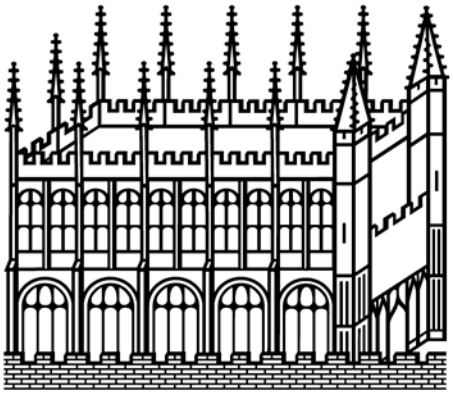

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THE

JOY OF WELL-DOING.

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THE JOY OF WELL-DOING.

CHAPTER I.

It was a bright little plot of ground, that cottage garden of Widow Salter's. Many a passer-by turned to look again at the clustering roses and honeysuckle which made quite a bower of the rustic porch in front, and to admire the patches of many-coloured sweetwilliams and gillyflowers, the great bushes of rosemary and lavender, the bright yellow and dark brown wallflowers, and the thick clumps of hen-and-chicken daisies which bordered the narrow pathway up to the door. Beside all these might be seen there, in the early spring, fair, smiling snowdrops, crocuses, and violets in abundance; and later on in the summer, the tall white lily, rising up like a stately queen in the middle of the garden beds, with sweet pinks and carnations bowing around her; and, as autumn came on, the sober Michaelmas

daisy, with many-hued chrysanthemums; and still, through the dreary winter days, the sweet, simple monthly rose, clinging and blooming round the railings, when all the other flowers were gone.

This garden was Widow Salter's pride and delight: all her spare time was given to it—she kept it in the most perfect order. She had a small pension to live on, for she was the widow of a brave soldier who had fallen in his country's service, fighting in the Crimea; her children were dead long since, and she lived on in her old cottage home, finding happiness in her own simple way among her flowers and her bees, with little change from day to day, except that made by the visit of a passing neighbour, or a walk into the nearest town to market.

Widow Salter was the picture of an old woman, in her snow-white widow's cap and apron, and three-cornered kerchief pinned over her breast. She loved the old-fashioned scarlet cloak, with its large hood, which had been her grandmother's and yet looked as bright as ever when she came out in it every Sunday to church.

"None of your new-fangled mantles and wimples for me," she would say, shaking her head; "there's no such a thing to be seen now-a-days on young folks' backs as these

sensible garments of their grand-dames. Ah, well! times do change, to be sure!"

Yet, though she had some quaint ways, Widow Salter was a canny, cheerful old body enough; and though she did sometimes give a bit of her mind to the "young folks," as she called the village maidens, none loved better than these same young folks to lean over her garden gate and have a chat with the old lady, as she pottered about her beloved garden, weeding, and tying up the flowers.

"I wonder you don't make some nice nosegays and take them in to market, mother," said Jessie Goyne, one evening, as she stopped by the garden rails on her way to the well; "you'd sell a many of them, I'm sure. I often hear folks asking for flowers there, when I take mother's butter in."

"Sell my flowers, child!" exclaimed the widow; "why, it would go to my heart to cut them: they are the joy of my eyes. I couldn't rob my garden for all the markets in the world; and as to making money by it, thanks be, I don't need more than I've got: it's enough to make an old woman comfortable, and I've no one left me in this world to care for;" and she gave a deep sigh, as she pulled a withered rose off its stem and threw it into the flower-pot which stood

half full of weeds beside her. She was thinking of her dear little grandchild, the last of her family, who had died in her arms the spring before.

"I should be a lonely old woman without my flowers, since I lost my flower of all, dear heart!" she added to herself, as Jessie passed on, singing and swinging her pitcher to and fro, towards the little clump of trees on the green which shaded the village well.

Widow Salter stood some time at the porch, picking off the faded roses and twisting the stray tendrils here and there round the woodwork. Once she raised her apron to her eyes, and brushed away something which dimmed her sight. "'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,'" she uttered, in a low voice: "all—yes, all! His will be done." Presently the chimes of the village church struck out for the evening service, so she turned into her cottage, and taking her bonnet and cloak from the peg in the old oak cupboard, she quickly put them on, took her Prayer-book from the little row of books on the dresser, and went out, carefully locking the door behind her.

This dear old woman never missed the service morning or evening, unless when she was ill or when she happened to be tending any sick neighbour. It was to her

the beginning and ending of the day; and what some ignorantly would call a form and a repetition, was to her the greatest blessing in her desolate life, for she loved God, and found her happiness in praising Him.

"Good e'en, mother," said a voice near her, as she reached the churchyard gate. "Have ye heard the tidings from Ashley Common?"

"Good e'en to you, John," replied the widow, to an old lame man who was sitting on the trunk of a fallen tree by the hedge, with his crutches beside him. "What tidings, then? I've heard nought."

"Not of the fire there last night? Terrible news, indeed! Michael Watton's house burnt to the ground: he's gone, poor fellow! a brave man he was, too. The floor fell in with him as he was letting down the children from the window."

"Mercy on us!" said Widow Salter; "and his wife, Kitty Watton—saved?"

"Scarce to be called saved. She clung to the window frame when the floor went in, and was got out at last, but burnt so fearful, they say, she isn't like to live."

"Poor soul! where is she now?" asked the widow; "and what's become of the children?"

"All in to Maggie Dobbs's, the nighest place they could carry her. Maggie's well distracted, I guess, with her own seven all skirling about her, and that poor burnt body to tend, as well as her little ones. 'Tis a bad job—a bad job," the old man went on, shaking his head. "She's sure to die, and they'll put them poor tender things into the Union. They says she takes on terrible about it."

"Poor Kitty!" said Widow Salter; "I don't wonder, either. I knew her, time agone, when she was in service; a nice, good girl as you'd like to see."

After a pause she added, "I think I'll go over there, and see if I can do anything for her. I can give up my church to help a poor suffering fellow-creature, and glad to do it."

"It's a full three mile to the Common," said John Lewis, "and very wild o' nights; but 'tis a good errand, so take care of yourself, mother, and God bless ye."

The old man sat looking after the widow, as she returned across the green with a quick step to her cottage. Presently she came out again with a basket on her arm, and set off towards the Common.

It was a dreary way over moor and woodland, and the wind howled dismally in fitful gusts, as the old woman hastened along,

bent on her kind errand. The night was coming on before she reached Ashley Common—a desolate waste, with a few scattered cottages rising here and there, in which dwelt some poor people who gained their living by stacking peat, or burning the bracken which abounded there.

Maggie Dobbs's wretchedly built and dirty hut was a poor place for a sick woman to lie in, but it was the best shelter she had to give, and willingly offered. She herself, slatternly, bustling, and rough as she was, had yet a kind, unselfish heart, and gladly let the sick woman's children share the loaf of coarse bread equally with her own.

"'Tis but scant food for ye, dearies," she said, at the same time cutting off huge lumps of bread, and tossing them to the hungry children who crowded round her; "but ye're welcome to it: God will not let me want for it."

"That's true enough; and what's more, Maggie, He'll bless you for it," said a voice on the threshold. Maggie turned, and saw Widow Salter standing there.

"Is it you, then, Mrs. Salter?" she exclaimed. "Well, now! you did startle me; who'd have thought of seeing you in these parts, and at this time of night? Not but what I'm right glad and thankful to see

you, for she," pointing to a door which stood ajar, and lowering her voice, "is terrible bad, and some one ought to be minding her better than I can, with all these children round me."

"That's just why I'm here," said the widow, with a smile. "I thought maybe you'd be glad for me to stay with her the night. Here's a bit of tea for ye, Maggie, child," she added, putting her basket on the table; "and a loaf of my own baking, for it came into my mind that ye might be short, with so many mouths to feed."

"Thank ye kindly, I'm sure," said Maggie; "it's not often we has the treat of a cup o' tea, and, maybe, *she'll* be glad of a drop. Poor dear soul! it goes to my heart like, to hear how she takes on, now with the pain, and now about her husband, and then again, worst of all, over the children."

"What does the doctor say of her?" asked the widow.

"No hopes," replied Maggie, shaking her head. "She might linger, he said, but that not long. Whatever's to be done with the children, I don't know. She's wild lest they should go into the Union. For the matter o' that, I should be the same, I know. I'd keep 'em myself if I could, but my master won't hear of it; he says it's not just to my own."

"Which are hers?" asked the widow, looking round on the swarm of little ones, of whom the eldest was not more than nine years old.

"They three," answered Maggie, pointing to a little group nestling together in a corner of the huge settle which nearly filled the kitchen. "They're but babies, sure enough."

Widow Salter went up to the children and kissed them. The youngest, a little chubby girl of a year old, with round blue eyes and flaxen curls, put up her small fat arms directly to the kind face which bent over her, and the old woman, delighted, took her up in her arms.

"And what's your name?" she asked of the eldest of the three, who was not more than five years old, a little shy, wistful-looking maid, very pale, with dark eyes and hair. She, too, had won the widow's heart in that moment, for she had a look of the darling little grandchild whom the old woman called her "flower of all."

"Agnes," was the answer, in a timid voice, which could scarcely be heard.

"And me called Kattern Andelina," put in the other child, who was just three, and anything but shy. "Why you not ask me?" she inquired, with her mouth as full of bread as it could hold.

The widow smiled, and patted the little one's head; and then, turning to Maggie, said,

"Shall I go in to her?"

"Yes, and thank you, Mrs. Salter," replied Maggie. "I'm sure it's a good God that sent you here to-night."

The old woman stooped to put down the baby she was nursing; but it clasped its arms tight round her neck, and would not put its legs to the ground. With the little one clinging round her, she followed Maggie through the half-open door which led into the only bedroom the cottage possessed.

There, on a low pallet, lay the poor sufferer, still and dumb with the anguish of the pain; her face, neck, and arms scorched and blackened, her large sunken eyes roving restlessly to and fro. She could not move her head on the pillow, but hearing a footstep, she whispered, hoarsely,

"Water."

Maggie poured some from a jug which was by the bed into a large iron spoon, and put it to the sick woman's lips.

"'Tis the only way she can take anything," said Maggie.

Widow Salter came to the bedside, and was about to speak; but as the poor mother caught sight of her little one, a spasm passed over her face, and she moaned out:

"My baby! my darling! no mother for thee! O my God, keep them!" and the tears gushed from her eyes as the baby put out its tender arms to her in vain.

Widow Salter could not restrain herself; she knelt down by the bedside and wept too, with the baby still in her arms. At last she spoke.

"Kitty," she said; "will you trust them to me?"

"Will I?" exclaimed the dying woman. "God bless you for ever and ever! Merciful Father! Thou hast heard my prayer. Now I can die."

And before midnight, poor Kitty's pain was over. She breathed her last with her hand fast locked in that of the widow. Her last words were, "God bless you!" and with a smile upon her lips, she sunk to rest.

"I'm glad the parson came to see her to-day," said Maggie to the widow, afterwards.

"Did he?" asked the widow. "But he's always at the bedside of the dying."

"Yes; and what do ye think he said to me?" returned Maggie. "He said he wished I was as prepared to die as she was. But then, as I told him, I've no time to think upon such things. How can I?"

"How *can't* you?" exclaimed Widow Salter, "when you know that every day

brings you nearer to death? O Maggie, take thought while you may! Look at poor Kitty there, this time last night as full of life and health as you are now. It might have been you. How can you speak so?"

"Well, this sort o' thing do go home to one," said Maggie, "more than all the sarmons that was ever preached. It gives one a turn, like, to think as one *must* come to that. Yes, I knows I haven't a-cared as I should; but mine's a hard life—slave, slave, from morning to night, to keep even a bit o' bread in their mouths."

"I know it," answered the widow. "But, child," she added, solemnly: "will that excuse you at the Judgment Day?"

CHAPTER II.

EARLY the next morning the widow, no longer childless, set out with the three orphaned children to return to her cottage. Maggie's husband carried the little one, who was too small to walk, and the other two each held a hand of the widow. Kattern Andelina laughed and chattered in her baby-tongue as they went along, often loosing her hold of the old woman to run on in front, and pick the pretty blue harebells which grew about the common, and then running back to show her treasures.

But Agnes walked on by the widow's side, without speaking. Young as she was, the child seemed to have an instinct of sorrow; and though she did not know that her mother was dead—and, indeed, would hardly have understood it if she had been told—she knew that she was leaving the house where her dear mother lay, and going to something new and strange, which made her feel sad. Once or twice, when the widow spoke to her and waited for an answer, she looked down, and

saw the dark eyes full of tears. Then she would stoop to kiss her, and wipe away the drops with the corner of her apron, for it went to her heart to see the dumb sorrow of the motherless child.

But when, after a long trudge, they reached the little wicket-gate which opened into the widow's garden, even Agnes found a tongue.

"O, what flowers! O, what roses! I love the sweet roses!" she exclaimed.

"And you shall have one, my darling," said the widow, delighted. She hastened to pick one of the finest of her damask roses, and gave it to the little girl, who smiled and said, in a low voice, "Mother loves 'em!"

Kattern Andelina, meanwhile, seated on the gravel walk, was quietly helping herself to the pink and red daisies which looked so tempting, all in a row. The widow turned and saw the little spoiler, and, with a face of horror, caught her up and carried her into the house. "That will never do!" she cried.

Richard Dobbs smiled, as he followed her with the baby in his arms. Everybody knew what store the old lady set upon her flowers.

"Thank you, Richard," she said, as she took the child from him, and seated it in the large, low window seat; "'tis very kind of you to carry her all this way."

"Ye 're welcome, missus," answered Richard; "I doubt ye'll find 'em too much for ye, whiles."

"I hope not," replied the widow, cheerily; "they make me feel young again already. How do ye like your pretty new home, my dear?" she added, turning to Agnes, who stood in the middle of the room, gazing round her with a strange, sad look.

"Home?" said Agnes, slowly; "this isn't *my* home. My home is with mother."

Richard and the widow looked at each other.

"You're going to stay here with me a bit," said she, tenderly; "and help me to mind my roses. Won't you like that?"

"Yes," said Agnes; "but will mother come, too?"

"You haven't seen my dear old pussy yet," said the widow, looking about her for the cat. "Puss, puss; come out and speak to your visitors. She's shy. Look at her, there, under the dresser. Go and stroke her, dear—she's as gentle as a lamb. There; isn't she a beauty, then!"

"I must be a-going," said Richard; "I've to stack a lot o' faggots for parson, so 'tis all in my way. Good day, missus, and good luck to ye."

"Good day, Richard, and thank you,"

answered the widow. "Ye'll mind to speak to the parson about the burying?"

"Surely," said Richard Dobbs, as he closed the gate behind him and went his way, wondering how an old woman like that could burden herself with three little children who had no claim upon her.

So wondered many, when they came to know it. Some of the village gossips even blamed her for her rashness; but Widow Salter troubled herself little about what others said, and went on in her own quiet way, giving herself up to the care of the poor little motherless ones.

It certainly was a great charge; but she had still health and strength, and, as she said, "Why should she not use these, when God had put it in her way to do so?"

And she was well repaid in the love these little ones bore to her. The two youngest soon learnt to call her granny—and very dear to her were their pretty, loving ways and merriment. But Agnes, though she too loved and obeyed the old lady, who was like a mother to them, still kept in her heart a precious hidden love of her "*own* mother," to whom she hoped to go back some day. The sad wistful look deepened in her face, a longing for something which never came; and people said the child looked old beyond

her years, and that the widow would not rear her. Her chief happiness seemed to be among the flowers: she would stand about the garden and look at them, and smell them, fondling them with her little delicate hands, and talking softly to them—"O you dear rose, you are my darling; you are very sweet, and I love you;" or, "You dear little happy daisies, round your big mother! do you love her? isn't it nice to be close to her? now, I shall tell your names—Mary, Jenny, Bessy, Anne, Kitty, Agnes." And so she would go on by the hour, while the widow—pleased, and yet not knowing what to make of the strange ways of the child, whom she dearly loved—left her pretty much to do as she liked, being a good deal occupied with the baby, who was only just beginning to run alone.

Kattern Andelina—or Katie, as she was usually called—was a very different sort of child, full of spirits and mischief from morning to night. Her bright sunny face, and charming little tongue, won her many friends; while Agnes was thought shy and dull, because she did not care to go out and play on the village green with the other children of her own age.

One of Katie's greatest trials from the first had been the flowers in the widow's

garden, which she was strictly forbidden to pick. She could not be content, like Agnes, with smelling and talking to them; she wanted to fill her pinafore with them, and more than once the little rebel had done so, when granny's back was turned. The second time it was a serious matter for Katie, who had a whipping for her disobedience, which she long remembered.

Granny thought, very wisely, that children cannot be too early taught to obey. Katie did not transgress again for a long time, but it was a constant temptation; and the widow, seeing this, now and then gave her a flower for her own, which made Katie very happy.

One day, when the two elder children were playing in the garden, and the youngest sitting in the porch in her tiny chair, kept safe there by the wooden bar which fastened her in, a lady, with her daughter, some fourteen years old, stopped at the wicket gate to look at them. The baby was crowing and calling joyously to Katie, the rogue, who was playing bo-peep with her behind the trellis-work of the porch, darting out every now and then, when both would burst into a merry peal of laughter, such as little happy children only know how to make. Agnes was sitting apart on the walk, talking in her own odd way to the flowers. All three

were looking as fresh, and clean, and bright as any lady's children could be; and the stranger was especially struck by the sweet serious face of Agnes.

"What dear little things!" she said, to her daughter. "I wonder whose children they are?"

"Yes, mamma; and what lovely flowers! Let us go into the garden and speak to the little girls, and ask their names. Will you?"

Just at that moment the widow came to the door, to look, as she did every now and then, to see that the children were all right. Seeing the lady standing at the gate, she went forward, and curtseying, said, "Will you please to walk in, ma'am?"

The lady, whose name was Mrs. Herbert, still more pleased with the appearance of the widow, answered: "Thank you, if I am not interrupting you. I was admiring your little ones, and your beautiful flowers. I have often in passing admired your flowers before, but I never saw the children until now."

"No, ma'am, I dare say not," replied the widow; "seeing they 've all sprung up at once—as I might say. They 're not mine, it's true; but I love them as if they were."

"They are relations, I suppose," said the lady, as she followed the widow into the cottage.

"Not that either, ma'am," answered the widow. "The Almighty sent them to me," she added, reverently; and then went on to tell their sad history. Mrs. Herbert was much moved; the more so at seeing how simply the widow accepted the duty which had come in her way, just as a plain duty, and nothing more: taking no credit to herself for having done "a good deed," as most would.

"And are you able to support them yourself?" asked Mrs. Herbert, when the widow had finished her tale.

"Yes, thank the Lord," replied the old woman; "we haven't wanted yet. My eyes are good, and I've been taking in a bit of sewing; for this I will say, that I was well taught at my needle when I was a girl—'twas 'most all the schooling we had then, except just enough to help us through our Prayer-book and Bible. And what do poor folk want more? I've been thinking, though, it would be a good thing for the eldest one to go to school: she's not like other children—she's too quiet like—and I believe she pines after her mother."

"Poor child! I dare say she does," said Mrs. Herbert, looking at Agnes out of the cottage window, in which she was sitting.

"She's a dear gentle lamb as ever lived,"

said the widow: "she 's the very look of my own little grandchild that died—died in my arms," she sobbed, even now unable to speak of her darling calmly.

Mrs. Herbert rose, and took the widow's hand in hers.

"These dear little ones have been given you in her place," she said, gently. "God will reward you a hundred fold for your love to them, be sure;" and then, bidding the widow good-bye, and stopping to kiss the children as she passed out, she went on her way with her daughter Ellen.

They crossed the village green in silence, and then Ellen spoke.

"Mamma?"

"Well, dear!" said Mrs. Herbert.

"Mamma, I've been thinking," said Ellen.

"What about, my dear?" asked her mother.

"Mamma, will you say yes to it?" said Ellen.

"I think I must hear first," answered her mother. "If it is a right and good thing, perhaps I may be able to say yes. I don't often refuse you, do I, my child?"

"No, mamma. It is just this: I do like the face of that dear little pale girl so much.

Mrs. Herbert smiled.

"Yes, indeed, mamma,!" said Ellen,

eagerly. "And I've been thinking that I should like so very much, if you would let me have her to teach."

"Would you?" said her mother.

"Yes, mamma; *do* let me!" cried Ellen. "I would make her happy. She looks so sad; and I am so sorry that she has lost her dear mother. What should I do without you, mamma?

"My dear girl," said Mrs. Herbert, as she kissed the bright, glowing face which looked up to her.

"Mayn't I try to make her as glad and happy as I am, mamma?" asked Ellen, beseechingly. "Do let me!"

"You shall, my dear child," said Mrs. Herbert, pressing the hand which clasped hers. "We will think about it, and see what can be done."

"Mamma, I've thought of a thing!" said Ellen, suddenly, as they turned in at the gate which led to the Manor House, where they lived. "You know papa gave me some money the day he went to London: well, and I have some besides, of my own. Do you think I have enough to buy that dear little girl a frock?"

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Herbert; "quite enough."

"Then I should like to do that, if I may,"

said Ellen; "and make it myself. And will you come with me to buy it, and cut it out, and set it all for me?"

"Yes, my darling, I will," answered her mother.

"Oh, thank you—thank you, dear mamma," cried Ellen, as she ran lightly up the broad stone steps which led to the front door of the Manor House.

CHAPTER III.

About a week afterwards, Mrs. Herbert and her little girl again visited the widow. Ellen carried a small parcel in her hand, and walked very fast.

"Steady, my dear child!" said her mother, once. "Don't let your spirits quite run away with you."

"Mamma, I really cannot walk slowly," said Ellen, looking with flushed face and sparkling eyes into her kind mother's face. "I do feel so very glad. I don't know how it is, but I do."

"I think I can tell you," said Mrs. Herbert. "When we give up anything that we like very much, to give another pleasure, it must make us feel happy, if we have done it in a right spirit."

"How do you mean, in a right spirit, mamma?" asked Ellen.

"I mean, my dear, if it was done simply because it was right, and because you wished to please God, without thinking of what any one would say about it. Do you understand?"

"Yes, mamma," replied Ellen, thoughtfully. "Do you know," she added, colouring: "I did wish it simply at first; but afterwards, when nurse praised me, and said it was so kind of me to work for a poor child like that, I am afraid I thought then of what others would say, if they knew." The tears came into Ellen's eyes as she spoke.

"I am glad you told me this, dear," said Mrs. Herbert. "Now you are ashamed of it, I hope. You can always put away these vain feelings, if you think of who it really is to whom you do any kind act—our blessed Lord Himself. You know that."

"Yes, mamma," said Ellen, reverently; "because He says, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me.' I remember your teaching me about that."

They were just turning out of the pretty shady lane behind the church, on to the village green. It was a lovely place, with fine old trees clustered about it, some of which had seats under them for the old people, who loved to gather there for a gossip in the long summer evenings, while the children played about on the green sward. At one end of the green was the village well, built into a little arched shed, nearly overgrown with ivy. Three or four steps led down to it; and of course, as it was

the most dangerous spot of which the children knew, they were generally to be found playing near it. More than one little urchin had fallen in, but, as it was broad and not very deep, had escaped with a ducking. For fear of this, little Katie had been forbidden to play on the green at all, except when the widow took her there. Sometimes the old lady would take out her knitting, and have a chat under the trees with her neighbour, Mrs. Goyne, while the children ran about, delighted with the soft green turf, on which they could roll and tumble without hurting themselves. But granny was very strict, and did not allow them to go beyond her own garden gate unless she was with them.

On this afternoon, however, Katie had a perverse fit. She would not eat her dinner of potatoes and salt, first of all, but sat with her finger in her mouth all dinner time; and when, at last, it was taken away, the little rebel cried for it. Afterwards, in the garden, she tugged up a great red daisy root, and flung it in the middle of the path; and, finally, when Agnes had gone into the house, Katie trotted to the gate, unlatched the wicket, and marched out alone upon the green, knowing all the time that she was very naughty indeed.

Three or four little children were playing on


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the grass, and to them Katie went. They began presently to chase one another, and they must needs race to the well. Katie, who had never been allowed to go near it, was delighted: they could not get her to come away. She toddled down the steps, and peeped over into the water, charmed at seeing her own face there. In vain the others, who had run off again, called to her to come with them. She had found something new, and could not leave it. But, stooping over the water a little too far, she lost her balance, and, with a shriek of terror, fell in.

Mrs. Herbert and Ellen were at that moment crossing the green. But for this Katie must have been drowned, for the other children were already far off, on the opposite side.

"Mamma, what's that?" exclaimed Ellen, as she heard poor Katie's cry.

Mrs. Herbert had heard it, too. She did not answer, but flew towards the well. Katie had just risen to the top. Mrs. Herbert, snatching at her clothes, drew her out, dripping, and insensible from fright, and ran with her across the green to the widow's cottage.

They had just missed her. Agnes, on coming out again, saw that Katie was not in the garden, and spent some time in wondering

what had become of her. Then she saw the wicket gate unclosed, and went in to tell granny, who, hurrying out, met Mrs. Herbert at the door with the dripping child.

Quickly and promptly Katie was undressed and put into a warm bed, in dry clothing; but she showed no sign of returning sense, and Mrs. Herbert began to fear that the shock and fright had been too much for her. She did not say this to the widow, but proposed sending for the village doctor, who lived near.

"Run, Ellen, dear," she said to her daughter, who stood by, silent and frightened, gazing at the pale face on the pillow; "make yourself of use. Go and ask Mr. Dale to come here at once."

"I don't know where he lives," said Ellen, timidly.

"I will show you, miss," said Agnes, who had not yet spoken. A bright colour had come up in her cheeks; she had grown suddenly brave.

"Yes; go, dear," said Mrs. Herbert, kindly. "Go together: be quick!" And Agnes, putting out her hand to Ellen, made haste out of the cottage, and the two ran breathlessly to the doctor's house. He was at home, happily, and came with them at once. When he saw Katie, he said she had had a very

great shock, and must be kept perfectly quiet, or she might never recover from it.

Mrs. Herbert then said to the widow, "Let me carry these two little ones away with me for a few days; I will take every care of them. My housekeeper is a very kind person, and they will be quite safe with her."

Widow Salter could not express her thanks. "It is too much, ma'am," she said. "How can you think of such a thing?"

But Mrs. Herbert would have it so. "They would be no trouble," she said. And Ellen, delighted, found the baby's hat and coat, and dressed her, ready to go. Then she shyly put her parcel into Agnes's hand, saying, "I made this for you."

Agnes as shyly opened the parcel, and found in it a pretty little print frock. She was very much pleased, and the widow thanked Ellen heartily. Ellen begged to be allowed to dress her in it, to see if it fitted. When this was done Mrs. Herbert, finding she could be of no further use, left the cottage with the children, telling the widow that she would look in again shortly to see how little Katie was.

Agnes kept tight hold of Ellen's hand all the way, but did not speak, as she felt very shy. When they reached the green gate which led into the pretty grounds of the

Manor House, Ellen said, "Mamma, may I take them into the garden?"

"Yes, my dear," said Mrs. Herbert; "take them to play on the lawn while I speak to Mrs. Brown about them."

The Manor garden was a beautiful one, with grassy banks and slopes, and beds of bright-coloured flowers on the lawn. There were also many rare and lovely trees and flowering shrubs; and at one end of the lawn was a large weeping ash, the boughs of which touched the ground on all sides, and made a charming little green bower. This was Ellen's favourite nook: here she brought her books, and amused herself for hours. Some of her things were scattered on the ground; she gave the baby a toy to amuse her, and then asked Agnes what she would like to play at. Agnes, who had never seen such a garden before, did not wish to play or to run about: she only wanted to go from one bed to another to look at the beautiful flowers, many of which were quite new to her.

"Are you so fond of flowers, then?" asked Ellen. "Would you like to have some?"

"Oh, may I?" asked Agnes. "Yes, I should, very much."

"Then I will pick you some of my own," said Ellen, leading Agnes to a round bed close

to the weeping ash. "This is my garden—and you see I have got all sorts of things in it—roses, heartsease, sweetwilliam, nemophila, geraniums, fuchsias, and sweet peas. And Roger digs it for me, and I weed it, and water it myself every evening. You shall help me to-night, if you like; what do you say?"

"Yes, miss," said Agnes, and her face brightened into a smile.

Then Ellen picked a large bunch of flowers, and gave them to Agnes, which made her quite happy. And Ellen took her to see the fountain which played in the middle of the lawn, with the little gold fish swimming about in it; and then they paid a visit to the rabbits, which had a hutch in a corner of the garden, and fed them with lettuce leaves and parsley, coaxed by Ellen from old Roger, the gardener.

Agnes soon lost her shyness, and began to think she had never spent such a happy day. She helped Ellen to water her flowers; and presently Mrs. Brown, the housekeeper, came out and fetched her and the baby in to tea in her room, and put them to bed in a little room which opened out of hers. The baby cried for granny, but Agnes soon comforted her, and they fell asleep in each other's arms, Agnes to dream of beautiful gardens and flowers and gold fish.

CHAPTER IV.

In a few days little Katie was herself again, and the widow took her up to the Manor House, to thank Mrs. Herbert for her kindness to the other children, and to bring them back with her.

When she got there, she was shown into the morning room, where Mrs. Herbert generally sat with her daughter. Ellen was sitting on the low window-seat which looked on the flower-garden, teaching Agnes her letters. Katie stood still for a moment, looking round the strange room, and then, seeing Agnes, flew to her with a bound, and clung to her neck.

Mrs. Herbert smiled.

"They seem very fond of each other," she said. "I am glad to see Katie so well again."

"Yes, ma'am, bless the Lord," said Widow Salter; "and I'm come to thank you as well as I can for your kindness in taking the two little ones. Indeed, ma'am, I don't know how to thank you, and that 's the truth."

"Don't speak of it," said Mrs. Herbert. "I am very glad to have been able to do it for

you; and, really, we have taken such a fancy to your little Agnes, that we are not inclined to part with her. My little girl has been teaching her her letters, and finds her an apt scholar."

"Agnes says she likes her lessons very much," said Ellen, looking up a little proudly. "Mamma, will you let me go on teaching her every day? I should like it so."

"If Mrs. Salter would like her to come to us every day for an hour, I think you might," said Mrs. Herbert.

"Thank you kindly, ma'am, I'm sure," said the widow, curtseying. "I'm well pleased that she should learn, and if it is not troubling you——"

"Not at all," said Mrs. Herbert; "my little girl will be very much pleased to do it."

"Yes, that I shall," said Ellen; and she whispered to Agnes—"Shall you like to come every day?"

Agnes smiled, and whispered "Yes."

Then Mrs. Herbert rang for the little one to be brought to granny, and Ellen took Agnes away to put on her things. Agnes came back with her hands full of treasures, which Ellen had given her,—some little dolls, and remains of a doll's house, chairs, tables, and dishes, which were a new delight for Agnes, who had never seen such things before.

"These are for us!" she cried, showing them to Katie, who immediately wanted to have them all, and seized hold of the basket. Agnes gave it up to her quite willingly, and the widow said in a low voice to Mrs. Herbert, who was watching the children, "That is always the way with her, ma'am. I never saw such a child to give up."

Given up the toys really were, from that moment; for Katie would have it they were hers, and only as a great favour let Agnes play with them sometimes.

But Agnes did not trouble herself about it: the one great joy of her day now, was going to the Manor House for her lessons with Ellen. Every day, at twelve o'clock punctually, she was at the back door of the Manor House, in her clean round pinafore and brown straw hat, with a little green baize bag in her hand, in which were her book and slate. During the fine weather the lessons were often done in the garden, under the favourite weeping ash. Ellen was a very steady teacher, and Agnes soon learnt to read: her reward for a good lesson was a bunch of flowers from Ellen's garden. Sometimes, after her lessons were over, she helped Ellen to weed and water her flower-beds. Ellen gave Agnes some seeds and cuttings from her garden, and

the widow allowed her to have a little corner just under the cottage railings for her own. She showed Agnes how to sow her seeds, and planted her cuttings for her, and when they went into the fields they dug up some primrose, and cowslip, and violet roots, for Agnes's corner, so that she had soon a gay little flower-bed of her own. It was a great delight to her to watch the tender seedlings coming up, and to count the buds as they showed themselves, and then to see them opening day by day, until they were fully out. I am sorry to say, however, that these treasured flowers became the cause of one of Agnes's greatest troubles.

There was a little plant of bright scarlet geranium in her garden, which Ellen had given her. Agnes was very proud of this, and had planted it just in the middle of the bed. It had only one spray of buds, and for many days Agnes had carefully watched these, as they grew larger and larger, and at last the red streaks appeared. One morning when she ran out as usual, the first thing after she was dressed and had said her prayers, she saw, to her great joy, that the bright scarlet blossom was quite out. She ran back into the cottage to tell granny, and to beg her to come and look at it.

"Do see how grand—how beautiful it is!"

she exclaimed; "do come, granny, dear! I never had such a flower!"

Granny had just finished teaching Katie her prayers; for she was very careful about this, and always taught the children to say theirs night and morning. Katie, hearing of the wonderful flower, ran out first to see it, and, stepping on the bed, stooped down to smell it. In her eagerness she went down on both her knees, right upon the geranium, crushing it under her, just as Agnes and granny came out of the porch. Agnes gave one cry and then stood still, quite pale, when she saw it.

"Katie, you naughty child! what have you done?" cried granny.

Katie burst out crying, and sobbed bitterly as she got up and stood over the broken geranium, and saw the bright, pretty flower all crushed into the mould.

"Poor Agnes!" said granny; "I'm sorry for you, dear. Granny will see what she can give you instead of the geranium. Katie, go and kiss sister, and tell her you're sorry you broke her flower."

Katie came slowly towards her sister, still sobbing, with one finger in her mouth, and put up her face to be kissed; but Agnes turned away, and went into the house.

Granny did not see this, for she was stoop-

ing over the bed to pick up the geranium. It was broken quite off at the root. She brought it with her into the cottage, saying, in a cheery voice,

"Agnes! where's my little Agnes? I think we can mend this poor thing, after all, though it won't flower again yet."

She got a knife, and cut off the bruised blossom and leaves, and the broken part of the stalk, and then put the slip in a mug of water; intending, after breakfast, to plant it in a pot, and keep it in-doors for a few days, until it should be strong again.

When she looked round to show Agnes what she had done, she saw that the little girl was not there; only Katie stood, still crying, in the doorway.

"There, that will do: dry your eyes," said the widow. "Another time be more careful. Where's Agnes?"

Agnes was sitting on the bed in the next room, very unhappy. She could not forgive Katie all at once; and she was *so* disappointed about her geranium. Granny called her to come in to her breakfast, and she rose and went slowly into the kitchen, looking very gloomy, sat down at the table, and eat her sops in silence. Katie looked at her, but she took no notice; and, as soon as she had done her breakfast, she took her spelling-book and

went and sat in the window-seat, without speaking a word. There she stayed all the morning, and though Katie several times ran in to see if she would not come out into the garden, she refused. It was granny's washing day, and she was busy in the back kitchen, so she saw nothing of all this. At half-past eleven she came into the front kitchen, and called Agnes to come and be made tidy to go to the Manor. She thought Agnes was more quiet than usual, but supposed she was grieved about her plant; so, kissing her when she was dressed, she said, "Never mind, granny's darling; she shall have a prettier flower before long."

As Agnes passed the garden where her two little sisters were playing, Katie ran up to her for a kiss, as she always did; but Agnes pushed past her, and ran quickly out on the green. She could not bear to see that great hole in the middle of her flower-bed.

As she walked towards the Manor, she could not help feeling that she had been very unkind to poor little Katie; but it *was* too bad of her to destroy the precious plant which she had set her heart upon for so long. No: she could not forgive her.

The lessons got on badly this morning.

Ellen could not think what was the matter with Agnes, she seemed so sad and dull.

When Agnes had finished saying her catechism, Ellen said to her, "Are you not well to-day, Agnes?"

Agnes made no answer, but coloured deeply.

"What is the matter?" said Ellen. "Can't you tell me? Are you unhappy?"

Then it seemed as if Agnes could not restrain herself. She burst out crying.

"Yes, Miss Ellen," she sobbed out; "very, very."

"What is it, dear?" said Ellen, kindly.

"Katie's broke my geranium, and I *can't* love her," cried Agnes, with a fresh burst of tears.

"What, the one that I gave you?" asked Ellen.

"Yes, miss," sobbed Agnes.

"On purpose?" exclaimed Ellen. "Well, that *was* unkind."

"No, miss, not on purpose," said Agnes, feeling ashamed, as she remembered how entirely it had been an accident.

"How then?" asked Ellen.

"She fell over it," said Agnes, in a low voice.

"By accident?" asked Ellen. "Poor little Katie. Wasn't she very sorry?"

"Yes," said Agnes; "she cried."

"And you were angry with her?" asked Ellen, in a tone of surprise. "But I sup-

pose it was only the first minute. You forgave her after?"

Agnes made no answer, but hung her head.

"You can't love her?" said Ellen. "How dreadful! I should not have thought it of you, Agnes."

This went to Agnes's heart. She began to see how unkind she had been to her little sister. Ellen said no more about it, but shut up the book, saying, "That will do for to-day. My bed wants weeding on this side. Will you help me?"

"Yes, miss," said Agnes, in a tone very different from that in which she usually spoke when asked to help in the garden. She did not smile, but knelt down and began weeding.

Ellen, meanwhile, ran off to a little tool-house behind the bushes on the side of the lawn, and came back with a pot in her hands, which she partly filled with mould. Then, taking her trowel, she dug up a pretty little French geranium, which was just coming into flower, with its large pink streaked blossoms—a great favourite of hers. She put it carefully in the pot, covered the root with mould, and pressed it down. Agnes did not see what she was doing, until Ellen brought the plant to her, and said,—

"Here is another geranium for you, as yours was broken."

Agnes looked up, and her face grew crimson.

"No, no!" she answered, as the tears began to come again.

"Yes, you must. I have potted it on purpose for you. Don't cry any more, now; but take it, and give Katie a kiss when you go home."

A thought came into Agnes's head as Ellen spoke. She said, joyfully,—

"Thank you, dear Miss Ellen. May I take it now?"

"Yes, now, if you like," said Ellen.

Agnes jumped up, and took the pot in her arms. Ellen wondered at the change in her face—it looked quite happy again as Agnes made her curtsey, and trotted off.

"Katie, darling, this is for your very own!" cried Agnes, bursting into the garden, where Katie still roamed about, looking miserable because Aggie would not kiss her. But a great hug made it all right again, and Katie could scarcely believe her own happiness when she was quite sure that the beautiful flower in the pot was all her own, "to keep!"

CHAPTER V.

We must pass over a few years in the life of the little ones. Agnes was now twelve years old, and had grown into a tall, fair girl, still as quiet and shy as ever. She had gone regularly to Miss Ellen to be taught up to this time, and now Katie had taken her place. For it was time, granny thought, for Agnes to be earning something, since, as the children grew older, they became more of a charge—their clothes cost more, and bread was very dear; and often during the winter, Widow Salter had been hardly put to it to provide for them. But she let no one know it; for she said to herself, that she had undertaken the charge, and she would bear the burden cheerfully. Many times she turned over in her mind what could be done to lighten it; and at last she resolved to give up that which, next to the children, she loved best. She would sell her flowers, and Agnes should take them to the market.

So one afternoon, when her pretty garden

was already looking bright with snowdrops, and crocuses, and hyacinths, she went to the Manor, and asked to see Mrs. Herbert.

After thanking Ellen and her mother for their kindness to Agnes, she told Mrs. Herbert that she thought Agnes was now old enough to be of use in helping to maintain the family, and spoke of what she meant to do, making little of it; though, in reality, it cost her a good deal to sacrifice her beloved flowers, which had always been her pride and the admiration of every passer-by.

"I care for my children more than my flowers, ma'am," she said, with a smile, when Mrs. Herbert expressed surprise at her parting with them. "'Twill give us a few more little comforts, and 'tis good for the child to be making herself useful, and the walk of a day will do her good. She keeps too quiet to please me: I don't think it's good for her. I'm not afraid of her taking up with any bad company—she's no likings that way. I shall take her in myself, the first time, just to put her in the way of it. Thank you kindly, ma'am, and dear miss, for all you have done for my dear child. I can never thank you enough."

"I shall miss my little pupil very much," said Ellen; "she is such a good girl, it has been a real pleasure to teach her. I think if

you take her away, I must have Katie in exchange."

"Thank you, miss, I'm sure," said Mrs. Salter; "but I doubt she would give you a deal of trouble—she's so wild and tempersome, I'm sometimes quite out of heart about her; she's not like her sister."

"I should like to try her," said Ellen, "if you can spare her." So it was settled; but when Katie first heard that she was to go to the Manor to be taught, she roared, and stamped, and said "she would not go—she hated lessons!"

"It's not a bit like school, Katie, dear," said Agnes, trying to soothe her; "Miss Ellen's so kind, you would be quite happy there."

"No," cried Katie; "I can't go! I won't go! I don't want to learn!"

Granny got up from her seat in the window, where she was busily stitching, put down her work, took Katie by the hand into the bedroom, and, without speaking a word, undressed and put her to bed. This was the greatest punishment to the wild and restless Katie, and the best that could be for her. When she had cried her cry out, she began to think how naughty she was; and when granny came presently into the room, she heard a little voice whispering, "I'm sorry! forgive me!"

Granny kissed Katie, and said, "I forgive you, dear; but there is some One else whom you must ask to forgive you for your naughty passion. Who is that?"

"God," said Katie, in a low voice.

"Yes," said granny; "He is more grieved even than I am, when He hears Katie speak as she did to-day. Kneel down and ask Him to forgive you, and to make you a better child."

Katie did as she was bid, and then said to granny, "May I dress again, now, and go out?"

"No, dear," said granny; "you must still have your punishment; you will not get up again to-day. Let me see that you are really sorry, by being good about it."

Katie looked very much disappointed, for the sun was shining brightly, and she wanted to go and have a game with the children on the green, where she was now allowed to go. She could see them all at play there, and hear their shouts, and it was so horrible to be in bed.

But she knew that what granny said she meant, and that it would be of no use to beg. So she got, sorrowfully, into bed again, and pulled the clothes over her head that she might not hear the children's merry play. By-and-by she fell asleep.

The next morning was Saturday, and after breakfast, while Agnes was washing up the things, the widow took her scissors and basket and went into the garden. Agnes was growing very helpful now in the house, and was able to do a great deal for granny: she got up early every morning and lit the fire, swept and dusted the kitchen, and got the breakfast ready; after breakfast she washed up and put the things away, and then made the beds, and swept and cleaned the bedroom; then went to help granny about cooking, or washing, or whatever was needed, until she went for her lesson to the Manor. The afternoon was spent in needlework, for she had become, under Ellen's teaching, such a clever little needlewoman that she was able to help granny with the plain work which she took in to do for some of the gentry round.

"Granny, what *have* you been doing?" cried Agnes, as the widow came into the cottage, laden with flowers.

"Why, I've got a treat for ye, darling," said granny, cheerily, laying the basket on the table, and taking from the unknown depths of her pocket a ball of twine. "You shall help me to tie these up in bunches, with a bit of green at the back, and then we'll take them into market."

"To sell?" exclaimed Agnes. "How nice. You and I, granny dear?"

"Yes," said granny; and then she put on her spectacles, and, drawing a chair to the table, began to sort the flowers.

Agnes quickly finished putting away the cups and plates in the cupboard, and then helped granny to tie up the bunches, each with a bit of box or yew at the back—some penny bunches, some two-penny, some three-penny; those with the hyacinths in them, Agnes thought, ought to sell for most, as they were so sweet. The basket looked very pretty when the flowers were all arranged in it. There were snowdrops; lilac, and yellow, and white crocuses; violets, daffydowndillies, single and double polyanthuses, and hyacinths of several colours. Agnes was delighted, though she could not help regretting their loss from the garden bed.

Giving little Mary in charge to Katie, the widow set off with Agnes to the market, which was held three days a-week at the town of Bayntown, two miles off. It was a small watering-place, but pretty and retired, and much visited by invalids, which was a happy thing for the sale of granny's flowers.

As they entered the town, and were walking along one of the newly-built terraces of nice-looking houses, Agnes heard a childish voice

exclaim: "O mamma, mamma! look at those lovely flowers; buy some for Janet; do, O do!"

Agnes looked up at the green verandah from which the sounds came, and saw a bright sunny-faced child standing there on tiptoe, peeping over, and pointing down at her, with a face of eager delight. At the same minute, a lady stepped out of the window which opened on the balcony, and seeing Agnes's basket of flowers, beckoned to her to bring it to the door.

The little girl, whose name was Florence, darted down-stairs just as the servant opened the door.

She looked shyly at Agnes for a minute, and then said,—

"Mamma says, will you let my sick sister look at your flowers? She would like to so much."

"Yes, miss, and welcome," said granny. "Give the little lady the basket, Agnes. No, it is too heavy for her, dear heart," she added, seeing that Florence could scarcely lift it in her little arms.

"I will take it," said the maid. "Come, Miss Flo. Go on up, out of the draught, dear. Come inside, missis, and sit down."

Miss Flo ran up, obediently, while granny and Agnes waited in the hall. Agnes heard

her rush into a room, a little way up, and say, "Here are the flowers, Janet, darling. Such beauties!" and then some exclamations of delight in a weak, gentle voice, as they were brought in. This was the sick young lady, Agnes thought, and she wished she could see her. She began to imagine all sorts of things about her—how she looked, how old she was, what was the matter with her; and then she heard her cough, and the door of her room was shut.

A few minutes after, the maid came down with the basket, and some of the best bunches of flowers in her hand, of which she asked the price, and then paid for them.

"The young lady is sick," she said, "and dearly loves flowers. Please call here whenever you come in."

The widow said, "Please to give the lady my best thanks, and my little girl will be sure to call;" and then they went on towards the market. But before they got there an old gentleman stopped them, and bought a bunch for a little girl who was walking with him; and a lady who passed them bought another; so that about half the basket was emptied before they reached the market gates.

"Let us stand here," said granny, "and offer them to the people who go in."

The flowers were all quickly sold; and then granny had to do a few little shoppings, one of which was to buy a small camp stool for Agnes to sit on by the market gates.

"That will be the best place for you, dear," she said. "Next time you will come in by yourself, and we shall see how you get on."

Agnes was rather proud, though a little frightened too, at the idea of coming in to sell flowers by herself. It was a good thing for her in one way; for she was apt to be too timid and dependent.

"I shall like going to the house where that dear little lady is," she said to granny, as they walked homeward. "I wish I could see the sick young lady so much!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE spring passed, and the summer came on, filling the widow's garden with its choicest treasures. Now the lilies and carnations came out, and an abundance of sweet roses, white and red; and one of the greatest treats that Agnes had was making up the tasty little bunches of flowers for sale, each in a small cabbage leaf to keep it cool.

She still went regularly to the market town with her flower basket, which met with very good custom, for she nearly always sold all that she took in. At first she had felt a little strange at going in by herself, and offering the flowers for sale; but she got used to it, and soon looked forward to it with pleasure. Best of all, she liked going to the house on the terrace, where the sick young lady lived, who always had some of her best flowers. The basket used to be taken up to her to choose from, while Agnes waited in the hall; and sometimes Miss Flo came tripping down to her with the money, and the brightest of smiles and

kindly words. Agnes did wish that she could see Miss Janet: she had so many thoughts about her.

"Granny, dear," she said, one day; "do you know that my moss rose has come out? I do believe it is the very first out this year. I have not seen any yet."

This was a precious little moss rose tree which had been given to Agnes by her friend Miss Ellen, of the Manor. The widow had none in her garden, so it was looked upon as a great treasure.

"Granny, I've been thinking," Agnes went on, "I should like to give my first moss rose to the sick young lady, Miss Flo's sister, if you think I might. I'm sure she'd like it; she is so fond of flowers. Would there be any harm, granny, dear?"

"I don't think so, dear," said granny, "if you send it up with a proper message."

So Agnes ran out, scissors in hand—for they were in the midst of tying up bunches—and cut the lovely pink moss rose, with two or three great leaves to put round it. It was carefully tied up in a cabbage leaf by granny, and laid in the top of the basket, and then Agnes set off for the town.

When she reached the house on the terrace, she sent up her basket as usual, with a request that the sick young lady would

be pleased to accept the moss rose. Her heart beat fast as she waited below, wondering what the young lady would say, and whether it would be thought a great liberty. Presently the door up-stairs opened, and Miss Flo bounded half-way down, calling out—

"Little girl, come up here, please."

Agnes trembled with pleasure and shyness as she obeyed, and followed Miss Flo into the drawing-room.

There, on a couch near the window, lay a pale fair girl of sixteen, supported by pillows, with a fur covering spread over her feet. She had a sweet, patient face, which looked as if she had known a great deal of pain, but which lit up with a bright smile as Agnes came in. A little table was by her, on which were some books, and a vase of flowers.

"I wanted to thank you myself," said Miss Janet, "for that pretty rose. It is lovely; and I like it so much. I shall put it in a vase by itself on my table. Is it out of your garden?"

"Yes, miss," said Agnes, colouring.

"What made you think of bringing it to me?" asked Janet.

"Because you were ill, miss," said Agnes.

Janet smiled.

"Have you a garden of your own?" she asked.

"Yes, miss," said Agnes, "a little bit."

"Have you many flowers in it?"

"No, miss, only a few Miss Ellen gave me."

"Who is Miss Ellen?"

"The young lady at the Manor, miss."

"Oh, I know her," said Janet. "She is a great friend of mine, and often comes to sit with me."

Agnes's face brightened, and she said, "She has been very kind to me, and taught me for a long time, miss, until I came in to sell flowers."

"You can read, then?" asked Janet. "Do you like reading?"

"Yes, miss, dearly," said Agnes. "I read as I sit by the market gate, sometimes."

"Flo, dear," said Miss Janet, turning to her little sister, who stood by the sofa; "run and fetch me that pink book that is on the table in my bedroom."

Flo skipped away, and came back with the book. It was called "The Little Comforters," and was full of stories and pictures. Janet said to Agnes,—

"You must keep this little book for your own; and mind you bring some flowers to me next week again."

Agnes curtseyed, and thanked Miss Janet as well as she could. She was so pleased, she scarcely knew what she said. She turned

her little book over and over as she went along, and admired its pretty pink cover, and thought how kind it was of Miss Janet. When she got to the market gate, she put out her little camp stool, and seating herself on it, with her basket on her lap, began to read "The Little Comforters" to herself. She was so taken up with the story that she did not hear a lady, who had twice asked her the price of her flowers, and who was standing by, looking amused at her eagerness over the story.

Agnes jumped up, and her face grew very red, as she said: "I beg your pardon, ma'am."

The lady smiled, and said, "You seem fond of reading?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Agnes.

The lady said, "Can you spare me all your flowers? I want a great many for some decorations."

"Yes, ma'am," said Agnes, joyfully; "and if these are not enough, granny has more in her garden."

"Where do you live?" asked the lady, who was the wife of the clergyman of Bayntown.

"Two miles out, ma'am, in the village of Elmsley," answered Agnes.

"Could you bring me in some more early to-morrow morning?" asked Mrs. Mayow.

"Yes, ma'am," replied Agnes, well pleased. "How many, please ma'am?"

"Two such baskets-full, if you can," said Mrs. Mayow. "Can you carry both?"

"My sister will help me," answered Agnes, as she remembered that the next day was Saturday, on which day Katie never went to the Manor for lessons.

"Bring them to the Parsonage, then, at eleven o'clock," said Mrs. Mayow. "That little house by the church, with green railings in front. You had better bring these flowers there now." Agnes thanked Mrs. Mayow, and followed her to the Parsonage, which was close by. On the plot of grass in front of the house, a dear little boy of three years old was playing, who raced to meet his mamma as soon as she was in sight. He was a noble-looking little fellow, with clustering chestnut curls round his bright open face.

"Ma!" he cried out: "Gee-gee vely naughty. I been whipping him hard!" Gee-gee was a large wooden horse which stood on the grass, nearly as big as the boy himself.

Mrs. Mayow smiled. "What has Gee-gee been doing?" she asked.

"He 'll not say his *grace*," answered the little boy, quite gravely, pointing to a small wooden bucket of water which he had put

before the horse—"so I *'biged* to whip him!"

"Like a little boy that mamma once knew," said Mrs. Mayow, kissing the bright face. Arthur's look showed that he knew who this was. He thought it was as well to turn the subject; and, seeing the flowers in Agnes's basket, exclaimed to her,—

"Fowers! Oh, do give me one!"

Agnes looked at his mamma, who said,—

"Yes, give him a bright one." She drew a rose out of one of the bunches, and gave it to little Arthur, who put up his face and said, "Kit me, 'ittle girl!"

"May I, please, ma'am?" asked Agnes, timidly.

"Yes, certainly," said Mrs. Mayow. And then she took Agnes into the parlour, and rang the bell for a basin of water, into which they put the flowers. Mrs. Mayow talked to Agnes the while, and was much pleased with her gentle, modest manner, and all she told her about her little sisters and granny. She bid her be sure to bring Katie with her the next day, with the flowers. When Agnes got home she had a great deal to tell: her visit to Miss Janet's room, the gift of the book, and all about Mrs. Mayow; especially she told about the dear little boy, and his giving her a kiss.

"Well, child," said granny, when Agnes had done: "I don't think I ever heard your tongue run so fast before." And she smiled.

"O granny!" cried Katie; "and I am to go, too, to-morrow. I wish I always went with Aggie, instead of those horrid lessons. I hate lessons."

"Hush! that's not right, said granny; "it's very kind of Miss Ellen to take the trouble to teach you. There's few young ladies would do that, day by day, as she does, for a poor child."

"I can't think how you can hate it," said Agnes; "I love reading. Now I am going to enjoy myself," she added, as she hung up her coat and hat, and took "The Little Comforters" out of her pocket. She was just going to seat herself in the window, when granny said,—

"Agnes, child, these night-gowns must be finished; I promised them home to-morrow night. There are all the frills to sew on yet."

Agnes coloured up, and did not speak. It was very disappointing, just as she was in the middle of a most interesting story, and she was longing so to read it. She had quite a struggle with herself before she put it back in her pocket. But she was a conscientious child, and something seemed to say to her that her learning had not been given her to

hinder her from her duties, but to help her to do them well. Agnes listened to this little voice, and a few minutes after she was sitting cheerfully at work on the window-seat, stitching away with all her might.

When Agnes went to bed that night she felt much happier, you may be sure, than if she had given way to ill-humour and selfishness about her story-book. Now she had done right, and there was the pleasure to come; so she lay down to sleep with a light heart.

The next morning, however, brought its duties. The flowers had to be picked and sorted, and tied up: the two little girls helped granny with this. Then they had to dress themselves neatly, and set off quickly to the town. Each carried a basket, and gaily they went along together, Katie's tongue going nearly as fast as her feet.

"There is the Parsonage," said Agnes, when they came in sight of it. "Now, Katie, I wonder if we shall see that funny little boy again, at Mrs. Mayow's? I hope we shall. Yes; there is his curly head—I can see it through the palings. Look: he has put his hat on the horse's head."

Katie and Agnes both peeped between the palings, and burst out laughing at this funny sight. The little boy turned round, and,

seeing the two merry faces peering through, called out—"Wobbers! wobbers! Ho! hi! Be off!" and, snatching up his whip, he ran towards the palings to drive them away.

Agnes and Katie fled to the garden gate, and were at the Parsonage door before Master Arthur found out that the "wobbers" were actually in the garden. Then, seeing who they were, he ran after them into the house, and bounced past them into the dining-room, crying out—

"Mamma! fowers come again! More fowers. See, see!"

Mrs. Mayow, seeing Katie and Agnes outside, called to them to come in and empty their baskets on the table. While they did so she spoke kindly to them, and asked them some questions about what they did at home, and whether Katie could read and sew. She was well pleased with their quiet, respectful manners, and their neat and clean appearance. They told her about granny, and their little sister, and their garden. And when they went away Mrs. Mayow said, "I shall pay granny a visit one of these days, tell her, to see her pretty garden."

"Take me, too!—me, too!" cried Arthur. "Only little me!"

"We shall see," said his mamma, "if little me is very good."

Two days after, Mrs. Mayow, with Master Arthur, came to see granny. While she sat in the kitchen, the children took the little boy into the garden, and Agnes picked him some double daisies from her border. Mrs. Mayow said to granny, "I came to say to you that I wanted a little girl as under-nurse, and I am so pleased with your adopted children that I hoped you would spare one of them to me. Are you willing to part with either of them? she should be well cared for."

"Thank you kindly, ma'am," said the widow; "it is very good of you. Yes; I suppose I must part with them, sooner or later. They must go into the world, and earn their living; and yet, I'm loth to lose them—I don't know which I could do without—they're dear children, both. Agnes, there, she's just my right hand, so steady and quiet, and thoughtful; does all she has to do, well, and because 'tis her duty. She's just her dear mother's gentle ways with her. My Katie, too, she's a sunbeam in the house: bright, and brisk as a bee, and such a one for cleaning and scrubbing; this kitchen's her handiwork," added Dame Salter, looking round with some pardonable pride on the bright fire-place, over which hung well-polished tins; and at the well-scrubbed table,

and shining chairs ranged in order against the wall. Certainly, a brighter and cleaner little cottage room was nowhere to be seen in the village.

"Is Katie fond of children, and kind and good-tempered with them?" asked Mrs. Mayow.

"Yes, indeed, ma'am, is she," answered the widow; "she's like an own mother over the little one. Thank you, ma'am, if it must be one of them, for thinking of her; for, indeed, I could not get on yet without Agnes: she is, in a way, getting her living, by selling our flowers, and I should not like to send the other to do it alone. She's high spirits, ma'am, if you'll excuse me for saying so much; but she's a sweet temper, and I hope would know her place."

"She would have a very good servant over her, who would teach her her duties, if she will only be obedient," said Mrs. Mayow; "but I am very particular about that."

"I have tried to train them to it, ma'am," said granny; "I will say that; for it's the main thing, I do believe, with children, and they can't begin too early. Not but what Katie has still a will of her own, though she has never been allowed to give way to it."

"I am quite willing to try her," said Mrs. Mayow. "How soon can you spare her?"

"It will take a few days to get her clothes to rights," replied granny. "Would Monday week suit you, ma'am?"

"Yes, perfectly," said Mrs. Mayow, as she rose to go; "I shall give her ten shillings a quarter for the present, and, if she continues with me and is a good girl, I shall increase her wages accordingly. I will give you this in advance," she added, taking half-a-sovereign from her purse; "you will want something towards her outfit."

The widow thanked Mrs. Mayow gratefully, and followed her into the garden, where Arthur was having a game of fun with the kitten, to the great peril of granny's flowers, while the three little girls stood shyly looking on. Mrs. Mayow nodded kindly to Katie, as she curtsied and held open the gate, little thinking that she was doing so for her future mistress.

CHAPTER VII.

"AGGIE, dear," said Katie, from the kitchen window: "do come here—I want to tell you something." Aggie was gardening, with a large coarse apron tied round her. "What is it?" she asked, coming to the window.

Katie, with her frock tucked up, and a scrubbing-brush in one hand, put her head out, and said, in a low voice, "What can granny be doing with all my clothes? Do you know, she's putting them out on the bed, and looking over each one, and putting some of them in Molly's place, and taking some of your aprons to put with mine."

"I'm sure I don't know," said Agnes. "Do go on with your work, Katie;" and she went back to her own.

Presently granny called to Agnes, and told her to put on her things, and come with her to the village shop.

"Look after Molly, child, while I'm away," she said to Katie, whose curiosity was roused afresh by seeing Agnes go off with granny. But when, after ten minutes, they came back, carrying a small paper-covered trunk between

them, her wonderings became greater than ever. What *could* be going to happen? They brought the trunk in, and put it in the bedroom, and Agnes staid there with granny for some time, helping her. How Katie longed to know what it all meant! But she did not like to ask, so she went on scrubbing, and cleaning, and dusting, till the kitchen was as bright as a new pin. By-and-by Agnes came out of the bedroom; her eyes were very red, and looked as if she had been crying. She came up to Katie, threw her arms round her, and kissed her as she had never done before; then, with a great gulping sob, ran out into the garden.

A minute after, granny came into the kitchen, with an armful of clothes to be mended.

"Well, my maid," she said, cheerily; "here 's a heap of work for us; and we must make haste with it, for ye're to go this day week."

"Go!" exclaimed Katie, aghast. "Where?"

"Didn't Aggie tell you?" asked granny. "I thought she'd have told you all about it. Where is she?"

"Ran out," answered Katie. "But, granny dear, what—where is it? *I* going away? No, no," and she burst out crying.

"What babies you are!" cried granny,

half smiling, though. "There goes Agnes off in a torrent, just because you're going to a place, and now you. I never!"

"Going to a place! Away from you, and Aggie, and Molly," sobbed Katie.

"Not very far," said granny, smoothing the fair-haired head which lay in her lap. "Only to Bayntown, my darling. Mrs. Mayow wants a little nurse-maid. Won't you like that? To tend that dear little boy?"

Katie's tears quickly dried, now. Yes, she thought she should like that. And it was not so very far off. She would often see Aggie and granny. And it was rather grand to think of going to service so young, and of being able to help granny, by earning some money for her. So she set to work brightly in a few minutes, and when Aggie came in to help, presently, she found Katie chattering away with granny about all that she was likely to have to do and learn in her first place.

Agnes took up her mending in silence. It was different for *her;* she was going to be left behind. She wondered how Katie could be so gay about it. Perhaps she felt a little, a very little, jealous. She was the eldest; and here was Katie, who was not nearly so careful or clever, going out to service first. It was a natural feeling, and yet a wrong one—Agnes scarcely knew how wrong. She was

really sorry, too, to lose Katie; so altogether she felt very unhappy, and worked on without speaking. Granny saw that something was amiss, and once or twice spoke kindly to Agnes; but this only brought up the tears again, and granny thought, "Poor tender heart! she can't bear to lose her sister."

Miss Ellen came in that afternoon, and heard the news.

"So I am to lose my little pupil," she said. "I suppose Mary must take her place. I should feel quite lost now without a little maid to teach. Mary, will you come and be my child?"

Mary, who was sitting very demurely on a low stool by granny, with the kitten in her lap, said, softly, "No, thank you, ma'am."

"O Molly!" said granny, shaking her head. "Don't answer the lady like that, when she's so kind."

Miss Ellen smiled.

"Afraid of Great A, and Little A, and Bouncing B, Molly? Is that it?"

"I know they," said Molly, indignantly.

"What is it, then? Why don't you like to come and be taught, little one?" said Miss Ellen.

Mary looked down shyly.

Granny said, "I don't think she's much for her book, Miss; she's a sad idle kitten,

and only cares for play. But it's time she began in earnest, or she'll never be a little woman like my Katie there, who's going to service, and means to keep us all!" she added, smiling.

She did not see the quick colour which rose in Agnes's cheeks as she spoke: but Miss Ellen did. She guessed, in a moment, what was passing in the little girl's mind, and she understood now, how it was that Agnes had gone on working so silently, while Katie, in high glee, had been telling Miss Ellen about the dear little boy she was going to tend, and showing her the new print granny had bought for her dress, and her box. Agnes had not smiled, nor spoken, all the time. Miss Ellen saw the gloomy look on her face, and felt sorry for her. She said, as she was going out, "Agnes, my child, can you come to the Manor House this evening? I was turning out my clothes to-day, and I found a few things which I thought would be useful to granny for you little ones. There is a nice grey cloak, which will just do for the little market woman to wrap round her on windy days, when she is working for the dear ones at home."

Agnes's face brightened: "Thank you, dear Miss Ellen," she said; "yes, I will be sure to come, if granny doesn't want me."

So, in the evening, Agnes went to the Manor House, and was shown up into Miss Ellen's room, where she was told to wait, as Miss Ellen was at dinner. It was a bright, pretty room, with a large bow-window looking on the garden; a little French bed, with white curtains, in one corner; a small bookcase, with some of Miss Ellen's favourite books in it, and a long shelf above it, on which were some brown-paper-covered books, that Agnes knew well, as they were what Miss Ellen lent to the village children, and she had read them nearly all. In the window stood a little round table with a vase of flowers on it; and in the middle of the room a more useful looking one, well covered with books, writing materials, and piles of work cut out ready for the school children. Agnes sat down on a chair by the window, and thought to herself what a nice cosy room it was, and how happy Miss Ellen seemed to be, and how she'd like to be a lady; or, at least, as that couldn't be, to be a lady's maid; or, to live in a lady's house. And then her thoughts went back to the grievance of the morning, and she thought it was very hard that Katie should go out to service first. She could not help thinking, too, that she should make a better servant than Katie, and she wondered why Katie had been chosen

instead of her. For first, she was older; and she knew more than Katie, and could do everything granny wanted; and Katie was rather a wild little thing, but *she* felt *herself* to be quiet and steady. What could be the reason? She should have liked so very much to have had the charge of that dear little boy. She would rather, a great deal, have gone to service than have to sit by the market gate two or three times a-week: she was getting tired of that.

And, at last, as she sat thinking these thoughts of discontent, the tears began to come again, and Agnes had only time to wipe them away, hurriedly, when Miss Ellen came into the room, with her kind, sweet smile.

"Well, Agnes, my child, have you been waiting long? I suppose granny could not well spare you, as you are all so busy now. I won't keep you. Look here!" and she opened a drawer, in which lay various articles of clothing, with a nice grey cloak at the top. "Let me see how this will do for my own particular child. It is a little long, perhaps, but you will find it such a comfortable wrap by-and-by, as the autumn comes on." She put it round Agnes's shoulders; it was just the thing for her.

"Thank you, dear Miss Ellen," said Agnes; "how kind you are. Granny *will* be pleased."

"Poor granny!" said Miss Ellen. "I hope some of these things will be useful to her. She will feel losing Katie. You will be a greater comfort to her than ever, Agnes: you have been able to help her very much the last few months. Now you must do all you can to brighten her, by being a good, cheerful, unselfish child; that will be more to her than all the earnings in the world."

Agnes began to sob.

"What is the matter, my dear child?" said Miss Ellen, sitting down, and drawing Agnes towards her. "What is your trouble? Tell me. Are you unhappy at Katie's going away?"

"Yes," sobbed Agnes, brokenly; "but it's not only that."

"No, it's not only that," said Miss Ellen; "you are not happy, because you would rather it had been you than Katie. Isn't that it?"

"Yes," answered Agnes, in a low, ashamed voice.

"You think it should have been you, because you are the eldest and the cleverest?"

No answer.

"You think it is very hard that she should be chosen before you? You are hurt and mortified at it?"

Still no answer.

"Shall I tell you, dear child, what makes

you feel like this?" Miss Ellen went on: "It is not a pleasant thing to hear; it is a very sad, mean thing. It is conceit."

Agnes covered her burning face with her hands.

"Please don't say that, Miss Ellen," she murmured.

"But it is true," replied Miss Ellen. "Dear child, I am afraid this has been growing up in you for some time past, unknown to you; and I am glad it has come to light. It is better that you should find it out, and struggle against it now, than let it grow on in your heart, and become worse and worse. Is it not?"

"Yes," whispered Agnes. "I did not know it was that."

"Shall I show you that it was?" asked Miss Ellen. "You thought *you* ought to have been chosen before Katie. Why? Because you knew more, and were cleverer, you imagined. You felt hurt because she was preferred before you. Why? Because you fancied there was more to like in you than in her. What was all that but being too full of yourself?—in other words, conceit. Do you remember those words, dear, of the Holy Apostle, who called himself 'the chief of sinners?'—'In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.' Have you been doing this?"

Agnes's only answer was a fresh burst of tears. She knelt down, and put her head in Miss Ellen's lap.

"It is all true," she said, at last. "You have said exactly what I felt; and I knew it was all wrong, for I felt so bad with it."

"Now you see your fault, dear child," said Miss Ellen, "I hope you will try to make haste and mend it."

"How can I?" asked Agnes.

"By not thinking of yourself at all, but of others," Miss Ellen answered; "by being bright and cheerful to granny and kind to Katie, and humble in what you do; by not being 'wise in your own conceits,' but remembering that what little you know and can do has been taught you by others, and is none of yours; by trying to think more of God than yourself. Say often to yourself those words of the Christian child's daily hymn which you have learnt:—

'Whate'er I do, O Lord,
I do it unto Thee.'

And, above all, ask God to help you day by day against this fault, and so make you lowly and humble, and contented with whatever He sends you. With Him you can do all things. And when you are tempted to be conceited, think of your faults. Then

you would not have these high thoughts of yourself, which are so foolish, and make you so unhappy. Will you try, dear child?"

Miss Ellen raised up the tear-stained face, and kissed it, and Agnes whispered—"Yes."

CHAPTER VIII.

THERE were a good many tears shed at the parting between the sisters, though it was for such a little distance. Granny took Katie in to Mrs. Mayow's after tea, leaving Agnes to put Mary to bed; and a kind neighbour offered to take over Katie's box in his tax-cart later in the evening.

"You'll be sure to come and see me often, Aggie," said Katie, as she gave a last hug in passing out of the garden gate. "Good-bye, darling."

"As often as I can," said Agnes. "O Katie, what shall I do without you!"

"Come, come," said granny; "I can't wait, Katie, child."

Katie gave little Mary another hug, and ran off. Agnes watched them across the green, and then went into the kitchen and had a good cry, before she set about her work.

She felt what we all feel, when any change takes place in our home, which leaves us behind to go on as usual—a sense of dreariness, that she could not have put into words.

This made her very dull at first, when she began to tidy the kitchen, and put away the tea-things, while Mary played in the garden. She began thinking of her last visit to the Manor, and of all Miss Ellen had said to her. Yes, she *would* try to be cheerful and humble, and she would begin at once. She bustled about, and quickly finished her work, then ran out and gave Mary a chase round the garden, caught her, and brought her in to put her to bed.

"*Do* read me a story, Aggie," begged the little one, as soon as she was in bed. Agnes would much rather have been quiet, and have sat out in the porch reading to herself; but she thought it would be kind to poor little Mary, who was rather sorrowful at parting with her chief playfellow, Katie, so she gave up her own wish to please her, and read her a little tale.

Granny came home late, full of the nice place to which Katie was gone. Such a beautiful nursery, and such a sweet little baby, and a nice, sensible nurse to be over Katie. And Katie had a tiny bit of a room opening out of the night nursery, with a little white bed, and table, and washstand, and chest of drawers, all to herself. Mrs. Mayow had seen her, and had spoken very kindly to her, and had

said that Katie might come out and see granny and her sisters once a fortnight, when she could be spared. She would be a kind, good mistress, granny was sure; and Katie was a lucky child to get into such a place at first.

Agnes listened, and the old thoughts of discontent began to creep in. She felt unwilling to rejoice at Katie's good fortune; but something whispered to her that this feeling must be got rid of, so after a minute she answered her granny cheerfully, and said she thought Katie would be very happy there. Then she asked granny if she should read her a chapter from the Bible before she went to bed; and when this was done, granny kissed Agnes, and called her her "treasure." Agnes went to sleep with quite a light heart, for she had gained more than one victory over herself that day.

We must take a look at Katie to-night, too, in her new place. How grand to have a room of her own, she thought, as she shut the door, after special directions from nurse to be dressed punctually by six in the morning, ready to sweep and dust the day nursery, and lay breakfast for the little ones. And to be called "our new under-nurse" by the children: that was grand, too, to Katie's ears, who felt that she was but a child herself. It

was all new and strange, and she missed Aggie dreadfully to speak to about everything; but still she thought she should like it. Now she must undress, for her light was to be out by half-past nine; so she opened her neatly-packed box to take out what she wanted. At the top was a paper parcel, directed to her, which she had not seen before. She seized and tore it open, and found, to her delight, a nice Bible and Prayer-book, with her name written in them—a present from Miss Ellen. "How kind!" she thought. "I ought to be a good child, I'm sure." When she had put her things neatly away in the drawers, she knelt down by her bedside to say her prayers. One of the last things granny had said to her was, "Katie, child, never neglect your prayers night and morning; you will have no blessing on your life if you do." Katie prayed that God would help her to do her duty rightly in her new place, and then lay down to sleep happily.

She was up at six, had dressed, and said her prayers, just as the clock struck. Tying on a great rough apron over her neat dark print, she hastened into the day nursery, which was a nice large room, with two windows, looking on the pretty little garden at the back of the house. Katie threw open the windows to air the room, and then, going to

a little closet just outside the nursery door, which the nurse had shown her the night before, brought out broom, dustpan, and duster, and set to work. Having finished cleaning and tidying the room, she spread the cloth on the round table in the middle, and laid the breakfast things all ready; cut up some bread for sop, and carried it, in two little basins, down to the cook, to make bread and milk for the children. By this time it was seven o'clock, and Katie had to go and help nurse to dress the little ones. There were two, besides the baby, who was just five months old,—Master Arthur, whom Katie already knew, and little Miss Gerty, aged two. She was a darling little tot, plump and rosy, with eyes blue as the summer sky, and golden hair curling round her head. She had a dear little tongue, and could say many words; and she was more gentle than Master Arthur, who was a true boy, as far as fun, noise, and mischief go.

"New under-nurse shan't dress me!" he roared out, as soon as he was lifted from his crib; and he accordingly began to cut capers in his night-gown round the nursery, to escape from Katie.

"Take Miss Gerty up and dress her," said nurse to Katie. "I shall not allow you to dress Master Arthur after those naughty

words of his, however much he may wish it."

Master Arthur was discomfited at this, for he had expected a battle, which was what he delighted in. Nurse quietly caught him up and dressed him, while Katie did the same for Miss Gerty. When she had done, Miss Gerty said, in a whisper, to Katie, "Me love you!"

After nurse had heard the little one's simple prayer, she said,—

"Now, Katie, take Miss Gerty and Master Arthur into the day nursery, and make them happy, while I dress the baby. First, fetch me up a can of hot water." Katie ran down as she was desired, and came back quickly with the water, then took the children into the next room; and Miss Gerty showed her her doll and all her treasures. Master Arthur took a shy fit, and would not speak till nurse came in with the bright crowing baby, who was the darling of the nursery. Then he and Gerty came and danced to her and sang to her, as she lay on her soft rug on the nursery floor, till breakfast was ready. Baby —"Ethel*weda*," as Arthur called her—was the only thing to which he could be gentle, and to her he was ridiculously tender, pushing poor little Gerty away if she dared to touch "the darling," lest she should hurt it.

"Say your grace," said nurse, as they stood round the table.

The children did as they were bid, and each said a grace, with sundry abbreviations of their own, as might be expected from such young creatures; after which they sat down to their nice basins of bread and milk, rather more silent than usual, because of the "new under-nurse," who felt somewhat shy in her turn in the presence of the grave, quiet upper-nurse, who kept the children in such order.

After breakfast, Katie had to sweep and clean the night nursery, make the beds, and put all tidy, while nurse dressed the little ones to go out early, before the great heat of the day. Thanks to granny's careful teaching, Katie had learned to do her work thoroughly, and with method. Granny had been in service for years herself before she married, as a nurse, and she had always been most particular with the children, to train them up in habits of neatness and order. At the cottage, Katie and Agnes had to do everything as well and carefully as if they had been working in a gentleman's family; and so it came naturally to Katie to open the windows and turn down all the beds to air, while she swept the room and made it neat. Then she made the beds, taking good care to shake and turn

each little mattress; folded the bedgowns, and laid them on the head of each bed; put everything in its place, and, lastly, took her duster, and dusted the furniture. It all looked so bright and tidy when nurse came in, that she was well pleased, and said she had not had such a thrifty little maid to help her for a long time. Then she told Katie to go and dress herself, and get out the perambulator for Miss Gerty, as they were all going down to the sands. There was a nice beach at Bayntown, where the children made themselves happy for hours, while nurse and baby sat under the shade of the rocks. This was something new and delightful for Katie.

"Get my spade and bucket," shouted Master Arthur, as he marched down-stairs into the hall. "I say, where my spade and bucket?"

"Master Arthur!" said a grave voice behind him. "Is that the way to speak?"

"Yes," said Arthur, audaciously.

"No spade and bucket will come unless you say 'please' for them," said nurse.

"Please spade, please bucket; do he hear me call he?" cried Arthur, his round rosy face brimming over with fun. They must have heard then, for Katie came running with them down the stairs. Miss Gerty's

were already in the perambulator, so off they set, spades, buckets, and all, to the beach.

When there, Gerty and Arthur set to work digging ponds and filling them with water, and Katie helped them, and enjoyed it, too, as much as they did. At twelve o'clock they all went home again, and when the children's things were taken off, they lay down in their little cots in the bedroom to rest till dinner-time; the window-blind was drawn down, and Katie had to sit in the room with them, but was told by nurse not to speak to them. Miss Gerty lay very still and quiet, and soon fell asleep, with her dear little hand under her cheek; but Master Arthur was very obstreperous, and kicked and rolled about, making faces, and trying by every imaginable device to get Katie to speak to him. She turned away, and sat with her back towards him, busying herself with some mending which nurse had given her to do.

"What lu doing, lu new under-nurse?" Arthur began at last, finding that Katie took no heed of his kicks and snorts. She did not answer.

"Lu very cross, under-nurse," he went on. "Boy not love lu!"

Still Katie was silent.

"Have lu any tongue?" asked Arthur

again, as he kicked his quilt out of bed on the floor. Katie could scarcely help smiling.

"Hush, hush!" she said, as she settled him again. "Be quiet and lie down, Master Arthur."

"Shan't hush! Boy not going to mind lu!" exclaimed Arthur. "Boy going to sit up if he choose!"

"Very well," said Katie, getting up and going to the door. Arthur knew what this was for. In a second he had popped down, and lay as if asleep. Katie, seeing this, came back to her work. Presently Arthur began again:

"Why lu hair cut short like a man?"

"Now, Master Arthur," said Katie, "the next time you speak I shall go in to nurse."

Arthur saw by her tone of voice that she meant it. He gave a great grunt, threw himself round with his face to the wall, and went off in a sound sleep.

Katie, having finished her mending, went in to nurse to ask what she was to do.

"Can you darn?" asked nurse.

"Yes," answered Katie, a little proudly; "granny taught me."

"Then take this basket of socks, and go through them," said nurse, well pleased. "You are always to take this hour for needlework at the children's things. I'm so

put about with baby lately, that they have got rather out of order, for the last little maid we had couldn't work fit to be seen."

Katie carried the basket into the next room, and sat there quietly at work. Presently Mrs. Mayow came into the room, and looked at the sleeping children. Katie went on working at the window.

"Katie," said Mrs. Mayow, after a minute, "you should always rise from your seat when a lady comes into the room."

Katie started from her chair, blushing violently.

"I should have thought you would have known that, my dear," said her mistress, kindly.

"Granny did tell me," said Katie; "but I forgot, ma'am. She told me such lots of things when I was coming here."

Mrs. Mayow smiled. "Never forget that, at least, Katie," she said; "it is a proper mark of respect, and one of the tokens of a well-trained servant. I know servants think less of these things now-a-days than they used to do; but remember this, that the more respectful you are, the more you will be respected yourself."

Katie felt vexed with herself for having forgotten it. Of course, that was one of the very things granny had said so much about

—being respectful. Agnes would have done it, Katie knew: *she* remembered all such things. So thought the humble-minded little girl, and resolved to be very careful in future.

CHAPTER IX.

DINNER was at one o'clock in the nursery. Nurse was very punctual in all her ways; and at five minutes to one, Katie, having cleaned herself and laid the table as nurse showed her, took the tray down to the kitchen. She felt rather shy, for the cook and housemaid stared at her, and they were both strangers. She waited silently by the table, while cook dished up the dinner. When cook put it on the tray, Katie said, "Thank you," and carried it away. As she went up the kitchen stairs, she heard the housemaid say, "What a prim little thing," and laugh. Katie did not like this. Her face grew quite red; so much so, that when she got into the nursery, Master Arthur said to her, "What you been doing—toasting our meat?" Nurse saw it too, but did not ask any questions.

After dinner, the children were to go into the back garden, where there was plenty of shade, and a swing between the trees. Mrs. Mayow liked them to be as much in the open air as possible, for she thought it so healthy

for them. There was a nice green bank under the trees, where they played, while Katie sat and worked. Arthur and Gerty had each a tiny bit of garden of their own, where they built mud-houses, and sowed seeds, and dug them up again to see if they were sprouting; and made wells, filling them with water, and wondering why it never stayed there. In their great round brown Holland pinnys, which quite covered their frocks, they could grub about to their heart's content, without any fear of a scolding from nurse.

Presently, Katie heard a loud shout of "Pa! Pa!" and saw the little legs going as fast as they could over the lawn towards Mr. Mayow, who came out with spade and basket in his hand, to do a little gardening. Katie got up and curtseyed as he passed.

"That's our new under-nurse," whispered Arthur to his papa. Katie had not seen her master before: she thought he looked very kind. He went to the end of the garden to put some plants in a flower-bed, and Arthur was very busy and important, running to and fro, and carrying away the empty pots; while Miss Gerty, left to her own devices, quietly seated herself under a currant-bush, and began to pluck the green, unripe berries, and cram them into her mouth.

"Gerty, my darling! what are you doing?" suddenly exclaimed her papa, as he caught sight of her in the snug corner she had chosen for herself. "Zu go on digging!" was her calm reply, looking up with two great, audacious eyes. What could papa do, but laugh. Katie, however, heard, and hastened to carry the little one away from the unripe fruit. Gerty did not at all like this, as she was too little to understand, and she began to make up a square sort of a mouth which would have ended in a cry; but Katie had a nice way with little children, and soon made her happy, seating her on the green bank by her side, and bringing her some "pussycats" to play with, which strewed the ground, from the pretty ash poplars that shaded them.

When Mr. Mayow had done his gardening, he went in, and Katie supposed that Master Arthur had gone with him, as he was nowhere to be seen.

By-and-by, nurse put her head out of the nursery window and called to Katie to bring the children in to tea. Katie rose, and, gathering up her work, took Miss Gerty indoors.

"Where's Master Arthur?" was nurse's first greeting.

"I don't know," said Katie; "he's not in the garden."

"You ought to know where he is," answered nurse. "I left him in your charge."

Katie knew this was true. She said, "I thought he went away with his papa."

"Go and see for him," said nurse; "his papa's at dinner. He's at some of his disobedient pranks, be sure. That boy is full of mischief."

Katie ran down-stairs, and after hesitating a minute, knocked at the parlour door. The housemaid opened it: she was waiting at dinner.

"Is Master Arthur here?" whispered Katie to her.

"No," was the answer; and the door was shut again.

Katie felt at a loss: where could he be? She went into the garden: he was no where there; then she went into the back yard: he was not there. She began to feel frightened. Suppose he should have wandered out, and lost his way, or been stolen! she had heard of such things. And it would be her fault, for not looking after him! She did not know her way about the place: there was a great door in the back yard, leading somewhere—should she open it? she tried, and couldn't turn the handle: it was not like other handles—it was a ring with a nick in the middle, which had to be pressed before


MEE

the door would open. What was to be done? she dared not go back to nurse without Master Arthur. To her relief, Sam, the man who did all sorts of things—gardener, groom, coachman, and boot and knife cleaner—happened to come into the yard with some oats for Mr. Mayow's horse; he looked surprised to see Katie there.

"What are you a-wanting of?" he asked, gruffly.

"Master Arthur," answered Katie, timidly.

The man's face widened into a grin.

"On Chessy's back, you may depend," he answered, opening the stable door.

True enough, there sat the delinquent on Chessy's back—the dear, good old horse, which, happily, well knew his daring little master. It was a forbidden deed, and Arthur knew it, too; and frightened enough he looked when he saw Katie behind Sam. Sam, I am sorry to say, rather gloried in Master Arthur's audacity; but nurse had quite another idea of it. The bold rider was undressed and put to bed, for disobedience, and I dare say he *thought* he would never do it again; but we do not always know ourselves. At any rate, he was subdued for that time. And Katie thought it was the last thing *she* would have done, to have got up on a great horse's back for fun.

After tea, nurse said, "Now, Katie, take Miss Gerty's white frock out of the drawer, and put it on her, and take her down to the dining-room. The children always go down till seven o'clock to see their papa and mamma. You must say that Master Arthur has been naughty. They never allow him to come down after dinner when he has been disobedient."

Katie went into the next room to get out Miss Gerty's white frock. Arthur lay watching her, then suddenly put his head down under the bedclothes, and burst into a passion of tears.

"Don't cry, there's a dear," said Katie, kindly, going up to him. "You will go down another day, if you're good."

"Nurse very unkind; boy hate her," cried Arthur.

"Hush," said Katie; "that's naughty."

"'Tisn't," cried Arthur. "Nurse naughty, lu naughty, evybody naughty, *'ceps* boy."

"Katie!" called nurse, from the other room.

Katie hastened in with Miss Gerty's frock.

"You shouldn't be talking to Master Arthur when he's in disgrace," said nurse. "It's the most foolish thing to pet a naughty child."

Katie was on the point of saying that she wasn't petting him; but she suddenly remembered that granny told her to be very

careful not to answer any reproof. "No good servant," granny had said, "will ever answer back either her mistress or any one who is set over her; mind this well, Katie, for it will be very hurtful to you if you don't." Katie had promised to try; of course granny knew best, and she did so wish to make a good servant. So she held her tongue; and though it was a little effort this time, it helped her to do it when next she was found fault with; and nurse, finding that she never answered, or made excuses, was the more kind and gentle with her when there was occasion to reprove her. "Such a difference," nurse said, in speaking to Mary, the housemaid, "between her and the last girl, who led me such a life with her impudence. To be sure, she had never been taught to behave, as this child has, one can see. 'Tis a terrible pity that girls should be allowed to answer; if they only knew how they are thought of when they do it, and how odious it makes them, they would, for their own sakes, learn to speak civilly, or be silent. The silly girls think it grand, I believe, and call it 'spirit.' If it's any spirit, it's an evil spirit, so there! Is that my baby crying? She's awake. I must run!"

CHAPTER X.

AGNES felt Katie's loss very much at first. She wanted some one to talk to, as she could not to granny: for, though she was not a talkative child, she and Katie had their little confidences, and castles in the air, as all children have, among themselves. Katie used always to help her, too, in getting ready the flowers for market, and was generally watching at the gate for Agnes when she came back, eager to hear how she had fared, and whether she had met with any adventures. Molly was away now all the mornings, with Miss Ellen; and as Agnes was naturally a very shy, quiet child, she had not made friends specially with the village children, who were almost strangers to her, as she had never been to the school. She did not like their rough ways, and rather shrank from them, so that she was really very lonely without Katie. Now and then, when she had sold her flowers unusually early, she would go to Mrs. Mayow's back door, and ask if she might see Katie for a minute; and once Mrs. Mayow, being

in the nursery at the time, gave Katie leave to take her sister into the garden for a little while. But granny told Agnes she must not go too often, as it might be thought intruding.

"I think you keep too much to yourself, child," she said to Agnes, one evening, as they were sitting together at needlework, after Molly was in bed. "Why don't you make friends with Mrs. Goyne's girls? They're nice tidy lasses enough."

"They don't care for me," said Agnes, "I'm sure; and I think they laugh at me, that's more."

"What should they laugh at you for?" asked granny.

The colour came up into Agnes's face as she answered,—

"They say I've got 'airs.' I don't know what they mean; but Minnie Brown told me they said so, and I don't want to have anything to say to them. She said it was all spite, because I went up to Miss Ellen to be taught, and that they said I thought myself a born lady, and what not; and I don't like it," added Agnes, as the angry tears dropped upon her sewing.

"'Twasn't kind, certainly," said granny; "but perhaps you gave them some cause to say it, my dear,—I mean by your way of

keeping yourself to yourself, and not making friends with any one. I dare say the neighbours' girls do think you proud. Not that I would have you go with all of them, or gad about gossiping away your time; but these Goynes are good girls at home, and well brought up. Lizzie's going to service soon —a very good place, I hear. Well, why don't you make friends with Minnie Brown, then?"

"She talks too much," said Agnes; "I shouldn't like such a friend. If she gets a chance to speak to me, she tells me all sorts of things that other people have said to her. She'd go and tell other people, perhaps, everything I talked to her."

"Well, there's some reason in that," said granny. "Don't you like Sarah Deans, the milkman's girl, then, and her little blind brother? She's a quiet girl enough."

"I didn't know she had a blind brother," said Agnes, with sudden interest. "No, she's like me—keeps to herself; I scarcely know her."

"She doesn't keep to *herself*, Agnes," said granny; "she lives for her little brother. Mrs. Deans tells me that she doesn't know what she should do without Sarah, as she is out to work so much. The child does everything for him—tends him from morning to night, leads him out, has never been able to

go to school because of minding him, and won't go to service for the same reason. She's a dear child; so unselfish and patient. They're very poor, too. You might go over some evening, and take the poor little fellow a bunch of flowers for him to smell: he's got few pleasures, I'm thinking."

"I should like to do that," said Agnes; and she sat silent for some time after, thinking what she would pick for the little blind boy. They must all be sweet flowers—roses, of course, and honeysuckle, and some pinks, and a bit of old man: yes, that would be it, and some sweet briar—only she would pick off the thorns first, that they might not prick his fingers. And she would take a story-book in her pocket—the one that Mrs. Mayow gave her—and read him a story, if she found he would like it. She planned all this in her mind, and felt quite anxious for the next evening to come, when she should be able to go.

Mrs. Deans's cottage stood in a lane, some way out of the village, by itself. There was a cowshed near it, and a bit of a garden, with a few cabbages and potatoes in it; but everything seemed wretched and neglected, and Agnes could not help thinking, as she dragged aside the broken-down garden gate, in order to get in, how different it looked

from her own clean, bright home, and its surroundings. The house was dirty-looking, the windows broken and stuffed up with bits of rag and paper; the plaster crumbling, and in many places gone. But there were sounds of joy and happiness within, in spite of all this wretched-looking outside—merry bursts of laughter, and the lively chatter of two little tongues. It was all the same to the blind boy how his home looked. Agnes paused on the threshold. Should she go in? Perhaps Sarah would wonder what she wanted. What should she say?

She tapped gently at the half-opened door. The merriment suddenly ceased. The blind boy whispered, "There's somebody: I don't know the tap;" and Sarah called out, "Come in!"

She looked surprised to see Agnes, and pleased too; but when the latter said, in a shy, half-hesitating way, "I brought a few flowers for your little brother," Sarah sprang forward to take them, her face full of delight, with an eager "Thank you! How kind of ye, now! Charlie, dear, smell them! Ain't they sweet? Oh my, what roses! And the old man's the best of all. All for ye'r own self, Charlie boy! There!" She put them into his hands as she spoke. The pale face of the blind boy lit up as he smelt

the flowers, and fingered them all over tenderly, to feel what they were like.

"Thank you," he said, in a soft low voice. "They 're very nice."

"Sit down and stay with us a bit, do," said Sarah. "'Twas so kind of ye to come. Can ye stay?"

"Yes," said Agnes, "if you like. I've got a story-book in my pocket. Would you like to hear one of the tales in it?—they're so pretty."

"Yes, that I should," said Charlie. "'Twas but to-day I was saying—do ye mind, Sally?—how I wished ye could read, that ye might be able to read to me. I love to hear it."

"Yes, I mind," said Sarah, sadly; "and I wish I could. But 'tis no use wishing. I baint going to leave ye alone while I goes to school: fine jinks ye would be at, I know."

Charlie smiled.

"Nicely I'd do without ye, wouldn't I?" he said.

Sarah looked as if it was a matter which admitted of no doubt. How *could* Charlie do without her?

Agnes took out her story and read it; and it was a great pleasure to her to see how eager Charlie was about it. It was a real enjoyment to him. She thought, as she went

home afterwards, what a pity it was that Sarah could not read; how much it might gladden and help the blind boy if he had some one to read to him, and to teach him, during the many long hours that he sat in darkness. Agnes knew that she could not do it—she had not the time. If Sarah could only read! A new thought darted into Agnes's mind—"Could *I* teach her?" She could think of nothing else after this: she would ask granny about it the minute she got home. How nice it would be!

Granny thought it would be a very good plan, indeed; and she told Agnes she might go to Sarah every evening after tea for an hour. She knew Agnes was steady enough to keep to her purpose, and that she would not spend the time in idle gossip; and she thought, too, it would be good for Agnes to have this interest, as she was apt to get too much wrapt up in herself.

The plan gave great happiness to all. The blind boy was delighted; Sarah more pleased than she could tell; and Agnes so glad to be able to do it, that it was difficult to say who was the happiest. Charlie used to look forward to the hour when Agnes came all through the day; and he would sit by and listen with the greatest eagerness while Sarah was learning, and ask questions about the

shape of the letters, which Agnes tried in vain to explain to him. A bright thought came to her at last: if she could cut them out in paper, so that he could feel them! He had such a wonderful way of feeling everything, and knowing it by its feel. Agnes kept this thought to herself for fear of disappointing him, for she was not sure that she could cut them out. She made several attempts at home, with some stiff brown paper which granny gave her; but her letters were such poor tumble-down things, all crooked, and out of proportion, that they made herself, and granny, and even Molly laugh; and Agnes gave it up in despair.

"Why don't you ask Miss Ellen to draw them for you?" exclaimed granny, at last.

"So I will," said Agnes. "Then I could easily cut them out. May I run and ask her now? She 'll just have done dinner."

"Yes, you may, dear," said granny. And away Agnes ran, full of her new idea. She knew how kind her dear Miss Ellen was, always ready to help her; so she was not afraid to ask her.

Miss Ellen was in the garden when she reached the gate, and beckoned to her to come to her. When she heard what Agnes wanted, she said,—

"I think if the letters were cut out in card

it would be better. I have some old cards, and will make you a set to give to Charlie. They will do to amuse him now, but I hope some day we may get him into a nice house where blind children are taught to read from raised letters, and where he would learn many things which would be of use to him."

Agnes's eyes sparkled with gladness for poor Charlie.

"Will it be soon, please, miss?" she asked. "And may I tell him?"

"He had better not be told yet," said Miss Ellen. "There is no vacancy now, but when there is, we will manage it for him."

"That *will* be nice, miss," said Agnes. "Thank you so much about the letters. They will make him very happy, I'm sure. How dreadful it must be to be blind."

"It must indeed," said Miss Ellen. "We cannot tell what it must be to be always in darkness, and never to be gladdened by the sight of any of the bright, lovely things which God has made. But Charlie is a very contented little boy, I think."

"That he is, miss," answered Agnes, eagerly. "I have never once heard him fret or complain of his blindness."

"It is quite a lesson for us," said Miss Ellen, gravely; "don't you think so, Agnes?"

Agnes was silent.

"Are you quite happy now again, dear child?" asked her kind friend.

"Yes, miss," answered Agnes, in a low voice, for she knew what Miss Ellen meant. "I am very sorry I was so discontented when Katie went." The ready tears began to come.

"I am sure you are," said Miss Ellen, kindly. "I am very glad for your own sake that you did not go to service then. Now, I hope, when you do go, that it will be in a humble spirit, not thinking highly of yourself, but remembering that you have a great deal to learn, and a great deal to correct in yourself."

"Yes, miss," said Agnes, humbly. There was a pause for a few minutes, and then Miss Ellen told Agnes she might go, and she would bring the letters to the cottage herself the next day, as she wanted to see granny.

She brought them, as she had promised, the following afternoon, beautifully cut out, large and clear, in nice stiff card. Agnes was overjoyed, and so eager about them, that granny said she might take them over to Charlie at once.

Great was the delight they gave the poor little blind boy. He sat fingering them one after another, and learned their names so quickly that Sarah cried out that she should

be left behind, and he would have to teach her—which caused great merriment.

Sarah gave Agnes a warm kiss when she went away.

"Thank ye," she said, "for being so kind to my Charlie."

Agnes thought, as she went home, "If I had had my wish, and gone to that place instead of Katie, I should not have been able to make Charlie and Sarah happy. I am so glad now that it wasn't to be."

CHAPTER XI.

"AGGIE," said granny, as Agnes was laying the tea: "how should you like to go to service?"

"Me!" said Agnes, as the colour rushed up into her face. "What could make you think of that, granny, dear?"

"Why, just because it 's what Miss Ellen came about. Didn't you know, then?" answered granny.

"No," said Agnes.

"I thought, to be sure, she 'd told you," said granny. "That invalid young lady at Bayntown (Agnes gave a start) wants a little maid to wait on her; Miss Ellen's friend, I mean—the young lady you take flowers to sometimes."

"Yes, I know!" exclaimed Agnes, breathlessly.

"Well, it seems her mamma asked Miss Ellen to find one for her," continued granny.

"And did Miss Ellen think I 'd do?" asked Agnes, all in a tremble. "No, no! I 'm sure she didn't!"

"She did, then," answered granny; "least-

ways, she asked me if I'd part with ye." Granny's voice shook a little.

Agnes did not feel as if she could speak just then. She waited. The bright colour had gone out of her cheeks again, and she was pale, as usual.

"Tea's ready, granny, dear," she said, presently, as she lifted the little black tea-pot from the hob, and put it on the tea-tray. "Molly, Molly!" she called, out of the window; "come in to tea!"

Molly came scampering to the door, crying "Katie's coming! Katie's coming!" and then darted off to the garden gate, followed by Agnes. Yes, Katie was there, looking so fresh and bonny, and grown so fat, that granny said at tea-time, with a look at Agnes, that going to service must be a fine thing!"

"That it is," said Katie; "and I'm so happy, granny, dear, I can't tell you. Missis is kind, and nurse; and those dear little children—I do love them so! Cook and housemaid, though, are not so pleasant; I don't like them much. What do you think I heard Mary—(that is housemaid, you know, Aggie)—say of missis, the other day? She says——"

"Katie!" said granny, sternly: "once for all, remember that you bring no tales here out of your master's house!"

Katie was silenced. She had seldom seen granny so severe. Neither she nor Agnes ever forgot those words, though, afterwards.

"Aggie 'll soon be going to service," said granny, presently.

"Will she?" exclaimed Katie. "Oh, I 'm glad! Where to?"

"To Mrs. Ward's, we think," said granny. "Miss Ellen wishes me to take you in this evening, Aggie, to see the lady; so you must get ready directly after tea, and Katie can stay with Molly."

"How nice it 'll be to have you at Bayntown," said Katie. "Aggie, aren't you pleased?"

"Yes, dear," said Agnes, quietly.

"You won't see much of Aggie," said granny; "for Miss Ellen says Mrs. Ward 's going back to her home in the country soon."

"And take Aggie with her? O dear, I don't like that!" said Katie.

To judge by granny's looks, neither did she; but she said nothing. She knew it would be for Aggie's good, and so she unselfishly made up her mind at once to part with her darling. They went in to Mrs. Ward's after tea, and the matter was quickly settled. Agnes was to go to her new place that day week. Words can hardly describe her delight at the thought of being Miss Janet's little

servant; it seemed too good to be true. The thing of all others she could most have wished for!—the thing of all others she could never have hoped for! She should be so *very* happy, she was sure. The only drawback was leaving dear granny; but that must come whenever she did go out, so, altogether, nothing could be better.

"You should go and tell Miss Ellen it is settled," said granny; "she has been so kind as to speak for you, and she will be glad to hear that you are to go. Mind you thank her, too."

"I'll run in now, granny, shall I?" said Agnes; "we're close to the Manor."

"Yes, do, dear," said granny, and went on her way homewards; while the delighted Agnes hastened to tell her kind friend, and to thank her for her kindness.

She was shown up into Miss Ellen's room, where Miss Ellen sat in the midst of a complete litter of many-coloured prints, planning some patchwork for her school children. She knew, by the sight of Aggie's bright face, what she came to say.

"Well, are you very glad, Agnes?" were her first words, as Agnes stood curtseying at the door. "Come in, my child. You are going to Mrs. Ward's, I suppose?"

"Yes, dear Miss Ellen, and thank you for

speaking for me," said Agnes. "It's the place I should have liked best of all."

Miss Ellen smiled: "Better than being nursery-maid at Mrs. Mayow's?" she said.

"Yes, miss," answered Agnes, shyly; for she remembered all about that.

"I hope you will do well, and be happy, Agnes," said Miss Ellen. "I shall lose sight of you soon, for you are going into the country, to Mrs. Ward's home; but I dare say you will come here sometimes."

"I think I shall like it very much, Miss Ellen," said Agnes; "but I feel rather frightened, too. I don't quite know what I shall have to do."

"Ah! Mrs. Pyke will teach you that," replied Miss Ellen. "Did you see her?"

"No, miss," answered Agnes, who began to feel a sort of trembling dread as to what this Mrs. Pyke was.

"She is Mrs. Ward's maid," said Miss Ellen. "You will be under her: she will teach you your duties, and you will have to mind, very exactly, what she says; for she is an old and valued servant, and Mrs. Ward leaves a great deal to her. She is very particular."

Agnes's face clouded over. She thought this would be rather a drawback to her expected happiness, to have a strict upper

servant always looking after her, and, perhaps, finding fault with her; it would be different from a mistress's doing it, she thought. Miss Ellen seemed to understand her feelings.

"You will find your discipline, wherever you may go, my child," she said; "and a very good thing, too, that you should. Your duty now is to learn, and to submit: if you do this, you will make a good servant in time; I hope you would like to be that, would you not?"

"Yes, miss," said Agnes, colouring a little; "I should not like to be anything else."

"No, I suppose not," said Miss Ellen, gravely; taking up her Bible from the table, she opened it at the Epistle to the Ephesians, and read these words aloud:—

"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, *as unto Christ:* not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but *as the servants of Christ*, doing the Will of God from the heart."

"With good will doing service, *as to the Lord*, and not to men."*

Miss Ellen was silent for a minute when she had finished, and then she said,—

* Eph. vi.

"Will you promise me that you will read over these verses every Sunday night, and examine yourself with them, dear child?"

"Yes, miss," answered Agnes, in a low voice.

"You know what I mean by examining yourself," said Miss Ellen, "for I have taught you to do that, as regards your daily faults; but I wish this to be a special examination, with regard to your state in life and the particular duties of it. Do you understand?"

"I think so, miss," said Agnes.

"You will have new duties now, and new trials," continued Miss Ellen. "You must meet these with more careful self-examination and prayer. Ask yourself, for instance, such questions as these: 'Have I obeyed my master and mistress, and any one whom they set over me, readily, humbly, conscientiously? Have I obeyed, not only to please them, but to please God? Have I done my duty thoroughly, in singleness of heart, not looking for praise, but because it was my duty? Have I been faithful, upright, doing the same whether my master were absent or present? Have I answered again, or thought myself wiser than others, or argued when reproved? Have I been forward, and forgotten my place? Have I remembered that I *serve the Lord Christ?*'

These, and such-like questions, you may ask yourself; and I think they will help you. If you find you have failed in any of these points, ask God to forgive you, and to give you grace through the coming week to do better. A few simple words will be enough: He will hear you, and He will help you."

Agnes was silent for a little while; then, with a great sigh, she said, "I never thought of all that before, please, miss. It seems a great deal to do."

"Not more than is required of you," replied Miss Ellen. "Life is a toil, and a long striving for all of us: yes, for those, too, who have not to work for their bread as you have. We are *all*

'Soldiers doing battle,
Day by day, and hour by hour,
Each one with his own temptation
Striving, in the Spirit's power.

'Still the wrong way will seem pleasant;
Still the right way will seem hard.
All our lives we shall be tempted;
We must ever be on guard.' *

You have learnt those lines, I believe, Agnes?"

"Yes, miss," said Agnes; "I remember them."

* "Hymns for Little Children."

"They were written for little children, but they suit us all," said Miss Ellen.

"Please, miss, will you be so kind as to write down those questions you said just now, for me?"

"Yes, gladly," answered Miss Ellen. "And one thing more, dear Agnes; for you know I cannot help thinking of and caring for you, whom I taught for so long. Promise me that you will be very careful never to forget your prayers morning and evening. You will have no blessing on your life if you omit this."

"I don't think I could forget *that*, miss," said Agnes.

"Don't be too sure," said Miss Ellen. "I know that servants are very often tempted, from weariness, or being hurried, to leave their prayers unsaid. You will see others do it, perhaps, and may fall into the same habit yourself, unless you are watchful." Miss Ellen then went to her bookcase, and took down a little book, in which she wrote Agnes's name. It was "The Christian Servant's Book," a collection of prayers, and hymns, and texts, suitable for servants.

"Here is a book that will be of use to you, I think," she said; "and now come and help me to turn out these shelves, Agnes, for I believe there are a few things

here which will make up for you. Here is a dress which will make you a nice frock for afternoons, and this bit of linsey will make you a good strong petticoat. You may take this roll of calico home to granny, and she can cut you out some under-clothing, what you most want. You must be very particular to be clean and nice in your person, especially as you have to attend on a sick lady. Here is some black stuff, part of an old dress of mine, which would make you a tidy black jacket for out-of-door wear. And you ought to have some white aprons. Have you any?" Agnes had not; and Miss Ellen, after a further rummage among her stores, found something that would make Agnes four nice ones. Agnes thanked her kind friend, as she went away with her bundle, and said she could not think what granny would say to such treasures. Granny was very glad and thankful to have such a good help towards Aggie's outfit, and they were both hard at work all the next week.

CHAPTER XII.

AGNES felt strange and cold all over when she woke on the morning of the day on which she was to leave home. She had been the evening before to say good-bye to Miss Ellen, and her friends the blind boy and his sister; and her box had been packed, and some little treasures put together to comfort Molly at the parting; and now this was her last morning with granny. They were both very silent, as Agnes for the last time tidied the kitchen and helped granny to pull up a few weeds in the garden. Granny picked a nice bunch of flowers for Agnes to take to Miss Janet.

"What will you do about the flowers now, granny, dear?" asked Agnes.

"Now I've lost my market woman, eh?" asked granny, trying to smile. "I think I shall have to do without. I shall be able to, now that two of you are earning your bread. Molly and the old woman will get on very well together."

"O, granny, dear, I don't like to leave you!" exclaimed Agnes, with a sudden gush of tears, throwing her arms round granny's

neck. "You've been so kind to us. We can never make you a return for it."

"If you only make as good a woman and as faithful a servant as your dear mother was, I shall be well repaid," said granny, with moistening eyes. She had scarcely ever spoken to Agnes of her mother before, only just to explain to her about her death. Agnes had shrunk from the subject, with a vague fear and sadness, then; but now she said,—

"Will you tell me something about my mother, granny?"

"I will, as we go along. You must get ready now, child, for I'm going to see Katie when I've taken you in," said granny.

Agnes was soon ready, and Molly just then ran in from her morning's lesson with Miss Ellen, and begged to come with them. Granny gave leave, so they all set off together. Molly presently ran on in the lanes, picking foxgloves and other wild flowers, and then granny said, looking at her as she sprung to and fro, shaking her curly locks,—

"She is so like her dear mother."

"Tell me what she was like, dear granny, please," said Agnes, in a low voice. "I can't remember."

"She was a bright, happy creature when I first knew her," said granny, "with a fair and rosy face, full of fun, and wild spirits like

Katie's. She came to the place where I was upper-nurse, as lady's maid to the young ladies. There were two, Miss Eleanor and Miss Edith. Sweet young ladies they were, and they were very fond of your mother; for she was quick and handy, and never forgot her place, which is a thing servants are very ready to do when waiting on young ladies near their own age. That is one thing for you to bear in mind, child; it was what kept your mother in her situation until Miss Eleanor married, and then she would have her for her own maid. She was with Miss Eleanor (Mrs. Hughes, that is) until your dear father found out her worth, and carried her off. A treasure she was for any poor man's home, sure enough. There was one thing about her, above all, which won my heart."

"O, what *was* that, granny?" asked Agnes, eagerly.

"'Twas a beautiful ornament she always wore," answered the widow.

"Granny, you're joking," said Agnes. "As if you would care for that."

"I am not joking, indeed, Agnes," replied granny. "I mean what I say. Did you never hear of 'the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit?'"

"Yes," answered Agnes, as the colour deepened in her cheeks.

The words brought to her mind a reproof once given her by the old clergyman who had passed by Widow Salter's garden at the moment when Agnes was answering her with some temper, and excusing herself for having put on her new bonnet to go to market. The old gentleman looked over the railings, and said, in his quaint, stern way,—

"Child, put on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, and go to market in that!"

Agnes never liked recollecting this. She walked on silently. Granny said, presently,—

"It was the beauty of your dear mother's character. She never gave back a word. 'Twas all the same whoever found fault with her, or crossed her, from the cook to the mistress. She was always the same gentle soul: never answering again, nor defending herself, but seeming to think that she must be the one in fault. What was the consequence? Nobody *could* be angry with her. She was the one we all loved; and I can't describe what the effect of her example was upon her fellow-servants, and even the young ladies. Miss Eleanor was a very high-spirited young lady, and couldn't take a word from any one, when I first knew her. One day your dear mother—(she had been maid to the young ladies about three months)—one day, I say, she had a new dress to make for

Miss Eleanor, who gave her some directions about the trimming of it, but soon after altered her mind, and sent a contrary message through the under-nurse, who carelessly forgot to give it. Of course the dress was finished according to the first directions, and your mother took it in to Miss Eleanor, who wanted to wear it at dinner. She was so angry. She scolded and stormed, while your dear mother stood by like a lamb, making no excuses, but only saying at last, that she was very sorry there had been a mistake, and she would alter it at once. It would never have been known to us servants, if Miss Eleanor had not spoken of it before me; for your dear mother was none of your gossiping girls, that would go to her fellow-servants, and tell what a tantrum her mistress had been in, and repeat all her hasty words; no, she had too much self-respect for that. But Miss Eleanor, in her quick way, was telling her mamma in the nursery how stupid Kate had been, and obstinate too, in not attending to her directions; when Susan, the under-nurse, said, 'I beg pardon, miss: I am very sorry. I quite forgot your message to Kate about the dress. It was my fault entirely.' To have seen Miss Eleanor's face was worth something. 'Well!' she exclaimed, 'Kate never said a word, so of

course I thought it was all her fault. I can't understand her taking it so quietly.' Nobody made any answer. I know what was in my mind, and I watched Kate from that day forward. She was a pattern of meekness. Miss Eleanor said once to me, some time after, 'I cannot scold Kate: she quite disarms me if I am ever so angry.' And indeed Miss Eleanor quite lost that hasty way of hers at last. She would not part with your mother until she was obliged, and used to say that she was a jewel in her household."

"If I could only be like her!" sighed Agnes, inwardly. "I'm not a bit like that. It 's all the other way with me."

All the good advice in the world would not have had the effect on Agnes that this narrative had. It sunk deep; and during that walk she resolved with all her heart to follow her dear mother's example.

The parting with granny at the door of Aggie's new home was a tearful one: yet the widow, as she turned homewards, lifted up her heart in thankfulness to her Heavenly Father, who had so well provided for two of her adopted children.

How they further fared on their journey amid the waves of this troublesome world, we may learn hereafter.

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