generally be raised up for those who strive to deserve them; and when the secrets of all hearts are laid open, it may perhaps be found that the right or wrong decision of a moment, either from a feeling of pride, or of some other sinful temper given way to; or, on the contrary, a humble endeavour to walk in the right path in early life, persevered in, may have had more influence over both the outward circumstances and the future character, than we have ever suspected. Not but that there is forgiveness and mercy to the very last for the truly contrite penitent, but those who set out in life, seeking there own way, and wincing under every little trial, will need bitter lessons before their life is over, if their Heavenly Father, to Whom all is known, sees, that by such lessons, sent in His infinite mercy, they may yet be drawn to Him.

One thing in Mary's early history must not be overlooked: her willingness to stay in a family, who gave their servants no opportunity of attending to their religious duties. It may not always be in the power of a servant to leave her place at once, if she has been hired for a certain time, and in that case she must submit, as to any other trial, till the time is at an end, only taking care not to be led into forgetfulness of such private habits of devotion as all have time for; but Mary was happily able to give up her unpleasant situation, and the wish of doing so was blessed to her through her future life. The influence of early example too is most striking in this little history.

Where parents earnestly wish above all things for the eternal happiness of their children, instead of only trying to advance their temporal interests, their early lessons, and their good example, will be remembered through life, and when they meet

at the awful day, their consciences will not rise up to reproach them with having neglected the most important charge that was committed to them, but united with them, in humble reliance on the merits of their Redeemer, they will meekly stand before His throne, and say, "Behold I, and the children which GOD hath given me".

The above appears under the title of "STORY OF MARY H___" in the book "Memorials" of LADY FRANCES CHARLOTTE BOUVERIE, published after her death in 1854, and intended for the religious guidance of young folk.

MARY HARMS The background to her 'story'

The little book "Memorials of Lady Frances Charlotte Bouverie" edited by her nephew Rev. Charles Leslie Courtney in 1855 includes within its pages "The Story of Mary H---", and it is likely that the owners of the surviving copies are unaware of the facts concerning Mary. Whereas a few, who heard first hand of Mary and her charge Fanny Bouverie, can recount that this is the life story of our MARY HARMS born 1796 at Send, Surrey, in years to come as memories fade and facts become clouded by the mists of time, future generations may, in the absence of substantiation, not recognise nor accept its reality. Although this tale may be neither unique nor outstanding, its occurrence is surely unusual and I would hope that it will not pass into obscurity on account of the main character being unidentified.

A search of public records was undertaken with little optimism of finding helpful data a hundred and fifty years after the author's death. The following notes confirm what I had been informed about Mary and should eliminate any uncertainty which might arise concerning 'The Story of Mary H-'.

My copy of the book was acquired in 1966, but its existance had been known a few years earlier. It bears the inscription— "Mary Finch 1855 from her gratefully attached Fanny Bouverie"

to which is added in an aged hand-

"Benjamin Harms his book from his affectionate sister Mary who died May the 10 1884 aged 88 years and 5 days"

Benjamin Harms (1813-89) was my great-grandfather and the book had passed to his grand-daughter Annie Harms (b 1863) thence to her second cousin Gertie Harms (b 1887) who then gave it to me. Mary Harms had been, so I understood, a nurse and companion to the Rev. Bouverie's daughter Fanny at Coleshill,

ten sturte

Birmingham, later to be proved as the wrong location. The book includes a plate showing Lady Bouverie's decease in 1854. The additional information to hand was, of course the brothers and sisters of Mary Harms, now included for reference:-

The surviving family of Richard Harms (1774-1832) and his wife Mary (1778-1864)

- * 1807 Robert
- * 1809 John
- * 1810 Hannah m Blake
- + 1813 Benjamin
- + 1815 Joseph
- + 1818 Sarah
- + 1819 Catherine m Hiscock
- * born at SEND + born at WEST HORSLEY

Enquiry was made as to the dates when Rev. Bouverie was at Coleshill: it was learned from the Church Commissioners that he was the incumbent from 1808 to 1874 at Coleshill, Berkshire: (-not Birmingham as firstly supposed)

MODERN ENGLISH BIOGRAPHY includes:-

Rev. Edward Bouverie, born 1783 at Overton, Hants educated Ch. Ch. Ox. B.A. 1804, M.A. 1807, Vicar of Coleshill, Berkshire 1808 to death; prob. of Preston in Sarum Cathedral 1826 to death; chaplin in ord. to Soverign 1819 to death; died at Coleshill vicarage 1874.

He was a kinsman of the Earl of Radnor who lived at Coleshill House. (destroyed by fire 1965)

The next search made was in the 1841, 1851 and 1861 Census for Coleshill, the relevant details:-being as follows:-

EXTRACTS from the CENSUS

1841 COLESHILL				
			born	in county
Rev. Edwd Bouverie	55			no
Lady Frances "	50			no
Fanny "	25			yes
Frederick Finch	35			no
Mary		f/s		no
Sarah Harms	20	f/s		no
Robert Townsend	50	m/s		no
+ 6 other servants				

1851 COLESHILL

born

			001 11
Edward Bouverie	Э	67 Vic. of	C'hill Ashe-Hants
Lady Frances "		60 W	St. Ggs-M'sex
Fanny "		35 d	Coleshill
Sarah Harms 1 + 8 others	u/m	33 maid	W.Horsley-S'ry

1861 COLESHILL

Edward Bouverie 77 Vic. of C'hill Overton-Hants Fanny Bouverie u/m 48 d Coleshill Catherine Berens 80 sister St.Ggs-M'sex Sarah Harms u/m 43 housekeeper W.Horsley-S'ry + 7 others

These show that Mary Finch was already married by 1841 and together with her sister Sarah was resident at the vicarage; also by 1851, only Sarah remained, her origin clearly indicated. By 1861, Lady Bouverie naturally is not shewn but the presence of sister Catherine Berens is of note.

Recollecting that the 'story' mentions Mary and two or three of her sisters, including Jane, as being in a neighbouring village a few miles off, a search in the 1851 Census of several villages around Coleshill was made, and the successful details details are:-

1851 SHRIVENHAM

Edward Berens Lady Catherine "	73 70	Vic of W	S'han	Sutton/Hone-Kt St.Ggs-M'sex
Frederick Finch Mary " w				Sunninghill-Bks

1851 k	NIGHTO	N C	OMP	PON		born
Geo. Whi	teman		48	Farm	lab.	Knighton
Jane	11	W	51			Send Surrey
William	11	ន	18	11	Sp:	italfields M'sex
Jane	11	d	10	Sch.	1	Woolstone Berks
Sarah	11	d	5	11		Knighton

1861 SHRIVENHAM

Beckett House

Wm Keppel, Vicount 67 Landed pr'tor London Barrington Peer London

Jane Elizabeth

and the second second

Vicountess 56 Peeress Ryton-Durham

Lady Barrington's School

Frederick Finch 53 Formerly butler Sunn'hill Bks
Mary Finch 60 Schoolm'tress Send Surrey

This clearly shows Mary Finch's origin and identifies her as the schoolmistress at SHRIVENHAM and furthermore, it will be noted that Catherine Berens who in 1861 was living at Coleshill, was formerly the wife of Rev. Berens of Shrivenham. Mary's sister Jane (m Whiteman) was living at Knighton and her family includes a son born in London. The location of Mary's other two sisters Hannah (m Blake) and Catherine (m Hiscock) has not yet been determined.

It is now possible to identify the persons and the dates connected with the story!

The Story of Mary Harms in relation to the Story of Mary H---'

Mary Harms, the eldest daughter of Richard and Mary Harms, was born at SEND, Surrey, in 1796. She assisted locally the 'kind and excellent' Hon. Bartholomew Bouverie and his wife when resident and later when their son, Rev. Edward Bouverie was Married, she joined Lady Frances Bouverie in 1813 at Coleshill Vicarage, Berkshire, as Lady's maid. Fanny Bouverie, their daughter was born 1814 and Mary continued as Fanny's nurse.

Mary's sister Jane, younger by four years,

later found a post as nurserymaid in the neighbouring village of Knighton, where she subsequently
married a local man, George Whiteman, sometime
before 1829. Soon after, George and Jane moved to
London where their son William was born in 1833.

(Incidentally, Jane was witness to her brother
John's wedding at Shoreditch Church in Nov 1831)

Mary's sister Sarah, born five years after Mary had left home and by when her parents had moved to West Horsley, joined Mary at Coleshill in 1830 as young lady's maid. It would seem that the honest gardner to whom Mary was once engaged may have been Robert Townsend who was present at the vicarage in 1841 but absent in 1851. Sarah's illness was probably around 1842. (She concluded her life in a wheeled chair as a photo in my possession shows). Mary would have started at Shrivenham around 1845, and the 'actively kind and good lady whose husband owned much of the village' was presumably Lady Barrington, although the county directory of 1848 states:- "There are two school rooms, one for boys and the other for girls built by the present vicar, the Ven. Edward Berens, M.A. ". Maybe the honours were divided.

Jane evidently returned from London to Berkshire before her daughter Jane was born in 1841. Hannah and Catherine also sisters of Mary were living, married, in the vacinity.

The girls' father Richard had died in 1832 (at West Horsley) but their mother, notwithstanding her large family, was in good health and she lived until 1864, dying at the age of eighty-six.

The Story of Mary H--- naturally terminates in 1854 but Mary's life continued. How long she stayed at Shrivenham is not known, but the Surrey directory of 1882 includes Fanny Bouverie at Broadmead, Send and it is very likely that Mary and Sarah were there also for Mary died at Send in 1884. (I possess a photo of all three at Broadmead House of about this time).

In her will, Mary included her nine surviving brothers and sisters, her late sister Catherine's

son and also her late husband's brother and sister. The value of the estate £1581 (worth maybe ten times as much today) was an achievement for a country girl of the period and it shows the regard in which she was held by her employers and friends.

Sarah Harms survived with her handicap and was living with Fanny Bouverie at Ringmore, Shaldon, Devon where, in 1888, she died and was buried. Her nephews Henry Hiscock (d 1886) and Joseph Blake (d 1890) were also buried at Ringmore where there is a gravestone for each.

Fanny Bouverie continued to live at Ringmore for there still exists a letter sent by her to one of Mary's nieces Catherine Harms, as below, in which she mentions the recent deaths of Sarah, Benjamin and Joseph in 1890. Fanny ultimately died in Hampshire in 1893 and was buried at Coleshill. Faithfull to her friends, her will made provision for the maintenance of the three graves at Ringmore, and amongst the numerous bequests was one for John Harms (d 1895) the last surviving child of Richard Harms, and also for James Harms of Merrow, the eldest son of Benjamin, There was doubtless high mutual regard between Fanny Bouverie and all of Mary Harms's family.

Ringmore, Shaldon, Teignmouth.

My dear Kate,

Thank you so much for your kind letter. Have just got a sad telegram (from your Cousin James of Merrow) to tell me that dear kind Uncle Joseph is gone.

I am so glad dear mother and Jane saw him so recently and I am sorry to my heart that I could not see him once more. I was very fond of him. All the dear family who were younger than myself are passes away, dearest Aunt Sarah, Uncle Ben and Uncle Joe. Oh dear how we miss them all. I know how you will miss Uncle Joe. I am glad Fanny has returned safe.

With much love and sympathy,
Yours very sincerely
Fanny Bouverie

27/1/29 19 Sandy Zame Dew he Pierce That you very much for lettery me veed this. I instead to horte to the Hyans (afte is stry at the Same address) & Lect Kung the Local Disting Society's formation Monts E Jeanon

188, Poverest Road
Petts Wood KENT
24.2.72

K.J.Pearce Esq 46, Charlbury Rd. Shrivenham

Dear Mr Pearce,

It was indeed good of you to let me see the catalogue of Lordships of the Manor which I found most interesting and informative. This I now return.

I note that some of the L of M include no documents and in the past, I have often wondered about the merit of 'owning' one when there were non documents!

Thank you for the information regarding the History of Shrivenham. There is doubtless a copy in the British Museum and I will arrange to see it there. I would have done this before, but it is difficult to trace unless one has the author's name and this you have now kindly done.

May I bore you with the reason for wishing to see it. Some years ago I was given a book "Memorials of Lady Frances Charlotte Bouverie" published in 1855 and formerly belonging to my Gt-Grandfather. This book includes "The Story of Mary H---" which I was lead to believe was my G.Gfth's sister who was Lady Bouverie's child nurse and later was a schoolmistress. Lady Bouverie was the wife of the then Vicar of Coleshill, but the location of the school concerned was unknown until I traced it through the 1851 & 1861 Census as being at Shrivenham. I am now hoping that a Shrivenham History may give some further details as to how the school was started.

It could be that there is a copy of this book in your records. I trust you will not consider it presumptious of me but since it concerns Shrivenham, to a small degree, I am sending a copy of the section concerned together with my notes on the personnel therein.

I made enquires of the Headmaster at Shrivenham School some four years ago but he was not able to give me the early information I hoped for.

Your kind assistance and contribution is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

(W.F.Harms)

P.S. I have now seen the British Museum epy of Cann Hill's book. Unfartunately it inly refers to the erection of the schools in 1863 and it look as though the earlier origin was not known to Canen Hill.

In 1871, Mary Finch was no longe at the School lux still lung at Shrumben—next door to the Prince of Wales.

Frederich Finch for horband clied in 1879 in Shrumban or imay ball have been beined there. Mary Finch may also have been beined beined there although she died at Send, her best flace.