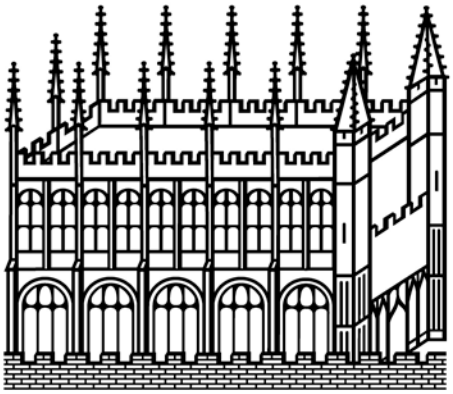

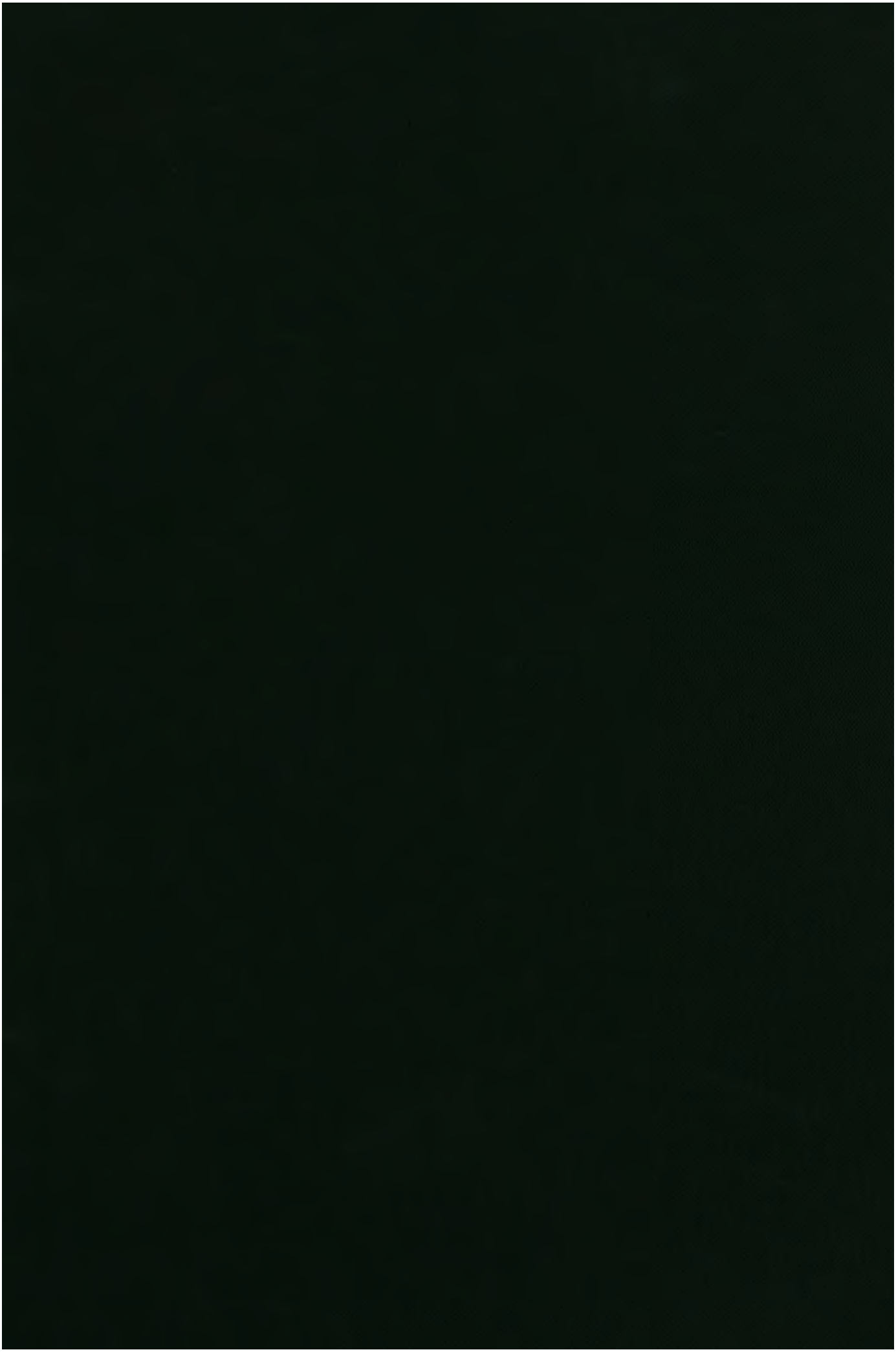

LIGHTS & SHADOWS:

STORIES OF EVERYDAY LIFE.

Edited by the Author of "A Trap to Catch a Sunbeam."

PART I.

Contents:

JOHN HODGES,
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Lights & Shadows:

STORIES OF EVERY DAY LIFE.

JOHN HODGES

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"ALL A-BLOWING, ALL A-GROWING."

"ALL a-blowing, all a-growing!" this was the cry which drew children to the door with their halfpence to buy roots for their little gardens, and ladies to bargain with old Reuben, for window plants. He was quite an old friend to those who had lived long in the suburb he frequented—and as he was a character too, full of quaint sayings and odd expressions—he was in the habit of having long chats with his customers, who always encouraged him to talk, and tell, as he would sometimes, anecdotes of his life.

He was a quaint looking figure, old Reuben Marbrook, grotesque more than ugly, bent with age and hard work, crippled somewhat in his fingers with "rewmatiks" as he called it; he, like poor Betsy Baker, had lived much in "damp attics," and suffered accordingly. His present residence was not well adapted to cure his complaint; but Reuben was never heard to grumble or profess poverty.

"There's a poor old body now," he said one day to one of those who out of kindness of heart, more than the need of flowers, had called him to the door, and with an air of pity inquired where he lived—"there's a poor old body, who has one room in the house where I live" (you would have thought by his tone all the other rooms were his), "she would be the better of a kindly hand to help her on, poor old thing, she can do nought to help herself. Where would she be a wheeling a barrer like this here, now for instance? women is mortal useless things, and in my belief was meant for men to keep them."

She, the lady who had sent to speak to him in pity, seeing

his bent form, and his trembling hands wheeling the barrow, laughed as she answered,

"I think it is more often the other way, Reuben, and the women keep the men."

"That may be, marm, heres and theres," answered Reuben, "cause there's a many things get topsy-turvy in this here world, through perhaps of its going round so fast; but my meaning is this, if a man's a man he can keep himself in many ways, but there's little open to a woman."

"So you would prefer that I should give to your old friend anything I have to offer," said the lady.

"To old Mrs. Nye, marm? yes, if you please. I have prayed, marm," he said in a confidential tone, "day and night for many a year just this prayer, 'help me to help myself.' And up to this time I've been able to do it, and I've great faith as I shall do it to the end. My father brought up nine on us without any help but God's and his own right hand. And surely I alone can keep myself without going to the House or asking alms."

"Well, you will let me buy a few flowers of you anyway?" said the lady.

"Yes, yes, marm, sure I will; that's my trade, and I'm grateful for any custom, I assure you."

"And you have no family dependent on you then?" said his new customer.

"No no—praised be—no one but myself, I've friends and relatives, which I goes to see nows and thens, but I ain't beholden to them nor them to me. It wasn't meant as I should be much in this world—you see ma'am, we can't all be cream and come to the top, my brothers and sisters all did very well, and them as is living are very comfortable off, but I were'nt a rising one, but as I say, whilst I can help myself, be no burden to no one, and keep out of the 'House' I'm satisfied; thank you marm," he said, touching his hat as he took the money she paid him and put it into a little canvas bag. "Every bit of money I take, I puts the *half* of it away," he said, "so I've alleys got some for a rainy

day, and I subscribes to a Club as will bury me when I die, so as my old bones even won't be no burden on anyone; good day, marm," and soon the cry of "All a-blowing all a-growing" was heard up the long road with its pretty villas, where Reuben always found customers.

He had from long habit grown so accustomed to this cry, that he continually said it to himself, and indeed it seemed to express, differently emphasized, his different states of mind, so that when greatly astonished, he would call out "ALL a-blowing and a-growing;" if worried or perplexed the '*blowing*" and "*growing*" received a special stress; in trouble, the whole sentence was spoken in a low monotone, and admiration was expressed by a loud enunciation of each word.

This peculiarity was a subject of great amusement to the neighbours; in short, Reuben Marbrook was altogether a curiosity to them. His means did not enable him to have a room in a very "genteel" neighbourhood, and the court in which he lived was inhabited by a set of people not remarkable for a strict adherence to the Decalogue; to them, the rigid honesty, temperance, and independence of the old man, were subjects for great merriment, and shouts of derisive laughter often followed him into the house where he lodged, when after administering a lecture to his neighbours for stealing flowers from ladies' gardens to sell, he would move away, shaking his head and mournfully saying, "All a-blowing and a-growing."

His landlady was by far the most respectable person in the court, and was very civil to Reuben, who paid her so regularly, and was so quiet and orderly; but she took in washing, and "when it was a heavy wash" as she said, "she did like 'a little extry beer,'" and sometimes it made Mrs. Bowman rather too talkative and quarrelsome. On those days the memories of older times, "when she were better off and her dear man would never let her put her hand to nothing" overcame her; and if at such moments Sally Lester, the "gal" she employed to help her, dropped the baby, which she so often did that it was a marvel the

child had got a sound limb left, then there were loud sounds and slaps, and hard words, so that Reuben was fain to shut his door and murmur in the refuge of his own room, "All a-blowing, all a-growing."

The man who never "let her put her hand to nothing," had long departed, and a new one had taken his place who was certainly by no means so tender of her, and greatly objected to her displaying, as she frequently did, "his picture, poor dear," a daguerreotype in the days when they were first taken, and which had the unhappy knack of fading away—so that the "poor dear" was not very discernible. Occasionally, particularly after the "extry beer" this caused a little discussion of an unpleasant character; but altogether, Reuben was comfortable, and never in any way complained.

Mrs. Nye, who lived in the next room to him, and was the only other lodger, was a very poor creature indeed, with a high whiney voice—a bad cough, one sightless eye, and also a little hard of hearing; these infirmities, and her extreme poverty, her loneliness, for no friends ever came to see her, excited the compassion of Reuben, and caused him to endeavour to find the help and pity for her which he scorned for himself.

Close to the courts in which Reuben lived, its fair white steeple rising up above it, and seeming like priestly hands held up in blessing and warning, was a beautiful Church, of exquisite design, built and endowed by one who loved to give his wealth for the benefit of the poor, to lure them to worship God in a beautiful Temple, to provide them with a staff of Clergy who served them with loving care and tender patience; and whom the hardest of them learned at length to respect. Beside the Church stood a grey stone building, in which resided seven ladies, who had offered themselves to assist in the poor neglected district in which the Church stood, and they undertook the education of seven young girls as household servants. The ladies wore dresses of grey cloth, and white muslin caps; the little maids, grey prints with mob caps of white linen and white

linen aprons, all scrupulously white and clean. At six o'clock in the morning, winter and summer, the good ladies rose, and went about with the girls into their different departments, doing the work with them, as well as showing them how to do it; and, latterly, they had added to their labours a large nursery—for how could they teach the girls to be nursemaids with no children to practise on? Like the mistress with her maids in the olden time, these ladies lived, teaching them to serve for the Love of God, "not with eye service, as men-pleasers,"—teaching them that she who sweeps a room for God's sake, "makes that and the action fine." To cook, to work, to nurse the sick, to make all such things as are needed in sick nursing, the girls learnt, and many a blessing was breathed over them and their gentle instructresses, in the crowded courts and alleys where they gave their loving service.

The Grey Sisters, as they were called, were much respected by Reuben, and always when he passed he touched his cap to them, receiving a kindly smile and good day in return, but when, one day, Sister Agnes stopped to ask if she could aid him, he made the same rejoinder that he always did to such offers.

"Thank God, madam, I can help myself;" but to her he added, "there's more than enough for your delicate hands to do amongst those who cannot or *will* not help themselves." So the pleasant "good-morrow" was all the intercourse Reuben held with the Sisters, excepting an occasional purchase of plants, for the Grey House was always ablaze with summer's brightest flowers.

Mrs. Nye had been brought up a strict Nonconformist, and when first the white graceful spire reared its head above the court, she was somewhat bitter in her remarks. She said it was one of them new-fangled Churches, which of course she did not hold with. And she must say as now-a-days, the farther off the Church was the better she liked it, and as to those ladies, dressed all in grey and white, like "ghostesses," she could not abide them; but when one frosty day, poor old Mrs. Nye slipped on the curb just by the Grey House and sprained her ankle, and

was tenderly carried into a warm, pleasant room by the kindly Sisters, her ankle bound up, and one of the maids sent home with her in a cab, she changed her opinion of them, and her deafness was unusually bad when anyone ventured to disparage the kindly ministrations of the good Sisterhood, and she would say in her high-sounding voice, "Yes, they are wonderful good creatures, sure, I don't know as anyone could be off of loving 'em." So in time, poor Mrs. Nye was found to frequent St. Mary's Church, always kindly led home by one of the Grey Sisters.

One day in the early spring, when on Reuben's barrow snowdrops, primroses, and violets mingled their sweetness, "all a-blowing and a-growing," as he wheeled it out of one narrow street, where one of his most regular customers dwelt, a poor dressmaker, whose sad white face Reuben's cry seemed to cheer and brighten, there suddenly appeared beside him a little strange weird-looking child, who running beside the barrow leapt and jumped, and made the strangest faces, till Reuben was obliged to stop his barrow and ask her who she was and where she came from.

"Yes, you'd like to know, wouldn't you neither," answered the strange child, with a hideous grimace, "but you ain't a going to, my beauty; you'd like to take me home, wouldn't you? but you ain't a going to. Oh! dear no! I've runned away, and I'm going to run along of you, and help you to cry 'All a-blowing, all a-growing," and with a loud and beautifully musical voice the child uttered the words, till people looked from their windows and came out of their doors and purchased roots from the old man and his strange companion.

On she ran beside him, the little elf child, hatless and shoeless, her rough ragged hair falling over her large brown eyes, her feet dirty and cut with the stones; her ragged frock blowing in the wind and showing the naked limbs, evidently the only garment which covered her. On she ran, singing snatches of street songs, varied with Moody and Sankey hymns, stopping

when he stopped and quickly changing from her street melodies to his cry, in her melodious utterance, refusing to leave him or say why she followed him, or where she lived. So, Reuben and she went on together.

Reuben had never mixed much with children; to him they represented sickly little things carried about in their mothers' arms, or little creatures fighting and quarrelling under his feet. Childhood had no bright associations for him; he remembered but little his own or any joy connected with it; he had never had to do with children himself. And did not in the least understand them, so that this most peculiar one puzzled him sorely.

Arrived at home, followed still by the child, he said,

"Now come, little 'un, you've had a fine run, you must go home."

"Home," said the child, looking up in his face with one of her odd grimaces, "not for Joseph, I've runned away, I tell you."

"But what are you going to do then?" asked poor puzzled Reuben.

"Stop here and go out with you in the morning."

"Here! where?" said Reuben.

"On this here step," said the child, "if you won't take me in."

"All a-blowing and a-growing," moaned Reuben, "dear, dear, dear, you'd better come up with me and have some tea, and I'll see what is to be done. I never see anything so queer, that I never didn't."

Following him up the staircase, humming some tune, the child entered Reuben's room.

"Lor! ain't it tidy?" were her first words, "nor pretty neither; why it's like a jewler's shop else a toy shop; here, let me do that, why I can get tea, and bile puddings and taters, and do all manner o' things."

And to Reuben's astonishment, who sat down to watch her,

she laid the tea, put the kettle on to boil, took the loaf in her small hands and cut some bread-and-butter and cleared away all the crumbs, and then said, "Now then, 'ere ye are, all a-blowing and a-growing," and jumping with the lightness of a bird on to a chair, she sat down on the back of it and proceeded to make a variety of grimaces, quite alarming poor old Reuben, who began to wonder if she had "runned away" from Bedlam; however, when she had finished her tea, the little womanly orderly way in which she cleared the table, washed the tea-things and put them away, convinced him of her sanity. But a new puzzle occurred to him; the light was failing fast and a refuge for the night must be provided for her; what was he to do? Again he ventured to suggest her going home, and from his canvas bag handed her sixpence as an inducement.

"No, thank you," she said, handing it back to him. "What do you call home?" she continued, seating herself on a little stool at his feet.

"Well, where your father and mother is," answered Reuben.

"Then I ain't got one, for I ain't got no father nor mother."

"Really—why you poor little thing, then where did you run away from?" asked Reuben.

"Why from a place where they put me when they died; father was drunking and mother was consumpted, and so some people said I had ought to go to a aunt of mine as took two or three nus' children as she'd brought up proper, and would me along of them—it was proper and no mistake; why it was *ever* so much worse than father and mother" said the child, drawing her stool nearer to Reuben, "ever so much; why there wasn't no saveloys nor nothing there, and the little ones always a skreeling, and then I seed you a-going by with them flowers, crying "All a-blowing and a-growing," and I did wish I was one of them in your barrow, and I thought if I could run aside of it and look at them I might grow to be like them, so I runn'd out when they weren't a-looking and caught you up, and I ain't never going back no more, I tell you."

"But" said the puzzled Reuben, "where are you going to be? I can't keep you."

"Can't you?" said the child, turning her head on one side and looking upon his face like a little inquisitive bird, "why not?"

"Because, my dear, I can only just manage to keep myself."

"Law, that is a pity, but I shan't want much, I ain't been used to it, I can have any scraps as you leave, and I can get some bits of broken, and snatch up a bun off of the counter."

"What!" he exclaimed in a voice of horror, "steal!"

"Law, don't go a hollering at me, you frighten me."

"Have you never been learned not to steal, never heard as that is against God's laws?" said Reuben.

"No, I don't know nothing what you mean by Gord; father used often to say it when he were hangry, and mother said when she were a dying, she hoped he would not say it no more, so I thought it were a wicked word, I did."

This was too much for Reuben, and a piteous "All a-blowing and a-growing," burst from him, which elicited from the child such a bright burst of hearty child laughter, that it seemed to have brightened the whole room.

"What ever are you a crying that now for?" she said, but Reuben took no heed of her; he had never been so perplexed before, he had never troubled his mind much upon so grave a subject, he knew that it was wrong to steal, to murder, to blaspheme, and had a memory which sometimes made a kind of odd feeling come over him (the nearest resemblance to tears) of a mother's teaching; but it was a very far-off one, he could not put it in words. His aim had been to lead a respectable life, to help himself and be no burden to any one; his religion, to help others when he could, and to keep from swearing, or any irreverence towards a mysterious Being he had so long ago been taught to fear—to fear, but not to love, not to understand or worship, not to know as his Friend, his Father. No, poor Reuben knew nothing of this great happiness; was this strange ignorant waif then, who had suddenly appeared in his path, to lead him and

teach him? she set him thinking, any way, and at length, after a pause, as she sat watching him with her big earnest eyes beaming through the cloud of rough hair that fell over her face, he got up, and taking her hand said,

"Come with me."

"I ain't a-going back," she almost screamed, struggling to get away.

"Do as I tell you and come with me," and the decision of his manner, and the firm grip of her hand, seemed to awe her into submission; he knocked at Mrs. Nye's door, and entering, led the child to her.

"Mrs. Nye, can you do anything for this little stranger, will you make her a bed up just for to-night, and I will see about her in the morning."

"Bless me, whoever is she?" said Mrs. Nye, shading her weak eye with her hand, the better to inspect the stranger.

"I do not know, but we must not cast her out, poor child; if you'll just let her pass the night in your room I shall be so much obliged," and Reuben told Mrs. Nye how she had followed him.

"And I'm a-going to foller him again, I am," struck in the child, who, during this conversation had been prowling about, examining everything in the room—"you just let me lie down on the floor or anywhere till morning, and then I shall go out again with him and cry 'All a-blowing, all a-growing'"—and the clear bell-like voice rang through the little room. Mrs. Nye did not particularly seem to like the notion of having the child, but said if Reuben would send her back in half-an-hour's time, when she had had her supper, she would see what could be done, "but she thought it were strange and awkward, and she hoped no perlice would come a-searching for her in *her* place."

"How old are you, child?" asked Reuben, when they were again seated in his room, waiting Mrs. Nye's pleasure.

"Oh! I dunnow,—I'm as tall as Tommy Warner, and he says he's eight, so I s'pose I am."

There was silence then, awhile, and Reuben smoked his pipe, she gazing out from the small window into the dimly-lighted court. Suddenly there came on the still air the pealing sound of the Church organ, and the child with a voice of astonishment exclaimed,

"What's that?"

"What?" asked Reuben, he was accustomed to the sound and hardly noticed it.

"That kind of music like the organs, only louder and beautifuller."

Oh! yes, it is the organ, the Church organ in there," answered Reuben, resuming his pipe and his meditations—they were of her and what he should do with her.

He had just thought that children ought to say their prayers before they went to bed, just as the sound of the "grand *Amen*" had awakened the child's curiosity. Should he ask her if she said prayers? If she did not understand him what should he say? he could not explain, nor could he teach her. She was leaning out of the window, listening to the sounds which rose and fell, and seemed such a strange accompaniment to the quarrellings and noises of the court, of the harsh voices and bitter oaths.

"Oh! I do just wish they'd 'old their rows down there, I can't hear," she said at length pettishly.

A sudden thought struck Reuben.

"Will you like to come along o' me into the Church and hear it?"

She looked for a moment at her ragged garments, at her naked dirty little feet—and said,

"They says, Aunt says, no one can't go to Church as isn't tidied up and smart-like."

"That's a mistake, little one; we may go there, anyway, if we're good and quiet; come, we'll go.

He knocked out the ashes of his pipe, and laid it on the hob; took his cap from the peg, and with the child's hand in his, they walked down the court, followed of course by many jibes

and cheers, and jests on his old cry. "Well come, Reu, she ain't a-blowing or a-growing."

But he heeded them not, only bent on his purpose, went on his way. Louder and louder pealed the organ as they neared the Church, and as they entered it he could feel the hand of the child tremble and grasp his more tightly. A Grey Sister was in a seat near the door, and turning with a tender smile to Reuben, she beckoned them to a place beside her. It was the first of May, and the hymn "There is one Way and only one" was finishing, as the two strange companions entered; the words were nothing to the little child, but the grand music, the fine voices harmonised, affected her, she knew not why; and, as at the close of the hymn the congregation knelt, the poor little deserted child fell on her knees, for the first time in her life and burst into tears. The Grey Sister kneeling beside her put her arm round her, and when the service was ended she led her out of the Church, and turning to Reuben, asked who she was. The tale was soon told, and that night the little waif lay fast asleep in a small bed at the Grey House, coming in the morning to see Reuben, who scarcely recognised the little maiden with shoes and stockings, and grey print dress and apron and cap, beneath which the long rough hair was neatly braided; till, springing towards him she cried, with a merry laugh, "all a-blowing and a-growing."

To the child and Reuben a new life had begun. The wretched people who had had charge of her never sought her, and as she could not know whether she had ever been baptized, only that she was called "Topsy," the Grey Sisters took her to the Font and with Reuben and two of the Sisters for sponsors, she was called Ruth.

The window of the room in which she slept, Sister Agnes filled with flowers, and every Sunday Ruth passed with Reuben, going to Church together, reading and looking at the pictures in a big Bible, a present from Sister Agnes. After Ruth had been a happy inmate of the Grey House for some months, one Sunday she brought to Reuben a text of her own painting, which

she told him, Sister said, he was to hang up in his room, and remember the blessing it promised. "I was a stranger and ye took me in." "Reuben bent down and kissed her, murmuring gently his old cry over the child, who was "blowing and growing," to bloom at last in the pastures of the Good Shepherd. Poor old Reuben! he found that he had "entertained an angel unawares," and the child who, attracted by his cry and his flowers, had followed *him*, now led him to the Better Land.

Carefully taught by the good Sisters she in her turn taught *him*. The strange prejudices he had imbibed, she set aside, and his weak and failing faith she revived and strengthened. It was a curious sight to see the once strange, wild, ignorant, neglected child, teaching the old man who had befriended her, the great truths which brought him such comfort, the truths which before he had so vaguely realised, and by which he had been so imperfectly consoled.

Those Sundays in Reuben's little room were milestones as it were on the road to Heaven. Ruth spent the whole day with him. To Church in the morning (for he never missed attendance there now), home to the little humble dinner, to which the kindly Sisters often added some little treat for Reuben, then the reading and the talk, often joined in by poor old Mrs. Nye, who had grown quite fond of Ruth and then tea, and sweet evening service closing the day.

Not that Ruth was by any means grown perfect. No sudden conversion changed the little wild Arab child to a perfect specimen of a Christian; but the good influence, the atmosphere of love in which she lived, and it may be the prayers of the good Sisters had made Ruth human, had given her more self-respect and awakened in her love which had lain dormant and which needed only to be roused by love and tenderness.

Her spirits were still untamed, her bright ringing voice was heard very often in the long corridors of the Home, and some of the graver Sisters would call her to order when out in the recreation ground, she would send the other children into fits of

laughter by her antics and grimaces; but Sister Agnes, her first friend, always took her part and told them to remember that she was very young and mirth belonged to childhood; "she would sober down as she grew older."

"Mirth should be sobered, always by judgment and reason," argued Sister Maria.

"Judgment and reason seldom visit the young," argued Sister Agnes with a smile, "but love will teach my little Ruth to do as we ask her, I know, and teach her to be merry and wise."

The Sundays passed with old Reuben were greatly encouraged by the Sisters, for they felt sure they both reaped a benefit, and when the call "Home" came to old Reuben, Ruth was his faithful steady little nurse.

In his last illness, he opened his eyes to look once more in her loving face, and as he closed them on this life and its cares for ever, a bright smile broke over his face as he murmured

"ALL A-BLOWING, ALL A-GROWING."

A GOLDEN DEED.

"I HOPE I have not kept you waiting long, brother."

"Not at all; don't apologise; I've been sitting on this stile, enjoying a delightful impromptu performance. One of your choristers, I expect, doing a little private practice down yonder." And the younger of the two gentlemen jerked his cane in the direction of the golden-green meadows that skirted the shady lane where he had awaited his brother (the Rector's) return from a brief cottage visit close by. "Listen, he's at it again! how true! you don't often hear a voice like that, do you?"

Both listened silently awhile. "I haven't a voice like that in my choir;" said the Rector. "It would be worth anything to us. That is an air of Vincent Wallace's, and remarkably correctly turned too; the lad must have a good ear, wherever he's picked it up!"

"Let us find out the invisible musician," said Herbert Trevor, the younger brother, lightly clearing the stile as he spoke, "perhaps we may enlist him in your service."

They had not far to seek. Down in the hollow of the meadow through which a field-path led to the next village, a lad of some twelve years old was sitting on the trunk of a felled tree, intently whittling a willow stick, with a piece of sharp flint as a substitute for a knife. The boy looked poorest of the poor; his worn-out heavy shoes were in holes, and his scanty out-grown trousers left visible beneath their frayed hems his thin stockingless ankles. The face was thin too, and wan, with lines about the mouth ill-suited to a face so young, but brightened by a pair of intelligent brown eyes, which just now lit up with some pleasurable sensation, gave a singular interest to the expression, as the sound of footsteps caused the boy to look up from his occupation, and suddenly cease his singing at the same moment.

"What's that you were singing, my lad?" asked Mr. Trevor, as the gentlemen came up.

"Please sir, I don't know," replied the boy, making a snatch at his ragged cap, and getting up rather shyly.

"You've got it very correctly for not knowing, however," proceeded the Rector, smiling. "What is your name? I don't know your face at all."

"Bernard Ray," answered the boy, with another snatch at the forlorn cap, which hid his curly hair.

"Where do you live?"

"I've got no home, sir. I don't live anywheres. I thought I'd get some work in these parts; so I've come to try."

"Where do you come from?" asked Herbert Trevor.

"From London, sir. I walked. Mother's dead and Dolly"—here a short jerking sob obtruded unawares; and the carefully whittled stick snapt asunder suddenly. "They took mother's things, what was left, when she died, for the rent, and I turned out. I'd nowhere to go, after, and I didn't want to stop in London, the big streets was so solitary like."

"Well that *is* a curious view to take of London streets;" observed Mr. Herbert, scarcely forbearing a smile.

The boy looked at him with questioning thoughtful eyes, then turned his attention to the fractured willow-wand.

"It seemed as if there was no one," he said, at length, slowly, "at least, no one for *me;* and I thought if I could get away, down amongst the fields, it wouldn't seem so lonesome, may-be."

"Which feeling I entirely comprehend, and sympathise with," said the Rector; "but it was a long way for you, my boy, where did you sleep last night?"

"In a barn, yonder, sir; the nights ain't so cold now; I had sixpence; but I spent it on something to eat. The fields makes one hungrier than London does."

This last information was volunteered with a smile, half naïve, half sad, and to both the brothers, curiously touching.

"Did you sing in London streets?" asked Herbert, kindly.

"Oh yes, sir, lots of times, I got a good bit now and then, that way. I got one o' these ere penny song sheets, and learned the words; but I'd rather work *ever* so," added the lad, with decision.

"That's right, my boy," said Mr. Trevor: "now look. I should like to do what I can for you, if you are an honest well-disposed lad, as I hope you are. I'll try and get you work. Here's a shilling to get you food and lodging to-night, and to-morrow will be Sunday, to-morrow will be Easter Day. Come to my Church, with clean hands and face, and pray to God to direct your way in this life, and keep you unto the Life Eternal, and come to me at the Rectory, after service. I'll have some more talk with you. Will you do this?"

"Yes sir, thank you kindly, I'll come."

"I wonder if he *will* come," said the Rector's brother, as they turned homewards, "poor fellow, I'd half a mind to give him something to rig him out somewhat less shabby, if he's to come to Church."

"It is as well not; if he is willing to come he will do so in spite of rags. Your money might only have tempted him to go on in his wandering life, and we should lose him altogether perhaps,"

"Perhaps we may, as it is. A little street Arab, I suppose, though he looks above that."

"Much above it, nor do I think he has ever been of that class, poor lad; I like his face, he interests me; and that beautiful voice! No, I hope we shall not lose sight of him."

"Ah! you are thinking of the choir. Poor boy, perhaps he has never seen the inside of a Church, who knows?"

Easter Day came, the very ideal of what an Easter Day should be, a day of sunshine and joy, and bright awakening hope, after the silent, fruitful discipline and patient waiting of the long Lenten Fast. A day of still, warm, golden beams, with a deep blue April sky, flecked with downy, floating cloudlets, and a tender richly-green April landscape, fanned by a soft south-west breeze, full of scents of spring.

"Christ is risen! Alleluia!" rang the silver voiced bells..

"Risen! risen!" trilled the full-throated lark, higher, ever higher, carolling ecstatic praise!

"Risen! risen!" murmured the golden king-cups, and daisies, and blue violets, and harebells raising their sweet heads in the joy of fresh spring-life after the long dream of by-gone winter!

And within the Church, the beautiful old parish church, with what fair order and high pomp, the "Day of days" was heralded.

Bernard Ray, true to the promise he had made the Rector, came softly in, just ere the last bell ceased chiming, and took his place among the furthest benches at the end of the aisle. It had been an effort to him to come in. Long he had lingered in the church path, and sat on a tombstone, doubtful whether or not he should take courage and follow the well-dressed congregation flowing in at the call of the pealing bells overhead. But oh! how glad he was that he did so. He looked less poverty-stricken than on the previous day. The widow woman at whose cottage he had made his modest appeal for a night's lodging, had been kind to him, with a motherly charity. Though sure of her payment, from the shilling he placed in her hand, with the

story of how he came by it, she felt touched with pity for the lone wandering lad, and treated him more like a son than a lodger, insisting on his sharing her supper, gratis, and supplying him with the unwonted luxury of hot water to bathe his way-worn feet, and the comfort of a more decent bed than he had known for many months; and when she heard of his proposed attendance at Church, offering to lend him an old jacket of her son's to appear in, in place of his own less presentable one, and trying, with praiseworthy vigour, to renovate and polish up his poor, dilapidated shoes.

"But I ain't fit to go," objected the boy, "though you're very good, ma'am, and I'd like to keep my word with the gentleman."

"Aye, sure, child, and there's no better place ye could go to: I'll lay any money that there kind gentleman as give you the shilling (I ain't going to touch that money, you know) was our good parson hisself; he's always doing a good turn for some poor body; you'll be just in luck if *he's* a friend to ye, mark me!"

Thus encouraged, and made to look as decent as the good woman's efforts could achieve, Bernard timidly set forth.

And now as he knelt in the fragrant stillness, taking in with awed wonder and delight the beauty, and the richness, and reverent order around, suddenly broke forth the deep rolling music of the organ, and forthwith issued from the vestry door the files of white-robed chorister boys like himself, and even younger, with bright subdued faces, and reverent steps, two and two, followed by the older members of the choir, and lastly by the Priests, the glad, glorious words of the Easter Hymn, "Jesus Christ is risen to-day," pouring forth rejoicing melody as the chanting procession filed into the choir-stalls on either hand.

Bernard dropt on his knees and hid his eyes in his hands, he felt it was all sweet and grand, and heavenly, and as if God were very near. And this was Bernard Ray's first Church service.

The Rector was seated in his study about three o'clock that Sunday afternoon, when he was told that Bernard waited to see him. He heard it with pleasure, and sent for him to his study at once.

The boy came in with a timid, almost awe-struck air. Could it be, that the white-robed Priest, whose voice had read the holy Word of God to the people in the Church yonder, with such solemn authority, was the same kind friend who had spoken so cheeringly and simply in the meadow the day before, and sat before him looking so genial and pleasant now.

The kindly tone of Mr. Trevor soon gave him confidence. "Well, my boy, I am glad to see you; so you kept your word with me and went to Church."

"Yes, sir."

"I saw you there, and was pleased at your reverent and attentive behaviour. Can you read, Bernard?" (the Rector remembered the uncommon name).

"A little, sir. Mother had to take me away from school when she couldn't spare the pence."

"Is your father dead?"

"I don't know, sir. Father went away and left mother before I can remember, almost; I was a very little chap, and Dolly only just born. Mother used to say, perhaps he was dead, or gone across the sea."

"Tell me how you and your mother lived, and where," said Mr. Trevor, kindly.

"Of late we had a poor place, sir, in a bit of an alley, out of Wexford Street; mother used to go out to work, but people didn't care to have her, because of her temper, sir; mother had such a hard temper, few could do with her."

"That is sad," said Mr. Trevor, "was she a good mother to you and your sister?" Bernard paused a second and then said,

"Mother used to beat Dolly awful, sir, because she couldn't wash up and run of errands and that, as some little gals do. She was such a poor little weak thing, sir; and—and—she died before she was turned of seven."

"God is good," said the minister; "you did your best to be a good brother, I dare say."

"I loved her so, sir; she was all I had; and such a pretty little creature, only so white and thin-like. She wanted sun and air, the neighbours said, to make her grow strong; but ours was a poor place—downstairs and always dark—(we'd only one room) dark and damp too, mother said. I used to take Dolly up and sit on the doorstep outside with her on my knee, when mother was put out 'bad; and Dolly's head ached much. I think that's how I took to singing, sir,—" the boy said with a sad smile, "she *did* like me to sing to her so. She used to keep on 'Sing Ber, *do* sing,' just like a little pining bird, and I learnt all sorts of street songs and tunes o' purpose to please her. I was sitting on the step, singing to her the day she died. I didn't know she were so bad, and mother *had* been hard on her, poor little 'un. She kept smiling on while I sang, and all on a sudden she dropt her head back, and a neighbour said she were

took for death then, and carried her in, and laid her on the bed, and Dolly was gone, sir."

Here the lad stopped, his lips twitching painfully.

"God is good," repeated the minister. "A little lamb taken home early by the Great Shepherd's love! Sit down, my boy; and so you were used to sing in the streets at that time?"

"Yes, sir; as I was a-saying, one of the neighbours said one day as I was singing to *her*, 'If I had your voice, boy, I'd try and earn a bit by it, and get a trifle or two for the child as wants it bad enough, and no one sets much store by her wants, but you, it seems, anyhow.' So I did sir, and oh, I was glad I *did* earn a bit for Dolly that way, many a-day; only I had to leave her so long. I wouldn't take her with me, though she'd have come, I didn't like to, sir, it was so like begging, but we were in awful want. Mother used to say she wished we'd never been born; but after Dolly died she took on dreadful, and cried nearly all nights; and when she got the fever, and her head was light, she kept thinking she saw little Dolly with her pinafore over her face sobbing at the foot of the bed, and kept calling out, 'Dolly, come and kiss me; and I'll never take the stick to ye any more!' Mother died of the fever, sir."

There was a long pause after that. The clergyman sat with his head leaning on his hand, and the boy traced, with absent gaze, the pattern on the carpet.

"Bernard," said the Rector of Elmsdale, at length, "do you want to be an industrious Christian lad, and an honest God-fearing man?"

"Yes, sir," answered the boy.

"Did you remember in Church to-day to make that prayer I bade you do, for God's good help?" pursued the minister.

"Yes, sir," again replied the boy in a low tone.

"Then, my boy, God helping me, I will help you, to the best of my power; let us shake hands. You have a good gift in that voice of yours, which first brought about our acquaintance (under God's good providence, without which nothing ever happens). Should you like to sing His praises in my Church like those young choristers you have seen there to-day?"

The boy's eyes lit up with wonderful brightness.

"Yes, yes, indeed sir!" he exclaimed hurriedly, "but I should not know how, not to sing like that."

"We will teach you, my boy, that, and much beside, if you are willing and diligent; and as for work, I shall make a young gardener of you for a beginning; you shall help weed and dig

my garden, and you may sing as much as you please," added Mr. Trevor, smiling cheerily; "now my housekeeper will give you some tea, and we will settle further plans to-morrow."

The Rector's plans for Bernard were simple and soon settled. It was arranged that he should continue to lodge with the kind-hearted Widow King, who had befriended him on his arrival; Mr. Trevor paying for his board till he should be able to earn something towards keeping himself.

His dinner on Sundays was to be given him at the parsonage if he continued deserving and well-behaved; and part of each day he was to attend school, working in the minister's grounds during the rest of the time, under the supervision of a grey-headed and, it must be confessed, somewhat irascible old gardener, who had served Mr. Trevor for some years, and held the same post under a former Rector.

"I'm right glad you met the parson," said Widow King, discussing Bernard's present and future good luck; "and that gentleman as was with him, I make no doubt was Mr. Herbert, his brother: a pleasant, free-spoken young gentleman; he's a architec' or somethink, up in London, and has as kind open-handed ways with him as ever you saw; he give all the old women in the Alms-Row, a bit of tea, only last Christmas, when he came down; and a bran new knife to the best scholar in every class in the parish school; aye, an open-handed young gentleman, sure enough,"—which character Herbert Trevor sustained by giving Bernard a new suit of clothes for Sunday wear the day before he went to town.

"Hard at work, Mace?" said the Rector of Elmsdale to his gardener, the morning after he had installed the boy at Widow King's. "I have brought you an assistant, a boy to do your bidding," and Mr. Trevor pointed to Bernard who stood a step behind him.

"Sorry to hear it, sir," replied old Mace with asperity. "Never made no 'count of boys sir, there's no sort of mischief they aint up to, and as to *work*, they mar more'n they'll mend or a wise man 'll mend for 'em, that's my experience."

"Aren't you rather hard on the species, Mace?" said Mr. Trevor, good-humouredly.

"No sir, I aint hard! look at that there Jim Tubbs as you give eighteenpence a-week to, till come last Whitsuntide, I got quit of him by good luck; that boy would waste his time a-settin' they snails to race, an' a-squirtin' water into spiders' webs, as was enough to rile anybody! and when I sets him to weed the

kitchen garden yon, didn't he go for to pull up about three dozen young cabbage plants as 'ad made my back ache to set 'em?" and old Mace turned away in disgust, at the reminiscence of Jim Tubbs's shortcomings.

"Well, well" said the Rector, "let us hope better things, this lad here is going to try and do his duty, and I hope you'll soon make him as good a gardener as yourself, Mace."

"Boys *is* boys, and I reckon they're all pretty much alike," retorted the old man, loth to show his content at the adroit compliment in his master's speech.

"I make no doubt now, that there King o' Egypt in old time knew what he was about, when he give orders to have 'em done away with as he did; he was a'countin' on the mischief as they'd do, them young rascals, in his fields and gardens, for sure!" and a humourous twinkle gleamed beneath the frown with which Master Mace planted his spade sternly into the earth, eying Bernard the while with becoming severity.

"Bernard, my boy," said the Rector, "we must do our best to let our good friend here find the difference between boys who help and boys who hinder; mind what is told you, and let me hear a good account of you," and Mr. Trevor went indoors.

Very soon did the old gardener find the difference the good Rector had spoken of, and was fain to acknowledge that there are "boys *and* boys."

Bernard learnt so attentively, and worked so steadily, bearing with such meekness the hasty words and impatient habit of his testy old instructor, and saving him so much in both time and trouble during the half day he was set to work, that Master Mace became prompt in his praise when Mr. Trevor inquired at the end of a week the success of his experiment, and thought it necessary to qualify his genuine commendation by the guarded observation that "new brooms sweep clean, sure*ly*."

Mr. Trevor sent for Bernard several evenings in the week, and taught him carefully and prayerfully, "precept upon precept, line upon line," the foundations of the Faith and practice of the Christian Life. Ignorant and timid he found him, but eager and responsive in feeling, and endowed with a susceptibility rare among those better taught, with whom holy things have been perhaps more familiar than revered; and his strong affection for the little sister he had lost, was a bright link to bind him to that Higher Love which Mr. Trevor was unfolding to him with gentlest wisdom day by day.

"If only Dolly *could* have heard about it," the boy said

sadly once, with sudden impulse; "I *wish* I'd known how to teach her about the Bible! poor Dolly! and she never knowed."

"Dolly will know, she has perhaps learnt already more than all the teaching this dim world can give, my boy," said Mr. Trevor, with glistening eye, "she is in the Heavenly school where the Master himself teaches, where the Good Shepherd leads His lambs through the 'green pastures and by the still waters' of Life Eternal. It is 'well with the child.'"

In a few weeks Mr. Trevor wrote to his brother in London—"Our little wanderer has taken his place where I longed to see, or rather hear him—in the choir! to his infinite joy, and pride, I was going to add, but the poor lad is very humble; he wins his way with all by his simple quiet manner and sweet temper. His voice will be the ornament of our Church, and his behaviour in the choir, I rejoice to see, is an example to some of my wilder young ones, who had better training. I am well satisfied with the boy: the Grace of God must have shielded him through much evil and temptation; he is an innocent and honest lad, and I hope something more."

A happy boy was Bernard that Christmas-tide, as he carried up to his little attic at Widow King's the choicest accumulation of treasures he had ever possessed in his life: bestowed, too, with the kindest and most helpful words the lonely lad had ever heard addressed to him.

A neat, strong leather purse, Mr. Herbert's gift, containing two bright half-crowns; a well-bound Bible and Prayer-book, with his own name written in them by the beloved Rector himself; and last, not least, a fair large text (illuminated by the beautiful gentle-voiced Miss Alice, Mr. Trevor's young sister, who had come to spend Christmas with her brother at Elmsdale), the holy words having reference to his admission into the choir: "Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall show forth Thy Praise!" Bernard repeated them reverently as he hung the bright text above his low bed; and being a Christian child of earnest purpose of heart, prayed simply and devoutly for grace to show forth in lip and life, His praise, whose goodness had raised such friends for him in his need.

Tears welled up into his eyes as he thought "how Dolly would have loved Miss Alice if she could have seen her and heard her speak," and how soothed and grateful the poor little one would have been for a few kind pitying words and looks of love—then he remembered the Rector's words—"it is *well* with the child," and as he thought of the love that compassed little Dolly *now*, his heart found rest, repeating "*With Christ*, which is far better."

* * * * * * *

Nearly two years had passed, when one morning, early in March, Mr. Trevor lifted the latch of old Mace's cottage door, to see how the old man's rheumatism fared, which of late had mastered him in spite of will and energy, till after several stout battles with his inability to get through his work he had been obliged to lie by for a time.

"I hope you find yourself better," said Mr. Trevor, "and the milder weather will set you up again."

"Yes, sir, I hope, please the Lord, to be about again soon; these cold winds do keep a body back sure*ly*, or I had ought to ha' been on my legs 'afore now, I had."

"Never mind," said the minister, "don't put yourself out, Mace, the garden will do very fairly; Bernard works apace: I hope he does your bidding well."

"He does that, sir: I ain't no call for to deny it, he's beyond the run o' boys in general, 'cause why?—he don't do no mischief, and what I tells him to do he'll do, and there's the differ," said Master Mace, conclusively.

"A very desirable 'differ,' too," observed Mr. Trevor, smiling:

"That boy's a queer sort o' lad, sir," went on the gardener, after a pause, "he's the curious-est searching-like turn o'mind I ever see, it's all for the why and the wherefore, with him, it is: he don't waste his time, mark me, but he'll be a noticin' and a findin' out, as one may say, all manner of hidden things—leastwise the ways o' they insecs' and creepin' things and birds, and such; and he's the feelinest hearted boy I *ever* come a-nigh, he wouldn't go for to hurt a livin' thing! 'it's so wonderful,' says he, 'the pains God Almighty must have took to make 'em!' just like that sir; and he's a patient lad and meek o'spirit too, is Bernard. I'll say that for him. I'm a bit hasty myself, and these here rheumatics they try a man's temper surely, but if I've been put out and spoke up a bit sharp at odd times—'Drat it I'd say, or a bit word more than that, sir (saving your presence) as it might be; 'You young blockhead,' I says, 'give me the tools! you're no more use than a may-bug,' and that boy, sir, he'd just look at me (saying never a word o 'sauce), with them great brown eyes for all the world like a dog when you've hit him, and he bears no malice for it; and that straight look of his, I aint ashamed to own, has brought my temper down, as if I'd heard a sarmin: yes, yes, I've that to say for the boy."

"I am very glad to hear it," said the Rector, "and thank you,

Mace, for telling me; You've done your best to teach the lad, I'm sure, and I'm glad he does you credit in the garden-work."

"Well, as to that," rejoined the old gardener, resting both hands on the knobbed staff between his knees, and his chin on his hands, and fixing his steady keen glance on his employer, as he slowly propounded his opinion. "As to that, I didn't go so far as to say the lad would be a credit to *me*. He'll do your bidding, and mine, while there's power in him to do it; but he's so *sot* on learnin', and learnin' above *his* sort o'grade, that I have my doubts if he'll make the workman *I've* been, and as my father was afore me; he'll dig and he'll plant, but bless you! his *mind's* on twenty other things: for a case in p'int, now you know sir, he works all day, and only gets to his books in the evenings; he'd sit to 'em half the night if Widder King didn't keep him short o'candle; only t'other night, as we was a-sorting seeds at this here table, 'Mr. Mace,' he says to me, 'I wish as you was a scholard,' says he. 'A *scholard*, my lad?' I says, 'well we gardeners study Greek and Latin sure enough,' I says, 'for the names of plants, and it takes learnin' to know the *nature* of 'em too, *an*niwal, *bi*-anniwals, and so on; but,' I says, 'we've not that *time* to give to other branches, as I may say, we've got our livings to get.'"

"'Ah' says he, 'but *I should* like to learn so much more; all about they stars and comets, and the fruits and plants of furrin lands, and the histories of all the nations of the world, and how the people lived aforetime.' 'Hold, my lad!' I says, 'why you want more learnin' than you'd get out of all the books in the parson's library:' says I, and I believe I'm right, sir!"

"You are right, Mace," said Mr. Trevor "the thirst for knowledge is insatiable, and the more we know, the more we desire to learn; but it's a healthy craving, in a young, strong mind, and interests one to see; well, my good friend, I must be going: have you those roots ready that I promised my sister? I have a parcel for Bernard to take to the Railway Station this afternoon, and will enclose them."

The Railway Station was about half-a-mile from the Rectory; and our young hero liked an errand there. It was a line of much traffic, and he took a boy's interest in the trains which passed up and down with frequency and rapidity.

Having deposited his parcel in the Booking Office, paid its carriage, and carefully counted his change, Bernard returned to the platform, in time to see a long train come up on the opposite side of the station, and discharge passengers; one of these, a

man of a sea-faring appearance, wearing a pilot jacket and carrying a small bundle, essayed to cross the rails to take the up train shortly due: Scarcely had he stepped two yards, when a short, sharp whistle was heard, and a porter shouted to him to go back. The man looked this way and that, hesitated, appeared confused, and finally hurried forward, his foot slipped and he fell across the line of rails. With a cry of terror, Bernard Ray sprang off the platform where he stood, and dragged him from his imminent peril; hardly knowing what he did: there was a rush, a whirling of sparks, and steam, and a pilot-engine sped through the station. All was the work of an instant; there were shouts of mingling voices, and a knot of people gathered round, "Brave lad! you've saved his life!" Bernard heard them say, and others, "where is he hurt, poor fellow? is his leg broke?" as they lifted the unfortunate traveller into the waiting room.

"This foot seems badly crushed," observed the station-master; "if his head had been where it was another second, he'd have been sent into eternity in a moment! Run for a surgeon, my lad:" as Bernard stood, shocked and pitying by. Bernard ran and was so fortunate as to meet the doctor in his chaise, who drove to the station at once, bidding the boy run on to the "Elmsdale Arms," the nearest inn, and get a bed or sofa prepared to which the sufferer might be conveyed at once. "On the ground-floor, mind," said the doctor, "we don't want stairs to mount."

The man, though in great pain, bore it bravely; he was laid on a sofa in the inn, after being lifted out of the cart in which he was brought thither.

"We must make you as comfortable as we can," the doctor said, when he had done his best for the injured limb. "I wish the accommodation was better here."

"It's no matter," said the patient: "it'll only be for a night or two: I hope I'll get on so as to be on my journey by then."

"I fear not, my friend," rejoined the surgeon. "It will be a good many nights and days too, before you leave your present quarters: I won't deceive you." The man half groaned, turning his face away, as he said,

"The Lord knows best, I suppose."

The injury to the leg proved to be very severe; the ankle-bones being so much crushed, that the doctor believed amputation a necessity.

"Poor fellow," he said to the Rector, "it seems to cut

him up sadly to be told so, but it will have to be done, I am afraid."

When Mr. Trevor went to see him, the stranger turned an anxious gaze upon him, as if he had somewhat he would tell or ask; and raising himself by one elbow, as far as he might, without disturbing the position of his bandaged limb, regarded the minister with earnest eyes.

"Do you think, sir," then he said "that when we've gone on and done against the will of God and our duty, a long time, maybe, when we fix our minds to turn, He withstands us, sometimes, and lets us be hindered for a punishment?"

"I think," said Mr. Trevor, "that God's ways are not our ways; His dealings are 'far above out of our sight.'"

"You know, sir, how Jonah the Prophet fled from his post of duty as the Bible tells us; and how he was withstood; that's how *I* did. I fled from *mine*, a matter of ten years ago, and worse than he, for *I* fled from the sharp tongue of a woman, like a coward, sir, and marred where I *might* (please God) have mended; I've seen it all clear since. I'd two little ones, too; one, my girl, but two days christened, when that last turn with their mother drove me to what I did. Solomon says, don't he sir? 'That it's better to dwell in the wilderness than with a contentious and angry woman;' and the Lord forgive me, I thought so too, for my wife she *was* a hard one to bear with. I left 'em, sir; I turned my back on the home I'd made and worked for, and deserted them I was bound to protect and look to—a heavy sin to lie at a man's door."

Mr. Trevor was silent for awhile.

"It is a sad story," said he at length. "You were indeed wrong; but, by the Grace of God, you have repented, and would make amends, if that might be, for the past; is it not so?"

The man answered with a heavy sigh. "They've never been out of my thoughts of late, weeks and months together; she and the children. I did use to love her, sir, if she'd a-let me; and I loved my children. But there, you won't scarce believe that. I've made a trifle to set me above the world as I may say, but I'd give it all, and more, to know what's become of my boy as has had no father to bring him up, nor teach him right from wrong, and now the Lord is punishing me, sir, I feel it."

"When did you first regret the step you had taken? asked Mr. Trevor, "and seek to retrieve it? Ten years is a long period."

"I shipped for Australia, sir, and led a rough life there

a good while. I'd been employed in a livery stables, and my being used to horses stood me in good stead out there. I used to work and move about up country, and try all the while to forget I'd ever had a home and a fireside. Then there came talk of the diggings for gold, and I went in with a lot for that speculation. One night we were travelling through one of them great lone forests, and fell in with a party of travellers, among them a missionary, or preacher, Wesleyan, I think he called himself, but howsoever, a good man, and full of the Grace of God, there's no doubt in my mind o' that, sir; and we all camped out for the night, and before we lay down round the great fires they'd made, this man preached to us of salvation and judgment to come; and talked of sin and repentance, with the wind soughing up in the tall boughs, and the great stars looking like globes of fire down from the sky; and the voice of God calling louder than a trumpet in my heart all the time, saying, 'Bernard Ray, you've been a traitor to your own flesh and blood, and have sinned before the Lord exceedingly.'"

"*What* name is yours, said you?" interrupted the minister. And if it had been told Mr. Trevor how little surprise he would feel when the stranger-man calmly repeated the words "*Bernard Ray*," he might scarcely have believed it. "It is of the Lord," was all his inward comment.

"Tell me more," he said.

"I prayed that night if ever I did in my life," went on the speaker, "I prayed to God to give me such success as should bring me back to the old country once more, and vowed I'd never rest till I set eyes on my wife and children, if I searched for 'em to my dying day; and I thought my prayer was heard, sir, for we had great luck, my mates and me, and though it was agreed beforehand to make clean shares, which we did, my share was more than I could have dreamt of; and after we'd parted company at Melbourne, a friend I had there did a bit of speculation for me that turned out most uncommon profitable, so I set sail for home with a lighter heart than I'd known since I left it, and landed safe and sound at Southampton, minded to make my way up to London where we'd used to live; but the hand of God has seen fit to stop me just at last."

"His ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts," repeated the Rector of Elmsdale reverently. "Were your family in good circumstances when you left them?"

"We had a comfortable living, sir; we had a tidy lot of

goods, and a tidy place to put 'em in, for I'd saved a bit before married. My wife had as much work as she could do at the boot-binding, and I got steady wages under a good master."

"How old might your boy be if he is living now?"

"My boy, sir? he were turned four years *that* Christmas; he'd be nigh on his fourteen now. Heaven bless him! he were a pretty little chap."

"About the age of the lad who saved your life yesterday," said the clergyman.

"Aye, sir! just such another; and strange enough, I'd set my eye on that lad, the minute afore the shout came to stop me crossing the lines; I was just saying (in my mind like) what a thing it would be to find a son such as that, if I ever should; and my thoughts were dazed like with the notion, I believe. Aye, a brave lad that is, sure; I'll make it up to him, please God when I get round a bit."

"That lad came to me two years ago," said Mr. Trevor; "he came from London, his name is Bernard Ray."

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It would be little use to try and describe a good deal that followed; much of which can be better left to imagination than detailed by the pen.

How the father and son were brought together, and piece after piece in either's history fitted into each other till every link was supplied; how wondering Bernard gradually realized a father in the tanned and travelled stranger whose life he had saved, and how proudly that father looked on his bright-faced curly-headed lad. How Widow King insisted on an immediate removal of the patient to her cottage, where he was tended with all her kindly best, by the pleased and wondering dame, and her "good lad," (as she always called Bernard); and rest of mind, and thankfulness, did wonders to allay suffering, and aid recovery, till with patient skill and care, the doctor contrived to avoid the loss of the foot, though lameness for life was inevitable.

Once more the parish church at Elmsdale is fair with text and sacred banner, and fragrant with odorous blossoms; all of best and richest that love can offer to beautify the courts of the Lord's House, and keep high festival before the King of kings.

Again the white-robed troops in their crisp, snowy surplices, file, singing the Easter hymn from the vestry to the choir-stalls, and the brightest, clearest voice among them is that of the boy, who two years ago, knelt, a homeless, friendless wanderer, at

the far end of the aisle, and thanked the good God whom he knew so little then, for the glory of the sweet sounds he heard. And the happiest *heart* too is Bernard's this day. So full of happiness, it could hardly hold an added joy.

As long ago, so now, he bows his head to hide the tears that suffuse his eyes, but they are happy drops of thankfulness and love, as at Communion-time, he sees his father, supported to the holy rails by a kindly arm; and thinks of the words he had heard him say as they two walked up the church path, that morning, (the first time Ray had been allowed to use the crippled limb, with the aid of a crutch and his young son's strong arm).

"What reward shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits that He hath done unto me? I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord!"

And more happiness is to come: on the next week sweet Miss Alice, the Rector's sister, is to be married to the young heir of Elmsdale Hall, Sir Edwin Chestney, who has heard the story of Bernard, and his father's return, and being interested for their welfare, has promised the post of lodge-keeper to the elder Ray, so that his son can live with him; and some of the Australian gold which he has brought home, will be able to provide a better education for the book-loving lad, whom Rector and Baronet have agreed, is made of other stuff than gardeners' boys in general turn out to be.

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Time flies apace, especially happy well-spent time. And in a few more years Bernard Ray's beautiful boyish voice will cease to be heard when the young choristers troop into the chancel, but he will then be advanced to a higher post of duty and privilege, as organist and schoolmaster of the parish, respected and esteemed by all, and known as "young Mr. Ray;" while his father, a grey-haired old man, moves about the park and grounds with his useful crutch, and tells by the winter fire tales of travel and adventure, and closes his days in peace and honest piety.

In bidding farewell to Bernard in his changed and happy life, it is pleasant to realize the faithful Rector's satisfaction in the success of the good work his charity had begun, and God's providence crowned: remembering the blessing conveyed to such in higher words than the praise of man can bestow,

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me."

A LITTLE MAID.

"Oh, what a world of beauty
A loving heart might plan,
If we but did our duty,
And helped our brother man!
Then angel guests would brighten
The threshold with their wings,
And love divine enlighten
The old forgotten things."—SWAIN.

"WELL, Mrs. Simson, I am sure, since you wish it and think will amuse you on your sick-bed, I shall be pleased to tell you how I fared when I first went out in the world. Although for forty years, girl and woman, I have been in service, I recollect all that befell me in my first place better than I do much that has happened later. It was a very hard life at first, as you will see, but I weathered it, and I learnt by previous suffering to know when I was well off, as I have now been for many and many a long year.

"I was one of a large family, and my father, a labouring man, down in Warwickshire, had much ado to bring us all up respectably on his small earnings. But though wages are higher now-a-days, I don't think the poor folks in my county seem so happy or contented as they used to do. The Squire and his lady never let any good servants want, and had always a helping hand for those who tried to help themselves. As to the Parson and his lady, both lying now beneath the chancel window of the old church, I never think of them without a 'God bless them' in

my heart. Theirs was indeed an abode of peace and love, where each one of the family strove who could best lighten the burdens of the other. Not a baby was there in the village uncared for by Mrs. Malcom, and in season and out of season the Vicar laboured for the souls of his flock. For me, I think, there was especial kindness felt at the Vicarage, and from the time I was seven years old until I left home, Mrs. Malcom had me much there and taught me to be useful in the nursery. Besides this, one or other of the elder of the young ladies took pains to give me a better education than I could have had in the village school, and taught me many things which have been useful to me all my life. Servants grew old in service at the Vicarage and never one thought to leave to better herself in any way, save by marriage. I wonder whose fault it is, Mrs. Simson, that the old friendliness has so died out between mistress and maid, and that neither now seems able to trust the other? Yes, perhaps there are faults on both sides, and therefore the best thing would be, instead of railing at one another, for both parties to try and come to a better understanding. When I was fifteen, my mother thought I ought to go to service, and Mrs. Malcom undertook to find me a situation as under-nurse. I was proud and pleased when she told me a friend of hers in London would take me, and great was my delight in the simple preparations necessary for my start in life. Mr. Malcom had me into his study the night before I was to leave home and gave me good advice, especially warning me not to be led away by bad example, and never to omit kneeling down night and morning and saying my prayers. I thought then it would be easy enough to do that which all my life I had been accustomed to do, and that he need not have made such a point of it.

"On arriving in London, I was met at the coach by Mrs. Burdett's man, who very much upset my dignity by inquiring if I was 'the young 'un for Burdetts.'

"'Here,' said he, when he took me to the housekeeper's room, 'is Miss Susan Martin, come to honour this establishment by taking service in it; blest if ever I saw such an upstart chick.'

"'Indeed!' said the housekeeper coldly, 'we shall soon have her country pride down; come in, pray, Miss Martin, and oblige me by taking a seat whilst I ring for a groom of the chambers to show you to your apartments.' I was struck dumb by this strange welcome to my new home, and sat myself down waiting for the next order.

"Presently a young woman obeyed the housekeeper's summons and I was taken off to the nursery. 'Oh,' said the upper nurse, 'you are the new girl: well I must say you are something of a clodhopper, but if you're willing we will make the best of you. Jane, take her upstairs with her box, and make haste back, for I want her to help bath the children.' Tired with my journey and wanting refreshment, I was put to work at once, doing everything in so frightened a manner that the little children shrunk from me. At length I was told it was supper-time, and that afterwards I could go to bed. In vain did I look round for a friendly face among the under-servants, with whom I sat at table. Whenever they condescended to take notice of me, it was in the way of coarse jokes, about my cheeks having been rubbed against bricks, or the pattern of my homely gowns, and especially did my arms, red and bare, for long sleeves were not worn by servants then, provoke their mirth. At last I was told to come to bed, when I found I had to share the room of the scullery-maid and under-housemaid, the former of whom was an exceedingly rough, powerfully built young woman. As I undressed, the girls took no notice of me, until I got my bible and knelt by my bedside; then I heard a great burst of laughter, and one said to the other, 'Oh! this will kill me, let's souse the

bible saint.' In great terror I rose from my knees and cried out 'I'll tell the mistress in the morning.'

"'You'll tell,' cried she of the scullery, 'tell! tell! tell!' and with each repetition of that fatal word she shook me with all her might. 'Now Small'un, or whatever your name is, that is a taste of what I'd do to you if ever you breathed a word of anything you saw or heard said, or done in this room. You might say your prayers once for all, my girl, if ever you told on us. Do you understand, Small'un?'

"I replied that 'I did understand and would never tell if she'd let me kneel down and say my prayers.'

"'Get into bed,' she said, 'I'm not going to have any nonsense of that sort in my room.' Thus saying she pushed me into bed, and I laid and prayed as well as I could, to be delivered from evil. So after that I never knelt again, but used to say my prayers lying down, though often enough I fell asleep as soon as my tired head touched the pillow.

"To make a long story short of this part of my life, Nurse either took a dislike to me, for I really tried my best to please her, or, she had, as I afterwards had reason to believe, a sister, whom she wished to put in my place, and she so represented me to Mrs. Burdett that she wrote to Mrs. Malcom that I was unfit for the nursery, and she could get me into her sister's house as under-housemaid. On her telling me this I readily assented to the change. I would not have returned home as a failure for anything that could have been offered me.

"If my experiences of my first place were hard, those of my second were harder still. My business was to help the upper housemaid till twelve o'clock, and the cook the rest of the day. You've heard, Mrs. Simson, of what black slavery was, and you've read 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' but you can't imagine that a young girl could be led the life I was in this place. I was that

drove, that put upon, and treated like dirt beneath her feet by the housemaid upstairs that all strength and spirit were driven out of me by the time I got into the kitchen. Twelve o'clock was the time, you know, for me to be there, but sometimes to spite the cook the housemaid used to dare me to go down till I had done something or other which it was properly her place to do, and thus I would be fifteen to twenty minutes late. As soon as ever Cook heard me coming, she snatched up a saucepan-lid and shied it at my head; however, I never got hit but once, for I found out how to dodge the lids, much better indeed than I could dodge Cook's tongue; from that there was no escape. At first she used to make me tremble in my shoes by the way she hooted on me.

"What is hooted? said Mrs. Simson.

"Why, it is the word for 'shouting' in my country, and hoot she did, and 'call' me so too that I turned real silly, and often the kitchen was all of a swim with me. Sometimes in my fright and daze I used to drop things, but as everything broken from one end of the house to the other was laid at my door, I was not sorry for anything I did smash. Often and often I had to stand still whilst the cook told the mistress what a bad girl I was, how lazy and careless, and how I broke everything I touched.

"At last, when I had borne all this for six months and began to feel ill and almost unable to work, Cook told the mistress she 'really could not put up with me any longer.'

"'It's very sad, Susan,' said the gentle lady to me one day, 'have you any excuse to make?' Cook's stony eye is on me, and I saw her clutch a frying pan in what she called her 'mild suggestive manner,' so I dropped a curtsey and I said, 'No, ma'am.' 'Then will you try and do better if Cook will kindly give you another trial?' 'If you please, ma'am,' I began and then burst out crying so bitterly, the lady in the kindness of her heart took

my resolve for granted, and said, 'that will do, Susan, I am sure you will try.' As the lady was leaving the kitchen I heard Cook say something to her, about 'a young crocodile not worth her salt.' Thereupon a great despair came over me. I was ill and miserable, but stay in that house another night, I would not. I resolved to run away, not knowing whither to run or what would become of me. I was very mad for the time and could not reason about consequences. I had but half-a-crown in the world, but I had a dim notion that I could get a night's lodging with it. Soon after, the servants' dinner Cook wanted an errand done. I just looked round the place, and taking up the cat, of which I had become very fond, said out loud, 'Good bye, Pussy dear, I'm going for a walk,' 'and make haste back,' shouted Cook, 'or I'll——.' I stayed not to hear the threat of vengeance, but as I closed the door cried 'artful young crocodile.' There was company staying in the house, there was a dinner-party that night—did Cook, I wonder, think of my parting shot as she stood surrounded by her 'washing up,' and hour after hour sped by and no 'Small'un,' as they had nicknamed me, 'homeward flew.' I had no plans and felt curiously free from care as I walked away from the neighbourhood of my late home, but as I perceived the approach of evening I knew I must inquire for shelter. At last, peeping into the window of a baker's shop, I saw the face of my first friend in London. I suffered a good deal after I saw that kind homely face, but thenceforward I never wanted a friend. I went into the shop, and timidly asked this good woman, 'if she knew of a place for a girl like me.'

"'Well,' she said, 'no doubt she could get a place for a girl of good character, and how was I for that?'

"Her voice was so kind and encouraging that I told her all my story—and she believed it. She tried to persuade me to go back to my place for the sake of my character; but no, that I

never would no. Seeing then how friendless I was, and the danger I ran alone in the great strange city, this most charitable woman said she would take me in for that night at least.

"There was a little bed always kept ready for 'her own boy against he came back from sea,' and in this she allowed me to sleep. Aye, but I knelt down that night,—the first time since I left my home, and thanked God Who *had* delivered me from so much evil!

"The next day, Mrs. James, that was the name of my new friend, went and saw my late mistress, who when she heard how harshly I had been treated in her house, said, she was very sorry for me. No doubt she was sorry, but I wish I could think all I suffered under her roof, made it easier for other poor girls who came after me. It's a shocking thing, Mrs. Simson, to put a young girl under such tyrants as her cook and nursemaid, and I wonder who would have been answerable to God over all if in my misery and despair I had gone that afternoon either into the river, or fallen into one of the many snares of London where I might have met a moral death no less dreadful?

"Mrs. James was a hard-working widow woman striving to keep a respectable name, and she could not afford to pay wages, but she kept me for two months until I got back my health and spirits. Many a useful homely thing did she teach me, and I did all I could to repay her for her kindness by working for her with all my might. I had such a dread of going out again as under-servant that we both agreed it would be best for me to get a place as a general servant. A friend of Mrs. James came in one day and said she knew of a situation just to suit me, and as it was within easy reach of Mrs. James, we settled I should try it. I went to see the lady, who had just got her first baby, at least it was nearly a month old. Mrs. Denby told me she had been brought up in great style, and did not know anything of

domestic affairs, so that she wanted a trusty girl who would manage all for her. She also told me, Mr. Denby was in a first-rate city house, in which he hoped some day to be a partner. You know Brixton, Mrs. Simson—the house was one of those villas in Royal Terrace, a lovely-looking house outside, with a fine portico and pillars, and flower-vases and all that; but inside it you never saw such a sham affair! Why, the roof lifted up and down when the wind blew, and the ceilings were always a-falling, and there were great rifts in the walls and the whole place looked like, I should think, it ought to look after an earthquake. As to the basement and the drains, they won't bear speaking of, Mrs. Simson. Mrs. Denby moreover said it was necessary for them to live in a genteel locality, because Mr. Denby had a position to keep up and such high friends as would not like to visit them in a common-looking house, and so they must put up with little inconveniences. I have seen a deal of this sort of thing since this first experience of outside show, a deal of the misery caused by keeping up a false appearance, and isn't it wonderful people should make such sacrifices and not be able to see their fine friends are only laughing at them.

"The second day after I got into my new place was to be the christening, because Mrs. Denby wanted it over before the nurse left. There was to be a party of six people to tea and supper. Mrs. Denby had me up and told me she hoped I would do everything very nicely, for she wished to astonish her husband's mother. Well, if she wasn't astonished it was not my fault, and she must have been a lady very hard to astonish," said Susan laughing.

"Tea was ordered for five o'clock, but as I had been busy starching and ironing Mrs. Denby's best white petticoat, with three worked flounces, I was all behind. Nurse said, Mrs. Denby must not over-exert herself; besides, how could I expect help from

her when she had to practise her music to astonish her husband's mother? She had also a blue-silk dress to re-trim, that she might look as much in the fashion as her brother's wife, and there were baby's cap and robe to see to, and no end of finery besides. I was quite excited with all the bustle and preparation and very earnest to do all as well as possible—but you know, Mrs. Simson, even a steam-engine will break down if you try it too hard.

"The christening party all got in about half-past four o'clock and Mr. Denby called for wine and cake, not knowing that the sherry had not come, and that the baker was also late. I had not been trained in the ways of genteel people, and I never thought to call the mistress out of the room, as was proper, but I just walked in quite candidly, and said, 'Please ma'am they havn't come.'

"'Susan,' she said, quite high 'you don't know where to find them. Poor thing'—she said this to the company—'she only came in yesterday and does not know where our wine cellar is.' Then she came out of the room, and called me 'a stupid,' and bade me run to the nearest shops for both wine and cake. I went as quickly as I could, but it took me twenty minutes good and five o'clock came without the kettle even being on the fire. It was getting on for six when the mistress called out, 'Susan, are you never coming with the tea?"

"'Oh, ma'am,' I said, 'I am so bothered, the coal is so cokey the kettle never will boil, and I can't get the toast to brown,' but I am trying hard to get on, missis, I really am.

"'Oh, do make haste,' she cried, and thus admonished I strove yet harder, and by half-past six left Mrs. Denby at the head of the table ready to pour out the tea. I had not got downstairs when I heard shouts of laughter, followed by a sharp ringing of the bell.

"'Susan, you tiresome girl,' cried Mrs. Denby, 'you've forgotten to put the tea in the pot!' How sorry I was, to be sure —and that is how I began by astonishing the mother-in-law!

"The supper was ordered for half-past eight o'clock, and was to consist of boiled chicken, tongue, roasted hare and cabinet pudding, all of which I had told Mrs. Denby I thought I could manage. But the place was strange to me, there were not proper things for use, and I was exhausted and half stupid with the long day's hard work I had already had. I know I ought to have had the fowls trussed and the hare skinned in the afternoon, but you see I was busy with that petticoat after I got dinner out of the way. It was eight o'clock before the fowls were trussed, and then I began to think about the hare. I had never dressed a hare and had no notion how to do it, and first of all I cut off the head and then tried to pull the skin downwards.

"Pull as I would, I could not get it off, so I ran up to the nurse and asked her if she knew how to do it. Finding that she did not know, I peeped into the drawing-room and beckoned the mistress out.

"'Skin a hare!' how was it likely she should know? I ought to be ashamed of myself.

"'What must I do?' I cried, wringing my hands 'Why get it done somehow,' she answered, and returned to her company.

"Just at this moment the baker's young man, at least he said he was his man, though it turned out afterwards he'd only been asked by the boy to bring the cake, which had been left at the wrong house, came to the door. He was very polite, and asked if there was anything he could do for me? So, I told him my trouble about the hare, and he at once offered to do it for me. When he had made the best job he could of the headless creature I thanked him and expected he would take himself off. But, I found it was much easier to let that young man in than to let

him out, and after I had complied with his request for a glass of ale, he declared he liked my society and would stay and see me through my supper. He was that useful, Mrs. Simson, I could not be sorry, he made the pudding and peeled the potatoes, and where the supper would have been without his help, I don't know, as it was nearly ten o'clock before I got all up. Now I must tell you how I again astonished the company. The wine was sent in—the two bottles of sherry, you know—soon after tea, and I put it on the dresser until it was wanted upstairs. At a moment when my back has turned Mr. Baker opened a bottle, requiring a little, as he said, for sauce for the pudding. I was too busy to watch him and I did not observe that he emptied the bottle, filled it again with water and carefully corked it. As luck would have it, when the master told me to bring up a bottle of sherry I caught up this one.

"'Susan' said Mr. Denby, as the colourless fluid flowed into the glass,—'what is the meaning of this?'

"The truth flashed through my mind in an instant; I had been deceived and betrayed by that baker.

"'Oh sir,' I said, 'it was not me—I never thought he would do such a thing!'

"'Who is *he?*' demanded Mr. Denby with severity.

"'Please sir, it's the baker's young man, who has been helping me with the supper.'

"'You are a nice girl to let strange men into the house, but we will settle this to-morrow. Fetch another bottle.'

"Imagine if you can, Mrs. Simson, what my feeling was when I went down into the kitchen and found the young baker had gone off with the other and only remaining bottle! Perhaps you can also imagine that I had now fully succeeded in astonishing the company. Mr Denby kept on ringing, but I dared not face him with the truth that there was no wine left. At last he came out and

called me, and I think when I confessed to him the true state of the case he saw I had been more foolish than wicked and bade me dry my eyes and run to the public-house at the corner of the street and fetch some wine. I hope he did not think, Mrs. Simson, what a shamefnl thing it was to send so young a girl on such an errand, but thanks be to an ever watchful Providence, I was not harmed morally, as so many have been in this way.

"'Susan,' cried Mrs. Denby, when it was close on midnight, 'you were so late with supper, my friends cannot get home to-night; we must manage to sleep them somehow, and you must lie on the sofa.' Not a blanket was there to cover me, for necessaries of all sorts were scarce in that house, and the night being chilly and my system thoroughly worn out, I got a severe cold. However, I slept heavily, and only awoke the next morning after Mrs. Denby had knocked long and loudly at the door. Nurse came down before the kitchen fire had burnt up, and said I was an idle good-for-nothing girl for not having the breakfast ready. Little did she know of my aching limbs and heavy head, and if she had known she would not have cared. Ah! Mrs. Simson, I've many a time carried up breakfast to a lady after a late party when I was much more fit to be in bed, and because I was a little silent, or unready with my answers or my sympathy for her fatigue, she has told others I was ill-tempered. No, I don't wish to excuse tempers, but I think now as I have always thought, that women folks do not make half allowance enough for the weakness, which oftentimes brings out the sharp word or the cross look. That's a lesson we all need to learn, Mrs. Simson, to bear with one another, and perhaps it is the hardest lesson against self, that a Christian woman has to learn."

"It is, indeed, my dear," said the old woman. "I have often wondered myself to see the extreme patience of sick nurses. Illness is so apt to make the temper irritable, and after a poor

nurse has been up all night, tired and worn out, to have cross words, their only payment, must be trying.'

"Ah, yes, they must need God's special help then to control their temper; I'm sure, Mrs. Simson, I'm sure mine wouldn't hold out against that; I do like to be thanked for what I do, I own."

"Yes," said Mrs. Simson, smiling, "I believe we all do, only few like to own it. I have my doubts of them people that tell you, 'I want no thanks, don't thank me, I can't bear it;' why, I remember hearing some lines once that say, "all worldly joys are less than the one joy of doing kindnesses,' and it would not be a joy if you did not know your kindness gave pleasure, that's as I took it," said the good old dame, "but go on, my dear, with your story, for it interests me very much, and I think you ought to make it known, for mothers are much to blame in my opinion for sending girls out without making proper inquiries as to the people they're going to live with; the servants ought to have references for their mistresses, same as they require for their servants."

"You mean then," said Susan laughing, "you ought to ask for your missis's character."

"Certainly, I do; ask in the neighbourhood amongst the tradesfolk, whether her servants stay long and speak well of her? if she pays her way, and keeps her home bright and clean."

"Well, yes. I think you're right, but you are getting tired, I can see, Mrs. Simson, so I will only tell you how I finished my time at Mrs. Denby's house. It was so short, that although I knew I was not in fault, except through ignorance and inexperience, I began to fear there must be something against me which would prevent my ever getting a character. The nurse was obliged to leave soon after breakfast, and then all the company left, except the mistress's sister, who stayed to have luncheon. As soon as this was over, Mrs. Denby said, she wanted to do a little shopping and would I take care of

the baby while she was away. Of course I promised to do so and also on no account whatever to open the door to anybody, unless on the chain. Mrs. Denby had hardly gone out ten minutes before the poor babe began to fret sadly. I tried all I could do to comfort him, but it was of no use. He never ceased to cry. I thought it strange, and that it must be something wrong in my management, for he never made a sound all the time the old nurse had him. I know now, and all young mothers should be warned of it, that nurses, in order to secure their own quiet, carry about with them soothing drops, which they secretly administer to the helpless infant, thus often laying the foundation of lifelong ill-health. An hour or more had gone by and the child was still crying bitterly, when there came a grand knocking at the hall-door. I opened it a little way, keeping up the chain, having the baker's misdeeds fresh in my memory. The visitor, a rather shabby-looking man, inquired for Mr. Denby, and on being told he was not at home, said, 'It was of no consequence, he could walk in and wait.' 'Oh! if you please, sir,' I said, 'you can't do that, for I am alone in the house, and I had orders to let nobody in.'

"'Nonsense, my girl,' said he, 'I am your master's first cousin, and if you don't let me in he will be very angry with you. Of course you are a stranger or you'd know me.'

"The baby was still crying, I was so nervous and bewildered I hardly knew what I was about, so I asked the man, if he was sure he was master's cousin and that it would be all right if I admitted him.

"He assured me his statement was correct, and with a trembling hand I unfastened the chain and in he walked, whistling as he did so to another man, who speedily followed.

"'Now don't be frightened,' the man said, not unkindly, 'we've come on business and will just go down in the kitchen and make ourselves comfortable till the master returns.'

"How utterly wretched I was for the next hour with that poor babe never ceasing its wail, you may imagine, and when my mistress returned and sunk down almost fainting as I told her about the man in the kitchen, I burst out crying too, and felt that there was nothing but wrong and misery in the world!

"'It's the rent, Susan,' said the poor young woman, 'you've let the bailies in.'

"Mr. Denby was late getting home, and when he came he had not the money to pay the man out, and my shame and sorrow at having by my disobedience to orders brought this trouble into the house helped, I think, to accelerate the illness which had begun in the cold I took from sleeping on the sofa. Anyhow, the next morning I found myself unable to get up, and from fretting and want of proper attention, by mid-day I became unconscious. When I, some days afterwards, found myself in the ward of a hospital, I had a dim recollection of having been carried to a cab by the man in possession, and when I was getting better, a note was brought to me from him, saying, he 'hoped I would accept the enclosed shilling, and believe he was very sorry, that in the execution of his duty, he'd so frightened a young girl.' So you see, Mrs. Simson, that even a bailie has sometimes a good heart, though he has such a bad name.

"The good nursing and proper treatment I had in the hospital soon helped me through, and when I was fit to be moved Mrs. James once more held out to me her good charitable hand, and took me to her home until I was fit for another place. Of all the many things I have to be thankful for in my life, there is nothing for which I do so heartily thank God as that, when she needed it, He gave me the means to help this good woman. For a time of great trouble came on her; poor soul, she thought the loss of her husband bad enough, and hoped that that was ALL she had to bear, but God settles the weight of the Cross, and it is never too heavy—for He gives the strength with it—so, poor

dear, a man offered to help her with her business, and said he could double the profits; perhaps he did. Anyhow, he made off with them one fine day, and left poor Mrs. James penniless. I was just at the time leaving a place where I had saved some money, and Jim, he kept worrying me to settle; so I went to him and said, 'Well, Jim, I'll be married now if you'll take Mrs. James to live with us;' and he looked as much as to say, 'No;' but I only needed just to remind him of the poor 'little maid' and the friend she'd been to her, to make him consent at once, and we were never a penny the poorer, I know. She lived with us till she died, poor thing; she wasn't old, but she couldn't raise herself up against her troubles; she was one of those gentle kind of people easily knocked down, and she seemed to feel as though everything was over for her in this life, and she'd only to lie down and die, and so she just seemed to melt away."

"Poor dear! well, it must have been a comfort to you to be able to repay in some sort what she did for you."

"It was, indeed; and now, Mrs. Simson, the little maid's great troubles were over, and another day, if you wish it, I will tell you of some brighter scenes of my life and how I gained the character, which you are so good as to say, has made me so respected."

"Thank you, my dear, very much," said Mrs. Simson, "you've whiled away an hour very pleasantly for me, and so you have the pleasure of feeling you have not lost a day. Those who have lived more than half a lifetime as I have, learn many lessons, and I think one of the most useful is the assurance that whether our work is light and pleasant, or hard and sad, it is what God wills us to do, and He has one of his great purposes to carry out through our humble means. The mighty Syrian Captain was cured of his leprosy, remember, through the agency of only

A LITTLE MAID.

"THE LAST ROSE OF SUMMER."

"You'll live to rue it, Peggy, my lass, I promise you, and if I'd ha' thought for a minute that going to Lunnon with my lady, would have made you dress in that ere fandangle manner you shouldn't have took the place—that you shouldn't."

The speaker, a farmer of the old school, stood leaning on a spade with which he had been grubbing up some thistles in a meadow he had just walked over, and the girl he addressed was leaning against the porch of the farmhouse—with the roses bending down over her, peeping into her face with jealous scrutiny, perhaps to inspect so fair a rival.

Margaret Crosland was an acknowledged little beauty in the pretty secluded village where her life had passed. Beneath the thatched roof of the large quaint old farmhouse which had been owned by a Crosland since the days of Elizabeth, when one Digby Crosland had built it, having turned his sword into a ploughshare. Margaret was born the fourth in the family and the first girl, so that she at once became the father's pet, and as she grew up, pride and admiration mingled with his love, and Peggy's beautiful eyes turned up to his face with pleading glances, would win any indulgence; and a loving kiss from her rich ruddy lips any forgiveness.

A bright cheery little maid she was too, happy as the birds that built their nests in the trees and shrubs in the old garden, unspoiled by her father's indulgence, perhaps, because

it was counteracted by the somewhat stern grave mother. David Crosland had married without any love sentiment; he had married to have a companion, and an honest, good, industrious homely woman to superintend the farm. He had thought little of a family coming to him and was a little bothered as they quickly increased, so that the fourth boy had a very indifferent welcome from his father, but the baby girl was another thing, and from the moment that it was placed in his arms a great love, greater than he had ever known, arose in his heart for the tiny child, and on the earth there was no one dearer to the farmer than his beautiful Peggy. This love was as unselfish as it was intense, proved by the fact that he had let her go away from him at her earnest request to be young-lady's maid to Lady Lucy Hamilton's daughters.

Attracted, as the young always are, by beauty, the girls seeing Peggy at work in the hay-field implored their mother to ask her if she would supply the place of their maid, who was leaving to be married; and Peggy, lured by the many advantages set before her by the eager girls, consented herself, if "father and mother would let her." The mother thought it an excellent thing, for she was beginning to feel uneasy at the lads coming hanging about the farm, bringing nosegays and other little presents for Peggy, talking nonsense to her, and turning her head; but it needed all Peggy's powers of pleading to persuade her father to part with her, only consenting at last when she turned away with something very like tears in her eyes—he could not bear that, he never could since she was born. Always in the baby days, when the mother would fain have punished her for some misdemeanour, he would say "Don't make the little lass cry;" so the tears brought immediate consent to her wishes, and she had been for three months in the service of Lady Lucy Hamilton. The family had just returned to their country

place and this was Peggy's first visit home since she had left it. More beautiful than ever was the little maiden, the face so softened and refined; but to the homely, honest farmer, the "young lady" in the long fashionable dress, the small coquettish hat set on elaborately dressed hair, was not *his* Peggy, with her short serge dress, and grey stockings, and thick shoes, her nut-brown hair rolled up in a large knot, with just a comb to hold it up, which it sometimes failed to do, and let it fall all rough and wavy over her shoulders, till her mother's sharp reproving voice would bid her "do up her hair neat"—that was *his* Peggy, wild and untidy perhaps, but bright and innocent, knowing little and caring less, how fair she was, only that she was her father's darling, and her life was all sunshine.

As he spoke the words the nearest to reproof he had ever spoken to her, a flush of pain and indignation mounted to her temples. She was leaning against the porch where she had been standing watching for him to come in, the red, gold sunset shedding its crimson light on the old farmhouse and on the gnats dancing round and round in myriads; and the cows coming home slowly one behind the other over the green meadow, and the poultry going home to roost—resting on all, as God's sunshine does, on the just and on the unjust, and on the girl, as she stood there hearing words from her father which so pained and disappointed her.

After a moment's pause she said, "I thought you'd like to see how I'd been getting on, father."

"Getting on, you call it, getting silly, I take it, aping your betters. What should I look like, dressed like the Squire, I wonder, and your mother like 'my lady?' it's folly, I tell you, and you'll rue it."

She answered nothing then, but turned and went into the house. Strange to say, the stern mother was less severe on

Peggy's change of dress than her father. The woman's nature in her was against finding fault with what was so much prettier, she thought, than the homely garb Peggy had worn before; besides it spoke of rising fortunes. Her daughter was no longer a little country girl to feed chickens and such like, but maid to a lady of quality, and "she had ought to be dressed up and not be laughed at by other maids." Thus she argued with "father" during tea, to which Peggy stayed, but the farmer only shook his head and said,

"As you will, as you will; but no good ever came of a love of dress, it's just the gate of the broad way which leadeth to destruction."

"Why David, man, it's only right; sure, a woman, and a young one too, should have a care of her looks, should make herself neat and comely, and——

"There, there," said David, interrupting his wife, "neatness and cleanliness are next to godliness, but finery," he said, touching the trimmed skirt of his pretty daughter and pointing to the dainty hat on a chair beside her, "finery such as that is not fit wearing for a decent young woman earning her bread honestly; it costs all her wages, and mayhap more, and folks will begin to ask where the money comes from which helps her to dress above what she seems."

"Don't be so hard on the girl, don't," said his wife, for Peggy had pushed back her tea, and large tears were filling her pretty eyes, "she won't want to come and see us no more, if you drive her away now with cross speeches. Sit you down, Peggy," continued her mother, as the girl rose and took up the offending hat, "sit down and finish your tea."

"No more, thank you, mother, I must go, it will be time to dress the young ladies for dinner against I get home."

"Well, you'll come again, Peggy, soon."

"Perhaps father won't care to see me?"

"I care to see *you!* I've no fault to find of you; your foine clothes I don't like," said her father, "you know well enough how I miss you, what it cost me to let you go, that nought has seemed to me the same since you left; the sun don't shine to me like it used, nor the flowers havn't somehow the same look. I'd give my right hand to have you back if I could keep you without it, but I'm willing to spare you, and happy to know as you be. I've liked your nice gladsome letters, and looked forward to your coming home, but I thought to see my bonnie girl come back like herself, not a fine madam."

Peggy put on her hat, and stooping to kiss her mother made never an answer to her father; but he drew her to him, kissed and blessed her, and as the door closed on her, took the pipe from the high mantel-shelf, and lighting it began to smoke in silence.

His wife busied herself clearing the tea away, keeping up a torrent of complaints at his reception of Peggy.

"Poor gal, you as used to spoil her and humour her, right or wrong, to keep on at her now, why you would not have her spoke to when she *were* wrong, and because, as is natural to her age, she likes to make herself a bit smart, then you goes on at her, poor dear lamb."

David only turned uneasily on his chair and puffed out fresh clouds of smoke, but said nothing; then Mrs. Crosland declaring "you might jest as well talk to a mummy as him," and she "wouldn't waste her breath on him," went out of the room and left the farmer to his pipe and his meditations.

And Peggy went on her way over the meadows to the Hall, not in the least concerned by her father's invectives against dress, only saying to herself the poor old man did not know, how should he, who had never been to London, and so she con-

soled herself by thinking he would get used to it, hoping he would too, for she loved him dearly, and did not wish to vex him, but the love of dress and the fear of the ridicule of her fellow-servants, were stronger than her love. At the end of one of the meadows which she had to pass, she saw approaching her a figure she well knew, one of the most devoted of those young lovers about whom her mother had grown anxious, one she had favoured more than the others, for he was good-looking and bright tempered and with a merry jest always ready, not the stupid heavy manner of the other fellows, whose only idea of expressing their affection was a nudge and a grin.

"Peggy!" he exclaimed as they met, "I heard you were in the village, I *am* glad to see you. Does the gold cling to you from the London streets? if so, give a poor chap some; but really I hardly know as I ought to be so friendly like with you now, you don't look like my—our Peggy."

"Don't I, Nat., what do I look like, then?"

"Well much as the sun looks to the stars, I reckon, a cut above them." He paused a moment and then said. "Are you going back to the Hall, may I see you home?"

"Oh! yes, Nat., for old aquaintance sake."

"Yes," he said quietly, and he turned and walked beside her glancing down every now and then at her, but silent for some little time; indeed, until the meadows were passed, and they were at the lodge of the Hall, they said but little, a strange shyness seemed to have come over them. Before the pretty rose-covered porch of the lodge an organ was playing; the children of the lodge-keeper, and she herself were standing listening to it. All the ruddy glow of sunset had faded, and the stars were "sitting one by one each on its golden throne." A bird late home to roost, rushed by on swift wing; a dog in some distant farmyard uttered a deep bark of warning against

intruders; all mingling with the sound of the organ playing the sweetest and tenderest of melodies, "The Last Rose of Summer."

The young couple stood a moment or two listening, and then Nat. reaching up to the porch, saying with a pleasant smile to the woman, "May I, Mrs. Winter?" pulled off one of the few roses still left and handed it to Peggy, and bending down to look in her pretty face, he murmured something which made her cheeks glow brighter than the rose she held, and hastily bidding him good-bye, she flew up the carriage-drive without once turning to look at him; he watched her till she was out of sight, and then with a civil "good evening" to Mrs. Winter, he went on his way.

Nathaniel, or as he was familiarly called Nat. Mostyn, was one of those quiet, undemonstrative people, who are as a rule what their enemies call obstinate, their friends firm. A resolve once made, Nat. carried out with courage and determination, "in spite of everything," some would say; but that was not always true, for Nat. would have given up directly anything which would pain or distress another; for under that calm, light manner, that seeming indifference, Nat. shielded a warm, true heart, which he could not bear that "daws should peck at."

For many years, since she was a little lass perched on her father's knee, Nat. had determined Peggy Crosland, and she alone, should be his wife. He had worked late and early, given up every indulgence which cost money, and had in pursuance of his scheme, added to the sum left him at his father's death, safely lodged in the county bank, sufficient to purchase a small farm, which he hoped by Christmas to stock, and in the New Year bring to it as its little mistress, Peggy Crosland.

But not one word of this had he breathed to anyone, not even to the girl herself. But he knew that she liked him, favoured him more than any of the others who fluttered about her. He knew it by the bright smile and blush that lighted all

her face when he came; the trembling hand placed in his, which, just to feel that little flutter, he sometimes retained; by the little pettish manner if at any time he could not meet her at the fair or any village merry-making; by the assurance spoken so petulantly, "that she did not want him, not she, there were plenty as good as he, Frank Wildman never was engaged anywhere when she wanted him;" and listening to it all, his heart beat with secret joy, and he was glad to have to disappoint her, to hear from her what he deemed a confession of her preference.

But fear and doubt clouded his bright hopes when he heard she was going away to London, and he thought, perhaps before she went he had best speak to her and ask her to be his wife and be true to him through all the London temptations. So he met her one evening, before she left, and tried to tell her of his love, but Peggy would not listen, would only laugh and say he was only jesting, he always was, she never could believe him; but when he spoke on, with more tenderness and earnestness than she had thought him capable of, she answered, snatching from him the hand he had taken.

"Say no more, Nat., till I come home at Michaelmas. I could not go away pledged to anyone, I don't want to be married ever, at least, not for years and years," and so he had to be content and let her go, and try to be patient and hopeful. He worked on just the same, taking all the jests of his friends on his saving habits, with a reply in the same spirit, his quiet determination unchanged; his resolve, firm as ever.

But when he saw her that evening for the first time since her return, though he spoke lightly as usual, his heart sank within him. She was, as he said and as he saw at a glance, "not our Peggy," not the innocent Peggy who thought herself smart enough with a piece of bright new ribbon to fasten the collar on her Sunday dress. How often had he bought her such,

her eyes brightening at the sight. And yet her wilful little tongue saying, "it wouldn't match her bonnet, and she didn't think mother would let her wear it;" but she always did, and came to church in it for him to see.

Ah! that was all over now, he feared; he saw at once that the serpent had entered his paradise, bringing the baneful knowledge of evil, that the little bright happy girl with her childlike wilful ways, her innocence, her enjoyment of simple pleasures, was changed into a woman, a woman who had learnt that she was beautiful, and discovered the power that beauty gave her. Poor Peggy! He had tried in those few words he whispered to her to see if she had remembered their parting and her half-promise. She had answered nothing and flown away from him.

Still for her sake he would not give up the hope of her yet; he knew he could give her a good home, where she would pass a useful happy life. He would try once more to save her from herself. Under the stars, looking down on him from the wide expanse of sky above him, Nat. stood thinking all this, some hours after he had left Peggy. He was by no means romantic; he was not gazing at the stars in any sentimental way, but he admired them as he did all nature, and would always rather be out than in doors; he liked his pipe better in the open air, and felt freer to think and plan. The moment he was harassed and perplexed, he went out, let the weather be what it would; he used to laugh when people called the weather disagreeable.

"I can't think what you mean," he would say, "I like all weather in turn, a good blow or a good soak; a bright sun or a dense fog, it's all one to me. I like to be out, and often think it a pity houses were ever invented. If we had always lived out of doors we should never have had any illnesses, I believe," so that Nat. was not star-gazing, but enjoying the sharp wind from the

spot he had walked to—a knoll, on which were a group of trees people often came to sketch, and often to see the view, which was very beautiful from there.

Nat. stood in the shadow smoking and thinking, but was roused at length by footsteps among fallen leaves which liberally strewed the ground. Two persons came in sight, and passing near him sat down beside one of the trees; his heart had told him one was Peggy, but who was her companion? None of the villagers. Was it a gentleman? At any rate, Nat. thought his dress proclaimed him one. He stood still a moment and then the honesty of his nature would not let him play the eavesdropper; so passing close beside them, he said, "Good night, Peggy;" she gave a little cry and only answered "Oh! how you startled me." He could hear her companion ask who he was, but not her reply, and poor Nat. went home. The moon was high in the heavens, sailing among the stars before Peggy reached home.

"You're late," said the housekeeper.

"Yes, I am so sorry," said Peggy, "I walked farther than I meant: I don't want any supper, thank you. My bell has not rung, has it?" But it did ere she finished her question, and Peggy went up to attend her young ladies, and went soon to her pretty little room near them, which she had all to herself; but she did not go to bed. She leant her head out of window to catch the cool fresh wind on her face and ears, which were burning, and had been ever since her walk.

"I will buy you the sweetest little hat, to-morrow, at Ilchester, which will make you lovelier than you are," those were the words which had lured Peggy to take that walk, and to think of all persons she should meet Nat., it was provoking; there was no harm, certainly, if her master's son found it agreeable to take a walk with her, and if she could get a new hat by

it, why on earth should she not? Still, whilst she thus argued with herself "a small voice" kept whispering, "You ask not to be *led* into temptation, why do you walk into it yourself, blindly?"

Uncomfortable dreams disturbed Peggy all night, and sudden wakings, when she wondered what it was that made her feel as though "something had happened," but the morning light brought its usual cheer, as it does to the young and hopeful, to such, who like Peggy, had never known sorrow; and with her usual bright smile lighting her sweet face, she entered her young ladies' room to call them and assist in dressing them. Just as this duty was completed, a knock at the door, answered by the permission to enter, admitted Mr. Edgar Hamilton, the girls' only and much loved brother. Lucy and Dora vied with each other in their efforts to spoil him, so said their mother, they waited on him hand and foot and thought nothing too good for him, nothing too much trouble.

"I have had my breakfast," he said, "girls, I'm going to Ilchester for the day, so I've come to say ta, ta."

"Oh! Edgar, going out *all* day!"

"Yes, I'm going to see a man about some shooting, and make a few purchases."

Had he looked at his sisters' pretty maid he would have noticed a deep blush mount to her forehead.

"What purchases? Cigars and tobacco, I suppose, you dear naughty boy," said Dora.

"Hush! hush! Dora; books, my dear, learned books."

"Yes, of course, we know; well, it's very disagreeable of you, however if you must go, wait a second; we are coming down and will see you off." So they stood on the step at the hall-door, watching him down the drive, he lifting his hat at the turn at which he knew they could not see him beyond; and turning back into the house, Dora said,

"Bless him, is not he a beauty, Lucy? what a happy girl she will be whom he loves!"

Peggy passed through the hall in time to hear these words, and the servants noticed and laughed at her for her unusual silence and abstraction all that morning.

In the evening the carrier stopped at the lodge and left a box for "Miss Crosland," which on being brought to the house Peggy snatched away from the inquisitive servants, and fastening the door of her room, opened the box and surveyed with delight the exquisite little hat which it contained.

Prettier far than her young ladies', "well he had got taste" and it was becoming, she must say, as blushing at her own beauty, she surveyed herself in the glass. What would poor father say to *that!* She must never go home in it, she would keep it to wear in London. Oh, it was lovely! and in her joy she kissed it, and laid it tenderly away in its box as though it was some live thing needing care and love. When she returned to the servants' hall, she was eagerly questioned as to the contents of the box. "A hat," she replied, "my aunt sent me, but it is too good to wear here, I shall keep it for London."

"Oh! do show us," was the universal cry," so Peggy went up to fetch the hat and put it on, amid an exclamation of admiration. Poor Peggy, the gate of the broad way had opened wide.

"I must have a new dress to wear with that lovely hat, but I have no money to buy it, what shall I do?" Peggy fell asleep with that thought, and waking in the morning determined to ask leave for a day out to go to Ilchester to a draper who knew her well and would trust her.

Led up to the gate by vanity, through it by falsehood, on the broad road by dishonesty, poor, pretty Peggy!

Nat. tried in vain for an opportunity to speak to Peggy.

And so a few days after their last interview he wrote to her, begging her to give him a final answer, "do come to me," he wrote, "it shall be such a happy home, do not go back to that wretched London, stay here where all love you." Peggy was some time answering this letter; she wrote several and at length sent the following, saying as she did so, "Poor old Nat."

"Dear Nat.,

"We can never be anything but friends—forget me—except as your little playfellow.

"PEGGY."

As she took from a little box where she kept her papers an envelope, a withered rose fell on the ground. With a slight petulant exclamation she took it up and tossed it back into the box, "it makes the paper smell sweet," she said to herself, as an excuse for still preserving all that remained of her love for Nat.

A few years have passed away and in a very poor lodging in London a young girl is seated working; her fingers seem hardly able to hold the needle, they are so thin, so feeble; her cheeks are wan and pale and thin, her long brown hair is pushed from her face and hangs rough and uncared-for, over her poor ragged gown. She works on fast, she has to get that garment home ere she can find breakfast; she has but one penny in the world, that is beside her on the table, she is going to pay that away presently; yes, there it is—she throws down her work and leaning from the window, with the tears running down her cheeks, listens,—listens to what?—an organ! in the same dirty street playing "The Last Rose of Summer." He comes regularly every Friday, and she will go without her bread for breakfast that morning if in no other way she can pay the poor happy-looking man who plays a tune which carries her from that dreary street to a rose-covered

porch, a sweet bright autumn evening, a feeling of joy and gladness which she thinks can never more be hers. She throws the man her penny, and is roused from her brief happiness by the voice of her landlady.

"I tell you what, my lady, you don't sleep here to-night unless you pays me, so now I tell you." "Oh! have pity, I will indeed, I am just finishing this work; I will get the money before night, I will indeed," and the door closes with a bang, and then the poor child for she is scarcely more, goes to a box in which she puts away a few halfpence sometimes, hoping to find that it may help, with the money she will get, to pay this harsh landlady and keep her from the streets to-night. As she opens it, hurriedly turning out its contents to find the hoard, "a withered flower comes rustling down;" she gathers it up, presses it to her lips as the organ draws nearer in the street, playing "The Last Rose of Summer." A rain of tears falls from the poor pretty eyes, as she exclaims,

"Oh! Father, Heavenly Father, help me. Nat., Nat., come to me—you loved me once."

The door opens again, the poor girl cowers down on her knees in terror to hear the harsh voice again.

Is she dreaming or mad? or does she hear words set to the music which awakens all of good in her?

"Poor darling, I have found you at last."

Is she dreaming or mad, that she feels warm tender lips press hers, loving arms enfold her, and her weary head is pillowed against a heart that has ever beat for her?

For one moment she lies in her sweet dream of happiness; then she springs away.

"No! Nat., I am not good enough for you, go away and leave me to die," she cries.

"Nonsense, Peggy, be brave, be sensible, and come home with me and we will forget all this wretchedness and thank God

for all His mercies; I know all your story,—how His love has spared you."

"And how this, this," she said, holding up the dead rose, "spoke to me of a truer better love than that of the base man who deceived me, and gave me strength to resist him."

"Yes, yes— but they thought you wrong and drove you away, and you were ashamed to come home, and would tell us nothing."

"And father?"—and the girl clung to his knees in a fit of hysterical agonised weeping, "Father? oh! tell me true, Nat."

The man paused for a moment and then in a voice even his courage could not keep steady, he said,

"I must be husband and father both, Peggy."

And the organ played on and the little dirty children danced to it, and other women gave him coppers for the pleasure he gave their children, but never more from that attic window came the penny thrown by the pale-faced girl, who in her tender husband's care forgiven and loved always now lived, going each Sunday with him to the grave of her father, over which they planted a Rose Tree, gathering always its last blossoms in tender Memory —who now in her tender husband's care, forgiven, and fondly loved, lived a bright peaceful life, which was gradually erasing from her memory that poor wretched home in which he had found her.

"Nat. dear," she said suddenly to him one evening soon after their marriage, "I so often think of poor father's words—that I should live to rue my love of dress; he was right, Nat., wasn't he? I have rued it indeed, as many more have, ay, and will, for young folks seem born with a love of finery; why, the veriest baby is proud of its new shoes."

"Ah! dear, no harm would come of a little innocent pleasure in new and pretty things; it is spending money on clothes

only fit for their betters, spending more than they ought, in getting the clothes made in the fashion, which leads to mischief," answered Nat.

"Yes, I suppose that is it, and many girls are led into over-dressing themselves by being ridiculed; they used to call me 'methodist parson' when I first went to service, and a little Quaker, and all manner of names, and I soon began to think I *was* a fright."

"No, no, come stick to the truth, Peggy; you never thought that," said her husband, laughing, and then Peggy laughed too, and so ended their little grave talk; but no one could ever say that the Farmer's pretty wife was dressed out of her station, though some, jealous it might be of her beauty, and the admiration it excited, said "such plain strange dressing was only to attract attention, for Peggy must know how her scrupulous neatness and simplicity showed off her pretty face; if she'd been a plain girl, she would not have dared to dress so." Anyway her husband was satisfied with her, and she lives for nothing else —true wife, and loving mother. Peggy lived a wise and happy life, going each Sunday to visit the grave of her father, over which she had planted a Rose Tree in tender memory.

A WOMAN'S LOVE.

"You may depend upon me."

So spake André, the would-be Alpine guide to two young Englishmen who had just arranged to put themselves under his care, at the early hour of three, the following morning.

It was evening time when the youths took leave of André; the setting sun had tinged the mountain-tops with a rosy glow, leaving the Rhone Valley in comparative darkness.

As his companions left him, André began to ascend the smooth green mountain-side; he went softly as one in deep thought; his hard weather-beaten face bore on its surface a very troubled expression, as he neared a cottage hiding itself etween the mountains. The tinkling of goat-bells attracted his attention, and looking up, he espied the form of a young girl driving the goats home. Her head was bent over a woollen stocking she was knitting, but at a low whistle from André, she raised her eyes, a bright light coming into her face as she recognised who was coming up the path.

He was not surprised to see her, for he had taken that particular way, knowing that the hour had come for her return; and bright as she might look, it was with anything but a pleasant sensation that he joined her.

"I have some startling news for you, Angeline," said he,

"the desire of my heart is accomplished at last; my turn has come, and I am off on my first journey to-morrow."

"To morrow! Oh! André, how sudden! and what will become of your father and mother? and who will mind the cattle? and André! where are you going, my darling?"

"I don't know, and what is more, I don't care," said André, "so that I get away from here. I may learn the tongue of these English, and fit myself for something better than the dreary life I lead here."

André spoke with warmth and energy. No one, not even his constant companion, Angeline, knew how his heart had been set upon this thing; how as he fed the mules in the early morning, his eyes had looked longingly down the valley, sighing for any change.

All the five-and-twenty summers of his life had been spent in the same mountain nook, with his old parents, who as far as their poor means would allow, had indulged this, their only son, in every whim and wish; only requesting him, to bide with them in their old age. He was a daring and courageous man, and well qualified for the life he had proposed for himself. He had for some years belonged to a Society of Guides; but this was the first opportunity which had come in his way of taking the prominent position of first guide to two or three Englishmen.

Angeline had carefully folded her work, and stood with it tightly held between her fingers. All the brightness had left her face.

"You will not make it hard for me to go, by putting obstacles in the way, Angeline, I hope," he said. "I counted on you to make it all right with the old folks, and when I come home, dear child," he added (putting his arm tenderly round her shoulders) "we will get married, and I will take you to some pretty village, where my wife shall be a little queen amongst women."

When he began speaking, his tones were hard and rough, but seeing a pained look come into her eyes, his voice softened,

until it assumed the caressing sweetness which it generally had when addressing her.

Her little shoeless and stockingless feet dragged themselves wearily homeward. Angeline was neither convinced nor comforted.

"I will not say 'dont go,' André," she said, "but what will life be here without you?"

"It cannot be much worse than it has been with me. Ah! dear, it has been dull indeed," he added with a sigh; "even you must feel that a fellow cannot go on all the best years of his life like this"—"feeding cattle, going to market, making cheese, feeding cattle going to market, making cheese—over and over, the same thing; with no change."

"And what better is my lot, André?" answered the girl, with a touch of scorn in her voice. "You have your kith and kin to work for; while I only live to pay a debt of gratitude I owe your parents."

"You have me, Angeline, and have I not promised, when I return to make you my wife?"

"Yes, I have you, André, forgive me, I am not forgetful, and I do not wish to be selfish," she added, with a little sob in her throat; "if it is your pleasure, and for your good to go, I will not say Stay; but you will think of me, André, and return before the winter sets in, with its short days, and long dull evenings."

"Oh! yes, truly," he answered, glad to see her mood changing.

André Duval was a cynical, selfish creature, and to all, save Angeline, carried his narrow mind and selfish cunning in his face. In his quiet country home, he had reigned supreme; and lived for, and to himself; and the love of this girl-woman was only one of the tributes he demanded and expected as his due.

Angeline Le Roy, when a very little girl, had lost her mother under very sad circumstances. They had lived together after her

father's death, in a tiny cottage, in the pretty town of Sion, built on a hill, in the Rhone Valley; and not far from the Duvals' humble dwelling; her mother took in washing, and by this means supported herself and her little daughter. Their cottage unfortunately taking fire, was burned to the ground, and although neither she nor her child sustained any injury, Widow Le Roy only survived the shock a few months, and poor little Angeline was left to a world of strangers. Her mother's early life had been spent in Brittany, and to Angeline descended pretty silver ornaments, and bright-coloured skirts, which had been rescued from the flames, and this was all her heritage. She had no money. The sunny face of the child, little more than six years old, won love and sympathy from all, and much to their surprise, the little Angeline chose, out of the many homes offered her, that of an old woman, who came past their door on market days with her mule laden with produce from her little self-made farm upon the mountain-side.

To old Nanny Duval's hut where the old man smoked up the chimney and dawdled away the best hours of the day, she came like a sunbeam. The son minded the cattle, worked in the garden, and helped his mother make goat cheeses for the market. Without the walls, all was tidy and cared for; within was dirt, confusion, stale tobacco, and hard ill-made beds, which gave little rest to the weary ones who laid themselves down for a few hours' repose in each night.

Children's fancies are indeed strange; there was something in the hard weather-beaten face of old Nanny Duval, which inspired the child with confidence. There was no one to claim her, no one had the right to say, "You must come here, or go there;" so when she pointed to the old mule, and desired to be sat between the empty baskets on his back, returning from market, to go with "Nanny," as she called the old dame, the peasants did as the little beauty directed; lifted her up, with her little bundle of treasures, and saw her depart on her way to the lonely cot upon the mountains.

They were very poor, these old people, but it was with ungrudging love they took her to their hearts. Sometimes old Nanny would take her to market, if the mule were not too heavily laden; for Angeline was then too young to walk so far, and was generally left at home to amuse herself.

Angeline, who was born of gentler blood, and whose parents had before her recollection seen better days, was not so much influenced by her surroundings, as she moulded and fitted them to her own taste and fancy.

The goats soon learned the clear notes of the childish voice, and ran ringing their bells, down the steep mountain-sides, before her little red petticoat appeared upon the path. The Widow Le Roy had been very anxious about her child's education, and at the time of her death, Angeline could spell through books of easy words. Her new companions were without education, but in André she found a ready listener. She read bits to him, in the winter evenings from an old book which had belonged to her mother by the help of a rushlight, or a bright wood fire, for the pine logs which they gathered high up on the mountains, and stored away in a shed, for winter use, made warm and light their tiny dwelling.

Every year that Angeline lived with these rough and uncouth people, made a change in their mode of life.

Nanny said she could not think where the child got all her learning, little knowing that the love of refinement, and comfort, and above all, beauty, was a natural gift she inherited, which "grew with her growth, and strengthened with her strength." To André, who was nine years her senior, she was a plaything; he was amused by her, and soon learned the little she was capable of teaching, and in return he taught her to feed the animals, churn the goats' milk, and cull cabbages, and very often, indeed too often, the only thanks she got for her poor endeavour to be a patient untiring pupil, was the observation, "She did very well for a girl," a contemptuous remark, and one that brought the blood in a carmine rush to her pretty cheeks.

Her great unbounded love for the (in her opinion) all-wise André gave her fresh strength to go on undaunted, and try still more to please him. André was not lazy, but he hated his life, and was glad to give his work to her to do, because he was tired of "the daily round, the common task."

At first he had greatly resented the advent of the child into their quiet home, and saw with feelings of jealousy, his mother's eyes following lovingly the tiny sprite, as she flitted hither and thither; but her winsome ways, her childish delight with all the country sights and sounds, her pretty ways with the animals, won him over, first to interest and then to love. He loved her with the careless selfish love of a big brother; it was only now, when she was stepping from childhood to womanhood, that he began to feel what her love was for him—the unselfish devotion of a woman. Now when he saw what she had made their home, what was the share of labour done by her fair hands, how she was everything to his parents, that the thought entered his mind, some day to make her his wife. She was only seventeen, and each year would develop her into a more beautiful woman. It did not occur to him, that others more fair, more gifted, more worthy of her love, might turn their steps that way, and steal his treasure.

No, André was too conceited, too sure of his prize, to have any such fears n leaving her, and going whither his new friends might carry him. He had got so used to her exceeding beauty, to the clear ring of her voice, to the slender grace of her figure, and all her movements, that he never gave them a thought; and her character with its lights and shades, its refinement, her fear of giving pain, her unselfish love of giving pleasure was so far beyond him, he did not understand it.

"Oh yes! of course that was Angeline, and she had promised herself to him, at such a time as he should choose to marry her." Meantime, as she had spent over ten years not only contentedly, but happily, with his parents, so she might continue, so long as he desired she should. And she, Angeline,

with all her beauty, with a soul as pure as the lily, with high aspirations, with only so much evil as is born in every child of man, had a blind idolatry for André; she saw no evil in him, saw only love when he corrected, when he frowned, when even he swore at her. She had long known something of his wish to be a Guide, and her own fingers had fashioned the flannel shirts which were to go with him; but her heart was very sore, now the time had really come, and she could scarce keep back the glistening tears from her sunny eyes; for was he not going without one word of regret at leaving her, which made the parting harder? The old people were sitting either side of a burning log, upon which a red cabbage was boiling for their supper, as the young people entered. Old Nanny was busy with her spinning, while her spouse was puffing volumes of smoke from a long pipe he held between his teeth. The old man in his second childhood took little notice of anyone; if he had a smile, or bright word though, it was for the soft-eyed adopted daughter, who was always about his path, and who imperceptibly had become so necessary to him.

André told his own story to his parents, casting side-glances on Angeline, to support him in all he said. Old Duval was not a whit stirred by his son's abrupt communication, that he was going to take his departure on the following morning. To the man who had spent all his life upon the snow-clad mountains and rivers of ice, there was nothing dangerous or startling in the tour his son proposed to set out upon, but to his mother, the news indeed was fresh; and she began expostulating with the anxiety only a mother can feel. It was not her own loneliness or the loss of his strong arm she deplored, but she was so afraid he was not prepared for his journey, and began at once to busy herself with preparations for his early start on the morrow.

With his rope around his shoulders, his knapsack on his back, and his ice-axe grasped in his hand, he started for his journey.

Angeline laid her head, with its long plaits of smooth chestnut hair for the first, and though she knew it not, last time upon his breast, looking very lovely, with them orning light shining faintly on her upturned face. If ever André's resolution was shaken, it was at that moment. A kindly look, almost a look of love, came into his swarthy face, as he bade his mother, "take care of his darling;" his last look, his last thought was for her then. Had her mind been disturbed of late, had doubts of his love shaken her trust in him, his words this morning dispelled the cobwebs which hung about her, and made her bright and hopeful for the future.

He was gone, but no less cheerful was the song which came through the cottage window, as Angeline busied herself with her morning duties.

That little cottage once so dull, so dirty and uncared-for, was now the picture of cleanliness, and possessed that sweet feeling of homeliness and comfort, which only a woman's hand can give it. It had become the pride of Angeline's heart to burnish the few old copper pans they possessed, to put clusters of flowers in any nook that would hold them, and her hands had mended and made, so that the old Duvals were no longer objects of pity, in their rags and tatters; besides these works of love, the girl found time to take to the market socks of her own knitting, and other such homely garments as were saleable amongst their poor neighbours. The youths and maidens watched for her coming, as for one who brought sunshine and joy in her wake; she was courted and flattered, and many were the words of love poured into her little ears; but she shook her head, laughing; it was all very amusing, and as she thought, the natural homage paid to youth and beauty but she had no heart to give them, she said, and pointed to the snow-capped heights in the direction André had taken.

The autumn went quickly, what with the gathering in of crops, and its many preparations for winter, but that dull season when it came, was *triste* indeed. Their dried meats

were hard and coarse, and their black bread bitter and untempting.

Snow fell thick and heavily about them, and all nature seemed death-like in its stillness; the water in the rivulets which ran down the mountain-sides was frozen, so that they were obliged to thaw it before it could be used,—all this rendered the season more trying.

There was a daily cry in the cottage for André; there were so many things, such as hewing wood, &c., which only he could do; but no André came. Angeline watched for the young Englishmen to pass that way on their homeward route, but they did not return.

So winter broke into a glorious spring; spring opened into summer; and summer faded into autumn, and yet no sign of André.

Angeline hailed many passing strangers, and sought news of him, but with no good result; she never missed market days, because there she thought she must get tidings from other villages across the mountains.

When Nanny fretted for her boy, Angeline would remind her, "no news was good;" but nothing brought comfort to her own young heart, she believed he had fallen down some steep place, or slipped into some deep crevasse, or been lost in the snows.

She heard strange noises in the chimney, and trembled at every whistle and moan made by the wind rushing about the cottage, and bringing down dead branches from the fir trees, which lay dark and weird upon the ground. The asses brayed after their master, the very goat-bells seemed to ring a sad warning note to the girl who was always listening for his foot-fall, always watching for his coming.

Some of Angeline's young friends tried to laugh her out of her sadness; and for a time she would be the merriest of the merry, but when she thought of him, who was her guide and ruler in everything, he, for whom she worked and loved, and lived, her heart grew very sad—as still he came not.

The following winter set in with more severity than many previous seasons. Old Duval, who had never had much warmth or vitality about him, grew more stiff and infirm as the months dragged themselves by, and when one day his friends coming from a neighbouring village to give him a Christmas greeting, found him sitting by his hearth, the log burning low, his pipe fallen on the ground at his feet, and he sitting so still with a smile upon his poor wrinkled face, they could not believe that his soul had fled! But so it was.

Without a murmur or a sigh, without even that craving his old wife had, to see her boy once more, he had left a world, which had never been a place of joy, or high ambition to him, The sunshine of his life of late had only been looking beyond, the belief in that future rest, fostered and kept alive by Angeline with the hymns and words of promise, which her mother had so carefully instilled into her during her childhood.

When the old man was gone, and his arm-chair stood empty by the fire, things were not more cheerful for the girl, and her old Nanny, certainly; now there were only two to work for instead of four. Nanny was old and deaf, and could not rebound as might Angeline. She drooped and faded as old people will, when their prop has gone.

The cold winter had given place to a mild wet spring, when old Nanny in her utter indifference to everything, which she had shown since her husband's death, caught a severe cold which laid her on a bed of sickness. This was indeed an extra trial for poor Angeline, for Nanny was such an impatient invalid, it was Angeline's constant work to minister to her wants.

The early spring flowers bloomed, and died, where they sprang up, for Angeline's hands were too fully occupied for her to cull them, as was her wont. Nanny would never be left alone, so that her poor little companion could never go to the market three miles off, or spend an idle hour with friends of her own age.

Nanny's cough was loud and incessant, and that with the ticking of the clock, were almost the only sounds the girl heard, as she knitted on, by the bedside of the old woman; she kept still her anxious watch for him she loved, hoping against hope, that she might see his dear brown face and stalwart shoulders coming up the road. She told herself that he was dead, and yet she watched and listened, and prayed for his return.

Meantime her non-appearance at the market became remarked by one and another, until there was quite a clamour amongst the youths as to who should go and see after her, and many were the kind hands, some interested, and some disinterested, which were held out to assist her. Her bonny cheek paled from long confinement to the house. She was such a bird of the air; her limbs lost their roundness, and her eye its wonted light, but she kept on unwearily, even when she knew it was in vain; for Nanny's days were numbered, and she, like her poor old man, was going "where the weary are at rest." It was one day when Angeline brought her apronful of Alpine roses that one of her lovers had gathered for her, and laid them on Nanny's bed, that the old woman took her hand, and blessed her for the last time. She was quiet now and resigned, but she left a message for her boy, who she felt sure would return to his Angeline; and so with the message on her lips, she fell asleep, still holding the girl's soft hand in hers. "If only he were here," thought Angeline, as she looked towards the mountains upon which the evening mists were beginning to gather, but no! he came not; and Angeline began to realize how utterly alone she was in the great world.

A long summer of loneliness followed. The heat was great, and she was beginning to feel how dull was the companionship of dumb animals only, how long the days, how long the nights, how weary the working and living for self. One evening, when the shadows were beginning to lengthen, she was sitting by the open cottage-door with her work upon her knee, a well-known footstep coming up the path towards her, made her

heart first stand still, and then beat wildly. She could not be mistaken, it was André. If she could have mistaken the foot-step, not so the voice, as he called her by her name; she made a step towards him, but could not speak one word.

"Surprised to see me, Angeline, I dare say," he said, "and indeed I am no less surprised to find you here alone." She put out her hand as though she would deter him from entering, until she had broken the sad news to him; but he took it in his, saying, "Spare yourself ,dear child, I know there is no one there." He had not kissed her at meeting, and dropped her hand the moment after taking it.

Could this indeed be André? her André! He spoke again with some hesitation in his voice. "I have been wishing to come to you, Angeline, since I knew you were alone, but somehow time flies so rapidly, and being settled on the Italian side, when I heard of the old folks' death, it was very inconvenient leaving home, in fact I could not get away before, so that you must not upbraid me."

"No," answered Angeline in a dreary far-away voice, "of course not; but what has kept you all this time, André, where have you been?"

"It is a long story," he answered with a short laugh, "and time has flown I scarcely know how, but I will try and give you a little sketch of my doings since I left here; but pray as I talk prepare me some supper, for I have not broken my fast since morning." Angeline's willing hands set about their work, while her heart beat as she listened to that much loved voice once more.

"I spent the autumn, as you know, with those two young Englishmen who had had enough of mountain-climbing when they got to the Italian side, and there taking leave of them, after long days of stiff climbing, and often meagre fare, I was glad to rest and look about me. I was in luck's way, for I fell in with an innkeeper and his family. The valley where my friends left me was glorious; a means of gaining a living

opened before me, and I accepted the innkeeper's offer, to make my home with them. Of course that led to my being very intimate with his family, and so to my marrying his daughter. It was at this time I heard of mother's and father' death, and much as I wished to return to you, then, of course it was impossible, but I must say they all, my wife included, have been very anxious I should come to see after my dear adopted sister. How have you borne the last few months, Angeline? what have you done?"

The colour had left her face, it was deadly pale; but she found voice to say

"I have been doing my work."

Had she spoken truly, she would have said, "I have been watching for you, my André, my beloved!" She moved to the door, almost gasping for breath, and heard his next words through a mist, as though the voice was far down the valley.

"You see, Angeline mine, I must think of your future, for the cottage here must be sold, and I think you had better return with me to these good people, who I am sure would give you a hearty welcome."

She answered not, but going out, with her bare feet and uncovered head, called the cattle homewards. The girl's voice was strange even to her favourites, but there was no bitterness in it, and though her heart seemed broken, tears did not dim her beautiful eyes.

Getting no answer, André turned his head, to find his companion gone, and following her to the door, he told himself he had never until now, known how beautiful she was; for in the declining light, he could not discern how pallid she was, and only saw the outline of her fine features. When she returned he had forgotten what he was saying, and began to ask questions about his parents.

Although the voice which answered was a little unsteady, she never allowed her gaze to rest upon his face, but busied herself with clearing away the supper things, and preparing to

retire for the night; her work being done, she took her candle, and glancing for a moment over her shoulder, wished him "good night," and quitted the room.

Poor Angeline! she had kept up bravely, but now as she threw herself on her little bed, sobs, long and bitter, shook her poor frame.

Had she given her love unasked? was the question, and the answer "No, a thousand times no," she repeated, as she recalled every word and look of his; but alas! she had wakened to the hideous fact, that his love, constancy and devotion, were vain things to have believed in, delusive creations of her own brain, for he could never have truly loved her.

"His wife!" she repeated to herself, "his wife, his home!"

She could not sleep, although her head and heart were aching. Then she got up filled with a new resolve. She dressed herself in the gayest striped skirt she could find, the brightest kerchief, which she pinned across her breast; then she put on a white Bretonne cap and beautiful silver cross, and ear-rings, her mother's legacy, and taking a basket, into which she put her work, and a few clothes, she went very softly through the room whilst André was still sleeping, and out into the morning air. It was not much past four o'clock; she felt at once braced and refreshed. The mountains stood out sharp and grand.

The rising sun seemed to stir into life all animal creation, as Angeline took her way to Sion, never even giving a farewell glance back at her cottage home.

It was market-day; arriving in the midst of her friends, as they were unpacking, and unloading their mules, she took them by surprise, coming so early too, and dressed as if for a *fête*, but as she went from booth to booth, selling her knitting, she said,

"André has returned, he came last night."

The morning air and brisk walk had given her cheeks a colour, and her eyes were shining with unshed tears. Bright and beautiful she looked; the youths were ready to curse his

return, while the maidens whispered and smiled meaningly, but Angeline having disposed of her work, took no heed, but walked on, with firm step and head erect into the town itself. A lady returning to England from India, with some children, had already asked her to accompany them as a French *bonne;* and she now resolved to accept the proposal. She went on her way, saying to herself—

"On, on, to Martigny, to the Lake, across the sea, where I may never see his face again."

The friends had wished her smilingly "good bye," they did not know they should never see her more, but next market-day the news flew from one to another that she was gone, and the cottage sold, and André was married..

"That must have driven her away, poor pretty Angeline!" said one bright-eyed girl.

"Yes," answered a handsome peasant, with his arm round the neck of his laden mule. "What she could see in such an uncouth animal, I could not think, but there is nothing so strange as

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"Now then Charlie, do 'ave done making that row, and go off and get me some milk round at Mr. Packham's; I do declare the 'ole morning you've done nought but sit on that step and howl."

This gentle remark was addressed by a large stout red-faced woman to a small, thin, pale little boy who was sitting on the doorstep of a dirty house, in a still dirtier lane, situated in the poor quarter of one of our large cathedral towns, which we will call, for want of a better name, Eastminster.

"Howling, do you call it, Mrs. Pierce?" said another woman advancing from some back premises, which were known as the "Washus." "I think it quite lovely to 'ear him sing, and I do assure you quite 'elps me along with the washin', and keeps that there baby of yours quiet for hours."

"Ah! well I don't know what you calls the row he makes. I haven't got time to think; now you be off and get the milk," and handing him a cracked jug, she gave him a parting push in his back, and Charlie struggled off, carrying the fat heavy child he was nursing, in one arm, and the jug in the other.

He was not long gone, poor little man, he knew he did not dare, and sat himself down on the step, and commenced singing again.

Just at this moment a Clergyman entered the lane, but stopped suddenly as he caught the sound of the child's singing, and looked eagerly round to see from whence came the voice

which no cultivated ear could pass without wishing to know more of. He caught sight suddenly of the little fellow with the baby in his arms, and going up to him, said in a kindly voice, "And who taught you to sing, my little man?"

"Please sir, no one."

"No one!" exclaimed the Clergyman, laughing, "I suppose you are very fond of music." A light broke out all over the little fellow's face, making his big brown eyes burn with a warm glow, and his face flush. "O yes, sir," from the very depths of his heart came the answer.

"Do you ever go into the cathedral and hear the music?"

"Sometimes, sir; but mother generally wants me to mind the baby, and the last time I went the verger would not let me in, 'cos, he said, I was such a ragged boy," and he glanced pitifully down at his ragged clothing.

At this moment, Mrs. Pierce appeared; she made a low curtsey when she saw who was there.

"Are you this little boy's mother?" inquired the Clergyman.

"Well sir, I stands to him in that light, I ain't his rale mother, so to speak. She died, and I married his father. We was Londoners, and came down to this part a hoppin', and my poor man," here the corner of a very dirty apron was pressed into a very dry eye, "caught cold in the hop-garden and died, leavin' me with four o' my own, and this 'un on my 'ands, an' a mighty hard job I finds it to keep 'em all in clothes and victuals."

"Do you go to school, my boy?" asked the Clergyman.

"No, sir, mother can't spare me from minding the baby. I used to go when father was alive."

This remark did not seem to please Mrs. Pierce, to judge by her face, and she commenced a second long story, which Mr. Ramsay cut short by turning to Charlie and saying, "Well, my lad, I shall be down this way again in a day or two and shall

call in for another song," and with a pleasant smile to the child and a courteous "Good morning" to the woman, he passed on.

For several days Charlie sat in his old position on the step, watching for his new friend, but he did not come, and Charlie had almost given him up, when one hot afternoon about four o'clock, he saw him coming down the lane.

"Well, my little man, still in the same place?" said the Priest as he drew near the child; "now if your mother will let you, I want you to come with me for a little while. Never mind your clothes being shabby, we won't look at them," he said, smiling kindly as Charlie murmured something about his ragged coat.

As they went along, the Clergyman asked Charlie many questions about his life at home, and found as he feared, that it was anything but a happy or godly one.

"When father was alive it was much better, cos' he used to take me out on Sunday up at Lunnon, and then he'd take me in the parks, and sometimes we'd go to Church and hear the music."

The boy said the last three words as if that was the summit of all his earthly happiness, "And that, sir," said Charlie, becoming more communicative as he went on, "is how I learnt so many hymns and Church tunes. I likes 'em better nor the tunes other boys whistle and sing in the streets. When I used to hear any tune I liked very much, I used to sing it over and over again to myself going home, and then I remembered it. I did not always remember the words, but I remembered the music."

They were walking along a shady path by the side of the river that bounded the north side of the town, and, the day being sultry, Mr. Ramsay proposed they should sit for a few minutes on one of the benches that stood under the trees.

"And now that we are resting, sing to me a little, Charlie," said Mr. Ramsay, wishing again to hear that beautiful voice, and thinking that in this quiet spot the boy would be less shy, with only himself as audience, than he would be later on in the presence of strangers. "Sing anything you can remember in the Churches;" and, to Mr. Ramsay's surprise, in a moment, the sweet, full, young voice broke out into Mendelssohn's exquisite "O rest in the Lord." Words there were none, he did not know them, but the true musician's soul in the boy had recognised the beauty of the melody and stored it up in his memory.

The tears stood in the Priest's eyes as the glorious tones of Charlie's voice died away over the water, and placing his hand on the boy's head he silently blessed him, sending a prayer up to the Almighty Father, that He would let the great gift He had given this child grow and prosper in him for his good, both in this world and in the one to come.

They walked on quickly now in silence; turning away from the river, they soon passed through an ancient stone gateway and found themselves in the cloisters of the cathedral. At the end of one of the old stone passages they came out into a square green place, around which were the houses of dean, canons, and organist. At the latter, Mr. Ramsay stopped, the door was quickly answered, and they were shown into a long, low room with a window at either end—one a bow window, looking out over the green sward to the big cathedral; and the other a French window, out of which you stepped into the quaint old garden.

In the room they found seated at the piano a gentleman who, Charlie afterwards discovered, was Mr. Welland, the organist of the cathedral. Mr. Ramsay conversed with him in a low tone at first, leaving Charlie standing near the door, feeling very shy and awkward. He was not used to be in a room with such a soft carpet, such lovely pictures on the walls, and then there was a

piano and a harmonium in the room! O, how Charlie longed to hear their sound! As he was standing gazing around him, he heard a slight noise at the other end of the room, and there, sitting half-hidden in the window curtain, on a little low chair, sat the most beautiful little girl Charlie had ever seen. She sat so still and so quiet that the gentlemen did not seem aware of her presence. Presently, Mr. Welland turned to Charlie, and said, "So you are fond of music, my boy? Well then, come here and let me hear you sing." And so saying, he sat down at the piano again, and played a few chords. "Sing a hymn you know the words of, to begin with," he said. So Charlie began that beautiful one commencing, "A few more years shall roll," and soon, the pretty room, the beautiful child, the strange gentleman, all had faded from his mind, and he poured forth the music from his heart and soul. At the termination, Mr. Welland jumped up excitedly—"He is a born musician, he must be taught at once; a most wonderful voice, a glorious voice!" "Sing again—sing the air you sang by the river," said Mr. Ramsay; and without accompaniment, and without words, Charlie sang Mendelssohn's song again.

After a few more words of praise to the boy, he said he should like to speak to Mr. Ramsay in private, "and you, my boy," turning again to Charlie, "wait here a few moments." They left the room, and Charlie took a seat which Mr. Welland had pointed out, near the door. He sat on the very edge, as he was quite afraid he might damage it in some way or other, it was such a beautiful chair, no holes in the cane, no rungs broken, altogether looking so utterly unlike any chair he had been used to sitting on.

Little Muriel still sat in the same place, leaning her head on her tiny hands, and taking no notice of Charlie. They sat thus in perfect silence for some few minutes, and then there was a

sound of a footstep on the gravel path in the garden, and in a minute a tall, dark, handsome boy stood at the French window. "Muriel," he said, bending down to the child, speaking quickly, "Come out, I want you."

"No, Maurice, not now," she pleaded.

"Yes, you must," in an imperious tone answered the boy. A few more low words from the child, who evidently wished to remain where she was, and a few more earnest ones from the boy, all of which Charlie did not hear, and Muriel rose unwillingly from her low seat, and passed into the garden.

In a few minutes Mr. Ramsay returned, and Charlie followed him away from the house, feeling as if he had been asleep for the last hour, and it was all a beautiful dream, and he was afraid lest he might suddenly awake and find it so. But no, it was truly real, and Charlie knew it was so, when he found himself back in his own squalid home, and heard once more the harsh tones of his step-mother's voice, the peevish whine of the baby, saw the barely-furnished room, and was greeted with loud exclamations from his little step-sisters, as to how long he had been away when he knew they wanted him to play, &c., &c.

But there were not to be many more such days for Charlie. About a week after his visit to the organist, Mr. Welland called to see Mrs. Pierce, and after a long talk together during which Charlie had been sent away, he was called back again and told that he was to leave his stepmother's home for ever, that Mr. Welland had made interest with the Dean for him, and that he had given Charlie a presentation to the musical school belonging to the Cathedral in which all the choristers were educated, but which had a charity belonging to it, which clothed, fed, and educated six poor boys, training them for the choir; and there being a vacancy at present, Mr. Welland had gained it for Charlie.

And now happy days were in store for our poor little boy,

new good clothes, a warm clean bed, nice wholesome food, was now his daily portion, besides kind words, and what to him was far better than all, a thorough musical education.

And for music Charlie lived. At home he had often amused the children by playing them tunes on a penny whistle, the only instrument it had ever been in the boy's power to get. Imagine his delight when Mr. Welland allowed him first to touch a piano, and also imagine his master's delight when he found how apt a pupil Charlie was. Talent will always show, and here Mr. Welland found not only talent, but genius. Charlie played any instrument instinctively, piano, organ, and violin, but the latter was his favourite, perhaps for the reason that he could move that away from listeners, which he often did, sitting in the college garden on half-holidays, when the other boys were away at cricket or football, playing softly to himself on the old violin which Mr. Welland lent him for his own use. The first few half-holidays he sat alone without audience, but after a time he always had one listener, little Muriel; at first she was shy and sat hidden in the bushes, afraid to venture further, but one day Charlie saw her, and in a hesitating way made some remark which drew her forth from her hiding-place.

After that, every half-holiday, Muriel would steal away to the college garden, and sit and listen to the violin. She led a lonely life for a child, her mother was dead, brothers, sisters, she had none; and her father being so much occupied, she was much left to the company of servants, therefore, these afternoons were a great delight to her.

One day Mr. Welland coming in unexpectedly, and passing through the hall, heard the sound of the violin in the garden. "What is the boy playing?" he said to himself, as the sound of a sweet tuneful air struck on his ear; and he passed into the garden to satisfy his curiosity. There he found the little pair seated side by side; Charlie playing and Muriel listening.

"What were you playing, Charlie?" he asked. Charlie blushed and did not answer, but Muriel said—

"He makes that music himself, papa, and plays it to me because it's my favourite,"

"Will you play it to me, Charlie?"

"Yes, sir, if you like," and he commenced to play the same sweet touching melody Mr. Welland had heard in the distance, and which had attracted his notice. From that moment Mr. Welland could see the future that lay before the child. There was under that little poor exterior a wealth of undiscovered genius that must come forward to make his name, some day, a world-famed one.

But in every earthly lot there must be some drawback, and though Charlie's life was now so improved, there was still some discomfort left in it, and this was caused by the big handsome boy, Maurice Canning. He was Mr. Welland's nephew, and though he lived in the college, he spent much of his time with his uncle and cousin.

When Charlie first came to the college, Maurice was the head boy of the school, and leading chorister in the cathedral, singing the solos when it was required. This he still remained, and as he had always been so far ahead of any other boy, he was much surprised when he found Charlie running him so close. There arose between the two boys then a feeling of jealousy, not only in the choir, but also about the little girl of whom both were so fond.

When Charlie had been at the college for about a year and a half, it was decided that they should have a grand Musical Festival, and amongst other things they were to sing on one of the nights a sacred cantata, by a well known composer, who had promised Mr. Welland to come down and conduct himself, and he said he would be present at two rehearsals.

There was a great anxiety amongst the choir to know to whom all the solos were to be given, but during the rehearsals Mr. Welland kept quite silent on the subject, but at last one evening as it drew near the Festival he announced the names Imagine then the surprise of all when he said that the treble solo, would be sung by Charles Pierce. They had all made so certain that Maurice Canning would do so, as usual, and to judge by his face, he had thought so himself.

The moment the rehearsal was finished the boys rushed out to talk this over, and one ventured to condole with Maurice on having Charlie put over his head.

"Thanks, I'm sure," he answered in a coldly polite note. "There is no need for condolence, I assure you," and with a haughty stare passed on.

Just at this time an old friend came to stay with Mr. Welland, whom he had not seen for long, as he had been living abroad. He brought with him some music, amongst which was a wonderful old manuscript, very difficult to read, written in a cramped hand, which was supposed to be one of Mozart's. He naturally prized this exceedingly and when he left Mr. Welland's to stay a few weeks with another friend, intending to return afterwards, he left his music with Mr. Welland, with many injunctions for the safety of the manuscript.

Mr. Welland's house joined the college, and often at tea-time he would come and fetch Charlie and Maurice in to tea with him. This happened on the evening Mr. Welland's friend left him, and the organist was telling the boys after tea of the wonderful piece of music. Charlie was much interested.

"Might I see it, sir?" he asked.

"Certainly, my boy," and Mr. Welland drew the manuscript from the drawer in which he had placed it.

Charlie looked long and earnestly at it. "Well, Charlie,

could you play that, do you think?" asked the organist, laughing.

"I should very much like to try, sir." Mr .Welland looked exceedingly surprised.

"You would not be able to make it out, I think."

"But may I try, sir?"

"I am so afraid to trust it out of my keeping, my boy, or else you might."

"I would take the greatest care of it," pleaded Charlie. "I would just take it away to play and put it back again directly if you would only let me."

Mr. Welland still demurred, but the little face looked up so pleadingly at him, that he finally gave way.

Accordingly Charlie each day took the music away with him and delighted in finding out all the lovely passages, through all the difficulties, taking care to replace it every time in the drawer.

The Festival week now arrived—with the first few days our hero had little to do except to sing with the other choristers in the chorus, but on the Thursday of the week was to be performed the cantata in which he was to sing the treble solo. On the morning of that day, Mr. Welland went to the study to fetch the old manuscript, to show it to the great composer, who had come down to conduct, and ask his opinion on it, but it was not there; so, naturally supposing Charlie had it, he went into the college to ask him for it. "Charlie," said Mr. Welland, "where is the old manuscript?" "In the study drawer, sir," answered Charlie promptly. "No, it is not, I have just looked; are you sure you replaced it the last time you had it?" said the organist, looking gravely at the boy. "Yes, sir, I am sure I did;" answered Charlie firmly, though the blood mounted into his face; "I have not had it for some days." Mr. Welland did not look convinced, and left the room without another word.

But high and low, all over the house and college, was the manuscript hunted for that morning, the other boys joining in the search.

Everywhere they looked, but in vain. At last Mr. Welland said, "Well, boys, now that we have looked in every likely place, I must unwillingly look in your private desks in the schoolroom. Each boy in turn give me your key, and I will unlock the desk in the presence of all the others." One by one the boys delivered up their keys, and one by one the desks were searched. At last they came to Charlie's. Mr. Welland opened it, and as he did so looked searchingly at Charlie, but he stood quietly by looking anxiously in the desk, as he had at each one as they were opened, and in a minute Mr. Welland gravely, sorrowfully, drew forth the missing music. But alas! only the half of it, it had been torn right across the centre, and only one half remained. A solemn silence fell on the boys, and Mr. Welland seemed for the moment dumb. Then saying quietly, "Follow me, Charlie," left the room, closing the door behind him.

For more than an hour were they together in the study, and then Muriel, who had been watching for him, saw Charlie open the door and go into the college.

"Papa," she said eagerly, as her father passed her to go out, "he did not tear the music, did he?"

"He *says* not, my dear, but I do not know what to think," answered her father wearily, as he opened the street door and went out.

For one moment she hesitated, and then she turned and ran into the college through the garden, and then into the now empty schoolroom.

Yes, there he was, sitting by the window, looking, oh! so pale and white. Muriel ran up to him and knelt down beside him.

"I have only come to say I am so sorry for you, Charlie; to tell you, *I* do not believe that you tore the music, whoever else does; also I want you to be brave and to sing to-night quite as beautifully as you did at the rehearsal, and not to mind what anyone says;" and without another word the child ran noiselessly away.

"To-night! oh! I had forgotten!" said Charlie to himself. "Yes, I will sing as well as ever, why should I not?" and rising from his dejected attitude, he went out into the fresh air.

The evening came, and as the hour of eight drew on, the cathedral gradually filled with a gaily dressed company, and as eight o'clock chimed from the belfry, the train of white-robed choristers, choir-men and Priests entered, followed by Dean and Bishop.

After a hymn had been sung and a few prayers read, the music was commenced, a few choruses sung and then a tenor solo. Another chorus—a duet—and then the treble solo. Mr. Welland looked anxiously at Charlie; how would he manage the solo after the excitement of the day? His surplice was scarcely whiter than his face, and there were large dark rings round his eyes, but the music he held in his hand was perfectly steady, he evidently was not nervous of himself.

A few bars of music, and then the sweet treble voice commenced; louder and louder it rose, climbing up round the great groined roof with its full clear sound; rose and fell in soft cadences, every word distinct, every note true; louder it rose, again bursting into a triumphant song of glory, until it died away into one grand "Amen."

"Well done, well done," murmured Mr. Welland to himself, and from one to another were whispered words of approval and astonishment, but these changed to one of concern and alarm, as Charlie was seen to sway to and fro for a minute, and then with

a slight groan totter and fall forward. A choir-man, seeing he was ill, managed to catch the child, or he would have fallen heavily to the ground. He lifted up the slight form of the little lad and carried him away to the vestry, and a doctor who was in the cathedral having come there, he was by his orders carried over to the college as soon as he was sufficiently recovered, and was shortly asleep, quite overcome by exhaustion and excitement.

For some days he remained very seriously ill, unable to see anyone; but his constitution being strong, he managed to fight through it, and at the end of three weeks was once more downstairs again. But alas! he came down to find that his position in the school was gone for ever; boys, masters, everyone, believed he had torn the music and then hidden it. "A thief and a liar!" thus, the boys in their outspoken wrath called him, and even Muriel was not allowed to see him; and so in loneliness and misery a few weeks went by for Charlie, and then one morning the college woke up to find he was gone! No word, no line, to say whither, all his little possessions left behind, nothing taken but the clothes he wore, but he himself gone, lost, no one knew where.

"I am afraid that looks like a guilty conscience," said one or two.

"But it may be a stricken heart," answered the organist.

* * * * * * *

Sixteen years have passed over Eastminster since last we saw it, but the town looks very much the same, though many old faces might with difficulty be recognized.

There is another Musical Festival being given, such a one as we remember when last we saw the old Cathedral town. Mr. Welland, still the organist, though looking much greyer and older, is very busy assisting at the Festival. It is on a grander scale this time; paid professionals from London are coming, and

there are to be concerts in the town-hall as well as oratorios in the cathedral.

It is the night of a concert when we again take a peep at our old friends. In the front row is seated a fair elegant girl, whom we should have some difficulty in recognizing as Muriel Welland ; by her side sits a clergyman whom we should more easily know as Mr. Ramsay, Charlie's first friend.

They are looking eagerly for the next song on the programme, as it is to be sung by the great tenor, Price Elliston, who has sent London wild for two seasons, and whom Eastminster thinks itself lucky to have gained for its Festival.

He comes on to the platform now, and Muriel sees a tall handsome man, with thick dark hair, a long brown moustache, and warm grey eyes. As he commences to sing, a feeling crosses her that she has seen him before. Impossible! How, when, and where could she have done so? and yet how familiar is the grave smile with which he acknowledges the plaudits of the audience, how well-known the bright light in his eyes. The song finished, long and loud is the applause. London has truly not made too much of this new star; Mr. Welland comes excitedly to his daughter at the end of the concert.

"Is it not charming, my dear? and such a very nice fellow too."

As they went out into the street, Price Elliston passed. Mr. Welland stopped him to introduce Muriel, and they all walked away together.

"Will you come in?" asked Mr. Welland, as they stopped at the organist's house. The young man accepted at once in a manner more eager than the occasion warranted. For an hour they sat and chatted of many things, and still the unaccountable likeness kept continually crossing Muriel. Suddenly the young man's eyes fell on an old violin hung against the wall. It was

Charlie's old instrument, and Muriel always kept it there in gentle memory of her little child-friend.

Price Elliston lifted it down, and drawing the bow across the strings, commenced the air that Charlie used to play to Muriel on half-holidays in the old garden so long ago, and which she had never heard since, and then like a flash of light came the knowledge! revealed to her the likeness that had puzzled her: there standing before her she recognized in the great singer, little Charlie Pierce.

Yes, indeed it was so; the little humble child who had been found singing a baby to sleep on a doorstep, and who had risen by force of genius to the celebrity he now enjoyed.

And now what explanations followed. Charlie told them that feeling the slights of boys and masters so deeply, he had determined to run away, and had walked to London, where, by his voice, he immediately got employment in one of the large rich churches; and how a very wealthy man hearing him sing, took a fancy to him and adopted him, sending him to Germany and Italy to study, and how then appearing in London he had made a great success, and that he was now very comfortably off; that he had gladly accepted the engagement at Eastminster that he might see them all once more.

This was his story. Then they in their turn had to tell him that soon after he left, Maurice Canning ran away also, ran away to sea, leaving behind him a letter saying that he could not bear the weight on his conscience longer; that it was he who took the music from the drawer and tore it, putting it into Charlie's desk, which he happened to find open, on the day of the Festival because he had meant to upset him, so that he could not sing that night, being jealous of the position he had taken in the choir—above him. He begged that if Charlie ever came back again, they would tell him this and ask him to forgive him.

"And have you ever seen him since?" asked Charlie.

"No, poor fellow, the ship he went out in sank, and all hands were lost—a short sad life, wrecked by his own hand."

Long they sat up, talking over events past and present, and when they separated it was with many promises from Charlie to stay at Eastminster for some days longer. These days lengthened into weeks, and still Charlie stayed on. Leaving his hotel, he took up his abode at Mr. Welland's, and there the old love for Muriel returned with all a man's strength, and one sunny afternoon as they were sitting in the garden where they had sat together so often as children, he asked her to be his wife.

"You know all my story, dear," he said, "will you take me with all my drawbacks?" She put both her hands into his, and looking up at him, sweetly, blushingly, while large tears shone in her clear blue eyes, said:

"Love, what matters it to me who you were; you have worked nobly, and made your own name, and have taken your own position in the world;" adding seriously and sweetly, "you were given the five talents, and you have made them ten; surely it will be said to you, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'"

CALEB WEBB'S MAGNIFYING GLASSES.

WE all know such villages as Low Loughton, with its wide Green, its pool with the pollard-trees, its homely inn with the benches outside, and the pump close by. We all know the small, plain church with the stumpy tower, the undecipherable stone in the chancel, and the suicide's grave in the corner of the churchyard. We all know the neat white cottages, a little back from the Green, where retired officers, and widowed ladies reside, and cultivate flowers, and train servants. We all know that the mass of trees which bounds the horizon, hides a long, low substantial house where the Squire lives, and rules the village, and countenances, the pretty white cottages, and gives hints to the Rectory itself. The recorded history of Caleb Webb, the carpenter, one of the inhabitants with whom we have to do, began with a bleak bare January morning, when a road-maker found him lying on a heap of dry turf, not very far from the inn. There was no touch of romance to gild his misery; no written paper left in his hand, no dainty garments to suggest that his mother herself had descended from soft places to lay her baby on the stones. He was wrapped in old coarse clothes. The old women who gathered round him pronounced him "a tramp's child," and if there had been sin at his birth, it was that poor, abject, bitter sort of sin for which there is no pity with man, whatever there may be with God.

His only welcome was the grumble of the parochial authorities. Why need he have been left within their borders? Over him were uttered some very hard words about superfluous babies. Even the Rector's wife observed that she thought it a

blessing when such were "taken." We are not as cruel as Herod now, we do not kill babies to destroy the Christ we fear among them; we only let them die, and thank God for their departure, heedless that a possible Saviour of his country or his kind may so pass away, and leave his work in this world for ever undone. We almost weep to think of a certain manger which must have been so rough and chill, with coarse strangers passing in and out, and unheeding cattle standing by. We feel that the people who filled up the inn, and left no room for the young Child and his mother, must be ashamed of themselves for all eternity. But few of us think of the little ones in the workhouse wards within a stone's throw of our own happy homes, and few of us have yet wakened to that voice which goes whispering through all the relationships of earthly society: "Inasmuch as ye do it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye do it unto me."

They called him Caleb because on the wild March morning when he was baptized, the lesson for the day was taken from that chapter of Numbers which tells how he of that name, strove to encourage the disheartened children of Israel. And they added the name of Webb, because it had been the name of a centenarian pauper who had died the week before, and as the nurse observed, "it was natural to have a Webb in the house."

And so the child had grown up in the workhouse, a quiet white-faced boy, with no prettiness or winsomeness to beguile folks into thinking pitifully on his parentage and his desolation. It was soon discovered that he was a very desirable person to trust with little tasks or messages, but he seldom joined in even such shadowy play as was possible in that dismal abode. He earned many a stray copper by running errands for master, matron, and guardians, but otherwise nobody took much notice of him. The matron's favourite was Jack Tyler, who was also a foundling, and who always getting his shins kicked, or his head broken, and so claiming her feminine ministrations in the shape of brown paper and vinegar, and her feminine championship against the other inmates, indignant at being victimised by his perpetual practical jokes. Jack Tyler also got many coppers, many lumps of sugar, and many stray apples, not by running messages, or cleaning out cupboards, but by hugging and coaxing. Jack Tyler had glossy golden hair, a well-turned figure, and small tapering fingers, therefore the old cronies whispered among each other that he was "a gentleman's son," and so con-

ferred on him a melancholy rank in a place which might have been deemed a true republic of misery.

The schoolmaster was the only person who liked Caleb Webb, and he liked him because, out of all his scholars, he gave him the least trouble, and by his progress and steadiness actually gained him a good word from the gruffy guardians. "It was not his fault that the other children did not learn, it was his merit that Caleb did" so he argued. And so Caleb was made welcome to the few tattered volumes which remained from his once respectable library. And thus while Jack Tyler was still blundering among the later reading lessons of the spelling-book, Caleb Webb was secretly cudgelling his brains with Bacon's axioms, or pondering over the cumbrous morality of Rasselas.

In the schoolmaster's dingy room, where a smell of coarse tobacco mercifully masked the sickly odour of spirituous drink, hope dawned on the desolate workhouse-boy. Not such hope as glorifies the sunny dreams of cared-for youth, nameless, vague, and vast, like the very light of heaven, penetrating everywhere, and gilding everything, but a stern, strong hope, hardy enough to grow in the bleak atmosphere of a heart unsoftened by any tenderness or love. He had no boyish dreams of fame and romance. Only it dawned on him that it was possible to exchange pauperism for independence and scorn for respect. The poor boy's first ambition only aspired to what is the common birthright of most of us, who are therefore prone, in utter forgetfulness, to omit from our thanksgivings the very blessings which filled his most ardent prayers.

For Caleb Webb prayed, and prayed sincerely. There was a warm heart beating beneath the pale face, and shy manner of the workhouse-boy. Nobody guessed it, nobody would have understood it, if they had, but he had gone again and again to the little corner near the inn, where he had heard he had been found, and had stood there, gazing wistfully, and striving to conjure up a vision of his mother. And so, yearning towards the relationships of life, he had eagerly caught at the idea of God, who lets foundlings call him "Our Father." So his prayers were real, for only those to whom God is a Father, and Christ an Elder Brother, can ever really pray. Those to whom Jehovah seems but a Judge, may cry out in appeal sometimes, like frantic prisoners at the bar, but like them they only do so, to relieve their own passions, all the while feeling that it does not make the slightest difference. Yet though poor Caleb had got on to the right path of prayer, the way of a child to its father,

his prayers were something like the letters of a son to his sire in India who went away before he was born. For him, no human love had dimly illustrated the divine; and we scarcely know all that God can be to the soul, till we have proved man's uttermost, and where it fails. God loved Caleb, and Caleb knew it, and wanted to love God; but the poor lad scarcely knew what loving meant.

The time came when he was old enough to leave the workhouse, and get work in Lower Loughton. He did not leave quite penniless. Humbly striving, as all honest hearts do, to reach his ideal—with him the simple glory of independence—he had for years stored his stray pence. When the guardians heard of this, after they had bought his outfit, they said he should have been made pay for it himself. If he had spent them, as Jack Tyler had spent his, nobody would have blamed or wondered. It might be natural for a pauper to spend, but it seemed to be a sin for a pauper to save.

Jack Tyler left the workhouse at the same time as Caleb, and chanced to get employment in the same workshop. But Jack presently got into a fight, and being dismissed before he had saved sixpence, went back to his old refuge, and had the benefit of its Christmas hospitality and misrule. Poor Caleb too had no home but the workhouse, and that is a hearth which keeps no welcome for the well-doing. So while Jack got roast beef and plum pudding, and a glass of negus in the matron's room, Caleb spent his Christmas morning in a long walk across the heath to hear a famous itinerant preacher, and passed the evening in his cold bare room, reading "Poor Richard's Maxims," his sole Christmas-box, presented to him by himself. It was scarcely the reading which a wise friend would have chosen for such a boy, living such a life. But that is the way the world wags. The favourite book of the prudent is the Proverbs; of the despairing and disheartened, Ecclesiastes; of the dreaming and hopeful, the Revelation of St. John. Unguided instinct rather seeks to add to what it already has, than to supply what it needs.

As time passed on, Caleb Webb prospered. He never changed his master, and with his hand in it, his master's business improved.

He left the lowly lodging which had suited the workhouse-boy, and took a snug room in the butterman's house in the Market-place. He had a Sunday suit as good as his master's, as good as the Squire's, for that matter, and Caleb's Sunday clothes became

him, because his abstemiousness had saved him from those coarse habits which make working men into louts and sots. Village moralists began to point at Caleb Webb as a living instance of what sobriety and industry can do, even for a workhouse-boy. But alas, for Caleb's feelings, he was pointed at in another way, too. The groups at the alehouse door would lounge insolently on his very path, and turn back their thumbs to point him out as a "regular screw," and "one of your canting sneaks." Jack Tyler was generally to be found in this party, and with all the rude liberty of old acquaintanceship would hail him with taunting questions as to what interest the Provident would pay him if he invested two-pence farthing, and whether Caleb was getting ready to rent the White House during the young Squire's minority.

Caleb had taken a class in the Sunday School and was a diligent teacher. He never went to his class with a lesson he had not studied beforehand, and between his chapter, his hymns, his questions and his story, there was always that harmony which indicates careful and conscientious thought. Yet his scholars were restless and dissatisfied, and constantly fretting after another class. For a long time he believed that they only longed for the loaves and fishes which some teachers bestowed in the shape of little books and picture-cards. But when there were two cases of actual desertion from him to the class of a little hunchback who had no money wherewith to purchase such bribes, even that poor cynical consolation utterly failed him.

Caleb Webb grew very unhappy. A bitter sense of injustice struck root in his heart. He began to think that people are surely liked according to the trouble they give, and the burden they inflict on others. He often felt inclined to say that Jack Tyler who had never kept in work for a fortnight at a time, and who spent two shillings for every one which he earned, was, after all, wiser in his own generation than himself. It was a good thing for poor Caleb that there was a firm rock underneath the tossings of his mind at such times: that sense of Right which cannot be blown about by the veering wings of Expediency. However he rebelled against the captious criticism which penetrated his life like a Scotch mist, he was always able to say within himself, "It is not right to stand lounging about, laughing and gossiping, and eating bread which one has not earned. No, and it is not right to refrain from a word of reproof when it is needed, and it is a thousand times wrong to say a word which is not truth, whether it please or offend." And in all of this,

Caleb was altogether right, though he was quite wrong when he wound up with the conclusion, "So I will not care a bit whether people like me or not." And it was indeed well for him that the stern words were softened by a smile, which secretly signified, "For I know Somebody likes me, anyhow."

Did it ever occur to Caleb that to this Somebody, he showed quite a different side of character from that which the Provident defaulters dreaded, and the village gossips scoffed at; if he did, probably he would have only asked, "How came it so?" and would have asserted that if others had behaved to him as Lettice Mills had, they would have found him the same man, forgetful that it is not from the ordinary run of humanity that we have any right to expect that strong clear-sighted love, which has patience with us till it catches the secret of our lives, and henceforth often learns to love us better for the very reasons for which others blame us, and is more tender over our scar and our weakness, than over our beauty and our strength. The common world is too busy and too self-absorbed to take the trouble to decipher any character which is not written out very plainly. Sometimes, it is kind enough to catch one or two capital letters of our history, and thence to jump to very wild conclusions about the rest; and while there is always plenty of consideration for the grain of good which is always confidently asserted to be hidden in those who have never shown it, and floods of sympathy and charity for the wrong doings of those who never do right, most people are cruelly ready to believe that bad motives lie at the root of well-doing.

The injustice of all this, Caleb felt keenly. It was scarcely to be expected that he should ask himself whether some virtues planted in certain circumstances are not in danger of growing into vices, and those of the most disagreeable kind? A fear of dependence, and a desire to be secure therefrom, especially in one who has once tasted of that bitter cup, may very easily grow into too eager a pursuit of money, and an over rigid economy, and presently degenerate into sordid avarice. Those who have lived without sympathy, obliged to conceal their best feelings to save them from mockery and degradation, may easily contract reserved habits, which, growing too dense to be broken through, will shut them up in real or apparent misanthropy until death. But the ordinary way of the world gives no pity and no help to such as these. It has mercy for the "good-hearted simpletons," and "poor prodigals" who spread desolation around them, and bring down loving hearts with sorrow to the grave. God alone

knows and alone cares for the maimed souls which often sit and suffer silently within, lives which are well-springs of wholesome succour to others.

It might have enlightened Caleb a little, if he had asked himself what had attracted him to Lettice Mills. She was a sunny winsome little thing, the only child of a widowed mother, and the two lived together in a tiny cottage, and kept cows and poultry, and did a little needlework. It never occurred to anybody to wonder what their income might be; they always seemed well off. Their gowns and bonnets were fresh and neat, when those of other women were frayed and frowsy: nobody noticed therefore how plain they were, how manifestly chosen and made for durability and service. Yet neither of them were notable "managing women," constantly talking of weights and measures, and wasting time and temper and honesty, by haggling for bargains. If Caleb had been attracted by such traits as these, he would have courted Susan Kite, the blacksmith's daughter; nor was Lettice one of those women who are always at work, who embroider at tea-parties, and knit at week-night lectures, like Caleb's master's daughter, Miss Sims. Caleb had indeed noticed that one of Letty's great charms was that her very presence seemed to make a holiday. His evening visits always found the cottage parlour "tidied-up," a fresh bunch of flowers on the table, and Letty's heart and hands alike free and at his service; and when he chanced to pass in the morning, and saw her milking her cows or feeding her chickens, he noticed that she never seemed at work in the grim sense which he felt himself to be, when he stood at his bench and realized the stern necessity which God has certainly placed upon us, but did not tell us to write it in great black letters over everything, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." All the world was the Father's house to Letty Mills, and all work was service rendered to Him and His, freely rendered, not bartered for wage, though wage must be thankfully taken that work may go on.

"I think you are like the strawberry blossom yourself, Letty," Caleb said, one fine summer evening as they sat together on the stile, while he twisted one or two of the white blossoms among the simple trimming of her sober brown hat.

"Not so useful as the potato then," she answered archly, "but I'm glad to hear you speak a good word for me, for my conceit is in sad want of a prop to-day."

"Your conceit!" said Caleb, "I don't believe you have any,

partly because you always so frankly say you have. But what has humbled you to-day in particular?"

Letty laughed, yet a little dew came into her eyes as she answered, "Mrs. Kite says that she pities my mother for having such a feckless daughter, I suppose she will pity you too when I'm your wife, Caleb!"

"How falsely people will talk!" said the indignant lover. "To call a busy little bee like you—feckless; she might as justly have said you were a vixen or a gossip."

Letty smiled again, but this time she shook her head.

"No, Caleb," she answered, "don't you remember the old proverb says, 'that where smoke is there must be always a little fire;' what makes these hard sayings so hard, is, that there is generally a little bit of truth at the bottom of them; I know I don't keep our dairy things half as bright and shining as the Kites keep theirs, and I know they always rise at four while I often lie till six. I hope I am not idle but I think I might easily become so, and that's the little bit of truth there generally is in talk. Sometimes only a very little bit, but the eyes that see it are magnifying glasses; so, after all, Caleb, why need we mind? we only get the use of a magnifying glass to help us in our own judgment of ourselves."

"They think me a miser, and a screw, and a sneak down in the village." remarked the young man ruefully.

"Well, if they are foolish enough to think so, dear," she said, "it can't be helped;" and she stroked his brown hand as she spoke.

"But you seem to say there must be some truth in it," he observed with a little bitterness.

"Perhaps you seem so to them, dear," she said, "and what a pity that is, when you really are so good, Caleb."

"I don't care what I seem," returned Caleb testily, "it only signifies what I am."

Letty went on patting the hand which lay beneath her own; if she had not done that, perhaps Caleb would have drawn it away, and a sense of division might have come between them.

"Are we not to care something about 'appearance of evil,' dear?" she whispered, "and does not Saint Paul say 'whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things?"

"Begin at the beginning, Letty," said Caleb, with a sternness of voice, which even at the moment explained to her what she never before quite understood, why people were afraid of him.

"Begin at the beginning, 'whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just.' "—

"Yes, those first and then the rest afterwards," pleaded Letty. "The root must grow before the flowers can come, but we should feel rather disappointed in a root which never flowered at all."

"I will tell you what it is, Letty," said Caleb, going on almost as if he had not heard her, "I'm too true to please people, because I really wish them well, I'll not gloss over their faults. There is a case in point,—that poor reprobate, Jack Tyler, has never forgiven me for plainly telling him that it was thoroughly shameful that a great strong hearty fellow like him should keep losing his work and sponging upon public charity; and the cooper's wife has been my bitter enemy, Letty, ever since I plainly told her that she had no right to go about complaining of her husband's drunkenness while his home was fit for no sober man to enter. As for Miserliness, Letty, it sems to me more miserly, because more selfish, to spend one's money on oneself, at inn or fair, than to save it as I do, in the one hope of marrying you, and making the world the better by one more decent and respectable household."

"I am sure that is all quite true," said Letty, gently.

"I'm glad you'll do me so much justice," returned Caleb, still tartly; and there followed a silence, till Letty suddenly said,

"Caleb, do you remember that bonnet of mine with the artificial flowers?"

"Yes" Coleb answered, thinking with a strange pang that perhaps Mrs. Kite was right after all, or that at any rate if Letty was not feckless she must be flighty, to make so sudden and irrelevant a change of subject.

"And you remember you did not like it," she went on, "I dare say I can guess what you thought, but still you did not say 'Lettice Mills, you are a very stupid girl to have the bad taste to put that staring colour next your face; you may think yourself smart, but you are really a finished guy.' If you had spoken so, Caleb, perhaps we two should not be sitting here, side by side, to-day; for you know I am a touchy little simpleton; and after all I'd only bought those flowers thinking to please you, and had never cared for such things before; but you did not speak so."

"Well, how did I speak?" Caleb asked, with a smile of intelligence half beaking over his face.

"You said, 'Letty, dear, there are such true roses on your

cheeks, that you put the false ones to open shame, and the false ones don't improve the real; get something the colour of the leaves, or something that will match your pretty eyes, little woman;'" and the mimic looked up archly and added, "I suppose you were false when you spoke so, Caleb."

"But I can't be expected to love everybody as much as I love you," said Caleb.

"And you don't want everybody to love you as much in return, do you?" asked Letty, wickedly, "but just in the proportion that you want people to feel kindly towards you, you must feel kindly towards them. If you will have your fierce schoolmaster airs, you must expect naughty-little-boy rebellions."

"I don't seem very fierce just now," said poor Caleb, "but I cannot help repeating that I can't love everybody."

"You needn't make love to everybody," retorted Letty, "I own that's another thing; as for loving them, you do that already, or you wouldn't trouble yourself about them, but you don't *like* them quite enough, I'm afraid. I say, Caleb, why can't you speak to people, and think about people—not as you speak and think of me—but as you would like other people to speak and think of me; that might make it plainer to you than bidding you speak and think as you would like to be spoken to and thought of yourself, for you're so brave and strong that you would not mind the whole truth, however plainly blurted out."

"I'm not so sure about that," said Caleb. And I suppose soft words are heeded more than hard ones. It's the old fable of the wind and the sun trying to take away a man's cloak, and the more the wind blew, the faster he held it, but when the sun shone, he was glad to throw it aside."

"I don't know," said Letty, "and I suppose it's wicked and selfish of me, but I'm not thinking so much of what will make people heed you, as of what you make them think of you. It must do them harm if you make them think that a good, upright man is hard and unkind. We have to take care that our good is not evil spoken of, Caleb."

"I'll tell you what it is, Letty," said Caleb, as the cool evening air whispered through the trees that it was time he should help her from the stile, and take her home. "I like that saying of yours about magnifying glasses. I don't think I'm quite a miser or a sneak either, Letty, I don't really, and it would be a fib if I said I did. But while we've been talking I've been thinking over things, and I see that there are a good many ways of mine which folks with a very little magnifying glass

may easily see as hardness and meanness. Life began hard with me, Letty, and I grew up hard in it. And if you hadn't made a chink in my shell, I might have died so—solitary and separate, and never knowing that we each have, inside of us, a drop of that sea of love, which carries on all creation. I've read more books, and grander books, living lonely as I've done, than I might if I'd sat at a mother's hearth and had to help with the babies and the marketing. I've learnt a deal more about most things than human nature; it's been shut up from me, and I've only seen the cover of it, and a precious tough rough thing it seemed, till all of a sudden, its book opened at a certain place, and there was a sweet little song called 'Lettice Mills!' Letty, I'll try to look at myself through other folk's magnifying glasses. You know I'm thrifty and don't like anything to be wasted, and what better economy can there be than to make use of one's enemies?"

"They'll soon find out what you're doing," laughed Letty, "and then they'll begrudge you their help."

This is a simple story, and we must not rush to the easy and romantic conclusion that Caleb Webb instantly became cordial and generous, and so universally popular. On the contrary, it seemed to Caleb, that never before had he been so severe and grumpy. That was only because he was looking at himself with other people's eyes. But almost simultaneously, other people began to see him with his own. For Caleb did really very soon learn to check his over outspokenness of rigid opinions—his aptitude to over-estimate the virtues which were hard to most people, and easy to himself, because he had such splendid experience of their worth. A little practice made it easier to speak the truth in love.

But Caleb never became a thoroughly genial man, or a general favourite, until after he had married Lettice Mills. Many people had professed to believe that the marriage would never come off,—saying that he might philander after a pretty face, but he would marry where money lay. It was always said that Miss Simms, his master's daughter, quite an heiress in her way, would not have turned a deaf ear had Caleb Webb addressed her with the voice of the charmer. But Caleb remained faithful to Letty; and it so happened that circumstances threw a little pathetic romance round their wedding. Letty's mother died, after a long and painful illness, which exhausted her little store, so that her daughter was left penniless. She and Caleb had not purposed to marry for some time later, and Letty prepared to

take some light service until the time of her engagement should expire. But where love and tenderness came in, Caleb Webb was not found desperately prudent; "they would marry at once," he said. The comforts with which he had wished to furnish his home could wait awhile; his best comfort was Letty's self.

The village mothers liked him all the better, when, while secretly fully aware of the distinction between their perpetual improvidence and his impulsive courage, they could yet shake their heads and say, "Those that have preached, should practise themselves."

And truly, so he did. And when he could hold before their eyes, the picture of a pretty thriving home, a happy wife, and a proud husband, he had no more for reproaches in words. But after his wedding, he made rapid progress in general popularity. And after his first baby came, the most sluttish mother in the village was not afraid to encounter him, if only she was armed with her own dirty infant. After he had kissed each sticky babe, and remarked that it was quite as fine a child as his own, which is all that can be expected from a man and a father; then he noticed that the dirty baby was probably several shades cleaner the next time he saw it.

Yet, as he sat beside his child's cradle, Lettice noticed that his watching face would often grow both stern and sad. It was so once, nor twice, but almost always; at last she asked him—

"Caleb, what do you think about, when you sit and gaze at our little lamb?"

"I think about my own mother, Lettice," he answered, "and I wonder how she could have left me *so*. How could she?"

Lettice once more patted the brown hand in the old caressing fashion.

"We don't know anything about it," she said, "perhaps she died when you were born, and it was some stranger who cast you off. And she may have been watching you from heaven all these years. Don't doubt it, because if it should be true, how you would repent of such doubts, afterwards."

Caleb left off reproving Jack Tyler when he was out of work, but was friendly to him when he was in work, and would ask him in to supper, and Lettice would offer to mend his socks and aprons. And when he saw his sweet wife rendering such little womanly services to the poor vagabond for his sake, Caleb remembered how he had once grudgingly felt that Jack's life was pleasanter and sunnier than it had any right to be, and he

felt ready to smite on his breast and say, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." Finally, he helped Jack to emigrate; Lettice made his outfit, and Caleb himself saw him on ship-board, and was quite ashamed of Jack's gratitude.

And whenever Caleb hears anyone else grumbling under the criticisms of the village gossips, then he says—

"Never mind, friend. These neighbours of ours are only furnishing us with cheap magnifying glasses. Let us use them and be thankful."

A TALE OF HARVEST TIME.

THE rich ripe corn is being carried on FarmerMarsden's land. All "his hands" have been busy for days; the last load is now going from the last field; and little children are riding in triumph on the top of the rich burden, which the cart with its team of fine horses is drawing away. He is very rich, Farmer Marsden, and very kind too; in scarce or plenteous years, he gives alike to his labourers, and a kindly welcome to the gleaners too, whom it is such a charity to be allowed to walk over the fields and gather up the fragments of the golden heavy-eared corn which seems always to crown his labours. The neighbouring farmers sometimes say jealously; "Marsden don't know what a bad year is;" but he did, of course, as others did, only that he always found *something* to be grateful for, something for which to thank the bounteous Giver of all good. "If the corn is not much to brag of," he would say, "the hay is sure to be unusually good; if there's too much wet for one thing, it suits something else, and all my life I've found I've had so much to praise God for, there's been no time left to grumble at Him. Sure*ly* He has a right to do as He wills with His own, and He who made all things must know what is best for them."

Among the things the Farmer was blest with, and for which he felt most thankful, most proud of, was a good son. He cared but little for his wealth, save that it might purchase all earthly good for him; he had therefore given him an admirable education, let him travel to see the world, and learn different modes of farming, comforting himself in his absence by the knowledge that it was for his boy's good; and what did his dullness signify compared to that (for John Marsden was a widower, and this his only child); but it was a glad moment when he came back after nearly a twelvemonth's absence; and a barrel of the best ale was broached; and good old port opened to wash down the

walnuts, and golden pippins, and Bergamot pears, which made a goodly show on the table; as after dinner father and son drew near the wood fire which the chilly evenings began to make pleasant, if not actually necessary, and talked together of all that had happened since he left.

He had been back a week or more on the bright autumn evening, when the waggon so heavily-laden, with the group of shouting children on the top of the load, came through the open gate, and he waiting for it to pass him, took off his cap to wave at them, and called to them to shout away—such a load *did* deserve a hearty cheer, but he did not seem as though he had come into the field to see that last load carried, for he entered it as the waggon rumbled out down the lane; and stood looking about him as though in search of someone.

The labourers had not all gone, they were putting their things together to take home the beer-cans and baskets which had brought their dinners; they passed him with a civil "good night, sir," but to none of those he spoke, save in acknowledgment of their greeting; still his eye wandered over the field, and then he suddenly stepped forward to where at the farthest corner of the large field stood a group of gleaners; children chiefly, but one amongst them was a girl some eighteen or twenty years old.

The first day that Hugh Marsden had been home, he had strolled up in the field to see the sheaves of corn standing so thick. It was such a goodly sight, his father said, and he would wager in all his wanderings he had seen no better crop.

Tying the sheaf which stood nearest him, was this girl who at once attracted Hugh's attention, not so much for any great beauty, as for the extreme refinement evidenced in her actions, in her voice, when she addressed her companions, in her courteous yet somewhat haughty manner of reply when they spoke to her. From the moment he caught sight of her, a strange fascination seemed to seize him. Many lovelier girls had crossed his path, but none had attracted him like this girl who came to tie sheaves of corn on his father's land.

"Who is she?" he asked him.

"What, that bonny lassie there?"

"I don't know her name, but she lives with Black Sally, as they call her; she seems to have no belongings but her, they must be a strange contrast," said the Farmer laughing—and so Hugh stood watching her—watching her till the girl herself seemed to become conscious of it, and moved away; but he had

come every evening since, and she had been always in the field somewhere tying the sheaves or gathering up "the fragments which were left," and watching as he did so closely, he could see that the men threw the corn down for her, and that the roughest among them spoke in a different manner to her.

He could not account for the effect she produced on him; she was not lovely, like the little Rhine maiden with the arrow in her golden hair whom he had half promised to come back for, and bring home to his English homestead; she had charmed him, singing over her knitting, the pretty "Volkslied," lisping the few words of English she had picked up from visitors, intermingled with her soft mother tongue; and he had whispered foolish words to her, and kissed the tears from her large blue eyes at parting; but it was all unlike this strange new fascination; he would not have dared to speak light words to her. Her queenly manner mingling so strangely with her rustic dress; her quiet self-possession; her gentle courtesy to the rough beings she mingled with, all filled him with curiosity and admiration. The light was fading fast as he neared the group, the large red harvest moon was rising; the sky growing greyer; and one by one the stars were coming out to keep their sentinel watch above.

"I am going home, children," he heard her say, "you had better come too."

"Look here, boy," said Hugh to a little urchin with his mother's apron full of corn, who trotted past him. "What is that girl's name, and where does she live?"

The boy stared and grinned in reply: "stay," Hugh continued, "here's a new sixpence, won't that sharpen your wits? Oh! no, not till you've told me" he said, as the child eagerly clutched at the money, "I want to know the name of that girl, and where she lives?"

"We calls her Beata, and she lives with Black Sally, in Parker's Lane, fust cottage, right-hand side; give us the money."

Hugh tossed the coin to the child, and drew nearer to the girl. She was gathering up the corn in the skirt of the dark blue linen dress she wore, exposing a bright scarlet petticoat, and beneath it, a pair of small feet encased in very-well made leather shoes and grey stockings; and he noticed that the hand which gathered the corn, though somewhat brown with exposure to sun and wind was shapely and delicate.

"Can I help you?" he said, slightly raising his hat.

"Oh! dear no," she answered, in a voice of cold astonishment, and calling quickly to the children to follow her, for it grew late, she passed him with a slight inclination of her head, and went out of the field with an air and manner which made it impossible for him to follow her, or speak to her again.

The children ran with her to her door, holding by her skirts, they were always round about her, and to them she was always sweet and gentle; they loved her too, as children will return the love they inspire; looking up into the deep fringed grey eyes with loving admiration, courting her sweet rare smiles, and vying with each other to give her pleasure.

She trod wearily the long village street, and entered a very small cottage containing but two rooms; sinking into the first chair with a sigh, laying the corn down; she said softly as she did so, for the action seemed to recall the words, "When the evening shadows lengthen, thou shalt lay thy burden down;" "Ah! how long, how long?"

"Is that you?" asked a weak peevish voice; the evenings had begun to draw in suddenly, and the cottage was very dark.

"Yes, Sally; dont you want your tea?"

"Yes, that I do, Beata, I thought you was never coming."

"I've brought you fine corn to make your bread, Sally."

"Ah! that's good, there's no corn like Marsden's; get the tea, though lass, my throat *is* dry."

The girl rose, laying the corn away in a large wicker basket, and taking a kettle from the fireplace, went out at a back door to a small garden in which was a pump, from which she prepared to fill it.

Long stretches of meadow-land lay out beyond, over which sheep were grazing, looking in the dim light like white spots on the grass; the big red harvest moon was rising, the grasshopper chirrupped merrily, and the birds seeking their nests, rustled amidst the branches of the trees, and Beata stood there till the moon's rays shone on her; shone like a blessing on her humble task, to which her graceful form, and fair delicate face seemed so unsuited; the kettle was full, brimming over, before she moved, and then with that weary manner which was so painful to see in that young thing who ought to have been so full of life and energy, she turned into the house with her sleeves rolled up to her elbows, and her gown tucked up above the scarlet petticoat, her rich red-gold hair, twisted up in a big knot at the back of her head.

Beata was busy on the following morning cooking the little dinner for herself and Sally, when a knock at the door startled her; the neighbours lifted the latch and came in, few knocked at the door of that humble cottage, and with a flush mounting to her forehead, and a glance at Sally sitting nodding over the fire, she went to the door. Hugh Marsden stood there.

"I beg your pardon, your name is——"

"My name is Elizabeth Wentworth, do you want me?"

She stood erect; her grand eyes looking straight into his, but with the colour of excitement still on her cheeks.

"My father told me to ask you if you would come to our field nearest the house, he thought you would find better gleaning there;" said Hugh, but he spoke hastily, as one abashed and shy.

"Thank you; I will come this evening."

"Who is it? the young master?" and Sally's dark ugly face appeared over Beata's shoulder.

"Go in, Sally, go back to your chair."

"Sally and I used to be old friends," said Hugh, "before I went abroad; shake hands, Sally, you had not this pleasant companion when I used to come and see you."

"No, no; sure, dear heart, you do favour your father; let him come in, let him come in." Beata moved aside and Hugh entered, but a look of extreme annoyance was on her face. As he seated himself, at Sally's request, near her, she, Beata, stood leaning against the little lattice window, round which the withered vine leaves hung, driven often by the autumn winds to tap against the small panes, helping to swell the chorus of strange sounds which, in the long winter evenings, were as so many voices to Beata repeating the story of her life.

She stood looking out into the village street, but not at the miller's cart bringing flour to the next cottage, not at the carriage passing with the squire's family in gay attire; only standing there, thinking, with an evil pain in her heart, of the sadness which had made her life seem so long; thus in its very dawn, poor Beata—she was scarcely twenty. She was vexed beyond words, that Sally had admitted young Mr. Marsden, and showed it by standing away from them, and not joining in their conversation; but presently at a few words uttered in the high peevish tones of old Sally, she turned quickly and said sharply, "Sally, Sally, that will do, let Mr. Marsden go, you have talked enough."

"But you'll come again, won't you, and hear it all? hear all about my poor dear," said Sally, as Hugh rose to go.

"Do not heed her, she is silly, a little matter excites her;" whispered Beata, "do go at once."

Wondering still; wondering more than ever, Hugh left the cottage; in his dreams haunted by the fair stately girl in her humble dress, the poor cottage, the half silly woman with her wrinkled dark face, her grizzled locks, hanging about it; all mingling together with such strange inconsistency; all serving to fix in his mind the face and form which had attracted him for its grace and refinement; and which now filled him with a warmer feeling than curiosity. What was she? who was she? that she was there with that strange companion; he could remember Black Sally, as from her dark skin, the village children called her, since he was a little boy, and spent his halfpence in buying brandy-balls and peppermint-sticks out of wide mouthed bottles, which stood in her little latticed window; but no one was with her then; it was during his absence this girl had come; well, he must find out about her, and he would; such was his determination as he walked into the field in which he had told her to come gleaning that evening.

She was there, her skirt pinned up over the scarlet petticoat as usual, her little dainty well-shod feet, her large straw hat covering the rich brown hair; a figure standing alone in its grace and beauty; Hugh's heart beat as he came near her.

He raised his hat as he said "good evening; I hope this field will repay you, there seems a great deal of corn which has escaped the carrying."

"Yes;" came the answer slowly uttered and with a haughty indifference, which seemed to forbid further speech; he moved a little away to some children working near her, and speaking to them, still kept his eye on her who so intensely interested him, but he could not get further speech of her, she moved slowly, but with evident intention, from each part of the field to which he came, and the moment he began to follow, walked with her slow weary steps away.

Many were the inquiries he made respecting the young stranger, but he got only the slight information that she came one evening to old Sally's alone, in a cart, from Meriton, a town some few miles off, and it was supposed Sally was her old nurse, by the way she spoke of her; but she was very odd and did not seem to like to be asked questions about her.

The gleaning was over, the fields were ploughed up in deep

furrows, sharp frosts made the earth crisp and white, and the cold winds of winter have whistled over the fields, and through the leafless branches of the trees, and shook the latticed window of Sally's cottage, and tossed the long stems of the vine against the glass, and Sally shivered and crept closer to the fire, and grumbled at the pains she felt in every limb. as though it was Beata's fault; Beata, who worked day and night to get their scanty fare, going out in the bleak wind and driving snow, to gather fuel in the wood, to keep a warm fire for the poor silly petulant old woman; working always with the same indolent grace, the same sad weary look in her grey eyes, the same strange manner, which seemed as though she lived far apart from all things which surrounded her; yet doing the common things of her life well and with never-failing regularity.

So the winter crept on, and Hugh had but rare glimpses of her, by whom he was so fascinated; but he had not lost his interest or ceased his efforts to discover the mystery which he felt sure hung over his life.

Mr. Marsden loved Christmas, and all the geniality which emanated from it; in any way that he could, he tried to make it a happy time for all; and many blessed his name on Christmas-day, who feasted at his expense.

Hugh had not ventured to go again to Beata's cottage, for he saw it so annoyed her, but he passed it often, yet seldom saw the face which haunted him, haunted him to the exclusion of every other thought, try how he would to reason with himself.

His father who loved him, and was so proud of him, what would he say to his bringing home such a daughter-in-law; he would expect him, if he married, to bring home some one at least in as good a position as himself, if not better, after all the money he had spent on him.

Many times the old man said with a chuckling laugh, "You must have a wife, Hugh, soon; I was married at your age, and your prospects are much brighter; you'll have naught to blame your old father for;" and then he would name the girls he thought he should like, and as he spoke there came before his son the fair still face with those eyes in which a story seemed to lie; some mute appeal for love, and help, and sympathy which he longed to give,—and would rise hastily and say with an effort at a smile, "No no; I have no wish to marry, I like you, dear old man, for a companion, and am too young to saddle myself with such a heavy responsibility;" and then he would go out away into the crisp snowy meadows, and walk for miles thinking,

even as he tried *not* to think, of those sweet sad eyes, and the joy it would be to take from her hard life the poor girl who seemed born to better things.

It wanted but a day or two to Christmas when Mr. Marsden said, "I wonder, Hugh, if poor old Sally has a Christmas dinner, I wish if you're going up the village you'd call and see."

"Yes, father, that I will," answered Hugh with ill-concealed eagerness, and so it happened that Hugh once again entered Beata's cottage; Sally admitted him; "Beata was out" she said.

"Sit down do, and chat; Beata won't let me speak to anyone," said the old woman in her complaining voice; "sometimes I wish she'd never come."

"When did she come? where from?" asked Hugh, hoping that at last the time had arrived when he should solve the mystery.

"Well, when all her trouble fell on her, and she seemed alone-like in the world."

"Her trouble, what trouble?" interrupted Hugh.

The door opened and Beata entered.

"There now, here she is," said Sally, "how provoking, she won't let me tell you no more."

Hugh rose as with the cold grave manner she always assumed to him, she asked his business. In few words, standing whilst he spoke to her, he gave his father's message.

"Sally will be pleased to have a Christmas dinner, I am sure." "Sally," she said, laying her hand on the old woman's shoulder; "Mr. Marsden is going to send you beef and plum pudding. You will like that, will you not?"

"Well yes; we always had it of course, and you used to sit up to dinner, and the pudding used to be all alight, and you spilt yours over your beautiful pink frock once; do you remember your pink frock?" A look of intense pain, mingled with anger, passed over the girl's face as she turned to Hugh and said, "Thank your father for his kindness, Sally is glad to be remembered."

"Yes, yes, sit down, don't go," said Sally, "tell me all about that; I seem somehow to forget, but one Christmas I know he came for the first time, and dined; that was it, the day you spoilt your frock; Oh! no, you was a little girl then. I said when he came he was bad."

"Don't pull your cap off, Sally, and drag your hair down, that is so silly," said Beata, going to her and putting her hands down into her lap, her own face deadly pale, even to her lips.

"My hair's got so thin," continued the poor old woman again, drawing her hand through the straggling grey hair which she had pulled from under her cap; "it wasn't thin then, why he said what fine hair I had. I remember."

"Mr. Marsden, will you go, she is so easily excited and will not sleep to-night;" said Beata in an agitated whisper.

Hugh rose at once, and said softly to her—

"Can I not help you? you have a hard sad life, I am sure; Oh, let me help you!"

"You cannot, the greatest kindness you can show me is to keep away from me;" she opened the door wide as she spoke, and he passed out and she closing it after him, rushed up the narrow-crooked staircase to the small room she shared with her half-silly companion, and falling on her knees by her bed, she wept there, tears, bitter tears of contrition and despair.

The Winter glided into Spring, primroses and violets filled the banks, the wild anemones and hyacinths carpeted the woods, and the birds sang in the trees their sweet love-ditties; the cuckoo's cry set the girls a-wishing, and all nature seemed making preparation to receive the golden Summer with due honour. Hugh's life-dream, for so it had become, was not yet realised; he knew no more of Beata, only that the patient weary life went on, that the burden she carried was not laid down, and his father grew anxious for him, for he was silent and sad, and seemed to have some weight of care which he would not, reveal to anyone.

A rough wind was tossing about the young fruit blossoms, and giving the gardeners cause for much anxiety, who mournfully shook their heads and said, "what a bad year it would be" —a wind strong enough to disturb the waters in their peaceful flow and swell them into angry wavelets, and toss them against frail bridges, till they broke, and bent, and went in pieces, floating down the torrent; strong enough to make the mothers' hearts ache who had boys at sea, and who lay in the night listening to its roaring round the house. Three days the gale had lasted, and Hugh had been busy walking over the land to see what damage was done, and have it repaired. When he went out in the morning he had seen Beata walking over the meadow through the path which led to the town.

In the twilight she would be coming home. Why did he start and turn back with sudden terror?

The bridge over which she had safely passed in the morning was washed away; he had come out in the evening to see what

could be done with it; to see the little stream lashed into fury by the wind; but he had forgotten until that moment that she might come back the way she had gone not knowing of the disaster.

They had said but few words, she would never speak much to him, only "I am coming back this evening," she had said.

"Is she home?" he asked, panting for breath, at the little cottage; "No, she *is* so long and I do want my tea so," answered the whining voice; he was away before she finished speaking; sending a boy and cart to Meriton, to stay her if he could; and rushing back himself to the broken bridge, to watch for her and warn her.

The light fades rapidly and the wind still comes in heavy gusts; no matter, he will stay there all night, if need be; he has bidden the boy with the cart to come down to the meadow, and tell him if he has her safe; and so with eyes strained he waits and watches. The boy does not return, she must be walking then.

A figure is visible through the darkness; he cries aloud "Go back, go back, the bridge is gone;" the wind is stronger and stronger, the voice is blown away; the little figure comes on, on towards the angry foaming stream; again he shouts; dark clouds shading the faint young moon, driven wildly over her face by the mad wind.

A splash, a cry, a piteous cry for help; yes, she who prayed for death, whose life was so sad, so dreary, cried in agony now to have it spared.

For a moment only the cold waters cover her, she is soon on the dry bank, and through her half drowned senses hears loving tender words.

"Oh! can it be? Alaric, beloved, come back at last."

The wind ceases, and the pale moon comes from behind a cloud, and shines on the face bending over her.

"Thank you so much, Mr. Marsden, you must have saved my life; and yet oh why! it was not worth the saving."

He said nothing, but carried her to the nearest cottage, and sent to tell Sally she was safe, but would not be home till the morning.

On his own bed, sleepless lay poor Hugh, repeating again and again "Alaric beloved."

A few lines asking him to come and see her were brought by a boy the next evening. "Come to the Willow Copse" it said, I must speak with you, and alone;" she was there before him;

in her simple rough dress, she stood leaning on the gate, the setting sun shining on her, coming aslant in ruddy lines through the trees; her face pale, grand, resolute, her hands clasped closely together.

She gave him no greeting, but spoke at once all that was in her heart.

"It would be silly to pretend," came the words slowly, "that I do not know you care for me, I did not wilfully deceive you, my heart was too heavy, too sad, to dream that anyone would ever ask my love again; see!" and drawing from her throat a black riband, on which was a plain gold ring, she held it to him.

"I believe I killed my mother," she said in a strange quiet voice, "she told me he would go wrong, and when he did I came away—away, and she died. I came to old Sally, to the woman who had loved and nursed me as a child. He will come back in a few years, I am waiting for him."

"What do you mean?" gasped Hugh, holding her hand, in which lay the wedding-ring, in his, "do you mean he——

"He was transported for forgery."

The words came forth slowly with an anguish in them which was piteous to hear.

"And you are waiting for him?" said Hugh.

"Yes, of course; I hope to live to welcome him back, to be the first to meet him, to hold him to the heart which has never ceased to yearn for him; oh! my love, my love;"—and Hugh, unable to speak one word, watched in silence the agonised weeping which seemed wrung from the very heart of the girl.

There was a solemn silence between them, no sound breaking it but her sobs, and then suddenly, with a great effort, she said "Go home and pray for me and *him*."

He went at once, without a word, down the lane where the wild anemones bloomed and the primrose buds peeped out from their bright leaves, across the orchard, down the long grass path in the garden, seeming still to hear that bitter sobbing; then he did as she bade him, and after lay down to rest, but not to sleep.

When the corn was ripe for harvest once again, Beata was gone; old Sally lay in the churchyard; and Hugh Marsden, with the shadow of a sad memory, went into the corn-fields, and saw the sheaves tied, and the gleaners at work; sighing for the sweet face he should never see again, and yet which he would never have displaced in his heart by any other.

* * * * * *

In a little sea-girt village a gentle grave woman lives a

quiet life, helping and comforting all in sorrow or need; waiting and hoping—for what is she waiting, for what is she hoping? the people ask. She does not tell them, she only smiles a sad smile when any venture to ask her, and says—

"Do we not all wait and hope, what would life be if this were all?" but they feel she is only evading their question: that even in this life she waits for some one, that even in this life she hopes for some great joy; and they wonder what it is, and they wonder at her great patience when the hope and joy are so long delayed; and she still works on amongst them, helping them any time, night or day; sick children, over-worked women, women needing hope and help when the rough winds lash the waves to fury, and they have husbands tossing on them in their frail boats. All these, with that strange quietude, which makes her so peculiar, she helps and comforts, telling even the saddest of them that there are sorrows harder to bear than sickness, harder to bear than death. She is called Beata, truly named, for all in that village call her "Blessed."

A BAG WITH HOLES.

A TALE.

"I REALLY do believe," said Mrs. Perry, "that there must be a hole in my pocket. I am sure your father is as generous as any man alive, but somehow all the pence and odd silver he gives me for pocket-money go just as fast as I get them. When he came in to dinner he brought me quite a handful of coppers, and now they are all gone. I am sorry for you, Emily, but I am afraid you must manage without a new tie."

Emily was a pretty nice girl of one-or-two-and-twenty, the eldest of Mr. Perry's family, which consisted of three boys, of different sizes and ages, Jessie, a girl of nineteen, and Emily.

Mr. Perry was the owner of the largest grocer's shop in his neighbourhood and drove thereby a most flourishing trade. The business premises were large and roomy, being two shops thrown into one, he having found it necessary to add on the next house as his business increased; therefore there was plenty of room behind and over the shops for all the children, and a very happy merry family they were, but with one general fault, which their father and mother possessing so strongly, naturally reappeared in the children—and this fault was wastefulness.

They had "no thought for the morrow," certainly, but they carried it to such an extent that it amounted to a great fault the other way.

"Let the poor little things have it if they want it," Mrs. Perry would say, and so pennies, and often sixpences would be given to the children to go and waste on sweeties and fruit, without a thought of the many little sisters and brothers in the courts not so very far off their own dwelling who had not the same amount to buy bread with.

"Very well, mother," answered Emily quietly, after a pause, "I suppose I must;" but it does seem hard that the children should plunder your pocket as they like, and leave nothing for me. It was only last Sunday that Charlie noticed how soiled my old white tie is."

As Emily spoke, her little brother Harry came rushing in from school, and the first thing he did was to plunge his hand into his mother's pocket and draw it out again with an expression of disappointment. "Why there's nothing in it!"

"I'm convinced there's a hole in it," said Mrs. Perry again; and to ascertain the truth she turned the pocket inside out, and could discover nothing in it, not even the supposed hole.

"I wanted a lolly," complained Harry.

Now came Robert and George, bigger boys, who clamoured for money to buy tops and balls. But the pocket was empty, and their wants were not satisfied.

"I wonder you like to have them all tearing at your pocket," said Emily to her mother; "it must be very unpleasant."

"I don't like it," Mrs. Perry replied; "but what am I to do? When your father comes in to meals he brings me the odd money, and the children know it is in my pocket, and of course they come tearing for it."

Emily reflected a few moments and then said, "Suppose, mother, you were to hang a bag up against the wall, and let father put the odd money in there; the children would not bother you so much, and when the bag was empty there would be an end of it."

"Well, dear, it might save trouble; but I have no time to make a bag, and if I did make one, I am afraid it would have holes in it like my pocket. Now, boys, here's your tea, sit down, and you, Harry, say grace."

While the boys demolished their meal, Emily went up to the room which she shared with her sister Jessie, who worked at a milliner's, and only came home to sleep. When Emily re-appeared in the parlour she carried in her hand a neatly made bag, something in the form of an offertory bag. This she proceeded to nail to the wall, just beside the fireplace. The boys were greatly interested, of course, especially as they had finished their tea, and had nothing more to do until they went up to bed.

"You won't come to my pocket any more," said Mrs. Perry; "whatever you want you will get out of the bag."

"And when the bag is empty," added Emily, who was

washing the cups and saucers, "there will be nothing to be had. You understand?"

The boys assented; each of the young persons, including Emily, secretly resolving to be always beforehand with the others. Harry tried the bag at intervals of about five minutes, but finding that it did not fill itself, he at length yielded to his inclinations, and marched off to bed. Shortly afterwards, Robert and George, who also were very sleepy, but were too manly to go to bed at the same time with their little brother, said "good night," and retired.

Then Mrs. Perry sat down and gave a great sigh of relief and comfort that the toils of the day were nearly over. Emily was laying out the supper, bread and cheese and watercresses, and a noise came from the shop as if the boy were beginning to put up the shutters.

"I wonder if Charlie will come in to-night," said Mrs. Perry.

Emily did not reply, though she was of opinion that Charlie would come in. And she was right; there was a firm step in the shop, a cheery voice greeted Mr. Perry, and then Charles Garrett came into the parlour. A stranger could have seen that he and Emily liked each other very much. In fact they had been engaged for some months, and were only waiting until Charlie thought he could afford to marry. He often came in of an evening, and was always welcome. His footstep was followed by that of Mr. Perry, who had his cash-box in his hand.

Mr. Perry was a prosperous grocer, as I have said, and a great deal of money passed over his counter every day. He was but a middle-aged man, his profits were made easily and honestly, he put money into the bank every Monday morning, and he thought himself entitled to spend freely and liberally. He now sat down at the table and emptied his cash-box. There was a good deal of gold, and a large quantity of silver; he took all the gold and all the silver (except threepennies and fourpennies), and placed them in a leather bag which he consigned to his own pocket. Then he swept the little silver pieces and all the copper into a heap, and pushed it towards his wife, saying, "there, mother, there's your pocket-money."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Perry, "there is more than usual. But I am not going to keep it in my pocket for the future. Emily has made a bag which she has hung against the wall, and all the spare money is to go into that."

"Very good," said Mr. Perry, "I've no objection. But as

Charlie has dropped in to supper, suppose we spend some of this odd money in givng him something better than bread and cheese."

"To be sure!" cried Mrs. Perry, starting up; "what shall we have?"

"Nothing for me," interposed Charlie; "I shall be quite satisfied with bread and cheese."

"Pooh, nonsense," said Mr. Perry. "I've set my heart on pork chops and Bass. Here, boy!" to the lad who was still in the shop, "step round to the butcher's and bring four prime pork chops, and then go to the *Crown* and get one, two, three bottles of Bass's pale ale, and be as quick as lightning."

The boy, who was anxious to finish his day's work, was as quick as he could possibly be, and returned with the good fare in a very few minutes.

In the meantime, Mrs. Perry and Emily had blown up the kitchen fire and made ready the frying-pan. The boy was despatched with bread and cheese for his supper; the chops were cooked, the corks drawn, Jessie came home, and the whole party sat down to table. The pork was very prime and very fat; the five plates were literally heaped with waste. But the lean was very good, and the conversation very brisk, and they were all very happy.

The bag became quite a joke. When Jessie was told of it she laughed and said—

"It will be just a sieve, like mother's pocket. Any bag in this house is a bag with holes."

"A bag with holes!" repeated Charles Garrett, thoughtfully, "that is a scripture phrase."

"Is it really?" said the others. "I never came across it."

"Yes; I think it is in the first chapter of Haggai; it is something about people earning wages to put them into a bag with holes."

"That is pretty much what we do," said Mrs. Perry; "we put a great deal of our earnings into a bag with holes. Don't we, father?"

"Never mind," rejoined Mr. Perry, jovially; "most of it goes into the bank, and they have no holes in their money bags there. Now, clear away, girls."

Emily and Jessie cleared the table; Mrs. Perry looked at the clock and yawned.

"I think I shall go to bed," she said; and Jessie being very tired, went up at the same time.

"Now Emily," said Mr. Perry, "I hope you don't mind smoke, for Charlie and I are going to have cigars." But on looking in the cupboard he found that there were none. "I believe the cupboard has holes, or else that youngster, Robert, is learning to like a weed. Well, I'll step out and get a few of my favourites;" and before Charlie could remonstrate, Mr. Perry was gone to the tobacconist's.

"Ah, Emily!" sighed Charles Garrett, "when shall I have money at command like your father and mother?"

"I often think," she replied, "that we waste a great deal of money in these odd ways, and are none the happier for it," and she sighed too; and when her father returned, and two very strong cigars began to fill the parlour with smoke, she found herself obliged to say "good-night."

"Now," said Mr. Perry, toasting his toes and speaking between his puffs, "Charlie, my boy, let me ask you in a quiet way, when is the wedding to come off?"

The young man was some time before he answered. "I don't see my way to it yet, sir; you see, I'm only a clerk in a counting-house, and though I have a very good salary, yet I could not keep Emily as she is kept at home. It would be impossible for me to supply her with pocket-money, as you supply Mrs. Perry."

"Emily would not expect it."

"She would feel the loss of it. She would think me stingy. She would not be happy."

Mr. Perry smoked in silence.

"It is not for me," said Charles Garrett, "to offer advice to you; but don't you think yourself that the unlimited bag is rather a mistake?"

"Well, I do," said Mr. Perry, frankly; "I think it is a mistake as regards the children, but now it has become a habit how are we to get out of it?"

Charlie laughed. "I should tell them to put money into the bag and not to take it out. And indeed, Mr. Perry, I believe that the habit of saving money grows upon one as easily and quickly as the habit of spending money."

"Well," retorted Mr. Perry a little sharply, "and who wants to be a miser?"

"No one, I should hope," replied Charles, "I was thinking about Emily, and that my only chance of being able to make a home for her is to save money now, that I may have it to spend when we begin furnishing and housekeeping."

Mr. Perry smoked awhile in silence; then he said slowly, "of course you will expect me to give Emily some cash down; and of course I shall give her a trifle. But the fact is that money goes out almost as fast as it comes in, and before long I shall have to apprentice my boys and put them out in the world, and then whatever I give to Emily I must give the same to Jessie when she marries, and by-and-by I shall want to retire and live in the country; so that altogether you see—"

"Yes," said Charlie, "I see. The expenses of living are very great; and yet my mother and several old people have told me that fifty or sixty years ago housekeeping was far more expensive than it is now. But I must be going. And, Mr. Perry, to return to our former subject, the very moment I see my way to making Emily happy, I shall come and tell you so; you know how much I want her, but I must be prudent."

"True, true," said Mr. Perry; "well, good-night, if you must be going. Come in again soon." And Charlie went home to his lodging.

As may be supposed, Mr. Perry, fully occupied with his business, did not spend many thoughts on the bag which now hung against the wall. But his wife found that it was a great relief not to have the children always plunging their hands into her pocket. The children, too, liked the bag; Emily managed to draw from it enough money to buy a new blue tie, and the boys supplied themselves with toys and sweeties.

But one day their thoughts were turned into a new channel by old Mr. Deeks, the cornchandler, who came in to pay a visit. He caught sight of the bag and exclaimed—

"Why, Perry, you've got a bag like the one we have, and how much have you collected?"

"Collected," said Mr. Perry, "we don't collect, we disburse."

"Don't you? Oh, I thought it was one like ours."

"And what may yours be?" inquired Mrs. Perry, growing interested.

"To look at, it is a good deal like yours; we are collecting money to pay for an offertory bag; you know I'm a good Churchman."

"So am I," said Mr. Perry, not be outdone.

"And as everybody is giving something towards the church now that it is restored and made so beautiful, I said I should like to give a small contribution, if it were not too expensive."

"And so should I," said Mr. Perry.

"They told me they wanted a lot of new offertory bags, white and black, and blue and yellow."

"Oh, Mr. Deeks!" laughed Emily, who had come to listen to the conversation.

"Well, my dear," said the old man, "why do you laugh?"

"They don't have them black and blue and yellow. They are white and red, and green and violet, according to the season."

Mr. Deeks confessed that Emily might be right, as in these days the young people always know so much better than the old ones. And he went on to tell that he resolved to give a new bag, and to help the scheme, he hung up a cotton bag in his parlour, and everyone who came in was asked to give some halfpence towards the church. He added that they had already collected nearly enough to pay for their gift to the church.

"They only cost half-a-guinea, I'm told; and Mrs. Deeks and my daughter are quite taken with the notion."

"So am I," said Mrs. Perry.

"And so am I," Emily chimed in; "suppose that instead of taking money out of the bag, we all begin to put money in; then we might give an offertory bag. But what about the boys?"

The boys were a great difficulty, as even Mr. Deeks feared they would be. They could not at first see any beauty in the arrangement that would curtail them in the matter of toys and sweeties. As to putting money into the bag, that really was an idea they could not take in for a long time. But after a while it was found that the bag became heavier day by day, and then it was supposed that Harry, Robert and George had ceased to draw so constantly on its resources. Visitors calling on Mrs. Perry were invited to add their mite to the contents of the bag, and they generally responded to the call, approving highly of the object. Perhaps no gift seems so entirely a gift as what is given to a church. It is a thing for which one can receive no return, humanly speaking; it is given to no person, and no person thanks one for it. And yet it cannot and it does not lose its reward.

There was a spell of very hard work at the counting-house where Charles Garrett was employed, and for some time he was not able to see much of Emily; he was always early at his post in the mornings, and now that he was kept late in the evenings, he had no leisure at all; he did not very greatly regret this, for there was to him a certain pain and discomfort mingled with pleasure whenever he paid Emily a visit. It chafed him

to see how her family wasted the money which might be so much better employed. He was saving, almost scraping, to put together enough for a start in life, while they actually threw away in a week as much as he could lay by in the same time. He did not blame Emily in this matter; of course he thought her perfection, and he knew that she did not approve the lavish mode in which her parents spent their money. Charlie liked sometimes to take Emily away from her home, and then tell his views on various subjects, and hear her ideas on the same matters.

When the press of special business was over in his counting-house, his employer gave him some leisure, allowing him sometimes to quit his desk at two o'clock and take the afternoon for himself. On one of these occasions he asked Emily to take a walk with him. They went along some gay streets where the shops were set out very smartly for the approach of Christmas.

"What shall I buy you?" asked Charlie; "I want to give you a present. Is there anything that would be useful to you?"

"Many things," laughed Emily; "but I don't know that there is anything in particular.

Charlie looked at her hands. "Very shabby gloves, he remarked; "will you have a new pair. This looks like a good shop."

Emily inspected her gloves, which were certainly mueh worn and rubbed at the tips.

"I should like a new pair," she said.

"A good serviceable pair that will last all the winter," said Charlie, "come n and choose."

They entered the shop, and Emily asked for black gloves, as they would last longer than any others; and Charlie suggested that they should be sewn with some pretty colour, such as crimson or blue, that would be bright and cheerful. A young man immediately attended to them, and brought a box of very nice black kid gloves, stitched with colours. Charlie Garrett selected a pair, which were all that he desired, and asked the price; they were three-and-sixpence.

Emily drew back a little; "have you none cheaper?" she asked.

"We have a similar glove at two-and-six," replied the young man; "but they have only two buttons, while these have four. Of course you know that four buttons are more fashionable."

"Yes, I know that," answered Emily, "but so many buttons are not necessary."

Charlie thought she was hesitating on account of the price.

"Never mind the other shilling," he whispered; "take whichever you like best."

"I will have the two buttons," said Emily, "if you will give me the other shilling for something else."

"Certainly, just as you like, what do you want?" For he supposed that some ribbon or velvet, or lace was the "something else."

"I will show you when we go home;" and Emily laughed, for she saw that he was rather puzzled.

They continued their walk, inspecting the beautiful goods which filled the shop windows and emptied the pockets of customers. Charles Garrett asked Emily if she felt a strong desire to possess any of these pretty things. Emily replied that she had no strong wish on the subject; it might be nice to have some of them, but she could do quite well without them. And Charlie was more and more confirmed in his opinion that Emily was a far more thrifty person than any other member of her family.

He escorted her to her own door, and there held out his hand to say good-bye.

"Won't you come in?" said Emily.

"If I do they will want me to stay to tea."

"And is that a hardship?" asked Emily.

"They make such a fuss of me, and send out for such a spread that I feel quite ashamed."

"They won't do that to-day," Emily observed; "and I particularly want you to come in because of that shilling, you know."

"That mysterious shilling," said Charlie as he followed her in, not very loth after all.

Mrs. Perry was in the parlour, resting on the sofa.

"Sit down, Charles," she said; "Emily will get tea."

Emily at once began to occupy herself with preparations for the meal, which Charlie was of course invited to join. He noticed that the preparations were not so extensive as usual; no pork chops, only some very good German sausage; no cream; no rich plum cake; and when tea was over and he was invited to smoke, Mr. Perry did not offer him expensive cigars, but only some ordinary tobacco for his pipe. This style of thing was so much more in accordance with Garrett's own tastes and notions of what was right that he was quite delighted, and began to think that he might afford to marry soon after Christmas.

"I don't offer you cigars," remarked Mr. Perry, "because I have given up smoking them. They look grander, but they are no more pleasant than a good honest pipe; and now that we are trying to fill the bag, we don't spend our money on mere luxuries."

"The bag with holes, do you mean?" asked Charles.

"There is no hole in it now," said Emily, leading him up to it; "and, please sir, I want you to put that shilling into it."

Charlie did as he was bidden, and then asked for an explanation. When he heard it, and found that Emily had restricted herself in the matter of buttons, that Mr. Perry smoked pipes rather than cigars, that Mrs. Perry ordered shoulder of mutton instead of mutton chops, that Robert, George and Harry mended their own toys, and in so doing found far more amusement than in buying new ones, he looked so pleased that Mr. Perry exclaimed with a laugh, "Why, Garrett, you look as pleased as if some one had left you a fortune.

"There are things better than a fortune," returned Charlie; "if one can make sixpence go as far as a shilling, one has practically doubled one's income."

Later in the evening, for Emily remained in the room finding that the odour of tobacco was not unpleasant, though the smell of made-up and adulterated cigars was stifling, Charles took occasion to tell her that if she was not afraid of the smallness of his income, he was ready to venture housekeeping.

"I am not at all afraid;" she replied, "I see how easy it is to do without things, and how many things one can do without."

"Then," said Charlie, much gratified, "let us bring our engagement to an end in the proper way, by banns and a plain gold ring."

Emily presently consented, and named St. John's Day, the 27th December, as the wedding-day. Their marriage would be the first in the restored church which was to be re-opened with special services on St. Thomas's Day.

"There is one thing I should like to say," remarked Charlie, "if you have no objection I should be glad to dispense with all the follies which people even in our rank of life sometimes indulge in. I don't want any bouquets of hothouse flowers at ruinous prices in the depth of winter; I don't want any crimson cloth laid down the steps of the church; and above all I don't want any hundredweights of cake sent to one's unfortunate friends, in order to give them dreadful dreams if they happen to eat it in the evening."

Emily laughed, and consented to all his notions of what they would not have. But Mrs. Perry had a lingering wish in the bottom of her heart, to astonish her friends and neighbours by the brilliancy of the wedding.

"No favours and no cake," she said dismally; "why it will make no show at all."

"Never mind show, mother dear," replied Emily; "but if you could manage to give us a Brussels carpet instead of a drugget for our sitting-room, I am sure, and Charlie is sure, that it would be worth, both in appearance and in wear, all that it would cost."

This idea somewhat consoled Mrs. Perry; she found that the saving to be effected by having no wedding-cake, would suffice to pay the difference between a drugget and a Brussels carpet; and as there was a certain sense of satisfaction, and even of grandeur, in talking of the splendid Brussels on her daughter's parlour, the good mother gave in to the young people's proposition, as also gladly did the father.

"I'll see the Vicar himself about the banns," said Mr. Perry privately to his wife; "and I should just like to know if there is enough in that bag to make it worth while to take it to him."

So one evening at the beginning of December in the presence of the whole family, the bag was emptied, and its contents poured on the table. They consisted of two shillings, five sixpences, fourteen threepennies, twenty-three pence, and seven half-pence; total, ten-shillings and two-pence halfpenny.

"Three-pence halfpenny more, and three cheers for the offertory bag!" cried Mr. Perry.

Then little Harry came forward shyly and said—

"Grandmother gave me a penny to-day," and he dropped it on the heap.

Robert fumbled in his pocket; "I went on an errand for the schoolmaster, and he gave me two-pence;" and the boy added his money to the other.

"I've got a loose halfpenny," said George; and lo! the required sum was complete.

"Who'd have thought it?" said Mr. Perry; "who could have supposed that just hanging up a bag and dropping in odds and ends of loose pence would have such an ending as this? Here is half-a-guinea got together without any trouble at all."

"And without anyone being a penny the poorer," added Mr. Perry, "for if the money had not gone into our bag, it would

have gone into other people's pockets, and we should have nothing to show for it."

The whole family were gazing in admiration at the shining heap on the table. Emily was about to utter a wish that Mr. Deeks could see what they had done, when a grey head appeared in the doorway and there stood the old man. He knew nothing of the way in which their attention was occupied, and had only called to pay a friendly visit as he was in the habit of doing occasionally. But when he found that fourteen eyes were fixed on a heap of silver and copper coins he fancied that he had come at an awkward moment.

"I won't come in, if I'm in the way, Perry," said he, backing out of the room, "you have some conjuring or mesmerising or something going on, so I'll look in again another time."

"Come in, come in," cried a chorus of voices, and Emily and Jessie seized him by the arms, and dragged him forward; "you are the very person we were wishing for."

"No, no, my pretty dears," said the old man, pretending to resist, "I won't be either conjured or mesmerised."

The girls forced him into an arm-chair, and then he asked, "Well, what is it all about?"

"I give you my word," replied Mr. Perry, "that it is just like conjuring."

"Very likely; but what is it?"

"Deeks, you see that heap of money, amounting to ten shillings and sixpence. It has all been collected in yonder bag, and nobody is a penny the poorer."

"A penny saved is a penny gained," replied Mr. Deeks; "and what are you going to do with it?"

The seven voices answered, "buy an offertory bag," and of course Mr. Deeks had to request that one, and one alone, would repeat that last statement.

"Why," he remarked, "that is just what we have done. I went the other day to the Vicar with our half-guinea, and he showed me the bag which is to be considered my gift. It is a red one; I know I'm right this time, Emily, about the colour. He said that the blue and the black and the yellow bags—what are you groaning for, Emily?—were all provided, but some of the red were still unpaid for."

"Then," said Mr. Perry, "ours will be a red one of course. I'll send the money to the Vicar to-morrow; not just as it lies here, but a half-sovereign and a sixpence put up in an envelope."

"Take it, Perry, take it, don't send it; it is more friendly-like to take it."

"Yes, take it," echoed Mrs. Perry and her daughters.

"As you will," replied Mr. Perry; "then I'll take it in the morning, and speak to the Vicar about this young woman's banns at the same time."

Accordingly, yet not without some feelings of shyness and awkwardness, Mr. Perry went next day to the Vicarage, and was shown into Mr. Ramsworth's study, a small severe-looking room, with one little strip of carpet, a plain oaken table, and two or three stiff chairs, and a set of bookshelves on which stood ranged a great number of books with long hard names, some of them Latin and Greek. It was evident that the Vicar spent more time than money in his study. He was sitting at the table with papers before him, and when he looked up at his visitor he scarcely recognised Mr. Perry.

"I believe I ought to know you," he said, "but it is impossible to know all one's congregation personally. I am very glad to see you now, what can I do for you?"

"If you please, sir," said Mr. Perry, "in the first place I wish my daughter's banns of marriage to be asked next Sunday for the first time."

The Vicar wrote a memorandum of the names and addresses of Charles Garrett and Emily Perry. This done, he thought his visitor's business was at an end; but Mr. Perry laid a paper containing ten and sixpence on the table, and said—

"I also wish to ask you to accept this sum of money as my contribution for a new offertory bag."

The Clergyman seemed much surprised and pleased. "Really, Mr. Perry, I was not prepared for this. It is very pleasant to find friends coming forward to assist their church in its many wants. Mr. Deeks has given a bag; and I believe this is the very last for which we wished to have a donor. We use red bags on all ordinary Sundays, and this one with a design of trefoils shall be your special gift."

He showed a new and handsome bag which was lying wrapped in silver paper.

"And now, will you do me two more favours?"

"As many as you like, sir," said Mr. Perry.

"One is that you will allow me to officiate on the occasion of your daughter's marriage."

"The favour will be all the other way," replied Mr. Perry,

much gratified, "I was wishing for it, but should hardly have liked to ask it."

"That is settled then," and the Vicar made an additional note to his former memorandum; "and the other favour is that you will consent to collect the offertory on Sundays in your own bag."

Still more gratified was Mr. Perry. He stammered something about not being worthy of the honour, and that a richer man than he should be chosen for the office; but the Vicar smiled down his objections, saying—

"You see one thing leads to another, and as you have already done so much for the church, I shan't let you off doing a little more."

Mr. Perry was thinking to himself that now he should be obliged to be very regular at church, more regular than he had hitherto been, and he was compelled to confess in his mind that such regularity would not hurt him, for he had hitherto not been as careful about attending divine service as he might have been with advantage to himself and his family.

"Well, sir," he said, after a pause, "I accept the office which you wish me to fill, and I hope that I shall be able to do all that you wish.'

"I don't doubt it," replied the Vicar; "after such a beginning I don't doubt that you will receive strength and grace to do and to give as you are disposed in your heart. I have found, and I dare say you find, that Bishop Wordsworth says truly, 'We lose what on ourselves we spend'; and another great Bishop, Thomas Wilson of Sodor and Man, who was always poor, and yet gave more as he became poorer, wrote in his private papers, 'I find that God will be no man's debtor.' He always repays in some way what is given to Him." With a hearty handshaking the Vicar and his new friend parted that morning.

And on St. Thomas's Day the Church was re-opened with a grand festival, and shortly afterwards Emily and Charlie were married. They had a bright pretty wedding, though not perhaps in quite so showy a style as Mrs. Perry would have liked had she had it her own way.

Emily wore a pretty soft grey silk dress, having said when she went to buy her wedding gown, that it would be much wiser and more economical for her to buy a grey dress than a white; for as she said, on what very rare occasions should she want to wear a white silk. Thus, did she begin her married

life in the same way that she meant to go on. Her sister Jessie and Mary Monsell, a great friend, were her bridesmaids, and being two very pretty girls, they vied so closely with the bride, that old Mr. Deeks laughingly said, that if he were Charlie, he should not know which to choose of the three of them. And then after the ceremony the Vicar spoke most kindly to both bride and bridegroom, and Mr. Perry half hesitatingly asked if the Vicar would be so kind as to step in in about an hour's time, and drink the young people's health, to which Mr. Ramsworth consented; accordingly they had just sat down to the table, spread with all sorts of good cheer, when the Vicar arrived, and most affably drank the proper toasts, making also a most appropriate speech, mentioning in a very pleasant way the gift of the offertory bag; and I may here say that from that day to to this Mr. Perry collects the offertory in his own bag.

And the old bag still hangs in the parlour, and still it attracts loose coins. Mrs. Perry once found in it sufficient money to enable her to subscribe to a children's hospital, and by that means to save the life of a poor little girl, who was dying for want of proper care. At the present moment Mrs. Perry is anxious to buy a pair of blankets for a crippled old man.

"And I don't despair of getting the money for them out of that bag. Ah, my dear"! she said to her husband, "it is a grand thing to put your money into a 'bag *without* holes!'"

AN ANGEL'S WHISPER.

SNOW, all snow—a wide expanse of meadow-land, divided by broad dykes, going down to the sea, the wide sea—looking brown and muddy, and coming up upon the shore in heavy waves, crested with foam which, against the brilliant whiteness all around, seemed no longer white—coming up with muttered wrath,—and threatenings and warnings, and rolling back with cargoes of pebbles and sand, as if to make the graves of those who in the coming night would sleep beneath their waters. Above, a dull heavy sky, with leaden hue—around, silence, save the dull roar of the waves, and the occasional shrill cry of the sea-gulls, which soared slowly far inland over the heads of the fishermen, hanging their nets to dry or mending their tackle, saying as they did so—

"In going out to-night, lads, we shall have a rough un, and no mistake."

In one small cottage of a group inhabited by fishermen and their families, sits a woman working, though the fast-failing light makes it difficult. She is working fast and eagerly, as though she would fain finish her task, and not be obliged to lay it down and get a light before the last stitch is set; her feet on the rockers of a cradle, in which sleeps a tiny baby some few months old, she moves gently, to keep it sleeping, and every now and then glances anxiously towards a bed in the corner of the room, curtained round with old curtains of a long gone-by chintz pattern, washed till one can scarce see what that pattern was, and thin and bare, so that the cold wind blows through them; and they serve no purpose save concealment of the occupier of the bed.

The eyes can work no longer, and a little impatient cry from the cradle makes the mother put down her work with a sigh

and rise to light a small lamp on the table, and draw across the little window the crimson curtain, and then take up from its cradle the little one who has given such unmistakeable signs of objection to stay longer there.

Stretching its little plump arms above its head, the child opens its big blue eyes and smiles in its poor mother's face; what balm and comfort in that smile! sorrow and anxiety flee before it, and the child-wife and mother—for she is barely seventeen—plays with her darling as a happy artless child might play with a doll, but very gently, murmuring in a soft Irish tongue, which the baby seems to know and answer in a low sweet "cooing," which is like music to its mother—better music than she has ever heard, she thinks, as she gazes in the little face with worlds of love shining out of her blue eyes. And when a little louder noise escapes it, she hushes it and says—

"Whist, mavourneen, ye'll wake the 'Daddy.'"

"I am awake, Norah," says a low hoarse voice from the bed.

"Ye are, my darlint?" she says, springing from her seat, and hurrying to the bedside—there is some one dearer to Norah than Baby, therefore Baby is laid in her cot—as with tender hands Norah raises the head of the invalid, who has lain in that bed now for six long weeks, brought almost to death's door with low fever, and feeds him with the strong beef-tea he is ordered. "Nourishment, the best of everything," the doctor has said, "if you want to save him."

And how she has worked to get it! there is no more for to-morrow if she does not get her work home to-night, that is why she has worked so hard, so fast, hoping Baby would sleep a little longer, that the light would last a little longer. Well, never mind, the doctor will come the last thing, and he will send her beef-tea for to-morrow, he is so kind. Mike must not know she's worried or wants for anything; Mike must not know that she has sat up with him far into the night, and nursed the baby, and dined on dry bread to get him what he needs; since he said one night it worried him and kept him back, he knew, to think that she went hungry for his sake. Some wondrous person has found everything since then; so Mike is satisfied, only begs she will name their benefactor; but Norah laughs and says it is a secret till he is well, and then she will tell him. But though this has quieted him, it has caused her more anxiety, for she is bound to provide the food, now there is no excuse of inability. "The kind friend will give more," says Mike, as with

a sigh she can scarcely restrain, she administered the last spoonful of the precious nourishment.

"Truly He will, why do I doubt it?" thought the little anxious wife, and she sought that Friend at once. The nourishment had never failed since then; but if that work was not taken home now, before the shops closed, or the doctor came without offering anything to them, what was she to do? and he seemed weaker, his head fell more heavily on her shoulder. Norah's heart sank within her, but she talked brightly to him, and laid him gently down, and brought the baby to him, put it beside him on the bed, and bade him mind it for her, whilst she just finished her sewing, and then she must run out and get things for the morrow. "Could he manage Baby whilst she was gone, or should she call the neighbour in?"

He said he could manage if she would not be long; and so Baby lies beside him, "cooing" to him, and Norah finishes her work, and then goes out into the snow, the cold wind blowing through her thin shawl, and cutting her face and freezing her fingers, so that she can scarcely feel them, and the dull roar of the sea strikes a cold chill to the heart of the poor girl; it seems to her as though it kept making moan over the dead.

Bending her head against the cruel wind, she hurries on till she arrives at a house a little out of the village, where she rings the bell timidly, and waits, shuddering with cold and anxiety, hours as it seems to her; but she talks with her Friend—poor Norah—and asks Him to grant her patience. At length the door opens; James has been having his supper; how could he answer the side door till he had finished eating? ridiculous! and mistress was not likely to attend to anything at that time of night. "Yes, he'd let her have the work in the morning, and she would send him, no doubt, with the money."

"Would you mind, sir, kindly asking if I can have it to-night?" said poor Norah, trembling with cold.

"What!" said the impudent boy, "do you think I'm coming out such a night as this? rather not; good evening," he said with a mock bow.

"Oh! for pity's sake wait," she said, pushing the door he tried to close, "the shop will be shut, and I want food for him, if it's only a shilling;" but the boy was stronger than the poor, frail weary girl, weary and exhausted with waiting, anxiety and want of food, and so the door closed, and the bolt was drawn. She had been troubled to get along the road over the snow, which clung to her feet, and against the cruel wind; but hope had

helped her; but now it had fled, and strength and courage fled with it, and she sunk down on her knees, and cried aloud—

"Oh! help, help, merciful and loving Father!" a bitter cry of sorrow and despair. As the sad wail mingled with the wind and that dull heavy roar of the sea, which made her heart so chill and sick, a hand was laid on her shoulder, and a kindly voice said,

"My good woman, what is it, what is the matter?"

Norah raised her bowed head and looked up in the face bent down to hers; it was too dark to see his features well, but it was a stranger to her, she thought. She was too exhausted to speak, and her head seemed going; who was it? was it a vision? but the kind voice spoke again, and she was raised gently from the ground.

"Do not be frightened, tell me what it is," and as he spoke he rang loudly at the gate bell. The door was quickly answered this time by James.

"Help me in with this poor woman—girl," he said, with a tone of unreserved compassion, as the light falling on her pale face, with its touching expression of sadness, showed him that she was very young.

"Yes, sir; certainly, sir," said James, very readily; terribly alarmed that he had made a mistake.

"I can walk," moaned poor Norah; "and please let me go; and if you belong here and will give me one shilling to take him food, I will bless your honour, and pray for better blessings on you."

"Let me hear all about you," said the gentleman, opening a small room, in which a large fire was blazing. "James, get some hot wine-and-water, quickly."

The boy returned with it in a short space of time, but sufficiently long for Norah to have told her errand.

"I will not keep you," said the gentleman, "whilst I see Mrs. Gray; but two shillings will procure what you want to-night, and without fail you shall have the balance in an hour's time."

"Oh! that is all—indeed, it is, that the lady owed me."

"Why, it must have been a very small job then, how long did it take you?"

"Well, you see, your honour, I had so much to do with Mike and Baby, that I was long doing it; but it was not much, indeed."

The gentleman smiled at her eagerness, and said,

"Well, if you think you can get home now, and this money is enough for to-night, I will see about you in the morning."

And the poor little child-wife dragged her weak weary limbs through the snow back with the food she had purchased, and reaching her own home, she found the kind doctor seated by her husband, and Baby on his knee.

"Ah! mother, come along, we're just wanting you; she's getting tired of her clumsy nurse, and we want some arrowroot to put some physic in I've brought." He spoke cheerfully, but as she took the child from him, he whispered,

"He is very, very weak; you must feed him every hour, night and day. I have brought brandy, give it him several times through the night."

"Well, good-bye, Mr. Trevanion," he said, rising and going to the bedside; "I am afraid you will not be up to plum pudding to-morrow; but you must try a little of the beef my wife wants to have the pleasure of sending you."

"Ah! it's Christmas-day to-morrow, so it is," said the man; the voice is lower and hoarser—poor Norah! The unconscious child is happily enjoying its supper, but stops a second and shakes its little head, for hot tears are falling on its face.

An hour later the neighbour Norah had spoken of came in to see how the invalid was, and if she could help in any way. She was very kind, doing her best to help; but she could give no cheer to Norah; she only said, looking at him, as he lay in a kind of lethargy, from which the poor patient little wife roused him for food every hour—

"Ah! poor dear, he's a-going, sure enough; you must be resigned, dear, its God's will; its just as my poor brother was took. Knock at the wall when he changes, or I'll stay with you all night if you like."

"Oh! yes, do stay," sobbed the poor girl.

"Well, I will. I'll just run in and get my things and tell my man; he aint out to-night, thank God; it's a fearful night and no mistake. I'll be in about ten; poor dear, it is bad for you, sure; but it's what we must all come to, and fretting aint no use. You must think of Baby, and cheer up for her sake, poor lamb."

And the waves had changed their sad moaning, their low murmur of anger and warring to fury, and came dashing on the shore with a noise like thunder, each dark wave crested with foam, as a mad beast foams at the mouth; and the wild wind catching it, tossed it about in white balls on to the roofs of houses

and up on the meadow lands far in shore; and the whole mass of dark angry waters grew higher and higher; and the heavy clouds thicker and lower, till they merged into each other, and struggled and fought together, and roared out angry defiance; and every now and then, as they and the wind paused, as it were to take breath, the minute-gun came booming over the waters, telling its piteous tale of distress. Louder and louder roared wind and wave; when suddenly the wind sunk, as day broke over the sea; and the waves rolled in with sullen splash, their fury somewhat stilled, but sulky still, washing up spars, and timber, and tangled weeds, and old chests, and casks; and ghastlier sight, some poor drowned wretch, battered and bruised, and with no trace of the face which lives only in the memories of those who will speak of him with hushed voices and moistened eyes—

"He went to sea, and we have never heard of him since." Ah! many such lie in nameless graves, or beneath the cruel waves; but it matters not; they, the living sentient beings, loved and mourned, live still, waiting for the meeting and the time when partings shall be no more, when—

No seas again shall sever,
No deserts intervene,
No deep sad-flowing river,
Shall roll this tide between.

* * * * *

The little cracked bell in the church of the small fishing village was proclaiming, as well as it could, that the anniversary of that day when the tale of good tidings has come to sinful men, had dawned again, as the good doctor entered Norah's cottage.

"What's the news?" he asked of the poor pale-faced little wife, who had kept her sad vigil through that fearful night.

"I see no change," she answered wearily.

"Come, come, you must not lose heart," said the doctor, laying his hand kindly on her shoulder; "you have no idea of what value to a patient are the bright faces and cheerfulness of the people who surround him. From them he takes the amount of hope he may entertain of his recovery. I never give a patient up. I have never thought it right to say they will not recover; we cannot tell, the wisest of us;" but when he has seen the patient, a mist comes into his eyes, and he passes out of the cottage with only a nod to Norah, and a few words, hastily uttered,

"I will come again by-and-by."

(*Continued in March Part.*)

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