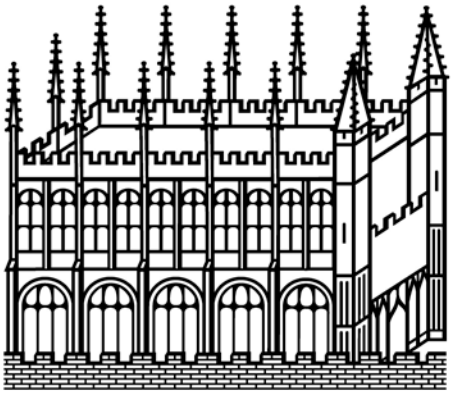

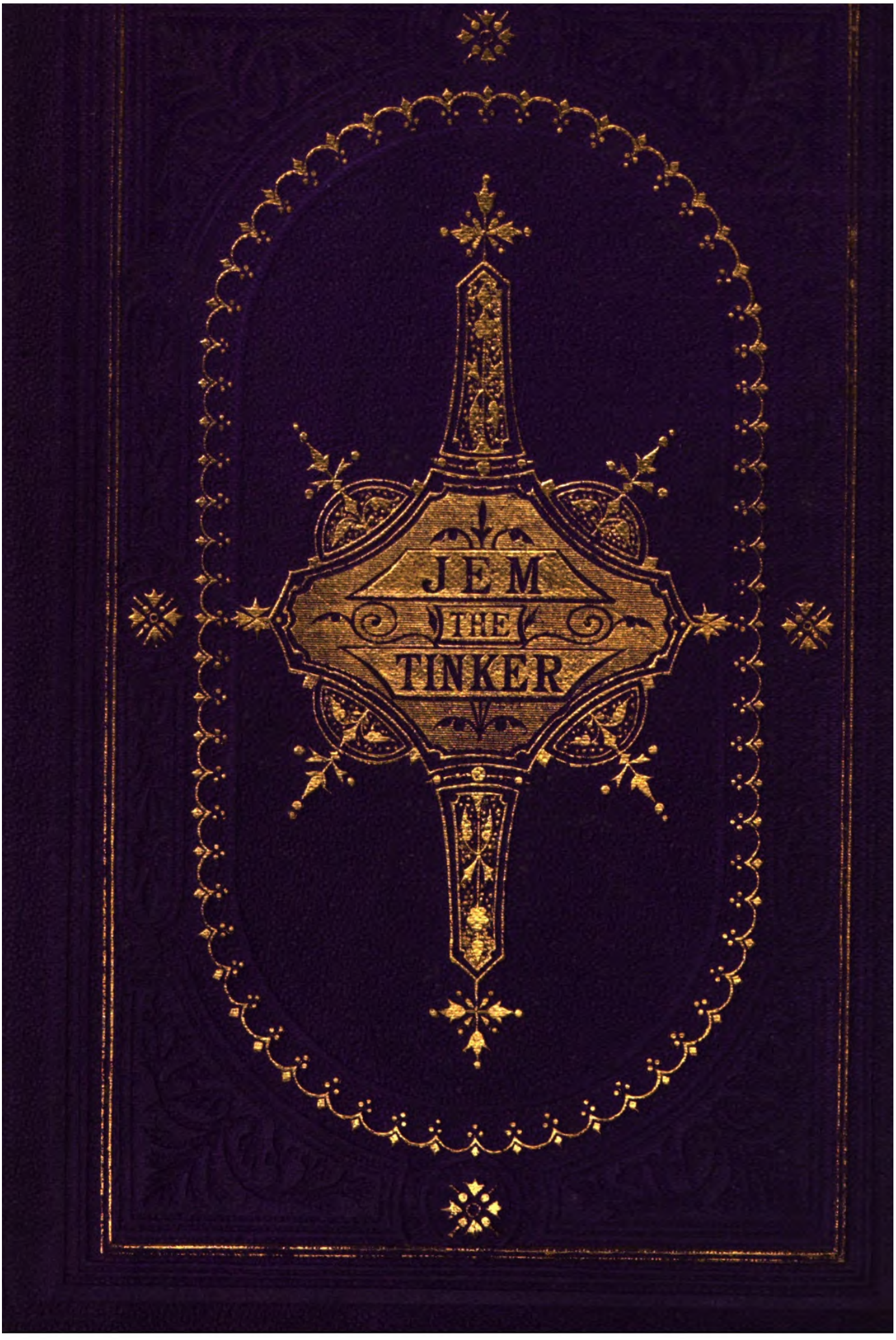
JEM
THE
TINKER

JEM THE TINKER

AND

HIS CHILDREN.

JEM THE TINKER

AND

HIS CHILDREN.

JEM AND SARAH.

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JESUS THE TINKER

AND

HIS CHILDREN.

JEM THE TINKER

AND

HIS CHILDREN.

By S. E. P.

AUTHOR OF "LUCY SMITH," "THE MUSIC GOVERNESS," ETC. ETC.

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JEM, THE TINKER.

Part First.

JEM.

"Man-like is it to fall into sin,
Fiend-like is it to dwell therein,
Christ-like is it for sin to grieve,
God-like is it all sin to leave."

WHEN Jem, the tinker, married Sarah Burrowes, he neither knew, nor cared to inquire, whether his first wife was alive or dead. He hoped she was dead, for if she was alive it was *bigamy*, and Jem knew it; but he was a wicked, reckless fellow, who feared neither God nor man, and the only misgiving he had about the matter was a fear

that, by some means or other, Sarah might find it out,—for Jem really loved Sarah, whilst Sarah loved Jem in return with all her heart. He had rescued her from the tyranny of a drunken father, of whom she was at once ashamed and afraid; he protected her from insults with which she was only too familiar, and he bore the heavier share of whatever burdens fell to their united lot. Besides, Jem never beat or scolded her, as her father had been in the habit of doing; and, though he did get drunk at times, she thought so lightly of it as never to suppose it necessary even to make excuses for him; and, when he swore at others, she only congratulated herself that Jem was so kind as never to swear at her! Everything in this world is judged by comparison, and Sarah, poor ignorant girl, thought her present life heaven upon earth compared with that which she had led previous to her marriage, and she was both proud and happy

to be called the wife of Jem, the tinker. That Jem was *only* a tinker was his own fault, for he was a capital workman, capable of earning a high wage, and had once been in business for himself in a small way. But, alas! a blight had fallen upon him which had blasted all his prospects, and James Marrable, once a master tradesman and a respectable member of society, was now Jem, the tinker, a disreputable vagrant, wandering about from place to place, without any settled habitation, doing a job here and a job there, as it came in his way, working one day and idle the next. Of her husband's antecedents Sarah knew nothing; and finding that any reference to his early life was repelled by him with a harshness almost amounting to fury, she quickly learned to avoid the subject, and Jem's past history remained a sealed book to her.

One beautiful summer evening, several months after their marriage, Jem and Sarah

were sitting together under the shade of some lofty trees, near a village on the west coast of England, where they had been lodging for a short time. Accustomed to be much in the open air, they generally remained out of doors as long as possible, and the evening was often far advanced before they turned their faces homewards. Jem had been very busy, having found plenty of work waiting for him in the neighbouring farm-houses; for it was a remote district, where a good workman was eagerly welcomed and prized, and to have brought one from the nearest market-town, to mend their agricultural implements and household utensils, would have involved the farmers in considerable expense,—so Jem, the tinker, had been in great request, for he was really a useful man in his day and generation. In this world of tear and wear the mender is as necessary as the maker, and Jem could mend anything, from a penknife to a plough.

Moreover, he did his work well, and housewives were wont to aver that the articles which Jem, the tinker, mended lasted longer, after passing through his hands, than they had done before! So when Jem pleased to be industrious he never wanted work, and earned enough to keep his wife and himself comfortable, according to their ideas of comfort.

And now, after a week of unusually hard work, Jem was resting and smoking his pipe under the trees, on the Sabbath evening. He looked very grave and thoughtful, which he always did when he smoked, though whether the pipe produced reflection, or was resorted to on account of his being in a reflective mood, would have puzzled even Jem himself to tell. He was dressed in his shirt sleeves, and Sarah sat opposite to him mending his coat. For Jem had attended a fair which had been held in the village on the preceding day, and having been tipsy, had got his coat

torn from shoulder to shoulder in a drunken fight. Sarah was a nimble sewer, and as her needle flew swiftly out and in, Jem looked on and puffed, admiringly.

"You are a clever sewer, Sally," said he, taking the pipe from his mouth for the purpose of refilling.

Sarah looked up with a bright smile, she liked praise, especially from Jem; but when he added, "Who taught you?" a mist dimmed her eyes, and she bent her head over her work.

"My mother," she replied, in a low soft tone.

Jem said nothing, till his pipe, being filled, and re-adjusted to his entire satisfaction, began to puff again, and then he remarked, "I expect, Sally, your mother had been a reg'lar good un."

"Yes, she was very good," Sarah replied, in the same low tone.

"The wonder to me is," continued Jem, "how she came to marry that scamp your father—how was it, Sally?"

"How can I tell, Jem, when it happened before I was born," Sarah innocently replied.

"To be sure, I might have thought of that," Jem said, gravely; "but I do wonder how she married him; but there's no accounting for them things." Then as Jem puffed and meditated, a similarity in his own case occurred to him, and he gave utterance to something which sounded very like a groan.

"Jem," said his wife, laying down her work, and looking anxiously at him, "Jem, I'm afraid you've been more hurt yesterday than you've a mind to own to."

"Nonsense, a mere scratch; I'm only a bit stiff," said he. "The fact is, Sally," he continued, with a laugh which was at once sad and bitter, "I was thinking it was as great a wonder for you to marry me, as for your

mother to marry your father, Sally dear, how could you do it?"

Sarah looked at him in some alarm now. "The drink's not out of his head yet," thought she. But Sarah was wrong, Jem was perfectly sober. "I married you, Jem," she said kindly, "because I loved you, and because I was sure you loved me."

Sarah could not possibly have given a better answer, and an unusual moisture darkened Jem's sight.

"And then you know, Jem, I ain't nearly so good as Mother was," she added, with great simplicity.

Jem took the pipe from his mouth, laid it down, and having got up with some difficulty, he crossed over to where Sarah sat, and kissing her twice, said gently, "You are good enough for me, Sally."

Sarah smiled and shook her head, and Jem returning to his place, lay down again.

"I wish I was good; I wish I was only half as good as Mother was," sighed Sarah. "I once had a Bible," she continued, "it was mother's, but father sold it for drink soon after she died."

Jem made no remark, but he eyed Sarah suspiciously. "What!" thought he, "is she going to ask *me* to give her a Bible? No, no; I am too knowing for that, my girl; yes, too knowing by one-half; you are too good for me already, and if you once get hold of a Bible, why! there's no saying how good you might become;" and at the bare idea Jem scowled and clenched his fist.

Sarah made no such request, but the question she put discomposed her husband even more than if she had asked him to give her a Bible.

"Had you ever a Bible, Jem?" she said, looking wistfully at him.

Something rose to Jem's lips which would

have frightened Sarah considerably had it found expression, but he checked himself in time, and in the effort he made to do so he nearly choked with tobacco smoke. A violent fit of coughing was the consequence, during which Sarah either forgot her question or repented of it, for when he recovered his breath, she did not repeat it, but went quietly on with her sewing.

Ah, yes! Jem had had more than one Bible, and his thoughts went back now to the first which had been given him by his mother, when he began to attend the Sunday school,—a plain, but neatly bound copy, with the Bible Society's mark stamped on the board; he remembered well how much he had prized it, and how proud he had been of the brass clasp which kept its leaves in order;—back to the handsome copy presented to him by his teacher as a mark of approbation for good behaviour, with its gilded letter-

ing on the back, and the gilt edges of its leaves, which he had carefully preserved for many years, on account of the flattering inscription which was written on the fly-leaf at the beginning;—then to the large family Bible which he had purchased before his marriage; and at remembrance of it a pang went through the hardened man's heart, as he recollected the feelings of pride and pleasure with which he had entered in its family record the name of his first-born—"ELIZABETH MARRABLE."

"Did your mother teach you anything else, besides sewing?" asked Jem, anxious to change the current of his thoughts.

Sarah had finished her mending, and having inspected the coat all over, was now folding it neatly up to await Jem's pleasure. "Yes, she taught me to knit stockings," she said, laying the coat on the grass, "and I've not forgot how to do it," she added, with a

laugh, as she took from her pocket a half-wrought stocking of Jem's, and began to knit with great rapidity.

"You must have been a clever scholar," remarked her husband. "And you were most a child when she died, weren't you, Sally?"

"I think I was about eight," said Sarah, restraining with difficulty the tears which she was afraid might annoy Jem.

"And she taught you to read, too, I know that," said he. "Why, you read as well as any parson. What more did she teach you?"

Sarah cast a furtive glance at her husband, and hesitated.

"Out with it," he cried, good-humouredly; "nothing wrong, sure?"

"Oh no, sure no!" said Sarah eagerly; and working faster than ever, but with trembling fingers, she said, in a very low tone, "she taught me to say, 'Our Father, who art in heaven.'"

"Well," said Jem, after a few thoughtful puffs, "I'd keep that up, and say it at a time, if I were you; nows and thens, you know, just not to forget it. There's worse things than a bit of prayer, and it's well to have it ready in case of need. I remember a man," he continued, after another pause, "who was dying, poor fellow! and he was always a-calling on his mates to give him a mouthful of prayer, but somehow or other none of them could say anything. Was your mother a Methody?" he asked.

"I think she must have been," said Sarah, "for I remember one day, when father was a mocking at her, she said she would not mind going through the world with Methody written on her brow."

"That was very proper," said Jem, gravely; "I've no notion of folks as are ashamed of their religion. If I was a Methody, I would stick to it through thick and thin, and fight

the first man that mocked me. It's a reg'lar Methody place, this," he added, pointing backwards with his thumb in the direction of the village, "and roughs in it, too, Sally," and Jem laughed and rubbed his bruised shoulder.

"They are good people, the Methodies," said Sarah.

"Well," said Jem, "most like other people, I suppose—some good and some bad; but your mother had been one of the right sort, I expect."

By-and-by the work dropped from Sarah's fingers, and, leaning her head against the trunk of the tree under which she sat, she fell fast asleep. The poor girl was jaded and worn out. She had walked many miles during the week, helping her husband to carry from place to place the implements of his craft; and as Jem sat looking at her pale sweet face, a sentiment of pity, not unmixed

with remorse, was stirred up within him. "It 's a hard life for her, poor girl," said he to himself; "I wish she had a settled home;" and his thoughts went back to the neat, well-furnished little house, to which, long ago, he had taken another bride. Ah! how proud he had been of it, and of his wife, and how miserably he had been disappointed; for the pretty, showy girl he married became a worthless, depraved woman, who sold for drink whatever she could lay her hands upon, even to the very shoes from off her children's feet. Poor Jem! it was hard to bear. He was sober and industrious, and had a fair chance of prospering in the world, but his wife's conduct blighted all his prospects. Jem said she was "a reg'lar bad bargain," and, losing heart, he became desperate, and flew for comfort to the very vice which had ruined her! Having thus put his foot on the first step of that ladder which

leads to the grave of all that is holy, pure, and good, his descent was rapid, and he was soon as bad, if not worse, than his wife. Finally, losing all self-respect, he became a tinker; and abandoning his two children and their wretched mother, he left them to starve or beg, with no one to care for them but a poor old man, his wife's father, who was possessed of means barely sufficient to keep him out of the workhouse. Jem regarded his wife with feelings of the bitterest hatred, and blamed her as the cause of all his misfortunes, forgetting that the sins and follies of others can never form a legitimate excuse for those we may commit ourselves. He hoped she was dead; and when he married Sarah Burrowes, ignored the fact of her probable existence altogether.

Jem and Sarah had chosen a beautiful spot for their seat, and everything around them seemed to be participating in the peace and

quiet of the Sabbath. It was the hour of evening prayer, and the soft melody of a peal of bells came floating on the breeze from a distant church; whilst the birds in the branches over Jem's head were warbling their anthem before retiring to their nests, and the moaning music of the waves, as they dashed upon the beach, just reached his ear where he sat. But all the sweet sights and sounds around him made no impression on Jem; for, alas! his heart was very hard, and as old memories came thronging over him, bringing in their train many bitter thoughts, he hated anew the woman whom (right or wrong) he considered the cause of his ruin. His love for Sarah was the only soft spot in his heart, and even that was poisoned by the knowledge of the probable wrong he had done the poor girl in marrying her. Not that Jem repented of that, or any other of his misdeeds; far from it, even the recollection

of the helpless children he had deserted failed to move or soften him in the slightest degree.

Sarah slept long, and when she awoke found Jem with his coat on, patiently waiting for her. On the way home he was cross and gloomy; and Sarah, only half awake, was in no mood for conversation. But the sight of a large crowd assembled on the village green brightened Jem's face.

"Make haste, Sarah, look sharp!" he cried, quickening his pace, "here's a row, something's up."

But Sarah, who did not relish many things which pleased her husband, lagged behind, till, struck by a sudden thought, she ran after him, crying, "It's a preaching, Jem, it's perhaps the Methodies!"

"Nonsense!" cried Jem, "it's a fight, and no mistake," and he hurried on, pulling Sarah along with him.

Sarah was right—it was a "preaching;" but

Jem was not far wrong, for had it not been for the courage and self-possession of the preacher, a "fight" would not have been wanting. As he mounted the table which served him for a pulpit, a huge fellow, drunk enough to be quarrelsome and dangerous, staggered into the crowd, eager for a fray. He was a noisy, troublesome fellow, the bully of the village, and at sight of his threatening gestures, the women screamed and the men prepared for action. But the clear, melodious voice of the preacher rose above the tumult. "Let him alone!" cried he, "give him a wide berth!" They all fell back immediately, and the poor creature soon found himself the centre of a circle, no one meddling with him. He gave a few wild howls, some wretched flings, as of mirth, and vanished, silent and abashed.*

* This incident is taken from the life of the Rev. Henry Wight, where it is related in the words of Dr John Brown.

"Isn't he a rare un," whispered Jem to Sarah, they having arrived in time to witness the conclusion of the scene. Jem eyed the preacher's stalwart form with great admiration, but when he said, in a solemn tone, "Let us worship God," Jem thought it high time to make his escape. A woman standing near handed a hymn-book to Sarah, but Jem, pulling her arm, whispered, "Come away, Sally, I ain't going to stand none of their preachings."

"Do stay a little, and hear what he's got to say," pleaded Sarah, and after some hesitation, Jem suffered himself to be persuaded, and remained, a little curious to hear how such a pretty man would acquit himself as a preacher.

During Jem's hesitation, the preacher had been reading several verses of a hymn, in a powerful tone of voice. It was a favourite Methodist strain, which Sarah remembered well, and ere the last verse was sung, the

tears were, to her husband's great disgust, streaming down her cheeks. It had been taught her by her mother a long time ago, and the words recalled much which her recent life had seemed to obliterate from her memory. Again she heard that mother's earnest pleading voice, as she tried to impress on her young mind the value of those truths which were the only comfort and support of her own bruised and broken spirit; again, far away in the dim light of the distance, she saw the sweet, sad face bending over her, and felt the impress of the soft lips on her brow; and again the anguish which had overwhelmed her childish mind, when her mother was laid in the grave, and she saw her no more, returned in full force. Ah! where was that dear mother now? Sarah had knowledge enough to enable her to answer the question, without doubt or hesitation, but what a gulf it seemed to place between that mother and herself!

But the preacher began to pray, and as Sarah listened to his earnest, pleading voice, she forgot the past in the present, and a wondering, yearning feeling took possession of her. When she had thought of God, which had been very seldom, it had always been with fear, and consequent dislike; but here was a man speaking to Him, reverently, it is true, but with that "love which casteth out fear!" How he could thus speak to Him, not only without fear, but as a son to a loving father, Sarah could not comprehend; and though he concluded his prayer with the words "For Christ's sake," she attached no intelligible meaning to them.

But when the sermon was finished, and the preacher prayed again, Sarah joined in his supplications with all her heart; for the barrier between God and her soul was broken down—the gulf which separated her from her mother was bridged over. If Sarah had

been asked the meaning of the good old SAXON word, GOSPEL, she very probably might not have been able to give it; but she knew it in her inner experience, which was infinitely better. The news she heard that day came as *good* news to her, and she gratefully accepted and appropriated to herself the blessings promised in the glad tidings. She had no goodness, no half-righteousness, to keep her back, but, like the Ethiopian of old, she believed with all her heart, and found joy and peace in believing.

John West (for that was the preacher's name) was one who, though gifted with much of the fervid eloquence characteristic of his sect, always told his important message in plain words, which all his hearers could understand. He never took it for granted that they were all, even theoretically, acquainted with the way of salvation; never besought them to believe the gospel without telling

them what that gospel really is; never told them that they must be born again before they could enter the kingdom of heaven, without explaining the means by which the new birth alone can be effected—without pointing out to them the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. Happy was it for Sarah Marrable that such was the case, for this was the first time she had heard the gospel preached since she was of an age to understand it, and with eyes riveted on the preacher, she listened with breathless interest to the wondrous story of redeeming love, which had not only provided for her a way of escape from the wrath to come, but which could even in this world save her from the power of sin, and make her good—as good, perhaps, as her mother had been! Even in that hour Sarah Marrable became reconciled to God, through Christ Jesus.

Sarah's emotion had not been unobserved,

and as she and Jem went slowly and silently homewards, the preacher overtook them, and after a few commonplace remarks, sulkily responded to by Jem, he abruptly asked Sarah if she had a Bible?

"I once had," she began, blushing and hesitating.

"Ah, I see, here, take mine, and may God bless the reading of it to your soul," said he, pushing his own Bible into her hand, and walking off in the opposite direction, before she had time to thank him.

Sarah's eyes beamed with pleasure, but her joy was of short duration; for, with a face livid with passion, Jem suddenly snatched the Bible out of her hand, and ejaculating, "Canting scoundrel!" he deliberately tore out the leaves, and scattered them about on either side. When the work of destruction was completed, he threw the boards into a dunghill, and glanced with savage exulta-

tion at Sarah's dismayed countenance. Yes! the man who blamed his first wife for all that had befallen him, rejoiced over the destruction of the Bible, which, he feared, would make his second wife too good for him! Jem lived to repent of that unmanly action, but he never could forget it. For though the guilt of our evil deeds may be blotted out, and pass away from our souls, their memory clings only too tenaciously to us. Sarah might forgive it —Sarah might forget it, but Jem never could; and that scene was ever after indelibly imprinted on his memory. Often, in after years, it rose up before him, in all the vivid distinctness of a mental photograph. The leaves of the sacred volume fluttering in the breeze, which was fast rising to a gale, some of them caught by the branches of the trees standing on his right, whilst others blew about and around the slates and chimneys of the cottages on his left, the remainder mingling with

the dust of the unpaved village street, but, above all, the mute reproach of Sarah's quivering lips and mournful blue eyes. Ah! Jem never could forget it; and he never remembered it without a pang which sent a blush of shame to his cheek.

But though Sarah had lost the printed word, the full value of which she had only that day realised, she retained the spirit of it, written upon her heart; and as she wiped away the tears which she could not repress, she checked the angry reproaches rising to her lips, and prayed in her heart for the husband who was thus "despitefully using and persecuting her." She knew now the meaning of the words with which John West had summed up his petitions; and she prayed that, for "Jesus' sake," God would forgive poor Jem, and bring him to repentance.

All through that night the wind blew a perfect hurricane, and all night long a storm

raged within James Marrable's breast. The preacher's words had come home to him, as well as to Sarah, but with a very different effect. Instead of "the faith which worketh by love," he was possessed by a spirit of hatred; he hated John West; he hated himself; and he almost hated Sarah. His mind resembled a pool of stagnant water, in which all the loathsome things had been suddenly put in motion and brought to the surface. Jem's sins stared him in the face; but, alas! he repented not of them. At the first grey dawning of morning light he got up, and went out, telling Sarah to be sure and keep within doors. He had been conscious, during the intervals in the storm, of a confused noise, and strange, hurried running to and fro in the usually quiet village. The sound of men and women's voices had mingled with the howling of the blast, calling on and arousing each other apparently in great distress. Glad of

any outward excitement to counterbalance the tumult within, Jem hurried out to ascertain the cause of the commotion, a faint hope crossing his mind that the *roughs* had come into collision with the Methodists, and that he might perhaps have a chance of trying his pugilistic powers in an encounter with the preacher. But Jem's hopes of a fight were disappointed. He found men, women, and children, hurrying down a steep road which led to the sea-shore, and following them to the beach, where the majority of the male inhabitants of the village were already assembled, he ascertained the cause of the panic.

A vessel belonging to the place was lying in the offing, dismasted and helpless, having toiled all night, in vain endeavours to reach the harbour. And now all hope was gone, for she had struck on a rock, and it was only a question of time how long she might hold together. Every man and boy on board

of her had those near and dear to them looking on, and strenuous endeavours had been made to reach her without success—for boat after boat had been launched, only to be swamped again and again, their crews saving their own lives with difficulty. The men who crowded the pier were stamping their feet, and clenching their fists, rendered almost frantic, by being forced to stand and see their friends drowning before their eyes; and as wave after wave dashed over the stranded vessel, the women on the beach turned away from the sickening spectacle, and covered their faces with their hands. Their eyes were dry and tearless, and they neither groaned nor sobbed, but each woman was praying with all her heart for the precious souls so near eternity. It was a primitive old place, the inhabitants being generally a pious, God-fearing people, and the preacher of the preceding evening had been on the beach all night,

drenched and shivering, moving about from group to group, giving a kind word here, a grasp of the hand there, or, it may be, only a tender, sympathising glance, where the grief was too deep for spoken human sympathy or contact. But the man was a *power* in himself, and perhaps neither he nor the people knew how much his mere presence amongst them helped to soothe and comfort in the hour of that bitter trial.

Jem had never witnessed a shipwreck before, and much excited by the novelty of the scene, he wandered about amongst the various groups which had collected on the beach to watch the wreck. One old woman was sitting apart by herself on a shelving rock, and, as Jem passed her, she looked up in his face with an expression of such mute despair as might well have melted the most hardened heart.

"Have you any relation on board, my good woman?" asked Jem, in a softened tone.

"I has, I has," she replied, rocking herself to and fro, and speaking in a low husky tone, as though addressing herself, "my man and two sons,—ah, me! my man and two sons. But," she added in a clearer tone, after a moment's pause, "blessed be His holy name, I knows that their souls are safe, not one o' them in his natteral state, the Saviour cannot lose his own,

"'"His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep."'"

And, as though unconscious of Jem's presence, she bowed her head on her knees, and began to mutter to herself the hundred and third psalm, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord"——

"Unfeeling old wretch that you are!" interrupted Jem in a fury, seizing her by the shoulder, with the intention of giving her a good shaking. But a strong hand grasped

his arm and pulled him back, and, turning angrily round, he encountered the flashing eyes of the preacher.

"Silence!' said he in a low tone, "how dare you speak thus to that old saint in the midst of her affliction; look at her, and if there be aught in you good or true take a lesson from the sight. She has a husband and two brave boys on board that sinking boat, and she knows that no earthly help can reach them now, but she believes that when those cold waters have closed over their bodies, that Saviour, to whose care they have committed their souls, will receive them into mansions above, and she can bless God even in this hour of her agony. Had you been on board that boat, where, think you, would *your* soul have gone?" he asked, fixing his eyes on Jem's with a piercing glance. Jem cowered under it, scowled, and turned away.

Sauntering on, he encountered several wo-

men standing in a group, whose shrill, excited voices proved them to be less deeply interested than some of the others. One woman was counting the number of the crew on her fingers, and summing up their merits and virtues as though they had been already dead.

"There's Peter Hudson," said she; "a good Christian was Peter, he's safe to go to glory; and James Altham, too, as good a Methodist as ever sung the hundredth psalm; and Eli Jones, a good man was Eli,—he was wild when he was young, but nobody ever could find a flaw in Eli after he joined *us*."

"Ay, ay, and a class leader, too," cried another; "and such a gift o' prayer he had! There's no fear of Eli, he's safe."

"And Jesse Jones and his two sons," cried a third, "precious souls all three. I saw Mr West a comforting poor Susan Jones just a minute ago; it will be hard times for Susan when the bread winners are away, but the

Lord will provide. And there 's Joe Holdgate; a good man was Joe."

"Well, I don'no," said another woman, "I've heard tell that Joe was one o' the Baptises before he came here."

"What of that, woman," remarked the first speaker sharply, "think you nobody goes to heaven but *us?*"

"Well," said the objector, hesitatingly, "I'se not quite sure about them Baptises; I've heered tell they think nobody can be saved that ha' n't been dipped."

"Nonsense!" cried the other, angrily, "my own brother was a Baptist, and he— "

"Hush, dear friends!" interrupted the preacher, whom Jem was startled to find again by his side, "our beloved brethren are going where sects and parties are unknown,— where all the true followers of Jesus shall unite in singing the song of Moses and the Lamb,—that song in which there shall be no

jarring note, no inharmonious voice. No one shall enter there by virtue of their own merits, but only those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Come," said he, "let us commend their souls to the care of our heavenly Father," and, stalking off to a sheltered spot near the pier, he was soon surrounded by a large kneeling circle.

"Kneel," he whispered to Jem, who had followed him like one fascinated, and Jem knelt down submissively by his side. It was many years since he had bent his knees in prayer, and as the voice of the preacher rose above the howling of the wind, pleading fervently that the same faith which had guided and cheered his brethren in their lives might now comfort and support them in the hour of death, a strange awe-struck feeling, nearly akin to devotion, crept over him.

At the preacher's other side knelt the bully who had offered to fight him on the previous

evening. The man had a heart, and was weeping bitterly, for his only brother was on board the wreck,—a praying brother, whom he had often taunted as a "canting fool," and who had been the sport and butt of himself and his wicked companions; and now he was drowning within his sight, and he would have given worlds to have been able to obliterate the past from his memory. Remorse was gnawing at his heart, and the preacher knew it; but, skilled in the knowledge of the human heart, he had forborne to add to his misery by one reproving word or glance, but spoke to him kind and brotherly words of sympathy. The poor man had followed him about all night like a dog, and now he was kneeling by his side, listening with a full heart; and the conduct of his future life proved that weary night to have been the turning-point for good in his history. He ultimately became a zealous, enthusiastic preacher amongst the

Methodists, and, when retailing his own experience for the benefit of others, he never spared himself, and never failed to pass a grateful, loving eulogium on the character of John West.

Many a fervent "Amen" was ejaculated at the close, during the utterance of that brief prayer, and when the people rose from their knees, a subdued resignation had taken the place of the wild excitement previously prevailing. The vessel was still in the same position; and an old sailor, who was held in mnch estimation by the villagers on account of his having served on board of a man-of-war, proposed making use of an old speaking trumpet he held in his hand, for the purpose of carrying (if possible) some words of comfort to the sailors on board of the wreck. The preacher eagerly seconded the motion, and they proceeded together to the end of the pier, followed by as many as its limits

would hold, the relations of those on board composing the front ranks, the rest of the crowd anxiously making way for them. But the old tar shouted in vain, and to no purpose, for the wind seemed to catch his words and send them back to him ere they left the mouth of his trumpet, and, hoarse and disappointed, he gave it up in grim despair.

"It ain't the fault of the trumpet," said he, "the wind's in the norrard, and blows right from the sea, but I expect if we could make them hear us, we'd get their answer back like winkings."

"Give me the trumpet, there's a lull in the storm," cried John West, eagerly.

"It's of no use, sir, just wasting your breath," said the old man, reluctantly relinquishing hold of the trumpet.

"My lungs are strong," said the preacher, putting it to his lips, whilst a murmur of approval and approbation rose from the crowd,

who felt sure of his success, and wished him God-speed.

John West was right, his powerful voice rung through the air, clear as a bell. "Brothers, dear brothers," he cried, pausing to take breath between every sentence, "we are praying for you. Oh, let not the tempter mock your confidence in this hour of trial. Remember that He who is for you is greater than he that is against you. Remember that Jesus is faithful and true. Has your faith stood the test? Are you firm on THE ROCK?"

A breathless silence followed, during which the people strained their ears to catch the faintest sound, their hearts throbbing wildly with a mixture of pleasure and pain, as over the billows the answer came floating on the gale, "Jesus is with us——we know He is near——His presence supports us——then how can we fear——In Him we have trusted ——in Him we believe——And the faithful

true witness——can never deceive——Fathers and mothers——sisters and brothers——wives and our little ones——Farewell!"

"Oh, blessed be God!" cried the preacher, bursting into tears.

"Amen!" sobbed the tar, wiping his eyes with the back of his hand, whilst plaintive responses rose from the people, for men, women, and children were alike weeping bitterly.

But again a breathless silence prevailed, for again the voices came floating over the water. The sailors were singing a hymn—yes! singing with voices so melodious and clear, that the words were heard by those on shore as distinctly as though they had been sung in the little Methodist meeting-house in the village. The hymn was the same which had affected Sarah,—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the raging billows roll,
While the tempest still is high.

Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past ;
Safe into the haven guide,
Oh, receive my soul at last.

" Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee ;
Leave, ah ! leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.
All my heart on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring,
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing."

The men were now dimly observable through the mist, clinging to the rigging, but as the last words of the hymn reached the shore, the vessel suddenly toppled over on her side, and as suddenly disappeared. A wild shriek rose from the onlookers, as they rubbed their weary eyeballs and gazed at the spot where she had been last seen, but not a vestige of her remained above the water. Jem gazed too, awe-struck and stupified, but started and turned round, for the preacher's hand was once more upon his arm.

"They are gone, and the sea has got its prey," said he, in a low whisper, which told of suppressed sobs and unshed tears, "never more shall wives and little ones look out for their return and welcome them home; never more shall their hearts beat high with hope and pleasure, as they descry the lighthouse and the rocky headland, which have so often told them they were near their homes; but," he added, lifting his eyes to heaven, "though their bodies are lost, never to be found, perhaps, till the sea give up her dead, their souls have already been carried on angels' wings to the foot of the great white throne, there to be judged by that Saviour who shed for them His precious blood,—absent from the body, present with the Lord. May that Saviour be yours, my friend," he continued; "trust Him, He is worthy of all your confidence."

"But I have been a great sinner," said

Jem, looking up in his face with a glance of wild despair.

A bright light shone in the preacher's eyes at these words, and when he spoke again, it was in tones of winning sweetness. "Ah, brother! I can sympathise with you there," said he, laying his hand on his heart, "for I, too, am a son of Adam, but 'He receiveth sinners.'"

"No, no!" cried Jem; "you don't know me, or you would not say that. I am very bad, and you are very good."

"Well, brother," said the preacher, patiently, "take it your own way. Let us suppose, for a moment, that I am very good, and that you are very bad, that only makes the gospel more suitable for you than for me; for Christ himself says, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'"

"Is that in the Bible?" asked Jem, doubtfully.

"Yes," replied the preacher, "but do not take my word for it; go home, friend, and ask your wife for the Bible I gave her last night, and read it there for yourself."

Jem blushed crimson—a good sign in itself, for it was the first blush which had dyed his cheek for years; and the confession he now made proved that his better nature was beginning to assert itself.

"I destroyed that Bible, sir, before my poor wife had time even to look at it," he said, hanging his head like a guilty culprit as he was.

Now, that particular Bible had been a great favourite with John West, and in giving it to Sarah, he had not only obeyed a noble impulse, but had performed a small act of self-denial. In it, when groping for truth, he had first found the pearl of great price, and ever since, it had been his constant companion. It had accompanied him in all

his itinerant wanderings; it had been the chart of his troubled path, the guide of his life, the solver of his difficulties; and now this precious volume, endeared to him by many associations, had been wantonly destroyed by a worthless fellow, ignorant of its value! He was naturally a man of a passionate, fiery temperament, but he had long since acquired the rule over his own spirit. Now, however, provoked and exasperated, he lost his self-command, and clenching his fist, he raised his arm to strike the offender to the ground. Had the blow fallen, Jem would have probably considered his punishment well merited, and might have liked the preacher all the better for it, but the rays of light beginning to dart through his benighted mind would have been in all likelihood extinguished, never again to be relighted.

But the preacher caught himself in time, and a groan escaped him, as his arm fell

harmless by his side. "All Bibles are alike," he said, mildly, after a pause; "get another, search it well, I cannot direct you to a better guide; make it your chart, and depend upon it, you shall not lose your way. I must go and comfort these sorrowing ones," he added; "I have been neglecting them too long."

Jem took the preacher's advice, and the day of the shipwreck was ever after a memorable epoch to him; for a struggle began then, which, though severe and long protracted, ended in his becoming a member of that Church which is composed of hearts that have been reconciled to God through Christ Jesus. Jem had been a great sinner, but he found a great Saviour. In the new life on which he thus entered he had many difficulties to contend with, many foes to conquer, many disadvantages to retard his progress. Old habits had to be broken off,

evil impulses to be checked ere they found expression in word or deed, evil companions to be shunned, evil tempers to be guarded against. But Jem had really donned the Christian armour, and though the fight was a hard one, victory was sure. With her simple, child-like faith, and clear, straightforward ideas of duty, Sarah helped him much; and giving up their wandering life, they settled in a town in the north of England, in which Jem thought his trade might be prosecuted with success, and in an incredibly short space of time he found himself again at the head of a small business, well employed, and much respected, not only as a good workman, but as a steady, God-fearing man. He and Sarah allied themselves to a small body of Methodists, and were at times cheered and encouraged by the visits of John West, the itinerant preacher, who took a tender interest in their welfare,

and whom they both loved and respected in no small degree.

And now, who so happy as Sarah Marrable! Mistress of a neat little house of her own (such as she had never once dreamt of possessing, when wandering about with Jem, the tinker), it was her pride and pleasure to keep it in perfect order and cleanliness, and to minister to her husband's comfort in every possible way. When Jem smiled approvingly on her, Sarah was the happiest little woman in the world; but Jem did not smile often, and at the best his smile was a sad one, for though Sarah was happy, he was not. Poor Jem's conscience was ill at ease, for though he had succeeded in persuading himself that his first wife's evil course must long ago have ended in death, the idea that she might be still living would sometimes recur to his mind with startling clearness, and haunt him with a felt consciousness of guilt;

and as his Christian experience deepened, and God's holy law revealed itself to him in all its stern, searching purity, that consciousness deepened also, and Jem became a miserable man. Even the desertion of his innocent children appeared at this crisis a small matter to him, compared with the fact that he had married again without having heard of his first wife's death. Love for that miserable woman had long been dead in his bosom, but the hatred which had succeeded it was now dead also; and had it not been for Sarah, his beloved Sarah! dearer to him now than ever, Jem felt he could have gone willingly back to the poor sinner who had such strong claims upon him, and, in the exercise of patient self-denial, have endeavoured to overcome the evil with good. But to confess all to his loving, pious Sarah, and desert her for the depraved woman who had made his home like the abode of an evil

spirit, and from whom he had fled, reckless and desperate! ah! Jem found it hard and difficult indeed. For how could he tell Sarah? how could he leave Sarah? to whose love for him was now added a touching gratitude ever beaming from her eyes—gratitude to Jem, who had responded to her unspoken wish, and had taken home her old father, become a helpless cripple, and an inmate of the workhouse; and when the old man died, a few weeks after his removal, Sarah's tears had been more those of joy than of grief, for he died blessing the son and daughter who had taught him that even at the eleventh hour his sins might be forgiven him, and cherishing an humble hope of meeting above the saint whom on earth he had mocked and persecuted.

No wonder the struggle going on within James Marrable's breast was at times more than he could bear—no wonder he was a

miserable man, the necessity of concealing the state of his feelings from Sarah making it all the more unbearable. At length one day he came home from his work at an early hour, complaining of violent pains in his head, and looking so ill and haggard, that Sarah's heart sank within her with a foreboding of coming evil. Before the next morning Jem was delirious, and Sarah, much alarmed, sent for a doctor, who pronounced his symptoms to be those of brain fever.

For several weeks Jem lay an unconscious sufferer, sometimes in a stupor, and at others raving like a maniac. It was a difficult task to nurse him, and Sarah did her best; but it was hard to be obliged to stand by and listen to language which never now polluted his lips when conscious, and harder still to hear him declare, over and over again, that he had a wife and two children when he married Sarah Burrowes. Poor Sarah, she knew that in de-

lirium people often talked great nonsense, and tried to think that the guilty secret, now brought to light, was but the product of Jem's sick brain. But at times she could not repress a startled, uneasy suspicion that he might be speaking the truth, and when Jem, evidently mistaking her for his first wife, would catch hold of her arm, and beg, with all the symptoms of abject guilt, that she would not tell Sarah, his darling Sarah! she would burst into tears, and weep as though her very heart was breaking.

The doctor was a little kind old man, brimful of experience to his very finger ends.

"This will never do," he said one day, patting Sarah on the shoulder; "you must have help, my dear, or I 'll have you on my hands too. I 'll send you a nurse this very night."

"Ah, no, no!" cried Sarah; "nobody must nurse him but myself."

The doctor had heard Jem's ravings more

than once, and guessed the cause of her shrinking reluctance.

"I'll send you one as deaf as a post, my dear," whispered he, and Sarah's gratitude showed she understood and appreciated his kindness. "Don't be frightened, my poor child," said the doctor; "we doctors hear strange things sometimes, and the patient is often the first to laugh at what he has said when he recovers." But when he got out to the street he ground his teeth. "The fellow!" muttered he, "I have my own fears that it is all true, and that that sweet girl has been deceived by him. I'll have him transported whenever he's able to crawl, or my name's not Jack Telfer! And he was one of those canting Methodists, ugh!" added he, as he went in search of a nurse to relieve Sarah.

Dr Telfer fulfilled his promise to the letter, and when Sarah found Jem taken off her hands by a kind but very deaf old woman,

who nursed him with the skill which can only be taught by age and experience, she only then found out how much she needed rest, and how very near she had been to becoming an invalid herself. But she did not know till long afterwards that the nurse was the doctor's own housekeeper, and that, to spare her feelings and save her strength, he had generously sacrificed much of his own personal comfort and convenience. For John Telfer was one of those members of the medical profession, whom the daily sight of human suffering has softened and not steeled, and many a kind action he did in secret without hope of thanks or prospect of reward.

At length the fever subsided, and, with a thankful heart, Sarah saw Jem's brain restored to its normal condition; and as full consciousness returned, and he lay watching her, as she moved softly about, with the old loving look beaming from his eyes, her fears

fled, and her spirits rose. She looked back now upon her husband's delirious revelations as a hideous dream, from which she was only too happy to have been awakened, and wondered how she could ever have supposed they had any foundation in truth. But when she saw that, though health was restored, cheerfulness did not return with it, but, on the contrary, that Jem grew daily sadder and more miserable-looking, her fears revived, and she resolved to put all to the test, by telling him of what he had said. His recovery had been tedious, and during the weeks of weakness which had succeeded the false strength imparted by the fever, Jem had lain on his bed, and silently communed with himself—it was a hard struggle, but he gained the victory. He rose from that sick couch the shadow of his former self, but with the path of duty clearly sketched out before him, and nothing remained to hinder him from following it out,

but the hardest task of all, the telling of Sarah.

It was Sarah, however, who broke the ice; and when Jem, with head bowed down and face hidden in his hands, made a full confession, it was Sarah who, freely forgiving the wrong done to herself, never hesitated as to the path of duty, but cheered and encouraged him in the resolution he had formed; and it was Sarah who took the doctor into her confidence, and borrowed from him a sum of money (their own small stock being exhausted) to enable Jem to proceed to London for the purpose of ascertaining whether his wife was alive or dead.

Dr Telfer was much interested in Sarah, and not a little curious as to the result of Jem's mission. "She 's dead, you may be sure, my dear," he said; "but your husband must be particular as to the date. If she died before your marriage, it 's all right, you know; but if

it happened after, you must be married over again, and I 'll come to the wedding, and see that it 's all right this time. If she 's, unfortunately, not dead," he added, with a darkening brow, " why then, my dear, we 'll transport him." When the doctor spoke of the necessity of being married over again, all the ingenuous blood rushed to Sarah's face; but when he threatened to transport her husband, her eyes flashed with indignation.

" Don't be angry, my dear," he cried, " I was only jesting. If the woman 's living, the poor fellow will have punishment enough. You and I know he did not give her the best of characters when he was raving; and if it should be so, I'll see that you are taken care of, I will," and the old gentleman went away flourishing his stick, and revolving benevolent schemes for Sarah's benefit.

And very soon Jem set off for London, and it was only after he was gone, and she was

left alone, that Sarah fully realised the extent of the position in which she was now placed; and the necessity of keeping up for her husband's sake being over, she sat down in her solitary home, and wept bitterly.

"Angel of Patience! sent to calm
Our feverish brows with cooling balm;
To lay the storms of hope and fear,
And reconcile life's smile and tear;
The throbs of wounded pride to still,
And make our own our Father's will!

"Oh! thou who mournest on thy way,
With longings for the close of day;
He walks with thee, that angel kind,
And gently whispers, "Be resigned:
Bear up, bear on, the end shall tell
The dear Lord ordereth all things well!"

END OF PART FIRST.

JEM, THE TINKER.

Part Second.

HIS CHILDREN.

"No spring nor summer beauty has such grace,
As I have seen in an autumnal face.

. . . . .

In all her words to every hearer fit,
You may at revels or at council sit."

'KEEP one eye on your work, my son, and the other on the Great Taskmaster," said Mrs Avery to her son Edward, as he stood talking to her one evening before setting out on some mission connected with his calling.

"Ah, Mater! Mater!" said he, laying a

hand on each of her shoulders, and gazing lovingly into her eyes, "What could I do, what would I be, without you?"

Edward Avery, or Ned, as his mother generally called him, was a young curate, whose work lay amongst the poorest of the poor, in a densely populated district in the east end of London. He had a good head, and a still better heart, and was naturally of a lively, enthusiastic temperament, the warmth and vigour of which was, however, only too apt to be chilled by the many difficulties which were constantly clogging and impeding his path. The sin and misery, the filth and ignorance, with which, during his peregrinations, he came into daily contact, often sent him home sad and despairing, to be consoled, cheered, and strengthened anew by the love and wisdom of a mother, whose faith and patience never failed her, and who was at the same time possessed of

that meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.

Ned had a long walk before him, and the night was bitterly cold, but he walked briskly and cheerfully on, bending his head and setting his teeth, in defiance of the sharp east wind. "One eye on my work, and the other on the Great Taskmaster! ay, that's it," said he, repeating his mother's words, and dwelling lovingly on them. "Ah! if I could only keep that always in mind, how easy even my most difficult work would become, and how trifling all the trials and stumbling-blocks would appear. I am too apt to keep both eyes on my work, and to exaggerate the difficulties." And again Ned repeated his mother's words, adding, as an appropriate supplement to them, a favourite text of his own, "I can do all things, through Christ who strengtheneth me;" and, strengthened indeed, he took courage, and

went on. He had been asked to visit a case in a comparatively strange locality, but from a mistake in the address, he sought for the place long and unsuccessfully, and was giving up the search in despair, when a heavy shower of rain forced him to seek shelter behind an open door, which stood conveniently ajar, in a low dark entry, into which he had run, half-blinded by the wind and rain.

As he stood in the dark, screening himself behind the door, he heard voices, and could not help listening.

"Gran'father," said a childish voice, "do you know who was the king of the Jews before Saul?"

"Nobody," was the reply; "Saul was the very first king ever they had, Jemmy, an' I'm sure they'd been better without him, if they'd only been content, but them Jews were always a contumacious race."

"Yes, but they had a king," was the eager response; "God was their king, Gran'father."

"You 're a smart boy, that you are, Jemmy," was the pleased answer; "didn't I quite forget that now; sure dear, God was their king, an' they might ha' been thankful; but, no! they wanted to be like other people —wanted to be in the fashion, Jemmy; but they suffered for it."

A silence followed, and Ned, anxious to see the speakers, descended on tiptoe a step or two of the stair which led down to the apartment, trusting to being hidden from view in the darkness.

It was a poor place, fitter for a cellar than for the habitation of human beings, its only redeeming point being a bright, clear fire, which was burning behind a few rusty bars. Before the fire, gazing steadily into it, sat an aged white-haired man, whose chin rested on the top of a staff, which he grasped with

both hands. Ned saw no trace of the child, and wishing to enter into conversation with the old man, he softly retraced his steps, and, as though just arrived, shouted out the question he had repeated so often during the course of his walk.

"Why do you speak so loud?" said the old man, turning sharply round. "Do you think because I am old, I must be deaf?"

"I beg your pardon," said Ned, descending the stair, and speaking in a subdued tone of voice, "but can you tell me,"—and again he repeated his inquiry.

"No, I doesn't know the name," said the old man. "I've lived here now nigh twenty year, but I keeps myself by myself, and interferes with nobody, so it may be hereabouts for all I knows. Are you a parson?" he asked, as Ned's figure became more distinct in the gloom beyond the partial light afforded by the fire.

"I am," said Ned, advancing a step or two, "Have you anything to say to me, my friend?"

"Don'no' but I have," said the old gentleman, coolly. "Take a seat, sir," he added, in a more respectful tone, pointing at the same time to an old rickety stool, with as much dignity as though it had been a luxurious easy chair. Ned sat down, and waited patiently for what might come next; whilst the old man, fixing his eyes on his face, took a prolonged survey of it, under which Ned suffered considerably. "I 'se not over fond o' parsons," he remarked, at length breaking the silence; "they allus talk of old folks going to the work'ouse; but they 're not all alike, and I guess you 're one of the right sort, sir—that is, judging by your face."

"I 'm glad my face pleases you," said Ned, laughing heartily; "but it is not always safe to judge by appearances; people sometimes belie their faces."

"A man's face is a very good mark of what's inside of him," said the old man, confidently. "Now, sir, I would judge by yours that you are a warm-hearted, kind young fellow, ready to do a good turn to anybody who comes in your way."

"What does the old fellow want from me?" thought Ned, laughing again.

"Now," continued the old man, taking no notice of Ned's merriment, "there be some parsons as comes in here without ever saying, 'By your leave,' as though my house, poor as it is, wasn't as much my own as theirs. I wonder, now, how they'd look if I was agoing into their houses at dinner time, and sitting down quite cool, as one of them did here yesterday—to be sure, it was only a bloater toasted on the cinders—but I don't see as a how that made any difference, and I guess they wouldn't just like me to do the same by them."

"I never intrude where I am not wanted," said Ned, eagerly.

"And never advises old folks to go to the work'ouse?" asked the old man, sharply.

"Never!" said Ned emphatically.

"I thought you was one of the right sort," said the old man, nodding his head approvingly, whether of his own discernment, or of Ned's good character, was doubtful.

"Have you any schools in your parish?" he asked, suddenly changing the subject.

"I should think I have!" said Ned, warmly,—schools in general being a hobby with him, and his own schools special pets.

"Anything to pay?" asked his interlocutor, looking wistfully at him.

"A mere trifle," said Ned; "they are supported principally by voluntary subscriptions."

"But you 'll have power—you'll have influence," he said eagerly; "parsons allus has."

"Well, to a certain extent, of course, I have," said Ned; "but, my friend, if you are wishing to get a pupil admitted I fear there is little chance of your succeeding; we always give the preference to the children of our own parish, and our list of applicants is at present only too full."

"Allus the same answer, allus the same," muttered the old man to himself in a wailing, disappointed tone, which touched Ned's generous heart; "I never even gets a chance. I might ha' known what a parson would say, they all says the same," and, turning away, he again gazed into the fire, forgetful, apparently, of Ned's presence.

Ned sat for some time looking at him, much amused at the situation in which he was placed, till the silence became oppressive, and he contrived to make a shuffling noise with his feet, in order to attract his companion's attention.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said with a start, "I quite forgot you were there. I am so much accustomed to sit here, day after day, looking at the fire, that I 'm the same as sleeping sometimes. A fire 's a great comfort, sir," he added with a sigh; "I never wants one, summer or winter; it keeps my old bones warm, and, besides, a fire's a companion to a man; I shouldn't like to want it now, and I hopes I never will; but coals are dear, an' I allus buys mine—I never takes 'em in charity."

"Are you ever able to go to church?" asked Ned, who thought it was now fairly his turn to put a question or two.

"No," said he; "I'se been my own parson for ten years. I goes through the sarvice reg'lar every Sunday; I 'm too stiff to go through the genufluctions, but I 've taught Jemmy here, and he kneels and bows at the proper places quite beautiful. Stand up, Jemmy darling,

and let the gentleman see what a lovely bow you can make," and what had appeared to Ned a bundle of rags suddenly assumed the shape of a small boy, who stood up and made a bow which would not have disgraced the first gentleman in the land. "Good boy," said the old man, fondly stroking his curly head. "He's my grandson, sir," he added with a sigh, as the child popped down again into his warm seat between his grandfather and the fire, and resumed his poring over a tattered story-book, reading by the scanty light afforded by the glow of the cinders. "Jemmy's fond of his book, and will be a scholar some day," continued the old man. Ah, sir!" he added, turning to Ned with an imploring look, "if you would only use your influence to get him into a school it would be a good deed you would never repent of. I assure you, sir, he would do you credit; he's worth the trouble,—he's a sharp boy, sir, he is."

"He ain't sharp a bit," cried some one who had entered unobserved, and who stood so close to Ned that he started in actual fright. "Jemmy ain't sharp; he never does anything for his keep like me, but sits here all day long mooning over any book he can lay his hands upon. He was always a gentleman, was our Jemmy, and my own dear darling duck,—but to call him sharp!" and the speaker snapped her fingers in derision at the very idea.

She was a young girl, apparently just entered on her teens, but with a face so sharp and keen, with premature knowledge of the world, that she might have passed for twice her age. She was dressed, too, in a gown which had been made for a full-grown woman, and which was pinned and tucked up round her small person in a most ludicrous fashion.

"Bessie, Bessie!" cried the old man in a distressed tone, "put on your manners before the gentleman." But Bessie heeded him not;

she was busy inspecting Ned, and, having looked him all over in front, was now behind finishing her survey.

"He 'll do," said she coolly, as she returned to her former position. "His air ain't cropped behind, and his linner band ain't quite the same; I was afraid at first he was one of them Papish priests; I 'ates the Papishes. One of their smooth, long-faced priests once tried to get me into one of his schools that he might change my religion, but I was too sharp for him, I was," and she snapped her fingers and nodded her head in approbation of her own cleverness.

The preposterous coolness of her manner and action fairly overcame Ned's gravity, and he burst into peels of merry laughter; but the old man's rage was unbounded.

"Bessie Marrable," cried he, "if you open your lips again whilst this gentleman's here, I'll put you in the black hole, I will."

Bessie had a wholesome terror of the black hole, a damp closet, where her grandfather kept his scanty supply of coals, and she prepared to obey, but had something to say first.

"I won't speak again this blessed night," said she; "but let me give you my coppers," and taking a dirty bag from some hidden receptacle about her person, she handed it to the old man, saying in a rapid monotonous tone, somewhat in the style of an auctioneer counting his bids, "Twopence for cleaning door steps, six pennies for six errands, a fourpence bit for hanging out a washing, and a lucky sixpence for nursing a baby; and if that ain't a good day's work, I don't know what is." She then sat down on a stool, and crossed her hands on her lap, with an air of mock humility, which imparted to her face a cunning expression, which pained Ned to behold in one so young. She was a study to him; for though her tongue was mute, her

eyes did double duty, watching both him and her grandfather with keen furtive glances, and even sparing an occasional side glance at Jemmy, who, absorbed in his book, took no notice of what was going on.

The old man having carefully counted Bessie's money twice over, put the bag aside, saying, "All right, Bessie;" to which she replied by sundry grimaces, which resembled the process of swallowing pins, thereby giving her grandfather to understand that she was obeying him to the letter, and swallowing her words before they found utterance.

"I hope, sir," said the old man, as Ned rose to take his leave, "I hope you'll keep my Jemmy in mind. I'm very anxious he should get some education, and if you would keep him in mind, a vacancy might cast up when you least expect it; it's wonderful what things do cast up sometimes," and he looked at Ned so wistfully, that he could not refuse,

and promised to keep little Jemmy in mind. "I've a beautiful suit of clothes for him, ready against his going to school," continued the grandfather; "you'd have no cause to complain of his appearance, I assure you, sir."

"Is the child an orphan?" asked Ned.

"Why, not exactly," said he, in a hesitating tone, evidently afraid that his not being an orphan might prevent his success; "at least, I'm not sure, he may be, for all I know," he added in a low tone, whilst Bessie made fearful contortions, the fear of the black hole evidently restraining her from a communication she was anxious to make. "I could not just swear to it," said the old man again, "but I hope, sir, it will make no difference."

"No, I don't think it will," said Ned, surprised at his offering no explanation.

"Good night, sir," said the old man, as Ned shook hands with him, "and I'll be very

happy to see you any time you find it convenient to call."

Ned promised to repeat his visit, and smiled on Bessie as he passed her, to which she replied by a nod, which had more meaning expressed in it than Ned could understand. He went home ruminating on the amusement which the relation of his adventure would afford his mother; but he did not know that light stealthy footsteps followed him through the now slippery streets; that Bessie Marrable dogged him to his own door, and then ran home much quicker than she had come. For Bessie had come to the conclusion that Ned had a good heart, of which something might be made, and she was not the girl to allow the opportunity to pass unimproved.

Next morning, as Mrs Avery was taking her usual walk before breakfast in her little garden, she was startled by seeing a pair of dark eyes staring at her over the gate.

"What do you want, my child?" she asked, having ascertained that they belonged to a little girl, who stood on tiptoe, with her chin resting on the top bar.

"Please, ma'am," said she, stepping back a few paces, and making a low curtsey, "I'se Bessie Marrable, the gal the 'andsome young parson called for last night," and again Bessie dropped a curtsey. She had observed the striking resemblance which the lady bore to the parson, and drawing her own conclusions as to the nature of their relationship, she took it for granted that the son had told his mother of his visit to her grandfather. Now Mrs Avery knew quite well that the girl was flattering her, but she was no exception to the general rule, "that a little flattery sometimes does good;" and instead of being displeased, she laughed good humouredly, saying, "Indeed, and I suppose you have come to return the call, Bessie."

"Oh no, ma'am, sure no," said Bessie, with a deprecating air, her eyes at the same time twinkling roguishly; "that would have been very *per*sumptuous; I knows my manners better, ma'am; besides, the parson forgot to invite me; but, ma'am," she added, coming a little nearer, "I'd be happy to do a job for you. I could clean the door steps, polish the scraper, weed the garden, run an errand, or anything else you'd give me to do, ma'am; I'se willing to work, I am."

Mrs Avery looked at the child and hesitated; it was difficult to refuse the eager young petitioner soliciting for leave to toil; but she knew of nothing she could give her to do which would not displease Amelia, the autocrat of her kitchen. "Have you had your breakfast yet?" she said at length.

"Not yet, ma'am," said Bessie, carelessly, as though breakfast was only deferred to a more convenient season; the fact being that

she had come out with the intention of working for her breakfast. There was a hungry glitter, however, in her eye, which settled the matter.

"Come in," said Mrs Avery, opening the garden gate, "I'll give you a cup of warm coffee, and we'll talk about the job after breakfast."

Bessie had no bashfulness to keep her back, and she followed Mrs Avery into the kitchen in triumph, gazing on the untold wonders she saw there with sharp-eyed admiration.

The largest fire she had ever seen was burning in the bright black stove, its flames being reflected in dancing rays from the clear polished dish covers on the opposite wall. Before it, standing on a steel stool, was a teapot, which Bessie told Jemmy afterwards "was made of solid silver, and had a silver bird a sitting on the top of it;" whilst on the hob

a coffee-pot bubbled and simmered, and sent forth a fragrant odour, which Bessie reported "took my 'eart, and made me a most like to swoon." "I wonders why they 'ad both tea and coffee," she remarked to Jemmy when detailing her experiences; "p'raps they took them cup about, or maybe the parson got the coffee, and his mother the tea; ladies mostways likes the tea."

A plateful of buttered muffins kept the teapot company before the fire, and the sight of them made the hungry child feel still hungrier. "They made my mouth water, they did," she told Jemmy. But Bessie had not long to wait, for Mrs Avery having poured out a cup of coffee, put two of the hot muffins on a plate, and told her to sit down by the fire, and enjoy her breakfast. Nothing loath, she proceeded to make herself comfortable, watching at the same time every movement made by Amelia, Mrs Avery's trim maid-servant, who

BESSIE AT BREAKFAST IN THE KITCHEN.

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was busily preparing breakfast. That worthy was much offended at seeing her mistress do without her help, what she would certainly have considered an insult to be asked to do. "Just Mrs Avery's way!" she muttered to herself, snorting audibly as she popped some eggs into a pan of boiling water and turned a sand-glass standing on the dresser, an operation eagerly watched by Bessie, whom nothing escaped. Amelia took no notice of the child, beyond a look of intense disgust, as she passed her with the tea-pot in her hand, which was not lost upon Bessie, who replied to it by a grimace, which, however, she took care should not be seen by Amelia.

Bessie drank the coffee, and ate the muffins, thinking while she did so that she had never tasted anything so delicious all her life, and then tucking up her sleeves, she produced an apron which had been stuffed into her pocket, and putting it on with a business air, declared

her intention of "working it out." Breakfast being ready, Mrs Avery had left the kitchen, and Amelia received the proposal with the utmost scorn.

"You!" she cried with a toss of her head, "you! d'ye think I'd let you lay a finger on my work? not very likely! sit down there, and see you don't move till my mistress comes back again."

Bessie obeyed at once, with her usual mock humility, and sat twirling her thumbs and watching Amelia from the corners of her eyes, taking the opportunity for a grimace every time she turned her back. In the meantime, a discussion concerning her was going on in the parlour during breakfast between Ned and his mother. Mrs Avery had been both amused and interested by Ned's account of Bessie's behaviour the previous evening, and was now still more so, having seen the child herself, and she suggested that it would be a

good plan to take her into the house for a week or two.

"I am sure I could get a suitable situation for her, after Amelia has trained her for a while," said she. "She seems very smart, and quite the kind of girl to pick up evil, if allowed to run wild about the streets, as she has evidently been doing."

"Mother!" said Ned, "take care what you do; that girl is as sharp as a needle, and must have learned many evil habits already."

"The very reason, Edward, why we should befriend her," said Mrs Avery; "the more need she should be put under the influence of moral training and good example."

"Very true, Mater," said Ned dryly; "but if you pick up all the strayed sheep you find in the streets of London, you'd soon have your hands full."

"I have no intention of doing so," Mrs Avery quietly replied; "but this one seems to

have walked into the fold of her own accord, and I think it would be a great pity, if not a great sin, not to take advantage of the opportunity thus thrown in our way."

"Mother, you are an angel!" said Ned, "but you may expect stormy weather with Amelia."

"That is the only obstacle I am afraid of," said Mrs Avery, smiling.

Mrs Avery visited Bessie's grandfather that same day, and was both affected and pleased by the gratitude with which he received her proposal. Bessie's wandering Arab habits had caused him much trouble and anxiety, and he joyfully accepted her kind offer to take her home for a week or two, to be trained by her own servant. "Tell your girl to be very strict with Bessie," said he. "Poor child, she is only too much accustomed to have her own way; and, oh ma'am," he added, clasping his hands imploringly, "would you be so kind as use your influence with the parson

to get my Jemmy into a school?" It was evident that the education of his grandson was an object of the utmost importance to the old man; and touched by his earnestness, Mrs Avery promised to do what she could.

Bessie was delighted at the prospect of any change, and went very willingly to Mrs Avery's, "to learn to be a servant," she told her companions. "Gran'father 's mighty 'fraid I doesn't behave," she remarked; "but I has manners when I likes, I has."

As for Amelia, she heard of the project with consternation and disgust.

"She aint fit to come into a decent Christian 'ouse, she aint," she cried, horrified at the prospect of Bessie's constant companionship; "a pretty mess she 'll make of this clean 'ouse, and a reg'lar tartar into the bargain, any one may see that with half an eye."

But Mrs Avery was not the woman to be daunted by the fastidious scruples of her

maid. With her own hands she washed the person of the neglected child, cut, combed, and brushed her matted hair, and having dressed her in garments suitable to her age and condition, was scarcely able to repress the admiration which the result of her labours excited. Bessie herself was fully conscious of the improvement effected upon her appearance, and curtsied to her own reflection in the looking-glass whenever she got a chance.

"She 's a pretty enough girl, now she 's clean," Amelia unwillingly allowed; "but her eyes are too sharp by one-half—they seem to me full of needle points."

"You must have patience with her, Amelia,' said Mrs Avery. "She is evidently very clever, and will do you credit; it 's not every girl has the advantage of being trained under a thorough worker like you; and I am sure you will do your duty to her."

Soothed and flattered by this timely compli-

ment, Amelia entered on her new duties with such vigour that it was doubtful whether, in the discharge of them, she or Bessie suffered most. Amelia, or 'Melia, as Bessie always called her, was so particular and exacting, and Bessie so mischievous and provoking. Accustomed to a free Arab life, doing a job here, running an errand there, with small bits of play with other girls between times, the lively girl fretted under the monotonous regularity and confinement of her present circumstances; and her repressed exuberance found relief in pranks and impertinences, which sorely tried Amelia's temper. Mrs Avery soothed and advised the one, and counselled and reproved the other; and sometimes Bessie would behave remarkably well. But it often happened, after a day of good behaviour, she would get up the next morning "the very incarnation of mischief," 'Melia would say; "and so aggravating, ma'am!" At length, one morning

on going into her bedroom, where they both happened to be, Mrs Avery found that matters had came to a crisis.

"I can stand it no longer, ma'am; either she or I must leave this house," said Amelia, after a recital of Bessie's evil doings.

But she did not tell her mistress that she had seen, in the mirror, Bessie making grimaces behind her back, which had been the crowning offence—the last drop which had made the cup overflow.

"Bessie," said Mrs Avery, sternly, "I have repeatedly told you that you *must* obey Amelia; if you do not, I shall be obliged to send you home to your grandfather; if this happens again, remember you go."

Mrs Avery left the room, leaving Amelia triumphant, and Bessie sullen—a rare case with the latter. Busy with some household duties, Mrs Avery forgot all about the matter, till, upon returning to her room, some time

afterwards, she found Bessie sitting on the floor, the very image of despair. At sight of Mrs Avery she started to her feet, and her face assumed the hardened, sullen, expression it had formerly worn.

"Come here, Bessie," said Mrs Avery, kindly.

Bessie approached with downcast looks and pouting lips, and Mrs Avery took her hand in hers, and speaking in kind and gentle tones, told her that all that was done was for her own good; and that instead of being rebellious and impertinent, she ought to be grateful to Amelia for taking so much trouble in teaching her. Bessie's lips remained firmly pressed together, and she showed no sign of yielding, till Mrs Avery, obeying a motherly impulse, bent forward and kissed her on the forehead.

That kiss did much for Bessie Marrable. She never forgot the velvety touch of those soft lips upon her brow. Her own lips qui-

vered, her eyes brightened, and her whole countenance lighted up, surprising Mrs Avery with the beauty of expression which it assumed.

"I'd do anything for you, ma'am, anything," she gasped out. "I 'll try to please 'Melia, ma'am, I will, though she 's aggrawating at times!"

"How is Bessie behaving now?" asked Mrs Avery, a few days after the foregoing scene.

"Very well indeed, ma'am," Amelia promptly replied; "she's been like another creature since that day you gave her the scolding in your bedroom. I only wish it may continue; she would not be the worse of just such another at a time, ma'am, to keep her straight."

But Amelia knew nothing of the kiss which had acted like a charm, and neither Mrs Avery nor Bessie enlightened her on the matter. By-and-by she began to take pride

in the pupil who was so sharp and clever as never to require to be told the same thing twice over, though she often found Bessie's restless activity both fatiguing and irritating. In the evening they would sit down together in the kitchen (which Bessie often declared was so clean "you might eat your dinner off the floor, you might"), Amelia knitting a stocking, and Bessie a garter. Amelia knitted slowly and steadily, Bessie very nimbly; but her eyes were constantly wandering from off her work to every corner of the kitchen. If a cinder fell she jumped off her stool, seized the tongs, threw it on the fire, and was back to her seat again in a moment. Amelia's ball of worsted afforded a constant excuse for a change of posture, for it had a trick of rolling off her knee, and was always replaced by Bessie in the twinkling of an eye. Then she would hear, or pretend to hear, the door bell ring, and crying, "There 's Mr Avery,"

she would run off to open the door, and having enjoyed a breath of fresh air, and a long look at the starry sky, she would return to the kitchen, looking very demure, and saying, "Sure now, I thought it was the parson;" and Amelia would set her to her work again, considerably annoyed and irritated by the draught of cold air which had been let in upon her from the open door.

"Tough ground there, Mother," Ned remarked one morning, as Bessie, promoted to carry in the breakfast things, had just left the room.

"Yes, but we can sow the seed, nevertheless," said Mrs Avery, cheerfully," and we know not what amount of fruit it may bring forth, even after many days, Ned."

"Ah, yes, that's always your way, Mater; you can sow, and wait patiently. As for me, I'm like the children, who are always wishing to dig up the seed, to see if it has began to

sprout. I've no patience," and Ned sighed wearily.

"My son," said his mother kindly, "permit me to give you a text on which to meditate to-day. 'Be not weary in well-doing; for in due season ye *shall* reap, *if* ye faint not.'"

"Thanks, Mater," said Ned gaily; "and in return I'll give you some favourite lines of mine to cheer you on with Bessie Marrable," and Ned repeated with much feeling the following lines—

'Sow, though the rock repel thee,
In its cold and sterile pride;
Some cleft there may be riven,
Where the little seed may hide.
Work while the daylight lasteth,
Ere the shades of night come on;
Ere the Lord of the harvest cometh,
And the labourer's work is done.'"

"Bessie is not an ignorant girl," said Mrs Avery, after a pause. "She seems to have been well instructed by her grandfather. I

think he has done his duty to these two children, in so far as he had the means.

"I know the boy is well up in Jewish history at any rate," said Ned, with a laugh. "I heard him give his grandfather a lesson in their theocracy that night I was hidden behind their door."

"I do think the old man is a real Christian," continued Mrs Avery.

"Do you think so, Mother?" said Ned, rather doubtfully. "I feel inclined to believe it when you say it. Precious metal tries precious metal, and has an affinity for its own kind; but I confess I did not like the old gentleman's flattering my face. I think he said that he judged from it that I was a kind-hearted young fellow—ready to do a kind action to everybody I met."

"You must excuse your mother not seeing much flattery in that, Ned," said Mrs Avery smiling.

"Well, but, Mother," continued Ned, "you are generally much more cautious in your judgments than I am. We seem to have changed characters in this instance. I am always too sanguine about people."

"I would rather have your loving, hopeful, charity, my son, though it were twenty times as rash," said Mrs Avery warmly, "as that cold-hearted bigotry, which tries every man's faith by its own standard."

"Thanks again, Mater," said Ned. "*Rash* just describes me. I need all your caution and prudence to guide me. And yet, Mother," he added, looking fondly at her, "you are possessed of that love which 'thinketh no evil'—the love of the New Testament. When scandal reaches you, it goes no further; for I do not believe that an evil report, true or false, was ever repeated by you. Indeed, I don't think you ever believe an evil report till conviction of its truth is forced upon

you. You turn your head aside from the breath of scandal, as you would from the foul air from an open drain or common sewer."

"Ah, Ned!" said his mother, "I am afraid you have been describing the mother of your imagination; your real mother has too often cause to echo the words of the poet—

'Alas! the evil which we fain would shun
We do, and leave the wished for good undone.
Our strength to-day
Is but to-morrow's weakness; prone to fall,
Poor blind unprofitable servants all
Are we alway.'"

"Just another phase of the charity which 'vaunteth not itself,' and 'is not puffed up,'" said Ned; winking hard to keep back the tears which had filled his eyes as his mother spoke.

"Have you heard of any opening for Bessie's brother?" asked Mrs Avery, after another pause.

"No," said Ned. "And he's lying like a dead weight on my conscience."

"I have been thinking of teaching him myself," said his mother. "I could easily spare an hour three days in the week; and if he's as bright as Bessie, he may learn a good deal in that time."

"He's a miracle of cleverness, according to his grandfather," said Ned. "But, Mother, it is surely too much for you to add the teaching of this little boy to all your other benevolent labours? And how would you do? Could you go to that damp cellar? I certainly could not allow that;" and Ned shook his head.

"Certainly not," said Mrs Avery. "There is no need for that. The child can come here; I know of nothing to prevent him."

"Nor I either—except his rags," Ned ruefully replied. But now I think of it, the old gentleman boasted of a splendid suit he was

keeping for him, so he may be very respectable, though I could scarcely trust the old man's ideas on the subject.'

"I hope you understand, Edward, I only take him in hand till you find room for him," said Mrs Avery. "Don't suppose that I intend to take him off your conscience;" and she glanced archly at the young curate, who was only too happy at times to have his responsibilities undertaken for him.

Ned reddened, and then laughed good humouredly.

"Ah, Mater," said he, "you know me of old,—great in theory, but lax in fulfilment. I am afraid the lines you would apply to me would be Cowper's beautiful, but mournful lament—

'Weak and irresolute is man;
The purpose of to-day,
Woven with pains into his plan,
To-morrow rends away.'"

When Bessie carried away the tea tray

that evening, Ned looked both annoyed and irritated.

"Mother!" said he, after she had left the room, "that girl wears a cross; did you notice it?"

"Yes, I observed it," Mrs Avery quietly replied.

"I can't stand it," said Ned. "She must not wear it, mother. You know I have a great dislike to the wearing of crosses."

"Yes, I know; and shall tell her not to put it on again," said his mother. "And yet," she added, "I regret to forbid the use of any little ornament; she is so clean and tidy now that even Amelia has now no cause to find fault with her in that respect. Indeed, she seems to have an innate love of cleanliness, and is not likely to return to dirty habits, after having tasted of its sweets."

"Let her be as cleanly and tidy as possible, but she must not wear a cross," said Ned

decidedly. "We see enough of them in the streets, without our very servants wearing them within doors. Ah!" continued he, "what woman, with a true woman's heart, can have heard or read of the ladies of Paris wearing as ornaments, during the time of the first French Revolution, small gold guillotines without experiencing a thrill of horror? And yet women—educated women—do not scruple to ornament their persons with an imitation of that instrument of suffering, which must ever be connected in our minds with all that is mysterious and awful. I can pity, and even sympathise with the ignorant, but, it may be, conscientious Catholic, who makes the cross an object of worship, but I have no sympathy with those who thus parade it as an ornament."

As Ned spoke, he paced the room with rapid strides—his face flushed, his eyes bright, his action animated.

His mother looked at him with pride and pleasure. She liked to see him thus fairly roused. It was in these moments of enthusiasm she admired him most, and prophesied in her heart great things of her son.

"I agree with all you have said," said she, "as to the folly of wearing such an ornament."

"Folly!" interrupted Ned, "that is a mild word, indeed, Mother. I hate the sight of them, be they made of gold, silver, ivory, or wood!"

"I was going to remark," said Mrs Avery, mildly, "that I think the practice proceeds more from want of thought than from want of feeling; for surely no woman, who had reflected seriously on the subject, could continue to wear a cross, and yet many do from whom we have a right to look for better things."

"Aye!" said Ned, "let them remember the scenes which took place at the commencement of the Inquisition, when the Inquisitors

inflamed the rabble to take up arms and assist in extirpating the heretics; and to please them, and give them a sense of the holiness of their mission, they affixed to the garments of the poor deluded creatures crosses of cloth, which acted as a charm in inflaming their ardour for persecution.* Only fancy, Mother," continued he, "Protestant ladies wearing now, as an ornament, the very symbol which was used in the thirteenth century to inflame the minds of the Catholic persecutors of Protestantism. But I daresay you are right, as you always are, Mother," said Ned, a

* "Sometimes the Inquisitors excited princes to arm their subjects against them, and at other times they inflamed the rabble, whom they themselves headed, to take up arms and unite in extirpating them. Such as they could prevail upon to devote themselves to this service obtained the title of Crusaders, and were distinguished by a cross of cloth attached to their garments. This badge operated like a charm upon the deluded populace, who, if they were inflamed before, were now infuriate, and, as one happily expresses it, were raised to a state of supercelestial virtue, which defied all the restraints of reason and humanity."—*Jones' History of the Waldenses.*

little ashamed already of the warmth of feeling which he had displayed ; " it may be sheer thoughtlessness, after all. I seldom strike the happy medium, but condemn things of which I disapprove with a warmth which may destroy the very effect I wish to produce. It was only yesterday I offended an artist, whom I both love and respect, by my violent denunciations against the subjects chosen by some painters for their pictures, more especially those in which the figure of the Saviour is introduced. There is something to me so awfully mysterious in the idea of incarnate Deity, that I always turn away with horror from the attempts made to delineate His humanity, and, above all, His sufferings and death."

" And yet," said Mrs Avery, " many people look at such pictures, not only with pleasure, but with feelings of holy rapture. We must keep in mind, my son, the various idiosyn-

crasies of the human mind, and not expect that everybody is to think and feel as we do."

"These people are on the high road to the Roman Catholic Church," cried Ned, warmly; "but the wearers of the crosses have no such feelings, Mother. The simple fact is, they follow the fashion; necklaces have gone out, and crosses have come in. Ah!" continued he, speaking in tones of strong, subdued emotion, "if they would but remember Calvary and its three crosses,—the scene at once of Satan's temporary triumph and final defeat,—the scene, as has been well said, of the greatest instance of faith on record; for when His disciples had all forsaken Him, their hopes crushed and their faith for the time almost extinguished, the dying thief recognised His divinity, and appealed to Him as the judge and arbiter of his eternal destiny. Mother," said Ned, as he rose hastily to leave the room,

"you 'll not forget to tell Bessie not to put it on again."

When Mrs Avery told Bessie she disliked her wearing a cross, she declared she did not care a straw for the old thing which she had found in the street, and expressed her willingness to burn it immediately. But when Mrs Avery explained to her, as simply as she could, her reasons for disliking the ornament, Bessie opened her eyes wide and listened gravely and attentively. A few days afterwards, having been sent an errand by Amelia, she came home in a great hurry, flushed and panting for breath. "I'se gone and done it, 'Melia," she cried in triumph."

"What mischief have you been after now?" asked Amelia, sharply.

"I'se done nothing wrong," said Bessie confidently. "You see, 'Melia, I met a lady on the street wearing one of them crosses, and I stopped her and told her how wrong it

was,—I just repeated, you know, what Mrs Avery said to me, I has it all by heart; and didn't she stare? oh, didn't she? I thought she was going to call a p'liceman, so I ran off as fast as my legs could carry me!"

Amelia first stared in surprise at the eager, animated young face, and then burst into repeated peals of merry laughter, which were echoed by Bessie with right good will. "You *are* a droll!" cried Amelia, when she recovered her breath, and from that day she began to like Bessie Marrable, and even to mingle a little respect with her liking for the young reformer.

When Ned heard of Bessie's exploit he laughed till his sides ached, and the tears ran down his cheeks. "Mother," cried he, "if the boy is as great an oddity as the girl, I 'm afraid your office of teacher may prove no sinecure. But Mrs Avery was not afraid; and when she told the old man she was willing to under-

take the education of his grandson, till room could be found for him in one of her son's schools, his gratitude affected her to tears.

"May the blessing of Him who was ready to perish be yours, ma'am," he said, in trembling accents; but she could scarcely refrain from smiling when he produced the suit of clothes of which he had boasted to Ned, and which he said he had made himself.

"I am glad I did not laugh and hurt the old man's feelings," she told Ned afterwards, "he seemed so proud of the result of his loving labours; but I am really afraid the poor little fellow may suffer from the ridicule his appearance cannot fail to excite amongst boys in the streets, for the clothes are literally covered with patches of all shapes, sizes, and colours—an humble imitation, in fact, of Joseph's coat."

"I 'll take care to be in the way the first

day he comes here," said Ned, rubbing his hands with boyish glee.

But if Jemmy Marrable suffered, it was in silence, for the gentle, timid-looking boy was made of the stuff which produces martyrs. The boon bestowed upon him by his benefactress was reckoned too precious by him to be compared with any annoyance endured in the obtaining of it; and besides, the sensitive, affectionate little fellow would have born anything rather than hurt the feelings of his dearly-loved grandfather. He proved an apt pupil, and though not so quick as Bessie, who often surprised Mrs Avery by repeating a whole chapter instead of the verse of the Bible, which was her daily morning portion, his judgment was deeper, and his reasoning and reflective powers much superior. He was docile and attentive, and so grateful for instruction, that Mrs Avery often declared it was a pleasure to teach him,

and her good deed brought with it its own reward.

The days that Jemmy came for his lesson were important days for Bessie, who took care to be in the way to open the door for him. Seizing him in her arms, she would hug and kiss him, and ordering him to clean his shoes on the door-mat, would next pull off his cap, and run her fingers through his hair, by way of putting it in order. Then she would accompany him to the parlour door, pouring instructions as to his behaviour into his ear by the way, and throwing it open with a flourish, show him in with as much ceremony as though he had been the parson. "Poor child," she would say to 'Melia, "he's abashed, and no wonder; he sees nobody but Gran'father—very different from me, you know."

But by-and-by Bessie's training was supposed to be completed, and Mrs Avery having

procured a suitable situation for her, she departed, making many promises of good behaviour for the future. Though really sorry to leave Mrs Avery, she was delighted at the prospect of another change, and considerably elated with a sense of her own importance. She behaved very well for a week or two; but, alas! away from Mrs Avery's influence, her Arab habits soon returned in full force, and she pined after her old life, and longed to be once more her own mistress. At length, unable to bear restraint any longer, she ran off, and returned home, to her grandfather's great dismay.

When Mrs Avery heard of her flight, she lost no time in looking after the strayed sheep; for though chagrined and disappointed, she was not disheartened by one failure. Fortunately she found Bessie at home, dressed in the old gown, and looking as bright and sharp as ever.

"I could not help it, ma'am, indeed, I could not; she was aggrawating, she was. Why! she was worse than 'Melia!" said she, referring to her last mistress.

"Bessie Marrable, you are an ungrateful girl," said her grandfather, in a distressed tone, "after all Mrs Avery's kindness to you, and giving Jemmy his education, too! I don't know what is to become of you, running wild about the streets."

"I makes more anyhow," said Bessie, pouting.

But after she had listened for a while to Mrs Avery's gentle tones, pleading with her, for her own good—tones which brought back to her the sweetness of a well-remembered kiss—she gradually softened down, and at length agreed to return to that lady's house, till another situation could be procured for her.

"But, 'Melia, ma'am," said she.

"Behave yourself, Bessie, and there's no fear of Amelia," said Mrs Avery, gravely, though inwardly amused at her guessing the state of Amelia's feelings towards her, that worthy being much incensed at the discredit brought upon her training. Her mistress, however, gave her a private hint, which prevented her showing her displeasure, save by looks; and she could not but confess to herself that she was glad to have the brisk, lively girl back again, having found the kitchen uncommonly dull after her departure.

Mrs Avery arranged that Bessie should pay her grandfather a visit every week, and judged wisely in doing so; for the regular excitement these visits afforded her, served as a safety valve for the escape of her partially suppressed exuberant spirits. Bessie's visits, too, made a pleasant change in the quiet monotonous life led by her grandfather and Jemmy. She loved them both so dearly,

and had so much to tell, not only about Mrs Avery, the Parson, and 'Melia, but about Mrs Avery's cat, and the parson's dog, and 'Melia's pet canary, that 'Bessie's night' was looked forward to with pleasure, and hailed as an event.

One evening they were sitting as usual before the fire, expecting every moment to hear her light footstep, the old man gazing into the fire, staff in hand, whilst Jemmy busily conned the lesson he was learning to repeat to Mrs Avery next morning. But instead of Bessie another visitor entered, at sight of whom the old man's brow contracted as with pain, and his heart quailed within him. The stranger was a tall, strong-built man in the prime of life, but worn and wasted evidently from recent illness. The old man eyed him sternly and suspiciously, but made no sign of recognition, and Jemmy after a careless glance returned to his book, leaving it to his grand-

father to inquire his business. Poor Jem, for it was he, felt that there was no recognition or welcome home for him, and still very weak, he sat down, faint and sick at heart. The familiar form and features of his father-in-law, and the squalid poverty surrounding him, brought the misery of old times vividly before him, and he expected every moment to see his wife stagger in, and upbraid him for having deserted her and her children.

But though the old man made no sign, he had recognised Jem the moment he appeared, and sat moodily staring at him. The old time had come back to him too, and he saw in the man before him a reckless desperado, returned to torment him and his innocent children. Jem was the first to speak. "Do you not know me?" he asked, in low, trembling accents.

"Yes, I know you; James Marrable," said the old man, in a cold severe tone, "and I

never did want to set eyes upon you again. Where have you been all this time?" he added sharply, "leaving me with your two helpless children?"

Jem groaned inwardly. Alas! it was only too true; he had left two helpless children (not to speak of their wretched mother) as a burden on this poor old man, a man too who had never ceased to warn him of the inevitable result of his downward career, and who had been a daily reproach to him and his wife by the stern purity of a self-denying life. True, Jem had been sorely tried, and had done it whilst loving the darkness; but had he hastened to repair the evil when brought to the light? Alas! Jem felt that in knowing the good and doing it not he had sinned deeply, and he bowed his head, humbled in the very dust. "Father," said he, "I deserve all, and more than all you can say to me; but," and in a few words he told of the great

change which he had experienced, and of his resolutions for good in the future. The old man listened quietly and attentively, till Jem ceased speaking, and then there was a dead silence.

"You speak well, James," said he at length, "very well; but time will show—deeds, not words, must prove the sincerity of your repentance. Have you become an abstainer?"

"I have," Jem eagerly replied.

"So far good," said his father-in-law. "I would not have believed in your sincerity without that; for one who went so far astray as you did there is no safety but in total abstinence."

Whilst they had been talking, Jemmy had gradually roused up to the fact that the stranger was his father, and he retreated in haste behind his grandfather's chair, the dismay written upon his face adding another drop to Jem's bitter cup of punishment. But

at this moment a swift footstep entered, at sound of which Jem started and turned round. It was Bessie, who stood for a moment staring at him like one petrified, but the next she was sobbing in his arms. Yes! Bessie recognised her father, and as he whispered, "God bless my child," Jem felt that he had at last got his welcome home. Seeing that Bessie was not frightened, Jemmy approached by slow degrees, and his father anxiously encouraged his tardy advances, till encircling him with his arm he drew him close to his side, and with his children thus on either side of him Jem felt all the father roused within him. But where was his wife, the mother of these children? was she dead or alive? Poor Jem's weak head swam as he looked at Bessie, the image of her mother as he first remembered her, but he could not summon courage to put the question trembling on his lips.

"Your children have not been uncared

for," said the old man, the expression of whose face had softened a little as he looked at the group before him. "When you forsook them God took them up, and gave them kind friends. Jemmy is getting a beautiful education from a kind lady, a parson's mother, who has also taken care of Bessie. She, poor child, has earned her own bread for years; but you will be going to do your duty by your own now, James?" For a moment Jem hesitated. If his children were so well cared for, why trouble Sarah with them? It would be an easy matter for him to provide for their support without taking them home, but it was only for a moment.

"I will do my best," said he, "to maintain my children, and to bring them up in the fear of the Lord; and I am sure my wife"—and he stopped in some confusion.

"You have married again?" said the old man. "Well, if she be a prudent, pious

woman, it may be all the better for my children."

Jem's heart throbbed wildly, as though suddenly released from a great pressure. It was evident that his wife was dead, else her father could not have spoken thus; and in the sudden revulsion of feeling, he confessed that he had married again without having heard of her death.

"And you are glad to hear of it now," said the old man, sadly. "Well, James, I don't blame you; conduct such as hers has a wonderful effect in weaning the affections. I lost my daughter, and you your wife, long before her death."

"When did she die?" asked Jem, eagerly —so eagerly, that his father-in-law looked at him in surprise, and understood it at once.

"You were not gone a week," said he; "so your second marriage is all right.' He spoke quietly and coldly; and, strange inconsist-

ency of human nature, Jem, who had the moment before been fighting within himself with an eager desire for his wife's death, felt offended and mortified that the father of that wife never seemed to suppose that he could feel any regret for her death.

But Jem's cup of humiliation was full when sharp, keen-witted Bessie whispered, "I 'se so glad she died before you was married, father!" Poor girl! she knew nothing of the priceless value of a mother's love. The only idea which she connected with the sweet name of "mother" being that of a drunken fury, who beat, starved, and otherwise ill-used her, and from whose clutches she had often been rescued by her father. No wonder that Bessie Marrable only experienced a feeling of resentment when she thought of her mother—no wonder that she rejoiced in the legality of her father's second marriage.

Jem's heart had been with Sarah ever since he left her, and he was longing now to return and tell her the result of his mission. But as he looked at his children, he bitterly regretted that, wholly engrossed by the uncertainty of his own doubtful position, he had neglected to consult with her as to what should be done with them in the event of his wife being dead. Something whispered to him that Sarah would welcome them home, take them to her heart, and be a mother to them; but without her acquiescence, Jem felt that he had no right to impose a burden on her of which she knew nothing when she married him; and he frankly told the old man that he must obtain his wife's consent before taking the children home.

"If she is all you say, James," he replied, "there will be no difficulty in the way with her;" for Jem had spoken warmly of Sarah's piety and many virtues. "But you must

promise to put Jemmy to school," he added, sharply; "I'll not part with him unless; that boy has the making of a scholar in him."

Jem promised all the old man wished, and departed, taking an affectionate leave of him and of his children, and promising to write and make arrangements for their coming home.

In Jem's presence the old man had looked doubtful of his sincerity, and had hinted the necessity of deeds to prove it; but when he was gone, he "boasted" like the buyer in the Proverbs.

"Your father's a good man now, a very good man," he said to the two children, who, awed by the sudden change in their affairs, stood silent by his side. "He speaks well, as well as any parson; see you mind what he says to you, and do all he bids you."

"I don't want to go with him; I want to stay with you, Gran'father," cried Jemmy.

"My darling!" cried the old man, with tears in his eyes, "it's all for your good. I've prayed long for this day, and it has come at last; my Jemmy will be a scholar yet, and I may live to see it. You've got a father now to take care of you, children," he continued, "and a mother, too, if I mistake not; see you behave well to your father's wife," he added, turning to Bessie.

"I doesn't like stepmothers," she replied, with a slight grimace; "but, Grandfather," she cried, suddenly putting her arms round his neck, "I'd do anything to please you, anything!"

He clasped them both to his bosom, and shed over them tears of mingled joy and sorrow, whilst Jemmy sobbed as though his heart would break, and Bessie hugged and kissed him and her grandfather time about, not very sure whether she was laughing or crying.

In due time Jem's letter arrived, with money to defray their travelling expenses, and many assurances of a kind welcome from their new mother.

"I 'm sure, ma'am, I for one don't envy the woman who gets Bessie Marrable for a daughter," said Amelia to her mistress; "not to say but that she 's like another creature since she came here first, but there's no counting on her for a day; she's as slippery as an eel, she is. Take my word for it, ma'am, she will soon tire, and be back upon us before we know where we are."

"It would not be surprising, Amelia; children soon find out who are kind to them," replied Mrs Avery, smiling; for Amelia had become both fond and proud of her pupil, and was not a little chagrined at the prospect of losing all control over her, and her mistress suspected that she would be very glad if Bessie verified her prediction.

Bessie was much excited by the change in her circumstances, going to B—— being much the same in her eyes as going to America. The only thing she disliked about it was the prospect of a journey by railway, and she amused Amelia by many ominous head shakings on the subject.

"You may laugh, 'Melia," said she; "*you* aint going. I hasn't read the newspaper bills on the streets for nothing; mostways there's a haccident every day, and ever so many people hurt and killed. I never was on a railway before, and I'se sure I'd much rather walk, if I only knew the way; I could carry Jemmy on my back easy, I could."

As for Jemmy, the prospect of the journey helped to sweeten the bitter grief he experienced at parting from the poor old grandfather, who had been father and mother and everything to him.

"Cheer up, darling," whispered the old

man; "mind your book, and never forget to put on your manners."

Bessie shed no tears at parting, but though scorning to "cry like a baby," the little woman was weeping in her heart, and surprised Mrs Avery (who kindly accompanied them to the station) by an earnest request, that she would regularly visit her grandfather in his solitude. She readily promised to do so, exacting a promise in return from Bessie, that she would write from B——, and tell her how she was getting on.

"Sure I will, ma'am, and thank you," said she, highly flattered by the request. "I can't write very well, you know, but I'se do my best, I will; I only wishes I was safe there," she added, shaking her head.

Several weeks passed before Bessie's letter arrived. It was a very long one, and had evidently been written by fits and starts. It had cost an immense deal of labour, and

was adorned by numerous blots, which made the reading of it a work of some difficulty. Mrs Avery shed tears over it, but Ned laughed long and merrily, and proposed sending it to the British Museum as a marvellous specimen of phonetic spelling. The following is an amended copy:—

"Deer maddam, this is to let you no that Jemmy and I was not killed by the raleway. Father was a waiting for us at the staychun, he had a bundel in his hand, and he told me to wait, and took Jemmy away into a room, and when they came out I scarcely new Jemmy, he looked so pretty. He had on a hole shute of new clothes, but father said I was quite decent, thanks to you, mam. Then we went home through the B—— streets, which looked so like the London streets, that had I not come on the raleway, I would have thought I was there. Mother was very kind to us, and gave us

tea and hot cakes which she had baked for us, and she called me her daughter, and Jemmy her son, and asked if we'd have any objekshuns to call her mother, which none of us had; the tea and cakes was so very good. Mother has such kind ways with her, and such lovely blew eyes, I sometimes wishes father had married her first, and then I would have been her reel daughter, and perhaps my eyes would have been blew too. I helps her to wash and cook, and cleen the house, and she praises me often, she does; and she says she had no ideer that I could be such a good worker, thanks to 'Melia, mam. And at nite she teaches me to nit and sow and sing hims, and anything else that she can do herself.

"Father is very kind too, and has a good busness; he has a man and two boys working to him. He has sent Jemmy to a school, and he gets on so quick, that mother says

we must not let him get before us, and that he must begin and teach her and me at nite; and Jemmy blushes so, he was always easy abashed, the darling. Before we goes to bed we sings a him; and if you only hard Jemmy, mam, he ain't afraid to let his voice be hard. I sees mother like to laff sometimes, I'se sure. And then mother reads a chapter of the Bibel, she reads as well as any parson; and then father he prays, his a reel good man is father. I always feels, when his praying, as if I 'd like to be good too, but I'se far enuff from goodness yet, and I no mother thinks so. On Sunday we all goes to the Methodist Chapel, and a queer place it looks, especially to me, who am accustomed to Mr Avery's beutiful church. They has an organ, but it is no more like his than a penny trumpet is like a bass fiddell, it gives a squeak sometimes in the middle of a tune, most like a pig. And then

the minister, mam, how he screams, and such grimaces he does make. Mother did catch me making them over again one day behind father's back, and wasn't she angry, oh wasn't she? but I liked her all the better for it after, bekause she did not tell father on me, which would have been meen, and I does not like meen people. Father would have been aful angry, I know, at me making faces at the minister, but I wont do it again, not that I'se afraid of father, but I would not like to vex mother.

"One day mother sent me a message, and I meets a little old gennelman; and he stops me, and says he, 'Are you the gal that's come to live with Mrs Marrable?' I did not just like it, mam; so I keeps up my dignity, and says, 'Yes, I'se Miss Marrable.' With that he pulls off his hat, and makes me a low bow, and says he, 'You're mother's as good as gold, Miss Marrable. See you don't be after

playing any tricks on her. If you do, mind I'm the man to find it out, for I've got an eye in the back of my head; and I'll pour ever so much fisik down your throat—that I will,' and he shook his stick in my face. What an ideer—as though I'd be playing tricks on mother. When I told her, she laffed, and said it must be Doctor Telfer, and that I must be civil to him, for he was a good man, who had been very kind to her and father. I has met him often since, and he always takes off his hat, and makes a low bow to me, and says, 'Good morning, Miss Marrable.' And I knows that he's a mocking at me, but I pretends not to see it, and drops a low curtsy; and then he says, 'I hope Miss Marrable's behaving herself,—the fisik's ready,' and goes away laffing. What a droll he is.

"But, dear Mrs Avery, I has not told you that grandfather has rote such a bewtiful

letter to mother; and I sees the teers a dropping into her lap when she was reading of it. You see, father rote a letter to him, to tell all about me and Jemmy, and that was the answer to it. And I does weary sometimes to see grandfather and you, and Mr Avery and Amelia; and I lies awake often and often, thinking about you all; and I sometimes wonder if you would be so very good as get another situashun for me—I would not run away again, mam—I would not. I told father I would ask you, and he said, perhaps I was right; and he looked at mother, but she said I was too young, and was better at home; but I does weary sometimes to be back in London, and I hopes you will keep it in mind. Jemmy bids me say he has been ducks for six days. He is always like to cry, mam, when he speaks about you—he was always a fecshunate little fellow.—Hopes you will excuse this big blot,

and remains your faithful servant, BESSIE MARRABLE."

Like other ladies, Bessie added a post-script—"Please, mam, the ladies here wear crosses, just like London. It is shocking, it is."

It was some time before Bessie's letter was replied to, for shortly after she received it, Mrs Avery had a dangerous illness, which confined her to bed for some weeks. When she recovered, she wrote to Bessie, telling her that she was going to Scotland for change of air, and as the train she intended to travel by would stop for a few minutes at B——, she would be glad if she and Jemmy could come to the station, and see her there. Accordingly, she found her two young friends waiting, hand in hand, on the platform, and eagerly looking out for her. Bessie she knew at once, but she could scarcely believe that the plump, smart little fellow by her side was the starved-looking, ragged Jemmy of old.

"We'se very happy to see you, ma'am, we'se are," said Bessie, who never found any difficulty in expressing herself; but Jemmy was obliged to turn away his head, to hide the tears which the sight of his benefactress had brought to his eyes. Bessie had a great deal to say, and short time to say it in, and she was forced to give up in despair, finishing off with a long message to 'Melia, only half of which Mrs Avery, laughingly, promised to remember.

"And Bessie," said she, "I 'll keep in mind what you said in your letter about a place, it's quite right that a great girl like you should be earning your own bread."

But Bessie's face fell. "Please, ma'am, I'se changed my mind," said she, with a little hesitation; "you see, ma'am," said she, coming nearer, and speaking confidentially, "I doesn't see as a how that I could leave Baby."

"Baby! what baby?" asked Mrs Avery.

"Why, ma'am, did not you know we had got a baby?" cried Jemmy, much surprised that any one could be ignorant of that important fact.

"Yes, ma'am, and such a duck it is, such a little darling," cried Bessie, with a glowing countenance; "opens and shuts its eyes, for all the world, like the wax dolls I used to watch in the toyshop windows in London. It's a gal, and we have christened her Sarah after mother; and I can nurse her, I does, ma'am; and Mother said only yesterday, that I made a better nurse than she did; only fancy that, ma'am!" and Bessie laughed triumphantly. "And when I tickles its soft cheek, it looks up in my face and laughs, it does; I do believe the little pet loves me already," and the first tears Mrs Avery ever saw shed by Bessie Marrable filled her eyes, and rolled down her cheeks.

Tears started to Mrs Avery's own eyes, but she was moved to smiles the next moment by the ostentatious display made by Bessie of a white pocket-handkerchief. "It's a beauty, isn't it, ma'am?" said she, catching the effect with her usual quickness. "Mother gave it me, and see, Father wrote my name in the corner," and Bessie displayed and gazed on her name with as much pride as her father had done on the ELIZABETH MARRABLE in his family Bible long before. "It's my Sunday handkerchief," said she; "but I took good care not to use it last Sunday, knowing as a how you was coming, ma'am."

"And we are gathering up," said Jemmy, who had been politely waiting for a chance to put in a word, "we are gathering up to pay for Grandfather coming to see us."

"Yes," said Bessie, "we has got eighteenpence already, and Mother has promised us sixpence, to help."

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"But, Bessie," said Mrs Avery, "your step-mother——"

"Call her mother—please do," interrupted Bessie, imploringly.

"You are right, Bessie," said Mrs Avery, blushing at the innocent reproof. "I was going to say that your mother might not like to be troubled with a visit from an old man like your grandfather."

"Ah! you don't know her, ma'am," said Bessie, with a hearty confidence in Sarah's goodness, which spoke volumes.

"She is a good un, she is," said Jemmy, nodding his head.

"She's a hangel!" cried Bessie, decidedly settling the question of Sarah's goodness for all time coming.

But time was up, and as the train steamed out of the station, and Bessie waved a parting adieu with her white handkerchief, and Jemmy lifted his cap, like a little gentleman as

he was, Mrs Avery's heart was filled with gratitude, which went up in silent thanksgiving to the Giver of all good, for His merciful kindness to the children of JEM, THE TINKER.

THE END.

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