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A MAIDEN'S WORK

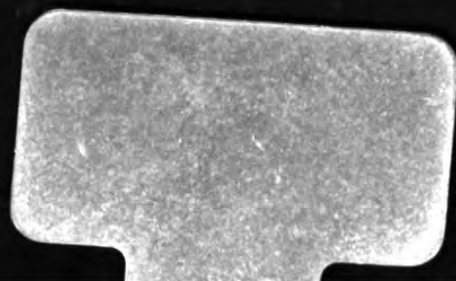
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A MAIDEN'S WORK.



I met a child, amidst a deafening maze  
Of wheels and bands, and engines loudly wrought ;  
On which the child fixed a bewildered gaze,  
Viewing such products rare, so strangely brought.  
The master of the work stood by, and taught  
How this revolved, whence that its action drew ;  
The child looked up, with eye of pure clear blue,  
And ne'er the while but half his meaning caught :  
Yet was his smile so sweet, his mien so kind,  
The child believed it all, obeyed, and learnt.

# A MAIDEN'S WORK.

BY

LADY HOPE,

AUTHORESS OF

"OUR COFFEE ROOM," "GATHERED CLUSTERS," ETC.

"Though the day be nearly done,  
There is still some work to do."



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## P R E F A C E.

—o—



SIMPLE tale of simple work done for the Master's sake, and beneath His blessing, that is all! I cannot claim for my story the virtue of rigid fact; neither can I call it fiction; for while most of the incident recorded is literally true, the blending together, with the names of persons and places, do not bear so high an origin.

Written as it has been in a time of anxiety, and chiefly for the delight of one who in the last few months has been taken from me, I must ask my reader to bear with its defects, and accept it as it is written—a humble tribute to the joy experienced by myself and many others in working, nay! oft times *labouring*, “for the Lord.”

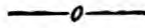
It is with the aspiration—*prayerfully* entertained—of inducing other workers to enter even a side-gate of the great Harvest field, that I venture to put into print my story message.

E. R. HOPE.

DORKING, *December* 1881.



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## CHAPTER I.


### Coffee-Room Visitors.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared.”—TITUS ii. 11.

See ! open arms of mercy stretched  
To meet the sinner who returns ;  
The love that calleth everywhere,  
If men will hear or will forbear.

The Shepherd never will forget  
His lost sheep in the wilderness ;  
Though far as east from west they stray,  
He calleth them by night and day.



“E'RE not going in there?”

“Yes; I'm going in.”

“And what for?”

“Well! why shouldn't I then?”

“All right! old boy. Don't nettle up, I say. Go your ways into the *old Corffee Shop*.”

The last three words were added in a gruff tone, prolonged and emphasised as only the genus to which the speaker belonged *can* “prolong” and “emphasise” words intended to be disagreeable.

The response matched the challenge.

“I don't care. I'm going in, see if I don't; and what's more, I'll stop there too. It's precious cold outdoors to-night.”

“Then come to the King's Arms. It's warm enough there, I can tell ye,” replied the other.

“King's Arms! No, thank ye! I had enough of that little game last night.” And so saying, the shock-headed, rough and ready, out-at-elbows, black and grimy youth, of about sixteen, or may be



seventeen summers, gave an unpremeditated slap to a gaping trouser-pocket, that now refused to respond to his attentions by more than a very faint coppery jingle. That the "King's Arms" and the pocket had something to do with each other in Bat Rowan's mental workings was quite evident from the gesture, and that the meditated relationship was not an agreeable or satisfactory theme was equally apparent. As the previous words went out of his mouth, he "heaved to" the swinging door with one push of his heavy shoulders, and was inside. Bat was not a beauty. His face told one tale, and his clothes two, to even an inexperienced onlooker. The former proved unmistakably that the cognomen of "Bat"—short for *battle*—had been well earned. There were marks of pugilistic encounters, irremediable now, with a certain breadth of jaw, and doggedness of expression, that proved an aptitude for fighting. The latter told of hard work in a coalpit or foundry, so black were they, and of drinking, careless habits, so ragged at elbows, knees, and wrists, were both coat and trousers.

Once inside, this is what he saw: a large room, square and clean, brightly lighted, its walls plentifully adorned with pictures, prints, and texts, all gay in colour, ornamented in outline, or interesting in subject. Across two-thirds of one side was stretched a wide counter, on which lay plates of

appetising cakes, ham, and beef sandwiches, buns, and pies, side by side with arrangements suggestive of various warm drinks, such as tea, coffee, and cocoa, and their addenda of cooler, sweeter, or more acid help-meets, as the case might be. On the many tables lay pictures and reading books of different sorts and kinds, each one attractive in its way, and all novel to the last degree to the new-comer.

Behind the counter stood a man of pleasant aspect, nice looking, suave in manner. His eyes smiled a welcome at the rough-headed lad, who hesitatingly advanced to the counter, that looked to him as "grand" as a ducal sideboard, glittering with its gold and silver, might appear to us. Had Bat happened to arrive an hour later, when the "throng of business" was on, he would have seen the manager's brows thoughtfully knitted as he weighed (metaphorically) quantities and prices, and recollected one by one each purchaser's demands. Even then a recognition of each known face was almost certain, with the hurried "All right," or, "How are you to-night?" "Cold, isn't?" or some dexterous remark, good-naturedly put to set the awkward customer at ease. For, be it known, that many a working man—indeed, *most* working men—pass through an ordeal untold in turning aside from the smoky tavern or brilliant gin-palace to the manifestly respectable coffee-house, where temptation in

the shape of alcohol may not enter. And it requires much in the shape of a coffee-server's tact and gentle kindness to dispel the clouds of shyness, doubt, and suspicion that his lighted windows have thrown open a street population hitherto bent too generally on public-house dainties and lowering rather than elevating recreations.

To return to Bat. He stood vaguely uncertain for a moment in the midst of his mystical surroundings; his own ideas on this, as on most other subjects, being singularly hazy, and anything but defined or resolvable into words.

He gazed about, pulled off his blackened cap, advanced to the counter, said "coffee," then "bread," looked up at the Roman-lettered texts and mottoes in blue paper on white calico, that spoke to him a silent but forcible welcome, from the wall over the manager's head, and finally collapsed into one of the varnished deal forms that surrounded the oblong tables of a similar character. Here, in silence, he ate his meal. His back was to the counter now; his eyes upon a large square book of pink calico, in which were pasted "Graphic" and "Illustrated" pictures of various shapes, sizes, and subjects, their spare corners being filled with poems, hymns, anecdotes, and other readings. Much absorbed Bat seemed in his study of the volume before him, and then he took another gulp of his coffee, after which

his inner cogitations may have been something in this fashion—

“Outside it is cold and dark; inside it is warm and light.” Another mouthful of bread and some more coffee, supplemented by another “comparison,” as true, but not altogether “odious.” “Out there they do *go on* so, they can’t let a feller alone; here it’s awful quiet, and people seem civil like.” More coffee and bread, and then the clencher. “And to think that I was here last night for the first time, more fool me! But it shan’t be the last neither.” We most humbly beg Bat’s pardon for thus diving into his mental recesses, and should our private researches be doubted in their result, we can only say in housekeeper’s language, that “the proof of the pudding was in the eating;” for when some such very evident cogitations on his part were interrupted by the sudden inroad of cold fingers down the nape of his neck, he started violently, uttering the challenge, “Look out there!” when, discovering that it was the black fist of his workmate, whom he saw outside the door, Bat’s aspect suddenly changed, and showing all his teeth in a smile of satisfaction, he remarked, “Told yer so, didn’t I?”

To the outside observer this might have been enigmatical, but to Phil Walker, as the new arrival was termed, its meaning was palpable enough. The

fact was simply this: The new coffee-house had lived some months before Bat Rowan had made his first and explorative entry, and since then he had introduced its praises, not in song like the Jewish maidens, but in short, repeated, and prosaic terms; and now his mate had come in to see for himself the charms that had won Bat's heart. The remark was one of query, and demanded an affirmative response. Phil looked all round and sat himself down upon the opposite bench, crossed his legs, leaned back, and rubbed his head. Bat said—

“What'll ye take?”

“Don't care,” Phil shortly replied, meaning what you or I would mean by the words, “Oh, thank you! whatever you like to give me.” For Bat's sentence implied that he wished *to treat* Phil to something. This system among the working men is much more common than some of us have any idea of, and that is one reason why the public-houses have proved so fatally popular. The men like to be able to do each other penny and two-penny kindnesses, as they cannot well afford more expensive ones, and “giving,” to them, is a necessity. Would that it were more so with the rich.

There were a few other men scattered about the room. One of them watched these two, winked and nodded to his companion. He was a neat-looking man, working in a brush factory close by.



I can tell you why he nodded. It was not that Bat was a chum of his. No; the man and the lad were very different specimens of coffee-room frequenters. Handyside, usually called Handy, was a mechanic—quiet, respectable, and clever at his trade. A sceptic, *of course*, I was going to say, but perhaps that is not kind; I only mean that, alas! scepticism is but too common amongst clever men of his rank, who have learned a good deal of some things, and a smattering of everything except the Bible. This great “except” has blackened their lives with a professed unbelief. Having nothing to uphold him except his own inclinations or love of industry—either of which might have failed or deserted him at any moment—he, too, was subject to certain vacillations, which were not to his advantage. Few and far between they had been hitherto. At an election he would get very much excited; and when the *unionists* came round “he was their man.” It was almost amusing to hear him talk about “the gentry,” “the masters,” and “rate of wages.” His dogmatic style of repeating over and over again the same sentences, and those not always original, was after all very like the clatter of an empty tin, or the measured flow of shallow water over a pebbly beach. They would not bear much sounding. But if you care to hear his opinion it ran somewhat thus: “The gentry are all a low-living lot, who just

eat and drink and sleep; the masters only care for one thing, and that is how they can make *summat* out of their men; the wages would do well enough, perhaps, if the prices were not so high, but when meat costs *so* much, and bread *so* much, and you have a young family to maintain," &c., &c. We need not follow him any further: suffice it to say that, though he did not by any means *always* grumble like this, yet such were his expressed ideas on these three subjects. He used to say that he "believed Mr. Gladstone was a good man," at least, so he had "always heard;" and that when "he tried it on at being a Prime Minister, he didn't do so very badly." Here his information politically seemed to find a rapid termination; but the paucity of it appeared to offer no discouragement to his enunciation of his sentiments. Having thus offered my reader a photograph of Handy, I may proceed to say, that though quite in another rank of life from poor Bat, he knew him by sight, as most people did. Continually during their evening street lounges, the workmen of Barton had stood to watch the pugilistic encounters that were fostered by pushing publicans at their tap-room doors, in which Bat was a favourite hero. Then the betting used to go on, and great excitement would follow. Whisky, gin, or beer did good work on such occasions, for they fired up Bat's temper artificially, when it was

not already "on the spark," and it inflamed the ardour of spectators as well as combatants. Thus the publican prospered in his trade, and the baker and the butcher grew poorer. It naturally was "a good joke" when Handy saw these two quaffing coffee instead of "liquor;" and, wonderful to relate, looking at a book! Not a very deep book, it was true, but even a "reading picture book" was something; and the idea struck him as incongruous.

Other men now began to come in, and other lads. The voices sounded cheerfully, and the ring of cups and saucers at the counter, the tunes played by one of the customers on the melodeon, and the hearty laugh over a defeat at draughts, all conspired to make those in the room feel "sociable like" and "at home." After an hour or so things began to drag. One and another of the men slipped out. "There's nothing *on* to-night," said one. Bat began to yawn and stretch himself. Alas! for the excitement tastes engendered by the publican in his desire to ply his trade successfully. Phil said, "I'm going."

It was now about eight o'clock. Just at this moment carriage wheels were heard. A vehicle of some kind had rumbled up to the door. Soon it opened, and there was a vision of smiles and pink and white cheeks, looking from under a fur hood, and little gloved hands trying to extricate very shining locks from the mufflements of the said hood,



and little dainty feet peeping from under a soft cashmere dress, and a sound of a silvery voice ringing out very pleasant tones.

"Are you very angry with me?" she said. "I'm so late. The Old Archway clock was striking EIGHT as I came by; and I felt so ashamed."

Everybody was smiling. Nobody looked "very angry."

"You know, I said I would be here at half-past seven," continued the little lady, looking appealingly at the deferential manager who stood behind the bar.

"Yes, miss," he replied. "But there haven't been a great many in, until lately."

"Oh, then! so you didn't want me. However, I am here *now*, so what shall we do?"

Then she glided about the room. "Handy!" she said, pouncing upon our friend of the brush factory, "have you got nothing to do? I'll teach you to play chess. Who else will come and learn?" and then she congregated a small group round her who went in warmly for the mysteries of that most delectable of games. When she thought that her ducklings might swim alone for a few minutes, she slipped out of the crowd to Bat and Phil, who were at another table.

"I am sure you don't know what that picture is," she said, sitting down in her own easy fashion

beside them. Then they listened, all attention, *ennui* having fled, while she told a story about a tiger; and talked about lion hunts in Africa.

"You're wanted, please, miss!" said a voice at her ear. "It's the library men asking for their books."

And in another moment she had disappeared from Bat's vision within an inner door. For a moment or two he and Phil looked at one another without speaking, then Phil smiled and Bat whistled. Hands in trousers pockets Bat slowly moved towards the counter. He tried to look nonchalant, and asked the price of buns; then a man came in from the little door looking into an open book.

"What's that?" said Bat.

"A *liberry*," said the other.

"A *what*?" inquired Bat.

"A young lady gives 'em out. They're books."

"Can anybody have 'em?" pursued the interrogator.

"Oh! ay! if you just pay a penny a-week in at that little table there where she's standing," said the other.

Then Bat whistled again, beckoned to Phil, and, after a short whispered colloquy, the two carrying brown pennies in their hands marched boldly into the sanctum.

"A *liberry*," they both said.

“What will you have?” inquired the gentle librarian—“A book about ships, or about wars—or both?” she asked smilingly, as she held up a thick book of Ballantyne’s boyish travels.

“Both!” exclaimed Bat, as he extended a hand that looked as if it had never seen soap.

“And you,” said the young lady, addressing herself to Phil. “What would you like? Travels, long journeys in foreign countries.”

“Oh, ay! all right,” said Phil succinctly, as he grasped the book and paid his penny.

They still hung about the door. Then Bat ventured—

“Will there be any singing to-night?”

He had heard a faint report that “when the young lady came there was always singing.”

Now the library comers had paused for a minute, so Geraldine popped her head out of her small window into the coffee-room, and seeing that the assembly round the tables was increasing, she went out from her library surroundings and said—

“Doesn’t anybody want a library-book? You can take them home, and read them for a penny a week.”

Then Handy got up, and several other men followed him towards the shelves of books.

“I’d take one, please,” he said, “and this one too, and him,” pointing over his shoulder to his attendant friends.

“ Well, Handy! You must have a very nice one, because I know you’re clever,” said the fragile little lady, looking up at him and smiling archly. “ Let me think! Here’s a life of a very clever man who knew all about insects, or—however, I think you had better choose for yourself, for I don’t know which you would like. Look, here are the shelves, and here are all the books.

For two or three minutes Handy looked up and down the rows of variously bound literature. Then he relinquished the task, and said—

“ I think you had better choose *for* me, miss. I’ll take whatever you like.”

“ Oh! how good and nice of you!” she briskly replied. “ Then you *do* trust me a little. And I will find such a nice one for you.”

So saying she handed him the Life of Edwards, the naturalist, by Smiles. To another man she gave the “ Biography of Duncan Matheson,” the ardent missionary, whose zealous efforts in the Crimean war for the spread of the Gospel were so greatly blessed.

“ He liked the soldiers, and used to go about amongst them. He was *such* a good man. I know you will like it,” she said; and her offer was gladly accepted.

“ I was a soldier once,” the man replied, and the others looked very grave, quite on their p’s and q’s for the occasion.

A silvery ringing laugh, gentle and sweet, broke from the young lady's lips, as she said—

“How delightful! Then it is just right!”

The other men were supplied with books, and then the manager stepped across from his bar and said—

“There's a great demand for the singing, miss. Do you think you could come soon?”

“Yes,” she said to Bat, “we are going to sing now,” and so saying, he handed him a hymn-book. “Will you come and join?” she asked.

Then she went into the middle of the crowded room, and said—

“Who would like to help me to sing?”

Hands were immediately held out for proffered hymn-books, which appeared to be very plentiful, for Geraldine's arms were carrying a large pile of them. Then she sat down to a very miniature harmonium, and she started a well-known hymn. It was heartily sung, many voices joining in; and then she proceeded to “teach a new one.” Bat was sitting near her, Handy at an opposite table. Five or six stalwart young fellows were standing round her as a sort of body-guard and voluntary choir. If their voices would hardly have been acceptable from under cathedral surplices to a refined congregation, they were thoroughly useful under present circumstances, and their song welcomed by Him who loves



the very thought of praise. The singing leadership was by no means an unimportant matter in Geraldine's evening arrangements, for the number of men present, who were not yet freed from the bondage of drinking associations, could thus have for themselves words and tunes of a higher order and better teaching than those to which they had hitherto been accustomed; and moreover, they could see standing before them men with whom they had formerly met only on "street" or "public-house" ground. From their lips were once heard, and not so long ago either, profane utterances and boastful speeches; now they were humbly singing

"Of Jesus and His love,"

and earnestly, cheerily telling of

"The new, new song,"

in which they longed that their neighbours and former companions should join. To the singers this opportunity of offering a praiseful advertisement of their new belief was an invaluable one, and each Saturday was heartily welcomed.

"We can't say much when we are at work to those other chaps," a tall dark fellow explained one night. "They won't let us speak, but they like the singing, and you see every week our number increases."

"Proof positive," said Geraldine, smiling.

"But now, where is a Bible? I will read a

verse or two," the young lady remarked at the close of the second hymn.

One was handed to her, and she was just going to open it when she became aware of an opening and shutting of the outer door, rather louder than usual, the shuffle of feet, and feeling a sort of almost imperceptible movement or rustle in the room, she raised her head as well as she could and tried to peer through the interstices of the crowd. But no, the elbows determinedly closed down to the sides, and the crowd, instead of opening to satisfy her curiosity, drew in rather closer.

"What is the matter?" she asked softly, looking straight up into Handy's face. He was now standing beside her with rather a defiant air. "Do tell me," she asked appealingly of another man. "Shall I read now?"

"Eighty-fifth hymn, please, miss," came in a decisive tone from a pair of stentorian lungs somewhere close by.

Geraldine's accustomed tact led her to respond in echo—

"The eighty-fifth hymn," and so saying she touched the chord of her harmonium, and sweetly led the melody. It was a very simple one, but it was brave and invigorating—

"We are marching to Canaan,  
With banner and song."

Supplemented by the refrain,

“ Who is on the LORD’s side ? ”

Take your place, my reader, outside the body-guard circle, and you will see what the men saw, but what at first Geraldine did *not* see.

The swing door had suddenly burst open, and four or five men had come in, not quiet, not tidy, like most of the guests, but rough-headed, flushed, and eager. They had looked hurriedly round, then seeing the tremulous flutter of a lady’s dress, and hearing an unusual voice, for a moment they had looked slightly discomfited, but rallying their wits again, they had asked in a disagreeable fashion, and rather more loudly than necessary—

“ Where’s Bat Rowan? We want Bat Rowan.”

Bat had instinctively pushed his head back to get more light for his hymn-book, and at the same moment artfully twisted his legs round behind the bench where he was sitting, so that Bat, in fact, had disappeared from a doorway view.

“ He’s wanted,” continued the men.

Nobody answered, but several were smiling in an amused way, while others looked unconcerned. The “ eighty-fifth ” hymn was being sung. The manager came to the front and said—

“ What then? take a seat. They are singing just now, you must not disturb them.”



"But we want Bat Rowan."

"There he is," said a man, pointing with his thumb over his shoulder, and shuffling his foot impatiently, as though he wished to cut short the colloquy.

A growl came from Bat. Like a bear disturbed in his retreat, his eyes glared uncomfortably, and leaning over the table he said—

"Shut up! none of your nonsense. Get out, can't you?"

"There he is; there he is," said one of them excitedly.

"He doesn't want to come," said the manager; "can't you let him alone?"

"They've give him out for a *stand-up* at the Old Bull and Swan, and the bets are on, and we'll *have* him. Send him out here, or it will be the worse for him, *I* can tell you."

"Now, look here," said the manager quietly and firmly, "he's our customer. No one has any right to interfere with him in our house. If he chooses to go, he can go; and if not, you just let him alone. Now, my man," he continued, coming up to the first, "will you stop here or go out? If you are going to buy coffee, you can have a cup for a penny; and you can hark to the singing if you like. But if not, you can leave."

Now, Geraldine could see the strangers, and

hearing the last words, she held out a hymn-book towards them. In so doing her face became visible, and the men were altogether, in their puzzled condition of brains, so taken aback that they collapsed into a seat. Geraldine had already telegraphed by a nod and a sign, that "those men were to have a cup of coffee" at her own expense; and so they were soon sipping the proffered draught.

Then she said, standing up, and looking round the room, "It is very pleasant to be quite sure that we are on the LORD'S side. *Who* is on the LORD'S side to-night? Soldiers know quite well what army they belong to. I hope you KNOW QUITE WELL that you belong to Jesus, and to Him only, and I *do* earnestly hope that, if you have never served Him yet, you will be His recruit to-night."

A word or two she read from the closing portion of Ephesians vi., and prayed as shortly.

"Who is the man they wanted?" she then asked in a whisper.

A gesture showed her poor Rowan, shrunk into a very small space.

"A fight!" the manager whispered; and then she gently put her hand on the lad's shoulder, and said—

"On the LORD'S side! and then you will be all right. *Will* you be *His* friend?"

Bat nodded.

“ I should like you to be on His side, and saved—*saved* through His precious blood,” she said.

In all his life Bat had never heard such a thing, and he sat spellbound.

“ Will you come to my men’s class to-morrow afternoon ? ” she was asking, when another rumble was heard ; and in answer to the remark—

“ The carriage is at the door,”

Geraldine was obliged to say—

“ GOOD NIGHT ! ”

## CHAPTER II.

### Geraldine Invites some Mothers.

“Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without desiring to see Thee.”—LUKE viii. 20.

I heard Him once, by Jacob's well,  
The message of salvation tell,  
For love of me.





T fell on a day that Geraldine was turning out of a street, where confused blocks of houses of all sizes and shapes and degrees elbowed and shouldered each other in a most uncouth and uncompromising manner. Rough heads were pushed out of windows. Black and ragged children peered into her face from rugged doorsteps with uneven surfaces and defiled surroundings. Here and there a poor mother dandled a pale baby, with eager jumpings, to attract a look of commendation from some passer-by—from Geraldine. Alas! nothing was strange there, except the clear blue sky, and clean fresh flowers that Geraldine sometimes brought in rare and precious handfuls at midsummer, unless it might have been their accompanying gift—her smile! It was a sunbeam glance indeed! “And, thank God!” the mothers thought, though they did not often *say* such polite things, “it lasted through summer and winter,” always bright and new and glad; and it *could*

flash out a reflective gladness, though this did not often happen, except when Geraldine was passing through her favourite haunts.

For Geraldine did like these dirty little houses, strange to say. You could tell that by her step, her eager voice, her catechism of questions at the open doors, her sparkling look of love, and the trembling of her lip at the sound or recital of sin and woe.

Who *was* Geraldine? you ask. Yes, my reader, I knew you would interrupt me with that commonplace query. A dreadfully prosaic one, too, when we are in a hurry going through the street. But if you must have an answer, I have very little to tell you. She was only a girl. About twenty or twenty-three her age might have been. She lived in that old house, close to the brow of the hill that overlooked the town and straggling villages which we were just now visiting. She had a father and no mother, but a lady companion. The said lady did not often appear, except in the garden, which was her great delight. But Geraldine had now serious thoughts of utilising Miss Tarlington in the highways and byways of Retcham-in-Norton, commonly called Norton.

But to return to Geraldine's triumphal march through the streets. Most of the houses she wished to call at had been visited, most of her little books had been distributed, and most of her intended

conversations had been held. Very original they were. A cut-and-dried district visitor would have been quite horrified, and undisguisedly too, at the summary manner in which long-winded subjects were dealt with, or rather subjects that usually *are* long-winded. Geraldine had one peculiarity. She may have had others. But this was a special one. She never could deal with anything, or person, as another person would deal with that said thing or person. She was obliged to do everything in her own way, or else to leave it undone. She could not say or do the simplest thing in a stereotyped manner. So she found it best to do things alone, or she would have been hampered. Another peculiarity of Geraldine's was, that she could not give reasons for what she did. She just *did* them, and that was all,—she very often could not explain why or wherefore.

But this afternoon's toil had come to an end, and Geraldine was returning, with slower steps, round the corner and up the hill. A woman with a can over her arm and another in her hand was turning out of a low doorway towards a conspicuous tap that stood in a low stone basin. The woman had a small red shawl over her head, from which dark locks strayed. She was looking keenly at Geraldine. Geraldine took no notice; did not see her, in fact. Absorbed in her own reverie, which to an outside



observer, had it been visible or audible, would have been very like a wool-tangle, she saw and heard nothing at that moment. The woman gave a cough; then she passed Geraldine. Reaching the fountain, she turned round and called in a sharp voice, "Harry!" The sound had its desired effect. Geraldine looked up; then the woman drew nearer, stood still, and rested one hand on her side.

"Well!" said Geraldine, "are you getting some water?"

"Yes, miss," was the reply; but eyes speak more than lips sometimes, and Geraldine answered the eyes.

"Who is Harry?" she asked, for the sake of something to say.

"He's my youngest," the woman replied, smiling as she spoke.

"Where is he?" said Geraldine.

"There!" said the woman, indicating with the flat of her hand towards Geraldine's rear a small fat boy who was busily engaged in scattering handfuls of brown dust over his fair hair.

"Come here, Harry!" shouted the mother in an angular tone. "Don't be such a dirty boy;" while, dropping her cans, she advanced towards the offender, bringing him to the front, and dusting him with her apron, while with the other hand she shook his small person until his physiognomy widened into a roar. A peacemaking ensued on Geraldine's part

of a very novel kind. In her finger and thumb she was holding a halfpenny.

"Sweeties!" said the boy, and grasped the coin, while the mother began to reply to Geraldine's questions.

"Do you live close by?"

"Yes; handy. You go by sometimes. Harry, he knows ye."

"I wonder whether I know your husband! Does he ever come to the coffee-room?"

"Yes; that he do. And he says you've spoke to him."

"Oh! Then I suppose he is one of my friends. Do you think he is?"

The woman laughed, and shyly passed her hand across her forehead. "Most of 'em's that."

"Oh yes! they are all very kind," said Geraldine. "I know that quite well; and I like them all. They are very good to me, and I would do anything for them—that I would."

"Oh, Miss!" said the woman, coming a little closer, "I was going to ask you—but I shouldn't wish anybody to know I said anything, for they do talk so—only there's lots as would come in if you'd have something for the mothers. The men gets everything now, and they has all the outings. I know ever so many women would come if they could get a chance."

“Come!” said Geraldine, “what to? They may come to the coffee-room if they like.”

“Then there’s that room upstairs. Couldn’t we have a temperance meeting, or something, all to ourselves?” continued the woman.

Geraldine hesitated.

“You could look in some day, miss; sure you could. That’s my place. It ain’t much of a house; but there!— Well! you know Brown’s gone on as regular rumpussing for such a time, till he come to your coffee-house. He’s been better since then, thank God! and I’m sure I thank you too, miss. He do seem very altered. But I should like if you’d call in”——. The woman suddenly ended, implying by her impatient but ardent gesture that there were volumes yet untold.

Out of her bag Geraldine pulled a tiny penny Gospel of St. John, and, doubling the leaf at the fourth chapter, she said, “You reminded me just now of that dear woman who got such a nice refreshing drink at the best well one day when the Lord Jesus was beside her talking to her. He was SAVING her too; and that’s what I want Him to do for you and for your husband,—yes, and for little Harry too. Will you take it home for a keepsake?” she added, handing the little book to the woman, who accepted it, gravely burying it in the folds of her shawl.

Geraldine trudged on her way to think. She was always thinking, and some people said always chatting and laughing too. They were mistaken. She was not *always* chatting, nor was she always laughing. She sometimes did both, sometimes neither. On this occasion she was as grave as a judge. She nodded here and there as she passed different friends in the shape of working men going home, tool-laden, toil-worn, tramping down the hilly road.

"What's the matter?" said Mr. Grayson at tea-time.

"An old woman on my mind," said Geraldine; and they all laughed.

This was a family proverb whenever Geraldine looked grave; and no one could join more heartily in a laugh against herself than Geraldine could.

"I suppose that is why you have given me no sugar in my tea," said her father, "or only one lump?"

"I was mentally sweetening some one else's cup," said Geraldine; "but I acknowledge the fact. 'Home duties first.' So I must be forgiven. My *theories* are right, you see."

Thus the hour sped.

"Bright as a firefly," her father used to say. She was his idol. There was no doubt about that; and the girl well knew her place in her father's

heart. What a girlish girl she was! Her eyes sparkling, her cheeks flushed, her two rosetted little toes on the steel fender, her rocking-chair lined with its crimsoned velvet, doing double work as she entered into her meditations about the water-bearing woman's appeal.

"I saw a woman at the well to-day," she said. "She was carrying some cans, and she reminded me of the picture of the woman of Samaria. And I thought of another thing. Father, don't you recollect that fountain in the village that you put up long ago—before I was born, I believe, or when I was a very little child, near the grassy bank at the other side of the Park?"

"Which one do you mean?" Mr. Grayson inquired.

"I mean the fountain at Park End, that has written over it, 'WATER IS THE GIFT OF GOD,' and is all broken and rusty, and has not a drop of water in it."

"Oh yes! I know the one you mean," said Mr. Grayson, laughing. "The one by the Ewe Park. It has a history. When I was abroad for your mother's health many years ago, the agent I left in charge stayed here to take care of the place. And very good care he did take of it—too much care, I might say. Among other strange things that he did, was to lose his temper over that



drinking-fountain, because he discovered that the boys threw stones at it. He therefore dismantled it, cutting off the supply of water from the hill reservoir, and leaving the fountain to go to ruin. It was a tiresome thing to do; but I have never heard any demand for it again, and so have never thought it worth repairing."

"Poor things! No wonder the people did not like him. They can't bear his name mentioned. What strong love and hate there is amongst the poor people!" Geraldine soliloquised.

"More than among the rich?" inquired Mr. Grayson quizzically, for he knew quite well that one of Geraldine's peculiarities consisted in very vehement denunciations of aught she disapproved, while at the same time she was equally ardent in her expressions of affection for her special friends, or any of their actions that approved themselves to her.

"Yes! that little inuendo may be true and perhaps deserved. But I do maintain that if there *is* strong democratic feeling just now in England and Ireland, there are also strong depths of ardent affection in her people's hearts, ready to well up at the slightest touch of kindness or the least manifestation on our part of real sympathy towards them."

"You can't be argued with," said Mr. Grayson, "so I will leave you alone. Let me finish

this grand letter of yesterday's debate from Lord Lycurgus. He is my admiration just now."

"And mine!" said Geraldine. So the family debate would have settled itself down into the normal condition of placidity, had not Geraldine secured to herself the feminine right of the "last word" by adding—

"You are so strong that you could knock me down, father; but you *can't* hold a wordy controversy with me. You always get the worst of it, don't you, now? Acknowledge with a kiss, and I'll say, *pax*."

This was behind the scenes. But to return to Geraldine's "mothers." The appeal beside the well had not reached her in vain. After much pondering and some visiting, she proceeded to business.

A few days after this rencontre at the foot of the hill Geraldine sallied forth, down a garden path, across a stream in which lay two shining stepping-stones, along the hedge-side of a meadow, and thus to the sanded shore which lay snugly between the woods and the long line of grey village, the latter veiled pretty constantly in woolly clouds of smoke that arose with untiring perseverance from the collieries and iron-foundries in the neighbourhood. This was one way of reaching the coffee-house. In her meditative moods Geraldine preferred this route;

in her more sociable ones she betook herself to the road that wound its way in and out among the crooked groups of irregularly built houses.

The sea was sprinkling its foam over the shingles, and causing a soft murmur of expostulation from the disturbed stones. The sand, golden in a pale spring light, half embedded many a shell treasure "that would delight that little Harry," thought Geraldine, as she stooped to fill her pockets from the ocean store.

The coffee-house was soon reached.

"Now, Barnes," began Geraldine in the tone of decision which she sometimes used in propounding a problem. From its first utterance she evidently intended that this one should be worked out. "I mean to have a tea—a tea for MOTHERS it must be this time."

"For what, miss?" inquired Barnes solemnly.

"For mothers," repeated Geraldine. "We must not forget that our men have wives!"

A grim smile played upon the manager's grave features as he answered respectfully—

"No, miss. But I don't know how it will work. These women are such gossips!"

"But you know, Barnes, that is our fault! We have never tried to tell them anything better. We have never given them the run of the rooms yet, except on Sundays, when they may come with their



husbands. But I think we might have them by themselves, and then we should get to know them better; and we could talk to them more quietly and comfortably than if the men were sitting by."

It always took Barnes a certain amount of time to drink in a new idea. He therefore replied, as he dusted a fly from his counter—

"I should think they would come *without* a tea, if they wanted to come at all."

"Really, Barnes," said Geraldine, "I don't agree with you. Besides, that is not the point. I am sure they would *like* a tea, for I like tea myself; and do you know, I am never asked to go *anywhere*—for lawn-tennis, or missionary meetings, or working parties, or even a walk round a garden, without finding that the all-prevailing TEA comes in somewhere. I don't know how it is with you, but it certainly is the case with me; and what is more, I should be very tired and thirsty if I did not get any tea or coffee, and very much surprised, too, if my friends did not offer it to me. I am only wishing, therefore, to do to these women—our neighbours—as I would be done by myself."

Barnes was silent.

"In the second place," Geraldine continued, "I particularly want our first effort amongst them to be a success. It would be very bad for us, and for them, and for our cause generally, if the invitation

tea-meeting for them were to turn out a failure. Don't you think so?"

Barnes was silent. His young mistress generally took away his breath at the first announcement of her projects.

Thus encouraged, Geraldine proceeded—

"But I know that they would come to a tea, for *everybody* likes that—myself into the bargain!"

Here Barnes relaxed into a smile once more, as with folded arms he leant his back against the counter, looking down on his bright-eyed young lady seated demurely on a wooden chair in front of him.

"How many is it to be for?" inquired the solemn Barnes, thereby evidently owning himself conquered.

"A hundred," shortly replied his visitor.

"A hundred mothers, miss!" remarked Barnes, moving away from his temporary resting-place; "and think of all the babies! It will be a Babel! And, dear, those women's tongues! I think it'll be a queer job for us if *they* all begin to talk about us, and they DO talk, and *no* mistake!"

"All the better!" promptly replied Geraldine. "That will be all the better for *us*. We shall reap the advantage. You said the other day we wanted advertisements. We could not have a better advertisement than the mothers' approvals. Though, to

tell the truth," added Geraldine smiling, "I did not think of *that* advantage from my proposed tea. I was only thinking of what they would like."

Barnes found himself "nowhere," to use a favourite expression of his when he even hinted an opposition to one of his young lady's plans ; though, to do both him and her justice, he in his heart of hearts, after the first blush of the proposition was over and a natural slowness of constitution overcome, than he was her warm and ardent supporter "through thick and thin ;" whereas Geraldine herself was as willing to stand corrected if she could see any good reason why her pet theory should at any time be deprived of finding its way into practice.

Matters were now verbally settled, and the preliminary arrangements had only to be carried into force.

Geraldine departed full of business. Barnes understood how to prepare the eatables for the important event. There was no difficulty about that part of the performance. His excuse for the dilatory response he had given to Geraldine's idea partly might be found in the fact that, though he had provided himself with a wife, he had no little children. Perhaps for this reason he could not sympathise with mothers in general, nor with Norton mothers in particular. Be that as it might, Barnes' way was marked out for him, and his only duty now

was that of calculation, to be shortly followed up by that of provision.

Geraldine's first visit was to the printer.

"Will you make me two hundred card tickets," she said, "with this inscription, in very plain letters—

ADMIT

TO

MISS GRAYSON'S TEA,

COFFEE-HOUSE, AT 7 P.M. TUESDAY,

and let me have them as soon as possible. When can you send them? To-morrow?"

"To-morrow," replied the man, bowing pompously.

Miss Grayson, if the truth were known, was in the habit of giving this unfortunate printer very extraordinary advertisements to publish. Mr. Porteous found it essential to business that he should without scruple pocket his money; he therefore found it equally essential to pocket his pride. But he chastised his fair young customer by never smiling upon her. Every one else smiled—he never; and Geraldine succumbed to his gravity, though she never approved it.

"That printer is so disagreeable," she used to say, "I hate giving him an order, and only wish he had

a rival, that I might turn my attentions in another direction."

But no other printer came; so Geraldine continued giving her orders at the little shop. At one time its counter had been bestrewed with yellow novels and police news; now there were signs of a better taste. Pink and blue tokens of the Tract Society, and volumes that showed a growing demand for higher literature,—clasped Bibles, and large print Testaments, all showed, each in their own way, that Retcham in Norton was by no means "a forsaken city," but "SOUGHT OUT," blessed, and cared for.

The tickets ordered, a little time was still left before the unalterable law of meal-time punctuality need assert its ever-recurring force. This time was to be occupied in a peregrination amongst the "mothers" who had recently been discussed in the coffee-house precincts.

Mrs. Grundy was first visited. She was an old woman, with brownish grey hair; a close-frilled cap that might have been white had it not been grey; a large pair of spectacles; knitting needles that never flagged amidst all her talking,—and Mrs. Grundy *could* talk, and *did* too.

"Poor, dear old thing! I can't get a word in edgeways," Geraldine used to say, when she was confiding to Tartie (her companion) the woes of her work.



"No wonder, my dear; you should go into the garden more, and less among those poor people," Tartie used to reply; and this was the only consolation this lady could provide.

Mrs. Grundy had to be visited now, and the invitation for the said "Mothers'" tea must be propounded in her hearing. This old woman was quite a character. Her cap was surmounted by a red handkerchief, because she had the "ralgies," and was "uncomfortable deaf" besides. Mrs. Grundy's diseases were generally of a peculiar character. They certainly did not find their visible counterparts in any medical dictionary; and this fact raised them considerably in the eyes of their owner.

"No!" she would say, "nobody ever *did* hear of no illness like mine; nobody ever *did* have nothing so bad."

Thus the questioning visitor was silenced. But when it came to a description of the complaint,—then one might as well have tried to follow the ins and outs of a Japanese diary, so extraordinary and so extravagant were they to polite ears. She thought nothing of telling one that she was just like that "ere kettle on the hob, all of a boil inside, and singing and making that row; anybody putting their ear to her mouth might hear it,"—thereby giving you the impression that she was a miniature volcano, wanting only a crater to make the model complete.

This time Geraldine's reception was an outpouring of ills. It was curious that though the world in general was viewed by this old woman through the blackest of spectacles, Geraldine had the honour of being a happy exception to the rule.

"*She's* a hangel; *she* is," Mrs. Grundy would remark.

"Yes, my dear! So you have come at last. I saw you go by yesterday. But you didn't come in."

"I have come to ask you to tea," said Geraldine. "Will you come and drink tea with me and some more of my friends at the Coffee-House on Tuesday evening?"

Thus Mrs. Grundy's pulse was felt on the proposed gathering, and her answer seeming satisfactory—

"Well, I don't mind if I do. But I must look up some bits of things to make myself tidy."

Geraldine proceeded to say that she would return with a ticket before Tuesday.

Several other women were invited. To most of them a verse of Scripture was repeated, or a hymn said, according to Geraldine's tactful impulses at the moment. The young lady visitor had faith implicit in the wonder-working powers of the inspired Word and in the all-prevailing strength of the Divine Name. So much so that it was her single



weapon in fighting the sins of men, yes, and of women too. In a pocket-book that contained her list of names for visiting, her weekly duties, and formidable array of promises to be fulfilled, and work to be done, there was inscribed in distinct characters on the opening page, these words:—

“ ‘ HIS NAME, THROUGH FAITH IN HIS NAME, HATH MADE THIS MAN STRONG WHOM YE SEE AND KNOW : YEA, THE FAITH WHICH IS BY HIM HATH GIVEN HIM THIS PERFECT SOUNDNESS IN THE PRESENCE OF YOU ALL ’ (Acts iii. 16).

“ *Believed by G. G.* ”

To which was added its counterpart verses—

“ ‘ SPEAK THE WORD ONLY, AND MY SERVANT SHALL BE HEALED ! ’ (Matt. viii. 8).

“ *A prayer. G. G.* ”

“ ‘ THE ENTRANCE OF THY WORD GIVETH LIGHT. ’

“ *A promise. G. G.* ”

“ Mind you come in good time,” Geraldine shouted in the ear of one who was very deaf, “ so that I can get you a seat close to me, and then you will hear everything.”

“ I don’t like strangers,” said the woman.

“ But we are FRIENDS,” responded Geraldine. “ Come early, and you shall have a seat near me.”

“Well, miss! I’ll be bound to say I’ll be in good time. I always keep my clock three-quarters of an hour fast, and then I *know* I am right!” said Mrs. Perkins.

“A doubtful argument followed by a doubtful conclusion,” was Geraldine’s soliloquy. However, she left the old woman smiling, and passed on to one or two more of her friends. Her encounter with the mother of Harry was very interesting. She found Mrs. King extremely glad to see her, and still more delighted to hear that the tea was in prospect, perhaps to be followed up by a mothers’ meeting held weekly. Harry’s joy was great when Geraldine’s pocket was emptied of its shells and placed in rows on the table for his admiration.

“Now the men won’t have it all to themselves!” remarked Mrs. King.

“Oh! that’s too bad!” said Geraldine; “I have only just begun with the men; and of course they must be attended to first, because they came into the world first, and because they are our masters!”

“Well! I do think if the women could be a little better, they would help on the men a deal,” said Mrs. King, emphatically. “You need to get *both halves* right if you want to get the whole house right.”

“Very well!” replied Geraldine; “that is quite true; and by God’s help and blessing that’s what we want to do. You will help me, I am sure.”

"I must get right myself first, then," said Mrs. King.

"Do you like your Gospel of St. John?" inquired Geraldine.

"It's fine reading," answered the woman; "but there's a deal I don't understand."

"Good-bye," said Geraldine, after an earnest word of prayer, standing there, that the neighbour who was so interesting her might truly receive the commandments there uttered, the invitations offered, and the gifts made known.

Miss Tarlington was speedily booked for assistance in giving away the tickets. She came into the house, her hands glowing with snowy lilies and golden auriculas.

"Dear old Tartie, you have been busy! and so have I!" was Geraldine's greeting. "And I want you to help me very much to-morrow."

"Am I *wanted* very much? or to *help* very much? which is it?" asked Miss Tarlington.

"BOTH," replied Geraldine promptly. "We shall have heaps to do, if you will come with me to-morrow afternoon. I want you to come round with me and give the tickets for the tea."

"Very well," replied Tartie.

And then Geraldine had to visit Mr. Grayson in his study, and drag him out to his five o'clock tea in the drawing-room. It was pretty to hear the bright

girl running over the chief topics of her afternoon's work, singling out the points that she thought would interest her father. Even Tartie, with her book on her knee, her garden gloves beside her, and her newly-culled flowers within fragrant reach, found her attention arrested now and then by Geraldine's sparkling accounts.

All was arranged. The tea was to be given, the tickets distributed, and the mothers entertained by singing, some magic lantern views, and one or two recitals. It was a full programme; but this was to be carried out partly by Handy's aid, who was willing to "help as he could," and partly by one of the young gardeners, who, with an intelligent carpenter near, felt able to sustain the dialogue parts. All was under Geraldine's directions, who held her silken reins with so gentle though firm a hand, that her team was never restive; nor did the yoke she imposed ever prove a heavy one.

By aid of the magic lantern there were to appear Scripture scenes, missionary ones, and foreign adventures.

"Not too many pictures at a time," Geraldine counselled, "or their poor dear heads won't hold them all. I like them to leave off, feeling hungry for more."

At last came the evening in question. Eighty mothers arrived. Some of them, indeed most, were

wonderfully cleaned up for the occasion, and all had expectant faces, and were received at the door with cordial greetings as they entered one by one. The gaily-decorated and brightly-lighted room was a dedicatory offering for the Master's use. So far it had succeeded in the night's work, if one could judge by the pleased whispers and notes of admiration that sounded in suppressed tones from many of the tired, worn faces that now were ranged round the tables. The said tables were composed of deal slabs on light tressles, and each was covered with its snowy cloth, bordered by the blue-rimmed plates and cups and saucers that were Geraldine's pride, manufactured especially for the Coffee-House at Norton.

"There ought to be a ship on them," Geraldine had remarked when the orders were being given, "for there are always ships passing."

"I think we have quite enough ships in sight without having them on our plates," Mr. Grayson had replied.

And it was quite true.

"'Tis a beautiful look-out," said one pale young woman, fresh from her cottage cares, and with a pale, heavy baby on her arm, that it had evidently cost her some effort to carry all the way from her home, the thatched lodge at Park End.

"Oh! Mrs. Berry; I am so glad to see you,"



said Geraldine. "How do you manage about getting water now? There isn't any in the old pump, is there?"

"No, Miss! nor hasn't been for ever so long. I gets it all from the spring up at Woodgate."

"At Woodgate!" said Geraldine. "Then do you walk nearly a mile for it?"

"Yes, Miss!" replied the mother. "Sometimes my husband he gets it for me when he is home of an evening. But mostly I can't wait that long, for there's the children, and a heavy washing. I am forced to get it myself when I can."

"Then I have got some good news for you," replied Geraldine. "My father is going to have that fountain put to rights. I think it will be done by next week. And then you will have it close to your door, and so will Mrs. Crowder and old Peggy."

The young woman made the effort, baby and all, to rise from her seat, her eyes expressive of thanks, while she said—

"*It will* be a good thing. I'm sure I'm much obliged, Miss."

Geraldine, having gladdened already at least one heart, went her rounds amidst the guests, smiling, condoling, or congratulating as the case might be, or as each separate case might require. "Weep with them that weep, and laugh with those that laugh," was a lesson of Divine tuition that she was fast

learning in that wonderful school, *human intercourse*. Though she was but a girl, with her faults like all the rest of us, she had with her a Powerful Friend and loving Instructor. Dark pages might eventually, or at any moment, fall to the lot of her life's history; but at any rate she was starting well, obeying His commands, "WHOM TO KNOW IS LIFE ETERNAL," and following in His steps, Who is "THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE," and Whose guidance is wisdom here, glory hereafter; and surely with such a Presence, and so true a Light, even the dark pages must ever be brightened with rays that gleam athwart the saddest surface, making it shine in Heaven's own beauty.

There were present at the tea-tables on this particular afternoon as great a variety of character, name, and disposition as you could well find. Representatively these women might have composed a very good volume of specimens of human character—a miniature world, in fact; and therefore to their lady-student intensely interesting. But she wanted their hearts; she cared for their souls. It was not only a present, but an eternal light, in which she viewed these neighbour-guests.

Mrs. Murphy was a rare character in that prosaic part of the world,—an Irishwoman, and as "long-tongued" as many of the others were reticent. Tall, pale, gaunt, and ill-clad, this woman's



first appearance on Geraldine's horizon had been anything but a prepossessing one.

Standing at the door of Mr. Grayson's house, after her preliminary efforts to ring the great door-bell, whose portentous clanging one would have thought quite sufficient to extinguish the courage of a beggar, Mrs. Murphy had stood erect like a tall washing-pole, with a few yellowish, brownish, used-up garments hanging upon it, and had calmly said to Geraldine, who happened to be passing the door at the moment, and stood to behold this strange visitor—

“ Good morning to ye, miss. I thought perhaps you would give me a thrifle for the children. You see I am an Irishwoman, and I am not *apprayshiated* here.”

It is needless to say that Geraldine did *not* give in answer to this request, knowing too well that a response to such demands is but a cruelty rather than a kindness. But, taking the wisest course, she inquired the woman's address, and, writing it down, promised to call on her that afternoon. Of course she discovered what all true visitors of the poor know too well, that the beggars of a town are not the needy ones. When once the efforts of industry, thrift, and respectability turn into covetousness, and thirst for another's money, the blush of purity and modesty are gone; and

beneath such petitions an observer or investigator will easily penetrate the hidden strata of an evil life, drinking habits or idleness, which have induced the begging round.

There, in a squalid house, she had found the frequent accumulation of men-lodgers, with bloated faces, reddened eyes, and other well-known tokens of dissipation. It was evident that there was no lack of money in the house, but, alas! equally evident that it ran too completely into the channels of sin. What was wanted here was not MONEY! but Scripture. And Geraldine had opened her tiny Testament, saying—

“May I read to you, my friends, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came Himself to ‘seek and to save the LOST’? Listen, and I will tell you what He says;” and then with her sweet voice Miss Grayson had read out the grand old parable of the lost sheep and its seeking Shepherd, making her own tender comments as she read. Very appealing her message was, as you might have seen by the hastily-wiped-away tears and solemnised glances by that fireside. There was not a dissentient voice from the miscellaneous group. All listened, all thanked her at the end. All bowed in prayer while she earnestly besought the Lord and Giver of life to heal wounded hearts, and to save lost lives.

The gaunt Irishwoman was now a firm friend. Her house was not yet the model home that Geraldine pictured to herself, as *some day* to be the result of her teachings. But it was improved already; and greater improvements would doubtless follow.

Droll scenes were associated in Geraldine's mind with some of these faces before her. There was Mrs. Channing, who one day went forth to collect shillings for her "poor dear husband's funeral," who had been "ailing for a long time," but had "at last died very sudden." Having collected a goodly amount at various charitable doors, this artiste in beggary had returned to her miserable haunt, unlocked an inner door which for that day had served to bar into concealment her "old man," and letting him out again, had gone off with him to the nearest public-house, where the sovereign collected in her day's tramp had been spent in a "jolly good spree," the result being a visit to the police cell the next morning.

So Geraldine's "mothers" were not all virtuous. But there were brighter gems, whose names were already written in the Lamb's Book of Life—holy, blessed women they were, who sought by humble prayer and effort to do their part towards the keeping of God's commandments in their little homes. Some of them had many difficulties, severe struggles, but they were patiently, perseveringly encountered;

and to them the earnest sympathy and loving visits of their "young lady" friend were an unspeakable boon.

There was Mrs. Burdon, a truly godly woman, whose missionary cup in the left-hand corner of her cupboard's top shelf never was quite empty. "Mother's cup" her children called it, and many a spare halfpenny, self-sacrificingly deducted from an expenditure on "sweets" or "toys," was consigned to this novel missionary-box, and consecrated to God by willing hearts. Daily some distant quarter of the globe was remembered in this woman's prayers, and daily mercies received their tribute of recognition, while thanksgiving, sweet and fragrant, ascended from the cottage home to the Lord of glory.

"I do thank God I can see the sea," Mrs. Burdon used to say. "And there's that house yonder, where the lady lives, so rich, and so kind; but she doesn't know God. Oh! I wish she knew Him! He'd make her so glad. Many a time when I am working I look out of my window, right across the green woods, and I pray for her dear soul, and ask God to come into her house, and to bless the little children too, and take *him* away from the horse-racing. It does a world of harm to the young men, and ever so many more besides."

Mrs. Burdon's children were always so neat and

clean that they slightly exasperated the other children, as well as their parents; and sometimes Tommy arrived at his paternal dwelling in bitter tears, because "Jemmy Duckworth had whacked him for having such a good jacket," or for being "too well shod." These were only "splinters of the Cross," Mrs. Burdon used to say, and she bore them with a sweet equanimity that had by Christian habit so grown to be the outward clothing of her life, as well as the inner condition of her soul, that now she was recognised silently by her neighbours as the woman who was "a deal too particular," but who "knew how to keep her temper." This was not a bad character to have; and Geraldine longed to see such a disposition multiplied.

There were other nice women again, who though Christian, sober, and amiable, and more or less exemplary in their lives, were not aggressive Christians, that is to say, they did not advance into the enemy's territory, as Geraldine would have had them advance. These were of various degrees of feeling. Some were only beginners; others had the feeble faith that almost trembled even to grasp the Crucified but living Hand.

There was sickly Mrs. Jenkins, always complaining, but ever saying, from evidently a true heart—

"I do trust my Saviour."

"Trust Him *a little more*," Mrs. Burdon used to



say, looking into the pale, sad face. "He *does* love you—better, too, than you think. Trust Him altogether. Ask Him to GIVE you the trust, if you can't understand it."

It was an interesting little world altogether, and Geraldine, through God's mercy and goodness, had had her eyes opened to find it so. Many another young lady rode or drove daily past these or similar gardens of human life, but not to admire their Creator's handiwork, to cull His treasured blossoms, drink their fragrance, or remove their hindering weeds. "Follow Me!" Jesus has said. He said it to Geraldine, and she obeyed. She was reaping her reward in a sweet foretaste of the fuller reaping time that was coming, when the harvest field should shine in its glittering sunlight gold, bringing joy to its Owner's yearning, but now "satisfied," heart, His angels and His "sowers" and "reapers" alike. It is pleasant to share the Saviour's joys. It is pleasant, too, to share His Cross. Of late these honours Geraldine had tasted, and should taste still further.

But to continue our inspection of the tea-party. The meal being soon over, and the chatting powers as well as the more passive ones of real enjoyment having gradually developed themselves beneath the genial influences of "Miss Geraldine," Tartie (who, of course, for the occasion was pressed into the service), and even of Mr. Grayson himself, whose pre-

sence was indeed an appreciated honour, the tea-things were removed, a grace sung, and Geraldine proceeded to business. Penny hymn-books were handed round, and all were invited to take part in the well-known words—

“What a Friend we have in Jesus.”

Then Mr. Grayson spoke. He said that it was a pleasure to him to meet the mothers; and he evidently meant what he said; for his face, benevolent and mild as it ever was, to-day brightened with a kindly smile; and his hands, laden with two basketsful of toys for the little ones, were soon emptied into the laps of grateful recipients.

“That was a capital hit of papa’s!” Geraldine said afterwards. “His present gave the mothers so much pleasure; quite as much as it did to the children, I think!”

Yes! it was a timely gift, and did more than many a more costly benefit would have done to promote good feeling, and to encourage the social feelings of kindness and trust between all assembled.

It showed too, as the “mothers” afterwards said—

“That the gentleman was *thinking*” about them, and it was “always pleasant to be thought about.”

Then came the dialogue. It was very amusing, and yet instructive, and was extremely well given



by the two young men who had undertaken it. It referred to the evils of drink, and neglect of home, taking for its text the question of the harmless or harmfulness of "little drops," and in a clever, taking way, compared the drink to mince-pies, which the temperance advocate argues finally *must* be evil, if they desolate homes, destroy souls, and impoverish countries, concluding with the emphatic statement—

"If you can prove to me that *this* is the work of mince-pies, I will never eat another mince-pie as long as I live!"

The recital was received with many clappings, and the last sentence served at least to prove that the gentler sex could understand the art of applauding."

Then the magic-lantern was exhibited. Geraldine, with the help of Handy, was her own exhibitor, and was able with a simple conversational facility to interpret the meaning of each picture.

"Do you think our Father in heaven loves little children?" she asked. "Yes! perhaps you say, He loves the little children that have died and gone to heaven. But do you think He loves the little *living* children, that are strong and healthy now, and that play about and go to school, and whom we hope will grow up and become men and women? Oh! you say, you don't know about that. Well! let me prove to you that He *does* love them. For He never

changes, and here we have a picture of the mothers who brought their little ones to Him to be blessed. He is putting His hands on their heads, and blessing them; and He is saying—

“‘SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME, AND FORBID THEM NOT; FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.’

“I hope none of you are so misguided,” she continued, “as to neglect your precious little children,—never to teach them about the Saviour, never to draw them to love Him. There are some mothers who *never* tell their children of Jesus, and *never* tell them Bible stories, and *never* teach them to pray. There are others again who give their duty to another. They say, ‘the servant, or the school teacher, or the governess, can tell them *these* things. I am not going to do it myself.’ After this meeting I have got some plans to propose to you about this matter. But I must go on showing you the pictures now.”

Then Geraldine exhibited her coloured illustration of the multitude fed upon the “green grass;” the “blind man receiving sight;” the “lame man” coming *inside* the “Beautiful Gate,” and praising as he walked; the palsied one healed as he lay at Jesus’ feet; and the resurrection garden, where the risen Christ met and comforted the weeping Mary. All these scenes, and many more, were brought

before the assembled guests, and deeply interesting they evidently were to all present. The foreign scenes and travels, with scraps from Livingstone's and Stanley's journeys, crocodile and elephant adventures, lion hunts and tiger escapes, so fascinated the spectators that Geraldine, instead of finding it difficult to "know what to say," discovered that the difficulty lay in getting fast enough from one picture to another. Her simple descriptions, with a telling touch here and there, were far more successful in pleasing her audience than anything in the shape of a description "read out of a book" would have been. Mr. Grayson put in a word now and then; and even Tartie occasionally interpolated remarks, thereby proving the effect of earnest enthusiasm in moving even nature's reserve! It was a free and easy time. No one stood upon stilts. No one felt themselves ill at ease. "Liberty Hall," Geraldine laughingly called her rooms, when she was striving to overcome the dislike or apathy of some outsider whom she desired to turn into an habitual guest. She was right; but it was a controlled "liberty" that reigned supreme in these favoured precincts. Without control there might have, and indeed would have, been evil. As it was, His Name held its rightful place, who purifies and, by His Spirit, gives peace.

At the close of the evening Geraldine said—

“I am going now to invite you to come to a weekly meeting at this place; every Monday afternoon it will be held. Materials for clothing will be sold at a slightly reduced price. In a register-book I shall insert each payment made, and when the full value is paid of each article purchased, the purchaser will take it home. Each one will have a card corresponding to the page in my book, and on the card the weekly payments of the member who owns it will be entered. We propose spending an hour and a half together. During the first half hour our business will be done. Those who please to do so can bring their work with them, and while they are working can listen to a book which will be read aloud. The last half hour will be spent in reading Scripture and singing hymns.”

This proposal evidently found favour; for when those who wished to join such a meeting were invited to testify their approval, many hands were held up. A few names were taken as a nucleus, and then with a distribution of booklets and picture-papers the tea-party came to a close. As the guests filed out of the room, smiles and thanks and *sotto voce* sentences showed that the evening had given genuine pleasure, and Geraldine felt amply repaid for her small expenditure and eager efforts by the recollection that came strikingly to her mind of her Saviour's words—

“WHEN THOU MAKEST A DINNER, OR A SUPPER, CALL NOT THY FRIENDS, NOR THY BRETHREN, NEITHER THY KINSMEN, NOR THY RICH NEIGHBOURS; LEST THEY ALSO BID THEE AGAIN, AND A RECOMPENSE BE MADE THEE.

“BUT WHEN THOU MAKEST A FEAST, CALL THE POOR, THE MAIMED, THE LAME, THE BLIND :

“AND THOU SHALT BE BLESSED; FOR THEY CANNOT RECOMPENSE THEE; FOR THOU SHALT BE RECOMPENSED AT THE RESURRECTION OF THE JUST.”—Luke xiv. 12-14.

Monday came! and with it the “mothers;” some of the “tea mothers,” as Geraldine called them, and some new ones who had never been in the rooms before. A few of her recent guests could not come; a few were cautious, and wished to know “what it was like” before they committed themselves by venturing forth upon untried ground; and others, again, had an idea that clothes must be bought, and therefore, as money was scarce, or necessity did not lay in that direction, thought it better for the present to avoid the gathering. But all knew that the invitation was kindly meant, and all were glad that a weekly hour was now devoted to *them*, and an opportunity created of which they might feel free to take advantage if they pleased. Across the end of the room nearest the door two or three tables were set in line, thereby forming one long counter; and upon them were set rolls of flannel, wincey, and calico, as well as patterns of coloured print, that



selections might be made for useful wearing apparel. There were even gay little shawls, and baby boots, which added to the picturesqueness of the scene. At this extemporised counter a tradesman was serving. Geraldine rather prided herself on this part of the arrangement. An excellent draper had agreed to deduct a halfpenny in the shilling, thus meeting Geraldine's deduction of another halfpenny, which both aided the women in their purchasing and facilitated the disposal of the said goods. A shopman was therefore to be sent over every Monday, to carry out his share of the proceedings. But as the women came in one by one Geraldine received them with her usual kindness of manner, and entered their names in her list of members. For those who wished to pay in for goods there was a special entry, each purchased portion being cut off its parent roll, and in most cases immediately placed under the detailed attentions of needle, thread, and scissors. At departure every parcel, now a possession, was to be put away, ticketed with the name of its owner. The duplicated cards and book entries prevented anything like mistake in the business department.

At half-past two the meeting began. At three o'clock the draper fastened up his bundles and left; and then the reading began. An interesting story was read the first day, bringing in important truths,



and inculcating lasting lessons. At half-past three Geraldine began to play her favourite hymns on the harmonium, then reading from the Scripture page those words of teaching from our Lord's own lips, in Matthew v. 1-16. She said—

“ Our Lord Jesus loves to bless us ; He wants to make us *whole* and *holy* ; so He offers us His blessing. We may all have it if we will come to God through Christ, His dear Son, who died and lives for us, and who can to-day make us full partakers of His great riches. These treasures never fade away. We might call this chapter one of God's great advertisement lists.

“ Do you ever look over an advertisement sheet in a newspaper ? I often do so ! Or the price list from the grocer or draper ? Then you pick out exactly what you want, pay down the money, and make it your own. We use common sense about earthly things ; we should use it for eternal things. Look over this list of BLESSINGS now, and let us see whether there is anything you want here ! ‘ BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.’ You see it is a very good thing to be ‘ poor in spirit,’ because then we want to be enriched. There are some people mentioned in the third chapter of Revelation who ‘ say they have need of nothing !’ and don't ‘ KNOW THAT THEY ARE POOR, AND MISERABLE, AND BLIND, AND NAKED.’ Perhaps God is

showing *you*, dear friends, that you *do* require a blessing to-day! Is it so? Then I have some good news to tell you. There is NO MONEY to pay! You can have all God's blessings quite free. Read Isaiah lv. 1—

“‘HO, EVERY ONE THAT THIRSTETH, COME YE TO THE WATERS, AND HE THAT HATH NO MONEY; COME YE, BUY AND EAT; YEA, COME, BUY WINE AND MILK WITHOUT MONEY AND WITHOUT PRICE. . . . INCLINE YOUR EAR, AND COME UNTO ME; HEAR, AND YOUR SOUL SHALL LIVE.’

“There is no limit to what you may get from God, if you will only come and tell Him your wants in the name of Jesus. If you go to a shop on Saturday night, you can only buy the value of your money—*according* to what you pay. But if you go to God to receive out of HIS treasure-house, He will give you—

“‘ACCORDING to your faith,’  
and

“‘ACCORDING to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.’

“This is the way our Lord deals with poor sinners. ‘THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN’ He offers to you! It reminds me of the gracious words that Ahasuerus, the Persian king, spoke to his Jewish queen when she sat before him at his feet.

“‘WHAT IS THY REQUEST? TO THE HALF OF THE KINGDOM IT SHALL BE PERFORMED.’

“This was an Eastern monarch’s favour manifested towards the woman he loved. In our verse to-day we find the bounty of an earthly king far exceeded. To *sinners* ‘poor in spirit’ the Lord offers not *half* His kingdom, but the whole! ‘THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.’ Nor is it a future, but a present, gift. The joy *enters into* US here,—‘THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU.’ *We enter into it there!* ‘ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD.’”

The reading, prayer, and singing did not last long. But it was tender, forcible, and true. That it was *telling*, you could read in responsive faces, that made no attempts to hide under placid exteriors, heart-stirrings that lay far deeper than *could* be shown.

A poor slipshod, weary-looking woman edged her way to the front, as Geraldine concluded, bidding farewell to her friends.

“Could you come round my way, miss?” This was the petition.

“Where is it?” asked Geraldine.

And then the sad, wan face so eagerly leaning forward touched Geraldine’s sympathies.

“Do you know Grigg’s Huts?”

“No!” said Geraldine; and then an explanation followed which revealed to Geraldine the fact that

nearly two miles off, below a wooded slope, and under shelter of a small quarry, there lay a group of cottages that must be reached by a footpath from the main road; that this weary woman craved a visit, and had returned to put her desire into words to-day.

The promise was given, parting words exchanged; and, left alone, Geraldine raised her two hands to her forehead.

“My God!” she said, “is it right that I should have this responsibility? Ought I to meet these women all alone? What would the minister say? What dost Thou say?” and she waited there. Very tired she was, and sad at heart, though glad at her early success. “Did I say what was the right thing to say? and will they ever come back again, or will they despise me because I am so young? Perhaps when they know me better they will like me less!”

“Darling!” said a voice.

Geraldine started up.

“Dearest Katie! is it you? How you frightened me!”

But a hearty hug followed, and it was evident that they were friends.

“How did you come? when? and why? and for how long? and many other questions I might ask, but I am quite out of breath with this sudden event.”

“I came to see Aunt Gwendoline, because I heard she was not very well and wanted me. This afternoon she said I *must* have a drive, as it was one of her ‘good days’—I only arrived this morning. I therefore insisted on coming over *here* and nowhere else, and of course I was told you were reading to some people here, and down I came. That is my whole history. Now for yours!”

“Oh! mine! It is very easily told. This is my field now, and it promises plenty to do. But come home and have a rest. In the meantime we will put away these things.”

But the words were hardly out of Geraldine’s mouth than a figure darkened the doorway, and Mrs. Burdon’s figure was seen.

“I beg your pardon, miss; but I’ve come back again. I hadn’t gone quite away, and I did just want to say the mothers all wishes me to thank you very much indeed for their pleasant evening last week. None of them liked to say anything—not themselves; but we are all very much obliged, and we are very glad that the mothers’ meeting has begun. A good many more will come as soon as it is properly known about.”

Katie stood by, tall, and comely, and grave, an interested spectator of the scene. A good deal of spirit showed itself in her face, gloved in real gentle-

ness. She heard the colloquy end by Mrs. Burdon's offer to "tidy up" and "put away" the tapes, and buttons, and needles, and other useful accessories of the afternoon's occupation; and then the two friends started towards Geraldine's home.



## CHAPTER III.

### Secrets of Peace.

“ I will keep him in perfect peace.”—ISA. xxxiii. 2.

In that deep sea I cast myself,  
Sink down amidst that perfect Rest ;  
And when my sins condemn my soul,  
Cling closer to my Saviour's breast,  
For there I find, go where I will,  
Unchanging Love and Mercy still.



**N**OW that we are at leisure again, shall we go back five years? It had been a grey, murky day. Dark clouds had lowered their shadows, heavy and low, over the sea. Tiny foam-decked wavelets had glanced upon the water's far-spread surface. White gulls had circled in restless flights between heaven and earth, daintily touching from time to time the heaving expanse, and then softly resting their white bosoms upon their strangely-chosen cradle, had risen and fallen with each ebb and flow. A large grey house, in strict keeping with the scene, overlooked the dark horizon. Its margin of woods and gentle vista of sloping meads but served to break the monotony of outline, and to add to the solemn gloom of a darkened day. The stillness was intense.

From a latticed bay window a little white hand might have been seen extending itself. But it was soon withdrawn again.

“It is raining. The drops are beginning to fall.”

said a voice that might have been heard had any one been listening to hear it. But there was no one to hear. All was solitary, and dark, and sad. Three months from this day the mother, who in her tender love had reigned supreme within that home, had been taken from it. Transported herself to a land of light, she had drawn away the cheering joys of a presence unspeakably sweet, *too* precious ; for in its brightness life had been blessed to her loved ones, and without her there was woe. She had left two behind, her husband and her child. Upon these two mourners the effect of the bereavement was distinctly different. From that sad hour Mr. Grayson had retired to the depths of his study. A lofty room it was, its walls well lined with books, its chairs and sofas formed and fashioned for comfort—comfort for the *body* that is ; alas ! for the soul there seemed to be none, except in the momentary relief that reading, writing, accounts, and the deep concealment of an intensified reserve could bestow. And *can* such artificial alleviations be *called* consolations ? Are they not rather the repression of a pain ? And were they not to him the preventives of a true relief ? But this we cannot tell ; for Mr. Grayson's griefs were his own. Even his Geraldine, his darling, must not know and could not tell "what father felt."

Geraldine had a governess at first, a grave, clever,

business-like woman, who insisted upon French and German in all her pupils' conversation at certain times. Regular hours and prescribed duties had long been the routine of Geraldine's life. In her mother's lifetime this was bearable, for there were always the blissful hours to be counted upon and looked forward to when a drive, or a walk, or a chat with that most beloved one, had sped the passing years of education, and turned a toil into hallowed pleasure.

"What would mother like?" "What would mother think?" "What would mother say?" These queries, uttered mentally and almost unconsciously, had hitherto been the touchstones of Geraldine's life.

Now that mother was gone, and the governess's presence was too irksome to be borne. "I shall die of it!" Geraldine used to say.

"Ma chère!" Miss Brenton would expostulate, "you are not giving your mind to your duties. Can you not study with a little more ardour? I do not wish to be always *on the reproof*, but you truly are not diligent. I do say so, for it is sincere."

"Oh! what *shall* I do?" Geraldine would groan out, her face buried between her hands, her elbows leaning on the table; "I cannot take any interest in it now. There is nobody to care whether I get on well, or whether I die, or become an idiot, or anything else! Oh! I *am* so unhappy."

Then Miss Brenton, continuing her vein of reproof, would say—

“But, now, this is too wrong. It is wicked. Did you not hear your excellent minister say, in his sermon the last Sunday, that when one is taken, it is a rebellious sin against your God, the great Almighty, if you grieve too much? There is no use to go on now like this, so long a time.”

“O Miss Brenton! I *cannot* bear it. I *will not* be preached to in my misery. This is really *too* much. Do, *please*, let me get through this odious play, and leave me in peace.”

“Geraldine! You are forgetting yourself, and you are forgetting *me!*” Miss Brenton would reply, rising from her seat in displeased dignity, while, like many another storm, Geraldine’s anger would subside into a new layer of heart pain, and she would repeat in the silence of her heart—

“No one understands me!”

It was after one of these schoolroom controversies that Geraldine had rushed down into her father’s study, sobbing violently, opened, without a scruple, the heavy double door that usually proved so impassable a barrier to the lonely man’s retreat, and throwing herself down on a chair in front of his writing-table, had said—

“Papa, she is so cruel to me. I really can’t bear her—I don’t know *what* to do. I am perfectly



miserable, wretched. I shall die. Oh! *do* help me. There is nobody to care for me now that mamma is gone. Oh, *do* help me!"

The imperturbable surface of Mr. Grayson's outer man really *was* ruffled now. He was at first displeased, and then sad, as Geraldine's outpourings reached their climax. He rose from his seat, and, coming to the fireside, he put his hand on the disordered locks of his child, and taking her chin between his hands he tried to look into her tear-stained face.

"What is this all about?" he said. "What's the matter now?"

"Oh! *don't*, papa; *don't*," Geraldine sobbed, shaking herself free. "I can't bear to be spoken to like a child."

Then Mr. Grayson turned away, pacing backwards and forwards with his hands behind his back in a thoughtful mood. At last he said—more to himself than to the excited girl who sat sobbing, as she warmed her cold hands at the fire—

"Poor, motherless child! Poor, motherless child—motherless, motherless!—and I don't know anything about it."

"Yes, you do!" Geraldine interrupted vehemently. "There is only one thing I want. Send Miss Brenton away. She is only a governess. I hate her."

“ Send Miss Brenton away !” echoed Mr. Grayson.

“ Yes, papa. I know I have more to learn ; but I could study by myself. I would work hard alone ; but I *am* so tired of being bullied, and kept in order, and treated like a child. And she makes me so miserably unhappy.”

To make a long story short, suffice it to say, that Geraldine was despatched to her own room that she might quiet herself down, and a footman was sent to summons Miss Brenton across the labyrinthine passages to the dark and solemn library. There she encountered Mr. Grayson, in grave silence, standing with his back to the fire. A conversation ensued, which ended in Miss Brenton’s dismissal. Two or three uncomfortable weeks passed in Geraldine’s schoolroom history, and then the day came when Geraldine’s ardently desired emancipation actually took place, and she was free ! The reaction from her former life of discipline was something tremendous. For a day her spirits knew no bounds ! Up in the lofts, down in the stable, out in the garden, she went about like a wild thing. She strummed on the piano, painted half an illumination, wrote two letters, ordered a plum-pudding, some beefsteaks, and a turkey for dinner, the first-named article being considered by her by far the most important item in her bill of fare. Then, as the hours wore on, Geraldine’s spirits gradually sub-

sided. She hunted out an old novel from her stores, made up a roaring fire in her room, and sat down to read it. Once she got up and looked at herself in the tall pier-glass, to see whether she was as good-looking as the heroine of her studies, and exclaiming—

“Not so bad!” sat down again. The vision she beheld therein was a figure rather slight and thin, not very tall; eyes that sparkled in their hazel light, and cheeks of rosy bloom, with lips that curved in a satirical arch, but with a very determined outline. Dark hair and eyebrows, and plump little hands—these were the closing or completing characteristics of Geraldine’s appearance. She was seventeen. But who would think it?

“Such a child!” the servants said, and wondered at Miss Brenton’s dismissal.

Geraldine was in her element for a little while, and then her sorrows came. A blank, black curtain seemed from that terrible funeral hour, with only this short interval, to have fallen upon her life, shutting out its “pleasant things.” Gradually her existence had settled down into a morose darkness. Spirits she had, and nature would unbind them, like the wild sea-gulls, from their rock-bound haunts, and set them free at times, and those often the most inconvenient and unsuitable times! Poor Geraldine! It was well that she was not required to control

her servants, for she certainly could not control herself. An excellent butler and housekeeper, by Mr. Grayson's wish, undertook that sole responsibility; and in this respect, as in many others, Geraldine was free. But freedom was *not* her own. It was *not* her portion. She was a captive. She said she was "the slave of fate." But Geraldine was mistaken. She had a tyrant, it is true, but that tyrant was HERSELF. It was her OWN HEART, the most remorseless monarch we can find, and in league with dark powers that bind us too often to "*the tombs.*"

A handsome, clever, high-spirited girl! was she *a slave?* Well, she was not happy. That was certain. As the weeks, and months, and years rolled on, she was passing through her own mental history unknown to the outer world, unknown even to her own father. Sister she had none, or brother, though she had often longed for both. Then whispers from a shadowy world began to steal over her heart—a heart that was hard, proud, broken in its hardness.

"I cannot explain! I cannot understand!" she used to say to herself, sitting at the lattice window that overlooked the sea, and wood, and moor, and mead. "There is something more—*something* that I have not found—I feel sure of that! where is it? what is it? where can I find it? who can help me? Not father! he is more morose than I am,

though he is dear and kind to me, and means to be still kinder than he is! But here I am, a young *woman*, now, with all my longings and feelings, and heart-breaking loneliness, and yearnings, and desires. And nothing, really nothing, absolutely nothing, seems to satisfy me."

Thus the days rolled on into years, and the household cares which at first Geraldine was allowed to disregard now devolved upon herself entirely; and though she could not but confess that from them she derived a certain amount of pleasurable occupation, yet her days were on the whole objectless. An afternoon drive, a stroll in the garden, an occasional visit, a home dinner-party, the rare event of a houseful of visitors—these were the breaks in a monotony which had now become Geraldine's existence. She scarcely craved excitement. A *something*—she wanted. "A something!" she knew not what.

It was Geraldine's hand that we had seen from the casement of her latticed window. Then the heavy drops fell. Thunder rolled. Thin streaks of lightning flashed over the grey sea. Distant, and still more distant, became the peals. During the thunderstorm Geraldine was seated in the favourite corner of her favourite sofa. Every now and then she shrank still closer into her recess. As the storm lulled, she took an occasional look into the far distance.



And then, when it had sobbed itself away into dying whispers, the girl started from her seat, stretched herself, shook back the troublesome locks that would assert their pre-eminence. In the dark eyes and eyebrows that gave such distinctness to her features there was an expression of weary energies suppressed, but still existent. Taking a long cloak from her hanging press, and a soft waterproof hat of the same material, Geraldine arrayed herself, and, wrapped from head to foot, sallied forth. She stepped across a broad extent of green lawn; the gravel path that skirted it entered a wood that on a sunny day might have been called shady, but on this occasion exhibited only its rich undergrowths of moss, and fern, and brake, and shrub, all damp with the soaking flood-tide that had just been poured out upon them. The tree branches shook off their legacy of raindrops, but the pattering sounds fell heedlessly on Geraldine's ear. Drawing her cloak still more tightly around her slender figure, she tripped hastily on her way, until reaching a belt of fine white sand, plentifully besprinkled with tiny shells, she stood before the expanse of ruffled sea, tossing, heaving, murmuring, rushing, retreating, moaning, mourning, then exultantly rising with a new force, only to fall the lower, as it lapped unavailingly the impenetrable, imperturbable shore. Looking round, Geraldine beheld her favourite stone,



now glittering from its watery bath, and hesitated as to whether it should once more be her seat. Prudence succumbed to past association, and she ensconced herself upon her mossy throne.

For a time Geraldine remained in silence, her feet tapping aimlessly on the shining pebbles that bestrewed her sandy floor. Lost in her own strange reverie, which, like a panoramic dream, brought facts and fancies, faces and forms, now in brilliant colouring, and then in shadowy cloud, across her mental vision, she sat gazing over the sea. A waterproof figure in sombre brown, a distant passer-by would scarcely have dissociated her from the rock upon which she rested. The time flew. A little gold watch ticked in its hidden nest at Geraldine's waist, but the moments were uncounted. What did *time* matter to her? It was only too long. The hours rolled on slowly enough whenever Geraldine watched them. She had become accustomed to this state of things. But a reverie was no uncommon luxury; a cheap one, it was true, but still a luxury,—sometimes very sad, sometimes rather glad. For there were times when, in her solitary broodings, the unconscious smile would play upon Geraldine's lips, as though her heart had found its bourne, but a movement, a leaf-fall, a hurried step, a thought, even, would dissipate it all, and as suddenly introduce the

dreamer to her pangs of sad reality; and starting from her place she would whisper—

“And here I am, after all, just poor Geraldine, and nothing else; and everything is as matter of fact as ever it was. But I like fairy-land—I confess *I do* like it!”

Seated on her rocky seat, however, Geraldine to-day was suddenly conscious of a break of light around her; and looking up, she saw the massive clouds parting. Between them there gleamed a broadening belt of crimson gold, that led as an avenue from the full-orbed sun, which descending in its glory to the horizon rapidly threw a fringe of purest light round each cloud edge. The scene was transformed. Distant hills started forth into distinct outlines of softened boldness. The sea became streaked with pink and amber lines; while a margin of tender blues passed away into regions of unseen haze on either side.

“It is sorry it stormed,” said Geraldine; “oh, how beautiful! how grand!”

Yes; Geraldine was right. The softened hues of the surrounding scene, once so angry, now tearful still, seemed to deprecate the past passions of each contending element.

“It is repenting,” Geraldine said; and her lips broke into one of those strange, solitary smiles, as she gazed most steadfastly into the scene of ever-

increasing beauty that so fearlessly seemed to invite her close inspection.

“*Repenting!*” she repeated. “How grand! I thought repentance was gloomy. But, oh! this is not gloomy. It is perfect—it is lovely!”

Her face was graver now. The sun was setting. Her face was buried in her hands; this was a favourite position; but it meant something more than usual this time.

“What a curious thing it is that such a thought should come into my mind now! I am an odd girl; I know I am; but still I must have my own thoughts.”

She raised her face again to look. The gold was passing into red; crimson tints were foretelling the ebb of this, as of all other delights. The sun in its passing glory was slowly going from its finished work; while the line so stern and hard, that needs must shut it from the beholder’s sight, was paling beneath the kingly advance.

“Repenting! I said,” Geraldine repeated, with a new eagerness in her face, as earnestly she strained her eyes forwards to stay each passing gleam. “O God!” she continued, “SO AM I!”

“What do I mean?”—the words came in broken phrases—“I’m not religious. I’m only just a girl—that likes—just what I *do* like—and that is all—and I don’t like cant. Impossible! I can’t bear

it. But *is* that 'repenting'?—I only want one thing, O God!—wilt Thou TALK to me! If *possible*—take the things that I think now—and do take pity upon me. I am not very happy—but to-day I am *repenting*. Yes, REPENTING," she repeated fervently. "That is all I know. I suppose I have been foolish, wicked, wasting time, discontented, evil in many ways, many more than I think. Is it possible that there is LIGHT IN THE CLOUDS for *me*?"

At this moment a sweet recollection of her MOTHER, that tenderly-loved mother, flashed over her heart. She had all the feelings, still strong and true, of a daughter—a bereaved daughter. On her fourteenth birthday Geraldine's mother had given her a golden locket, richly engraved with a double monogram. Their initials were intertwined. In it that feeble hand had inscribed a text. Through the delicate tracings of a pen, now silent, Geraldine had more than once found the words so clear, so unalterably distinct, and had read them with a bitter pang. For as the girl had learnt, already young, though there be but a step, and that a very short one, from "love" to "joy," there is also a very narrow pathway from love to pain. How closely mingled; how sadly interwoven! But instinctively now she reached her hand to the slender chain that encircled her throat, and unclasping it, the locket dropped into her lap.

"Precious darling!" she murmured; and reverently opening her treasure, she read—

"REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND."

And on the other side the words—

"THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST HIS SON CLEANSETH US FROM ALL SIN."

"Those were two of the texts mother was so fond of," Geraldine said to herself as she looked from the inspired lines to the writings of creative power. The two blended. "Mother used to talk to me about these things," she continued, still soliloquising, "but I don't remember well what she said. I wish I had paid more attention. Indeed, I wish everything different from what it is and has been. But perhaps that is wrong too! I am sure I do not know what is right. Everything is *puzzledom* with me."

One thing Geraldine's mother had often said to her—one touching entreaty had often lingered on her lips; but it had never been obeyed. Conscience spoke to-day. In the sadness and the sunset, and the thoughts and the reveries, all were acting on the young heart by the might of the Spirit of God.

Sadly Geraldine gathered up her simple garments, and wended her way home.

The "one thing" was the devotion of a single hour each day to the careful study of her Bagster



Bible. As Geraldine pursued her homeward pathway, she saw the dewy tree-tops glistening in the last ripples of a sunny ray. The old grey house appeared in the partings of tall leafy stems. On the doorsteps stood her father. She ran to meet him.

“Oh, you dripping child!” he said. “Where have you been?”

“On the seashore,” was the reply.

“I might have known it,” he answered; “and, judging by appearances, should have guessed that you had rather been *in* that watery element, than *beside* it.”

Geraldine glanced at her feet, removed her hat and shook it, and then asked—

“Where are you going?”

He only wanted a stroll, he said; so the two set off at a walking pace. Passing through the farm-yard into the garden, and round the edges of the beech copse, they chatted of various home interests—the fowls, the flowers, the forest trees. An order was given here, a comment there, and sundry inspections made. Then Geraldine and her father returned, to find a pleasant tea and crisp toast, and a hissing tea-urn awaiting them before the drawing-room fire.

But first Diena (for so her father always called her) must remove her damp cloak and hat, and



obediently she went, though reckless to a degree herself on these points. Descending the stairs, she peeped into a velvet bag that was on her arm. Its silver clasps opened to display a tiny Bible. In the midst of her easy prattle the sunset thoughts had sunk deeply into her heart, and were not to be so easily ousted.

While serving her father at the tea-table, Geraldine was startled to hear him say—

“THERE now! I have forgotten something after all!” as he struck the table sharply with his hand; “and to-morrow it will be too late.”

“What is it, father?” she asked.

“It is about one of the cottages,” he answered, “in the Park village. The bailiff has been complaining of the tenants, and he wished me to look in. To-morrow they get their dismissal. He says the house is in a shameful state, going to rack and ruin through their carelessness.”

“So they are going?” replied Geraldine.

“Yes! The sons are given to poaching too. The example is bad. And we do not require such tenants in these days, when there is a real demand among the respectable classes for good cottages. I ought to have called there,” he continued, “to satisfy Sinclair. But there is no *necessity* for any interference. I trust him so fully. But I’ll tell you what,

Diena! We will go next week and see the *in-comers*. I should like you to take an interest in the cottagers, so long as you do not catch smallpox or measles from the multitudinous children that always seem to be about."

"Very well, papa!" Geraldine replied, pleased at a new idea of any kind; and, kissing his forehead, she rang the bell for the removal of tea, and retired into the depths of an ottoman beside the little table, which supported a small reading-lamp, to renew her meditations.

In the meantime Mr. Grayson took up his newspaper, and was soon buried in the narrative of a debate.

These two were very different. They had scarcely a thought in common. They got on well together, talked politely and kindly when they met, and were thorough father and daughter in their manners to one another. But beyond a love which really made them inseparable outwardly, there was no tangible link. Conversation lost its charm beyond the first five minutes of its commencement. Then Geraldine listened languidly, with a visible effort to seem pleased; or if the flow of words were on her side, her father listened gravely, kindly, or with an easy smile upon his lips. Her subjects of interest were as far from his mental range "as those outer hills

were from these inner brooks,"—so Geraldine almost unconsciously felt,—and the almost unconscious thought pained her.

"There is such a distance between father and me," she often complained in her reverie thoughts.

But now she had another skein to disentangle, and another web to weave. Her thread had been broken by that hasty look at the locket and her subsequent return by the wooded path. Her resolution, then formed, had been retirement to her room for at least one half-hour before her tea-making duties began. But the walk had taken its place; and now she must not desert the drawing-room at this social hour. An hour of silence it always was. This was nothing unusual. To-night—the evening of a sad anniversary, to which her father could not, and she would not, refer—the favourite novel must be relinquished, and a better volume opened in its stead.

"Mother would like it!" Geraldine said sadly, as she dipped aimlessly into the first ready page.

Her eye fell upon these words—

"THEY HAVE FORGOTTEN THE LORD THEIR GOD. RETURN, YE BACKSLIDING CHILDREN, AND I WILL HEAL YOUR BACKSLIDINGS. BEHOLD, WE COME UNTO THEE; FOR THOU ART THE LORD OUR GOD."

They were in Jeremiah iii. 21, 22.

"Such dear, kind words!" Diena was thinking—

“CHILDREN! I like that. Oh! I wish I—*myself*—could have some nice, kind, precious words like these, or any others, all for myself. But the judgments and the punishments come to me, and the good things go to other people—to GOOD people, of course; and this is quite right.”

As she sat there in the recesses of her ottoman, buried in meditations, Geraldine suddenly remembered her locket. Its words, harmonising with her thoughts, engendered by the sunset hour, came softly back to her memory.

“The Bible says, Repent. And mother, beloved mother! said it. I always thought repentance must be gloomy. But to-day *the storm* was gloomy, the repentance was grand. Nothing could have been more beautiful. And then, what a scene of loveliness followed! Repentance and heaven are together.”

In something this fashion Diena pondered on, until, laying down her bag and book, she opened up the piano, and meandered into melodies, sweet and simple, but expressive. They formed an outlet for her thoughts, and reflected, more faintly perhaps, a little pleasure on the solitary man who coned his newspaper at a distance.

At this moment both occupants of the drawing-room were startled by the sudden report of a gun. It was outside the house, but very near it. Mr.

Grayson threw down his newspaper and was at the window instantly. Throwing open the lower sash, the father and daughter looked out into the grey light. A movement they could distinctly hear, as of some one vanishing through the trees. Mr. Grayson shouted, but only to receive as his reply the sound of a more distant shot. Then darting forward from the low grey terrace into the breadth of dewy lawn that lay at her feet, Diena, with her fleet footstep and airy tread, soon reached the upper part of the sloping wood. There she stood, intently hearing the soft, whispering ripple of sea-waves upon the invisible shore, broken by the crashing sound of a rapid human retreat amidst the undergrowth of wood and thorn that divided her from the long, lone sea expanse beneath. She returned with slow footsteps to the open window.

“*Father!*” she said, as she returned to the lighted room, her eyes dazzled by its prodigality of lamps, after her long, keen gaze into the nothingness of night, “he has escaped down into the woods, just over the shore. I heard him crashing through the branches. I wonder what was the matter!”

“Poaching, I should think,” was her father’s reply. “These ruffians are always about now, whether we hear them or not.”

“I don’t believe *this* man was poaching, for he



would not have come so near the house to shoot game."

"Well!" replied Mr. Grayson, 'you may keep your own theories, my child. But I must come to the bottom of the matter, somehow or other, and before to-morrow is out too."

"I wonder what father will do to him, *if* he finds him," was Geraldine's mental query; and after a little more discussion on the subject it was dropped, and Geraldine retired to her meditative post, while Mr. Grayson resumed his newspaper.

As Geraldine's youthful life had slowly expanded into womanhood, her heart had intertwined itself with tender clingings round each stem and twig of *life* that she saw around her. It was a curious existence, but a very simple one. The great bull in the farmyard fawned upon this girl as though it loved her, and she was the sole possessor of its peaceful instincts. The labouring men would say, as they saw Miss Grayson pass—

"A good job she's round to-day. The old gentleman he do be terrible and cross. *She'll* put him right."

Yes, it was quite true. Geraldine had an extraordinary influence where she chose to exercise it. Dogs, fowls, babies—all seemed to appreciate her.



And though she affected to despise the latter, their crowing, laughing reception of her if she entered by any chance a village cottage, invariably induced surrender on her part, and not seldom resulted in the gift of some toy or biscuit on her next visit.

“I am going out, father,” she used to say.

Were the answer to resolve itself into the query, “When are you coming in again?” the reply would be as frequently—“Oh, that I cannot tell;” and then the farm round would begin, every live creature coming in for its share of notice. A look into the hen-house, a pause at the cow-shed, a word with the gamekeeper. Thus Geraldine passed much of her country life.

Popular though she was, much of her existence was objectless. It was a poor life, after all. It might have satisfied some minds, but hers it could not satisfy. There were further and higher aims. There were restless wanderings that vainly strove to narrow themselves into circumstance’s rigid groove. The girl was growing—not in height, for she was a woman now, and she knew it—but in mental needs, in soul aspirings, and in thirsts hitherto unslaked, though often silenced, checked, and driven into some anterior depth where unseen they might abide until thought’s dart by some sudden touch brought forth the pain in all its poignancy. Then a novel was seized, and its sensational pages devoured with an

eagerness only too suggestive of a fathomless craving yet unsatisfied, or the drinking deeply of a sedative draught that left the powers listless, benumbed, disappointed,—a prey too ready to the apathy that Geraldine in her young life vigour hated. Yes, I say it advisedly, she *hated* this state of things. But it was her gilded fetter. She gloried in her idleness, while she loathed its pangs. Life was a strange mixture to her; and one of its unworded sadnesses lay in the fact that none knew her heart.

Geraldine's experiences of another side of life had not been large, but they had been varied. Sufficiently varied they were to give her a practical distaste for an immaterial something that she called "religion." Theoretically she approved this anomaly, which, after all, was the creation of her brain, because "mother" approved it. That sacred recollection was quite enough to throw a halo over the ugliest deformity. But that the deformity existed, even Geraldine in her tenderest moments could not deny.

What image did this strange unconfessed actuality present to her brain? It is difficult to describe; but its features were portrayed somewhat in this fashion:

Religion is a very dull thing.

Religion is a very disagreeable thing.

Religion is a very unpleasant thing.

Religion means reading a sermon every day, and two on Sundays, out of some dingy-looking book.

Religion means saying your prayers without your thoughts wandering at all.

Religion is doing good—and *there* came a sigh—  
“because I must be very irreligious, for I never do ANY good!”

Had you knocked at Mr. Grayson's study door, and asked him what *he* thought RELIGION meant, he would have replied—

Religion means doing as you would be done by.

Religion means paying your debts.

Religion means saying your prayers.

Religion means living a good life; and, in fact,

Religion means WHAT I DO, for I AM RELIGIOUS!

Geraldine might be pardoned for some of her conjectures on this subject, as her chief source of study hitherto had been the ordinary Bible of the non-Bible student—namely, the lives and characters of those who stood out rather more markedly than the rest of the professedly religious world, by their extra profession of a religious name. On these persons Diena had ever fixed her keen eye of pointed observation, that she might understand and know somewhat of their confessed mysteries. Just as we should look more closely at a strangely-dressed figure in the midst of a crowd than at the more quietly-garbed passers-by, or at the strangely-

blossomed shrub than at the sober-tinted tree; so Geraldine saw and watched and observed and reflected, and, even unwillingly sometimes, came to her own conclusions, which were not always flattering to the objects of her consideration. Poor girl! She could not help it. These were the open pages that lay before her, and her artless comment, rarely expressed in words, naturally followed on their perusal.

The panoramic views of "religious" life that had passed before Geraldine's eyes had hardly been faithful representations, if the truth were told. But as Geraldine rarely in these days studied her Bible for herself, they were the only records she had formed of a higher life. She compared notes, and the result became a tacit acknowledgment, "no religion for me!"

But her Heavenly Father had not left the lonely girl without friends. "A delicious invitation," as Geraldine called it, came at a most opportune moment from one of her mother's friends, whom Geraldine since her childhood had scarcely seen.

In a Devonshire valley, with its pastoral surroundings, picturesque villages, and not far-distant downs, there nestled a spreading, gabled, grey-roofed house, "something like a motherly dove," thus Geraldine wrote to her father those first impressions that with her were always more or less vivid, and

not unusually stamped with the impress of truth. In this friendly mansion Geraldine found Mrs. Callcott, her husband, and two daughters. Mr. Callcott was a regular country gentleman. His tastes were rural, his manners good-natured, and his income comfortable. Every year the family migrated to London for a time. There they had the advantage of meeting their friends, seeing and hearing the sights and doings of the day; but always in high contentment they returned to their "earthly paradise," as Katie (the second daughter) enthusiastically styled their country home.

It was fortunate for Geraldine that she was received with ardent cordiality, or the shyness of home solitude would have lingered long about her, and debarred her from the pleasures of family life, that from the first hours she was able to enjoy in the fascinating spot to which she had been welcomed.

There were rides and there were drives; there were boatings on the reed-bordered lake, where the wild birds called in strange, unmusical notes, and in sweeter, richer strains, for the friendly notice of the youthful oarswomen. There were walks, and scrambles, and rambles, heart-delighting to the solitary girl. Each day had its events.

But there came a morning when, after some feminine discussion in the sunny dressing-room, where Mrs. Callcott usually received her daughters for their



early reading, a knock sounded at Geraldine's door. Ursula came in.

"Mother says, perhaps you would like to come to our Bible-reading, Diena! We *always* read with mother. But you may come or not, as you please."

Geraldine had wound her shining hair into decorous coils about her head, and putting the finishing touch with her ivory brush, she replied—

"Of course, I should like to come, Ursie! EVERYTHING is nice here, so the Bible-reading will be nice."

The two girls went together to the dressing-room that opened from the green passage, and there they found Mrs. Callcott seated in her low chair by the "paragon window," as it was commonly called, from its perfect view over hill and dale and down, interspersed with a peeping village here and there, or overtopping spire.

They were reading in course that day the tenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. At the tenth and eleventh verses Mrs. Callcott explained—

"We see here that the Lord Jesus gave His life *for* us, and *to* us! Will one of you tell me," she asked, "the difference between these two propositions, or rather the different teachings they give us?"

Ursula answered, "'He gave His life FOR the sheep.' That means He died for them. He was crucified for sinners. He died instead of us."



“ And if we receive His gift we are saved. So it *was* FOR us, wasn't it, mother ? ” Katie continued.

“ Yes, darlings ! That is very clear, very plain, isn't it ? Thus Jesus, the Good Shepherd, gave His life FOR the sheep. But now He goes further still in His gift, ‘ That they might HAVE it more abundantly. ’ How can we say Jesus gives His life *to us* ? ”

As Mrs. Callcott spoke, she laid her hand on Geraldine's, looking into her eyes for the answer.

“ I don't know, ” said Geraldine, shaking her head. “ I never understand about these difficult things. ”

Mrs. Callcott smiled, and turned to her own girls.

“ I suppose He gave His life FOR us that we might be saved ; and He gives it TO us that we may be holy. Isn't that what it means, mother ? ”

“ Nearly, I think, ” Mrs. Callcott answered. “ And yet this is *hardly* the truth either ! Let us try again to get the question answered clearly in our minds, that we may never doubt about it again ; ” and then, in her own lucid way, Mrs. Callcott showed that the word “ salvation, ” or “ saved, ” meant not only deliverance from final punishment, but from the daily power of sin ; and that, to ensure this completed work, our Saviour had given His life for us, as our Surety or Sacrifice, thus by His precious blood atoning for our guilt before a holy God, and by the daily, constant gifts of His Holy Spirit,

and by His own blessed, indwelling Presence, *imparting* to us the righteousness He had already *imputed*.

These definitions, and much practical detail that followed, fell upon Geraldine's ears as a new sound.

"Then if we want forgiveness of our sins—pardon, peace, rest—on which of these gifts do we by faith depend?"

"On His life given FOR us on Calvary," Katie answered.

"And if we want to overcome our tempers to-day, sloth, neglect, or foolish conversation—*any* fault, in fact—what is our promised, certain remedy?"

"Most certainly," came the answer, "from the holy life of Jesus given TO us, straight from Himself, and by the power of His Holy Spirit. It is the only way we *can* do right."

"Well, mother, that sounds right; but do you think it *is* quite certain?—for each one of us, I mean?—or is it only for *some*?" the younger girl asked.

Geraldine smiled; for Katie was echoing her own thought.

"For to-morrow's reading, will you try to find me an answer to that question out of your Bibles?" Mrs. Callcott asked; and she wrote on a slip of paper—

"Yes; I believe that Jesus gave His life for

sinner; and therefore I believe He gave it FOR ME. But can I believe that He gives TO ME that same life which can indeed overcome sin?"

Prayer ended the reading.

"They are happy girls!" Geraldine thought. "I should NEVER do wrong if I had such a mother!"

The dressing-room hour solemnised to her the early part of the day; but soon her bright spirits rose again, and the reverie of her thoughts seemed to have passed away. A busy morning, a merry lunch, and then a changing of dresses for boating, serge and woollen cap, succeeded in natural, pleasant sequence to the stiffer routine of book and needle-work.

"Who will come in the boat with us?" the girls asked.

"You have not asked me," said their mother; "perhaps I would come if you were to invite me."

Of course a hearty invitation followed, and soon a basket filled with dainties, eggs, and crowned with flowers, was packed, and conveyed to the boat.

"For mother is going to see the lame girl at the other end of the lake," Ursula explained.

It was a pleasant afternoon, glowing sunlight rippled over the smooth water, the oars dashed up their glistening spray, and the low trees that steeped their roots in crystal, contributed from their leafy boughs musical variations; sun and song, and wood

and water, all combined in sweet perfection to tone into a new reality to Geraldine, as real as it was strange, the thoughts of her morning hours.

Standing out bold and red, with its clear outline against the topaz sky, and backed up by its soft screen of sloping shrubbery, stood the cottage for which the girls were making. Its interior was reached through a long line of cow-sheds; and consisted apparently of a spacious kitchen, out of which doors opened into further rooms.

It was a dairy farm. There were sounds of lowing cattle, and the tinkling sound of fast-filling milk pails, as they entered. Beside the lattice window, seated in an old-fashioned chair, her feet upon a wooden stool, sat Ellice Gray.

"Please sit down," she was saying. "I wish I could get you a chair, ma'am; and the young ladies. My sisters are milking; and my father is out. I am all alone"—then her face lighted up.

"I know," said Mrs. Callcott; "I quite understand. You were NOT *alone*!"

"Oh! it's a wonderful day," said Ellice. "Shall I tell the young ladies? or may be you would like me to say it another time!"

"Oh, no; do tell us!" was the answer; "what were you thinking about as we came in? I am sure it was something very nice."

" 'I KNOW IN WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED,' " continued

Ellice. "That was my verse, young ladies. It is a year to-day since mother died. We were in another farm then. It was in another country, far away from this. Mother liked our old home very much; but we were obliged to leave it. Father will tell you all the story some day. But we *had* to leave it, and it made her very sad. The Saturday came, and father said he would go on with the boys—my brothers, I mean; they are grown up."

Ellice interrupted herself with a smile—"But mother said she would wait till Monday. So I said I would stop too. I was just always the helpless cripple; and mother had to do everything for me. She liked to do it, she said. Nobody ever touched me but mother, and I often said I couldn't live without her. She was everything to me. I loved no one so well.

"On Sunday we were all alone. Mother said she was tired, and would rest. We sat there. It was very quiet. All we had was packed up and gone. Mother talked about 'rest.' She said she would like to *rest* now; but she liked home. She would not like a new place so well. It would all be strange. She looked very sad, and quiet too; and I got up, and leant on the bed, for she said she thought she would lie down a bit, and I kissed her, and told her not to mind; and said, 'You'll have me, mother, and father too, and the boys; and



there's Betty and Lucy too.'—So we talked. At last it was afternoon. We did not care for much dinner. We just had 'a bit.' Then the sunset came, and it threw a red light over mother's gown, and on her face. I got my crutch, and moved along to the window that looked over to the west. It *was* a sight. There was the sky all gold, and the fields and sheep, and the little garden all seemed to catch the red light that was shining down. When I saw the little garden it made me cry, for I'd had so many violets from it, and sweet roses too, and pinks and stock flowers—bunches of 'em—and now we were going away! It did seem sad!

"Then mother spoke—she said, 'HOME! yes! I'd like to rest; I'd like to be at HOME!'

"I went along the bit of carpet to the bed—it was firmer for my crutch. And mother's hands were very tight folded. I said, 'Please, mother, don't take on so. It will be all right perhaps after all. It won't be so bad may be as you think.' But she was sleeping. She did not answer. I heard the old clock striking six. It wasn't our clock. It was the church. I heard it from the tower. We always heard it when everything was quiet.

"Then it seemed very lonely, and rather sad; for mother slept a long time. 'Mother!' I said at last, 'won't you have some tea? You have been a time without;' and then I tried to wake her. 'Mother!'



I said, and kissed her. But! oh!—can I tell you, ma'am?—I shall never—no! never!” and the girl took a long, long look out of her latticed window into the broad vast depths of endless blue beyond. “I shall never forget that kiss! Mother was cold as marble. SHE WAS DEAD! I had lost my mother! precious, precious mother! She was gone. I suppose I fainted, for I know no more;—until it was evening, or perhaps the night, I don't know when it was, but I saw a candle, and there was somebody standing near, and there was another moving round; and I screamed.

“It couldn't be! No! it couldn't be! It couldn't be true—that dreadful dream—Mother was DEAD! ‘Oh! tell me, sir,’ I said, for I saw the minister was there, ‘do tell me she's better now. Poor soul! she got so tired; and then the sunset came, and she had a sleep!’

“The old minister had a book. It was the Best Book. I know it now. But I didn't care then. I was mad. They said I raved. I hated God. I hated His words, and works, and ways. I hated all He did. He hated me, and He was cruel. . . . And then the old man read. I don't know what it was; but it seemed to make me quiet. He held my hand. I couldn't cry. No! not a tear! It all was very, very dark. My heart was broke. I know it now, and see and understand. A cottage woman stayed—and the long night went on.

“Then morning came, and the birds sang. There was a fire in the grate. But I saw no light. I hated the day. My eyes were closed; and then the minister came again. He sat very quiet. He did not speak a word; and then I looked in his face. He said ‘My child!’ and then my tears came. I cried; I cried. ‘Weep on, my child,’ he said, ‘stay not those tears. They will ease that poor heart-grief of thine.’ And so he sat, and thought, and talked, and read, and stayed a long, long time.

“Then father came, and brothers. Oh! it *was* a weary time. The funeral day! it was all rain everywhere, and heavy hanging clouds. And they all went, but me. Me! who loved her best! Yes! I stayed at home. Then the minister came in, and he said—

“‘Look at me, Ellice. Those poor sad eyes of yours will shine one day. Yes! my child! they will. Believe me now. You will know it soon. GOD WILL BE MORE TO YOU THAN YOUR MOTHER.’

“Yes! so he spoke; and I heard his voice! but that was all. Then he read this verse—and he marked it here in my Bible.”

From her basket, filled with darned and undarned stockings, the girl drew a well-worn Bible. “Will you read it, ma’am? I would like to hear it from *you!*”

Mrs. Callcott read—

“AS ONE WHOM HIS MOTHER COMFORTETH, SO WILL I COMFORT YOU ; AND YE SHALL BE COMFORTED IN JERUSALEM.”

“It’s been true,” Ellice continued. “I can testify it’s true. It’s been true for ME ; and I say so to-day. He does all for me now, instead of mother. . . . He’s my all in all. I couldn’t tell you everything, not all at once. But oh ! it’s wonderful. Seeing you just to-day, when I didn’t expect to see any one, has just opened my heart, and some of my story has come out. I don’t tell it to everybody. No ! I can’t. . . . I KNOW IN WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED. That’s my text.”

At that moment the door opened, and a stalwart, grey-haired farmer came in ; but looking round the group, and seeing tearful eyes and grave faces, he removed his hat, and went out again.

“That’s father !” Ellice explained. “Perhaps he guesses what we have been talking about ; and he can’t bear to hear it. But he’s wonderful good and patient. Then there’s my brothers, too, and my sisters. We are all close united. Mother’s call made a bond that I think’ll never break. We all try to be a comfort to father. And the boys—I mean my brothers—they work very hard ; and they’re always steady. They’re kind to me, too,—rare and kind.”

A tall, buxom young woman, with handsome

features, dark eyes, and highly coloured cheeks, now entered, carrying a tray with four glasses on it, and a huge jug of milk.

“Perhaps the ladies would take some refreshment,” she said, and disappeared again.

The visit was over. Few parting words were said; but a promise exacted and given of an early return, accompanied by the usual book-loan that the boat journey implied.

But Geraldine’s heart was full. It was breaking. She could scarcely repress her tears. Mrs. Callcott saw it; and she sent the girls to a farther part of the lake, on one more cottage errand, and putting her hand on Geraldine’s shoulder, she said—

“Sit down here, darling, beside me; and let us have a talk. God sent you to me; and so we must be friends.” Geraldine buried her face in her hands, and sobbed.

Then it all came dropping out—the past—the present—the locket—its hard message—the sunset light upon it, by the shore—her mother’s tender memory—her solitude—her weariness—her lonely heart—her rebel ways in those governess times, when she had refused control; and now so longed for *any one*—any one! to talk to.

When Ursula and Katherine returned, they found a piece of paper on the bank, where their mother and Geraldine had rested. On it was written—

“Call for us at the rock pier; and be very gentle with Diena, for her heart is sad to-night.”

That evening ended with a long, late conference between Geraldine and one who now was revealing Himself to her as her SAVIOUR! Blessed girl! she had found the truth! She had sought, she had wanted, she had received!

“AND TO AS MANY AS RECEIVED HIM, TO THEM GAVE HE POWER TO BECOME THE SONS OF GOD.

“AND IF SONS, THEN HEIRS; HEIRS OF GOD, AND JOINT HEIRS WITH CHRIST.”

. . . . .  
Five years past. In the meantime Ursula had married. Katie and Geraldine were firm friends. Annual visits were interchanged between Crofton Manor and Suniscourt House. Gradually Katie's energies flowed into fresher sources, and were entranced with the variety they found therein; as well as with the higher nature of their new occupations. The farm-yard and the garden were not disregarded, nor were they forgotten, but they were now the recreation of Geraldine's life, rather than her sole employment. She still cared for the pugnacious bull; but she often said she should prefer him if he had but a soul!

The cottages were loved as never before, in her memory of their inhabitants. They were visited earnestly, arduously, assiduously. Mr. Grayson



entered into new life as his interests were drawn forth in those of his child. "The lame girl did wonders for me — through God's GOODNESS!" Geraldine used to say.

But the home she was then visiting, and had since visited, had done as much, and more, for her in the way of magnetic attraction to the higher, holier life, the bliss of which she was now tasting.

Miss Tarlington had been an associate of earlier days—having filled the post of governess when Geraldine was but a child. Now, she had gradually refilled her old position on different terms, and was in many respects a comfort to Diena; though sometimes Geraldine ventured a private wish to her father that "Tartie cared more for the poor."

"It will come!" said Mr. Grayson. "You did not always care for the cottagers! did you?"

"Oh no! father. But she is older than I am! alas!"

"Never mind. Such interests are not confined to one age or another," was the reply. "I believe Tartie will like them some day."

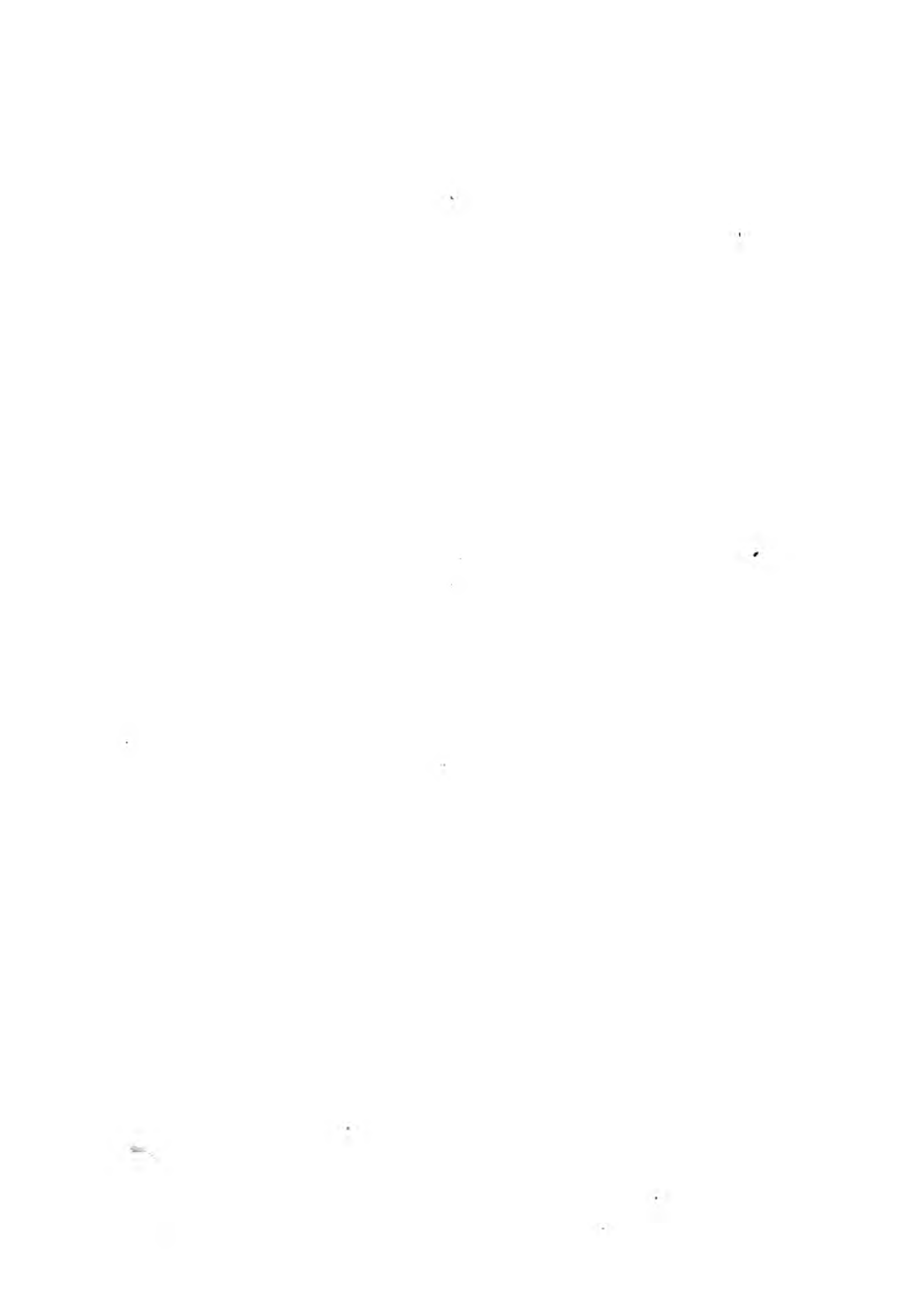


## CHAPTER IV.

### Enterwoven.

“ Her clothing is of wrought gold.”—PSALM xlv. 14.

We interweave a web.  
We work, and wind, and plan,  
And think upon it.  
God takes it in His hand  
And turns it round,  
Withdraws the favourite thread,  
And smiles, and sets His seal anon,—  
That we may think again,  
And think anew,  
And see His mind within it.





AFTER the mothers' meeting, Diena and her friend walked up the hill. They were comparing notes, discussing difficulties, but Katie was taking the part of listener, when she suddenly broke into Geraldine's sentence by saying—

“I believe mother would say, TRUST!”

“Of course she would. I know that too. But you see I want some one to help me in the mechanical work. I *can* trust for the spiritual. As for the evenings at the Coffee-house, I think I do better alone. I certainly never require any one there. The men are less shy when I am alone with them; and indeed there is nothing to do there, except to entertain them, as one entertains guests in a drawing-room, though I confess with much more ease and pleasure, and with much more freedom in bringing forward the great, all-important subject. But for the mothers' meeting, I do foresee difficulties.”

“Is there no one you can ask to help you?” was Katie’s inquiry.

“No! not one. Tartie is hardly suitable; and I don’t like to bother her too often. There’s Mrs. Menzies, who lives in that rather smart little house with the iron gates; but I don’t feel sure that she would be very earnest about it; so she might chill us, and do more harm than good. Then there’s Miss Cartwright. But they *say* she is—well! it does not seem very kind—but they say she is a gossip.”

“There used to be a little fair-haired woman, quite young, who helped in the singing in church. Wouldn’t she come?” Katie asked.

“I don’t know very much about her,” Geraldine answered; “but I don’t think she is very suitable either. However, I have not an idea that if these people *were* everything that was desirable, that I should be able to persuade them to help me. They have all got their own little interests, and their amusements, too, I imagine. How do I know that they would care?”

“Mother would say, God can make them—each, or all, for that matter—suitable, and interested too. He can find *no* difficulty in raising up some one to help you. He must love you better than I do, darling! and I am sure I would do *anything* to help you,” Katie replied.

“Do you think you could come over *next* Monday,—just for once?” Geraldine asked. “It would be so delightful.”

“Next Monday, and every Monday, while I am here,” was the reply, “and we will pray earnestly;—by the time I go away, no doubt some one will turn up who will be perfection,” Katie said. And there the matter dropped. Geraldine heaved a sigh of relief.

But the next instant she had darted from her friend’s side into one of those concatenations of crooked houses that seemed specially to be a feature of Retcham in Norton architecture. It was useless for Katie Callcott to look round in wonderment. Her friend had vanished.

She presently emerged, however, from another end of the irregular pile, flushed and out of breath.

“I am so sorry!” she said. “But if you only knew how I wanted to see him. For several evenings he has not appeared at the Coffee-room; and then I suddenly beheld him turn the corner into that alley; and I could not lose the opportunity.”

“Who is ‘*he*’? I could not think what had become of you!” Katie remarked.

“*He* is Bat Rowan. He is a certain young fellow that comes to the Rooms. He used to be a dreadful pugilist, quite notorious in the town for

his ways—not of the best. But, poor thing, he has been so different lately. The singing took his fancy one night; and then he joined my class for rough lads”——

“Oh! so you have a class for *lads* now, do you? You are getting on, Diena!”

“Of course I do,” said Geraldine; “how could I help it, when they are so anxious to come! But I saw Rowan just at that moment, and asked him where he had been. He says he has been working in those quarries on the road to Arlington Towers. He says his father lives there, and has been ‘on the drink’ lately, and he has had to go and take his place.”

“Oh dear! oh dear! how dreadful it all is!” Katie chimed in. “Our people are all so quiet and good, at Crofton. We never hear any of these things, or very rarely.”

“I expect it is because you never go to the really bad ones in the town. You keep to your own respectable people, and the farmers, like that delightful family by the lake. If you were to go a little further, or go out in the evening, you would see plenty of it, I fear. Or it *may* be, that this place is worse than your neighbourhood. I know there is sin, and there is sorrow too, enough to keep one busy all day long here.”

“And your father likes you to see the people;



and does not mind your knowing all these dreadful things?"

"Oh dear no! of course not! He says if there *is* the misery, it is our bounden duty to try and relieve it. He is dreadfully shy about talking to them himself, but he delights in knowing that I do it. He did not *always* care so much for their troubles and wants, as he does now; but still I think that, in former days, when I was idle, it grieved him, and he would rather I had taken a little more interest in the tenants, at any rate."

By this time they had reached the door. A cheery welcome awaited them. Scraps of news passed from one to another. Mr. Grayson had had his ride, seen the new drinking fountain erected, crossed the park by the far plantation, and interested himself in one or two alterations that were being made. Tartie had gone in the direction of the shore, evidently having been very much inclined to look up Geraldine and her "mothers" on the way back, but "thought it would all be over," and so desisted.

The time flew, and a short time it was! for soon the parting must take place. But it was not made without the exaction of a solemn promise from Geraldine, that one day in the end of that week she was to lunch with her friend at Arlington Towers.

Mr. Grayson and his daughter were to ride over, and have a good day at Sir Herbert Courtenay's.

"Then you will see Aunt Gwendoline," Katie remarked, "she says she *never* sees you."

All was settled. Katie had gone; and the trio settled down to their usual avocations,—books and work and writing. Tartie usually retired early, and then Geraldine and her father were left alone. The evenings never palled upon the quiet inmates of that comfortable room. One or two *devoted* nights—devoted to a labour of faithful obedience—now consecrated the remaining portion of the week. It was no longer *all* luxury, *all* self-pleasing. Hours and efforts were consecrated to the commanded work of winning souls.

"Father, we must give something of ALL we have to God, who has given SO MUCH for us. His well-beloved Son He did not withhold! How can we withhold our time from HIM?"

Her father tacitly agreed. Sometimes he spoke his approval, sometimes he looked it; but always it was there.

"I should have no pleasure in my work, if father did not like it," Geraldine used to explain.

As they sat and talked or read, or Diena wrote her notes—for a good deal of writing devolved upon her—the quiet of a peaceful afternoon and evening were broken in upon by the slow rising of a windy

storm. Dark clouds seemed to chase each other from a distant horizon into the moon-lighted vortex above. At first it scarcely caused an interruption to their quiet avocations, but as ten o'clock approached, Mr. Grayson looked from the terrace window. His comment was—

“A stormy night! and here comes the rain, I fancy. But the wind is the worst. Are there any ships? Look, Diena, your eyes are better than mine.”

“Oh no, father. I can't see anything but those dark clouds, and the pale moon darting her light through them. But the sea is dashing up grandly on the shore.”

They stood in silence for a moment, then the bell rang for prayers. As the servants came up, Geraldine turned over the leaves of her hymn-book until she had found the grand old hymn—

“Eternal Father, strong to save.”

“Let us sing this to-night,” she said. And it was touching to hear the voices raised unitedly in supplication and acknowledgment to the “God of air, and earth, and sea.” It was a very hearty little gathering. All sang, all seemed to feel what they sang.

“The wind seemed to hush when we were singing,” the old cook said afterwards.

But as the night wore on, and when all were

safely in their peaceful chambers, the wind rose loudly, the window panes rattled, the sharp gusts brought hail and rain in distinct bursts against the lattice of Geraldine's favourite oriel.

In the morning the storm, though somewhat abated, had not ceased.

"It has been a terrible night!" Mr. Grayson said. "My child, you were not frightened?"

"Not exactly frightened, father," was Geraldine's reply; "but one could not help thinking of the people,—those fragile roofs and tumble-down chimneys! and then the sailors in the little ships,—altogether it was a solemn thing, wasn't it?"

"It was. And the danger is not over yet, I fear," Mr. Grayson answered. "The sea waves are still high."

"So they are," said Geraldine. "And see, there is a distressed ship! Do look at it! The men are trying to reef in the sails. How it is tossing backwards and forwards; I wonder if they are really in trouble."

"I fear so," said Mr. Grayson, steadying his telescope on its stand. "You are right. I think I'll go down to the beach and see what is going on, and hear if there is any news about last night."

A hurried mouthful or two of hot coffee, and some hastily-cut sandwiches of bread and butter, sufficed for that morning's meal, as Geraldine and

her father hurried down through the wood to the nearest point of shore. There was a coast-guard flagstaff there, and on the eminence that it crowned a crowd of eager spectators were watching.

Intent though they were, the people accorded Mr. Grayson and his daughter a silent greeting, while all watched together the distressed ship.

The wind had already caught the sails, and ere they could be reefed had torn them into ribands. A sad sight it was!

"There ought to be a life-boat here," said Mr. Grayson. "This is a sad piece of business indeed."

At this instant one vast shudder ran through the staggering ship, and she heeled over. A cry rang out from the crowd. Boats were instantly filled. Strong men stripped themselves of their jackets and flung themselves into the water.

Sick at heart, Geraldine *could* not look. She turned her back, and slowly wended her way home. Then changing her mind, she ran back again.

"Can I do anything to help, father?" she asked.

"No, my child, nothing," he answered.

Raising her voice, Geraldine shouted—

"There's *everything* at the house. You know where to come."

And the girl ran. Her quickest speed brought her to her own hall-door, just in time to see the group of anxious servants gazing from a stone



balcony upon the appalling scene beneath; and to hear a shout—

“They are *all* in the water!” responded to by—

“No, they are not! There are two clinging to the masts!”

“Oh! what a terrible thing,” said Geraldine, burying her face in her hands.

“God! save *some* of these poor fellows! Let me help them, if I can!”

Then entering the house, and summoning the servants, she said—

“Get hot water ready, and blankets. Have one or two of the beds warmed. Who knows? God may give us something to do for *Him* to-day!”

Tartie was summoned for a rapid exploration of the medicine stores, from whence sundry bottles of reviving cordial were extracted, and placed in readiness for expected emergencies.

“We may be wanted to help, or we may not,” Geraldine said; “but it is well to be ready.”

Just as once more Geraldine had prepared to return to the scene of excitement on the beach below, she heard the tramp of footsteps—and voices too, there were. Above them all she heard her father’s, loud and clear—

“The side-door, my men! Straight ahead. Don’t stop. That way.”



Geraldine crossed the corridor and entered the passage, and as she did so she met the sad procession.

On a rough plank of wood, supported by four men, lay a pale, dark form, loosely covered with her father's coat. Dripping hair, and sternly set immovable features, told of life but nearly gone. Geraldine's preparations had not been in vain. The lower spare room was quickly in requisition. Between warmed blankets the unconscious form was placed, the doctor put in charge, and rapid restoratives administered.

"We knew he'd be took in here," the men said respectfully, as they shook out the water from their dripping shoes on the outside doorstep.

The strong-minded person of the household was Miss Tarlington. No one had ever known her shed a tear. But as Geraldine darted round a corner to satisfy some urgent demand from the doctor, she unwittingly flew into that good lady's arms.

"O Tartie!" she said; and the tone expressed worlds.

Tartie was in tears! Weeping as helplessly, as hysterically as a child, she had to be persuaded into an arm-chair, and placed under the protection of the upper housemaid, who would have done her best to soothe and relieve, had not her patient beat a retreat in spite of all expostulations, and silently

striving to master her rare and unusual emotion, glided through a curtained door, not generally opened, from whence she startled the watching group by uttering under her breath the words—

“WILL HE DIE?”

“O Tartie dear! do go away,” Geraldine coaxed.

But Tartie wouldn't go. There she stood; gazing on a transition from death to life. Slow and solemn it was indeed, and many days the awaking lasted. But that there was distinct progress the bystanders—each of whom was, in his or her own way, a devoted nurse—could distinctly observe.

It was a remarkable time. Every several power of sick-room watching was developed. Every inhabitant of the house was, in a smaller or greater degree, a sharer in the labours of love that sought the sick man's recovery.

Of the perishing crew one or two had been rescued, but none had sunk so low in loss of vital power as to demand the ardent, earnest devotion of the Suniscourt household. Geordie Macdonald, as his name showed, was a northern seaman. His gratitude was very silent, but none the less real.

When the parting day came, Geordie's farewell was somewhat in this fashion—as he twirled his cap round on the top of his extended fingers, looking down as he spoke—

“I’m sure you’ve done”—and then there was a pause—“I wish I could”—another pause—“it’s too much”—and then the sturdy fellow put his hand on his chest, as though he would choke down the feelings that threatened to master him altogether.

“But”—he interrupted himself—“I want to thank the lady that sat up at nights with me.”

It is needless to say that this was the wonderful Tartie, who suddenly through the agency of that marvellous wand—SYMPATHY—had found her powers called into a new channel, and who declaring emphatically that she was the strongest person in the house, for she “never knew an ache or an ail,” insisted upon the usually uncoveted privilege of night-watching.

“Oh yes! of course you shall say good-bye to her,” said Geraldine.

Miss Tarlington was summoned to receive in person the strangely short-worded thanks that *would* not come properly from those deep chest-reservoirs of the Scottish sailor.

“Most affecting it was,” said Geraldine afterwards to her father. “I never saw such a touching parting.”

As the trio that had proved themselves his true friends escorted their parting guest out of the door he had entered in such prostrate condition so

recently, he turned round, removed his sailor cap from his dark locks, and gazing admiringly and lovingly from turret to turret of the great grey pile of building where he had been housed and nursed, he said, looking at Geraldine—

“You have *saved* me!—Sir, you’ve been good to me!” and the sailor extended a brawny hand.

Mr. Grayson took it, and as he did so, he looked at Geraldine to be his mouthpiece.

She took the hint, and answered—

“Yes, Macdonald; and we *are* so thankful! More thankful and glad than we can tell, but you *know* what we want most. We want YOUR SOUL to be saved. That is what we want now. But you have got the little Bible; and you have got our prayers; and you have the Lord Jesus ALWAYS beside you.”

“Yes, miss, always. I believe that; and I shall *never*, NEVER forget all you have told me; and your prayers by my bedside; and the reading too. And I say, sir, if ever I pass this way again, I’ll look up at this house and say, There’s my HOME! That’s the blessed place where I was SAVED!”

One more farewell, and he was gone. As they turned into the house again, Tartie remarked—

“What a fine fellow he is! I never admired a sailor so much before!”

“Oh, you dear innocent creature!” said GERAL-

dine, bestowing a kiss upon Tartie's forehead. "Don't you know the reason of that? It is not because poor Geordie is superior to all the other sailors—and I am sure you have seen plenty of them; it is because YOU HAVE BEEN KIND TO HIM! *That* is the secret."

Not many days after the friendly walk, Mr. Grayson and his daughter rode over to the Towers. On their way thither, Geraldine dismounted at the Quarries, when she easily found the abode to which she had been invited. It was a miserable tenement indeed; and in it she recognised the grey-haired woman who had invited her at the close of the last mothers' meeting.

"It's a poor place," she said, dusting a chair; "but I thought I'd like to ask you to come this way. It seems dulsome like, never seeing no one round here."

"Does no one ever call here?" Geraldine asked.

"No one," the woman emphatically replied; "except them as had better keep away."

Geraldine was silent, and the inuendo was in some degree explained.

"Perhaps you don't remember, miss. It were a long time ago. We had one of Mr. Grayson's cottages. But we had to leave. The bailiff, he said there was a rough lot about, and one thing or



another. I was sorry. It never won't seem the same anywhere else. You see," she whispered, drawing closer, "it's my man. He was the one; and then there was Alfred. He was but a boy and liked his fun"—

"Mrs Morton! I think you had better not tell me any more about this. You know it is no concern of mine. I did not know that you were the same family that we turned out of one of our cottages five years ago. I remember it quite well now; and am quite sure it was right to do so. My father wishes to have his cottages well tenanted. Of course if there are families who live godless lives, and set a bad example, they do immense harm to the other families. A property is just the same as a house. We must not have wickedness going on in our home, nor may we allow it in our houses."

"Oh no, miss. It's not that," Mrs. Morton replied; "I am not thinking to get back again. But it was what you said at the meeting. It seemed to go right home to me, it did; and I thought maybe you would come round this way, and read a bit sometimes. This do seem a God-forsaken place."

"Then I will read you a verse or two now; for Mr. Grayson has gone to see how the blacksmith is. He has been ill lately; and in five minutes I must be going, for I have to walk up the lane."



Then Geraldine read the closing verses of the 62nd chapter of Isaiah. "When the Lord Jesus came upon earth, this was the cry, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make ye His paths straight.' Will you let Him come into your heart," she said, "and *take away* the evil things that are grieving Him so much now, and making you so unhappy too? . . . He sends you a very glad message too. He says, 'Behold, thy salvation cometh!' Isn't that good news? It is for you, dear friend. Listen, 'AND THEY SHALL CALL THEM, THE HOLY PEOPLE, THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD; AND THOU SHALT BE CALLED, SOUGHT OUT, A CITY NOT FORSAKEN.'"

As Geraldine entered into her simple explanations, and prayed earnestly and believingly for the entrance of light into that dark home, the poor woman wept.

Geraldine told her of the sailor, and said, "We were *so glad* that his life was saved; and oh! how the Lord will rejoice over *you*, if *you* are saved!"

Thus they parted, Geraldine determining to return soon for a visit to Rowan's father, and another to the poor seeker she had just left.

As she rejoined her father, she reminded him of the expelled family.

"I remember them well," he said; "and a very good riddance they were. Nothing could have been worse than the state of their house physically

and morally. And every such expulsion is not only a benefit to the surrounding cottagers, but a duty on our part. You remember that shot that was fired, the night before they left. Cartwright said, as perhaps you recollect, that the shot near the windows was a parting token of ill-will from the father and son. Both old and young Morton were about the place that night."

"There are lots of young Mortons, father," said Geraldine. "I saw them just now. The most abject, ragged-looking creatures they are. There is quite a tribe of them."

"And they live in the quarries now, do they?"

"Yes. I want to get hold of that bad son, if I can. Not back to the cottage, I don't mean that; for I quite think that the further away they are the better. But I must try and get the family into better ways, if I can."

"You certainly are a brave aggressor," said Mr. Grayson, as they rode along. "You by no means confine your efforts to the *good* people."

He was smiling; but Geraldine answered in grave earnest—

"I have two kinds of affection, father. One I bestow upon the *good*; and the other on the *bad*! And I believe that is Scriptural, though it seems to come to me naturally. In fact, I suppose it is the

NEW NATURE. But I must foster and not quench it. Is not this so?"

Soon they arrived at the Towers gates, and soon were cantering up the long avenue.

Katie received Geraldine at the door, and after a few minutes chat conveyed her to Lady Gwendoline's boudoir, while Sir Herbert took possession of Mr. Grayson.

Lady Gwendoline was a delicate, lady-like, refined woman. Well-dressed, pleasantly mannered, she struck one at first sight as fascinating. But the lap of luxury is not always the best of schools; and in it Lady Gwendoline had learnt a variety of lessons. Geraldine's eyes were at first betwitched by the æsthetic interior of the boudoir. Many of its decorations were truly artistic. Others again were extravagant, and suggested a lavish expenditure, with a proportionately small result, as far as pleasant effect went. It was evident that whatever the result might be to an outside observer, to the habitual inmate and possessor of the room, there was but little charm. She took Geraldine's notes of admiration, expressed at intervals, with calmness. This perhaps was natural; but when details were mentioned, and Lady Gwendoline began to express her own running comments upon them, the said comments were to this effect:—

"Do you like that screen? I can't say that I do."

"Oh! Aunt Gwenaie," Katie exclaimed, "you used to say that you were so fond of it!"

"Did I? Well, I suppose I have got tired of it now; for I certainly don't admire it. . . . Oh yes! the china arrangements on velvet would be very pretty, if the velvet were of a different colour. I don't like that bronze shade. It sets everything off so badly."

The conversation was changed to the storm of Tuesday and its terrible consequences, and the invalid sailor of whom Katie had already heard by letter.

"Oh! you heroic creature!" exclaimed Lady Gwendoline, holding up her white, ringed hands. "You do such wonderful things. How *could* you have courage to take that man into the house? And then he might have died. How dreadful *that* would have been!"

"We are so glad that he recovered, that I don't think we have ever considered the other possibility since the morning that he was brought in unconscious, when we really did think he would not live," Geraldine answered.

"But Kitty has been telling me about you. She says you read to poor women; and you teach ragged boys; and do all sorts of wonderful things," Lady Gwendoline continued, with a slight tremor. "I can't think how you can have courage to do

such things. And do they like it? or do they come because they think they *must*?"

The two girls smiled. In their minds the processes of seed-sowing, and the interest of watching for results, were so simple, not to say natural, from even a short experience, that they could not, in spite of Lady Gwendoline's languidly graphic expressions, realise that this immense amount of "courage" was required for dealing with the wants and sins of those around them; nor had it ever occurred to Geraldine before, that any one could accuse either themselves or their village neighbours of *making* one another do this, or that! It certainly was ridiculous, and a very foundationless supposition.

Here Katie interposed—

"But, auntie, the people IMPROVE! They become altered. Their hearts get changed. Diena can't make them do *that*! One person may lead a horse to the water, but ten cannot make him drink. We acknowledge that Geraldine leads these poor souls to the Living Fountain, but certainly *she* cannot make them 'drink, and live!'"

"Well, I suppose not. But we are getting very mystical in our conversation. I never can go into these consummate depths, or mysteries. They are quite beyond me. Mrs. Prescott is coming to lunch to-day. She is very religious. She does a great deal of good; and really her floral decora-



tions are quite wonderful. You must have some talk with her. She has just worked some tapestry in the Arabesque style, for that little gem of a church that we built lately, near their house,—an altar cloth, and stools. She has made them all herself. Most wonderfully worked they are.”

Lady Gwendoline’s ideas were rather hazy on these subjects. She thought everybody, except criminals, was “very good;” and that all were right in their own way. Everybody meant well. And in fact people were all much alike, and opinions also. She had no definite outlines in her composition. To her there was no *black*, and no *white*. Everything was *a little grey!* Thus she lived. No midnight darkness; no brilliant sunshine. And when she had guests with her, or was enjoying her butterfly existence in society, this neutral state suited her very well. But at other times blank phases of discomfort came over her, which she called ‘depression.’ Nor were these conditions uncommon.

“It was unfortunate,” her husband said; for the result of this state of matters was hardly a satisfactory one to her household. She saw very little of her children. They lived in bare-walled nurseries and lofty schoolrooms. “Mamma” was a sort of show person to them. They saw her when they were nicely-dressed, twice a day, for a



few minutes. They never unburdened their little hearts to her. The servants and governesses with whom they lived, of course duly instilled into the childrens' minds the sad instruction on any occasion, "not to tell." And they were silent. Of course Lady Gwendoline had not an idea of this; nor, to tell the truth, would she have cared very much if she *had* heard it. She considered herself too delicate for the care of children.

"I wish Lady Gwendoline were happy! like some of our dear mothers!" Geraldine remarked, when she was alone with Katie. "I don't think she *is* happy; though she has got almost everything that the world can give her."

"I am certain she is not," Katie replied. "Sometimes she is in a better mood than the one you have seen her in this morning. And then she is more willing to talk and listen. But Mrs. Prescott! she really is very trying. She is quite *full* of religion; but it is the most wearisomely empty thing one ever knew. There is just as evidently no satisfaction in *her* life."

Perhaps Kate was right, perhaps she was mistaken; my readers shall judge.

Mrs. Prescott was at luncheon. An engaging woman she was, pleasant, agreeable. Her lilies, her wreaths, her reredos, the new cross, a stained window—thus her graver thoughts ran. At

luncheon she hardly liked to talk much on those subjects, but alone, if you became at all intimate with her, you would easily have discovered her feeling as to *religion*. Had Mrs. Prescott, sweet and lovely as she was, put her ideas on this subject into words they would have been—

Religion is a beautiful church. An ornate service is indispensable. Attentive observance of every sacrament, and diligent use of all aids to devotion.

Religion is giving alms to the poor.

Religion is veneration for the Church; veneration for the clergy.

Lady Gwendoline would have said—

Religion is not telling lies; and not stealing.

Religion is being kind, and asking people to dinner that I don't care about very much.

Religion is going to church on Sunday;—so I am religious.

The afternoon was soon over; and Geraldine returned with her father to her own bright home.

“How vapid the conversation was at lunch!” he remarked, as they rode through the gates. “All that sort of thing strikes me as so empty.”

“That is what I think, father,” she answered. “It is all like a counterfeit. One thing is certain. When one has tasted the *actuality*—that is, has learnt personally to know the Saviour, and the realities of a *present salvation*, His constant presence

and teaching, and His most tender love, one finds that all those attentions devoted to the external tend much more to draw *away* our souls from abiding converse with HIMSELF, than to bring us into renewed Communion with Him. That is *my* feeling, very strongly; and one finds it to be Scriptural, as well as the language of many leading Divines in the Church of England. I have been looking into many of those delightful old books in our library lately. And it is as evident that this attention to external rites, and 'aids to devotion' as they are called, are quite *new*. They are an innovation. They do not belong inherently to our good old Church."

"Are they not something like the gilded cupolas that our neighbour, Mr. Noveltime, has put upon the turreted stables facing the grand old Castle of Mainbanes. Of course, to us, it is an eyesore, because it is not *in keeping*, as we say; and truly, these new adornments are not in keeping with the massive magnificence of our Liturgy, built as it is on the Truth, and nothing but the Truth."

"But, father, you know what the answer would be, if you were to say that to Canon Fremington, the Curate Mr. Dalton, or to Mrs. Prescott herself!"

"What would they say?"

"Simply this, that you were an old-fashioned Christian, and that you had not advanced into the

clearer light of our present age. They would say, too, that you evidently liked a dirty, untidy, cobwebby old building, by some extraordinary deformity of taste, better than one in conformity with the highest rules of ecclesiastical architecture, and so adorned as to lead the thoughts and feelings into an atmosphere of reverent devotion."

"My dear child!" said Mr. Grayson, scarcely able to suppress a smile—"you are too well up in these matters for me. I only know what I like, and what I don't like, in our Church of England worship; but as to arguing on the subject, it is not in my line."

"I know that, dearest father, and I am sure you are right. For argument is indeed of little or no use when people are already convinced; but it says in 1 Peter iii. 15, 'Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;' and really one gets so often and so unexpectedly into conversation on these topics, that I feel it is well to be prepared, that one may answer in wisdom. A foolish or thoughtless answer on such an important subject might do far more harm than good."

Mr. Grayson was responding with his grave, fatherly smile to this last remark of his daughter's, when they drew near the opening of the lane to the

gravel pits. Geraldine reined up her horse and said—

“I think I want a counteracting remedy for this afternoon’s griefs ; and if you have no objection, I should like to go again to the pits, and try to see Rowan, and one or two more of the cottagers. If you will leave the groom with me, he can hold the horse, or better still, he can take it home, and I will walk. There is a delightful short cut through the fields and gardens, which will avoid the dusty road, and bring me home in good time for dinner.”

Mr. Grayson yielded to Diena’s wishes, and left her at the head of the lane. As she walked briskly towards the cottages, she was saying to herself—

“This is a capital opportunity for seeing *the men*. They will all be at home now. When one goes earlier, one misses the heads of the houses, though a quiet talk with the *wives* is, I am sure, a great point, and one not to be neglected.”

But as Geraldine reached the hollowed out quarries, at the sides of which were ranged the tumble-down huts, that looked scarcely superior to their unhewn surroundings, she was aware of a strange commotion. Very different the scene from the dead-alive appearance of things in the morning ! Like a hive of bees disturbed, figures in the near



distance were running in and out of doors, children were grouped together, and horses stood picketed, as though their masters had been too much occupied to give them the ordinary stabling and feeding.

Geraldine quickened her steps.

“What is the matter?” she asked of a stalwart workman, his loose brown jacket and corduroy trousers plentifully besprinkled with the yellowish brown sand amidst which he had been labouring.

“An accident!” he said curtly.

“Do tell me what it is!” Geraldine asked eagerly.

“It’s one of our chaps. He was taking them trucks down the slope line to the next quarry where they empties ’em; and the trucks got over-running the horse. Ben, he began a trying to stop ’em; and next moment he was done for! the horse, and trucks, and all, on top of him. That’s how it was. He’s in there. Ben Fagan they call him.”

In a moment Geraldine was at the door.

“May I come in?” she was asking; and there she beheld indeed a sad sight. Stretched to his full length on a cottage bed, his head thrown back, and bespattered with blood, lay the man whose door she had passed that morning. She stood and watched with the small silent group of by-standers, while the mother and wife sponged the bleeding face and chest. Only groans were heard from the



sufferer. The tears ran down Geraldine's cheeks ; she could not keep them back. The women came forward. The rough men stood back.

"She's Squire Grayson's young lady—up there at the big house." It was Mrs. Morton who was speaking ; and then she tried to persuade Geraldine that it was not so very bad—"perhaps he would get better." A dark-haired man, with bleared eyes and reddened face, came forward and said—

"This is no place for such as her ! 'Tain't right. 'Tain't, indeed."

Geraldine mastered her feelings, and said—

"Oh ! don't think about *me*, dear friends ! The Lord Jesus is here ! your most tender loving Friend. Oh ! how sorry He is for you to-day. He *does* feel for poor Ben. Shall we just ask Him to make him quite well, and to give him TRUE COMFORT in his pain ?"

A silent assent was looked, rather than given ; and Geraldine prayed, standing as she was, the men and women standing round her.

"O Lord God ! our Father ! do help us in this great trouble ! Draw nigh to this house now, and give ease and relief from this terrible pain, and if it be Thy will, recovery. Thou alone canst help us. Above all, we beseech Thee to visit his soul, and give him Eternal Life ! Let his heart be cheered and sustained by Thy precious Word !

and may his family and friends be helped and comforted. We ask it for Jesus Christ's sake Amen."

Every hat was off during the short petition; and at its close many a rough sleeve was hastily drawn across eyes that had rarely wept before.

One verse from her treasure-chest Geraldine repeated. It was this—

"LOOK UNTO ME, AND BE YE SAVED!" followed by the consoling entreaty and promise—

"FEAR NOT! I AM WITH THEE; I WILL HELP THEE; I WILL UPHOLD THEE WITH THE RIGHT HAND OF MY RIGHTEOUSNESS."

"Yes, dear friends; JESUS is with you," she said. "He *will* help you! He is willing to save you!"

As she turned away to whisper to the terrified, looking wife some gentle promise as to her return, and question of comforts more material than those hitherto alluded to, a murmur ran round the sad group; they were looking at one another.

"Well, I never!" they were saying, as they wiped their eyes. The men were sagaciously nodding their heads. They meant by these significant gestures, their own simple approbation of the recent proceeding. They meant, "She is a visitor worth having!" They saw reality in that prayer, and recognised divinity in the words she had quoted.

These people, in spite of their life blindness, were shrewd and far-seeing even in these matters. They knew the difference between mere lip-words and *heart-messages*.

Then the doctor came. He suggested ice. Geraldine said it should be sent; and arranged that one of the numerous youths lounging about the doorways of the various cottages should follow her to the house after the doctor's visit, to return with the ice or any other necessary required.

It was useless to attempt further visits that day; and indeed the day had already been a full one. The quiet walk over the flowery meadow path, across the rippling stream that skirted the orchard wall, and past the greenhouses rich with their luscious grapes, all ministered the soothing balm that Geraldine's tired heart needed. But no rest must be taken until the supplies for the quarry boy were provided. Then came dinner, and her father's sympathy, which ever cheered and sustained her in her labours of love. The boy had brought word that "the doctor said Fagan must be kept very quiet; but Mrs. Fagan said, perhaps the young lady would call again soon."

"They say that troubles never come alone!" she remarked after a pause that evening. "I am quite sure work never comes alone! Every little thing I do seems to bring more with it."

Then Mr. Grayson gravely said—

“So it is with good and with evil alike. Each success creates fresh effort; and again each effort bringeth fresh success. Thus the great wheel of life rolls on. It is a busy world certainly—not an idle one!—and we may each make our share in it as busy or as idle as we please. Then the harvest will come. How soon, who knows?”

. . . . .  
Bright and sunny was the next morning. In a radiant conservatory, glistening with its many-hued blossoms, and gay with its variety of tender foliage, creeping plants, and mossy hangings, stood a lady, wrapped in thought, absorbed apparently on some higher study than that of her fuschia, verbena, or other floral treasures.

Geraldine's arms were round her neck in a moment.

“Tell me what you are thinking of, you beautiful creature!” she said.

The answer was a characteristic one. Softly returning the warm greeting, and taking a gentle, clinging hold of the two hands that were upon hers, Mrs. Mowbray replied, “Looking at His handi-works! Just see! You have come exactly at the right moment, dear.”

Geraldine had driven over for an early visit to her favourite friend. It was not far, but a sufficient

distance to make her cheeks glow, and almost to brush away the little anxious contractions that had lingered about her brow, since the interviews at Arlington Court and their sequel conversation with her father.

She looked in the direction indicated, and saw the golden-feathered inhabitants of the aviary, that occupied one window of the bright conservatory, plainly visible from the drawing-room recess. The tiny things were in full flutter to-day. One had been bathing. It was spreading sparkling feathers in the pure sunlight, and shaking out a miniature shower of spray from its delicate wings.

“Isn't it exquisite?” Geraldine said.

“Oh! but you are not looking in the right direction,” Mrs. Mowbray said. “Look at the domestic arrangements; they are in full swing just now.”

It was a good-sized aviary, about six feet high by four feet broad, amply fitted with perches, feeding boxes, and garnitures of groundsel, chick-weed, and other dainties. Across one side there stretched a narrow strip of wood, about a foot from the roof, and carefully fitted with three shallow nests made of tin softly covered with lint and wool. In one of these a small, busy hen was deftly placing threads of yarn and sprigs of moss, hopping from perch to perch as she did so, with an air of intense pre-



occupation; while in a similar receptacle, at a further corner, sat another little hen, equally busy in a more advanced stage of home duty. She was sitting closely on the four tiny eggs of mottled blue that she had placed therein. On a perch adjoining the nest her mate warbled cheerily, receiving as his due reward her little notes of chirruped praise.

"It is most wonderfully interesting to watch these tiny creatures, in all the perfection of their divinely-given instincts, performing their daily duties. They teach me so many lessons," said Mrs. Mowbray.

"PRAISE lessons, I should think!" said Geraldine. "But what lessons do *you* want to learn, Mrs. Mowbray? These little living musical boxes, that are a combination of joy and industry, can hardly have much that is new to say to one who has learnt all these lessons for so many years."

"Well, we will sit down and talk," said Mrs. Mowbray, smiling. "I see that you are in a chatting humour. What have you come to tell me this morning?"

"I have come to tell you," said Diena, ensconcing herself on a sofa beside her friend, "that all the world is wicked; even the *good* world is disappointing; that is the fashionable, foolish, silly excellence that would not steal, and must not lie, and is horrified at the crime of ragged poverty, or even of that



of invasion of its charming circle, by those who wish to make it *less* ragged and *less* poor!"

"My dear child! you are not often now in this cynical mood; I must say that for you. But what have you been hearing or seeing? or where have you been? Certainly not at the dear Coffee-room!"

"No, I have not; or I should not be so irate. My feelings on this subject were not so strong even yesterday; but I have been *thinking* since; and that has made me worse. So I rode over here this morning, partly to enjoy the fresh air of heaven and partly to get some comfort from you."

Then they began to talk. The birds sang on, and twittered parental notes of interest in their tiny nests; the sun shone clear and strong upon the venetian blinds; the gaily bedded garden sent its wafts of fragrance into the quiet room; the bees hummed busily as they sought their daily meal; and the tiny silver clock ticked the passing time.

Presently a pause ensued, which was broken by Geraldine's voice.

"What do you think, then, on the whole? Tell it me in a few words, and I will try to remember. Is it right to think everybody good? That is the first question."

"There is none good, no, not one," Mrs. Mowbray replied gravely, quoting from the fifty-

third Psalm. “‘There is none good, save one,’ Jesus said. Is He not the highest authority?”

“Yes! that answer does very well for the first phase of the difficulty. But there is another. The *broad* (as they call themselves), or charitable people (as others call them), say there is *some* good in all; and that we must make the best of every one. What do they mean by that? Do they mean that we are never to see error? or that we are to condone it? ignore it? I think that is the most common, as well as the most puzzling, way of putting their amiable opinions.”

“Alas! I fear that there is in the unenlightened heart—the soul, I mean, that is not having direct spiritual intercourse with God—a carelessness about error, a disregard of it. Truth suffers at the expense of a so-called *love*. But it is not GOD’S love! That is a discerning, distinguishing love. It distinguishes between good and evil. It rescues the ‘wheat,’ dispersing the ‘chaff.’ GOD’S LOVE cares for the *souls* of men, ‘delivering’ them ‘*from* evil,’ and showing them HIMSELF as ‘the Way, the Truth, and the Life.’ ‘God so loved *the world*, that He gave His only-begotten Son.’ He so loves *His own*, that He calls them ‘by name, and they follow’ Him. God’s love is very pure. It is a holy, sifting love. It does not overlook and disregard each outline that He Himself has

laid down by way of precept, counsel, declaration, or warning. We should be very careful about a clear understanding of His mind on these points, or we may fall into some dire mistake. Let us pray for wisdom, guidance; and search our Bibles much that we may indeed know His will, and walk in His light."

"Does it not say somewhere—'Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil'?"

"Yes, indeed; and 'woe unto the women that sew pillows under every arm-hole.' This *condoning* of evil is one of the most dangerous habits of the present day. It is a snared pitfall that is wrecking many a soul."

"Only think of a lovely, gentle, beautiful creature like you, using such strong language!" said Diena, gazing into her friend's face. "How astonished some people would be to hear you."

"In the first place, I deny the adjectives," said Mrs. Mowbray with her sweet restful smile; "and in the second,—was not our model of loveliness, Christ the Lord, true and clear in all He thought, and said, and did? as well as unsparing in His warnings against the very slightest deviations from the written Word?"

"Quite true," said Geraldine, "only I wish Lady Gwendoline could hear you. For if I were to say such things to her, she would think me rabid and

unkind, and I cannot help wondering how she would take them from *you*."

"I have lived a long time," said Mrs. Mowbray, "and I see now that human arguments are useless unless the LORD is speaking them to the *heart*." Human influence is useless unless He uses it. But we must earnestly watch and pray that daily through His power, and through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit, our lives may be consistent and truly holy; that they may not see the glaring discrepancy between our lives and our Bible that too often injures our Master's cause."

"That is all quite true," said Geraldine; "and it helps me immensely. But you know what Mrs. Prescott would answer to it, I suppose? She would say—Follow the Church; then you will be all safe. She considers it unsafe to attempt to judge for one's self."

"But the Church is divided! If she means the Church of England, that is to say. Some of our highest dignitaries teach one thing, and some another; who are we to follow? We must, and inevitably *do*, use our own discernment *somewhere* in the question. And it is for a RIGHT discernment in these and all other matters that we need so much the Lord's own teaching. *There* we are certainly safe. Our Bible is our one unshaken foundation. And for you, my child, I should say

it was *most* important, too, that you should be well grounded in good, sound, wholesome DOCTRINE, such as we may find in the writings of many of the old Divines. This sort of solid truth will make thoroughly distasteful to you the empty, shallow, and external crust of nominal religion, that so often conceals now an uneasy conscience, a troubled heart, or a weary, despairing mind. Our religion must go down very deep, and up very high, or it does not satisfy a heart that has been the work of an Infinite Creator. Christ both fathomed the depths of humanity, and sealed the heights of Divinity. He, therefore, and He alone, is the ladder by which we may ascend. He only, in fact, is 'THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.'"

"This is delightfully clear," said Geraldine. "Shall we pray?"

And together they prayed for the *promised* light and truth of a living Word, imparted by an indwelling Christ, and taught by a holy, anointing Spirit.

"A visit to you cheers me up very much," said Geraldine. "Many thanks for the talk and prayer. This evening I shall visit the Coffee-house; and a little intercourse with these simple earnest fellows always does one good. I like to hear their hearty prayers and singing; and get talks with them right to the point about the different things that interest them."



“I am sure that little field of yours must be useful in many ways,” said Mrs. Mowbray. “And as for *morbidness*—the misfortune of too many fine ladies—it must quickly fly beneath such wholesome influences; shrewdness, honesty, and industry are capital antidotes to self-introspection, I should think.”

“Capital!” said Geraldine energetically. “But we have not *only* good men there. Some are very bad.”

“The very thing that makes the work interesting, I suppose,” her friend answered. “And as the ploughman’s work is more likely to be a healthy one than that of the immured citizen, so this kind of personal dealing with these plain-spoken fellows, must be a far more agreeable and useful mode of time expenditure than that of too many who are shut up within the narrow limits of self-interest. There are different kinds of work, certainly; but I should say that your Coffee-house interests were admirable ones.”



## CHAPTER V.

### Cousin Jane.

“With the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.”—PROV  
xxxi. 16.

Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of Thy love !

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LARGE, old gabled house, garnished without by evergreen shrubs of varied tint and shade, and within by holly, mistletoe, merry faces and ringing voices. Yes! it was Christmas time at Blackberry Hall, and "the boys" liked Christmas; so a most adoring mother and a spoilingly indulgent father must, as a needs be, prolong the blaze of the yule log, and spin out the web of Christmas festivities as long as possible. A house full of visitors was sharing the general merry-making, and of these visitors Bessie Inglis was one—very pleasant it all was; and if I must tell the truth, Bessie enjoyed the "spree," as the boys called it, just as much as any one else.

Sometimes a tiresome little "prick" would come from that well-known, though too often obnoxious old friend—Conscience, who intruded himself on her fun by whispering disagreeable things; and though I fear she was rather an adept at giving him the cold shoulder, yet there were one or two

sentences that he would say, in spite of all Bessie could do to prevent herself from hearing them. One of his rude and unpleasant remarks was to this effect: "You are only pleasing yourself this Christmas, you are not thinking of any one else." Again he would whisper in a still more disagreeable manner: "There are many people quite as good as yourself and BETTER, who have none of the luxuries you are enjoying. Have you not a thought for them? And there are many, both rich and poor, living within easy reach of your hand and heart at this very moment, who are in sore trouble, and knowing not, with a personal knowledge, the one living Comforter. Do you not care about them?"

Well! Christmas passed away, January came—February. Then there was very wet weather. The Hall party was small. The days dragged rather heavily.

One morning a letter came directed to Bessie's special friend—Janet Hardcastle. It was addressed in a large, bold handwriting, and a good laugh they all had over the portentous missive (for that old gabled house had a fashion of holding merry hearts!) when opened, duly read, and handed round the breakfast-table. They began to discuss its contents. An invitation was therein. It extended only to the favoured receiver, and proved to be from celebrated "Cousin Jane," who was evidently well-

known in the family, but of whose existence, up to that moment, Bessie had never heard.

“You won’t go, Jan’, of course,” shouted the boys.

“Of course not,” said the boys’ father and Janet’s uncle.

“The idea of such a thing,” said another.

“May I go, auntie?” mildly requested Janet over the heads of the uproarious crew.

“Oh, nonsense!” said everybody.

Granny looked over her spectacles, auntie looked rather grieved, uncle shook his head, the boys blustered.

“Eat your breakfast, Jan’!” said one of those irrepressible youths, “and don’t begin to try and make us all miserable.”

“Don’t interfere with your cousin,” said their father, “let her do what she likes; she is sure not to go.”

“Who is Cousin Jane?” Bessie innocently asked.

“Oh! well! if you are going to inquire as to the personality of Cousin Jane, I think we may consider the etiquette of the breakfast-table at an end,” said the head of the house. “Has everybody finished?”

Everybody *had* finished, so they rose to depart to another room, and then was unfortunate Bessie nearly throttled by these riotous boys.

“What! not know Cousin Jane?” said one.

“Is it possible,” said another, “that you have spent your life in such ignorance?”

“Why, she is the wonder of all the country-side,” echoed the first.

“Well, boys! do let me alone,” Bessie gasped, as she tried to make violent retreat to a distant sofa; “I am sure I can’t help it, if I don’t know; I never heard of her before. Please don’t kill me!”

This touching appeal was the result of a sudden earthquake caused by the tilting up of the sofa upon which Bessie was endeavouring to sit; and a simultaneous enfolding of her head in a woollen couvrette that ought by rights to have been reposing neatly at the bottom of the said sofa.

“Pax,” said the other boy authoritatively, “and we will try to teach her who Cousin Jane is. In the first place, try to imagine a tall, gaunt female, big enough to make six of you; bony, and strong enough to keep us all in order; and with a voice like—what shall I say?”

“Like thunder,” responded Marty.

“No, no! that won’t do,” said Peregrine, “that won’t do at all. Think of another word.”

“All right! say like pebbles jolted in a glass bottle.”

So ridiculous a simile set all the trio off again into a fit of laughter: from which they were happily



delivered by noticing Janet's grave face, as she sat in the corner once more perusing her letter.

"I think I shall go," she was saying in a quiet soliloquy.

"Now, Jan', you know you will do nothing of the kind," said Marty.

Janet only smiled, but her lips looked very firm.

"How old is Cousin Jane?" Bessie inquired.

"Oh! what a question!" irreverently remarked one of the tormentors; while the other gravely said, "She ranks anywhere between the tertiary and granite periods; that is to say, she is any age you may like to mention between thirty and eighty; she wears a wig, so no one knows exactly how old she is."

Janet now became furious, and threatened to appeal to the higher powers for instant interference if another word was said on such a topic.

Mutinous shouts were here arrested by a silvery call from the boudoir, and Janet obediently pushed aside the rich velvet curtains that separated the oak hall from Lady Frobisher's boudoir.

"My darling, do you want to go?" the lady asked.

"Yes, auntie, if you will spare me," was her reply.

"But poor Bessie! what will she do?" said

her aunt. This tender thought was very justly bestowed.

“Oh, Bessie will be very happy here,” said Janet; and she might have added more had she not been interrupted by Bessie’s sudden presence, and the defiant remark—

“Oh yes, I dare say! left to the mercies of my tormentors.”

The end of the discussion was simply this:—Cousin Jane was to be asked if Bessie might accompany her friend, and needless to say answer came in the affirmative.

“Of course she said ‘yes;’ she is awfully hospitable,” said one of the boys.

“And a great matchmaker into the bargain,” retorted the other.

“No, not a matchmaker,” said the first; “mamma says, she only *carries on matches*.”

“Oh! you absurd boys, do be quiet; and don’t talk of what you know nothing about,” said the reprimanding voice of “mother,” who was generally somewhere near, hovering like a guardian angel over her two obstreperous youths.

. . . . .

A few days had passed and the two girls were driving in at an open gate down a short avenue fringed with beds of early spring flowers, deodoras, laurels, magnolias, and other shrubs of a useful as

well as ornamental kind; clothing the barrenness of a past winter and softening it into a verdant spring; these sober tints were filling their proper sphere, and giving a pleasant home look to the rambling, old-fashioned, two-storied cottage that *now* stood before them.

At an open door they beheld—Cousin Jane! It could be no other, clothed in a steel-grey gown surmounted by a voluminous cap, over which fluttered some pink ribbons; the masculine voice—in which first a welcome was given, and then orders to the one male domestic about the luggage—was easily recognised.

“I am so thankful she did not kiss me,” Bessie gasped to her friend, when they found themselves alone in one of the two dimity-clothed bedrooms which were dedicated to their use.

“You silly child!” said Janet magnificently; “whatever you do, pray don’t be afraid of her; or perhaps she will not like you. Such an offence she might never forgive; be quite at your ease, and look happy, and take an interest in everything; and you will be sure to get on and to enjoy your visit. That I prophesy.”

The meal to which they now descended was a substantial one as regarded viands, as well as elegant in its leafy and floral decorations. There were two other young ladies present, both prettily dressed in

simple pink and white muslins. They were not sisters, but cousin friends, as the newly arrived guests soon discovered. Every one seemed at ease, and the general *bonhommie* that prevailed helped to cloak a certain awe on Bessie's part, of which she was only too well aware.

The evening passed away, and the morning came. After they had had their social little breakfast in a very pleasant morning-room that faced the village green through a range of latticed windows, which gleamed like so many gold-set diamonds in the early sun, Cousin Jane was reading her letters, when she looked up and said—

“Now, girls, what are you going to do? I shall be busy all the morning, housekeeping, gardening, writing, and if after that there is any time before luncheon, I shall be seated in the drawing-room knitting. If in any of these occupations, or all of them, you feel disposed to help me, I need not say that I shall be very glad; if not, you see at your disposal a piano, bookshelves, drawing and painting materials, the garden, and last, but not least, the village. Go wherever you like; do whatever you please; only DON'T BE IDLE!”

As her friends learnt to know Cousin Jane better, they soon discovered that this last sentence was the key-note to her life's story. A strange history it was, too much entangled with other lives to bear

a truthful tracing in these pages ; but to return to this especial day, Cousin Jane's young lady guests strove obediently to busy themselves. Alas ! a long idle time had made the habit of industry seem a difficult one. So it was in Bessie's case, at least. Perhaps Cousin Jane saw this, but be that as it may, her roamings were soon finished, and the girls found her ensconced in the prettiest of old-fashioned drawing-rooms. A striped awning stretched over the low verandah that alone separated it from a beautifully shaded lawn, on which small families of tiny birds were disporting themselves. The grey parrot whispered smooth speeches of his devotion to "Thweetetht Janie," and the sparkling gold fish darted hither and thither in the miniature pond that lay beneath a fountain to the right, while to the left there stretched a wide expanse of woodland scenery, all sun bespangled, and dotted over with white cresting villages, and little towering churches. It was indeed a pleasant spot, and cosily all the party were soon ensconced in apportioned chairs, Cousin Jane *forming* the centre of a happy group.

Bessie was the first to break the silence—

"I haven't brought my work."

A penetrating glance, as severe as direct, sent the humiliating colour hotly over the unfortunate girl's face.



“No work!” said the stern voice; and then pitying her discomfiture, the self-constituted mentor took it upon her to say, “Bring your chair here, my child, and I will teach you to knit.”

“Oh! I *can* knit,” Bessie replied, “but”——

“But what?” was the instant query. “You won’t be happy if you are idle. Bring your chair here; and bring me that wool and those pins,” pointing to a large scarlet and blue work-basket of a peculiar shape and texture that stood upon a sort of wicker table near where Bessie was sitting; “I will show you how to make a little hood,—the prettiest thing you ever saw.”

Once more the circle was complete, and Bessie, with grave face and business-like air, was learning the mysteries of manufacture in the line of hoods, a very pretty patent it was!

“My own invention,” Cousin Jane triumphantly remarked.

General conversation followed, and then beginning to succeed pretty well with the new task, Bessie could once more breathe freely, and accordingly asked——

“Do you knit a great deal?”

“My dear!” said Cousin Jane, looking over her spectacles, “I knitted the schools, and half the church, and the fountain on the green, and”——

“What!” Bessie exclaimed, thinking that now



at last she had discovered her hostess's secret of aberration; and at any rate monomania for speaking parabolically.

Calmly the old lady repeated her former asseveration, explaining as she did so, amidst a chorus of supporting witness from the young lady trio, that she had knitted socks, comforters, and hoods sufficient to realise the various large sums necessary for the erection of these different buildings; adding quite casually, as an unimportant addenda to the information already given, that she was also by this means supporting several children, giving annual subscriptions to one or two societies, and also enjoying the pleasure of making presents to her friends.

Cousin Jane was a veracious person, and all this was strictly true. Certain it was that, from that moment nothing could exceed the admiration and enthusiasm with which this heroine of industry appeared to have inspired the idle damsel. Nothing would satisfy her but to "know all about it!" How? when? and where? were all questions eagerly put to the hostess, and then quietly answered by her, sometimes with an amused smile, sometimes with the dispersal of a tear or two that *would* come with the simple recitals. "Associations, my dear, associations," she would say as her apology for such an unwonted betrayal of feeling. "Even my old knitting-needles have got associations worked into

them; and the past is never really past, remember that, and let your retrospective thoughts, in after days, be pleasant ones. Idle moments bring misery; work with God's blessing brings happiness; not only to yourself, but to many another. First, GOD'S GLORY let us live for, then man's good; He whom we serve will care for *our* welfare."

This delicious little homily, delivered in such a pleasant, easy way, and in such a homely combination of circumstances, made a strong impression on Bessie's mind—perhaps a lasting one. On that same afternoon there was to be a garden gathering of cousins just for a chat and walk, and then tea in the old carved hall, a sort of "free and easy," for which Cousin Jane had a great partiality. When every one seemed at home, and the little party had resolved itself into twos and threes, Cousin Jane beckoned to her new pupil, and together they slipped out of a little side-gate on to the village green, where, facing them, there stood a handsome stone fountain surrounded by a trough. "The knitting-needles built that fountain," said Bessie's guide. "How the people in these cottages must adore you!" she said. "They are much too grateful," Cousin Jane replied. "And did you say *a school*?" Bessie timidly asked, wondering whether by any possibility she could have made a mistake in the recital of these deeds of industry. "There it is!" Cousin

Jane answered, pointing to a most picturesque building, which quietly asserted in appearance its educational superiority to the smaller tenements that surrounded it, and from which at this moment issued the busy sound of children's voices. "It is impossible!" Bessie answered, gazing into her face enthusiastically. "And then there was the church."

"The church too!" Bessie exclaimed.

"No, child! no," she replied: "I only built half the church. Our good Squire managed the rest."

"I never would have believed such a miracle, except from your own lips," the girl fervently responded.

And then Cousin Jane said, as they turned again into the little garden shrubbery, through the wooden wicket gate—"Spare moments; odd minutes. No one knows their value, until they begin to make use of them, my dear. I saw that you were interested this morning, and so I thought I should like to show you some of the little pleasures of my life."

. . . . .

There were many radiant faces in the old oak hall that evening. Little did the stranger guest know that the whole arrangement of festivities, simple and delightful as they were to all, were only the surroundings of a very important little plan that was finding its development from the recesses of Cousin Jane's kind heart.

But as the pleasant evening succeeded the merry afternoon—when tea and toast, and cake and eggs and Devonshire cream, and all the other successful operations of Cousin's Jane's rather noted *cuisine*, had been fully discussed, the party of guests subsided more quietly, by special invitation, into various chairs and sofas, while a variety of lamps and candles dispelled the twilight shades. Then Cousin Jane brought forth from a curtained recess, with the aid of a stalwart nephew, a very large square basket—open, narrow edged, and covered with a square piece of quilted satin.

This basket was a special invention of the busy mind that reigned supreme in those quiet precincts. It was on tiny wheels, and once emerged from its recess it could easily be moved from place to place within the little drawing-room.

“What *is* that?” said inquisitive faces and amused smiles.

Cousin Jane disclosed the mystery. She said, “I must explain! Our darling Geraldine, who has been working so hard lately at Retcham in Norton, has just begun a Mothers' Meeting. I want to send her a parcel; and I want your help to-night. I think you all know Geraldine, and you love her, don't you?”

“Yes!” Geraldine was a pet in that pretty village, and especially in the home of Cousin Jane.

In her early motherless days, Geraldine had spent pleasanter weeks with busy Cousin Jane than in her own solitary rooms at lonely Suniscourt; she liked to see the bustle, and think she was helping in it, and the brisk kindness of one who knew so little of morbid feeling, and yet had so warm an affection for the gentle friend that had passed away, cheered Diena's desolate heart, and diverted her mind from many an oppressive thought; but the effect had scarcely been more at that time than one of increased longing for a useful happy life.

Home seemed darker, darker, duller, sadder, when she returned to its habitual aimlessness, the aimlessness she had herself created, or rather permitted. Then we know how the days changed, and work flowed in; now Geraldine used to say she was "too busy to pay visits." One or two at a time were now the order of Geraldine's routine, and these were not seldom cut short by this declaration—

"I must get home soon now, there is so much to do!"

The last time Geraldine had favoured Cousin Jane's cottage with one of those visits, few and far between, the good lady had positively smiled tears into her eyes at the contrast between her favourite's past disinclination for work, and her present activity for it.



“Will you come and see me some day, Cousin Jane?” she had asked at parting.

Some few months had elapsed between this invitation and Bessie’s visit, and now Cousin Jane was promising herself a peep at her favourite’s “workshop,” as she denominated her Coffee-house, and was on this particular occasion revealing the unmade contents of the gift she desired to present from Geraldine’s “cottage” friends.

There, in the large square basket, lay a vast quantity of material all ready arranged. There were bunches of gaily coloured wools, pictures, coloured calico, and other treasures.

“Who will make me some baby’s balls?” Cousin Jane inquired, holding the wools up to view.

“I *would*,” said a fair-haired girl sitting just opposite, “if I could; but I never made one in my life.”

“Can *any one* make balls?” Cousin Jane asked.

“Yes!” came an answer from another, “I used to make them once.”

“Then we shall be grateful for your help. Will you teach your art to any of our party who are willing to learn?”

Several impromptu pupils immediately clustered themselves round the *artiste*, whose skilful fingers soon wrought wonders in the skeins, turning them into soft fluffy balls that would have enchanted



any baby; rag dolls, scrap books, and tiny red boys, woolley rabbits, and picture foldings were soon in process of creation; and the drawing-room was transformed into a manufactory.

Then Cousin Jane said—

“I did not like to waste time by telling you beforehand my little plan. I knew you would all be willing to help me. But now that our hands are busy, explanation will cause no lost minutes. Geraldine Grayson has begun a Mothers’ Meeting; it is held in the large room over the Coffee-room. But poor Diena complains that the ‘babies make a noise,’ and yet the mothers can’t leave the babies at home.”

“And this basket is for her babies!” chimed in one of the youths, who at that moment with long scissor-strides was cutting out pictures from the *Illustrated News* and *Graphic*. “I say, that’s an awful shame! if you had told us *that*, Cousin Jane, at first starting, I don’t know that we should have been so willing to obey.”

“Babies! my dear. **EXTENDING THE KINGDOM;** the **SAVIOUR’S Kingdom!** That is what we are doing by our work; or rather, that is what we hope to do, and *expect* to do, by His blessing.”

Harry Sinclair was “shut up,” as he called it. He could say no more. But he was a good-natured fellow, and he plodded on. Besides which, he felt

quite at home in the little shady room, amongst both cousins and friends; and he tacitly acknowledged that there would be no after-regrets to bestow upon a well-spent evening. His brother was there, and another friend. All were busy. As the pictures were cut out, they were pasted by another deft hand on the pink calico arranged in squares for their reception. Some of these scrap-books were only a few inches square, and consisted only of a few leaves.

“Are these to teach the young ideas how to shoot?” asked one.

“No,” promptly replied Janet Hardcastle. “They are to occupy the ‘young idea’ before it learns to shoot; the colours and pictures will amuse the babies capitally.”

The “picture foldings” consisted of tailors pattern books—canvas on long lengths bound by green leather—the only difference being that the cloth patterns were replaced by pictures and alphabets.

Cousin Jane was requested by her apprenticed guests to “tell something interesting.” Accordingly she began, seeing her guests all thoroughly occupied and progressing with their work; she agreed to their request, making this proviso—

“If any of you can’t get on, you must stop me. The materials are all in this basket. The time is running on and soon will have run out; so we

must not waste it. But to give you an answer to the question, What is a Mothers' Meeting? I will just tell you Geraldine's plan. The 'mothers' assemble at half-past two every Monday afternoon. They purchase at a reduced rate clothing for their families, paying in the price by small weekly instalments, consisting of a very few pence at a time; *this* in itself is a very great benefit to them. Then comes the reading aloud, the conversation and prayer. Thus many a bright ray is let in upon minds hitherto dark, ignorant, and sealed to the truth. Christ is the Light—His Word is the Lamp. Saddened lives are brightened by His entrance; and evil homes are made pure by His blessed teachings. I was once staying in a town"——

"*Once!*" whispered Bessie to her next neighbour, the fair-haired ball maker; "that is sure to be interesting!"

"And there I became very much interested in the cottage mothers. At first we met once, and even twice a week in a cottage; and this small gathering gradually grew into what we proudly denominated a 'Mothers' Meeting.' It became a very great source of interest to us all, I believe—but I speak for myself.

"If *you* were mothers, you would know—you needn't laugh, boys, you may be fathers some day,

there's no saying. At any rate, you have all *got* fathers and mothers, so you are not quite independent of the subject!" This apostrophe was addressed to one of the young men of the party, whose smiling looks had called it forth.

The whole party were so intimate with Cousin Jane that they would take a great deal from her—and in that particular little pet drawing-room which they had known from their babyhood—which otherwise they might have passed by unheeded.

"Our dear Geraldine has just begun a similar attempt; and I am most anxious that it should be a success; and I want you to help me to make it so.

"One difficulty that I found a great one, until I endeavoured to meet it properly, was the presence or the absence of the babies. I mean, that when the babies were present their voices often disturbed us all—so much so, that it was difficult to read or hear the reading. When they were absent, the mothers were absent too. So the babies formed a very important part of the Mothers' Meeting, and we found that they must be duly considered. Accordingly we set to work to amuse the said babies, and even the bigger children who occasionally came.

"We soon found that our 'baby' efforts were going to be very successful; a most popular move.

First, we got some soft, unbreakable dolls, which we dressed gaily. These, of course, were a never-tiring source of amusement. Then we made balls of patches of tailors' refuse cloth; and I think the last invention was a series of small calico picture-books."

"Like these?" said some one in the room.

"Yes! like those. Only our original attempts were very primitive; and I don't think the pictures were so beautifully cut out, as you are cutting them, Gerard."

Sundry specimens of unfinished handiwork were now examined, and encomiums pronounced, while difficulties were explained.

Then Cousin Jane said—

"No man liveth to himself,—no man dieth to himself. I am not a young woman. In fact, I have lived a good many years; and I think the happiest parts of my life have been those I have spent in working for others. People *think* they can live for themselves, but they are mistaken. Silently, it may be, but steadily, surely, every one who lives and breathes is exerting an influence, through a larger or smaller circle, for good or evil. How very much pleasanter, and how much wiser, it is to take up that which is imperative and turn it into a blessing? By daily consecrating our influence, we are daily enriched with useful happi-



ness, and the lives of others, by God's goodness, are daily enriched through us."

"But all Christians are not useful!" said Janet. "There are very few people like you, I think, Cousin Jane!"

"My dear child! your experience of the world has not been extensive enough for you to judge of this. But I acknowledge that there *are* many morbid Christians, and alas! I fear, some useless ones. But such a life is not a happy one. It is because I wish that all of you should avoid so terrible an existence, that I venture to ask if I may read you one page from a delightful book I have been reading?"

"The chapter is on 'Agate Windows,' a free typical commentary on Isaiah liv. 12—'I will make thy windows of agates.' . . . 'The principal use and design of ordinary windows in a dwelling is to admit light into the room, so that the inmates may see to perform their various household duties. And so, the use of these windows of agate, whether they be windows of faith, of feeling, or of spiritual character, is to let the light of heaven shine in upon our life, that we may discharge our various duties as members of the household of faith, that we may act our part as children of the day and of the light. We are not to sit all day long with folded hands at these windows, looking out listlessly



or sadly in mere religious reverie, or in despondent abstraction. The light which we get through them is given us to *work*,—to work while it is called to-day, for the night soon cometh, and those that “look out of the windows shall be darkened.” The light of heaven is given for usefulness as well as for beauty. It warms and fertilises the earth, and ripens the corn. So let the light which streams in upon us through these windows of agates—costly light obtained through faith tried in the furnace; lambent light gleaming through painful afflictions, the decay of nature; sparkling light struck through sore struggles with sin and self; light coloured by the experience through which it has passed; let that light (from HIM who is the Source of all Light!) warm, and cheer, and quicken our souls, and make us more meet for “the inheritance of the saints in light,” for the communion that shall be eye to eye, and face to face for evermore. Let the light that radiates from above, shine upon our joys and our sorrows, upon our home and grave, and make them holy. And let us ever remember that the *reality* of our belief in God is (evidenced by) the measure of earnestness, love, and diligence that we manifest in living forth His life on earth.

“Now, my busy bees, you must not tire those bright eyes of yours any more. You have all worked very hard; and have earned my admiration

thereby. We will just offer up a word or two of prayer for a rich, abundant, and lasting blessing on your labours."

A few words of earnest, praiseful prayer were there and then presented on behalf of these efforts for the Lord's glory; and the "Mothers' Meeting" volunteers once more found their productions inspected. Cousin Jane was "all there!" "up to the mark!" and "something like!" as the boys said afterwards,—and by these ambiguous phrases they meant that her earnestness was apparent; that her efficiency equalled it; and that they thoroughly respected her for both.

Most of the newly commenced doings of that evening were now put tidily away in the large wheel-basket, and covered over until a future opportunity occurred for disinterring and completing them.

Out of this meeting grew a children's working-party. Cousin Jane was quite in her element on these occasions; and it was a very pretty sight to see these youthful helpers grouped together in the drawing-room; all were working busily, and though some little fingers found their way more cleverly round the stitches than others could do,—yet all were doing their *best*, and this was all that Cousin Jane asked. She had wisely evoked the aid of one or two seniors for the occasion, whose aid and

opinion were constantly referred to by their youthful pupils. The hour passed very quickly. A story was read aloud, and lively comments made upon it. A shelf of books for "reading aloud" had long held an honoured place in the study bookcase; and to their number fresh additions were being constantly made. One of these was now in use, and a very valuable adjunct it proved.

When the work was being folded up, somebody asked—

"When are we to come again?"

"How soon would you like to come?" Cousin Jane asked; "in seven days? or fourteen days?—a week or a fortnight."

Votes were taken, and a week was proved to be the voice of the majority. So Cousin Jane found herself "saddled" with two working parties a week. Then, who so happy as she?



## CHAPTER VI.

### Easter Days.

“Jesus saith unto her, he shall rise again.”—JOHN xi. 27.

The leaf may fall and perish,  
Not less the spring will come ;  
Like wind and rain of winter,  
Our earthly sighs and tears,  
Till the golden summer dawneth  
Of the endless year of years.





**R**ELLS and roses! lilies and forget-me-nots!  
Thus you might have epitomed the inside and outside of Suniscourt House on a certain Easter morning. A year had passed away, and Geraldine's work with but few intervals had been a home-life. She had lived amongst her people. Her father's sunshine, and the joy of many a town and village home, the hours had sped, and the weeks had threaded themselves into months, and the months into a year, while Geraldine worked and sang, and sympathised and laboured, and visited and rested, as each day's duty called. "Duty" to her meant a silver sound. There were no discordant notes there; because Geraldine's heart sounded forth in harmonious echo.

But to-day there was a special gladness casting its halo about Geraldine's waking thoughts. What was it? Simply this. RESURRECTION was no dream of the past, no haze of the future. It was a strong reality—a very present reality too. She had seen,

and was seeing, sealed sepulchres unclosed; while the dawning glories of a new, true light shined forth in living rays from what *had* been the black decay of a sinful corruption. The lives of evil men were becoming holy, pure, the reflection of Jesus Christ's life; because they were emanations *from* His life. The tombs of impurity that had by their influences defiled homes, saddened hearts, by a magnetic attraction drawn around themselves, and sent forth *from* themselves circles of a like and ever-increasing impurity, were now the new creations of a gracious Spirit, and as such were distributing far and wide—further and wider than they thought—the fragrance and the sunlight of a blessed life. Tears had dropped beside those tombs, but they were tears that had shined themselves away into smiles of an Everlasting Day. Tremblings of earthly shadows still hovered, it is true, about these realities of light, for earth is sinful, and sin is sad. But Geraldine could trace the brightness whithersoever her footsteps trod. “Lord! let my footsteps be Thine!” she used to ask, “or rather let Thine be mine! Then there can be no crooked paths, and thorns *must* turn to flowers in Thy track.”

This was true. The girl knew a secret some wise people have never learnt. It is the tread of CHRIST, the footprint of JESUS in earth's sorrowful gardens, that makes the night leap into day; and

by a power Omnipotent disperses His "Mary's" tears, bringing prostrate grief into the joy of prostrate, submissive obedience. No clever workings of a well-designing philanthropy can supply the place of DIVINITY. "Jesus knows"—"Jesus sees"—"God can do all things"—why, the very infants in our country are taught such truths as these. But the truths want daily application. And this simple girl applied them; that was all. Her childish faith was honoured. Her simple obedience brought its reward. The message she carried was the Living Word. It met the people's hearts.

You say, "I have never succeeded thus." Why not? God only knows. Perhaps your neighbours know. Be that as it may—OPEN YOUR CASE TO HIM. Perhaps you have used other means first, and then supplemented them—or *sought* to supplement them—by the Word of God. This will not do. It is of no use. Jehovah must go in the forefront of the battle. He will not follow in the rear. This makes all the difference between victory and defeat.

Cousin Jane and Bessie were both staying at Suniscourt. As they met, with their early morning greeting, in Mr. Grayson's sunny breakfast-room, sparkling with its greenhouse flowers, its brightly decked table, and kindly, pleasant faces—Geraldine asked the question—

“What hymn shall it be?”

“For prayers? Oh! a very praising one this morning. We have a right to pray for Easter mercies—have we not, Bessie?” said Mr. Grayson, as he passed his hand over her glowing curls.

“Oh yes! uncle. We must *always* praise. I know that now. But specially to-day.”

“Then, Dena, let us sing—

“The Lord is risen. Hallelujah!”

And so they did. The servants gathering in an adjoining room were met by the breakfast-room party, Geraldine taking her seat at a small harmonium. A sweet, silvery sound the instrument sent forth, and beautifully led the united voices.

“A day begun with praise and prayer,  
Must see a sunset bright and clear.”

If it were well that this spirit should pervade the passing hours, it was well that it should commence them. The incense of praise drives back many a noisome, Satanic vapour. It had been so at Suniscourt; and from Suniscourt through many a Norton home.

Everything was done in great simplicity. There was nothing artificial here.

“ALL MY FRESH SPRINGS ARE IN THEE.”

This was the Easter text, embosomed in lilies,

that Geraldine had provided for her beloved Cousin Jane, with its smaller duplicates for Bessie and her father.

“Have you got one for yourself, my child?” asked Mr. Grayson.

“No, dear father, but I think I have found the ‘fresh springs’ themselves, and their source too,” was the answer.

A few days later, Geraldine found a beautiful edition of the illuminated text, exquisitely framed, within the recess formed by her oriel window. She knew at a glance that it was her father’s gift; and as she sped down stairs with her burden of thanks, she whispered to herself—

“EVERY GOOD GIFT  
AND  
EVERY PERFECT GIFT!

Father is my ‘GOOD’ gift. The text is my ‘PERFECT’ gift.”

But to return to Sunday—that Easter Sunday. After breakfast a turn round the garden and pleasant converse prefaced the Easter peal. And then amidst the ringing bells, and clear, bright sunshine, Geraldine, her father and friends, pursued their way along the circuitous sea path that led to the old grey village church. It was a pleasant walk to-day. Sometimes the stormy waves, or boisterous

wind, could make that path impassable, while at other times the watery mist, or heavy, soaking fog would gather close about the rocky shore,—and then prudence forbade Geraldine's favourite stroll. But to-day it was "Resurrection morning," Bessie said, "and there were *no* fogs, and *no* clouds."

On the slanting ledge of the old square pew lay a note. It was directed to Geraldine. It was directed in Mr. Cathcart's handwriting. Mr. Cathcart was the clergyman. Of course Geraldine peeped in. This is what she saw—

"DEAR MISS GRAYSON,—May I come to the Mothers' Meeting to-morrow? I have a particular reason for wishing to do so. You need not be afraid to admit me, for if you like, I will do the *talking* while I am there.—Yours very truly.

"A. CATHCART.

"A happy Easter to you all!"

Poor Geraldine blushed up to her eyebrows. This was truly alarming! what *could* Mr. Cathcart want to come for? He had never done so before. True it is, that the beginning of the service was not so undisturbed to Geraldine's mind as she would have wished it to be. However, as the psalm, and hymn, and anthem, and scripture truth rang out in sweet, rich, harmonious succession, all memory of the Vicar's self-invitation had vanished,



and Geraldine's heart was attuned to the Easter melody that she loved.

Hard, plodding work, was her share during the week; but underneath the work lay a subsoil of rest. In church, in her room, with her Bible, it was all rest,—except for the diligence of SEEKING that she knew how to practice.

Then came the sermon. Mr. Cathcart was an old man. He always preached simply, as to little children. Looking down from the experience of age, and up from the level of a very simple faith, there was a clear ring about his teaching that Mr. Grayson said was "always welcome." But Mr. Grayson had not always attended the village church. Passing by its ivy-grown porch, and its rustic congregation, he had preferred the new, white steepled edifice that stood further inland, the centre of a cluster of hamlets, and still more notably the resort of many a rich family from the surrounding country. But deeper teachings from above had created new tastes; and Suniscourt's master had begun to find the "sincere milk of the WORD" sweet to his taste. The simple truth that rippled forth in living streams from the village pulpit suited well his present thoughts.

"It is very simple," he sometimes said, "but true and clear. It bears the ring of the WORD about it; and what more do we want?"

The old man had lately introduced a curate, young and active. *His* earnestness was beginning to do great things, or rather to be the *means* of doing great things.

“Poor old Norton is looking up a bit,” said Handy, as Geraldine stopped outside the churchyard to give him an Easter greeting at the close of the service.

“That sermon was something like *us*, I was thinking.”

“What part of it?” Geraldine inquired.

“The texts the parson read—don’t you think so, miss?”

Geraldine still looked as if she wanted to hear Handy’s version of the matter; for the utterances of these newborn souls was ever like music to her ear. So Handy producing a smart new Bible, for the purchase of which he had sacrificed the delights of a new greatcoat, began to read—

“AND YOU WHO WERE DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS HATH HE QUICKENED TOGETHER WITH HIM.”

“Quicken! that means making alive. I’m sure He has done that for me. I know that quite well,—and the wife *she* can see the difference. She has said so, many’s the time. And then there’s Bat. He’s wonderful changed. Quite an altered chap. Anybody can see it; and everybody knows it too. But there’s many more beside him and me.

That chap, 'Blackeyes' they used to call him, because he was always *in for it*, somehow or other he's the rarest fellow I ever did know for psalm singings and Bible readings now. And he's a fine hand for getting other rough chaps along with him too. But I am keeping you, miss. There's no end to it, when a man gets on this tack."

Geraldine held out her hand. It was grasped responsively by Handy, with his bright face and honest smile of Easter light—RESURRECTION light it was.

And then Mr. Grayson appeared with Cousin Jane. Bessie and Miss Tarlington had walked on. Mr. Grayson had visited the vestry with his daughter's verbal answer—

"Oh yes! do come! But you must do *all* the speaking!"

And so it had been arranged.

"Who was that nice fellow I saw you talking to just now?" Cousin Jane asked.

"Handy," Geraldine replied. "Don't you remember him?"

Cousin Jane with knitted brows tried to recollect. "No: I don't think I do," she said.

"What! you don't remember Handy,—the man who always sang the hymns with his hat on? and said to me one evening when you were there, after I had read some verses in the Coffee-room—'Miss,

I beg your pardon—but I must dissent from that?’ ”

“ Oh ! ” Cousin Jane laughed—“ so I do. And you answered him so quickly—‘ First-rate ; you are a man worth talking to. What do you think about it ? ’ whereupon a small colloquy ensued. I recollect it quite well. But that is *never* the same man !! He is perfectly altered ! You *must* mean somebody else.”

“ No ! darling Cousin Jane. You really have seen the same outer man, but the inner man has become changed.”

“ Well ! I must have another look at him,” was the reply. “ But he looks to me quite different. I thought him an unpleasant looking fellow that night, I must confess ; though I admired his respectful manner in speaking to you.”

“ An unpleasant looking fellow ; what a shame ! ” exclaimed Handy’s champion. “ He never was that. But I know he is altered, because I can see the difference myself, and he feels it, and his wife owns it too.”

“ Well, I should think that was a decided encomium when it came from *a wife !* ” Cousin Jane remarked, adding, “ When are you going to take me to see some of your wonderful people—your *prodigies*, I call them ? ”

“ Then *don’t* call them so,” said Geraldine earnestly ;

“call them the ‘WORKS OF HIS HANDS,’ if you like—His ‘NEW CREATIONS’—His ‘LIVING ONES;’ anything you please, but recognise HIS might in the change, not my blundering mistakes and helpless weakness that has nothing to glory in but nothingness itself.”

“Forgive!” said Cousin Jane, “I know. I understand. You are right, dear child. Were it not for such facts as these, all the blessing would cease.”

Then Mr. Grayson chimed in. “What are you going to do to-day?” he asked.

“A great deal,” was Geraldine’s ready answer. “In the afternoon, first, a quiet hour. THEN! a Bible-reading. We have all agreed that an hour is to be dedicated to this to-day. We four ladies are going to indulge ourselves for once.”

“And you won’t admit me?” said Mr. Grayson.

“Oh yes, if you will help us!” was the answer.

“And then?”

“Oh! then we all sally forth to Grigg’s Huts, for the usual Sunday reading among the people there. But there is to be a novelty this afternoon, for Bessie is going to entertain all the children in one cottage, by telling them Bible stories, and singing with them, while Cousin Jane and I attend to their parents in the other.”

“And then?”



“ Then home for tea ; and then church.”

Handy had become a very useful friend to Geraldine. She had started an evening reading for sailors, near the pier, in a small goods shed, which was always “comfortably crowded.” And now Handy could take her place ; standing by the rude oil lamp, with fervent tones, and an earnestness of simplicity, that could not have been acquired—it was so absolutely, evidently genuine—he would, Bible in hand, give forth the same precious life-giving truths that he had himself received. Reading and comment and singing were alike homely of fashion, but hearty, downright, earnest—and in these qualifications lay their acceptance. A Gospel foundation with its scriptural up-buildings of truth, righteousness, holiness—these were Geraldine’s aims in her work ; and some of those who had with hearty readiness received the salvation proffered, were her helpers in making known the Saviour they loved.

The curate was much interested in these little meetings ; and he was going down to-night with Handy to take a share of the labour. He had done the same on a previous occasion, and had come home saying to his Vicar—

“ The warmth of that little gathering is something most refreshing. I wish you could look in some day, sir. Those poor fellows are quite at home in that rough place ; and they do shout so heartily



over the singing. And then the prayers! They were something like prayers—from the very heart they came.”

“Miss Grayson works very hard,” was the Vicar’s answer. “I used to think she was a Dissenter. But I see, now, the results of the work. Some of our brightest communicants have owed the origin of their Christian life to such little meetings as those.”

Thus, in peaceful concord, the little community, like the builders on Jerusalem’s wall, wrought together under their great Captain, the Lord of Hosts. The aged minister was the father of his little flock; the beauty of his country home was in no wise marred by the pain of schism. To the pretty drawing-room, with its large inviting casement in summer, and softly carpeted hearth in winter, each parishioner felt there was a welcome. In the old-fashioned study many a heart-sorrow had found relief from the healing balm the hand that had trembled not seldom under life’s smartings could well administer. The way to the Mercy-seat had been made plain to many a seeking soul by that study table, beside the Vicar’s well-worn Bible. The pastor could be a true friend, and in this true parish work, his wife was his helpmeet.

But people do not always understand each other at once. The bond of love is not always cemented at first sight. Heart links between Geraldine and

Mr. Cathcart had grown; there was no fear now that they would break.

Three o'clock had come; and in the garden room at Suniscourt the little party were gathering.

"RESURRECTION" was their subject. All were to bring contributions suitable to the topic of the day.

"Who will begin?" said Mr. Grayson. "We will give Bessie the privilege."

Bessie unclasped her Bible and read the words of Romans iv. 25—

"Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

"A very good key-note!" Mr. Grayson said.

Verse after verse came forth from the rich treasure-house, all bearing upon the great truth of the day; until a copious list of strong, full passages were closed with the practical commentary in 2 Corinthians v. 15—

"HE DIED FOR ALL, THAT THEY WHICH LIVE SHOULD NOT HENCEFORTH LIVE UNTO THEMSELVES, BUT UNTO HIM WHICH DIED FOR THEM AND ROSE AGAIN."

Then Geraldine suggested that the EMBLEMS of "resurrection" should be found.

"Nature is full of them," Bessie said, "but what does Scripture say?"

Then they searched, and Geraldine with her pencil noted down—

The seed—1 Corinthians xv. 36, 37.

Corn of wheat—John xii. 24.

The tree—Job xiv. 7-9.

Isaac—Hebrews xi. 19.

The dry bones—Ezekiel xxxvii. 1-14.

Impotent man—John v.

Thus they gathered truth in its fresh, attractive form from the very source of truth, and their souls were fed.

Across the meadows they trod a grassy path that led to "those uninviting quarries," as Lady Gwendoline would have said. Had Geraldine answered this disparagement of one of her favourite haunts at the dawn of her early interests there, she might have said—

"It is their uninvitingness that invites me!"

But now the briars were turning into flowers. Fruit and seed were following; and the "fruitful field" possessed new charms for the young worker, as it did for her Master.

Of course the ladies found a warm reception. This could scarcely be otherwise. The English heart is a hospitable one, and apart from all appreciation of Geraldine personally, or of her efforts spiritually, the quarry-men and their families liked a

visit. They were proud of a visit, too; they liked the young lady; they liked the family; and they specially liked the attention to themselves of her walk, and kind words, and general manifestation of friendship that these and many little kindnesses implied.

But the people liked the reading too. In the appointed cottage all was ready. Chairs and stools of various descriptions were gathered together, and when the young ladies appeared were soon in use. The man who had the accident was a warm friend, his wife and neighbours were scarcely less so.

*One* kind act, how far it goes! A kind word tells through many a circle. A whole street may be won by sympathy shown to one of its households. Geraldine had found it so. A most productive crop she was now reaping from—

“ Little deeds of kindness,  
Little words of love ”

sown freely during the past few years. But these kindnesses were mere vehicles. They did not save souls. They formed the medium of friendship; and in the friendship, truth was transmitted. A living voice communicated living words. Loving looks told of a higher love. Simple gifts and tender touches opened the way for reception of the great gift, and healing from a crucified, but risen hand.

This humble gathering it was touching to see.

Poor women with sleeping babies, rough uncoated men, and working boys were seated there. Some looked very shy, while others smiled their welcome, but all were expectant. Bessie assembled her gathering of children in an adjoining homestead. She found it a novel kind of infant school. There were no well-arranged tiers of seats ; she made her little charge as comfortable as she could, and then began to teach them a hymn. It was entered into heartily, and at its close, when prayer had been offered, sweet stories of the Saviour's love fell upon the children's delighted ear—ah ! more than that—entered into their little hearts, to be treasured in their tiny minds. How important was such a work ! It only lasted an hour, do we say ? Let us take care. Believing, scriptural work done in the name of Jesus, and for His glory, has in its very nature an eternal duration. It is *real* in its effects, divine in its results. True, the seed may scatter as it falls, some handfuls reaching the way-side, some the thorns, some the rocks ; but *some* is destined for the "good ground." It is a living seed. There is a germ of sacredness within that can never die. Nor can it live alone. It must multiply. So these girls did not waste their Sunday afternoon,—something was done ; something was effected, they knew that, even though they might not behold any results at the time.



Geraldine's reading was from the last chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew. The bright shining from the Saviour's open grave. This was her theme; very earnestly, very simply, she pressed home the fact of Mary's recognition—"Master!" the disappearance of her tears, the joyfulness of her service. It was all short, and clear, and forcible, because *from* the heart, and *to* the heart. Only a simple worded colloquial rendering of the grand old Scripture; only a bringing home, in easy Saxon words, of great truths and great teachings these people had never heard before, or if they had heard had never understood. They listened intently, and drank it in, as "cold waters to their thirsty souls." Yes! and who could wonder? It was "good news from a far country." No wonder, too, that they loved their young lady. Who wouldn't love the hand, feeble though it might be, that brought a refreshing draught in the hour of a thirsting death,—and thus exchanged that death for life?

"I'll be bound she's a good un'! a *right* good 'un, too!" said the roughest of the lot; old Sam Wilkins he was. A good specimen of the general run of these lonely country quarry-men. A hardened looking fellow, too. But the soft side of his heart had been touched to-day.

"Ain't ye glad?" he said over his pipe that



evening, as he sat at the cottage door—"Ain't ye glad, old woman" (for thus he addressed his wife), "that that there big stone got took away? And jist in good time, too. She do put it pretty, and no mistake. What do *you* say, Mike?"

Mike was the navvy son, home for his holiday. He responded in his usual curt fashion—

"Yes, she do. And yet she come it pretty strong, now and then, 'bout the drink; didn't she? She bain't afraid to give us her mind 'bout the blacks and the whites of a thing. For my part, I've a been down the country-side a good many times, and I never heare'd nothing like it before. *That* I didn't."

All this time Geraldine was innocently raising her heart in praise for the cordial reception given to her Bible at the quarries; and earnestly pleading that souls might be saved through that same blessed Word, and the simple message she had been permitted to take.

Cousin Jane had accompanied Geraldine. Tartie had used her efforts in aiding Bessie amidst her juvenile throng.

"Your prayer was such a help, Cousin Jane," said Diena. "I wish you could always come with me."

"No, my darling, that would never do!" was the response. "While you read and talked so

simply to those poor things, their earnest faces quite riveted me; and I thought of neglected hamlets still almost untouched round my own home. I must work harder. The time is short. Life is wearing on. I have made up my mind that I will try to institute a Visiting Society."

"A Visiting Society!" said Diena. "Do explain!"

"There are ladies of various ages, and various capacities as to purse, and strength, and ability, in the county; and I think that amongst us all there might be sufficient to form a company who would undertake the visiting of different country roads, or rather the houses on those roads, once a week, or once a fortnight, as we might prefer"——

"But different parishes!" suggested Geraldine, as the first evident difficulty that presented itself to her mind.

"Oh! we should have nothing to do with parishes," was the reply. "We should merely, in our drives and walks, visit these poor people as friends, look after them when they are ill, sharing our substance with them, as may seem wise and well, and in fact *caring* for them both soul and body. Of course it will all be done in a very quiet humble way. Above all, we will *pray* for them."

"What will the various clergymen say?"

"Too delighted," was Cousin Jane's decided reply. "*Of course* they will be! How can they be

otherwise? I know them all well. There are only three parishes within our reach. We shall go as their *friends*, not as their *enemies*."

"Well, Cousin Jane, I can believe wonders where you are concerned. After *knitting* public buildings, and living for the public good, as you do, I suppose anything that has your heart's interest, and your love, may be carried on with impunity. But I don't think *everybody* could attempt such a daring step."

"I suppose it is a good thing to have a good name," said Cousin Jane soliloquisingly, "but HIS NAME is best; I wish to do it all, and to do *everything*, even my *knitting*," she added with a smile, "in that dear, precious name."

"It is a grand thing to get you on this theme," said Geraldine. "I like to hear you get enthusiastic, not to say eloquent!"

"I will let you know how I prosper, child," was the answer; "and perhaps you and your men will remember my scheme in your little prayer meetings."

"Indeed we will!" was the hearty response, as the ladies separated each for her own room.

The Easter-day had closed, and it was night. But the darkness only lay without. There was sunlight within, and a holy peace reigned throughout Suniscourt.

One of Geraldine's peculiarities was a desire for privacy. She had learnt it from Mrs. Mowbray. Its very simplicity was a mark of spiritual genius; and like all other signs of true genius it was practical, for it accomplished what was required. At the quiet hours that she found so needful for her soul's welfare, and so absolutely essential to the progress of her work, Geraldine was in the habit of suspending on the outside handle of her bedroom door, a card on which was printed in large characters the single word "ENGAGED." This being visible, no one was allowed to knock even. Such an interruption was strictly prohibited. Thus, amidst the infinity of interruptions that will spring up in a household at all hours, she was able to reserve her sacred privilege accorded and decreed in Matthew vi. 6. Here she could obtain large gifts, and come forth enriched with the "open reward" (or "recompense," as the revised Testament has it); and this girl needed much, for she was not living for self,—she was living for a great multitude of "impotent folk" who were becoming healed, and going on their way rejoicing, while their places were ever filled by other sorrowing ones, the "healed" souls "following her in the way as she went."

It is a very pleasant thing to go to the King, and get our hands filled for the hungry ones, who perhaps tremble and stand aloof from lack of

intimacy with our supplying Saviour, or who perhaps are asleep, or death-stricken—"fainting" like the multitude in the desert—and hardly know *what* they need, certainly not *who* they need, but only that they *have* a need, and cannot travel much further to get that need supplied. All resources have failed, and they are grieved, disappointed. The doors of earthly storehouses shut in their very faces when their bartering coin has fled, and they are *very poor*. At this critical moment the world, and even the Christian, proffers that hard and impossible advice, "Send them away that they may buy bread," but the Lord steps in, holding out an asking hand, that those who *have* the satisfying substance may give it ALL UP! Yes! every bit—ALL! It is all made over to HIM, and then the plenty begins. Instead of craving hunger, songs of joy arise, for the hungry are "FILLED." This process has to be gone through so continually and so continuously by all who would be successful workers, and true feeders of the hungry, that hours apart, in the literal fulfilling of our Lord's double command—"Bring them to Me!" "Ask of Me,"—are to them essentials of life, and nothing less.

Monday morning was a helpful one in this way. The little mantle-piece clock in the oriel room did double duty. Waking the sleeper to her day's routine of useful action, it reminded her that three



sections of prayer necessarily lay before her. They must all be taken up and spread forth before her hands should become soiled with the enjoyments and cares of her day's life. To-day they were—

Herself,  
Her home,  
Her mothers.

“It is nice to have something to pray for!” Diena soliloquised, as she raised her venetian blind, and then the window sash, that she might drink in one refreshing draught of morning nectar. “Lovely, lovely, lovely! isn't it?” she said to herself, as she gazed down into that softly floating web of morning mist that so often veils night's parting from the earth she has shrouded, till morning comes and takes her place. The sun was rising gently,—a golden flood heralding its approach and tinging everything it reached. The sea, and hills, and wooded knolls, the grassy lawn, the garden, all partook of its touches. But soon the exquisite refinement of its advance passed into universal light—and *all* was bright. The darkness, the twilight, the morning grey, all had taken leave. The day had begun; and with its stern reality Geraldine must face *her* work. She began wisely, and so she began well. The throne of grace! Yes, **THERE** her first visit was paid. **THERE** she found “strength to



help in time of need." The King's court was *a home* to her. She did not require to put on a special dress or manner, or even form of words to reach it.

"JUST AS I AM, WITHOUT ONE PLEA,  
BUT THAT THY BLOOD WAS SHED FOR ME,  
AND THAT THOU BIDD'ST ME COME TO THEE,  
O LAMB OF GOD, I COME."

This was her method of approach. It was a happy one. It was the commanded one; and it was, moreover, the satisfactory one; for no earthly father ever proved himself so unfailingly accessible to his loved daughter as the Lord of Glory had proved Himself to His child in these morning seasons. Barriers, hindrances, coldnesses, difficulties, wants, "*mountains*," had been banished here,—smoothed away by an ALMIGHTY, though to the eye of sense, Invisible Hand. Thus she could *go forth* victorious! Before the difficulties came, she could meet them; and when they came, overcome them. This she found the best kind of warfare; and she had found, too, that the youngest recruits may be drilled into it. "The crooked things became straight, and the rough places plain." When this preliminary part of the warfare had been by any chance neglected, she found herself plunged into so many misfortunes, that apart from its pleasure, she found her hour at David's brook, picking up,

“smooth stones” from the Master’s Word, an absolute necessity.

This morning her calendar portion was Psalm ci. connected with James i.

“GIVE the ‘singing,’ the ‘walking,’ and the ‘working,’” she prayed, “and preserve me, O Lord! graciously preserve me from the ‘forgetting!’”

She believed it would be answered. She believed it WAS answered,—for this, what was her ground or guarantee? Simply this—“WE KNOW THAT HE HEARETH US” (1 John v. 14); not “He *will* hear us,” but “He HEARETH,”—the present tense. Thus, the matter done and settled, left no room for doubt; and only required the trust or faith that by common courtesy she would have accorded to a human affidavit, in order to claim its enrichings, and make them her own.

Were these secret inflowings neglected, then Geraldine suffered; and many a black spot in her life stood out with terrible vividness, unnoticed perhaps by human observers, but plain to her own memory and perception, resulting only and entirely from the missing of her privileged reception of her Lord’s Divine supply.

When people praised her work, Geraldine would answer—

“You only humble me. Far larger things, far greater things, might easily have been done, and

*ought* to have been done, had I only drawn more largely upon my Bank !”

When luncheon was concluded, the pony carriage came to the door ; for a visitation to the “ Mothers’ Meeting ” was the further order of the day. The said vehicle was not very large, and it required a good deal of packing before the bevy of fair ladies, and the various packages of monthly papers, a pudding for a sick child, shawls for two old women, &c., could all be accommodated within its limited space. However, in due time the party was despatched, Mr. Grayson standing hatless on the doorstep to see them start. That child was his darling, but the people only said—

“ No wonder he be fond of her ! Whatever should *we* do without her ? ”

No sooner had the wheels trundled out of the gate, than Mr. Grayson quickly bustled into the house, donned his hat, seized his stick, and set off at a quick walk down the shortest and most intricate paths that threaded his woods. These conducted him to the shore, which lay to-day bathed in spring sunlight, like a ripplet of gold encircling the far-curving coast. Here and there, it rose in bold, brown headlands of rock, which seemed to utter in voiceless words the ancient decree, as they frowned threateningly down upon the ever-encroaching tide—

“So far shalt thou come and no further;” while now and again the stern iron mood seemed to melt into a more conciliatory gentleness, as softly foliated woods in every tinge of newly-shaded green clothed and mantled the sloping cliffs. Along this varied shore, and past one of his own rich fields, where the young Alderney cattle lay sleeping lazily, Mr. Grayson walked. His step was quick and firm. There was a characteristic look of well-to-do comfort about himself, and about his possessions.

“God has blessed my stores!” he was saying to himself to-day. “HE gives; and *we* give; and the more *we* give, the more HE blesses. One lives and learns. But oh! that Bible truth! ALL those Bible truths! WHY, oh! *why*, do we learn them at the *end* of life, instead of at its BEGINNING?” and as this thought took its residence in his mind, the placid smile upon his face vanished into a frown.

“Papa, you are looking quite forbidding!” said a voice at his elbow.

“My child! *where* did you appear from? you quite startled me. I thought you had gone to the Mothers’ Meeting.”

“Yes!” said Geraldine, “so I did start for the Mothers’ Meeting, but I saw you coming, and ran across Mrs. Barker’s court, and through that little gate. But, father, what *do* you think those crazy people have done? *Look!* can’t you see it—there,

over there, by the Coffee-house door—in huge letters, amidst laurel and ivy, a great ‘Welcome’ is written. I don’t like it at all. They should have asked me before doing such a thing. This is only an ordinary Mothers’ Meeting; and those vagaries look so eccentric.”

“My dear child, did you not tell me Mr. Cathcart was coming to it for the first time? Perhaps it is a delicate attention from some of the mothers, or their husbands, to him?”

“Well! I did not think of that. It may be so. But I still wonder that they did not ask me about it; for we generally consult together, as you know, about every little trifle.”

Mr. Grayson looked very grave, but did not attempt to enter into a controversy about it.

“At any rate, we had better go in,” said Mr. Grayson. “The ‘welcome’ cannot be meant to keep us out.”

They went in, and found the manager at his post behind the counter, with his usual calm smile and bow.

“Have many mothers come?” Geraldine asked. “What is the meaning of that”——

“You are rather late,” her father interrupted. “I think you had better go upstairs. I think I will come too, for I have not been in lately.”

So they went up together; and Geraldine in her



very natural, simple way was saying, as she entered the door, to her various friends, whom she found all ready seated in a most unusually punctual frame of mind—"Here is an honour for you to-day? The best man in the world has come to see you?"

The mothers all looked immensely amused; and poor Diena then beheld at the further end of the room, in the chair of honour, no other than the Vicar himself.

"Oh! I *beg* your pardon. I *am* late," she was saying as she hurried forward. "Have you been here long?"

The old minister rose to give his hand to the girl; and said—

"No, Miss Grayson. I have only just arrived, and finding only two chairs available, I took one of them. That is my history, so far. But now proceedings begin. What do you do first?"

"We usually begin by selling the materials," said Geraldine. "But as you are here, we will reverse the order of things. Perhaps you will offer prayer."

Mr. Cathcart did so, in somewhat these words—

"O God! our Father! we thank Thee for Thy presence and for Thy promise to-day. All good things are *nothing* without Thee. We dare not have Thy gifts without Thyself. Thou hast clothed and



fed us. Thou hast preserved and taught us. Thou hast given us Thy Word. Now give us THYSELF! Let no heart here be alone just now, in that awful solitude which means absence from Thyself. Let Thy Holy Spirit rest upon these dear people! Let this Mothers' Meeting be blessed! And oh! let Thy word which is read here, result in LIFE, SALVATION, and STRENGTH to many souls. EACH WEEK! let there be a blessing!"—there was a pause, an unbroken silence, then he ended—"for our Saviour's sake. Amen."

There were some moistened eyes in that room when at the close Mr. Cathcart rose, his large print Bible in his hand, and read—

"A LITTLE WHILE!" John xiv. 19; chapter xvi. 16-19.

"Noah preached this as he builded the ark. Enoch told it, before 'he was not, for God took him.' Sickness tells us of the 'little while,' DEATH tells it too, tells it, oh! so plainly. Who can be deaf to *that* voice? Jesus Christ spoke these words. His message has found 'adamant hearts,' and 'withdrawing shoulders.' Many have rejected Him, many have refused even to listen to His voice. But *still* the words ring out. The pendulum of the clock cannot silence them. Man's unbelief cannot banish them. 'A LITTLE WHILE, AND THE WORLD SEETH ME NO MORE.' Is there any end to that 'no

more?' 'A little while' you have your life here, 'A little while' you have your friends about you in this seaside village. 'A little while' you have your home. 'A little while' its cares and duties,—its joys and sorrows. 'A little while' your children are your charge. Then they grow up to be men and women; or they pass away into that other unknown land beyond your sight. Yes! mother, cherish that baby. Comfort it; love it as you will. Teach it well. The little boys, the little *troublesome* boys"—(here the mothers smiled. They had been inclined to weep before; and even now some tears were dropping from one poor weary face, as she leant over her child, her one solace in a very drunken home. A poor terrified life hers was. For her husband, the man God gave to "love and cherish," and protect her earthly years from all hurt, was *not* her husband. He was not the *man* she married! He was possessed "most nights" with an evil spirit. The alcohol had eaten away his heart; and poor Marstead was indeed a slave. Of the two who could one pity most? for that down-trodden, hunted creature he called a wife, was indeed the victim of a bondage hard to bear. "O grievous burden laid on men's shoulders," *not* by Jehovah, but by a Satanic hand, and that hand working through human agencies, and those agencies not unfrequently calling themselves *Christian men!*

However, so it was ; and if the ordinary excuse of “numbers” could give comfort, this poor creature should have been a happy woman ; for she was only one of *thousands* upon *thousands* of like victims. But unfortunately these solecisms do *not* comfort ; they cannot solace grief, though they may silence conscience. Where will such excuses find standing room at the last Great Day ? will they form a rock to cover the *drunkard*, or the *man who lives* by making him one ?) “ may they never see a look on your face but one of love, of peace, of holiness ! ‘ Jesus Christ’s looks,’ as the child of one of my parishioner’s said one day, when a naughty temper had been conquered, and a little smile came back. Mother’s face—not mother’s words—is the child’s best copy.

First—The walk.

Second—The word.

Third—The work.

This is the best order for our life’s obedience to Him who *gave* that life, and lends it still, that we may use it here, and find it again up there, all perfected.

“ There are some of you, I know—there may be some whom I do not know—trying to please the Lord. You *know* the world is passing, passing very swiftly. And you have taken the hand of the one

sure Guide. To you He says to-day, 'a little while!' bear patiently that cross for Me! It seems heavy now. But a day is coming when looking back, you will see it shone with heavenly light. It was carved by His own hands and fashioned for you. It fitted your shoulders, though you thought it fitted them not. Share that cross, and all the crosses, with Him. Then they are turned into the 'My yoke,' that Jesus spoke of when He was here; and He makes that yoke easy. In fact it is united to 'rest.' We do not generally think that the carrying of a yoke means rest! But God's ways are different from our ways; and He does wonderful things. The fact is, we cannot bear the yoke, unless we *have* rest. We cannot yield to the cross, unless we *do* rest. We must be resting all the time—all the 'little while'—resting on Jesus, leaning on Him. Then we can see a light through the cloud; and we know that He is coming.

"Yes! but you say your shoulders are *galled* with that weary cross you have to carry. The weight is really more than you can bear. Oh! for a little relief! oh! for a little ease! Remember, dear, tried, sorrowing mother, JESUS CARRIED THE HEAVIEST CROSS FOR YOU, now He carries it WITH you. Breathe your burdens into His ear; and He will help. Perhaps when He sees you thoroughly submissive, He will give that very relief you desire.

Who can tell? He is very merciful. He is full of compassion. His loving-kindness is great. His tender mercies who can number? His *thoughts* toward you are 'more in number than the hairs of your head.' What a God you have! what a loving Friend! Put His power to the test. Try His love.

" 'A little while,' too, for opportunities. I rejoice that many of you manage to attend the church on Sunday. May the Lord speak His *own* words to you there! I am glad, too, that you like the Mothers' Meeting, and the little prayer-meetings. Miss Grayson, I know, is often encouraged by your hearty support of her many efforts for your happiness, and your welfare.

" But—I have not forgotten—there is a message to you this afternoon from the mothers. Am I not right? " Mr. Cathcart asked, again facing his audience.

" Yes, sir! yes, sir! " said several voices, while all eyes were directed to poor Geraldine's face.

" If I am not mistaken, our friends wish to sing this hymn. Will you lead it for us? "

And then he gave out the grand old hymn—

" Oh eyes that are weary, and hearts that are sore,  
Look off unto Jesus, and sorrow no more;  
The light of His countenance shineth so bright,  
That on earth as in heaven there need be no night.



“ Looking off unto Jesus, mine eyes cannot see  
 The troubles and dangers that throng around me ;  
 They cannot be blinded with sorrowful tears,  
 They cannot be shadowed with doubtings and fears.

“ Looking off unto Jesus, I go not astray,  
 Mine eyes are on Him, and He shows me the way ;  
 The path may seem dark as He leads me along,  
 But following Jesus I cannot go wrong.

“ Looking off unto Jesus, oh, may I be found,  
 When the waters of Jordan encompass me round ;  
 Let them bear me away in His presence to be ;  
 'Tis but seeing Him nearer, whom always I see.

“ And then shall I know the full beauty and grace  
 Of Jesus my Lord, when I stand face to face ;  
 I shall know how His love went before me each day,  
 And wonder that ever mine eyes turned away.”

The hymn was sung with much earnestness and feeling ; and as it ended, Mr. Cathcart said—

“ The mothers wish me to say, Miss Grayson, that until you invited them to come to the Mothers' Meeting, many of them had never known the comfort of 'Looking off unto Jesus.' They are very grateful to you for what you have done for them, and to the Lord for raising them up such a friend”——  
 At this moment Geraldine's astonished ears, not accustomed to such open praises, heard an unwonted bustle at the side of the room where a curtained door led to an inner-class room, that was often used for smaller gatherings. To-day, however, as the curtain



moved aside, Geraldine beheld a pyramidical erection draped in white being carried towards her. But her surprise had not long to wait; for as the covering was lifted, there stood before her, on a small table, a tall elegant vase in frosted glass, wrapped round with the most delicate interlacing of silver. "Exquisite! lovely!" Geraldine was beginning rapturously; when two of the mothers came forward carrying a pure white wicker basket filled with rare lilies and maidenhair ferns—"And they wish me to ask your acceptance of this Easter gift. It is an offering from their hearts; and from mine, the pleasure of asking your acceptance of it."

Poor Geraldine's eyes could only behold the faces before her through a very misty medium. But dazzled as they were with the gathering tears, she could not but see her beautiful vase now filled with the snowy lilies, decked with their sprays of feathery green. She tried hard to thank her friends, but voice would not come. So Mr. Grayson stood up, and in a few hearty sentences, on behalf of his daughter, warmly thanked her friends for their thoughtful kindness, which had to-day manifested itself in so valuable a gift. His thanks included the friend who had so kindly been their spokesman on the occasion.

Neither Cousin Jane nor Bessie had been in the

secret ; but they were evidently as delighted as though they had been the receivers,—apparently *more* so ! for those reddening cheeks and trembling lips looked as if Diena wished to be the other side of that curtain, where she could vanish from public gaze, and perhaps have a good cry ! Be this as it may, Mr. Cathcart, saying—

“ I have done my work now, and shall say good-bye ! ” held out his hand to Geraldine, smiled his adieu to the mothers, and took his leave.

Mr. Grayson, in answer to an appealing look from his daughter, did the same ; and then Geraldine felt that she could breathe more freely.

“ This exquisite vase ! and these lovely lilies ! ” she said. “ How can I ever thank you enough for your beautiful gift ! It will be a treasure to me for YOUR sakes, dear friends, as well as for its own. And as it stands on my table, it will remind me—of what, shall I say ?—of the ‘ LITTLE WHILE ’ that our dear Vicar has been speaking to us of this afternoon. The ‘ little while ’ for life, the ‘ little while ’ for work, the ‘ little while ’ *with* our loved ones, and the ‘ little while ’ of absence *from* them. It will remind me, too, of purity, brightness, sweetness, beauty. It will tell me of all that is spotless and holy. And as I look at it, I shall thank God, oh ! so earnestly, that some of your dear hearts are washed white as snow by His precious blood, and

daily being sanctified by His Holy Spirit. Will you let me thank Him soon that you are ALL His? That is what I want. I want it for yourselves, and I want it for your husbands, too; and your little children. Will you? WILL YOU?"

There was a pause. Then several voices said solemnly, and tearfully, for it had been a touching as well as a teaching time to them—

"Yes, miss, we will!" while others added, "God help us, it may be so!"

"Then let us tell Him so!" said Geraldine, rising to offer prayer, which she did with heartfelt thanksgiving. Many souls were united in that simple strain of praise on Easter Monday.

But Geraldine had another word to say. Cousin Jane was there, and her presence must not be wasted.

"Do you remember," Geraldine asked her audience, whose babies were now beginning to get rather fidgety—"the great big Christmas parcel?"

"Oh yes!" There was an amusing chorus of response. The mothers were all smiling now.

"And all the beautiful things that came out of it? Dolls, and balls, and picture books, and bags of sweeties? Well, I want you to know that *this* is the lady who sent them to you. Here she is. This is her very self. I call her Cousin Jane. You may call her Miss Boynton, for that is her

name. Yes! this unknown friend, who thought of you such a way off in her country home, asked a number of young ladies and even some young *gentlemen*."

They were all laughing now at the emphasis Geraldine chose to lay upon this last mentioned fact; but she continued—

"She asked them all to come and help her to make up these playthings for us? and they *have* been useful, have they not?"

"Oh yes! Miss Boynton, they have kept the babies from crying; and they have amused the toddling children too; and they have done us *all* good. For they have helped us all to enjoy the Mothers' Meeting more than we ever did before. They are kept in that cupboard, and distributed amongst the children when the reading begins; and none of our treasures have been lost. So we are all very grateful for our Christmas box."

"Oh yes! we liked them very much, and I'm sure we are all very much obliged," said a stout, grandmotherly woman, who sat at the corner of the front bench. "The children asks for Monday now, that they may have the toys."

"That's right," said Cousin Jane. "You know I haven't any children myself; but I like them very much for all that; and I like making toys for them. But you know, I like your Mothers' Meet-

ing ; and so it gives me pleasure to think I can do anything, even a little, to help it."

"They're capital, ladies," said the publican's niece ;—the fair-haired young woman with the cluster of red roses in her bonnet. It was only an aside ; but it meant the capitulation of a very decided little citadel of previous opposition ; and *so* was valuable.

And now the move for departure began, Geraldine gliding through the crowd with more fragments of personal thanks for her much-prized present.

"You should not have spent much money on me," she was saying ; "you know I would not have allowed you to do it, if you had told me beforehand."

"No, and that's why we *didn't* tell you !" said a little smiling mother, as she edged past, very close to the young lady.

"And you *did* like it, didn't ye ?" said another.

"We thought you ought to have *something*," said a third ; "just to show you that the mothers had learnt to know something about that sweet hymn, and lots of other things you had taught 'em."

The crowd was gradually thinning itself away ; and soon the vase had to be packed in a bedding of softness for its safe conduct to its owner's home. The lilies were taken possession of by Bessie, to be carried in their basket "very carefully."



“ You have been very clever about your secret,” Geraldine said, as she took the proffered cup of coffee that Barnes always had in waiting for her on his counter at the close of the meeting. “ Who put up the ‘ Welcome ’ over the outer door ? You may as well tell me, for secrets will out ! ”

“ Well ! miss, I only wish you could have seen it all. That was the men’s doing. There were ever so many of them here at daylight this morning, putting it up. And it was all so mysterious. You were to know nothing about it. And we were so afraid you would come down in the morning ; and then you would have found out that something was up. But one of the men, that young Harry Ingles, you know, the deaf man, who always says everything so slowly, with such a grave face ; well he said—‘ It’s a good job it’s Monday morning. The young lady is sure to be busy. I’ll be bound she has a lot to do in that ’ere big house on a Monday morning.’ The others all laughed ; and said, ‘ What do *you* know about it ? ’ ‘ I know a good many things,’ he said, and looked so very wise over it.”

“ He was quite right,” said Geraldine. “ Monday is a very busy day always. But I shall not soon forget *this* Monday ; good-bye, Barnes. Please send up the vase in its case by a very careful hand—this evening, if you can.”



"I will, miss," said the man; and the ladies drove away.

"I don't like affecting scenes," Cousin Jane remarked in the carriage, "but I would not have missed this one for anything."

"I suppose you feel like a heroine, Geraldine," said Bessie.

"Don't!" was the only reply. "I feel like a convicted delinquent. All my shortcomings stand out in a very black cameo relief from such a background of undeserved affection."

"Lor, Bob! you should have been up at that place this afternoon," said Mrs. Hardacres that evening to her better half, as she administered to him his tea and hot bacon. "It *were* a pretty sight, though I say it as shouldn't, seeing I subscribed to it."

"What! the present for the young lady?" replied the person addressed. "Did she like it?"

"Didn't she, though?" Mrs. Hardacres was not a sentimental person, and usually expressed herself in a few terms which served a variety of purposes. She treated her children and husband much as the old keeper treated his dogs, *i.e.*, according to his moods—cuffs and coaxings alternating. "Poor thing! I *was* sorry for her, just for one minnit, when they uncovered it; and she didn't know nothing about it. *We* had all seen it before. Her

cheeks got so red. She looked as if she was going to cry. But she was all right again directly ; and she said a lot of nice things. Didn't she, Martha ? ”

Martha responded with her mouth much more intent on bread and butter, than on the descriptions in which her mother would fain have indulged, could she have supplied the necessary words for the expression of her feelings.

“ But it did look a pretty sight to see the old gentleman giving her the present—My ! ”—but at this moment the baby began to cry, and Mr. Hardacres wished for another helping from the saucepan ; so the tale was never ended. But from that day Mrs. Hardacres was a regular attendant at the “ Mothers' Meeting.”

## CHAPTER VII.

### “One over against the Other.”

“Let us also go that we may die with Him!”—JOHN xi.

The giddy waves so restless hurled,  
The vexed pulse of this feverish world ;  
He views and counts with steady sight,  
Used to behold the Infinite.

—REV. E. H. BICKERSTETH.





YES! cloudland and sunshine are fellow-travellers. There is no doubt about it. Sometimes when we are basking in the brightness of a radiant day, the shadow across our path of a troubled heart or a saddened life comes irksomely to us as a trying reminder of what *may* and *can* be even in our flower-garden of delights. And then the buoyancy of our enjoyment is checked by the trite saying, or its inner thought-echo—TROUBLES MUST COME. Certainly there is no school so good for giving ballast to the character, or for steadying the life, as an earnest participation in the joys and sorrows of those around us. There we find the true variety of life. Morbid thought has no leisure left for its labyrinth tracings that too often, if unchecked, become a habit;—and a very difficult habit to lose. Steady work takes us out of ourselves. The life that JESUS chose must be the best life. It must be the life that lies nearest heaven; and heaven is the happiest place!

The world does not think so. The life immersed in the excitement of gaieties shudders at the thought of such an existence as a CHRIST LIFE! Why, He dwelt among the sick, the poor, the homeless, the diseased, the suffering; His very followers were men of the lower classes—uneducated, and even unappreciative! They were very changeable, harsh in their judgments, narrow in their ideas. True, but their hearts were united to God; and they were learning. They were gaining ground every day as they faltering trod the narrow way, following the Saviour who had given up ALL for them. HE loved these men. He was interested in them, and in all that He was doing for them, in them, and through them. The Lord Jesus Christ had left heaven that He might benefit this earth, He wanted to save people. "A child knows that," we answer,— "everybody knows it." Yes! perhaps so; but then why do we say, "That sort of life would not suit *me*"? Do we not call ourselves Christians? Are we not anxious to be thought travellers on the road that He trod? and do we not consider it the most painful reflection, or harsh injustice, when from within or without comes the iron hand of truth with its unanswerable assertion, "You cannot be a Christian, for you are not following Christ." Unfortunately we are often too *busy*, or too *merry*, or too fond of this pursuit or that pursuit, or this person or that



person, to give a proper hearing to the clear, sterling tones of our truest Friend. It were better for us that our hearing were quicker and our steps more subject to guidance, that thus we might turn into a hitherto untried line,—for “*untried*” it must be, if we can say “it does not suit me.” Judas was the only one of “the twelve” who declined from the divinely marked pathway; and we find that his heart was not a right one, nor was his end a covetable one. Those who *did*, and those who *do*, in earnest follow the Lord, find it a happier road by far than the circuitous maze called “crooked paths,” that has been marked out by the enemy for misguided, self-pleasing souls. Every one has tried the “self-pleasing,”—some have tried the Christ-pleasing. Which is happiest? which is best? Let us ask those who have tried BOTH. This is the common sense view of the case.

But accepting the well-proved fact that for six thousand years has repeated itself, in histories private and public, in experiences personal and recognised, and in testimony however diversified, that THE ‘SERVICE OF GOD IS A DELIGHTFUL, HAPPY SERVICE,’ and a very enviable one,—we must also believe that it has its crosses. As Christ carried His great cross, we as His servants carry our little cross; it cannot be otherwise. Even in our work there are trials, but they are most fascinating ones,

if I may say so. They absorb us. They carry us away. They have all the realities of excitement, without its objections, or rather its evils. And then the interest of *watching, helping, upholding*, is so great. All this apart from SUCCESS. But when this also is given, our work is indeed crowned, and we can rejoice.

Geraldine was living in this forest of interests. Living, loving hearts surrounded her. She wept with them. She worked for them. She *lived*—not for herself, but for Christ her Master,—and for them. In her thoughts that evening of the Mothers' Meeting, she ran over meditatively the lives of the different people she knew; and she decided—"No life can be happier than mine!"

But it had its anxieties too. Various relatives had hinted to Mr. Grayson that the girl would become grey and wrinkled before her time, that she would never get married, that her responsibilities were too great, and were growing ones.

"A few years ago I should have agreed with you," said Mr. Grayson smilingly, when the Lady of Arlington Towers threw out these suggestions a day or two after the events of the last chapter; "but now I see things plainer."

"What! that curate for her husband! the conventicle man!" said Lady Gwendoline, throwing up her little white hands.

“Not exactly!” and Mr. Grayson could not help shrugging his shoulders impatiently. He had no idea of seeing his pet carried out of his sight quite so suddenly. “But,” he continued with an effort at patience, “I mean that I can TRUST her now to Him who lent her to me. I can trust for *her* as I can trust for myself. And you know,” he added, “it is easier to trust for one’s self than for another. I let Him lead her now in the way He would have her to go; and He will not make a mistake. As long as she continues in the mind she is at present, humble and obedient (though I say it), prayerful, and a very devoted and constant student of her Bible, He is holding her hand, and He will not let her go wrong.”

“But you foster the whole thing,” said Lady Gwendoline shrilly, and rather more emphatically than necessary, as she took the embroidered cushion from her sofa lounge, and shook it into shape again.

“*What* whole thing?” said Mr. Grayson.

“Why, this visiting the poor, and running after drunkards, and holding meetings, and all the rest of it,” said Lady Gwendoline. “And teaching dirty children too. I really think that is the worst of all. I never saw such horrors as they are at those pits. I passed them the other day in the carriage; I should not think they washed themselves once in a month!”

There was a silence. Mr. Grayson did not answer.

"Isn't it true?" said the lady, tapping her little satin foot on the carpet. "I do think it is *such* a pity!" and she must needs heave a sigh so deep and so forlorn, that her single auditor must needs jump up from his chair, pushing it aside, and thrusting his hands into the oblivion of his pockets, answer—

"Really, Lady Gwendoline, your sorrows are *quite* uncalled for. If you could but understand that we like our life, and that outside measures can hardly reform it!" He was laughing now; and the case looked hopeless; so his fair assailant renewed the attack by saying—

"Well! I think it is a great pity; for she is quite lost to society."

"Now, don't be absurd!" said Mr. Grayson. "It is too ridiculous to argue about this. You never will see that Diena and I quite understand each other. The girl takes up her duties every day and does them; that is all."

"Well! I am not quite so sure of that!" said Lady Gwendoline, turning her pretty little head on one side, and looking plaintively at her pair of love-birds in the window.

Finding no response came, but that her friend took up a newspaper and seemed inclined to study its columns very attentively, she made a last effort towards defeat, by saying—

“I think there are other duties in life besides those of visiting the poor, and undertaking all those very unpleasant occupations with which poor Diena thinks it her duty to regale herself. I think, for instance, that she might come and see me sometimes, for really the days are often very long”——

“*Always!* my dear Lady Gwendoline; always she will come when you really need her; or indeed when she can be of *any* use. But”——

However the pretty lady chimed in—“Now, next week there are Lord and Lady Barrington coming, and Mr. Hainsworth, and Mr. Moselees, with his wife and daughters. Could she not come over and meet them? Mr. Hainsworth really is a charming man. You know he has not less than four or five thousand a year, and that very pretty property which he must come into soon.”

“Thank you very much!” said Mr. Grayson. “Good-bye!—my horse has been waiting some time. I fear Geraldine is too busy for Mr. Hainsworth’s attentions; however, she is her own mistress!” and he disappeared with a smile on his face, that provoked Lady Gwendoline to say despairingly, as she lifted her feet upon the sofa, and threw out her hand for the novel volume that had been laid aside during Mr. Grayson’s visit,—“Provoking man! I can do nothing with him. How irritating it is! and that girl’s prospects will be ruined!”



In the meantime the "girl" whose "prospects" were matters of such grave solicitude was occupied in her own thoughts, and seated under one of the trees in the avenue at Suniscourt. Quite unconscious that her "unworthy self (as she would have said) was the subject of such serious discussion," she was plodding over two books, both of which she held open in her hand. One was a Testament, the other Bridges "On Faith." Her German Bible lay beside her. She seemed very much immersed in her studies; for though sometimes she raised her head, with a far-away look in her eyes, and gazed over the horizon of wood and water,—her general position was one of research into the open volumes. Her passage of interest at the present moment was one in the "Sermons on Faith."

"A dull, brown, old book!" Lady Gwendoline would have called it.

But Geraldine did not look dull. She looked absorbed; and she was so. This passage she was conning—

"Faith puts the soul under God's protection, and leaves Him to answer all such objections and inconveniences as may come thereby; which if a man can do, he may be very quiet. Now, true faith will enable him to do this. You know how it was with the three children Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; they put themselves under God's commandment.



The Lord commanded and said, ‘Thou shalt not make to Thyself any graven image.’ Well! but the king commands them to fall down before his image. No, say they, we will not stir; we will not bow. But, saith the king, I will make you bow, or I will heat the furnace seven times hotter for you. Well! be it so, say they; as for that, we are not solicitous; we will do the work that God hath set us to do; we will put ourselves under God’s command. We know that our God is able to deliver us. And whether He will deliver us or not, we will leave it to Him. Let Him answer to the inconveniences and mischiefs which follow upon His work: so, saith the Word, they trusted in the Lord.’ . . . It is the proper work of faith to engage God to succour. ‘The Lord shall save them because they trust in Him’ (Psalm xxxvii. 40). ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace because he trusteth in Thee’ (Isaiah xxxvi. 3). Now, when a man can do these things, will he not be quiet and free from discouragements? Surely he will.”

Thus Geraldine read in her quiet seclusion, drinking in precious truths that fed an unseen life; and this life was daily manifesting more strongly in the fruits and labours of a *re-created* heart.

As her father rode up on his chestnut mare, slackening his pace beside the elm that over-

shadowed her with its leafy branches, he said to himself—

"Who would wish to change this simple useful life, to turn it into man-marked channels, poisoned with ambition and foolishness, and"—

"Father!" Geraldine said, looking up; and after a short parley he continued his way home, promising to return after he had dismissed his steed.

When Mr. Grayson returned, he found his daughter standing where she had been sitting. Her books had fallen open to the ground where they lay unheeded on the grass. A man stood opposite her, whom in the distance Mr. Grayson did not recognise, but whom he now saw to be Handy in his working clothes smoothed down into a modicum of tidiness. But it was Geraldine's appearance that attracted his attention. She was flushed to an unusual colour, her eyes intently fixed on the face of her companion, and her little hands tightly clasped together.

Laying his hand rather suddenly on her shoulder, Geraldine started as her father said—

"What is the matter?"

"O father!" said Geraldine, turning to him a very trembling lip and tearful eye—"Bat has been fighting again! and he is drunk now in a public-house."

Handy touched his hat, and was turning away, when Geraldine called him back, saying—

“Don’t go. I shall want you.”

“I am very sorry,” Mr. Grayson was saying.  
“That is a terrible thing!”

“I can hardly believe it,” Geraldine continued in a hurried voice, “but Handy says it is so. I am going to see him at once.”

What was Mr. Grayson’s impulse? of course to forbid it. But he was a wise man and had learnt some heavenly lessons. So he hesitated; and then whispered—

“Whatever you do, my child, do it prayerfully. Don’t be in a hurry.” Then turning to Handy, he said, “You will go with Miss Grayson if she thinks it well to go into the town.”

“The young lady is safe with me, sir,” was Handy’s laconic reply, as he once more raised his hat, and saw Mr. Grayson walk rapidly away.

“God bless him!” said Geraldine. “I have the best of fathers, Handy.”

“No mistake about that!” the man replied.

“But he said ‘*prayerfully*,’” the girl continued.  
“Shall we pray now?”

They did so, standing there. Both in a few short words entreated the Lord’s guidance, wisdom, and help in this moment of disappointment and need.

Then Geraldine picked up her prostrate books, and as she did so, she said to Handy—

"I must just read you this bit first." And she read aloud the strong, clear words of trust above quoted.

"I like 'em very much," said Handy; "but most of all I like a bit of Bible. That seems always to come—just like the stones to David's sling,—so ready, and always the *right* ones too. They knock the giants clean over."

Geraldine said—

"Now we will go—straight to the—what?"

"The Herring Arms," said Handy.

"Oh! horrid! how *could* he go to that low place again, after he had *given up*, as I thought, all these evil ways? I can't think how he could *like* to go!"

"TEMPTATION!" said Handy. "Men have strong temptation for that fiery drink. Bat has got his own temper, and that leads him into mischief, I expect."

"Are you sure he has been fighting?" she asked.

"Yes, I am downright sure; for I saw him myself!" Handy replied.

"But couldn't you stop him?" was Geraldine's eager inquiry, as she turned and looked her informant full in the face. They were walking quickly down a path between hedges that led to the back department of the flower-garden. Here Geraldine

called “Alfred!” and a garden-boy responded to her summons.

“Take care of these books,” she said, “till you have done work, and then take them into the house.”

The boy shaded his eyes from the hot sun as he looked after the young lady and her companion, and said to himself as he did so—

“She’s up to something! what can it be? I’ll be bound it’s some of those ere Coffee-house men been larking about. She’s always a breaking her poor little heart about ’em.”

On they walked, Handy continuing his remarks to the effect that poor Bat’s temper was his foe, “and then there was that ’bominable drink.”

These strong expressions rather encouraged Geraldine; for they reminded her of past days, when her friend Handy disapproved of “total abstinence” quite as much as he did of the Bible; because, as he had since explained, he always thought “they were part and parcel of each other—or were something the same line, anyhow.”

“And you were right,” Geraldine had told him; “they are not bad fellow-travellers. At any rate, *drunkenness* can’t walk into heaven, nor can it take men there. And then, you see, you men can’t take a *little*; and what’s more, you WON’T!”

“We’re not all equally bad!” had been a very



frequent argument on Handy's part,—and Handy was very clever at argument, and like most clever men of his species, was fond of it.

These old times were now past; and Handy consoled himself that he had "got a little more sense now." He could see the dangers and the evils, as he had not seen them before, that beset too closely the working man's path; and by God's grace he was being daily kept from those snares that had more than once threatened to prove ruinous to him. But no man indulging in any sin, or even in company that ignore the sin, can see its blackness, nor can he measure its terrible dimensions. Once delivered, purified, and taught, he begins to realise the danger of that from which he has been delivered.

Handy now had it on his mind to say—

"Beg your pardon, miss, are you going down that way—to the 'Herring,' I mean?"

"Yes!" said Geraldine.

"Because, I don't know as it will do any good if you go just now. The drink's on him, you see, and he won't know nothing except just his mad notions about fighting and that."

"I quite understand," Geraldine answered. "Yes. I quite understand that. I know it is true. But I want to *see* him if I can. If it's only for a moment, I must see him. Then, when he's sober,



I can tell him about it. If I don't see him, he will only be angry with you and the other men for telling me tales of him.”

Handy laughed.

“That's pretty near true!” he said. “But it won't be a very nice sight for you, miss. For the matter of that, though, you've seen a good lot that is not *very nice* looking at.”

“And a great deal that *is* VERY nice!” Geraldine interrupted emphatically. “What is so beautiful as a changed life? a changed heart? Answer me *that*, Handy!”

“Ah! well! It *feels* nice. That is all I know,” said Handy, taking off his hat and rubbing his head thoughtfully—“and looks nice too, no doubt.”

“The angels sing over it,” said Geraldine. “They look at it all the way down from heaven. How surprised God must be when *we* don't care, Handy! But we *do* care, don't we?”

And now they were nearing the irregular street with its crooked corners, low gables, and cramped dwellings. Very little of the light of heaven could thread those dark passages, or enter those hidden rooms. A board creaked upon rusty hinges which presented a coarse painting of a fish, quite unrecognisable as the likeness of a *herring*, but for such it was intended. Judging by its size and absence of proportionate surroundings, it might have been a

whale; but alas! the uncouth delineation did its work, and drew only too many slippery, unsteady souls down into the dark tide of a ruinous mirth. Mirth! do we call it? what are the sights and sounds that greet the eye and ear of Geraldine and her guide?

A stampede seemed to be taking place on the floor of the second story, if one could judge by the noise that proceeded from the small open window above their heads.

Handy hesitated, and looked at his young lady.

"Go in," she said.

"It's not much of a place for *you*, miss," was his reply.

But he thought better of it, and went in.

"Get out with you!" roared the publican from his bar. "Get out! I want none of your nonsense here. Kick him out. Handle him, boys!"

"You might speak civil," said Handy; "there's a young lady here."

The next instant he faced Geraldine as she stood in the door way.

"He's not there, miss," he was saying. "'Pon my word, I don't like taking you in there. It's not really fit."

By this time the publican appeared. Making a low bow, with a mimic smirk on his face, he said, rubbing his hands—

"Anything I can do for you to-day, miss?"

Geraldine fixed her eyes on his face, and said—

"What are they doing up there?" pointing to the upper window.

"Up there?" said the publican, assuming great innocence of expression. "Up there? Well! I shouldn't wonder if they were having a little bit of a dance." And he smirked again, rubbing his hands together.

Now the notes of a fiddle were quite distinguishable; and Geraldine thought that the publican's "ball-room" was a highly probable hiding-place for her erring Bat; so she said to Handy—

"Do you think we might find him there!"

"Who was you asking for?" said the publican blandly.

"Bat Rowan," Geraldine answered.

"I'll go and see, if you like," he replied, becoming obliging all at once.

A look on Handy's face told her that there were limits to *his* permissions; and she saw as plainly that the upper room *was* forbidden ground.

"Thank you!" she therefore replied to the amiable publican, who accordingly disappeared, swinging a greasy door behind him.

As he made his exit through it, Geraldine said—

"Now, I *must* go in here, Handy. I will!" and she walked into the little dark parlour. A double

room it was, the front small, and nearly filled up with the bar. Mugs and bottles and glasses ranged on shelves, and hanging round the inner partition told the uses of the chamber. Two or three, half-tipsy, sat and lolled on chairs or stools; one lay underneath the table, his hat over his eyes.

"Don't look any further, miss," said Handy.

"I will," said Geraldine; and she took one step towards the inner door.

This enabled her to get a glimpse of the further room. It was lined round the wall with seats. Tables stood at different angles. Dirty newspapers, spilt beer, and empty glasses told their own tale. Here and there on the seats sat or lay some poor inebriate.

"How do you do, my dear?" It was a thickened, unsteady voice that spoke.

Geraldine looked round. Fear seemed to have left her altogether. Pressing her hand tightly on her chest, to keep down the rising agitation that threatened to overmaster her voice, she said in a clear, distinct voice—

"My friends"——

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed a voice; "that's good! and who are you?"

"Be quiet," said another, aiming a kick at the speaker. "It's the young lady from the Hall. You ain't got no manners."

“Yes; we are strangers now,” Geraldine continued; “but I want you to be my friends. Will you come and see me on Sunday evening at the pier-head. Punctually at six o’clock I shall be there. Who will come?”

Then repeating in the solemn, emphatic manner, that had become so natural to her when she quoted the inspired Word, Geraldine said—

“‘Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.’ Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ! who will come and hear about the FRIEND of sinners?”

These searching words began to arouse the poor half-dazed occupants of the rooms, and feeling she had given her message, Geraldine turned away; but as she gained the door, she found herself confronted by the public-house keeper.

Smiling blandly as before, he said with a peculiar gesture—

“Excellent! excellent! very good advice. I quite approve of religion. It’s very good in its proper place. I think it was Bat Rowan you were inquiring for. You must have been misinformed. He is not here. Good evening, miss.”

And here came another low bow.

“Only one word, Mr. Malting,” Geraldine said in her decided, bright way. “What *is* the proper



place for Him we were speaking of? IN YOUR HEART—just in there!—

‘There’s room in my heart for THEE.’ ”

It seemed a hopeless task; but Geraldine silently wrote into a corner of her memory the resolution that “Mr. Malting must have a Sankey hymn-book.”

In the meantime the publican, when he disappeared through the door, had climbed some creaking stairs that led to the noisy room above, and there singling out the one disconsolate figure from the riotous group—yes! it was poor Bat—had said to him—

“Now then! cut your stick! there’s some of your Coffee-shop folks looking after you. A deal of trouble you ‘totallers’ give us. Why can’t you stick steady to the liquor?”

The word “Coffee-shop” acted like the sudden sting of a whip-lash to the young man’s conscience, and he rapidly disappeared down the back stairs, and out into an alley that led towards the wharf. Sauntering about there, with his pipe in his mouth, and his pockets again sadly empty, he drank in the soft breezes of that autumn evening—a better draught than the fiery spirit drops he had already too freely imbibed. Suddenly he wheeled round and disappeared again. This time he passed through



a door between two bow windows, over which another sign was hanging. It was called “The Rope and Anchor.” He had become aware instinctively of a presence incongruous to the fumes of tobacco, gin, oaths, curses, and profane songs. Miserable, wretched as he was, and only half-conscious, he could not face “the young lady.” And he was gone. Geraldine saw him glide into another haunt. The spirit of *reclaim* was strong upon her, and like the hunter within scent of his prey, she would not turn.

“There he is!” she exclaimed; and Handy’s expostulations fell like exhausted arrows before her. “I *must* find him!”

“That’s a *horrid* bad place!” said her friend.

“Never mind! I want Bat;” and in she went.

This was a more attractive-looking place than the last. It had a very long, low, wainscoted room that led out to the sea; and, supported on a strong wall, the broad balcony welcomed its guests to combined charms that its frequenters found it hard to resist. Sea view, cool breezes, pots of foaming beer, spirit draughts, the pipe and unfailing game with cards or dice,—these were the delights of the “Three Suns Inn.” Skulking like a naughty boy in the tap-room passage, Geraldine found him.

“O Bat!” she just said, “you mustn’t stay

here. This won't do. You must come to the old place again. Come back to the Coffee-house, Bat. Do you hear? Will you come home now? Come and get some coffee?"

Then she tried her unfailing weapon, the sword-point that can do such unerring work. Remembering her "faith" helps under the trees that afternoon, and a corresponding passage from the written Word, Geraldine said, with an earnestness almost peculiar to herself—

"Bat! the Lord Jesus Christ LOVES you. Yes! He loves you still, and wants to bless you. Do you believe that? He says, 'Call upon ME in the day of trouble: I WILL DELIVER THEE, AND THOU SHALT GLORIFY ME.'"

Poor Bat listened stupidly, and a touch from Handy's fingers showed Geraldine that she must leave. As they withdrew, sounds of altercation, which before were perceptible enough from an inner door, now grew louder; the door burst open, and two men, their faces red with drinking, their hair roughened, and their arms locked about each other, fell prostrate into the narrow passage. They had been fighting desperately; and now their company having proved likely to be too hot for the publican's license, he was endeavouring to expel them.

"He's in with a nice lot *now!*" said Handy, as

they turned away from the sickening sight. “Poor chap! I’m sorry for him; and he was going on so well too!”

As they walked through the strolling groups that lined the quay, and passed out from the busy populated streets into the gentle field slope that led to the more immediate grounds of Suniscourt, Geraldine suddenly stopped, and looking round, said—

“I must go back to the Coffee-house.”

“Is it any message that I can take, miss?” Handy asked.

“I want to ask Barnes to look out for Bat, and treat him kindly if he comes. He might speak to him, and ask him to be sure to come to the Sunday meeting at the pier.”

Geraldine knew it was useless to invite the man *to church*. In that frame of mind, and amidst those associates, the church seems so far above the working-man, and altogether so foreign to anything like the degraded surroundings of a public-house, that Geraldine had found out in her short experience, as she sometimes said—

“You might as well tell me to walk straight into Buckingham Palace! you can’t make these rough fellows think that the church is for them. *After* they have become respectable, and in some degree taught, they see things differently; and often

(though not always) they begin to take a pride and delight in regular attendance there. Certainly with our simple service and the fatherly kindness of our dear old Mr. Cathcart and this earnest young curate, it is no wonder that they get attached to the church. Would it be so, were the sermon, services, and ministers DIFFERENT from what they are?—*that* is the question."

Handy promised faithfully to deliver his messages to Barnes.

"Then I need not keep you any longer," Geraldine said. "Good evening, Handy."

"No! I thank you, miss," replied Handy, touching his hat. "The master said—'I trust her to you;' and if you please, miss, I'll see you to the house."

A golden sunset was at this moment vying with the gold and orange tints of autumn foliage, that spread massively to the right as far as the eye could reach, ending in a bluish distance that sometimes was a scroll of green, in winter almost russet brown.

Yes! "those wonderful trees," Cousin Jane called them. They were always changing. They had their winter, spring, and summer dress; and now their autumn beauty, quite gorgeous in its rich variety. The near line of water had caught the golden tinge and was sparkling brightly.

To-day even Geraldine was refreshed by the blaze of colour; and the gentle evening air was soothing as it passed over her flushed cheeks. But she could give her real thought to nothing but poor Bat and his public-houses.

“Why *do* the men go to these places?” she asked. “You *never* really liked them, did you, Handy?”

“Too much, I am afraid, miss,” Handy replied abruptly. For he too was thinking; and thoughts are not always pleasant. In his there mingled, however, a tinge of satisfaction as he thought of strange deliverances. “There’s three things—least-ways that’s how it seems to me—that does the mischief. First, the taste of the drink. They like it, and they get to like it more and more. Then there’s the company. And then you see it’s a shelter for ’em. Nobody likes stopping about always on the road. Anyhow, there’s reasons enough for every sin, when once you come to give way to it.”

Thus Handy moralised. As he did so, they were approaching the brow of the hill. Geraldine stood and looked back over the water, the woods, the little white boats that seemed to skim a glassy, golden surface,—and over to the left, beneath its grey veil of smoke, the town that held so many human hearts, each with its own history of griefs, and cares, and sometimes joys.



It was a fascinating scene ; and yet Geraldine was glad now to make her escape from the friendly protection who had guarded her steps. Finding her way into the house by the side door, she went up the stairs that passed by the conservatory lobby, took a glance in at the hanging festoons of creeping crimson, with its snowy counterpart, just then in their radiance, plucked two tempting sprays for her evening adornment, and entered her own room. That pretty corner of the old house had been deftly hung with scraps of china, paintings, illuminated text scrolls and mottoes, each bearing a history, and all most precious to the owner. But Geraldine went straight to her open window and gazed out into the flood of beauty below. The gold had faded into red. A darker shade of sunset light was pervading the expanse above, below, and around.

"Too beautiful!" she said ; and then she thought of the "locket" night, as she sometimes called the eventful evening when *repentance*, in all its grand, appealing beauty, dawned upon her soul. Now, her heart went upward in its praise to Him who had GIVEN "the turning from darkness unto light," and had GIVEN its bright consequences in the fruits of a new life, new but continued usefulness, success in turning souls,—but then came the humbling. Yes! this was indeed a humbling



reflection! It was a sudden view—a recollection of her own helplessness.

“I cannot save even Bat! I could not do anything for him this afternoon. We saw all those horrors; but I could not help him. And there are thousands, thousands just like that poor fellow; and many thousands far, far worse!”

The tears gathered in her eyes and dropped over her cheeks. Then Geraldine locked her door, and spread out her tale in prayer. But as she prayed the Sennacherib hosts, arrayed against her in that simple work and labour of love, fell back. The hand of the Lord was upon them, and they were “as dead men.”

At that very hour new thoughts were beginning to resolve themselves in Bat Rowan’s brain. Stupefied as he was, he knew a little. He thought it was a dream; but he knew that the “young lady” had visited him. And bit by bit, slow dulled recollections of his past came back upon him. In kaleidoscopic confusion he saw the Coffee-house, the friendly faces, the steaming cups, the pleasant games, the books and pictures, and he heard the hymns—those sweet bright notes, caught from a higher realm than those wild sinful songs that rang at this moment through his ear, and filled him with a remorseful shame. He could not think distinctly yet; but he felt very unhappy. He could not

think, but he could shuffle out of those quarters ; and regardless of the cat-calls that pursued him, he made his way along the wharf. Very unsteady his gait was. Towards the Coffee-room he went. He did not get far, however, before a hand was laid upon his arm.

It was a man called Arnott, a very regular frequenter of the Coffee-house Bible Classes, who now waylaid poor Bat on his journey.

"Well, old chap!" he was saying, "where are you bound for?"

Bat looked threateningly at him. The old impulse was upon him to raise his fist and strike. But this time the hand fell powerless. He could not strike *a friend*. That kind face was looking into his. There was love there. Friendship and pity looked down into the wanting, aching needs of his forlorn heart. And instead of striking, Bat said—

"I've been on the drink."

"Well! that'll do for just now," said Arnott. "Won't it? Come along home with me. There's a good fellow. My missus has got the tea on. She'll give you a cup. Come on, don't you mind nothing. Come on with me now."

And the force of a clear mind carried the day against a dulled intellect, weakened in its reaction from strong spirit-drinking. Rowan walked doggedly by the side of the man, who, as he walked, prayed ;

and who might have, there and then, turned Cain's question into an affirmation, or better still an entreaty. "I *am* my brother's keeper,"—or, "Help me, Lord, this night, to keep my brother! Keep us both! keep us from temptation!"

The "missus" was invaluable in her aid. The steaming, hissing kettle, too, did its work. Even the purring cat, and Arnott's crowing boy of one year old, with his clustering curls and fat rosy cheeks, and hands that would stretch themselves out to every new-comer. Yes! the baby did a stroke of work that night; for while Bat's tea was being poured out, he must needs sit on the visitor's lap, and look in his face with those laughing blue eyes.

"He do look that clean and pretty," said Bat, as he smeared his hand over his eyes, "he makes me feel quite 'shamed of myself."

"Have your tea and bacon first," said Arnott pleasantly, as he stole away the curly boy, from his seat on Bat's knee. "Maybe you'll come down the Coffee-room way afterwards."

"Not I," said Bat. "I've been having a time of it. I don't want to go along *that* way."

"All right," said Arnott. "The only thing is the young lady. She's been in a way about you. And she might be down there this evening."

"Well! I ain't going, that's all I know!" was the

reply, as the tea went down in mouthfuls. Not a morsel of food would he take.

"A chap can't eat when he's on the drink," Arnott explained to his wife afterwards, who happily had never seen *her* "man" the worse for that terrible diet.

As long as Arnott could keep Bat with him, he did so; and then he took him "home," as he called it, to the lodging he had in an adjoining street.

Geraldine did go down that night just for an hour or two. Her father ordered the brougham, and went with her; for he was much interested in his daughter's account of her rambles. He thought she was a little tired; and so she was. Those scenes and thoughts commingled,—the scenes but a specimen of world-wide misery, and the thoughts, so trying in their helpless sympathy, were a good afternoon's work of themselves. But she had found the relief of casting them upon God. Little did she know how that very stretching out of pity had cast its bands of weakness in mighty fetters about the captive foe, and laid him down. *Her* sympathy, too, had more warmly enlisted than that of other men who otherwise might have looked more coldly upon the backslider.

At the Coffee-house Geraldine asked Barnes and one or two of the men if Bat had been there. "No," they said, and she was disappointed. But

she did not know how safely the Lord had housed him in Arnott's home during that evening of temptation.

Presently Handy came in.

“He's all right,” he whispered; “Arnott's got him.”

Geraldine's face sunned all over with smiles.

“You don't mean it!” she said. “How did Arnott find him?”

“Somewhere down there by the shipping. He told me he'd have a look-out for him.”

“And where is Bat now?” Geraldine asked.

“He's gone home, I believe,” was the reply. “He wouldn't come in here, though Arnott he did all he could to get him. But he seemed dreadful miserable. Most likely he'll be down this way to-morrow night; I shouldn't wonder. Poor chap! it's the first downfall he's had. I hope it will be the last.”

“I hope indeed that it will!” echoed Geraldine. “It is bad enough to have *one* such fall.”

“It came just this way,” said Handy. “He got into words with the man that has the furnace by his, and then Rowan struck him. The man, he said he'd have it out afterwards. And so they did. Then Bat, he didn't like coming round this way where we'd all see him; and he just sloped off down into the beer again, like he used to. And



once he began, he couldn't stop. That's something how it was."

The carriage had been put up for an hour. In the small precincts adjoining the Coffee-house building, Mr. Grayson had erected a stable and coach-house. This proved a very necessary convenience, and was almost daily in use. As the hands of the cuckoo clock, that decorated the wall opposite to the door, told that the close of the hour was approaching, Geraldine took up a Bible. The passage at which she opened was the first chapter of Jeremiah. "SAY NOT, I AM A CHILD," she read, beginning at the 7th verse, and reading the 8th and the 19th. She read these words "distinctly, and gave the sense, and (by the help of God's promised Spirit) caused the people to understand the reading" (see Ezra viii. 8). A sermon, even an address, or anything approaching to these, would have been wholly out of place in this Coffee-room, largely attended by men of various phases of character, mood, and at that moment taken up with a variety of occupations, much of the latter consisting in desultory conversation. No! they were only a few bright sentences, very pointed, short, and striking; in which she asked the men not to be discouraged if another fell, nor to stand themselves, irresolute soldiers in the line of battle. "Say not, I am a child!" she repeated, looking round her at



the faces that were almost all turned in her direction, listening as she spoke. “This is Saturday night. Let us look *up*, and confess our sins; let us look *in*, if we will, and see our weakness; and *back* at our failures, but oh! we must not stop there,—we have not a moment to stay there! Rather let us look UP anew, and constantly, for grace and strength; and ON into the future, with faith and hope, believing that He who has promised will also perform. Our own weakness we must see; and the enemy’s terrible power shown in so many different ways. But THE LORD’S STRENGTH is more than a match for both! How grand it is to have such a friend to trust in! Who will trust Him to-night? ‘BE NOT AFRAID OF THEIR FACES; I AM WITH THEE TO DELIVER THEE, SAITH THE LORD.’ You will ‘agree’ with me in prayer now, that WE may be His children,—that WE may be kept safe,—and that we may be very useful, happy children!”

Standing as she was, she prayed—

“Lord! bless each one of us this night! Bless these dear men! Bless those who serve them! May we have great courage in serving THEE! Forgive every sin *now*, while we confess them to Thee, and look upon us with love and in mercy; for Jesus Christ our Saviour’s sake. Amen.”

The words read entered into hearts more or less unaccustomed to the Best Voice; and the petitions

offered put into shape more than one vague, wandering wish for a better, more comforted, and holier life. These petitions ascended in the Divine Name. The answers *must* come. The capital had been invested, the interest *must* follow. These poor men were getting an insight into the simple art of drawing cheques on their great Heavenly Bank, ever open by day and by night. Heart ingress ever allowed, whether through the door of church, chapel, coffee-house, meeting-room, cottage, roadside, or shed: was not this good education? Where would all the Nihilist, Land League, Fenian, Unionist ebullitions go to, if these sweet dews of content—yes! peaceful content!—and holy, humble submission were a little more frequently, generally, and attractively presented to the people? "Strikes" would disappear if the spirit of the lowly Jesus were more welcomed, and thus distilled into hearts. A peaceful love would exist between master and man. The master would sacrifice much to benefit his men, and the men would yield to much rather than injure the master or a fellow-workman. Does this seem a millennial state? impossible at the present time? Surely not. If instead of the Sunday trains, the opened museums, and other efforts at *amusement* for the people, we could by any possibility comfort them in their sorrows, let them into the happiness of being saved by, and

serving, the One who has promised to the “upright” every “good thing,” we should truly be bringing our country into renewed prosperity. Thus we should be extending the highest Kingdom ; and the extension of that Kingdom means BLESSEDNESS. PEACE follows on obedience to our Father’s laws. Those laws teach the people submission ; while they teach the masters patient love. A mutual concession would rivet the indissoluble link of mutual service, made strong in kindness, affection, and respect. With higher motives men would do better work. Gain a man’s heart for God, and you have gained the man’s character for yourself, and with good character and good motive you have gained good service.

The Coffee-house conducted on these principles requires plodding work, but that work blessed and owned by God accomplishes wonders.

The hour spent by Geraldine this afternoon in those apparently useless trackings had already done something. They had accomplished, too, far more than she was aware. They had once more shown the town that she was in earnest. The proverb, “Every hand gives a push to a drowning man,” had for once been proved false ; and a very unusual exception it had been. These men, until lately, had not been accustomed to be run after in this way when on their downward paths. But the

silken rein was a popular one; and one syllable against their self-constituted "keeper" would have been a mistake on the part of its author. The worst frequenter of those public-houses would have stood up for this slight, smiling girl. Unpretentious, unassuming as she was, she had these people's hearts. Why? Because she devoted herself to them, that was all! She took an interest in them; and they were grateful to her. The English working-man is independent truly, but he is not independent of kindness, and especially of this sort.

Handy was addressing Mr. Grayson at the further end of the room, when he said—

"She's done a good job of work for us to-day, that she has. Beg your pardon, sir—the young lady, I mean."

Mr. Grayson could not help smiling, for at this moment he looked across the tables and saw Geraldine donning her cloak and gloves, surrounded by many eyes intently watching her, and a small bevy of stalwart friends round her. To each of these she was saying her parting words.

"Ben! I am very anxious to see your wife at the hospital to-morrow, if I can. Is there any message I can take?"

"Nothing, thank ye all the same. I am going up there myself in the evening. She *will* be

pleased if you can look in. She do count the days for your coming.”

“I will go then; and take some more of that jelly. . . . Merton! I want you to come up to the house to-morrow evening. Do you think you can manage to do that?”

Geraldine wanted a quiet talk with this man, for she had her fears that he was not doing quite so well just now as in past times. His appearance at the church, meetings, and even Coffee-House, had been getting irregular; and altogether she had her misgivings. But her excuse for the said talk must be found—so Geraldine remarked to him in a *sota voce* tone, that perhaps his little boy would like to come up to the house and get some tea and cake in her “little room.” This was a small unused housekeeper’s apartment near the region of the side door.

“I have got something for him,” she explained. The “something” was one of a parcel of toys she had purchased a few days before to help on a little struggling shop in one of the villages she passed in her drives.

“I hope we shall have a good Bible-class on Wednesday evening,” she said to a third. “I like the subject. Don’t you? THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP,” she continued, turning round to some of the other men seated by the tables. “Will you come?”



she asked, stooping down to a new man who had been at several of the meetings lately.

"May be!" the man answered laconically.

So, giving her faithful Arnott a look,—who was at that moment entering the door, having disposed of his charge with safety,—she committed the stranger to his care, knowing well that a kind word would be spoken, and a friendly influence exercised.

It was not so much what Geraldine said and did, as what she *was*, and what she *felt*, and *showed* that she felt, that did its work in the town, and was so blessed by Him who was its Author.

The evening's work done, Geraldine and her father got into the carriage, and went home. It had been a busy, useful day. The hours had flown. New teachings had been received, new experiences gathered, new sights seen. Painful sights, it is true,—but valuable ones, for they were no fictitious stage representations of highly-drawn and sensational horrors,—only a new page turned in the book of real life that lay before her; and that lies before you and me, would we but glance within it, carrying our balm amidst the grief we find therein.

Tartie's reception was rather characteristic. That lady was not growing younger as the years advanced. Her benevolence of nature though somewhat developed by the circumstances amidst which she dwelt,



was still rather a hidden gem, crusted over by much that to an outward observer would seem to savour of *coldness*. “All is not gold that glitters,” she would say of an enthusiastic manner, or glowing ardour of expression. But underneath the crust of outward indifference there lay a warm heart. Geraldine understood Tartie as well as any one did; though even she was sometimes puzzled. Reserve is often a very impenetrable veil, sometimes unconscious, sometimes assumed; but if permitted to carry its sway too far, it is an injurious friend. Hiding the better feelings from the sympathy that would meet them, until that “hiding” becomes a rigid habit rather than a necessary defence, a wall erects itself that immures the soul in a self-constituted banishment. The “going out” and “coming in,” of friendship, and with it much that has been ordained for us of refreshment and help, are forbidden; and the life becomes perforce a solitary one. The constant presence of a third is often a trying one, and Tartie’s would have been no exception to the rule, had it not been for a certain amount of tact which in spite of her *brusqueness*, she had learnt to use. And having decorated her tiny suite of bedroom and boudoir to perfection, by Geraldine’s tasty aid and her own faculty for collecting treasures, picturesque though not extravagant, Tartie’s days, except at certain hours, was a

good deal divided between the garden and her own household occupations.

"What's the news?" Geraldine asked, as she came in and found Tartie absorbed in a newspaper beside the reading-lamp.

"News!" Tartie answered, looking up. "Any amount! First of all, I was going upstairs for my Shetland shawl, thinking the evening rather chilly, when I heard the swing-door fall to rather heavily, and Sarah the housemaid came to me saying—

"'Please, miss, here's a woman begging, from the Pits. I have told her to go away, and she won't take a denial, so I said I'd come to you.'

"'I'll come!' I answered; and reaching the back door, there I beheld that slatternly woman, Mrs. Fennell, who was at the meeting that Sunday your cousins were here, and we all went over the fields. She said her child had fallen into the fire, and was very badly burnt. She wanted 'a line,' she said, for the hospital."

"Oh! poor thing! how distressing! And did you give her one?" Geraldine asked.

"Oh yes! I did. But hear the end of the story. She said she had been out washing some things at the back, and was hanging them out to dry in the back yard, when the child screamed, and the mother running in found that it had tumbled off a high chair into which it was tied, and

had fallen on the low grate full of red-hot coals. Poor dirty creature! she kept saying, as she wiped her eyes with her shawl, 'Oh dear me! dear me! She do cry to be sure!' I said, 'What have you done for the child?' And what do you think the deluded mortal informed me? She said that 'the husband' had rubbed salt into the child's burns!"

"Oh! dreadful! I cannot bear to hear of it!" said Geraldine.

"Yes! indeed! and then told the child to be brave like a soldier, and bear it well!"

"I should like to see a soldier bearing that!" said Geraldine. "The miseries of ignorance!" she remarked, as she threw off her cloak and proceeded to pour out tea.

"You take it very quietly," said Tartie. "I very nearly set off there and then to see after the child, and prevent them from killing it altogether."

"Well, Tartie, I'm glad you didn't yield to the impulse. We should not have seen you back again to-night. Do you remember the sailor?" Geraldine remarked.

"I don't know about that," Tartie answered; "but I think we should go and see after it to-morrow."

"We will go!" said Geraldine. "Shall we take the pony-carriage there before breakfast?"

"You don't seem to have much time for fatigue, Geraldine," Mr. Grayson interposed.

"A burnt child does not come every day, father. *Something* must be done," she answered.

"You are your own mistress," was his answer. "You won't go very far wrong, I think."

"A truce to compliments," said Geraldine, kissing her father. "And now, Tartie, what more news? I know there is something left that you have not told us yet."

"Oh yes! Two more paragraphs! When the woman went away, I was just looking at those evening primroses in the narrow beds, so lovely they were! as white as ivory, just opening out freshly—when I saw a sailor hanging about. He looked like a foreigner. However, I asked him what he wanted. He said, in broken English, he had just come ashore from one of the ships in the harbour, the vessel on which he was employed having been wrecked in the Baltic."

"And did he want money?" Geraldine asked.

"Oh yes! of course he did! I gave him a shilling, and made him promise to go away."

"And was that all?" Geraldine asked.

"I thought that would come!" said Tartie. "No, that was not all. I asked him his name, and the name of his ship. I thought you would want that."

"Well done, Tartie!" Geraldine answered. "That was quite the correct thing. And now we can

follow him up. The story *may* be true. But did he *ask* you for money?”

“No!” Tartie was obliged to confess, “he did not ask; but he said he wanted you, and so I supposed he wanted money!”

“Now, father, did you ever hear anything like this?” said Geraldine, appealing to the arm-chair in which her father reposed; “isn’t Tartie sordid in her ideas? She thinks that because a sailor came up the avenue in the evening, he must necessarily want money. I think it is most probable that he *didn’t* want it; however, we shall see to-morrow what it was all about. Did he take the shilling?”

“Oh yes! he turned it round in his fingers two or three times, but finally he pocketed it.”

“I daresay he will wear it as a medal round his neck, or on his chain. It is not likely that he wanted it. But it was very kind of you to give it to him, dear old Tartie! all the same.”

“The last piece of news is a note from Mrs. Mowbray, enclosed to me, ‘because she thought you would be out.’ I was to give a probable answer, to which you were to send your own more definite one.”

Geraldine took the note. And thus the conversation ended; the day had rolled round, and beyond the hours of sleep’s oblivion lay a busy morrow.





## CHAPTER VIII.

### An Endless Life.

“One day is with the Lord as a thousand years ; and a thousand years as one day.”—2 PET. iii. 8.

Unto all eternal ages  
For the flesh we ask not rest,—  
During this our time of trial  
Give us as Thou seest best !  
But the spirit will not leave Thee,  
Clings to Thee in endless prayer,  
Till Thou give her perfect freedom  
Life—breath of the heavenly air.





DAY may seem very short, or very long, as we fill or waste it. But in the verse above quoted we have the LORD'S view of a day. To use each twenty-four hours aright, as it comes to us, is a matter of importance worth a prayerful study. To generalise in a matter of such infinite variety is ever impossible; but there are for each of us in our Father's teachings—His own Word—mottoes and axioms of the greatest value. One of these we might have found on the Coffee-room wall at Norton. It was this—

“WHATSOEVER THY HAND FINDETH TO DO, DO IT WITH THY MIGHT.”

The words were very simple. Every one could understand their surface meaning. But within them there lay new spiritual depths that Geraldine was discovering, and with her some of those whom she was leading heavenwards.

It was a September afternoon, just after the hour for dinner, when the men stood reading it. It was

written in plain Roman letters, distinguishable from some little distance. That the eyes of these men had been attracted across the room to its study was evident from the vision of neglected plates that lay on a table in a distant corner.

"But, if there ain't nothing to do! what then?" said one, a brawny fellow, with his square shoulders heavily set, and his arms hanging loosely from them, as though they were encumbrances rather than the all-important appendages that we usually consider them.

"I don't know about that," said the other. He was a younger man, shorter, with crisp brown curls about his head, and showing under the cap which was set jauntily on one side of his head.

The other whistled, and said—

"I suppose that's religion. It's all talk. There's nothing in it that you can make out. Look at that now written up there! There's no meaning in it at all. I've got nothing to do, that's all I know; no more have you!"

And the two men turned away. The last speaker was a determined-looking man, with an uncomfortable expression on his face. The other, in spite of his youthful appearance and manly figure, had a care-worn look, and an anxious pucker about the brows, that told of that weary uncertainty about money which the rich know as well as the poor.

“Nothing to do!” it was quite true. You could see it in their attitude as they went out at the door, leant aimlessly against the iron rails, and finally strolled away down the streets, looking in at the shop-windows as they went.

Judging by their step, life at the present moment was a weary business. Idleness is always more tiring than work. Every one finds it so. These men evidently found it so. They thought no one cared, no one noticed them. They were mistaken. There was an eye beholding. ONE was watching. Their hearts were in His hand. He had died for those men, but He wanted some one to tell them so. Then, perhaps, life would bear a new aspect. In that little town a beacon-light of mercy had been placed. These men who would never enter a church had entered the Coffee-house by the pier. There, new ideas, not frequently met with, had been communicated to them from the walls and books, and from the kindly tone of the serving man, and his pleasant smile; and last, but not least, the low charges for the “first good dinner they had come at these three days,” as in their own parlance they expressed it.

The manager had his eye upon these fellows, and when they returned three or four hours later for a final cup of coffee, he accosted them—

“Nice afternoon! been down about the shipping?”

“Over Acton way,—looking for work,” was the answer.

“Got a job?” he asked, bustling about his counter with the invariable dish-cloth as he did so.

“No such luck!” one of them answered; “work don’t grow like grass under your feet.”

“Don’t say ‘luck,’” was the reply from the ever-ready Barnes. “No, my man, there’s something better for you than that!”

“What d’ye mean?” asked the square-shouldered customer.

“I mean that there’s something better for you than that. Look higher than luck, if you please, sir, and *then* I’ll be bound it will all come right!”

The two men looked at one another and laughed outright. They couldn’t help it; they didn’t mean to be rude; but really this was such a very new view of the question, that it naturally struck them as incongruous, with the facts that haunted them day by day. “No work!” “No work!” “No work!” They were “weary of its chime!”

“I’ll tell you what!” said Barnes. “Do you know our young lady?”

“No,” the young man answered rather roughly, “no lady ever come nigh us. There’s my wife and two little ’uns away down in the Shires. There’s little enough coming in this last three weeks,—



nought but what the wife can earn,—and no one of the gentlefolks driving by in their carriages has ever been inside the door. I don't know *no* young ladies. They're a stoopid, idle lot,—that's what they are. I know enough *about* 'em, if I don't *know* 'em."

It was now Barnes' turn to be amused.

"I don't know much about the Shires," he replied; "but I know very well *our* young lady isn't like that. Look you here! can you come in to-morrow evening? She'll be here then."

"Perhaps we might, there's no saying!" the oldest man answered. He was called Redhead, for his hair somewhat savoured of that colour. But his answer was an indifferent one. It meant that he did not care very much for anything but the fulfilment of his desire to get work.

They were going out when Barnes said—

"Not luck, remember, but LOOK UP!"

"Not a bad fellow that!" was the remark from one to the other, as the couple pursued their cheerless way amidst the thickly-strewn public-houses that lined the wharf, to the room where they slept with three or four other men. It may seem strange, but it is a fact, that as they laid their heads upon their jackets (as pillow substitutes) that night, there was a glimmer, just a glimmer, a very faint one, of a new comfort about their hearts. What was it?

Simply this, instead of being in everybody's way, they felt for the first time that they were WANTED. This much had been accomplished by Barnes, the Coffee-house, and the text. "We are saved by hope." No word was ever truer, unless it were the counterpart verse, "we are saved by faith." There was something to look forward to this evening. It was an invitation, whether they accepted it or not—the invitation was a pleasant thing.

. . . . .

But to go back to Geraldine's note. It was from Mrs. Mowbray, and ran thus—

"DEAREST CHILD,—The grapes are waiting your commands. They will soon be too ripe. When are you coming? Are there *no* sick people at the Hospital just now? and *none* in the cottages? Come and explain. And bring a good large basket with you.—Your loving friend. L. MOWBRAY."

Geraldine seemed to be a sort of *reservoir* into which people "emptied their kindnesses," as she sometimes said, expecting her to form the communicating channels into "empty lives." It was rather pleasant to be such a medium. In accepting the responsibility, and doing the duty, she recognised the honour thus conferred upon her of being "God's steward," His almoner. In the fulfilment of trust there is always pleasure. In her case it was a

very hallowed pleasure, because she undertook it in the name of her Master whose steps she was endeavouring to follow.

The pony-carriage started at ten o'clock,—immediately after breakfast; in it were Geraldine and her friend. They were bound for the Quarries. It did not take long for the nimble feet of the grey pony to carry the ladies to their destination. Here they found the lamenting mother and the burnt child. After a due examination of the poor little sufferer, and many tearful manifestations of sympathy and pity, Geraldine said, with the decision that she sometimes found necessary to call into play when dealing with her dear mothers—

“There is only one thing for it, Mrs. Fennell, you must let me take your baby to the little Hospital. There she will be well taken care of. If you keep her at home she may get much worse.”

After a little firm persuasion and some coaxings, Geraldine succeeded in effecting her capture, and drove off in triumph. Beside her sat the mother and wrapped-up baby. In the back seat Tartie was enthroned. It was a couple of miles to the Hospital. Here Geraldine introduced her charge, and asked if it could be taken in. The nurse examined the infant, raising her hands in horror at the sight of the strangely aggravated sores.

"Whatever have you been putting over it?" she asked the mother severely.

"Only just some salt, miss," said the woman with a courtesy. "The father thought, maybe, it 'ud do a deal of good."

"Salt!" exclaimed the nurse, proceeding with a still closer inspection. "Whoever in this world heard of such a thing! What made you do that?"

"The father thought salt cured most things, and I was to try it on the child; but, lor', she did scream to be sure!"

"Did cure most things! what can she mean?" said the nurse, turning her knitted brows to Geraldine.

But that young lady was disappearing to an inner room. The "ham and bacon" idea, from which the poor mother's ideas about the salt-cure were evidently derived,—even under such painful circumstances, were proving too much for her risible faculties. But the piteous screams of the baby brought her once more to the front.

"Can I do anything for you?" she said to the nurse.

"Yes, Miss Grayson; first, will you call Jane?" Jane was the under nurse.

She was called; the baby put into her arms; and Geraldine beckoned out of the room by the nurse,

who, with one of her swift, silent movements, entered the little dispensary, on the skilful keeping of which she prided herself.

“Now, I will tell you what you can do for me, Miss Grayson. If you wouldn't mind driving that woman back again to her cottage, you would be doing a real kindness. Where does she live? poor forlorn creature that she seems!”

“I will ask her to come, if you like. But I don't know whether she will,” Geraldine replied.

“I can do nothing while she is here,” the nurse answered. “I shall have to treat that baby till the doctor comes; he may be here directly. But the mother cannot stay now. She may come to-morrow afternoon if she likes. What horrible cruelty these people do practise, to be sure. The idea of anointing the child with salt!”

“Never mind, nurse! I will bring you something nice presently. Some grapes for the patients. Good-bye.”

And Geraldine having persuaded the mother to accompany her back to the Quarries in the pony-carriage, departed, to Tartie's relief. Tartie had been holding the pony's reins all the time.

The nurse returned to soothe the infant, and doctor its wounds, while the weeping mother drove home to the Quarries with Geraldine. On the way there Geraldine seemed absorbed in her own



thoughts ; till the sight of a clear rivulet trickling over some mossy stones below the road, reminded her of her text that morning—

“ALL MY FRESH SPRINGS ARE IN THEE.”

Turning round on an impulse to Mrs. Fennell, she said—

“Do you know any comforting verses in the Bible? I can tell you one,” and she quoted the above, commenting simply upon it. “It is very nice to know that we may have some of the ‘clear crystal’ stream from heaven in our hearts if we will. *You* want COMFORT to-day, and help ; and so do I. Where can we get the streams from? only from Jesus! We may come ‘boldly to the throne of grace, and obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.’ Isn’t that a nice promise?”

There was not much response beyond tears from the unhappy mother ; so Tartie, thinking some more material comfort might prove more to the purpose, remarked—

“I daresay Miss Grayson will take some grapes to your baby this afternoon ; and does she like pictures?—There is one of those coloured books for children, you know, Geraldine ; it has been lying by a long time. We might take it to the child.”

The final promise of a frock did more towards



drying the mother's tears than any of the other suggestions. But without any apparent interest in the truths spoken from the Living Stream, the new idea of "help from Jesus," had reached the woman's mind in a way it had not done before. The little readings at the Quarries she had attended once or twice, but then she was not in trouble, only always very busy, and always very tired, and there had seemed no loophole for the truth to enter.

"Get help from Jesus!" the poor creature kept repeating over and over again to herself, as she rocked herself backwards and forwards in her chimney-corner that night. Her arms were aching from very emptiness. No baby to hold, and pet, and rock, and grumble over. The cottage did seem lonely.

The unsteady step of the man she called her husband, as he entered at the close of the long twilight, brought her no comfort. How could it? This was only the shadow of a man. His senses were not there. He could not advise, he could not counsel, he could not even love or sympathise. It was a foreign power that dwelt in that man's soul; and the evils of the power swayed him where they would.

Geraldine did not know all the details of these people's lives, or she would have broken her heart over them more than she did. Perhaps it is well

for us that in all our labours to penetrate the crust of sorrows that surround us, and to alleviate them, —we only get a very little way down. There is only One who has ever penetrated the whole, and He is called,

“A MAN OF SORROWS AND ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF.”

. . . . .  
When Tartie had been safely deposited at home, Geraldine wended her solitary way towards the pretty home of her friend Mrs. Mowbray. There she had her usual reception; the pony “must be put up,” and there were “ever so many things to talk about.”

“No! not to-day, dear Mrs. Mowbray,” pleaded Geraldine. “I have been out the *whole* morning. A burnt child had to be taken to the Hospital, and the mother conveyed home again; and altogether this is an unusually busy day.”

“Then, at least, you must have the grapes and peaches. Sit down while I send to the gardener. He may have them all ready; but we shall see.”

Mrs. Mowbray’s conservatories were by no means useless luxuries. She consoled herself for the indulgence of flower delights by the loving consecration of all her first-fruits, and, indeed, her flowers too, to Him who had given her both, and who “daily loaded her with benefits.”

“ I like to give both flowers and fruits to Him ; and if they can comfort any of His sick ones, how I rejoice ! ” she was saying to Geraldine, as the basket of refreshing beauty was brought in.

“ This is fruit, ” Mrs. Mowbray explained ; “ there is another one of flowers. ”

Her guest was in an ecstasy.

“ These will give such intense happiness amongst my poor invalids, ” she said. “ I don’t know which they will like best. A gift like this is particularly useful, because it draws the people’s thoughts *upwards* to Him who made them. ”

Laden with her treasures Geraldine drove away. Many were made happy that afternoon, and not the least glad were the honoured distributors of these mercies. If “ receiving ” is “ blessed, ” “ giving ” is still “ more blessed. ”

. . . . .

And then came the Bible Class evening. Delightful to say, Bat was there ! He looked very much ashamed,—miserably uncomfortable ; but was received with such warmth, that his shyness thawed as the evening progressed. The two strange men were in the Coffee-room drinking coffee. They were shown seats in the Bible Class room ; and once ensconced in a comfortable corner, they did not look unhappy, though bewildered at the novelty of their circumstances.

Before the reading, Barnes had suggested to Geraldine that she should take some notice at the class of the motto "WHATSOEVER THY HAND FINDETH TO DO, DO IT WITH THY MIGHT."

"A great many look at that," he said, "and some of them seem greatly puzzled over it."

"The Shepherd and the sheep" was to be the subject. How could the motto be brought in? But it was evidently a *direction*, and Geraldine must lift up her heart for grace to do it wisely and well.

A Hymn,  
Prayer,  
Scripture,  
Prayer,  
Hymn.

This was the order of the Bible Class. A portion of the tenth chapter of St. John's Gospel was read aloud by one or two different members of the class, and then the subject was divided for consideration.

#### WHAT DOES THE SHEPHRED DO ?

- He "entereth in by the door,"
- "calleth His own sheep by name,"
- "leadeth them out,"
- "goeth before them,"
- "cometh that they might have life,"

- “and . . . . more abundantly,”
- “giveth His life for the sheep,”
- “knoweth His sheep,”
- “bringeth His sheep,”
- “giveth unto them eternal life.”

### THE SHEEP

- “hear His voice,”
- “follow Him,”
- “know His voice,”
- “but a stranger will they not follow,”
- “find pasture,”
- “know the Good Shepherd.”

These short divisions of a very great subject were taken up quickly and accurately by the men assembled; and commented on in their own matter-of-fact way. Very lively the class was, bright, and the remarks to the point. There was teaching in every line; and the gracious Spirit gave His aid in carrying that teaching home to the hearts that waited for His light.

The subject was in some degree generalised that evening, but it was understood that a more detailed view would be taken during the next two evenings.

“The sheep hear and follow,” Geraldine said. “That is the Christian’s work. We hear and follow, we learn and do, we listen and obey. Without

surrender to this pair of duties, our life is an incomplete one. It is inconsistent. We read that in the end of the seventh chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, and in the end of the first chapter of the Epistle of St. James. It stands to reason, doesn't it, that if we want to follow, we must hear His voice; and if we hear His voice, we are bound to obey it?"

"Yes! there's something in that," said one of the men. "That's like me in my work. The master gives the orders, and I gets 'em of a morning, and just carries 'em out in the day."

"The boys sometimes is very troublesome about that," said another. "They *won't* listen properly, —won't give attention, that's to say—and then they forget what they're to do."

The two new men looked at one another and smiled. The illustration was a perfectly true one, and appealed to their consciences; but they had not before heard the question treated in so free and easy a style; nor indeed had they *ever* before heard it treated in such a manner that they could easily understand it.

"I'm sure it would be a good job if *we* were a little more attentive to our Shepherd's voice," said Arnott. "He says Do this, and Don't do that; and yet we go and do just the opposite."

The stranger man who was sitting opposite him shuffled with his feet and looked uncomfortable.



"But it's not so easy to do right always," said another.

"Doing right, and doing good; what is the difference between the two?" Geraldine asked.

"I suppose if we 'follow,' as we were reading," Handy answered, "we shall be always doing both!"

"I think that's true," Geraldine said. "And I think our motto in the Coffee-room makes it all very simple. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might!' '*Findeth to do*'—that is the duty that comes next. There are no idle moments for God's sheep. They are ALWAYS to be following. The next step, the next call, the next opening, the next need."

"But if there's *nothing* to do?" said a voice.

"There's never nothing!" said Geraldine, losing her grammar in her eagerness. "There's *always* something to do. No idleness, but constant rest. Surely some of you can tell us more about this?" she continued, looking round.

There was a pause, and she explained—

"First of all, we must give our HEARTS to God, *then* we give our HANDS to Him. The man that loves his home, works for it. The heart moves the hands. Well, if our hands are given to God, He finds work for them."

The young man shook his head sceptically.

“There’s a good many professing Christians who has plenty idle moments!” a dark-looking fellow in railway costume remarked.

“Yes; there’s no doubt about that,” said another; “there’s plenty of idleness.”

“If you can prove that there *is* idleness, you have not proved that there *should* be idleness,” Geraldine said, smiling. “Every minute is precious. Time is short. We may work for an earthly master for certain hours in the day; but our Heavenly Master has BOUGHT us with His precious blood, and so *all* our hours belong to Him. The free hours are really most precious, for we can do a bit of HIS special work then,—filling up some little corner with work for Jesus! that is a very happy way of spending time. But”—— Geraldine interrupted herself, “no man likes to be without regular work. It is necessary, too, while we are in this world, or *how* could we live! Don’t you think our Heavenly Father likes to see us busy and happy, and with our wants supplied? Of course He does. So if any of you want help of that kind at any time, MIND YOU TELL HIM! and He will provide you with work.”

How very earnestly those two men from the Shires were looking at her as she spoke. The looks were not lost upon her.

At the close of the meeting, which had been

throughout a varied, interesting, practical, and profitable one, Geraldine detained these two men and spoke kindly to them.

"I wish *we* could get a job of work," one of them said, twirling his cap round on his hand.

"You *can* get it, if you will just ask the Lord humbly for it. We often ask that for our men at the little prayer-meetings," she said; "and the work always comes."

When these men wandered away that night it was with the sense of being no longer friendless. A hope dwelt in their hearts, a memory lingered there that carried within it a germ of living truth,—that truth which shall never die. Was that evening wasted?

The men became very soon so fond of the Coffee-house that, having found a "job of work," they became lodgers within its precincts. A few weeks later the job was finished and they went home; but it was to carry away with them new teachings and comfort that before they had never known.

It was not an uncommon thing for men such as these (of bricklaying capabilities), to return after an absence of some time, bringing their families with them. There was generally some building going on in the neighbourhood; and they found that in Norton they might combine the two advantages of regular work and an evening resort;

besides privileges for their families of which they had been debarred in the sequestered villages where they had previously dwelt.

On this evening, before Geraldine left the room, she asked Barnes if he knew anything about a ship called "Aurora." Was it in the harbour?

"Oh yes!" said Barnes, "that is the ship that brought in the shipwrecked crew. There are some of the men sitting at that table."

Geraldine went to them. They were foreigners; and could only talk a little broken English. She had, however, German tracts at her disposal; and she could talk to them a little herself. One of them said with a low bow—

"We haf seen your place. We walk round the road. This man he see a lady. She give him one shilling. Show the money!" and a merry-looking individual returned the coin. He had evidently considered its reception a very good joke.

"Poor Tartie!" Geraldine thought, "she must add another sailor to her category now. I wish she would come down to this room oftener, and learn to know the people better."

Bat was discovered deep in a game at draughts, and looking as if he wished his loose cap would slip down ever so much farther over his face. Geraldine engaged in the next combat with him,

and at the end of it spoke to him so warmly, so encouragingly, that Bat said afterwards to Arnott—

“There’s a real good, kind lot down there at that place. As for Miss Grayson, she gave me a new heart about it all; and *I did* like that Bible Class. I must keep on ‘following.’ That’s all. I don’t want to go off in those ‘crooked paths’ again.”

“The wandering sheep was brought back,” Arnott remarked. “But God says, ‘Let them not turn again to folly.’”

The Coffee-house grew and prospered. Its takings increased, and its influence spread. Each man who was benefited by its shadow owned more or less his responsibility in extending that influence. Let us leave it and them in their noon-day prosperity; only hoping it may be long before their sun shall set, or their success decline.

The Mothers’ Meeting next presented to Geraldine an UMBRELLA! that she might be sheltered from the rains and snows that so frequently accompanied her in her winter walks for their benefit. It was a very handsome one, and well worthy of its ardent givers. But the excuse was—

“You see, miss, you told us one day that your ‘poor old umbrella was awearing out.’”

Geraldine blushed guiltily, for she remembered

this sally made some time ago on a very wet day. But she did not think it was to produce this gift from the pockets of her friends.

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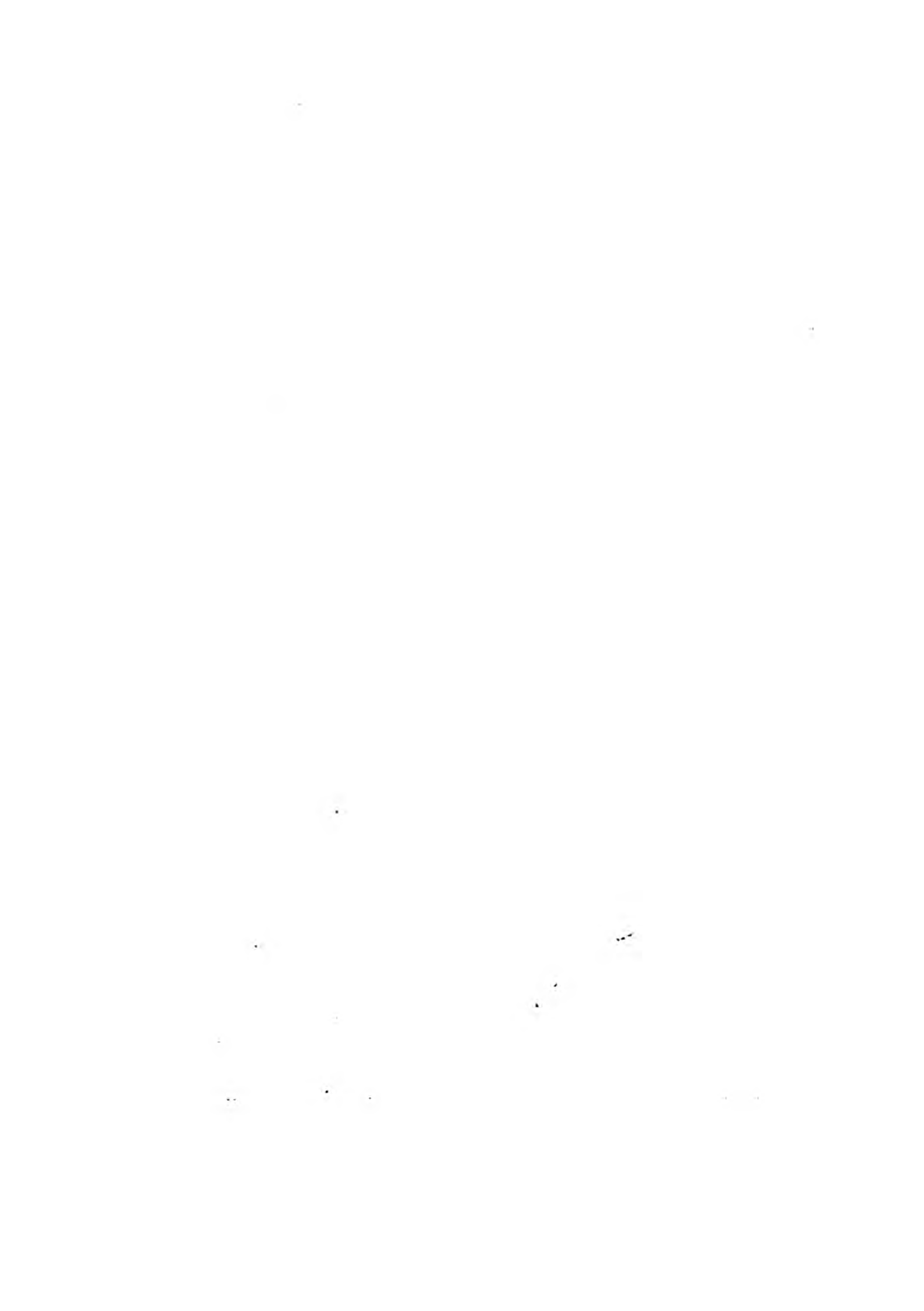
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