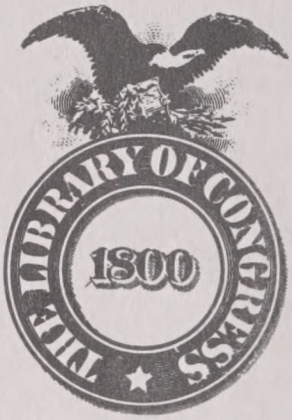
OUT OF THE WAY



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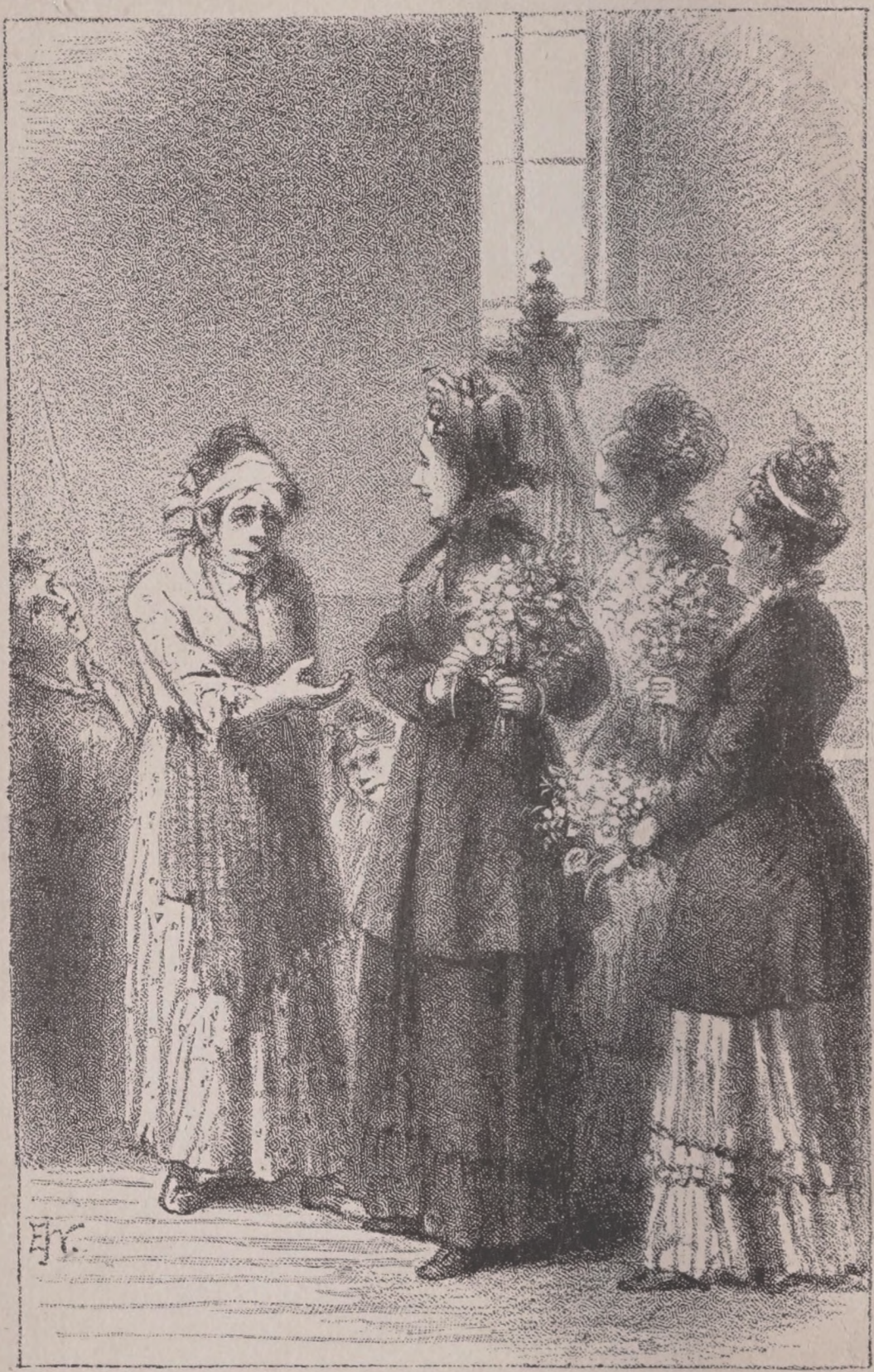


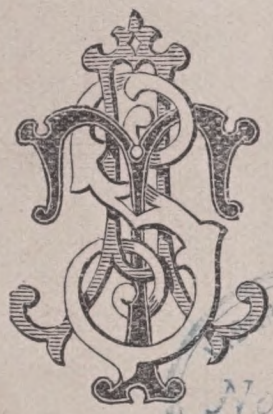
"Out of the Way."

BY

ANNETTE LUCILLE NOBLE,

AUTHOR OF "UNDER SHELTER," ETC.

Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. Heb. 5:2.



AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,

150 NASSAU STREET, NEW YORK.

"OUT OF THE WAY."

CHAPTER I.

"When the conflict ends, and slowly
Clears the smoke from out the skies,
When far down the purple distance
All the noise of battle dies;
When the last night's solemn shadows
Settle down on you and me,
May the love that never faileth
Take our souls eternally."

"HERE comes Miss Hallenbeck," said Mrs. Grey to her friend Mrs. Stuart, as they sat in the pretty parlor of the latter, one afternoon about the last of May.

"Indeed," returned Mrs. Stuart. "It is time she made her appearance, and I shall tell her so;" which she did, forthwith, on Miss Hallenbeck's entrance, adding pleasantly, "How did you think I could get along with my Spring sewing without you?"

"Oh," said Miss Hallenbeck, characteristically,

"I knew you would plan to have more than you really needed, and, if I waited you would find it out."

To this speech each lady assented with a laugh, well understanding the speaker. She sewed, when she liked, for well-to-do patrons, and their money helped her to sew for all sorts of people who never could pay her. She never broke a promise to the first; but the truth was she seldom would make one. She was not going to bind herself to "sew corkscrew flounces around and around," on just such a day, when likely as not she might want to stay with somebody sick in a tenement house. She was very *queer*, very independent; too dreadfully sallow and sharp-boned and snapping-eyed ever to be one bit like a beautiful conventional "ministering angel;" but tender-hearted enough to do such unworldly things as to lend money without security, and to give away her own clothes faster than she could replace them. This afternoon she dropped, somewhat wearily, into a willow rocking-chair and sat, at first silent, enjoying the restful atmosphere of the dainty room with its pictures, its snowy curtains, through which the sunset light streamed in over the many vines and flowering shrubs adorning every corner and bracket.

"I thought you two ladies might have gone out of town to the country for the summer," said Miss Hallenbeck.

"No," said Mrs. Stuart, "we have not; and what is more, we are not going. I shall try an experiment this year. Mr. Stuart cannot leave his business, and it is not feasible for me to go to G—— where I usually go for July. Now we live out here, so far from the noise and most of the things that make the city disagreeable, that I am going to be unfashionable enough to stay at home so long as I keep well and happy; best of all, Mrs. Grey will do likewise. We can get plenty of fresh air, and by a little exertion enjoy lovely trips on the river."

"I think you are very sensible," said Miss Hallenbeck decidedly. "This living in a trunk, tearing around the country in hot, dusty cars, eating in hotels what would sicken you at home, is spending money for naught. It is different going where you watch the ocean or climb the mountains to get quieted, up nearer to God; thinking how he makes grand things we forget about in the folderol of city performances. Yes, overworked folks need a change; but you have a nice home and good health, while your Jane makes better bread than you will find very often."

"Yes, she does; take off your hat and try some of it to night."

"Thank you, I meant to, if I found you at home," said Miss Hallenbeck, depositing a venerable head covering on the carpet and exposing a quantity of reddish gray hair, done up to look like a rusty iron door-knob. Gentle Mrs. Grey, in her quaker-colored silk, could not but be amused at the contrast between this angular outspoken spinster, in her heavy shoes and old black alpaca and the noble dark-eyed hostess whose dress was always exquisite for taste and fitness; but the amusement was only kindly; for these three women knew each other's worth. There had been, in the past, days when Mrs. Stuart ran the sewing-machine, while Miss Hallenbeck cut and trimmed silk, velvet, and linen, and when they had met soul to soul. Earnest Christians can meet, like the nearest relatives, if you bring each to the other from the antipodes. So this dressmaker, who thought the rare statuary here "heathenish," was yet learned enough in her Bible and rich enough in experience to be a valuable friend and often a teacher to the sincere, enthusiastic lady, whose culture had not outrun her piety. Time and again when their hands were busy with the things that perish with the using,

their talk was wholly of the truest things in life, the deepest secrets of the hereafter.

"Your church is closed during the summer and your Sunday-school suspended, I suppose," said Miss Hallenbeck; "but I believe you are one of the sort who do n't give their piety an entire vacation. What are you going to do for other people now?"

"You tell me," asked Mrs. Stuart. "I asked Mrs. Grey this afternoon what our summer work could be. With good health and time outside of home duties and interests, what shall I, can I do? I always try to keep my eyes open for chances to help those right around me, but is this enough? I have felt impelled to ask this even about my winter work; there is my Sunday-school class of ten excellent young girls! They listen attentively to what they have always known; they are so hedged in by good influences that they are comparatively sure to go aright and really my efforts with them is what you might call gospel fancy work."

Miss Hallenbeck laughed.

"Yes; I agree with you. Fancy work is good and beautiful; but there is drudgery, and few able or willing to do it for the Master. I could show you work hard enough, only I am not sure you are equal to it."

"Come, now," cried Mrs. Stuart coaxingly, but in earnest; "find Mrs. Grey and myself a mission."

"No, I shall *not*," said that lady emphatically. "If the Lord has a work for you, you and he, together, must find it out. However, I will help you if I can," she added.

She leaned forward, and looked out of the window, exclaiming, "What a beautiful view there is here!" And truly there was, for a smooth-shaven lawn sloped down to the river, and across the sparkling water, between tall old trees, were great gray stone towers, faintly rose-tinted from the evening sky.

"A lady once told me," said Mrs. Grey, "that those grim buildings over there made her think of castles on the Rhine, and sent her off into wonderful day-dreams and reminiscences of travel, whenever she watched them. She lived opposite here for fifteen years, and never tired of the view."

A strange expression crossed the sallow face, as Miss Hallenbeck remarked, "Lived here fifteen years and dreamed, did she, when she watched sunset lights on the outside of those buildings, did she? Well, well, I am afraid, if she had gone *inside* them at the end of that time, she would have had what old Deacon Mills calls a realizing sense of things, and have experienced a *nightmare*, to say the least."

Mrs. Grey, not understanding her meaning, looked over to what she had vaguely considered "City Institutions of Charity and Correction," and was silent. Mrs. Stuart, out of some inner reasoning of her own, asked suddenly, "Don't you think I am adapted to anything but fancy work?"

"I cannot tell until you try; but if you were *sure you could* do any sort of Christian work, it would be proof to me you were not. What would you think of folks poking right into a hospital, and going to work nursing, doctoring, dosing, advising the patients, without knowing a thing about their diseases? Well, now, I've seen Christian workers, or Christian blunderers, as I call them, go at sin-sick and sin-paralyzed and sin-sore patients, and give them all the same sort of treatment, or just the kind they happened to like for themselves. Such folks may have a good deal of religion; but more sense would improve its quality. Now, I know a good, worthy woman, who insisted, one day, on going with me to see a dying girl. I felt it in me that woman's mission was not visiting the sick, for her religion meant just two things to her (good things, only not all religion is made up of), duty and solemnity. The girl had been a Catholic; but she had come to love Christ so entirely, that all

her old superstitions had faded out of her memory, and she did not think enough about herself to know what she was beside a redeemed sinner. Before that day, I had once taken a little child to see her, and the child had a bouquet for her. Both of them were happy as larks, wondering if there would be posies in heaven; talking as if dying was a most joyful sort of a journey, with everything glorious. Well, as I was saying, I took this woman the day before she died. She went up to the bed, and stood as grim and stiff as some sort of a detective; then she heaved an awful sigh. Then she said, 'You are drawing nigh to the tomb.' I hate that word 'tomb.' Mary opened her great eyes, and looked her face all over. It was not so bright, evidently, as her own thoughts, for she shut them up again. 'We have all got to come to it. It is to be hoped that we shall meet in the other world. I—I—are you sure you are prepared?' That was all right, of course, only so *ground out.* I never forgot the look on Mary's face at that. It was just as if a soul half into the golden gate should turn aronnd to answer a question from away off behind in the dark; but all she said was, 'I have been so tired lately, but last night I heard nothing else but "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give

you rest." I am going to him; I can hardly wait!' Now, if that woman had just smiled her joyously on the way, it would have been enough; but she stood there and made moral observations until the nurse shut her off as you would a draught of cold air. The truth is, if folks are going to get any good, or any help, or any instruction from us, or comfort, even, they have got to be attracted by us, or by what we have to offer. We have got to be genuine ourselves, or they will find it out. Then we must be careful not to overturn with one hand what we want to build up with the other. I know a nice girl, pretty dressy, but her heart is all right. She teaches a class of younger girls, of the same position in society, and I know she does them good, for her finery, more or less, does not make any impression on them. They could have the same. Well, that young lady happened to find somewhere another girl about her own age, who had run away from home, and was going to ruin—a girl who told *me* she never should have taken the first wrong step, if it had not been for a passion to wear fine clothes. Now, the young lady I spoke of sat down one day, and read her the story of the Prodigal Son, and talked to her like a sister. The Lord blessed her own soul for it, I can't doubt. But, do you know?

I could n't tell whether to laugh or to cry when I saw those two together, for, you have seen these heathenish silver bracelets—all jingling bells—bangles, they call them. Well, the young lady had on *seven* pairs—three on one wrist, four on the other; then she wore those queer antique ear-rings, and pin and belt to match. And that poor prodigal's eyes kept wandering over them, until, I declare, I believe she could not make up her mind whether she would arise and go unto her father, or whether she had not better stay a while longer with the swine and the husks, until she got a set of silver bangles, too. But dear me! Who set me up on a judgment-seat? I had better remember,

> "'The eyes that fix the praise or blame,
> See farther than thine or mine.'

I only try to learn from such things what to avoid. When you get to the real truth, it all turns upon one thing: just how much warm love to the Lord Jesus, just how much of his Holy Spirit you have in your heart. If we have enough, that will lead us into the truth, and we do n't make mistakes."

Both ladies assenting, Miss Hallenbeck, who was a prodigious talker when under full headway, continued, "Then again, there are people running wild nowadays after mission-work, who had far bet-

ter stay within their own four walls, and do the duties neglected there. Mrs. Nichols—I must tell you about her some time—she was grieving the other day over a lady who, for the last few years, has been foremost in meetings, Bible readings, classes, missions here and missions there. She was very fluent, very active, wonderfully sympathetic and enthusiastic; only just a *little* too much given to telling everybody about her own remarkable spiritual exercises, instead of what the Lord of heaven had done for them. In fact, she declared she gave up her 'whole time and talents to Christian work.' She took a flat for her family, sent them to restaurants for their meals, while she went ont early in the morning, Bible in hand, letting beds and sweeping and shirt-buttons take care of themselves. She confessed her husband did not like it one bit; but that was 'the cross she must take up cheerfully,' and when her children declared mother's religion had spoiled her, she remembered the Bible said, 'a man's foes shall be they of his own household.' She was a Christian, I cannot doubt; but she took her own gait, whether or no; and the Lord let her run until she had to come to a dead standstill and look at the evidences of her folly, as they came to her one after another. You

see, she proposed to do a big work of her own for the Lord, instead of simply doing the work he had given her to do herself. The husband she promised to be faithful to, but cheated of her time and her help, deserted her; four boys have found in barrooms the comforts that failed at home; one girl became a low actress, one ran away, one is a chronic invalid, from lack of care in sickness. Now the rest of that woman's life must be spent in efforts to redeem the time that was lost, and she never can do it wholly. Plainly, *she* was not called to mission-work."

"Well, well! I can't regret I used the word that has been your text for this excellent sermon," said Mrs. Stuart, "but I am sure you will weigh me in your balance and find me in some way wanting. I might be a Christian blunderer after all."

"It is not impossible," said Miss Hallenbeck frankly; "but I know you. I have faith in what you are. Yes, I would like to initiate you two women into some things I am greatly interested in; still they bear the same relation to anything you have tried that washing greasy kettles and scouring black pots do to embroidering pincushions. Some of the sinners I have to do with are dreadfully disreputable."

As neither of the ladies looked dismayed, she

tried again, resolved to have them go with eyes wide open, if they followed her as a leader. She glanced about the flower-perfumed rooms, at the tasetefully-dressed friends and remarked: "I go to places that smell very bad and look worse than anything you can imagine. I have come on contagious diseases, and as for vermin—well ignorance is bliss."

She smiled grimly to see them wince a little; then she added: "Of course one can be prudent and need not run much risk of contamination, though dirt is dirt, and bedbugs are bedbugs, no matter how enthusiastic one is. I have been vaccinated and I keep a dress I call 'my regimentals' for this sort of charity work; then I pray the Lord to have a sort of particular oversight and care of my nose and eyes and whole body that I may be spared as much as possible. Yes, I would like to take you on a trial expedition; I would risk your coming out all right. Will you go for once?"

Somewhat to her surprise each lady said, "Yes," without hesitancy and then the tea-bell rang. When Miss Hallenbeck left them that night she said, "Next Wednesday bright and early I will be here after you. I see your yard is full of flowers; suppose you should take all we can carry with us;

they will be good as a disinfectant for you, and be like air and sunshine to the people we find."

The ladies gladly agreeing she bade them Good-night and departed—where no one knew; she seldom told her address. Patrons had such a troublesome way of running after her, when she wanted to be at liberty.

CHAPTER II.

"All our pride of strength is weakness and the cunning hand is vain, . . .
But the heavenly help we pray for comes to faith and not to sight,
And our prayers themselves drive backwards all the spirits of the night." WHITTIER.

"Oh, you are all ready, are you?" said Miss Hallenbeck, next Wednesday morning when, on opening Mrs. Stuart's front door, she met the two ladies in brown linen dresses, so clean and slippery that nothing could well adhere to them. "And the flowers too! Oh, what lilies! That is splendid. Now come on. I do not usually go the way I shall to-day; but I must do an errand in the city first."

"Where are we going?" asked Mrs. Grey, while they walked toward a street-car.

Miss Hallenbeck pointed across the beautiful river, remarking succinctly: "To the Castles on the Rhine; I do not want you to sentimentalize over them for fifteen years."

They rode quite down into the city, where their leader did her errand and then guided them down

a side street where at the dock puffed a little steamer. She marshalled them on and up aloft on the deck, where in a breezy spot under an awning, they could see the other passengers as they arrived.

"Is this a summer boat for pleasure?" asked Mrs. Stuart innocently; but the short laugh of her somewhat brusque companion gave an answer without the words: "You two bodies really never saw the under crust of society; you can on this boat. There comes the Black Maria, only it is white now."

A great stage rattled up and a policeman helped out one insane and two drunken women, a half-paralyzed negro, an emaciated woman with a baby in her arms and one clinging to her skirts. These were the first-comers of a rapidly increasing throng. Some came on foot through the gateway; half-helpless ones were rolled in on chairs; bedridden ones brought in on stretchers. Others limped, staggered or hobbled on between the boxes of meat and barrels of flour being rolled from the wharf. A procession of women, bareheaded, barefooted, some bold, blatant, wrangling with one another and threatened by the policeman's club, some weak with drink, one or two shame-faced, half of them gray-

haired, half in their teens—these were hurried on in a troop.

"Sent up for disorderly conduct—going to the workhouse," said Miss Hallenbeck, as one of them in passing below looked up with a leer. "Now here comes a gang of men, mostly going to the penitentiary. The boat runs every few hours and the load is always the same. Don't be afraid, Mrs. Grey, all are below. These well-dressed, respectable-looking folks that you see coming on are those who have friends or relatives or may be servants at the hospitals or the asylums. Do you see that pretty pale-faced woman in black? She comes twice a week to see her poor crazy husband. Mrs. Nichols (I really must tell you about Mrs. Nichols some time) first noticed her; it was one day when she saw the tears rolling down the poor young thing's face, as she sat off there alone in the stern. She went and sort of nestled up beside her under pretence of shading her with her umbrella and she got out the whole pitiful story."

But time would fail to tell every detail at the outset of their expedition. The bell rang, the boat glided from the dock, and Mrs. Stuart realized, with a vividness that after-familiarity somewhat dulled, something of what was comprehended in the inces-

sant trips of that steamer, day in and day out, year in and year out, and always with its dreadful load of sin and of suffering. It seemed so strange to think that in the months that were past, when she had been reading beautiful poems, paying social visits, enjoying art and music and home life, this awful caravan had been moving on to punishment, to lingering sicknesses, to the Potter's Field. It did not make those lovely things wrong, but it made these before unrealized things so suddenly true. Along with these thoughts came another, even more depressing, and she turned quickly to Miss Hallenbeck, asking, "What can *one* do? What can three or six or twenty do against all this avalanche of misery and depravity? Do n't you feel every effort smothered? Is n't it like trying to sweeten the ocean with lumps of sugar to do good, or to try to, with all these?"

"I never come to these islands to do good to the many thousands," said Miss Hallenbeck. "If I did, it would kill me. I only let myself think of the worth of one soul, and keep a sharp lookout for one that might need me. But I know just what you mean. Some nights, when I get thinking about it, I feel as if I had been bending over an awful rushing river, and had seen human beings

caught in, tossed, and whirled, and hurried down to destruction, some of them senseless, some horridly jesting and crazy, some turning up such pleading faces to me. Then I think: Well, now, I know there *is* such a river. Rather than run away and hide from the sight of it, I will stand there and see it all, if only once in a while there is a hand stretched out, or I can get close enough to snatch one out of the horror. And then, foremost of everything, I don't let myself forget to think: If *I* am sorry for them, is not God more so? If *I* would do my utmost, is he not willing to do the same?" And the dressmaker's homely face glowed with light from within.

It seemed but a few moments before the boat again approached a landing, and a part of the peculiar crew went ashore, our friends among the number. They were within a stone's throw of one of the largest "castles," toward which Miss Hallenbeck proceeded.

"I will go around the building with you for a while," said she; "then I have a few people I want particularly to see. While I am doing that, I will ask some one of the nurses to show you sick women, who will be so glad of your flowers."

The ladies followed her over the threshold into

the building, noting every object as they went through the long halls, stone-floored and freshly whitewashed. They passed groups of the same sort of people met with on the boat: shiftless, miserable men, shuffling along to the place assigned them at the "office;" pale, decently-clad women, bringing sick children, and perhaps a few clothes tied up in a bundle; coarse, noisy ones, running hither and thither.

"Yes, there are all sorts here," remarked Miss Hallenbeck, in answer to a questioning look on Mrs. Grey's face. "There are often nice, respectable folks, who cannot pay for proper care in the city! there are wrecks of drunkenness, and victims of every vice, who eome here to die; there are lazy fellows who get in here on the slightest pretext, and live on charity. In fact, as a nurse told me, there are scores of men and women, who come in, go out, and come in a few months after, and keep this up for years."

They passed along the far-stretching halls, and up stairs, passing ward after ward, classified according to the patients, or rather to the nature of their diseases.

"There are an equal number of male and female wards," said Miss Hallenbeck; "but we will go

only to the latter, I think." Just then she found herself stopped by a double line of women, ranged up a short flight of stairs. They had half-boldly, half-timidly obstructed the way, in the desire to get a flower.

"No, no," said Miss Hallenbeck good-naturedly. "You, who are able to run around and get out in the air, do not need these. I save them for the sick ones." Nevertheless, she gave those who pleaded at least one. At the top of the stairs stood an Irishwoman, with her head so plastered up with cloths, that little was seen of her round, red face, swollen eyes, and black and blue bruises.

"Would ye give me a lily, Miss Hallenbeck?" she asked, in a wheedling tone, stretching out a great hand.

"*You* back, Kate Mulligan?" said the lady. "I thought you were going to such a fine, new place, you said. What ails you?"

"'T is me husband sure. He mashed me entirely; it was dead I thought I was when the officer come till us."

"Why, you told me you were a widow."

"A widdy is it?" said Kate, a grin distorting her swollen physiognomy. "Faith, miss, 't is much

the same; he does be doin' nothin' for me to spake of."

"Humph," retorted Miss Hallenbeck, grimly surveying Mrs. Mulligan, "I should say he *did* enough. A fight I suppose; were you drunk?"

"Well, I wont desave ye; ye know I have been wakelike since I came out of the hospital and so I took a wee drap for the strengthnin', and last night he put sass on me, a callin' me by every bad name ever he could lay his tongue onto, and I resisted like."

"Yes, yes, I know all about it. If you will drink, you will fight, and if you will fight you will certainly keep getting mashed."

"'T is true for ye," said Kate, philosophically. "And now, me dear lady, have ye an ould skirt or a pair of shoes or a bit of a sacque, may be ye could spare me just to be daycint whin the doctors goes around. 'T is not becomin' in me to be so ontidy; but ye see they fetched me off whin I was sort of insensible; so me clothes was all left behint me?"

"No, you are strong and able-bodied, Kate, you could earn plenty, if you liked and be well-dressed."

"Yes, marm, and the day I come out of this is the day I begin, ye may count on it, marm. But have

ye just the makin' of a laytle sup o' tay in yer pocket? I am that gone in me inwards I could faint; there is naught wholesome here for a poor body to ate or to dhrink ayther."

Miss Hallenbeck shook her head.

"Well, thin, may God bless ye all the same and kape ye wearin' yer good cloths whoiver goes bare or hungary," said Mrs. Mulligan with what she may have meant for sarcasm or may not; and turned on her heel to wait for the next comer.

"There is a type of dozens I meet here," said Miss Hallenbeck. "The first time I saw Kate she was a widow and a devout Episcopalian, had worked eighteen years in a family that adored her. I believed a little she said until she began to beg right through hit or miss from a pair of cotton stockings to a side-comb, a prayer-book, a waterproof, and money to take her to friends in the country and to redeem her teakettle that was in pawn; oh yes, and the 'address of some nice charitable Christian like myself.' I have talked to that woman until I am discouraged; for the moment I stop for breath, she takes up the subject and out-talks me on her own weaknesses. She confesses, repents, weeps, reforms right on the spot, then goes out, gets 'mashed,' comes in for surgical attendance,

and gives me quite a new autobiography. It would be ridiculous, if it was not dreadful, to see one so low down in the scale of being and thinking."

"She is putting that yellow flower you gave her into her knot of red hair," said Mrs Stuart.

"And see," added Mrs. Grey. "Every one of those women are putting the flowers in their hair! Well, now, I like to think they have some sense of beauty, if not exactly of fitness."

A sharp-looking girl who stood in a door behind them gave a derisive laugh and exclaimed, "They stick a flower in their heads here for a charm to keep off sickness; just as they'd hang up a horse-shoe to keep out the devil."

When the ladies turned, the girl was waltzing down the hall singing a song.

Miss Hallenbeck, who seemed to find nothing that surprised her, went on and they followed. She stopped at last before the doors of a large ward for women, saying, "Now you ladies might come in here with your flowers, one on each side of the room. Don't be afraid to talk with anybody you are inclined to; for no one will be likely to repulse you. Time goes so monotonously here any new thing or person is welcome. I want to go across the hall to the ward for consumptives."

A little while after they separated, Mrs. Grey noticed a young girl about nineteen years old sitting between a bed and an open window. She had a fair smooth face, quantities of light, tightly-curling hair, and was decently dressed. Something about her interested Mrs. Grey, who approached and offered her a couple of roses. She took them with thanks, saying that it was good to see anything bright and pretty there.

"You like flowers; perhaps you have lived in the country?"

"Yes, before I came to New York."

"And how long ago was that?"

"I left Germany when I was not quite fifteen."

"Left Germany? Why you speak very good English."

"Yes, and as good French," said the girl, with no apparent pride in the fact. "I was three years in a boarding-school there."

"You have come a long way from home," said Mrs. Grey gently. "Have you relatives or friends here?"

"Relatives—yes."

Something non-committal in her tone and a certain hardening of her expression noted by the lady, made her return to talking of the flowers and

then of Germany again. She soon saw that the girl was not averse to talking of her childhood, and her story bore inherent evidences of truth. She described the pretty little village where she was born, her brothers and sisters, the death of her father which left them poorer than they had reason to expect it would. She did not allude to her mother but once or twice; when she did, her eyes, which were a little cold and distrustful, softened and even seemed bluer.

"Poor girl!" said Mrs. Grey sympathizingly. "How hard for your mother to think of you now, sick and with such surroundings!"

"She does not know it," confessed the girl, half unwillingly.

"Oh! you keep it all from her when you write. Well, your letters must be a great comfort to her."

Trouble, anger (not toward Mrs. Grey), rebellion, a flash of longing passed over her features, then they settled back into hard indifference as she answered, "I never write to her."

A woman more curious and less really interested than Mrs. Grey, would have pressed her inquiries then, and perhaps been rebuffed, perhaps deceived by half-truths or a story wholly false. Mrs. Grey, instead of questions, fell to talking in a pleasant womanly way of sickness and trouble, of absence

from dear ones; but of God's care and mercy; of Christ, who is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Evidently the manner as much as the matter of her talk touched the girl; for she listened with respect and a certain surprised attention. Mrs. Grey took up some embroidery that lay in her lap and admired it.

"Yes, I can do all kinds of such work; I learned at home."

"Have you been here long, I mean in the hospital?"

"Two months."

There was a stolid acceptance of circumstances, quite different from cheerfulness about her whole demeanor, which puzzled Mrs. Grey. Her hands were small, white, unused, it was plain, to hard labor; while her language was perfectly correct, yet if she had ever had such a childhood as she said she had known how dreadful must be her present surroundings, unless she had, in some great gulf between the "then" and the "now," lost all sensitiveness. To be sure, the long ward in which she had a spot was light and clean and airy, if one looked only at walls and floor, but in the bed next to hers, so near she could almost put her hand on it, lay a woman, in a horrible stupor succeeding an attack of delirium tremens.

Mrs. Grey shuddered as she looked down the long double row of cots and saw faces that (so it seemed to her) told all the evil of as many lives. Looking back at the girl by her side, her heart filled with pity, with a desire as well to help or to save her from what she scarcely knew as yet. She did not realize how intense and penetrating was her look, until for the first time, the girl's eyes filled with tears.

"Josephine, have you anything here to read?" asked the lady simply.

She glanced up quickly at the sound of the name, then saw that Mrs. Grey had read it from a card over her bed. With an impulse to speak the truth in everything to this stranger, she said, in a low tone, "My real name is Elsie. I should not be in here if I had not belonged among—these—but I have not been like them either," and she gave a fierce contemptuous glance around the room.

"No," she added, in a different tone, "I have nothing now to read, or only an old paper once in a while."

"Would you read books if you had them?"

"Indeed I would, gladly. I sew all the time for the nurses, to keep myself doing something."

"Well," said Mrs. Grey kindly, "I will come

again and bring you some books. If you are here long I can be your friend and can help you perhaps."

She did not say in what way; she did not know herself. She certainly never thought that she had already made any impression for good on the girl; but when she went away Elsie found a bottle and filling it with water put in her roses; then she turned her back on the scene behind her and looking out over the sun-illumined water and the soft blue sky of the May day—Elsie *thought*. She had not thought really for a year or more. She had raged and sinned, and sullenly felt remorse—never repented. She did not repent to-day; but she did think, and it was of the future. It may seem a thing impossible; yet this sometimes stubbornly indifferent, sometimes reckless girl had all her life long neglected to think of the future. We mean her future in *this* world—of any other Elsie had so little idea that she was even more uninterested. It came to her dully, heavily now, that she had lost a future, thrown away her life before it came to her, if such a thing could be. Only one thing she could let herself dwell on contentedly: this was that the great ocean rolled and tossed between her and the clean, sweet German home, the pure, simple-hearted mother, who would gladly have died rather than

send her little yellow-haired girl into the great city of America, had she once heard tell the half that Elsie had known, seen, and lived through.

But where was Mrs. Stuart in the meantime? She had distributed her flowers and had gone across the hall into the consumptives' ward, in order to rejoin Miss Hallenbeck. Entering the room, she saw the latter reading to a woman who was evidently near death. Unwilling to interrupt her she sat down in a great wooden chair, which stood by the table where the nurse kept her roll-book, in which was the name (or *a* name) of all who came in or went out. The sunshine streamed in broad bars over the clean scrubbed floor. The open windows kept the air pure; a great hanging basket filled with luxuriant vines hung where the eye, tired of everything else, might rest—yet, at the best, the place was gloomy. Over each bed some visitor had left a printed text in large bright letters and Mrs. Stuart was interested in noticing how the inmates of the many beds had used them. Some were carefully secured against any danger of blowing away or of being soiled. Some were bottom side up, as if having fallen they had been replaced without a thought of their purport. Others were torn off by bits, perhaps to light a lamp. A good many were

turned with the Bible verses to the wall and a crucifix or rosary hung on the blank side. As she sat there, looking at the pallid faces on pillows but little more colorless, as she heard the long hollow cough or convulsive gasping for breath; she was peculiarly attracted toward a woman in a bed not far from where Miss Hallenbeck sat. She was about thirty-five years old, English or possibly Irish, she thought, but with a most gentle face and large clear eyes, that were full of expression. She had raised herself on her elbow and was eager to catch, above the incessant coughing, the words that were meant for Miss Hallenbeck's listener in particular. As the latter read promise after promise of cheer and consolation, her eyes filled with tears, while her lips parted in a smile. A pleasant-mannered nurse passing with bottles of medicine, detected Mrs. Stuart's interest in her and said, "That Ellen is a good soul, kind and patient as a lamb. She gets weaker, poor thing!"

"I would like to go and speak to her," said Mrs. Stuart, gliding over to her bed and putting into her hand the last flower she had.

"Oh thank you," said Ellen. "How kind ladies are to come here to read and to bring nice things! This is a sweet-william, is n't it? Why, I do n't

believe that ever I have seen one since I came across. My mother had them in our little garden at home. There, the lady has stopped reading. Oh, it is so good!" said she, dropping back on to her pillow.

"Then you like to hear such words as these?"

"Oh, I do," she returned, her eyes full of light, her thin hand on her sunken chest. "They are sweet. I feel every one here in my heart. Yes, someway I can take them right in and know they are all *true* and for *me*. Oh, they rest me! She read here one day, 'When thy father and thy mother forsake thee, then the Lord will take thee up.' Now the blackest sort of days I have are for the thinking of my little girl. Her father's gone five years come summer. And when I leave her she is all alone. If it is the Lord's will to take me I haven't a fear of death; but oh, think what a world this is to leave a slip of a girl in and she to make her own way."

The light had faded out and left only the tears in Ellen's eyes; and so Mrs. Stuart, sitting close by her on the little stool, such as stood by each bed, asked, "Where is the child?"

That was the key to unlock all Ellen's confidences, and she was soon pouring out her simple

story, which we give condensed. She was so modest, so sincere and gentle, though evidently of humble birth and of little or no education, that she pleased Mrs. Stuart much.

"You see he was a carpenter (my husband was), but he was killed by falling from a great height in a new house that he was building. This left us all alone—me and the child, who was only five years old; but folks were very kind to me—someway they always are; and I got sewing; for I was not strong enough to do washing. Thank the Lord we could keep warm and clean, and got enough to eat, while little Mary never ran the streets, but kept quiet-like and civil, not knowing too much, as poor children have to, sometimes. Dear, dear me! He knows best; but it seemed hard lines when I got this dreadful cold that never has let go its hold of me. You see, I went with some work one bad night, and got wet and waited an hour in a cold basement hall, before the lady would pay me, or, to tell the truth, before she refused to. I've never seen the well day since. Six weeks ago, the dispensary doctor said it was very doubtful if I ever got up, and all my earnings were spent, so I made up my mind I must come here, there was no other way. I had what was the neat furnishing of three

or more rooms, and my husband's tools, and a few bit things I fetched from the old country. I gave every one to a woman, who promised me solemnly, a-knowing God heard her, that she would be good to my Mary, and keep her safe till she could put her at some honest work where no evil will harm her; but oh, my heart aches! It aches to kill me, sometimes, for the child. O marm, just since I 've come here they do tell me, and I see myself, that there are young things so bad, so knowing in wickedness! O God, save her! She was never out of my sight an hour, and I miss the voice of her, and the nice lovin' ways, for, if she was my very own child, marm, I know she was a good little one. If I could only just see her *once* more! but the woman cannot leave her work to be running here, and I would never let that innocent thing make her way to me on that awful boat. O marm, you do n't know what she might hear! Why, there be around these buildings men and women so wicked, they can't be satisfied with their own sins, but they must poison-like and fill the heads of them as do n't know any evil, and they fling wickedness at them, and talk it where they must hear. All that nurses and doctors and priests and chaplains might do, can't help it."

"Where is your little girl?" asked Mrs. Stuart.

"With Mrs. Catharine Rian, 106 —— street."

"Well, Ellen," said Mrs. Stuart, "you do not know *me;* but I think you can trust me, if Miss Hallenbeck tells you that she is my friend. Now, I will go and see your little girl, and tell you how she is getting along. I will bring her to see you, and know that she gets safely home again, if it will be such a great pleasure to you."

Mrs. Stuart expected that she would be pleased, but was unprepared to see such perfect delight as Ellen manifested. "Oh, if you would! If you could!" she cried. "Oh, how good God is, and how good people are that love him!"

"How do you know I love him?" asked Mrs. Stuart, smiling.

Ellen answered instantly: "People who have everything themselves, do n't leave pleasant places and go around trying to help sick and wicked folks in places like this, if they have not soft hearts, and think about our blessed Saviour."

As Ellen spoke a string of beads slipped out from under her pillow; she picked them up on her thin, white fingers and replaced them.

"Are you a Catholic?" asked Mrs. Stuart, concealing her surprise.

"Well, I always call myself so, of course; but the priest is angry at me. He says I am not and he talks very sharp and argues about things that make my head ache. May be it is wrong; but I let them slip and lie here and think over things that come to me, I can't hardly tell from where. Oh yes, all my folks were Catholics at home, and I always was in the church; but I was younglike and did not think of my soul anyway, not then nor much after, until my man died. When I got this sick stroke I had to lie in bed about all last summer. Well, next to where I lived was a church, and I know now it was not a Catholic one. Summer evenings and every Sunday, the windows being wide open, I heard prayers and prayers and preaching and easy lectures like, not a bit hard to understand, and beautiful, beautiful singing. I listened to all of it. Oh, it was so good! Why I should have supposed the priest would have liked it. I learned a great deal more than I knew about Jesus Christ our Lord, who died for us and all that; even little Mary understood it too. I heard a man in there, one hot evening, talk sort of discouraged because so few people came out. He said he was afraid they were not doing any good. I laid there and laughed to think how foolish that was in him and thanked God they were and right

through two stone walls and two open windows at that. Why that very man's prayers had, time and again, made me feel so happy thinking about God's love and forgiving my sins. Queer, was n't it? I never seeing his face and never going to, unless it will be to tell him about it sometime in heaven. Well, then, I came here, and off and on that good old maid (I beg your pardon I do n't mean any disrespect, only she is just as plain as she is kind), she comes in here and reads to Mother Humphry. I always listen and, when she goes away, I say, over and over, things she has read. Nights they come back to me; and if it were not for little Mary's being left I would be glad to go any minute. Everything beyond seems light to me lately. Oh yes, I am a Catholic of course. This little rosary I love so, because my mother got it at a fair and gave it to me when I was a bit of a girl, and she held it herself when she died. I do n't very often pray the prayers with it, because—well, I have not much time and I like to tell our blessed Saviour everything about myself and Mary before I go. No, I do n't know why the priest is so cross to me and scowls."

"Ellen," asked Mrs. Stuart tenderly, "how do you know you are going to heaven?"

"Because—why see *those words* over there on the wall: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him shall not perish but have everlasting life'—why I believe that with all my heart. Father O'Donevan took away the paper card over my head; he said the red letters drew the flies. It said on that: 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.'"

Ellen had evidently not a desire to ask if Mrs. Stuart called herself Catholic or Protestant; and the latter seeing well enough why the priest was "cross," was inexpressibly touched to see how rapidly a soul had drifted away from superstition, how unconsciously the relics of the old faith were disregarded, how Christ had become all. In the time when the soil was ready, God had sent seed meant for other souls unto this one; it had sprung up qnickly and was bearing fruit.

"I must go now," said Mrs. Stuart, seeing Miss Hallenbeck arise; "but do not fear that I shall forget little Mary; for I shall not."

The look that Ellen's face took on at the mere thought of seeing her child, made Mrs. Stuart resolve to gratify her, whatever trouble it might cost.

At the door they met Mrs. Grey and all together

hastened down stairs; for some one told them the boat was just in; and this was the hour they meant to return. As they came out of the great stone building, they were amazed to have nearly three hundred young men rush by them like the wind—coat-tails flying, hair blowing, hats held on, all of them intent on getting from the boat to some other point, within the shortest possible time. Miss Hallenbeck retreated and let them sweep by her, while she regarded them with a grim look which seemed to say, "I suppose it *must* be all right, but I doubt it."

"Humph," she exclaimed, as the last one sped by, "I would like to know how many of *them creeters* there are loose." Miss Hallenbeck was sometimes ungrammatical when emphatic.

"*Creeters*, Miss Hallenbeck?" echoed a fine-looking, dignified gentleman, following in the wake, and who gave her a quizzical look.

"Yes, they are creatures a' n't they? fellow-creatures, if you like that better, Doctor D——."

"Well, you ought to *love* them," laughed the professor walking on after his troop.

"Humph," she repeated "*love* three hundred medical students, maybe I ought to; but I *do n't* just like those chaps, one bit and *he* knows it, Prof.

D—— does. He brings them up to a clinic. Now I do, in reason, suppose that there can't be thorough experienced doctors in the world, without their being these raw young sawbones first in their proper time; but I can't abide 'em, that is a fact. Think of that host there let through peaceful communities to bleed and blister and physic, until they learn the best way. I wish they had to be shut up to experiment on cats and dogs and wornout car-horses, and so I told Dr. D—— once on the boat," said Miss Hallenbeck, who was an individual with strong prejudices.

"What did he say?" asked Mrs. Grey.

"Oh, he said he did not think it would answer all the ends required in practice to restrict the youths in that manner; that is just what *he* said; and he asked me, besides, when, for instance, would I have a young doctor stop with a pussy-cat and begin with a sick baby. I told him just the minute the fellow got so skilful that he did not kill the cat. And that is just what *I* said."

By this time they were seated in the boat, and moving gently toward the city.

"Well, now," ejaculated Miss Hallenbeck, after a long pause; "you have seen that place, and you never need go there again."

"Oh, but I want to!" exclaimed each lady at the same moment.

"I promised a young girl to take her something to read," said Mrs. Grey.

"Oh, I must tell you about a woman right behind where you were reading," put in Mrs. Stuart eagerly—so eagerly, that Miss Hallenbeck, looking at them, laughed heartily.

She continued to laugh at intervals; then she said, "You were faint, you know you were, Mrs. Grey, when we passed through that room where the carbolic acid was so strong. I saw you plunge your nose into your flowers and turn very white."

"I can't help it," said Mrs. Grey firmly. "I need not go that way again, unless it is necessary; but if anything can be done for that Elsie, a bad smell on the way is not going to discourage me."

"And it would be perfectly heartless for me to refuse a poor mother one sight of her only child before she died, if it cost me so little trouble," said Mrs. Stuart warmly.

"Oh, very well, just as you like. I am always ready to go with you," said Miss Hallenbeck. "And now, perhaps, I had better go and cut that silk sacque for Mrs. Price. Yes, I will; my purse is getting low. Oh there, I forgot to run down to

the Bowery and see if that poor little widow got turned out by that wretch of a landlord. If he did put her out, I was going to get her in a place I know of. I'll just let Mrs. Price go; she has clothes enough, and her husband will thank me, maybe. Oh, but the silk is *bought!* Well, I'll run across and send a young girl I know of in my place. She is poor, but she will suit; she cuts beautifully. We part here, do we? Good-by, then." And off walked the dressmaker, no one knew where; but it was extremely probable she did not replenish her purse *that* day.

CHAPTER III.

"I am only a little sparrow,
A bird of low degree;
My life is of little value,
But the dear Lord cares for me.

* * * * *

"I fold my wings at twilight,
Wherever I happen to be;
For the Father is always watching,
And no harm will come to me."

IT was only the first week in June, but it was as hot as midsummer need be. Down in —— street, all the old people, the lazy, the half-sick, and every individual child seemed at nightfall to spill out of the old houses on to the pavement, in order to breathe. There was, therefore, going on all at once, quarrelling, gossiping, beer-drinking, marble-playing. and baby-tending. The tall doorsteps of each tenement-house were full of dirty women, and men in shirtsleeves, smoking old pipes. Every window was wide open, and those who were within doors were sewing or working as near the outer air as possible. In room No. 10, of one of the tallest houses, a large, vigorous woman was ironing shirts

and talking with her neighbor across a hall, this neighbor being too lame to get down to the door-steps.

"Then ye like yer rooms, Mrs. Rian?" said the latter.

"Yes; 't was much better I come here than to be payin' extravagint rint for thim rooms I had. They war ginteel, to be sure; but what for should I be a-puttin' on style whin here there 'll be the savin' of three shillin's a week? Then, ye mind, don't ye, I was tellin' ye of Ellen McCarroll? Well, I made a rale bargain with thim old traps of Ellen's. 'T was no use for me to be a-storin' thim, so I sold ivery one, and made enough to pay me for the kapin' of the child, for the saison, at least."

"But ye do be a-spoilin' the young one, Mrs Rian."

"And how, thin, is that?"

"Oh, wid ye's allowin' her foine lady airs, washin' her face tin times a day, and all such. Niver does she put foot out of the door, but her hair is that sleek that ye 'd think the cat had licked it. Did n't Bridget Gaffiny tell me but yesterday how the landlord axed her what was she a-doin' here, when she and your Mag was a-playin' togither? He was after puttin' complimints on her, like as if she

was a gintleman's child. It 's not me that 'd be a-presarvin' her hands white for her, and she a beggar, if the truth is told."

"Oh, I mane she shall worruk," said Mrs. Rian; "but she is not altogither tough. She cooks the males, and washes the dishes, and tidies up clane. I 'll say that for her, she 's moighty nate-fingered; but if, as ye say, Mrs. McCarty, 't is a young miss that Mary 's a-settin' up for, I 'll take that out of her."

"Faith, thin, it 's just *that* I say," went on the other woman, secretly vexing Mrs. Rian by assuming that little Mary was better-looking and better-behaving than any of the five red-headed scapegraces that made up her own family.

"Ye better get rid of her as quick as iver ye can," was the neighborly advice; "or, the first thing ye know, she 'll be carryin' off the chances of good wages and favors away from yer own."

To this Mrs. Rian made no answer, but soon remarked crossly, as she put down the heavy iron and folded the last shirt: "Oh, but it is hot. How I do be a-dreadin' the walk across town wid these. I 'm bate out wid the hate."

"Sind Mary wid um; she 's had no big job the day, has she?"

"No, but the basket is purty heavy, and the young one is—"

"Too del-i-cate for ony work," laughed the other hatefully. "Yer a soft one, Mrs. Rian. Wait till yer own Mag is tin years old and we'll see if ye spare her."

Mag now at eight could have knocked all the breath out of Mary; but facts were facts and if at ten Mag would carry clothes why not Mary now?

"Maybe ye are right," said Mrs. Rian, not quite able to forget that she had promised Ellen to keep Mary out of the street after dark. At that moment the neighbor was interrupted, and soon after Mick and Pat and Zed came squabbling up the stairs and along the hall, much like rat-terriers, snapping, snarling, and gyrating around Mary, who kept her feet with difficulty, because she bore Mrs. Rian's youngest, a monstrous baby, in her arms. Mary was indeed very attractive; her soft gray eyes looked shyly out from under dark lashes, and her skin was so fair the blue vein showed on her temples. Her clothes were old but very clean, and she wore shoes and stockings, which last fact was to bring instant disgrace upon her, for when Teddy and Mick gave a simultaneous lunge under her at Pat-

rick, she stepped by chance on the latter's thumb. He changed base rapidly and attacked her with howls of rage; the baby being broad and Mary thin, the former suffered assault first, joined the uproar, and the din was deafening. Now when Mrs. Rian found out the first cause of offence, she declared she would have no more of Mary's wearing shoes and stockings every day when every little Rian she possessed went barefooted.

"Here be I," she cried, getting more irate as scolding naturally heated her. "Look at me slavin' myself to kape the likes of ye in illigance; ye shall jest help bring in a penny from this day forth. Heft that basket, will ye?"

As a matter of a moment, Mary lifted the basket of clean clothes with no trouble.

"Now, thin," said Catherine Rian, not without some compunction, "I 'm dead tired, and so I want ye to fetch that over to Grand street and leave it at Mrs. Nelson's. If it is a trifle heavy, why ye can just drop down a bit on some steps or other and rest yerself. Only mind ye nobody touches finger to these shirts."

"I—I go—alone—to-night!" said Mary, her eyes darkening with fear. "Why I could not get back until after nine!"

"And what o' that, sure! Is yer pocket full of gold that anybody will lay hands on ye?"

"Oh, but the alleys are full of ugly boys and there are drunken men and streets so full of everything."

"Look ye here, girl," stormed Mrs. Rian. "Do ye think ye're a growin' up wid a Frinch nurse to walk out wid ye and by-and-by a carriage and a coachman. 'T is true for ye, ye've been too much made of whin, not to be too particular about confessin' it, ye are just naught but a beggar, wid ye own mother, poor soul, a-dyin' over among the paupers. Pick up that basket and out wid ye before I get that mad at ye I'll do something hasty."

In truth she meant before she relented; for the thought of Ellen again made her uncomfortable, but the meddlesome neighbor across the hall, shouted out, "That's sinse out of ye at last, Mrs. Rian," and Teddy and Patrick leered with delight at Mary's evident fear of the expedition. The tears so blinded her eyes Catherine had to find her straw hat for her; then carrying the basket herself down to the door, she started the child, saying a little soothingly, "If me Mag was about I'd make her go too;" but Mag was not about, and had she been it is doubtful if she would have been much of a comfort.

For a few streets all went well; the basket was heavy, but still Mary managed it, and best of all, it was not yet dark, the days were so long this time of year. Her troubles began soon enough, however; for her wrists began to ache until they felt numb; the heavy weight drew on her little back and shoulders until she was forced to sit down on a doorstep; but hardly had she done so, before a set of little ragamuffins made her a target, at which to fire the contents of an ash-barrel. Lumps of coal, stale bread and potatoes, an old shoe, and last of all a dead kitten came flying over her head or into her lap.

Seizing her basket, she hurried away from her tormentors only to meet a more respectable (?) crew, who set a Spitz dog upon her. It was quite dark, when breathless, perspiring, her heart beating like a trip-hammer, she reached the Nelsons'. Her clothes were for a boarder on the top-floor, and when she mounted to his room it was locked and a chambermaid sent her down again, with her basket to wait in the kitchen. The cook, vexed with the maid, sent her up once more; and she might have been kept vibrating between attic and basement, until such time as the boarder returned, had not the landlady discovered her panting on a landing, and

taking charge of the clothes started her home. Mrs. Rian would have been perfectly sure that Mary had been foolishly brought up had she known the terror of that walk, or rather run, through narrow streets, whose noises were dreadful to her because so new at this hour. In every area-way she suspected danger, and did in reality encounter brawling women, drunken men, and worst of all those many malicious boys, who divined by a sort of fiendish instinct that she feared them, and so pounced on her the instant she appeared. It was nearly ten o'clock when she turned up the long crowded doorstep and hurried to Mrs. Rian's new apartments, which seemed so dreadful to her, after the last old-fashioned cosey nest near by the old church.

The children were asleep and Mrs. Rian was hanging half out of the window refreshing herself after the day's work. She spoke pleasantly to Mary and gave her a penny bun she had sent Pat to buy for her, adding, "There is bread on the table if ye want more, and a drink of tay. Nothin' hurted ye, did there? I've no wish to put onything wrong on ye, child; I'd do the same by me own; 't is not always ye'll have to go eyther. Now ye can go up and slape on the roof, if ye like."

Mary did "like." The closet she otherwise shared with Mick, Teddy, and Mag, frequently Pat, was very like a small oven redolent with everything cooking therein; so she much preferred taking her chances for sleep on the roof with the sky for a coverlet. Ellen would not have been pleased with this, for a whole community from the tenement were of the same mind as Mary and shared the top with her; but as yet no evil had come nigh her. To-night she stretched her poor little tired limbs on the old straw bed she had brought up, but sleep forsook her for a time. Mrs. Rian's words about beggars and paupers did not greatly trouble her; she was too young and simple to understand them bitterly; but her mother was "dying," was she?—going to be still and white, and cold, in a coffin, like the father she dimly remembered, who never came back any more—and she, was she going to belong to Mrs. Rian, who was so loud and disorderly and would make her take heavy baskets for ever and ever?

No wonder she cried herself to sleep and forgot her childish prayers. But the Father in heaven did not forget her, although she was just one little miserable one among thousands and thousands of others. Neither did the poor mother in

the hospital forget her; for while the night lamp burned low and the great ward was silent she waked and prayed for Mary.

"Though small we are never forgotten,
Though weak we are never afraid,
For we know that the dear Lord keepeth
The life of the creatures he made."

CHAPTER IV.

"If you cannot speak like angels,
If you cannot preach like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus,
You can say he died for all."

"WELL, it is downright hot, is n't it?" exclaimed Miss Hallenbeck, dropping into a seat in Mrs. Stuart's parlor, about a week after the date last mentioned. "I came for you early, so as to have time to get rested. I had to go and see Mrs. Nichols first I declare that woman means just one Bible verse to me and this, 'Charity never faileth!'"

"Now do tell us who Mrs. Nichols is," said Mrs. Grey. "You are always going to tell; but never have."

"Who is she?" echoed Miss Hallenbeck. "That is what I would like to know myself, and plenty of other people would. I only know what she is."

"She is a lady, is she not?" asked Mrs. Stuart, a little vaguely.

"A lady," again echoed Miss Hallenbeck crisp-

ly. "There are two sorts: one you can make right up out of a camel's hair shawl, a diamond ring and a weak back—she is not that sort! As many as twelve years ago, I used to hear of Mrs. Nichols. In hospitals and prisons and everywhere among the sick and the wicked, I was always coming across people, who had been helped in body or soul by her; but I never could catch a glimpse of the woman herself. I could not think of anything but a poem of Horatius Bonar about a life that was

"'Like the fragrance that wanders in freshness,
When the flowers that it comes from are faded and gone,
So would I be to this world's weary dwellers,
Only remembered by what I have done.'"

Miss Hallenbeck paused and fanned herself. She was always quoting such scraps of rhyme, always with a good purport were they, if not the rarest poetry.

"After I had come to be curious about her," she continued, "I saw her one day. I heard that a big brute of a fellow, who had a wife and little baby, was on a spree. I went off to see if the woman had anything to eat and when I went up the stairs, I heard the man rushing around enough to kill. I hurried along, pushed open the door,

and this is what I saw: The woman huddled up in a corner, holding her baby close, and that half-crazy fellow flourishing around with the big wooden arm of a chair, he had broken. A little slim woman dressed in black, with a queer quaker bonnet fallen back off her hair that was turning silvery, stood right up holding that man's wrist, as if he were a big boy, and saying with a soft voice that had a ring to it though, 'John! John! Thee must stop this. I tell thee give me that club!'

"She took it right out of his hand and walked him over to a bed and told him to lie down and be still; then she showed me how to help fix the woman and baby nice and comfortable, and just as I got things all settled enough for me to gratify my curiosity about her, she was not there. It was exactly as if she had gone suddenly up the chimney like a whiff of smoke. For a year or two more I was always finding her work, but never her; but at last, when I got to going so often to the hospital, I saw her more frequently; she has done me ever so much good without ever knowing it, but as to who she is I can not tell."

"Did you ever ask her?" laughingly inquired Mrs. Grey.

"Not squarely, I could not; for I have often had her tell me after other questions she did not answer, 'I would rather not talk to thee of this,' and that ends matters. I went to see her this morning about a woman over at the hospital who has been sick there for three years and has avowed that she was a Christian. She has read her Bible and attended Sunday service and Mrs. Nichols had hopes of her, though she was ignorant and very easily influenced. Well, last week she got a pass to go out and see some relations; she was so much better she thought that she was able—and would you believe it, she got drunk and had to be fetched back on a stretcher. The women over at the hospital are dreadfully down on her; they say she is a perfect hypocrite and all that, and wanted me to let Mrs. Nichols know, because they said she was imposed upon. I told her the whole story; she was so sorry the tears came in her eyes; but she said, 'Oh, I hardly believe that Mary is a hypocrite.'

"'But,' said I, 'can you think, *now*, that she is a Christian?'

"'I hope so,' said she.

"'*What!* a Christian get *drunk?*'

"She looked at me so long and queerly, then

said she, 'Mary has been very exemplary, now, for two years. She has kept from bad language and temper and drink; but I feared a while ago she was getting a little self-righteous over it. Now, as thee knows, she went out suddenly, off her guard, and very weak, physically. The old craving came on as soon as she got tired, and she fell. Yes, she sinned.' Mrs. Nichols looked at me, *into* me, in a way she has, and said, 'We will immediately condemn Mary, and call her a hypocrite, if we do not know of any Christians outside of hospitals who ever fall into sudden temptation and yield. Are there any well-to-do people in our churches who are not put out for every relapse?'

"'Well, it sounds sort of dangerous,' said I, 'to admit such things—is like laxity and letting down of barriers. Why, they said, when they brought Mary in and rolled her off the stretcher—one of the doctors laughed and said, "Here is a saint who went out into the wicked world, and it was too many for her."'

"'Yes,' said Mrs. Nichols, 'but all there is to it is this: If she was not a Christian, we must go to work at the beginning again, and try to show her how to become one; and if she was one, and fell, why, she must be restored.'

"'How many times would you put your faith in her? How often have her brought in drunk?' said I.

"'I never put faith in her. I tell her to put faith in Him who says, "My grace is sufficient for thee," and, if necessary, I forgive her seventy times seven.'

"Now, if you believe it, Mrs. Stuart, I was wicked enough, because that woman looked so sweet and peaceful, to long to see if I could not stir her up; so I said, 'They say, too, that you gave Mary money to buy shoes, and yet that she has twenty dollars hidden in her bed, all made by selling to the others her "extras," as they call milk, beer, beefsteak, and things allowed them by the doctors when they are ailing more than usual.'

"'Is it possible?' smiled Mrs. Nichols. 'Well, does thee not think that is being harder on her own stomach than on any one else. I am sure it was not dishonest, and it may have been as interesting to her as keeping a shop.'

"'Maybe she got drunk on your shoe-money,' I said, as a last arrow. She only said, 'Perhaps she did! I ought to have bought the shoes myself. I erred there, in putting temptation in her way, but I did not know she was going to get a pass. Poor Mary! I must go and see her.'

"Well, I gave up trying to stir that woman up.

I might as well try to whip honey into a froth. They say she is an orthodox Quakeress, and I always supposed such were very prim: but she has got the heartiest soft little laugh, and laughs it someway always at things that would make me *snap*. Yes, just *snap*, unless grace saved me in time. She told me how yesterday (you remember how hot it was) she walked across town, over two miles, with a wild, flighty girl that she had persuaded to go to a reformatory home. She had her all fixed up neat and tidy, and lent her a silk sun-umbrella to carry across, because the sun was so hot. Well, when she got there, right on the door-step, the girl repented, and Mrs. Nichols, turning her back on her to ring the bell, she was off like a flash, umbrella and all! When the matron that minute opened the door, there stood Mrs. Nichols, looking up and down and all around for her girl, who had utterly vanished. Now here she is up bright and early to-day, going cheerfully off to hunt that needle in a haymow. Yet she laughed; maybe it was to keep from crying, though. Dear, dear me! if it is not time to start, and I have talked one steady stream ever since I sat down. If you do n't tire of me before this season is over, I shall be greatly mistaken, that is all."

So saying, Miss Hallenbeck put down her palm-leaf fan, and prepared to start out with the ladies.

On the way to the boat, Mrs. Grey told about Elsie, and said, "I wish I could gain the girl's confidence. It seems to me that she might be rescued; she is young, and cannot be so hardened."

"About that *last*, you can't judge for some time; but get acquainted with her first," said Miss Hallenbeck. "It is utterly useless in personal work for individuals to take one as a representative of a class, and to deal with him or her always accordingly. Sin conforms itself to character; and to know where to attack the sin that so easily besets some particular sinner, you must first know that sinner."

"I am sure it must be so," said Mrs. Stuart. "I have often thought there was far too much religious talking done, on the principle of a good but ignorant old fellow, who would respond most inopportunely in prayer-meetings. He stopped a while once, after a mild reproof, but soon after, he shouted, 'Amen—*hit or miss!*'"

"Yes," laughed Miss Hallenbeck; "so much good talk is random talk. The longer I live, the more I realize that one single 'Thus saith the Lord' is worth everything else. An hour spent

telling people your ideas may be wasted, when a Bible sentence would have been a ray of light through a fog of words, and might gradually have cleared up everything ahead of them."

After a moment, Mrs. Grey spoke of Elsie again, and Miss Hallenbeck continued, "I have given up all undue encouragement from any amount of feeling I may stir up. Such women are, as a rule, excitable and unstrung, peculiarly susceptible to emotional appeals. I have seen them cry like children at pictures of their former innocence; do it in real sincerity, yet, a few hours later, any visitor, who might have left them thinking, as one told me, that she had touched chords that would never cease to vibrate—such a visitor might find them as hard as ever. It is not *looking in* that will save them, but looking up; not tears over the past, but prayers for strength in the future. They know far more about sin than you can tell them; they feel its disagreeable consequences, but not its evil in God's sight. Most of all, they need to awake to a sense of God's loving kindness. By that I do not mean a reckless trusting to his mercy for salvation, somewhere and somehow, when their course is run. They know, as a matter of fact, that they are branded, that the good and the pure are far removed from them, and

think, if they think at all, that the God of the good and the pure is the farthest off of all. I try to make them feel that he is near and ready to help."

After a while, Mrs. Grey said: "I was surprised at one thing. I wondered at the kind way in which they reeceived me. I spoke to nearly every one in offering flowers, and not one repulsed me."

"Of course they did not," said Miss Hallenbeck energetically. "Oh, some of them are awful wicked, there is no mistake about it—bad, bad women—and sometimes I get thinking about them, and the sin and misery that they represent and which they cause to others, and my soul burns with indignation. I resolve to come over here, and, standing up among them, pour out torrents of Old Testament curses against sin and uncleanness. I think I will tell them that their steps take hold on hell, and God's wrath will as surely smite soul as body. But if ever I do that thing, I shall just have to pounce down suddenly on them, without a bit of preparation, for just as sure as I go to praying about it, I begin to think how *all* sin is an abomination to God. He sees away back behind all lives into all hidden things. Who can determine those who are the sinners above all in his eyes? Though I do declare I am not the least grain sentimental, a great

pity comes rushing over me when I remember how some of these poor creatures never did draw a good, sweet breath of air morally or physically, since they were born, but out of dirt and poverty and ignorance blundered into the great slough. How some of them ran right off dangerous paths out of bright, giddy lives into it. Why, then I get to thinking, what would the Lord Jesus have me say, the Son of God, who has compassion on the ignorant and them that are out of the way. After asking myself that, I might just as well stay away for all the denouncing that I can do. But it consoles me to find that it is pretty much the same with the best women that I ever see in that ward at work for souls. The more in earnest they get, the more they tell of Christ's forgiveness; and the more they tell of him, the more reverently they themselves are treated."

CHAPTER V.

"What if this sinner wept, and none of you
Comforted her; and what if she did strive
To mend, and none of you believed her strife,
Nor looked upon her!" JEAN INGELOW.

"GOOD-MORNING, Elsie," said Mrs. Grey, coming quietly up behind her, and sitting down by her little wooden stand, on which was the faded remains of her last week's gift of flowers. "Did you keep them all this time?" she asked cordially. "Well, here are some fresh ones that will be a great improvement."

Elsie's face showed real pleasure as she hastily arose, and insisted upon getting one of the few comfortable chairs for Mrs. Grey, who, as she took it, said, "I have thought of you a great deal since I was here, and how monotonously the time must pass. You told me you could read English, and so I have brought you one of the more interesting books in our language—as much so as one of your German fairy stories. Have you ever read 'The Pilgrim's Progress'?"

Elsie, in saying No, took the book, with large,

clear type, and turning its pages past a few of those pictures that will instantly arouse the curiosity of children or older people fond of marvels, seemed much pleased. She had expected some fine-print volume, "to make her good," which process, when systematically undertaken, she vaguely supposed would of necessity be very tiresome and unpleasant.

"It looks very nice," she said gratefully. "I am fond of reading, but we get nothing here but scraps of old papers."

"Did you bring a Bible or a Testament with you?"

"No, marm."

"I thought very likely you had not. Have you read much in either since you came to America?"

"I have never even seen an English one open."

"I am very glad then that I brought you to-day a little German one. I had a fancy that very likely you would remember times at home when you read or heard it and it would be better for you than ours. Do you remember much?"

"No, nothing scarcely. My mother read it, but not I; when I came here my aunt was a Catholic," said Elsie, without apparent thought that her ignorance was anything out of the way.

"Then while you are in the hospital is an ex-

cellent time for you to learn a great deal. There are beautiful and wonderful stories here and much for any one who reads to take and keep. We find out about ourselves and our way here in life on earth, and what is to come hereafter. Don't you remember one story, the Prodigal Son, for instance?"

Elsie shook her head.

"Well, then, just let me read you that and tell you a little of the bright beautiful truth in it."

Elsie drew her stool a trifle nearer and prepared to listen, while Mrs. Grey, as naturally as if picking out some choice passage from a story-book, began to read the dear old parable. A Catholic, in a near bed, scowled, crossed herself, and laid a pillow over her ear; but a haggard woman on the other side opened her eyes wide, and a giddy girl scrubbing the floor said, "I heard that once in a ragged school, I can just remember."

While Mrs. Grey read she talked, in no preaching tone of exhortation; but as easily referring to God's fatherly love for us and our lost and loneliness when in the "far country," where his love means nothing to us, as she would have called attention to the beauty of the fresh flowers that she had brought in. She made no personal application of what she had read and Elsie seemed to expect none.

She listened intently and when Mrs. Grey ended she promised to read in the Bible given her. Why should she not? This story was certainly interesting; the days were tiresomely long and coarse sewing for the hospital was all she had to occupy her time.

"You spoke about your aunt," said the lady after a while. "Does she know that you are here?"

"No ma'am. I do not wish her to know."

"Why not?"

"Because I ran away from her and she is very angry with me."

"But now that you are in trouble would she not be sorry for you?"

"She would be angrier than ever."

"Tell me how you came to leave her," said Mrs. Grey, in a tone of gentle persuasion, at the same time half doubting, if it were wise to ask and if Elsie would tell the truth.

An expression perplexed, almost abashed came over Elsie's face; but the manner of her reply suggested that however much she might be leaving out, that which she was bringing forth was not false.

"I was fifteen," she began, "when I came to this country; but I was like a child. I never had

seen anything or been anywhere but at home and to a school. My aunt did not give me a warm welcome at all. She was provoked at my mother for sending me to her; because her husband wanted me even less than she did. They had children of their own and are all for making money. He has a store and they live in a flat over it. She thought I ought to do housework every minute, and I never had been used to it, and things were so new I suppose I did waste time looking, and talking, and reading, if I had a chance. When she caught me at that she would scold and scold and tell uncle I was lazy and wanted to be more of a young lady than her own daughters. Germans are so industrious and saving, you know; but I liked American ways better, and I learned them fast—too fast they said. As I did not suit her in the house, she had uncle put me in the store for a clerk. There were all sorts of girls there and I told them too much of my affairs so there was never-ending trouble between my aunt and myself. She was cross and I am quick-tempered. I wanted to go on Sunday excursions and picnics, and she always declared I was disgracing her family—and—and—I ran away."

"How long ago?"

"Two years."

"Where have you been since?" asked Mrs. Grey with gentle calmness.

Elsie looked off and out of the window, moving a little awkwardly. "Part of the time in a fancy store, and once I was with a lady as maid, and—"

"And some of the time you were in worse places?"

"Yes, ma'am."

With indescribable sadness, Mrs. Grey asked her simply, "Has it paid?"

The girl started candidly to answer "No," when the soul looking out of Mrs. Grey's eyes, how did it move her? By a memory of the vanished morning of her German maidenhood, by a revelation of the lady's own womanhood, by the new hearing of the old-time prodigal, who knows? Only Elsie suddenly dropped her head on the near pillow and sobbed convulsively, for all the answer made.

"Self-convicted for the moment," thought Mrs. Grey; "a bad, bad girl; but is there no more chance for her among the good? Must she be slipping lower and lower through all the degrees of degradation, until she returns here to be carried out to the Potter's Field?"

"Elsie," said she, "will you not tell me where your aunt is and let me go to her? If she knew

you were sorry and willing to do right, she might forgive you for the past and help you in the future."

"She would be glad to know that I was dead; then my mother would never have to know anything more than that. I feel sure my aunt has not told her: because she knows it would kill my mother and she might blame my aunt for not doing more for me. I do n't blame her myself. No, it is of no use," said the girl, wiping her eyes, "not the least use."

"Did you ever in all your life ask God that you might not be led into temptation, or might be delivered from evil? Have you ever really prayed and meant it?"

"No," said Elsie briefly.

"Well, then, how can you tell what God might have done for you, if you had so much as looked toward him?"

Elsie was less inclined to talk than before, and Mrs. Grey, after a few more words, of earnest, yet sympathetic counsel, left her and went to see some others in the same ward. After she had gone, Elsie sat thinking of one thing, if she had not best, after all, let Mrs. Grey go and see her aunt. She had a desire, that it might be known she was sorry for the past; then if her mother knew the rest, she would feel more pity for her. And there was a

bare chance that her aunt, if told now, might at least send her a kind word; that she would do any more she had no hope. On the other hand if Mrs. Grey went to see her, all Elsie's evil doings would come out; and strange as it may seem, while Elsie herself had, in outline, sketched her life, she dreaded to have this true good woman learn the details of the whole. Would she have any interest left in her? Any more helpful words? She looked after her with a sort of wistful reverence, as she stood over a bed with her flowers. How strange and easy and good life must be to her!

"Can you sing, lady?" Elsie heard the sick woman ask. "Sometimes folks do, that come in."

Softly enough not to disturb any one, Mrs. Grey began:

"No voice can sing, no heart can frame
Nor can the memory find
A sweeter sound than thy blest name
O Saviour of mankind.

"Oh hope of every contrite heart
Oh joy of all the meek,
To those who fall how kind thou art!
How good to those who seek."

Elsie could hear her, although far down the ward; it was not so much the words, but having a

German's true love of music, she softened under the singing. Somewhat later as Mrs. Grey laid her hand on the great door to go out and join her friends, Elsie came to her with a folded slip of paper saying, "This is my aunt's address—but it wont do any good to go to her."

"Never you fear, Elsie; God will open a way if you truly look to him; if you seek him with your whole heart; but he himself says he will not hear us while we are planning evil."

CHAPTER VI.

"O brother man! fold to thy heart thy brother;
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there;
To worship rightly is to love each other,
Each smile a hymn, each kindly word a prayer."

"WELL now, I must allow that the kapin' of that child niver will make a beggar of me," said Mrs. Rian, giving the plate of boiled pork and cabbage, which little Mary refused, to Ted, who, having eaten his own dinner, was fully equal to any body's else. Mary was not feeling well; although a healthy child, she was delicate. The heat everywhere was excessive and Mrs. Rian's rooms were full of steam on washing days, and like a furnace seven times heated on ironing days. The halls, the stairways, and the street were as dirty and vile-smelling as only a New York tenement-house and locality can be in midsummer, and so it came to pass that Mary began to wilt and hang her head, exactly like a little white-rose bush that somebody was trying to make live in a window on the first floor. She stopped to look at it frequently and she fancied that it felt just as disgusted with its home

as she did. On this particular day, when she could not eat her dinner, Mrs Rian declared, not unkindly, that "her headache was all along of the hate, and she better try and slape it off."

She made Pat stop teasing her and went about her own work thinking that Mary never would be able to do much toward earning a living.

Mary stretched herself on an old cot in one corner and tried to put herself to sleep with a cherished whim of her own. In that last home, before Ellen was taken to the hospital, she had for the child a tiny playground. It was by the church wall—a few yards of green sod, where in the season, there were ever so many, many yellow dandelions. Those dandelions had been Mary's ideal playmates ever since. How many times in her imagination had they budded and opened and changed to white downy gloves, then floated shattered up toward the sky over the church steeple, about the same time Mary floated into dream-land. To-day, just as she or a dandelion (half asleep it was all the same) was sailing away right over the old tenement-house, the child suddenly opened her eyes and getting actually awake was very doubtful of being so. A tall, handsome lady, with an airy, summer dress on, was pointing toward her and talking to Catherine Rian.

Yes, it must be Catherine's red head, her freckled face covered with perspiration and her voice saying, "'Tis very kind of yez to be a-takin' that much throuble for a poor body, though 'tis true Ellen McCarroll is a good daycint woman." Then Mrs. Rian whisked around the place and from some drawer or chest brought out a neat dress, stockings and shoes, with a little straw hat Mary had not seen since her mother left them in Catherine's care.

"Come here, Mary, till I get ye ready. Hurry wid ye into these, and go off wid the lady."

Mary asked not a question. One look at the kindly face of the visitor made her as willing to go anywhere with her as to go over the steeple with the feathery dandelions. She was ready in five minutes to follow Mrs. Stuart down the stairs and out into the street, where a carriage and a coachman were the centre of an admiring crowd of "gutter-snipes." Ted and Pat set up shouts of derisive envy at seeing Mary enter the coach and ride away. They held on behind as long as possible, and then threw decayed vegetables after the disappearing wheels. Mary's headache was all forgotten as they rolled through the narrow streets out into an avenue, and then up beyond much of the

noise, and where there was grass, with trees and glimpses of water. She talked freely with the lady, who seemed to know so much of her mother, and who told her she was to go and see that dear mother again to-morrow. Mrs. Stuart had thought to give the child a treat; but she could not realize how perfectly she filled up the measure of delight in what she did so easily for her. Too entirely a child to reflect that it was only the pleasure of a few hours, Mary was only conscious that the carriage took her to a home more beautiful than she had ever seen, where there was unlimited green grass, on which she might anywhere run, a tiny fountain to watch, a broad stretch of blue sky and a long sweep of shining water to look off upon. Mrs. Stuart told her to play out under the trees until she called her, and then went into the house to send her out a bowl of bread-and-milk, some fruit, and cake. If Mrs. Rian's dinner went uneaten, this daintier supplement suffered no such fate. The last morsel disposed of, Mary returned the dishes to a pleasant servant-girl, and then, finding a sleek old family cat with three kittens, she enticed them all to follow, and roamed about the place, taking in pleasure at every breath. Mrs. Stuart did not interrupt this enjoyment until sun-

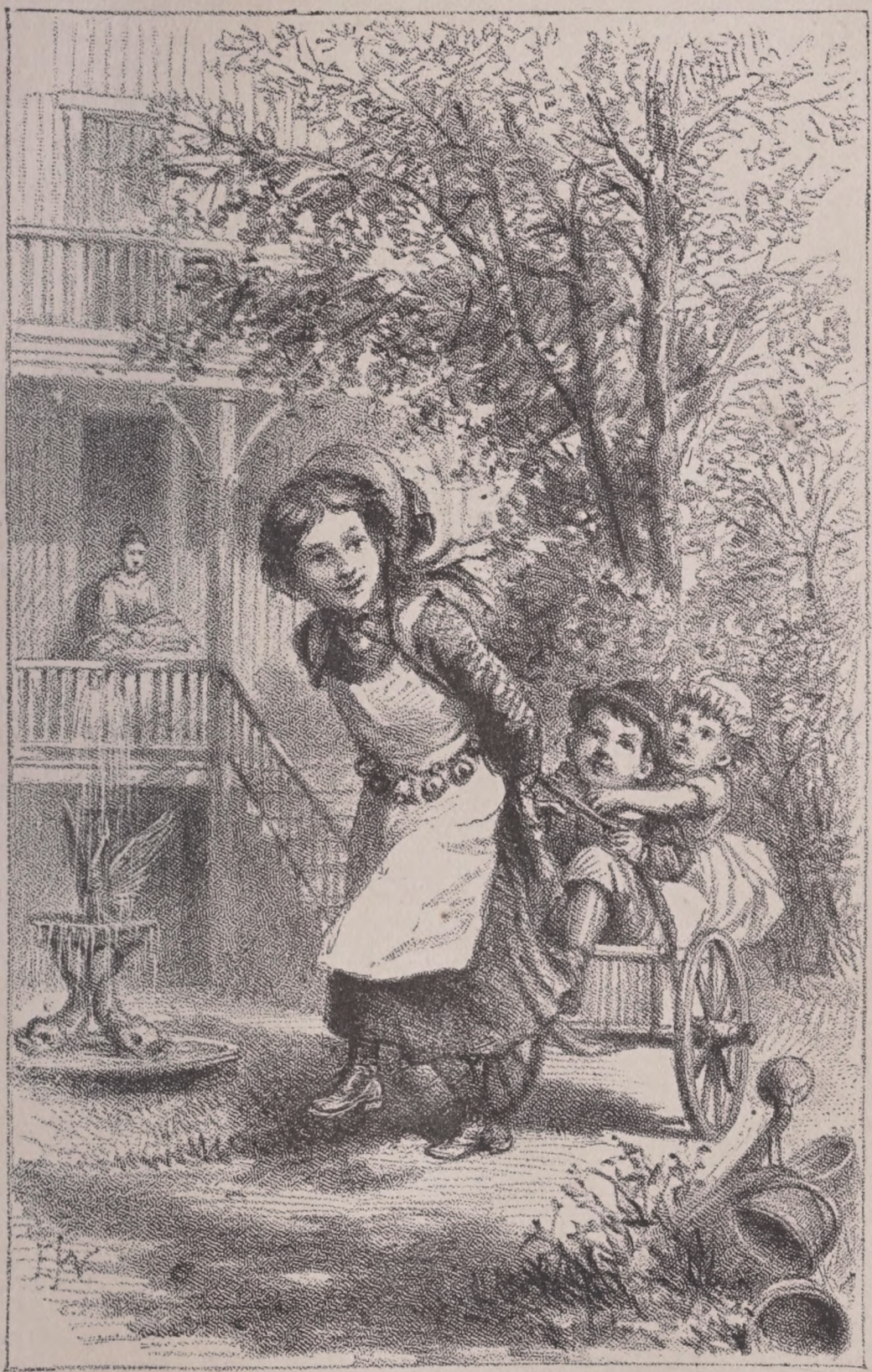
set, and then only to call her in, that supper, picture-books, and a little talk about her mother might fill out this wonderful afternoon in her brief history.

She had meant to take Mary to her mother the next morning; but, although it proved to be one of the most beautiful days of the season, the lady herself awoke with a severe headache, and previous experience warned her to remain quietly at home until she felt well again. She was glad to find that, while Mary was eager to see her mother, the novelty and charm of her new surroundings were amply sufficient to keep her contented. Ellen would not be disappointed, not knowing just what day they were coming. As Mrs. Stuart rested on the sofa in the cool parlor that morning, she asked Mary many questions about her past and present. She was more and more pleased with the little girl, about whom there appeared to be nothing rude or coarse. It seemed a great pity to send her back to the rough guardianship of Mrs. Rian. She was sure that Ellen herself would be distressed at knowing much that Mary artlessly confided to her; she even said to the child, "When you talk to your mother, if I were you, I would only tell her pleasant things. She is very sick, and it might trouble her to lie there and think about you after you had gone

away—how you had to go out evenings, and that Mrs. Rian's rooms were so hot. You and I, Mary, must pray to our Father in heaven about your troubles, and maybe he will make things different for you in some way."

Mary supposed that she meant to pray immediately, and dropped on her knees by the sofa in such ready simplicity that Mrs. Stuart's eyes filled with tears. Mary was only one of a great army of little homeless, friendless waifs, drifting out alone into life; but she was so young yet! This fair summer morning, her eyes were as blue, her hair as sunny, as any petted darling's in the great city. But if left to make her way unaided! Oh, Mrs. Stuart knew so much more than she did last summer! It was no wonder Ellen, after a few weeks in the hospital, cried, "God save her!" when she thought of pretty Mary, with her heart so innocent. She sent the child out to play again, and tried to devise some feasible plan for securing her a better home than Mrs. Rian's.

While the lady meditated within doors, Mary, throwing off all care, in a child's own blessed way, went dancing over the lawn, rejoicing again in the rare, bright holiday. The forenoon was half gone, when the sound of children's voices attracted her to a



hedge which divided the neighboring grounds from the Stuart place. On the other side was also a beautiful lawn and a similar pretty country-house. A pale, elegant lady sat in the porch, and two children were playing near her, one a boy four years old, the other a girl, just able to run. The boy had seated himself in a little cart, and was vainly endeavoring to propel it, somewhat after the fashion of a velocipede. Of course, it only scraped along a little way, and ground its wheels deep in the gravei walk. Suddenly he espied Mary peeping through the hedge, and promptly invited her to come over and draw him. His mother reproved him ; but, seeing Mary's pleasant face, and her manner, half-timid, half-desirous, she asked her to come and play, if she would like to do so. Mary waited for nothing more, crept through the bushes, and drew Rob to his heart's content, even getting little sister Nellie safe on as footman, and wearing a bridle and bells herself. She was very fond of children, and these two, although brimming over with fun and frolic, were very different specimens from Mrs. Rian's fighting, scratching youngsters. If these disagreed, it was with their lively little tongues, and Mary had a chance to act as peacemaker, without any danger of having her hair torn out, as formerly, with Ted-

dy and Pat as combatants. They had the greatest fun until noon, and then Mary was called to have her lunch, while Rob was clamorous for her promise "to come back the minute she had eaten it."

The children's mother called her to come into the porch and asked her a few questions, then she thanked her for keeping the children so contented and nicely amused all the morning—something which seemed very queer to the child, who took it as a great favor to have been asked to play with them.

"What has Mary been doing all the morning?" inquired Mrs. Stuart, of the maid who had gone to call her.

"Oh she has had fine times with Mrs. English's children. They are the most wide-awake two I ever did see! Mrs. English asked if you were well, marm, when I went to the hedge for Mary. She is a very delicate-looking lady."

"She is ill a great deal," returned Mrs. Stuart, thinking to herself that she had not been quite as neighborly as she ought to have been. She had exchanged calls with the lady spoken of; had taken the children to ride once or twice, and in the spring Mrs. English had sent her a few choice flowers. This was the extent of their intercourse. As the

afternoon wore away, her head felt much better and for some reason or other, she kept recurring to the thought that she was too negligent in her attentions to this Mrs. English. She really did not want to go soon again and see her; but finally acknowledged to herself that there might not be another afternoon when she could so easily. It was not strange, therefore, that a half hour later the two ladies were talking together in Mrs. English's parlor. The latter lady was speaking and this was what she said: "Yes, I believe there never were two more active children than mine, and they are not hard to control; but they want to be watched every minute and that makes it very hard for me. They have the same nurse I have had in the family for fifteen years, and I could not get along without her; but she is getting old and is very fat and cannot possibly follow them around all the time; so I have had a succession of young girls, and I am completely tired out with them. I will not entertain you by talking of my 'babies and servants,' although really nothing else has occupied me lately. Since I have been so out of health I have given up society, and when I heard the other day how you were going about doing so much good, I felt as if I was just shut up at home and good for nothing in the world.

Wont you tell me all about your going to the hospitals and what you do over there?"

Mrs. Stuart gladly complied and while she talked, she was surprised at the interest and sympathy she evoked. She was a little self-condemned also; for she had thought her neighbor far more worldly-minded than she proved to be. She had supposed that Mrs. English was only prevented by ill health from being a very fashionable woman; but to-day she learned that she was trying to follow her Master, with many things to clog her steps. She told her incidentally about Ellen, and Mrs. English asked with genuine interest, "Was it *her* child who played all the morning over here?"

When she heard that it was, she hesitated a little and then remarked, "After she went away I was wondering if it would not be a good idea to take just such a child as this for a second nurse. One young enough to invent plays and to play with the children. Margaret does all the real work for them, sewing on their clothes, and bathing and dressing them; but somebody must follow them throughout the day. I have been so tired with girls fourteen or fifteen years old; they get cross and fret at the children or neglect them and amuse themselves. So many of them have appeared all

right before me and proved so deceitful and untrustworthy when left alone a while. It has been suggested to me more than once to take a child out-and-out, dress, feed, and give it to feel that it had a real home. If this Mary is as innocent as she seems to be, and of respectable parentage, I should be tempted to say I would take her, not in any undefined position, I have seen trouble from that: children half-adopted, petted, led to expect an own child's portion, then coldly pushed out or humiliated. My idea would be to make the child grow up knowing we loved it and wanted to fit it for a useful life. She should be taught all she needed—or as much as she wanted to learn in the line of books; how to sew and to do anything about the house a woman ought to understand. When she was old enough she should have wages; but never be made merely a servant in any such way as to feel that her interests were not ours, or that we did not love and respect her, if she proved worthy. If after I had taken such a child, I found that she had some one decided talent, say for teaching or for music, I should feel as desirous to cultivate it, as if I saw it in my own child. I have thought often of this, but never considered it practicable; perhaps because I never saw a child whom I cared to take into my

family before; even now I would wish to know all about Mary's parents. But really, Mrs. Stuart, I am going to talk this all over with my husband to-night, and early to morrow I will tell you what questions to ask her mother. If everything is satisfactory, I think you may tell the poor woman what I have said. I am not unselfish in this, for it seemed to me, this morning, that Mary had a peculiar gift for keeping children interested and out of mischief, and I was surprised at her good judgment with them; but I really want to do some good in the world and may be I can in this way. You go and carry comfort to a good many poor neglected ones; but perhaps if I can't do that, bringing one into comfort may do for me. Every time I have seen you start for that hospital with all those flowers and things, I have thought how selfishly I was living."

Mrs. Stuart could not say much, she was so overwhelmed by such a speedy answer to her morning prayer. She had done so very little to find her efforts so abundantly rewarded. It came to her at the same time with even greater force how all things had "worked together for good." Ellen had prayed for weeks past and a great reward of faith would now be hers even before she left the old hos-

pital for all the joys of heaven. The child herself had prayed—and most strange of all, quite unconsciously, Mrs. Stuart had been making a more earnest Christian of her almost unknown neighbor. Beginning the work of charity herself, it had truly, as Carlyle says, "radiated outward," and as may be supposed this afternoon visit, undertaken so reluctantly by Mrs. Stuart, had brought the two Christian women together for what might be good impossible to estimate.

It is doubtful if there was a happier child in the city than was little Mary, when next morning she started for the hospital with Mrs. Stuart, Mrs. Grey, and Miss Hallenbeck. She had on one arm a little basket full of delicacies for her mother, and in her hand a bouquet as large as she could well manage. A clean white apron made her as fresh and pretty to the eye as a daisy. The ladies on reaching the boat kept her as much as possible away from disagreeable sights and suggestions in order that her recollections of this visit to her mother might be only pleasing. When they arrived at the hospital the nurse told Mrs. Stuart that Ellen had been failing very fast since the weakening warm weather came, and that she probably could not last much longer; but she was free from pain and able to talk.

They entered the ward quietly, intending not to take her too much by surprise; but she espied them the moment they came in. At sight of Mary so sweet and happy-looking, her face lit up with a positive radiance, while both her thin hands were stretched out to greet the child, who dropped basket and flowers to nestle down face to face by her, laughing, crying, and altogether overjoyed. The ladies left them alone for a long time, but a while before they were to go away, Mrs. Stuart came back to Ellen's bed and found the flowers all about her stand, and evidences that Mary had tried to feed her fruit and jelly, while chatting to her of all that had happened to her since she saw her last.

"God will bless you for giving me this pleasure," said Ellen gratefully, as the lady sat down by her side. "I do n't believe anybody ever does such a blessed thing as you have, in giving me this one look at Mary before I go, without God's remembering it of her. If ever *your* heart aches I think there 'll be an angel ready to comfort you somewhere waiting. Your coming here and doing this has lifted me way up and out of my fears to leave her all alone like in the world. It is God's world and plenty of God's folks in it, spite of all the wicked ones. He can take care of her. I shall not pray

any more to have her follow me soon; it is not right. She is not so very strong, but it is for lack of good air and nourishing food. She comes of a long-lived healthy family on both father and mother's side. My man died from an accident and I am the first I ever heard of to have consumption. When I came to this hospital it was all new to me that there were so many ways of getting out of the world with diseases, with drunkenness and craziness, and things I never so much as heard of. I see now, ma'am, it is indeed a thing to rejoice over, if ye came of a clean, decent-behavin', healthy race, as, thank the Lord, I did. Consumption is wearin', but it is a kind of a *neat* disease;" and Ellen smiled, with a dim idea of humor in this last thought.

Mrs. Stuart, who was glad of the turn the conversation had taken, asked her many personal questions and assured herself that little Mary had no friends to care for her, aside from Mrs. Rian. When Ellen leaned back on her pillow, a little exhausted from so much talking, Mrs. Stuart told her all about her neighbor's plan for the child, and promised herself to keep her interest in Mary if Ellen should give her up to them. The sick mother could only clasp her hands, while the tears of joy rolled down her cheeks. The child had been drawing

glowing pictures for her of the flowers and the sunshine, and the kindliness she had met with in the last two days, and now for Ellen to think that she might remain in it all to grow up a pure, intelligent girl!

"God is good! God is good!" was all she could say at first. Mrs. Stuart would not let her excite herself, but quietly calling Mrs. Grey, Miss Hallenbeck and the Protestant nurse for witnesses, she asked Ellen to give before them her full consent to the plan proposed—a wise precaution against after-influences of possible opposition. When this was done the time had come to go away. Mrs. Stuart promised to bring little Mary again if it was advisable and the farewell, which might have been so sad for mother and child was almost joyous. Mary had just learned that she was never to go back to Mrs. Rian's, never to see the hot foul rooms, never to endure the rough onsets of Teddy and Pat, never to have again to hurry through crowded streets after dark, her heart beating with fear of innumerable dangers.

"When people put themselves in the way of it," exclaimed Miss Hallenbeck, as they seated themselves in a retired part of the boat, "how easy it is for the Lord to use them as workers together with

him, and how wonderfully clear his share of the work comes out! That summer Ellen was lying in her bed and hearing the words of life from out of the open window of that old church, those workers in there were all in ignorance of her, and never will know, until eternity, that they were fitting a soul outside their walls for heaven. And *you*, Mrs. Stuart, by a half-hour one day with Ellen, put yourself where God could answer her prayers through you. Then there was Mrs. English, whose duty lies in staying at home, yet who has seen you going to the hospitals, and wished that she could do a little more for others. She, being willing, has the service for her Saviour brought right to her, and as a blessed result of the whole, the fate of a child, with an immortal soul, may have been determined for good in this world and joy hereafter. I do like to get a glimpse of these workings; it makes the world so much less confusing and melancholy, lights it all up for the time, and you see, as well as believe, that God is weaving human lives and prayers, in and out, in and out, for glorious effects by-and-by."

CHAPTER VII.

"There are, who, like the Seer of old,
Can see the helpers God has sent
And how life's rugged mountain side
Is white with many an angel tent." WHITTIER.

"WELL, I can assure you I am tired," said Mrs. Grey, as she walked into Mrs. Stuart's cosey library one noontime, and gratefully accepted her invitation to remain with her the rest of the day. "I started out this morning, with Miss Hallenbeck, to go and see Elsie's aunt, and it has all amounted to nothing but fatigue and a good deal of disappointment on my part."

"Tell me about it, while you sit here by the window and rest; lunch will be ready soon," said Mrs. Stuart. "Did you not find her?"

"Oh, yes; Elsie gave me the address all right. It was a long way across town, but I reached it at last. I found a flat over a store, and asked for Mrs. ——. A bright, pretty girl (Elsie's cousin, I presume) put me into a nicely-furnished room, and went for the aunt. She was a good-looking, intelligent German woman, and greeted me politely.

After a word or two about the day, I said that I had called to talk a little with her about a niece of hers, Elsie ——. She looked blank a moment, and then told me that she had no niece, and knew no such person as Elsie ——. I began to explain, thinking I had made some mistake, until, recollecting that the name and the address were right, I sat a second silent. In that second, I suspected that the sudden rigid denial of the woman was forced, a suspicion that proved correct, for all at once, getting more emphatic, she excitedly declared that she never wanted to hear one word about that girl. She was a bad, ungrateful, lazy, hard-hearted creature! Since the day she landed in America, she had made her no end of trouble. She came of a good family, and she had disgraced them all. Her voice trembled, her eyes were black with excitement, while her imperfect English became more and more confused. I saw I had unloosed a tempest that must spend itself before I could say a word, and so I sat quietly and listened, after briefly explaining where I had seen Elsie, and why I came. I do not mean that the aunt was rude to me. She was, I could see, in spite of her great excitement, a sensible, industrious woman, with a great deal of pride, which last she felt had been terribly outraged.

'You see,' said she, 'Elsie's mother sent that girl over here without giving me one chance to say she shall not come. My sister has the notion, that all those people in the other country do for ever get into their heads, that America is all money, and to be had for the picking up. I have children of my own, and my husband and I work hard to make all to succeed in the shop. Our girls are never idle. Well, you see, Elsie, she runs away out of the work every day, and I find her always with a book. I say, "You shall not do this," and then she cheats me, and hides them. I catch her at that, and tell her she may read Sundays, no other days. She makes friends I do not like, and wants new dresses. My husband talks to her, and I talk, and she gets cross. Elsie has a hot temper, and so it goes. Finally she runs away, and then comes back and begs us to take her again, and I think perhaps I will, for my poor sister's sake; but first, I tell Elsie just what I think of her, and she says she will eat poison and kill herself; she is not one bit thankful to me. My husband says she shall not spoil my good girls, and off she go and get arrested, and put in the Tombs, and her name in the newspaper! Then we tell her, never show her face here again. Oh, I wish that Elsie was dead, I do. Never have

I written one word of this to that poor mother. I tell her Elsie has left us, gone away off to learn dressmaking. By-and-by, I shall write her that she have died. My husband and I, we never give one more penny to that girl. He hate her, and I, too: she have made us much trouble always. Think of my family, good, respectable people in Germany and in this country, all the worse for her to spoil our good names! I hope she die, and you tell her this. I believe her not one word that she wants to be good, and if she does, what use? No, always she tells lies. Never let me hear of niece Elsie, I have none.'

"The woman stopped for breath, and I did my best then to make her think that, bad as Elsie was, there might be in her youth, her ignorance, and her natural disposition, extenuating circumstances. I might as well have blown against a whirlwind. She would not listen to any account of Elsie's life since she left her, or hear of her present abiding place. The hospital was too good for her; she ought to be in the penitentiary. It was kind in good women to care what became of her; but they would not, if they knew her better. She warned me that all my trouble for her would be in vain, and evidently she thought me very weak to have any

compassion on her. I tried to touch her through Elsie's mother, but that only warmed her up to fiercer wrath. She had, as she stoutly asserted, written her various falsehoods to keep her in ignorance of the girl's whereabouts, and seemed to think this the only kind and commendable course. As I arose to go, the uncle appeared on the scene. He treated me politely, and my errand with supreme contempt. 'If,' said he, as he bowed me out of the door, 'you can ever let us know the girl is dead, I will give her a nice funeral, for the sake of writing it back to Germany;' and that was the result of that visit."

"Well," said Mrs. Stuart, "I hoped for Elsie's encouragement, her aunt would send her back a message of peace. It may not have been reasonable to expect that she would be taken back into the family or best that she should. I can imagine that it has been a terrible blow to the woman's family pride—a pride commendable within Christian limits. Miss Hallenbeck, in speaking of a case somewhat like Elsie's, where a young girl had reentered the family of a relative, said she regretted that a home had not been found her among entire strangers. The family, even after she had proved in every way the sincerity of her repentance, never

allowed her past to be quite overlooked, never could forgive her, as God forgives, when he remembers our sins no more for ever."

At this moment the bell rang for lunch and the conversation was not renewed, until later in the afternoon, when Miss Hallenbeck came in to bring a bundle of little Mary's. She had taken it upon herself to go and arrange the matter of Mary's removal with Mrs. Rian, and Mary herself had not returned to —— street since that golden afternoon, when she had been taken from the dirty tenement-house to sweet and peaceful surroundings. The children were very fond of her already, and her duties were as pleasant as play to her. A few pretty print dresses and neat articles of clothing made her feel as rich as a princess. Almost every time Mrs. Stuart looked out of the windows, she heard the three children's merry voices or saw them nestling together at the foot of a tree while Mary read them some nice story.

CHAPTER VIII.

"He alone whose hand is bounding
Human power and human will,
Looking through each soul's surrounding,
Knows its good or ill." WHITTIER.

A HOSPITAL nurse was talking to Mrs. Stuart thus, one afternoon: "There is just all the difference in the world between the patients, though just to stand here and look at them you would not think it. Such goings-on as there would be, if we did n't keep the sharpest lookout! You see that little woman over there? No wonder she is exhausted; she was fairly wild last night. You see a great many of these poor creatures drink or take laudanum or eat snuff—yes, marm, eat snuff, plenty of them do it; and if they are in here for any length of time and do n't have it, they get furious as she did. The doctor would not let her go out to the city (she was not able), so she got some strip of old linen I had for bandages, and when I went out of the ward a minute, she hung herself in a loop of it. A patient screamed for me and I had just time to get her down. Ellen is it you want to know

about? Well, after you were here last, she grew weaker; but she did not suffer much and she seemed to be so happy, thinking of her little girl. One day when I went to give her a drink of milk, I noticed the look on her face I have come to know right well, and I said to myself, she will die when the tide goes out next. That is n't a notion, marm; I have seen so many of them, where the life slipped out just as the tide did. And sure enough, Ellen went that way, smiling to the very last. I cut off a long lock of her hair for little Mary, and we put her in the neat clothing she brought on purpose and asked me to keep. She was not sent to the Potter's Field, but was buried by some friends of her husband; carpenters, I believe; one came once with his wife to see her. You would see a great difference in such things between patients, if you lived here among them. Those that do n't care how they live do n't care how they die, and, many a time, instead of feeling solemn when one of them goes, as you would think they would (it being on a midnight as likely as not), some are scolding because they can't sleep for the groaning, and some sly ones are watching their chance to steal any little trap the dead one may have hidden in her bed. An actress died here last night. She was out

of her head and fairly wore herself out singing her theatre songs. I could not send Ellen's little girl word, very well, about her mother's dying. I knew you could break it to her best and I thought it might be harder if she saw her poor mother's body.'

"Yes," said Mrs. Stuart, "I can take her now out into the sunshine, where everything is sweet and beautiful, and tell her that her mother will never suffer any more. I will try and make her think of heaven instead of the hospital and of God's love for her. To have seen her mother in the coffin would have been a terrible grief to her."

The nurse was silent a moment, then said, "Oh you have brought more beautiful flowers," glancing down at Mrs. Stuart's basket. "I never saw people love flowers as they do here."

"Yes they really do love them for their own sake I am convinced," said Mrs. Stuart. "I am not surprised that the sick ones welcome a bright or a sweet-scented blossom; but here great, rough, brutal-looking women, whom once I would not think could care for such a thing, tease me for 'just one.' You will see when I begin to distribute them," she added, turning away to begin that very work; and in a moment or two the whole ward was in animation. All who could get on their feet crowded

around like eager children. "A bright flower and a little green," was the constant request. White flowers, no matter how sweet, were only second best in their esteem. Sick ones in bed waved their hands in comical distress and pleaded, "Do n't give them all away! Save me a good one!"

While Mrs. Stuart was thus employed, Mrs. Grey, who came with her, had sought out Elsie. As soon as the girl saw her she showed an excitement which she tried in vain to hide. Mrs. Grey followed her to a quiet corner, and sat down near one of the open windows. She did not keep her in suspense, but told her very concisely the result of her visit to her aunt, only omitting what she thought there was no use in repeating: the harsh expressions and unkind wishes. The fact that she would not forgive her, of course, came out at once. Mrs. Grey would not have been surprised had Elsie shown sudden fierce resentment or tried to prove herself ill-treated. What she did made Mrs. Grey more truly sorry for her than ever before. She sat perfectly still, only her face took on a dull, hopeless look, and tears stole down one after another. "I might have known it would be of no use. I treated her badly; I gave her no end of trouble," she said.

"Well, Elsie, there is One whom you have treat-

ed worse than you ever treated your aunt, but One who loves you far better than she ever could have done—One who is ready and waiting to forgive you, and to help you to the uttermost. I mean Jesus, who died for you; he never will turn you away:

"'When he lived on earth, abased,
Friend of Sinners was his name:
Now above all glory raised,
He rejoices in the same.'

That is what the old hymn says. Before I went to your aunt, I *hoped* she would forgive you; but I knew nothing about it for certain, and I was disappointed as it turned out. But I can tell you to go to your Saviour with your sorrows and your sins, and he will as surely forgive you as you go. No one is ever refused by him; for, as the Bible says, he is a 'Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.' Do you know *how* to go to him?"

Elsie shook her head in a listless, weary way.

"Suppose," said Mrs. Grey, "that this very day you knew that your mother's heart was full of love for you *because* you were her child, and full of sorrow because you were wandering away off in this distant land; and suppose you could put yourself suddenly where she could hear every word you would say to her—do n't you think it would be easy enough

to let her know that you were sorry, and that if she would only let you try once more you would do better? Well now, Elsie, God is nearer to you than your mother could be, and he can hear, if you tell him just what you would tell your mother, and if you beg of him what you could not even of the most faithful loving mother: to blot out the sins of your past life and help you for the future. He will *hear* and *he will answer.* In some way he will make a plain path before you. I cannot say that you will not find hard struggles and sore troubles in the days to come; you will in all probability, but he can carry you through all safely; and however hard life may be, you will realize that sin will be harder in the long run." Elsie's tears were stayed, but she was listening intently.

"Now, do n't you care enough about this to try? Will you not pray in this way for yourself, Elsie?"

Moved, as she plainly showed herself to be, Mrs. Grey hardly expected the prompt promise Elsie gave her. A few moments longer the lady talked to her, and then taking up the little Testament that lay on the stand near them, she read her a few verses. This was something she had never failed to do when visiting in the hospital wards. "My coming," she used to say to herself, "may be quite

forgotten with every word I say, but God's words are with power. He has promised that they shall not return to him void."

When she shut the book, Elsie said, "I myself read in it, as I told you I would, and I have read twice through the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' I like that. The time hangs so heavy here."

"I know that it must," answered Mrs. Grey, "and I have brought you some work. You told me once that you could embroider, and a lady has given me quite an elaborate piece of work here. If you do it to suit her, she will pay you what it is worth, and perhaps have other articles embroidered. In this way you may have a small sum ready when you go out from here to keep you while you are looking for some work. I will speak among my friends for more of this same sort of work, if you give good satisfaction."

"Oh, I am very glad! It is dreadful to sit here and think all day. I can do it beautifully. I thank you very much for all you have done for me."

At that moment Mrs. Stuart appeared to tell Mrs. Grey it was time they were going, and they went together. Elsie stood by the window and watched them going down to the boat-landing. They did not distinguish her face among the many

that were all the time gazing out of the innumerable windows of the great castle. She was thinking how strange it was that Mrs. Grey should be so kind to her. When she was a child she took kindness as a matter of course; for the last few years she had never expected it, or deserved it, as she frankly confessed to herself, now that it came so unexpectedly. It was altogether strange, the effect Mrs. Grey had upon her. She never upbraided her; always held out to her the offer and the hope of becoming a Christian; yet her very gentleness seemed to humble her into a deeper sense of her own unworthiness; her sinfulness seemed loudly rebuked. The very tones of Mrs. Grey's voice talking to another person softened her, made her melancholy, and yet not wholly miserable. To-day she thought, "Could I ever have been a good woman like that? Oh, why could I not have been? Why did not somebody tell me how? Now it is all stumbling along in the dark; and how can it ever be any different? There are not many people like her in the world to help me and—" And *what*, she did not say, but finished by turning her face entirely out of sight of any inmate of the ward; and if she wept hopeless tears or prayed feeble prayers, only God knew. No one else need know.

CHAPTER IX.

"Then be ye sure that love can bless,
Even in this crowded loneliness,
Where ever-moving myriads seem to say,
'Go; thou art naught to us, nor we to thee—away!'"

KEBLE.

It was late one dismal afternoon in the autumn when the hospital-boat touched the dock at Twenty-sixth street, and a miserable crew disembarked. To one who knew how passengers usually rush off ferry-boats, leaping over chains, running up the street before the wheel has stopped or even the plank has been thrust from wharf to boat—to such a one there was something most suggestive in the listless way this company spoken of moved off. Men and women, weakened by months of sickness, were not eager to get back to the daily grind of toil. Lazy vagrants would have preferred to stay where the meals provided by charity were more regular than the same begged outside an "Institution." Almost the last person to leave the boat was a young girl, in a plain, coarse dress, and with a face so much thinner and paler than formerly, one would scarcely have recognized Elsie. In those weeks that Elsie

had been in the hospital she had thought and prayed more than in all her life before, and now she really longed to turn her erring feet into some safe, straight way. Mrs. Grey had often visited her, and to her was, in a great measure, due the awakening of the girl's moral nature. She had helped her spiritually, and it was her intention to help her in some most practical manner to work or to a home when she should be well enough to come out of the hospital. She had not considered it wise to talk much of this until she should see the proper time and way to carry out her plans. Elsie was deeply grateful to her for what she had said and what she had been to her. She expected nothing from her beyond what she had received—the pay for quite a large amount of embroidery. Therefore, when one day the doctor of her ward "crossed her card," and the nurse told her that they thought her well enough to go away—when, we say, this was done, Elsie had no idea of applying to Mrs. Grey; and the latter had not supposed that she would leave the hospital so soon. The nurse helped her to get her few articles of dress into order, and gave her good and kind advice about her future. Elsie thanked her with tearful eyes, for the daily life and character of many of these trained nurses had been

a great blessing to her as to others. To see women, young, refined, self-respecting, caring night and day for the degraded and suffering, with a gentleness and justice, a wise, helpful patience—this touched Elsie as mere talk never could.

But to return to the afternoon of Elsie's departure. She had a small sum of money which she hoped would keep soul and body together until she could find work; and as she walked slowly up the street, she wondered what she had best do first. A woman in the hospital had told her of a room which she might rent for a small amount of money. It was away across the city, but when found proved to be in a very respectable tenement-house. The old woman who showed her the room gave her immediate possession on her paying a week's rent. When she had made her bargain, she shut the door and left Elsie to herself. There was a small iron bedstead in the room, a rickety old washstand, two wooden chairs, and a little, old table leaning against the wall, in a way that suggested its inability to stand without support; still the place was not dirty, and a cheap curtain was drawn in front of the window, out of which could be seen countless clothes-lines passing back and forth from rear tenements. A hopeful, bright young woman would have been

downcast; but Elsie had gone through too much to be fastidious about her surroundings. She spread out on the table a paper of rolls and meat which she had bought for her supper, satisfied her hunger, and then, weary from so much unusual exercise as she had taken, she laid her head on her pillow, and was soon fast asleep. The next morning early Elsie started out in search of work. She bought a paper, and answered advertisements. People seemed quite pleased with her appearance; twice she would have been engaged as a nurse-girl, could she have told any plausible story to gloss over her lack of "references."

There was a confectioner's shop, where, because of her talking French and German, she might have had good wages; but, on account of "no recommendations," she was treated with ill-concealed scorn. To one woman she admitted that she had but just come out from a hospital. The woman (a dressmaker) hustled her out of doors as if she had been a smallpox ambulance, sure to spread contagion far and wide. She found a few shops where she could do machine-work at starvation wages, but she was not strong enough to undertake the work, especially as she overheard the proprietor of one of these shops tell another man that "a tough girl

held out sometimes three months, but generally there was a *new* lot each Monday morning."

After several days of tiresome walking and seeking, Elsie recollected that a sick girl in the hospital had told her of a place where she had worked at making paper boxes. She had said the work was easy, and the wages enough to feed her. Elsie had forgotten the name of the establishment, but she remembered the locality and found it after long seeking. It was far down town, a great, gloomy building, where she timidly applied, and was surprised at being admitted without any rigid questioning. She wondered less when she had worked awhile in the place and silently studied her companions. There were there a few quiet German girls, modest and industrious, a number of sickly women, respectable—glad to get lighter work than they were used to, now that they could not do heavy tasks. Besides these, there was a large preponderance of girls, loud in manner, vulgar in talk; their dress none the less soiled and ragged for the cheap jewelry and gaudy odds and ends of finery that bedecked them. Some were Irish, the children of laborers—girls once pretty, and too vain to go out to service. They had been in shops, lost favor with employers, and come down to transient work,

with intervals of vicious idleness. Others, now quite on a level with these last, showed more of original refinement, and suggested a past not like their present.

Elsie took her place among them silently, and kept it almost as silently. They let her alone after a few attempts at conversation. "I know all about them, and the less they know of me, the better," was her mental comment. The room was dark, and although cold, was very badly ventilated; so, for a few days, Elsie suffered great discomfort; but she had no thought of abandoning her work. With what she already had, the weekly pay would keep her from actual want, and this, of course, was what she most dreaded. Each day here was like the one before it; she hurried down town in the morning, took her usual place, worked steadily until noon, ceased for a hasty lunch, began again her work, at six, laid it down and went out with the crowd that poured forth into the street and up the Bowery. Elsie never made any acquaintances, and never talked but to one woman, a sad-faced young widow, who coughed constantly as she worked at Elsie's right hand.

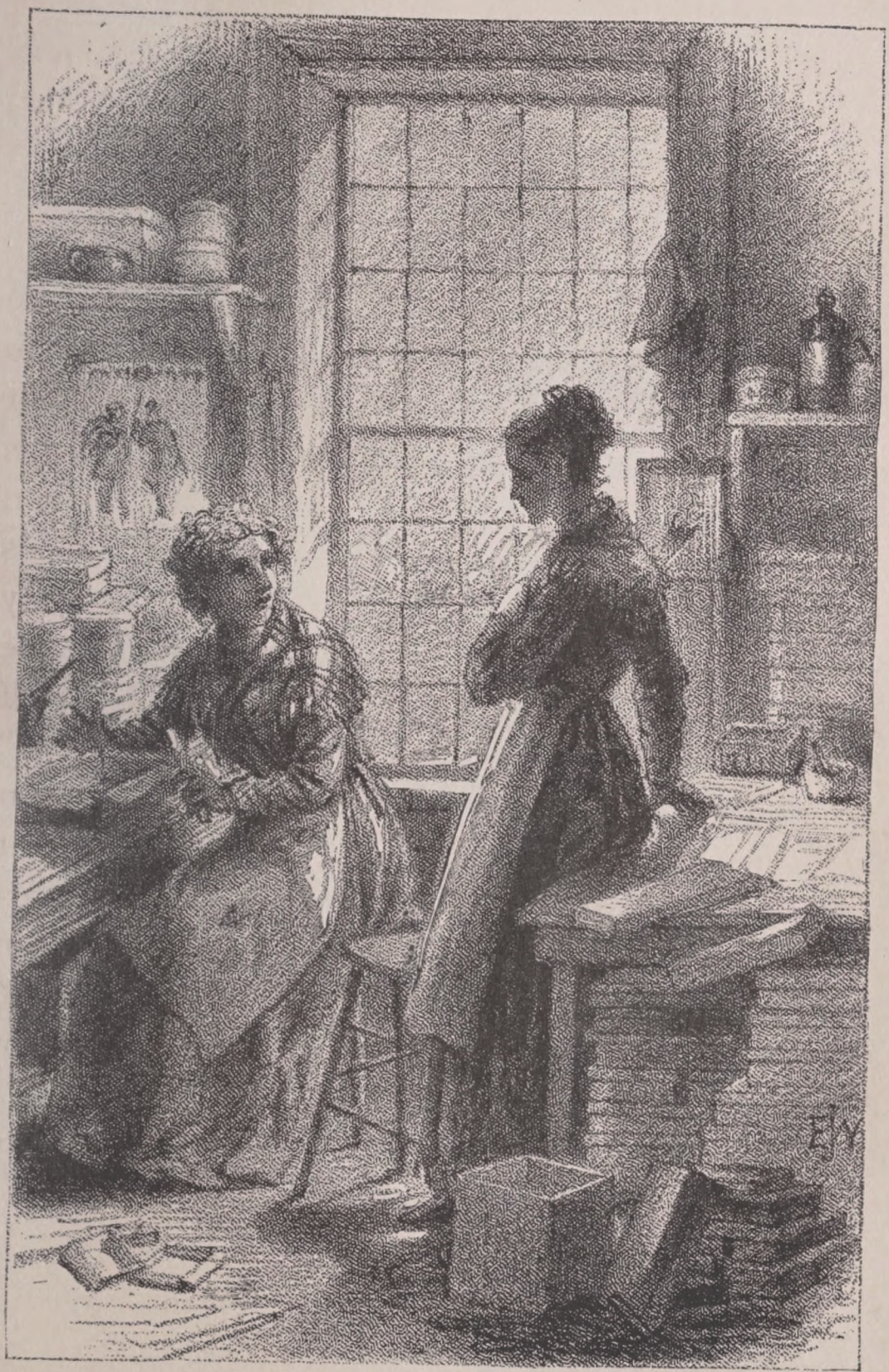
One bleak November day, as Elsie, shivering, drew her shawl closer about her shoulders, the

woman stopped her work and looked a moment down into the street below, one of the busiest thoroughfares, between noisy manufactories—one full of cars and stages, horses, carts, men, women, and children—a picture of turmoil and confusion.

"Do you ever think of things away back?" she asked suddenly of Elsie. "And do they seem to you as if they all must have happened in another world, or that you were somebody else? I was thinking, just now, of long days in the summer, when I used to go in New England to the woods for berries and wild flowers. I did not know any more of struggles with poverty and trouble, and the sight of such things as I see in New York, than if I had been in heaven. Is it anything so with you?"

Elsie thought of her home and of her mother in the German valley. She said, "Yes, I know what you mean." But the woman had so severe an attack of coughing, that she could not speak again for a long time; when she did, she said, "It will not be long for me here, anyway, and it does not make any difference. I learned a hymn when I was a little girl, and I think of four lines of it every day, as I work here. They are my prayer now.

"'Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without Thee I cannot live;



Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without Thee I cannot die.'

Are you a Christian?" she asked, a faint flush creeping into her cheek as she looked at Elsie. She was half afraid of a repulse; but Elsie looked up in return, with far more animation than she had ever shown before, and answered her, slowly, "I—I—I am not as good as you are. I have—"

"God never loves or saves us because we are good, but because *he* is," said the woman, continuing. "You seem different from the other girls here, quieter and sad. I have wanted to be friendly with you as I never have with the rest. You have had trouble, I guess, and I am sorry for you, and afraid, too, because trouble makes people worse, unless it makes them better. God never will forsake you, if you do n't forsake him: remember that."

Elsie started to speak, but the noise of near machinery prevented her. She smiled, however, at her neighbor, and both of them were happier for the episode. The next day, the woman's place was empty, and Elsie never saw her again; but afterwards, she remembered her words, with a half-superstitious awe, as a message direct to her.

No, Elsie could not *then* plainly say that she was a Christian. She was still so very ignorant

and fearful, that, in feeling her way along towards a better life, she made many mistakes. She reasoned that living the dull life she did, she ought, as a reward for her efforts, to be very happy in mind; whereas she found her daily work tedious, and "being good," as she understood it, very, very tiresome. She knew only too well what the city could provide in the way of exciting amusements; and although her will to go on as she had begun remained steadfast, it seemed as if she had started on a long, gloomy pilgrimage. She sadly needed Christian help and instruction. At night, when her work was done, she heard the girls chatting nosily of their plans for a merry evening, and as she walked home, past theatres and concert-rooms, the music appealed to her German temperament, and made the thought of her silent, dark little room very uninviting. Sunday she knew not what to do with herself. Her clothes were too shabby to wear into any grand church (or so she imagined), and of mission-churches she knew nothing. She usually spent the day in sleep.

Still, ignorant as Elsie was, her face was turned toward the light, even if that light was yet so dim it only showed her where her feet must *not* go. She clung to a few half-truths, being quite unable

to apprehend the whole power of much that she had eagerly treasured up in memory. She looked forward with a colorless sort of hope that, after a life spent in trying to do right, her sins would be forgiven, and she should enter heaven—a place vaguely supposed to be desirable. She prayed, but seldom thought of spiritual help and comfort as anything for immediate application. If they came to her, she supposed it would be as physical help came to hospital patients, from the charity of the city; not because the city was concerned for them individually, but because certain help was provided for them collectively, in a wholesale way, if they availed themselves of it. Still, on the whole, Elsie was more at peace with herself than for a long time. There was a while that very simple things gave her real satisfaction. Saturday nights, when she received her pay and stopped on her way home to buy herself some little articles of dress or of food, and the shop-people spoke respectfully to her, it pleased her greatly that they never tried to bandy jokes with her as with her shop companions.

So passed October, November, and December, and through those months she had kept her room, managing to feed and clothe herself. During December her work had been much harder, as more

was required to be done for the holidays, and new hands were employed. After January these last were dismissed, and the pay of the rest was cut down, so that it was barely possible for Elsie to feed herself when her room-rent was paid, and paid it must be the very hour that it came due. Nights as she walked home in the keen, cold air, her appetite intensely sharpened, and she faint and tired with the day's work, she longed at every baker's shop to spend three days' allowance, and thus for once have enough to satisfy herself.

One bitter cold morning in January, Elsie reached the place where she was employed only to be told that all the girls in the West room had been dismissed, their services being no longer needed. The whole noisy troop of them was leaving, some loud in their lamentations, more recklessly defiant, too long used to a precarious living to expect anything different. Elsie was one of the number dismissed, and turned away into a side street, asking herself what she should do. She remembered how hard her first search for work had been, in weather comparatively pleasant, and when she had some little money to keep her in the meanwhile. To-day her hands were purple with the cold, she had but a trifle in her purse, and even at this early

hour in the morning she was hungry. Where now should she labor that she might eat—and life had come to *that* with her. The thought suddenly smote her, as if it were quite new. She stood still away down on Broadway, where she had come, and realized that, at nineteen, she had no home, no friends, no hope, nothing to eat! What of it? Who cared? Not one of the thousand people hurrying by her, crowding into stages, shivering behind the glasses of elegant carriages. Did God care? Was he punishing her for sin? Yes, she had sinned; but had none of these others sinned—the rich who bought and sold in these great shops? Presently she came to old Trinity churchyard, where the fierce wind was whirling the snow among the ancient graves, and, seeing it, the girl vaguely wished that she had been dead a hundred years, and life was that far behind her. What was the good in being just one cold, hungry outcast in a world too full of people already, so full that the wrecks of them crowded prisons and hospitals and tenement-houses. She argued, not in desperation or insanely, that perhaps she had better buy a bottle of poison and go home, and taking it, end all; for suicide is looked at as a safe if not a comfortable remedy for all ills with the class of people from whom Elsie had learned much.

Nevertheless, although a year ago Elsie might not have looked beyond the cup of poison, to-day she did; and thinking of Mrs. Grey, she aroused herself, turned off into a busy side street, and began a new search for work. What she endured of fatigue and cold and hunger, with constant disappointment, she never forgot. She could find nothing respectable to do. She repeatedly met girls on the same quest. Some of them advised stealing something, that they might be sent up on the "Island," where there were always food and warmth. Whatever she thought, before night Elsie had ceased to resent the suggestion. When she dragged herself home, her last penny was spent for what must keep her one day longer from starvation.

In the cold and darkness of her room Elsie thought of many things—of sweet, pure things, when she was a little girl in Germany; of disagreeable, bitter things in her living with her aunt—of much, oh, so much! Of a sudden the words returned to her spoken by the woman who worked at her side in the factory: "God will never forsake you, if you do not forsake him; remember that." Elsie was awed, yet in some way quieted.

"I do not see how any one can be more deserted than I am," she reasoned; "but I can pray once

more, it will do no harm." And with the thought that she was indeed throwing herself once for all on God's care, Elsie prayed; then, benumbed with fatigue, fell asleep.

The next day was a glorious winter Sabbath. The sun flooded the street with light, if not with warmth. Elsie went out early in the forenoon, and spent the time after a fashion of her own. She would have nearly frozen had she stayed quietly at home, so she went from one ferry-house to another, where she sat apparently waiting for a boat. When she had remained in one as long as she thought prudent, she went to another, thus managing to keep tolerably warm. As the day passed and she had plenty of time for reflection, the thought of what she should do on the morrow filled her with hopelessness. She would have suffered for food even this day, but about noon, as she sat longingly looking at the cakes on a stand near the ticket-office, a child rose up near her, and before taking the boat with its mother, threw away a paper with the remains of a luncheon in its crumpled folds. Elsie picked it up and eagerly ate the bits of crust and broken cookies. It even flashed across her mind that the mouthful of food was provided for her, as God gives crumbs to the sparrows she had

seen hopping about on the snow that morning. Toward evening she lingered so long in the last waiting-room, forgetful of everything but her miserable condition, that a policeman questioned her roughly as to what she "was hanging around for when the boat had come and gone."

Elsie drew her old shawl tightly about her, and hurrying away, plunged in and out between the car-horses around the entrance, and then struck off down a long street opening into a broad, lighter one. It was full of teeming boarding-houses, saloons, places of low amusement, and the Sabbath being a holiday, the street was crowded with gayly-dressed shop-girls, young men sauntered up and down, while all the news, peanut, and candy stands were driving a thriving trade. Elsie drifted down the street, and half halted once or twice before windows out of which streamed light, with singing and loud laughter. At last she stood in a hesitating way at least five minutes, then turning suddenly, fled, as if pursued, up the street—on and on and out of it, walking in breathless haste until she reached the tenement-house. While she was groping up the stairs, the woman of whom she rented the room met her, and called out, "Be off in the morning, or pay down."

Elsie went on, opened the door into the cheerless place, where there was no fire, no food, nor any comfort. "I might as well be off to-night," she exclaimed, in a sudden reaction from that terror of evil that had but just possessed her; "it is of no use, there is no help for me;" and turning from the open door, she slipped away again into the darkness. But her prayers had not been in vain. Help might linger, but it must come.

CHAPTER X.

"There are in this loud, stunning crowd
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of the everlasting chime." KEBLE.

IT was midwinter, when one day Miss Hallenbeck appeared in Mrs. Stuart's parlor, and, as usual, lingered for a chat. After the errand for which she came had been accomplished, she remarked, rocking back and forth in her easy-chair, "I do wish that I might some time find truthfulness and stinginess combined equally in one person!"

"What do you mean?" asked Mrs. Stuart, who sat sewing in the bright winter sunlight.

"Oh, when I go to a person who has plenty of money and closets running over full of clothing, and I ask her, as I asked a lady to-day, for a little old linen, or a half-worn under-garment, and she talks as this one did, I am just sickened. I came from a home full of trouble—an honest, hard-working man had been terribly burned and laid up for weeks. His wife has a baby three weeks old, and five children are suffering for bread. I told her all the story, but I don't believe that she heard half of it.

She did not mean to be cruel, but she *herself* had not seen the burns or heard the children cry. She is naturally stingy, and she listened to such things as she listens to the multiplication-table; but it was not that which vexed me. It was her evasions and excuses. She sighed and she talked piously, and she generalized about 'pauperizing the poor,' and how 'if one attended to those laid at the *home-door*, one's hands were full.' Now I want to be large-minded in judgment; but I did keep thinking, 'Mrs. Price' (that is *not* her name), 'if you told the *truth*, you would say, "It *hurts* me to give things away, and I will not, if I can possibly help it."' I made her dresses at one time, and she has showed me piles and piles of garments useless to her. I *know* her closets are full of jellies and canned fruits; so that when she talks to me of 'so many calls and hundreds of such cases,' I can only hope she really does not know of one hundred little boys who look as little Tommy Banks did last night, after he had given his one cold potato to his wee sister, and cried himself to sleep lying flat on his stomach to deaden the gnawings of hunger. At any rate, she was not asked to help anybody *but* Tommy this time, or to give a little linen for poor John Banks' limbs. The truth is, Mrs. Price says *No* every time, for fear if

she began, she should not stop; but I declare, you will think I am a regular old slanderer; may be I am! I will say, while I am about it, even more—that I cannot abide these ladies who go to female prayer-meetings (wealthy ladies), and who talk so heavenly of everything in the abstract, and yet when another lady says, 'Dear sisters, right around the corner is a widow, belonging to our church, who is sick and poor, etc.; let us do a little something to cheer her,' these ladies, who get calm and skeptical all at once, want to take time to investigate, and must 'draw a line,' and draw it this side of a penny. Not that it is everybody's business to give to objects *I* think worthy. It is only the cold clutch on their purse-strings of people who will talk even gushingly on religious subjects; this makes me wicked, as you can see."

"Did you get any bandages and food for the family?" asked Mrs. Stuart.

"I did. I went to a person who I knew would help me, and got some money; but when I returned to the Banks', they had a fire, and the children were toasting their toes and eating warm mush, that a black woman had brought in. She, a neighbor, finding out their trouble, as a matter of course had taken half the food of her own flock and half

of her bedclothes. 'Oh, the good Lord knows we has to help one anoder,' she said, when I thanked her. I could not help wondering what the good Lord thought when we could and would *not* help one another."

Miss Hallenbeck had talked herself tired, and gasped for breath a second or two after she stopped. Mrs. Grey had entered a little while before, and now spoke. One usually had to seize the opportunity when Miss Hallenbeck was breathless, if they talked much in her presence.

"Well," she remarked, "there certainly was one good work accomplished last summer, and that was the getting of little Mary into Mrs. English's family. You would scarcely know the child; she has grown tall and full; her cheeks are as plump and red as apples; but the best of it is, she has proved a real treasure, busy and happy from morning until night. Mrs. English's health has been failing steadily ever since she came, and she says it seems as if Mary was sent to her in just the right moment. She has that gift which Mrs. Stowe calls a 'faculty.' One day, a few weeks ago, Mrs. English had a hemorrhage from the lungs, and sank very low. I spent nearly the whole day there, and I myself was surprised at the child's tact and judgment.

She went up and down the stairs as if shod with velvet. She kept the children quiet as mice by putting them to pasting pictures in a scrap-book. She was as respectful and helpful to the old nurse as if she (the nurse) had been her mistress. Of course she is not a perfect child, but she is a remarkably good one. Mr. English is by no means a pleasant man in the house; he is very domineering and irritable; and it was really amusing to me to see how, in the absence of Mrs. English, little Mary tried to keep out of sight every cause of offence: to shut the door, so the servants could not hear him scold, and to be so innocently unconscious of her little services. Mrs. English has done the child great good, even if she is not spared to go on with the work. Mary has not been in the kitchen, but constantly with her and the children, and has been taught to do little things that Mrs. English was too feeble to do herself. She has read aloud and studied with the children, and has become as lady-like as any little girl to be found."

"What will become of her, if Mrs. English dies?" asked Miss Hallenbeck.

"I was thinking of that the other day," returned Mrs. Grey, "and I was glad to hear Mrs. English say that she should beg Mr. English to keep her. The

old nurse could hardly get along with the children without her."

"I had made up my mind," interposed Mrs. Stuart, "that if there were changes in the family after Mrs. English died, I would take Mary myself."

"Yes, she may find things very different, and not want to stay there," said Miss Hallenbeck.

"Undoubtedly she will see a great change. Mrs. English, feeble as she is, controls the whole house gently and firmly. Old Margaret loves the children devotedly, but she is foolishly jealous of her influence over them, and often unwisely indulgent. Mary, of course, is too much of a child to set up her judgment in opposition, yet sometimes, young as she is, she might know that they were being dealt with in a way not like their mother's. However," continued Mrs. Stuart, "I shall not take Mary unless it is plainly best for all parties. She owes a duty to Mrs. English, and I shall counsel her to stand at her post, and make it my especial work to teach her to try and carry on the mother's work for them after she has gone. She owes Mrs. English a debt of love and gratitude."

"Yes, that is true," said Miss Hallenbeck; and the ladies were silent awhile, until she exclaimed again, "Oh, by the way, Mrs. Grey, have you found

out where your German girl went after she left the hospital?"

"I have not, and I begin to fear that I never shall see or hear of her again."

"It occurred to me the other day," said Miss Hallenbeck, "to tell Mrs. Nichols about her, and to describe her the best way I could. You would be amazed to know how many such people she is continually coming into contact with. I call her a 'missionary detective.' She said if Elsie was quietly at work and doing right, she would probably never see her; but if she had gone into any evil way, it was not at all unlikely that they might meet. You see, the idle vicious in the city, who commit no actual crimes for which they must shun the light, are constantly coming to the surface in certain spots throughout the city: hospitals, police courts, parks, and boats going to and from Blackwell's Island. Considering the immense population, she said it was wonderful how she could follow the career of certain individuals, without taking any particular pains to do so."

"Well, I want to hear of Elsie," said Mrs. Grey, "but not in this way. I suppose that no news of her is therefore good news;" and here the conversation dropped.

CHAPTER XI.

"O Lord, O Love divine,
Once more I follow thee!
Let me abide so near thy side
That I thy face may see.
I clasp thy pierced hand
O thou that diedst for me;
I 'll bear thy cross through pain and loss,
So I may cling to thee."

On the afternoon of the Sabbath when Elsie was shivering in the ferry-house, another person, to whom we have previously referred, was spending the day quite differently. On the east side of the city, in a locality once very fashionable, there yet dwell old wealthy families, who keep the place still aristocratic, by their own simple disregard of fashion. If you had entered a certain one of the grand stone mansions there, you might have expected to be dazzled by the glitter and show of upholstery, glass and gilding; but such was not the impression produced by the interior of this home. Exquisite taste, but extreme simplicity marked every article on which the eye rested. Soft tinted curtains toned down the light, and the air was balmy as summer.

If the long parlors seemed a little colorless, the room at the southern end furnished brilliancy enough to suit any artist. Here were the brightest and the rarest flowers: a conservatory and library in one. In an invalid's chair reclined an old lady, her snow-white hair brushed under the neat cap of a Quakeress, and her long wrapper of the softest gray. This was "Mother" Esther Hodge, a childless widow, who had for years been kept by disease a close prisoner in her beautiful home; because that home was beautiful and God had given Esther earthly riches as well as heavenly, there were people who said it was no wonder she was always serene and happy—who would not be so in her place? But Esther knew what intense suffering was; and if she was glad in her wealth, it was because out of her home was constantly going comfort and good cheer into darker ones. By her side, reading to her from an open book of the Psalms was a much younger woman, also with a calm, sweet face, but with earnest eyes, wide open and penetrating, as if she was alive to everything about her, and must, at times, be used to taking part in other scenes than those of peaceful meditation. The relation which existed between these two women was a puzzle to many curious people. They were not relatives. So far

as any one knew, Mrs. Nichols had no property; but they two lived together as equals. Some persons believed that the younger was the almoner of the other's riches—that she gave the heart, hands, and feet, for charitable work, while Esther's was the treasury from which she drew. A few were fully persuaded that Mrs. Nichols herself had wealth; but none the less chose to go herself into the highways and the hedges, the "wild waste places;" but whatever the truth might have been, these women never talked of themselves and all curiosity was balked.

On this afternoon Mrs. Nichols read aloud the thirty-seventh psalm, with that full clear utterance which makes a few persons' reading of the Bible so spiritually invigorating, like the reading of a message which had for some reason acquired a new interest. When she ceased, the two sat for a long time in the silence sacred to each. The bright sunlight of the short winter day faded. The rosy glow from the heated coals in the grate played over the walls, and at last Esther rang a little silver bell at her side. Almost immediately a neat maid-servant entered and noiselessly arranged an inviting supper on the little round table drawn up between the two friends.

"I thought that thee was going out this evening, Hannah Nichols," said the elder woman, as she put down her cup of chocolate.

"I am going out for an hour or two," returned the other, "if it does not matter to thee."

"Go, by all means, if thee thinks best, and is there any trace of the young woman of whom thee was talking yesterday, the German girl?" asked Mother Esther.

"Nō, not the least. I have no clew to her. I have prayed, but I am at a loss to know how to begin a search. I am going to-night to read the Bible to the boy who must die very soon; he begged me to come in the evening when his room is most quiet."

"Shall not Mary or James go with thee and carry thy basket?"

"No, I do not need them."

Mother Esther said no more, and Mrs. Nichols finished her supper, arranged every comfort for the invalid, and five minutes later stepped over the threshold of the grand mansion in a garb as plain as the plainest working woman. The air was keen and the little Quakeress took a brisk pace toward her destination, only once making a detour and this into the street where a few moments later Elsie

was to come—toward which she was even now rushing in a sort of blind desperation. Would they know one another if they were to meet? No, and they were not to meet then; but God's hand was in it for good. Hannah Nichols had not come into the street for any special purpose, but because she often met here those whom she knew and could help, warn, or counsel. To-night three young girls under a gas light attracted her attention, and she hastened toward them: two of them she recognized. The eldest was the wreck of what had once been a strong fine-looking girl, but her dark face was flushed and her great black eyes were fierce. She was both noisy and profane in her talk to her companions, one of whom had a face as blank and silly as a soulless animal; the third was brighter-looking and more neatly dressed; a girl who had perhaps but just started on the downward career. On her arm Mrs. Nicholas' hand fell first, even as she recognized the other loud speaker and exclaimed, with real sorrow, "Oh, why did you not stay where I put you?"

"It is no use! I wont! Don't urge me again. I wont listen one word to you. You are an angel; but five hundred angels could not save me now; it is too late for all that."

Mrs. Nichols had known of this girl for three years, and knew that in this mood she had best let her alone, so, saying to the one whose arm she held, "You three will be arrested in a minute for disorderly conduct, if you talk so loud and swear. Will you walk down the street a little way with me?"

The girl hesitated, glanced at the loud talker, who offered no objection, then yielding to the firm speaker, she moved off, only halting a second, as Mrs. Nichols repeated, "Oh, how could you! how could you leave that place?"

"How *could* I?" returned the girl, careless whether any or all passers-by heard her. "Because I 'm fit for nothing else; because I 've lost my life and my health and my friends, and I might as well lose my soul, too! I had to think there, where you put me, and it is because I wont think that I run away," she cried after the retreating Quakeress.

A moment later, a new figure joined the two left standing. It was Elsie, her face very pale with hunger and cold, but her eyes almost as wild as the half-drunken speaker's. She had stopped at first to listen, and that because in the foolish-looking girl, who had slunk behind a lamp-post, she recognized a girl who had worked in the factory with

her. When the Quakeress disappeared, this last-mentioned came out boldly, saying, "She let me alone this time. She has put me into 'safe places' until she is tired of it. As you say, there is n't any use. I was treated well, and had enough to eat; but there was nothing to do but knit and make beds, make beds, knit, and go to prayers; great fun that," and she gave a silly giggle. "I 'd rather sleep under cart-wheels and have some variety."

"Where are you now?" asked Elsie suddenly.

"Come, and I 'll show you," returned the other.

The tall girl wheeled about and stared at Elsie, her gaze increasing in interest until she exclaimed, "If you are a decent girl, you had better go about your business."

"I have n't any," answered Elsie moodily.

"Oh, you poor fool!" continued the other, in a lower tone, "go and pitch yourself into the river. I would, if I was back where I begun."

"I know something," groaned Elsie, shivering from head to foot with cold and excitement.

"You do know?" shouted the speaker. "Then go along."

Elsie recoiled; and the girl, perceiving it, dropped as suddenly her coarse tone, saying, "Maybe

there is a chance for you—you look so—do n't lose it. There is a saint ahead; run and catch her; she will stand by you."

Elsie did not half hear, or at all understand; she only moved slowly off, or attempted to do so, when the younger girl, slipping to her side, chatted into her ear in a wheedling tone, evidently teasing her to go away with her. At this, the tall girl darted forward, thrust them forcibly apart, and with a derisive laugh declared to the one that she could not be separated from her, while she said to Elsie, "I do not know nor care who you are; but if you would rather be honest than to go with us, go straight to No. — —— street. There is where I would have stayed, if I had been worth saving. Go this minute, if you want to. Tell them—no, just say, '*Hannah Nichols* wants you to help me.'"

"Are *you* Hannah Nichols?" asked Elsie, half-fancying that a trick was to be played on her.

The silly girl gave a loud cackle at the question; the fiercer one said, "She is an angel who goes around trying to make others so—girls like me, and fools like Liz here. But go along with you; we shall freeze here. Go to grief, if you like; but if you do n't, go to No. — —— street."

Cold! Yes, suddenly aware that she was icy

cold, Elsie beat her benumbed feet on the pavement and deliberated. She was only a few blocks from the address so strangely given her; should she test the truthfulness of the girl's statements? She hurried on as fast as possible, and in a quiet street found a plain brick building corresponding to the address given. She for a minute could not find the bell. Her hand fell on it, as she was half-tempted to flee away again: but it rang at her touch, and the door was opened by an elderly woman, to whom she said, hesitatingly, "I was told to say that Hannah Nichols wants you to help me."

The woman scanned her closely; but not at all unkindly and then led her into a neatly-furnished room, so warm that the half-frozen girl felt as if she had stepped into paradise. When a very few questions had been asked her by the quiet woman, who had a motherly, home-like air, and a way of taking Elsie's arrival as a matter of course, which greatly tended to make her comfortable, she led her into a larger room, where she gave her a simple but abundant meal and a cup of hot coffee. When Elsie saw and smelt this last, she laid her head on her arm and burst into tears. It was very foolish; but she being overtired and so hungry; with the change too from the gloom and emptiness of her

room—all was so overpowering that her nerves gave way at the first sight of food and comfort so kindly offered.

"There now, eat your supper," said the woman. "Everything will be right, if you want to make it so. We never turned out a body who wanted to stay;" so Elsie controlled herself and ate, wondering if it was not a dream.

Before long, she heard the sound of singing and when she was warmed, satisfied, and quite calm, the woman invited her to go with her into a hall, nearly full of women and girls. They were seated in orderly groups and all singing the same hymns that had moved her when heard in the hospital. No one appeared to notice her and she was at liberty to listen undisturbed to a chapter of the New Testament read in a gentle, earnest way by the same woman, who had given her food and welcome. When the exercises were over, Elsie was assigned a room for the night, a small plain room; but clean and warm. In great letters of various colors over the door was the text, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Elsie in a new sense of comfort and undefined hopefulness went to rest, not without a fear that the morning would find her awakening from a delusive dream. At midnight

she did awake and for a few minutes could recall nothing. There was a gaslight in the street just below, which filled the room with a mild glow, and as Elsie looked up the last four words of the illuminated text which happened to be gilded, were as if written in letters of fire "no wise cast out." These four words seemed to mean a great deal to Elsie as she watched them in the solemn midnight. She had once more wrestled with evil, had once more fled for refuge to the first opening that promised help and she had not been "cast out;" might she not take courage and believe in God's help? was this opened door the answer to last night's prayer?

The next day was the beginning of a storm, which was the most violent of the winter, lasting three days. These were three strange, peaceful days to Elsie; the matron of the "Home" showed no curiosity to know the details of her history, but waited until Mrs. Nichols should make one of her frequent visits. She gave her plain sewing to occupy her time and a few simple interesting books to read, when she was tired of work. The rest, the warmth, and the sufficiency of food, were just what Elsie needed physically and there was nothing better for her moral nature than this time for reflection. The fourth day after her coming, she sat by

herself, hemming towels when five or six girls about her own age entered with a lady, who evidently had been in the habit of getting them together and reading aloud to them. Elsie had seen all the persons about the house; but no one at all resembling this lady. In fact, as Elsie watched and listened, she said to herself that she had never seen so lovely a woman. How or why she seemed so, she could not explain, for she was not young. The soft hair, plainly parted over her delicate forehead was silvery gray and her face was grave; but her eyes rested on one with a strange, gentle interest, as if, for the moment, she saw just you and thought of nothing else. As for her dress it was soft and modest, making no impression on the beholder. The girls seated themselves with pleased looks and quietly awaited her movements. She read them a short story, with a direct lesson, yet interesting in itself and as she read she talked to them—not preached; but spoke as a teacher having knowledge of and sympathy with them. They listened eagerly, answered freely, often questioned. Once or twice she spoke to Elsie, calling her Mary; because on the night of her arrival Elsie had asked that she might be thus called, admitting that it was not her name.

After an hour of reading and instruction, which could not fail of doing good, because Mrs. Nichols always talked with the thought in her mind that it might be the one time some particular soul would come under her influence. After the hour she dismissed her hearers and stayed behind with Elsie. She had been immediately interested in her. Her face, never coarse, had in a manner been refined by sickness and suffering, so that it was without instinctive repugnance that Mrs. Nichols drew her chair near to her, saying, "I am so very glad that some one told you to come here. Now I would like to know how it was, if you will let me hear all about it."

Little by little, Elsie told her story, until, opening her whole life to the Quakeress, as she never had even to Mrs. Grey, she laid all before her from day to day, when a careless child, she first stepped her foot on American soil. Towards the last she mentioned Mrs. Grey's name and Mrs. Nichols suddenly exclaimed, "Elsie, that was the very one! You are the German girl I promised to look for. Well, well, is it possible? Why this Mrs. Grey would have continued to be a good friend to you. She was sorry to lose all track of you. I must now let her know. Stay here for the present and we

will consider what is best; keep your courage and pray for help and strength, God will give abundantly. Let us pray together now."

It seemed to Elsie, as she knelt in that plain little room by the Quakeress that she had never been so near to heaven in all her life and perhaps she never had been; her eyes were full of tears, but hope was in her heart and true penitence. When they arose from their knees and Mrs. Nichols left her with a kindly word, she felt almost as if her mother had been with her—the true good mother whom she always thought of as divided from her by something infinitely vaster than the sea itself.

CHAPTER XII.

"Little souls that stand expectant,
Listening at the gates of life,
Hearing far away, the murmur
Of the tumult and the strife."

It was a lovely evening in May; the beautiful river was a broad sheet of quivering crimson and gold. The lawn in front of the pretty villa was like emerald velvet dotted here and there by a golden dandelion or sprinkled with showers of rosy petals from some blossoming tree. In a little summer-house, overlooking the river, were three children; although in calling Mary a child one felt the word misapplied; "Little Woman," Mrs. Stuart always called her. To-night while she was reading with real interest a story to the big-eyed, handsome Charlie, her arm was around his sister Nell in a motherly way, and the little girl snuggled up to her as to one in whom she had supreme confidence. By-and-by the sunset light was so dazzling on the page that Mary shut the book, saying, "Now let us go in to dinner. Let us see which can reach the steps first."

Charlie's fat legs carried him briskly off, Nell's tiny feet pattered hard behind, and Mary judiciously stumbled over a hillock that one or both might triumph over her. They reached the house and trotted up to the nursery, knowing by experience that "Our Molly," as they called their little nurse, would not let them eat until she had brushed their soft curls and washed their faces, making them fresh and sweet as their mother always did—their dear mother gone from them now for months.

Mr. English had, as usual, taken his dinner alone and was lounging on the veranda, when the children, coming down, seated themselves at the table in the diningroom. Mary, who had always eaten with them took her place also and a maid brought them their food. Mr. English, looking through the long glass windows, suddenly threw them open, and entering, rudely bade Mary "Get up." The maid gazed at him in surprise. Mary sprang to her feet, wondering what could be the matter.

"Hereafter you can eat with the *other* servants. You are no better than they. I never adopted you, and you are not to put yourself on an equality with *my* children."

Poor Mary was dumb; but the maid, by chance,

an unusually sensible girl, put in respectfully, "It was not that, sir. Mary is not pushing of herself forward. Mrs. English liked her to do it, to keep the children quiet like. They would frolic and upset things."

"Humph," he returned, "that speaks well for their manners. So a child from a tenement-house must come and teach them to behave themselves? I wont have it! Hereafter, serve them alone, and if they upset anything I will punish them for it."

The tears were running down Mary's cheeks, as she stole out of the room; but she did not think first of herself. The servants were all well disposed toward her and she was not foolish enough to feel herself above them. It was the rough, disdainful tone that hurt her, and she knew the children were better for having her there. Who would keep Charlie from eating all sauce and no meat, while Nell certainly would play and overturn her plate or her milk, then to get a sharp box on the ear, if Mr. English saw it.

"Whatever is the matter with you?" asked fat old Margaret, who was really the prime minister of the nursery. She was coming down stairs and caught sight of Mary's tearful eyes. Margaret was getting clumsy, was also troubled with rheumatism,

and lately she had taken her meals when and where it most suited her convenience and her infirmities; but it had been for years her prerogative to eat at the children's table when she chose. It was, therefore, with fast increasing wrath that she listened to the maid's account of matters; this last individual having just come out for a plate.

"And so I a'n't good enough to eat in the diningroom, am I? I must work my way down to the basement with my poor limbs ailing as they have lately. If Mrs. English was alive, as likely as not, she'd send me up my meals before I'd have to hobble over even one flight. Pretty goings on there will be here, I foresee that. A house without any head but a cantankerous, high-tempered man a meddling with things his poor dead wife settled all peaceable years ago. I can't stand it, and I wont!"

Now Margaret and the cook had seldom exchanged ideas; but had always met amicably when their duties brought them in contact. To-night, in spite of the stairs, Margaret descended to the kitchen, not for her supper, she quite forgot that, but to give free vent to her pent-up emotions. The cook was equally full of complaints, and for a while their mutual grievances kept them harmonious if

agitated; but soon Margaret trod on dangerous ground. Little Mary, who was silently eating her soup with the maid, and without thought of protest, heard Margaret loudly vindicating her claims to eating in the diningroom, and not being put with the "servants." That spark struck fire instantly. Hitherto it had been tacitly conceded that she (Margaret) was good enough to eat with the children; now, the claim of being too good to eat with the cook was hotly contested. The maid, for months quiet and gentle, as need be, took vigorous part in this war for precedence, and poor Mary, in dismay, would gladly have promised to eat behind a door, or in a corner, could she only have calmed the raging elements. Margaret unwisely intruded Mary's "rights," and ranged her on her own side, so far as the others were concerned, until the cook declared that it was "just good for her to be snubbed a little." Mary then took refuge in flight, and sought the children, finding them much out of humor. They had quarrelled over a cake, which belonged of right to Charlie. Their father, overhearing, had scolded him and given it to Nell. Neither of them was satisfied, and both were inclined to vent their ill-humor on poor Mary. She enticed them up into the nursery, and it was only after a long

talk about their mother, and what she would like if she were living, that the children or their young nurse felt quite at peace with all things.

This little episode was the opening act in a whole drama of confusion. Mr. English's management of domestic affairs was singularly unfortunate. Indeed, had he merely allowed all matters to go on in the old tracks marked out for them, it is likely the result would have been far more satisfactory. As it was, the trouble between the cook and Margaret continued until the former gave warning and left the house. A new incumbent was settled into office; and the maid, not liking her after a few days' acquaintance, followed the footsteps of the old cook. The new-comers considered Mary far too young to be able to initiate them into any of the household ways, although she might have told them a good many sensible things. After one or two attempts to do this she gave it up, and it was only needed that they should overhear a few of Mr. English's unkind speeches, in order for them to consider her an upstart. Margaret was not unkind to her, but was not so much of a comforter as she might have been. She was a woman of good principles and warm heart, but bitter in her prejudices and unwise in giving way to them. Her best judg-

ment told her that Mary was faithful to the children, and that she tried to carry out their mother's ideas with singular fidelity; but she was sometimes jealous of their love to her, and thwarted Mary's influence from pure contrariety. Now it must not be supposed that Mary was a perfect child. She had decision of character enough to be a little obstinate, and sometimes gave her opinion when, all things considered, she might better have kept still. This latter fault did not tend to make her way any smoother; but on the whole, as Mrs. Stuart often affirmed, she was "a treasure." What Mary would have done without this lady, it is impossible to say; certainly she would have found far more obstacles in her path than she did, and frequently would have acted unwisely. Under any other circumstances Mrs. Stuart would not have allowed Mary to confide to her so freely the domestic affairs of her neighbors; but as time ran along and matters grew more perplexing, she allowed the young girl to open her whole heart to her. The new servants were not long in comprehending the domestic situation and shaping their conduct accordingly. So long as Mr. English's many and sounding orders were promptly obeyed in his presence, all was as it should be. How was he to know—what the mis-

tress of any house would soon have detected--all their tricks and wrong-doing.

Old Margaret did her best to protect the interests of the family; and the servants, although they scouted her authority, were careful to do nothing before her that she could report. However, they well knew that when she had with difficulty mounted to the top of the house, it would be some time before she could be back again; and of Mary they made no account. During the summer, when both children were sound asleep, little Mary would often run over to sit with Mrs. Stuart on the veranda, and tell her the day's experiences. She had always been one of those observant little bodies, who knew just the order of the objects about them, and who saw any change. Now how could she help noticing that beautiful linen napkins were burnt and torn and used for any purpose in the kitchen; that not a day passed without some outrage on her master's property? One day the butter-tub would be half full, and the next, empty. Tea and coffee seemed to evaporate in ways that would have appeared miraculous, had not the cook's sister and the maid's sister-in-law made social, little visits semi-weekly, and always appeared and disappeared with formidable baskets—of clothes, at least that was what

the cook told Mary. But Charlie said No; they must have been to market, for he saw cold roast chicken in one basket. Mary disliked to be a tell-tale; moreover, as she assured Mrs. Stuart, whenever she did try to right such matters she made great trouble for herself, with no good accomplished. Mr. English believed the story of the more voluble servants, who in turn vented their spite upon her. To this Mrs. Stuart could only advise her to tell Margaret as dispassionately as possible, whenever she actually *saw* such wrong-doing, and leave Margaret to inform Mr. English, if she thought it best.

Many a time Mrs. Stuart would have said to the bewildered child, "Come and live with me," had it not been for the children. Without Mary, Charlie would be playing in the stables, hearing the low jests and profanity of the coachman's cronies. Nell would refuse to stay with Margaret, and be tossed about among the servants, foolishly indulged, or unjustly punished. As it now was, from the time they were neatly dressed by old Margaret in the morning, until their curly heads were still in sleep at night, Mary was with them. She kept them at play on the lawn, or read to them, or played school at Mrs. Stuart's suggestion, or tried to teach them

and learn something herself. No, every time the thought came into Mrs. Stuart's mind she instantly dismissed it, with the after-thought, "Mary must learn patience; she must watch and pray and stand at her post." As for Mary herself, the few times when she wished that she were "out of it all," Mrs. Stuart told her how Mrs. English's promise to take care of her had filled her own poor mother's heart with comfort, and that now she could richly repay her debt of gratitude. The thought was a constant inspiration to Mary. She never again spoke of falling out of place. It was old Margaret who continually threatened to go to Jersey and live with her son William.

One beautiful Sabbath-day, about the last of June, Mary arose very happy indeed. She hurried to the help of old Margaret, who had promised her what she considered a treat that day. Sunday was a day Mary particularly dreaded; for while one servant-girl went away, the other one had a host of friends to visit her. Mr. English was usually at home, and frequently had gentlemen to dinner. Mary was called upon for all sorts of services, scolded for all mistakes, and forced to neglect the children, who invariably got into trouble. When Mrs. English was alive, Mary was sent each Sunday to a

little church in a beautiful grove about a half mile distant, and sometimes the children went with her. The services were simple, and after them a Sabbath-school was held, which she greatly enjoyed; but all that had been at an end for Mary for some time. On this Sabbath-day Margaret had agreed to arrange matters so that Mary and the children could go. She would put up a little luncheon for them, so that they could eat it and remain to the Sabbath-school, which lasted quite into the afternoon. Mary flew about the house and did her various duties as promptly as possible, and at half-past ten had the satisfaction of seeing both children ready with their little singing-books, and each with a handful of sweet, June roses. As they stood in the hall with Mary, Bridget the chambermaid opened the door. She was marvellously arrayed in all her cheap finery for an excursion into the city. In her clamorous, Irish way she was fond of the children, but Mary knew her to be unprincipled.

"How lovely Nell do look! What illigent curls she has when they be all in order," she exclaimed. "And Charlie is fit to kill in that sailor suit. Come wid me for the day, ye little darlints, down into the city. We'll ride on the cars, and maybe cross the ferry. Run till ye ask the father."

"No, oh no, they certainly cannot go, Bridget," said Mary, very decidedly. "They are going to church."

"Nonsince now wid yer church for sich mites as these, shut up in the tight house!"

"O Mary, do let us go into the city with Bridget," begged foolish little Nell, hopping up and down in eagerness, while Charlie vigorously accepted Bridget's invitation, declaring on the spot that he would go.

Whether it pleased the girl's vanity to exhibit two really handsome children, or whether she most wished to oppose Mary, we cannot tell; but she remarked hatefully, "Run back, Mary, and take yer bonnet off, ye'll be needed at dinner. The idea of you a gaddin' off on a Sunday like this ere."

Being sorely tried, Mary was foolish enough to say, "Mind your own affairs, Bridget." Whereat Bridget marched directly into the library, and in a wheedling tone begged Mr. English to let her take the children out for a little air, and would he please tell Mary not to be running off, for the cook needed her to shell peas for dinner. He answered her in a way that made her feel at liberty to go back and arrogantly order Mary off the scene; then grasping the hands of the children, she poured into

their ears stories of candy, rides, sails, and strange sights, all the while hurrying them away from the house. Mary, powerless to help herself, rushed away and had a good cry before she returned to tell Margaret what had happened.

The old nurse was very indignant and as much troubled. Their careful mother had never wished the children to go to the city with any servant. She knew too well how often other children were carried to dirty tenement-houses, or dragged about the streets until worn out by fatigue, not to speak of the moral impressions they might receive. But what was done was done. Margaret could only be unusually kind to Mary, and manage to let her have more leisure to read a book Mrs. Stuart had lent her; but, after all, it was a long, dreary day. At night Bridget arrived with the two children. They were very tired, very dirty, and very cross. Bridget herself was afflicted in much the same way. Mary overheard her tell the cook that they were the "botheringest" couple "that ever she seed, and had given her no peace whativer."

Nellie, when she had received at Margaret's hands a cool bath and had been put to bed, told of rides and candy, also of little rooms close and full of hateful children and Irishmen smoking pipes, of

getting very hot and tired; and she declared, as she sighed herself to sleep, "It was not one half as good as going with my nice Molly to church." Charlie was sulky, and sick from eating something that disagreed with him. The next day both children were languid, and complained of being tired, and the night following little Nell tossed about and cried so that Margaret had to get up and carry her about in her arms. Old Margaret understood children's ailments perfectly; and when, after some days of fretfulness, and nights even more restless, she declared that something unusual ailed the child, Mr. English promptly sent for a doctor. The old family physician asked all sorts of questions, and among others if Nellie had fallen, or in any way hurt herself. Both Margaret and Mary assured him that she had not, but a sudden, "Oh, she did!" from Charlie, made them turn at once to him. He colored up to the roots of his curly hair, and declared he must not tell, because he "got a big pink pop-corn ball for promising that he never would." A little reasoning from the old doctor, and the urging that his little sister might suffer if he did not tell what ought to be known, brought out a confused story of "that old house, you know, so awful full of beggar-folks, where the children played

out in the old shed over the coal-hole—had a swing up there, you know, and we all swinged, and the boys tried to make our toes touch the roof of the shed, you see. Well, Nell she was agoing so, and kind of slipped out, and she cried dreadful when Bridget picked her out of that coal place; but they washed the chimney-stuff off her, and Bridget said never tell, and we never did."

"Here is a pretty to do!" muttered the old doctor. "Why in the name of common sense do n't you keep these young ones at home, when you have acres of grass for them to roll on? The idea of sending them for change of air down to Water street or some other such hole;" and as he scolded he carefully felt the little girl's limbs and back.

"I can't promise you at all that this baby has not received some lasting injuries. She has broken no bones, but this tenderness and pain are bad signs. Now listen to what I tell you, and mind you attend to her faithfully hereafter." Whereupon he talked a long time to Margaret, while Mary listened attentively. Mr. English, at the first pause in Charlie's story, had hastened to the kitchen, where he fiercely upbraided Bridget, who stoutly declared the thing never occurred, and was dis-

missed on the spot. She did not stand at all upon the order of her going, but only lingered in the house long enough to select from an unlocked closet such articles of the late mistress as she fancied would be becoming to her robust style of beauty.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Ever so little the seed may be,
Ever so little the hand;
But when it is sown, it must grow, you see,
And develop its nature—weed, flower, or tree."

THE old doctor was quite right: that bright June morning, when little Nell danced down the shaven lawn, her motions were as light and free as a butterfly's; but after that day and a succeeding sickness of a week or two, the child was physically never the same. She was always "tired," did not care for any violent play, but preferred to walk slowly down to the river to lie in the soft grass while Mary told her stories. Mr. English was for a time much worried, and saw that everything the doctor advised was faithfully attended to—riding, salt-water bathing, tonics, whatever it might be. But when Nellie ceased to be irritable, complained of no acute pain, and did not, as he feared, develop any deformity in consequence of her hurt, his anxiety gradually died away, and other things occupied his mind. He did one thing which was very commendable: he released Mary from all obligations

to any other persons in the house, and let her belong entirely to Nell.

Mrs. Stuart was somewhat of an invalid that summer, and therefore was much at home. She had by her sofa a little silver bell, and always every day it was rung out of the window towards the English's. In a moment or two the children would appear, and for one, two, or three hours would stay happily there. It was a little trouble to her, but of incalculable benefit to them. She nursed and petted Nell, for every time she lifted the tiny girl in her arms she seemed lighter, and when the silky yellow curls were pushed up from the little forehead the blue veins were clearly marked through the delicate skin. She was sure that Nellie was not a long way from that home where her mother had gone, and she could scarcely be sorry. She also in these times taught Mary much that she ought to know, and gave her excellent counsel, while Charlie kept things lively for all of them.

Domestic affairs at the English's went on in much the same way, only old nurse Margaret became more and more incapable of exercise, and more frequently threatened to go to her son's. At last the summer-days drew near to an end, and the leaves from the trees fell in crimson heaps on the

lawn. Nell was almost confined to the house now, as it made her back ache to do more than play a little about the nursery. It was at this time that something most important occurred in the family history. Mr. English one morning ordered a much more elaborate dinner than usual to be prepared, rooms to be decorated, and the children arrayed for company. He expected guests from the city; but as this was not a very unusual occurrence, little was thought of it, unless it was by old Margaret. Mary overheard her muttering away to herself unintelligible prophecies of evil to come, after a fashion wholly her own.

Late in the afternoon, Mary was trying to amuse little Nell, whose stiff white dress hurt her, and who was begging to have on her "nice, easy wapper," as she called the little loose gown she wore now constantly. Charlie was mounted astride a chair, when the door opened, and Mr. English led in one of his guests. Mary had never seen a very fashionable young lady so near at hand before, and she gazed in as wide-eyed amazement as did the children at this one, whose eyes were excessively bright, whose hair was wonderfully puffed and curled and frizzed, whose silk and velvet trail wound away yards behind her, while, waddling along at the

end of it, was a poodle-dog, with a blue ribbon around its neck.

"Oh, you dear, sweet little creature," she cried, tossing and tumbling, hugging and kissing sober little Nell, exactly as she manipulated the poodle a few minutes later, when he trembled at the old cat. Then she begged to kiss Charlie, but he flatly refused her. Mr. English scowled; but, on the whole, he was so affable, Mary scarcely knew him. He pointed out the views from the windows, told the young lady where he meant to have a new summerhouse; then, with another shaking up of Nellie, and not a glance at Mary, the remarkable trail slipped and rustled, and wound spirally out, the poodle at the terminus again.

"Is n't she a buster?" broke from Charlie, after a second of dead silence.

"Do n't!" begged Mary. "Mrs. Stuart told you not to say that."

"I wont," he conceded, as, with a hand in each pocket of his little knee-breeches, he mused a while.

"Do you suppose," he asked, perfectly innocent of sarcasm, "that she combed that doggie's wool over his forehead same way she did her own, or that she went and fixed her ownself so 'cause his growed that way? I wish I 'd asked her."

"I am glad you did not," said Mary, turning gently to Nell, who was moaning, "Now, my Molly, can't I have my wapper on? I guess no more folkses want to shake me up; will they?"

Mary thought not, and so she drew the little waxen arms out of stiffly-starched embroidery, stopping only to cuddle her up in her own quaint little motherly way, at which Nell moralized, "I like peoples to love me softly, like you do, and my mamma gone away; she wore pretty silk dresses, too."

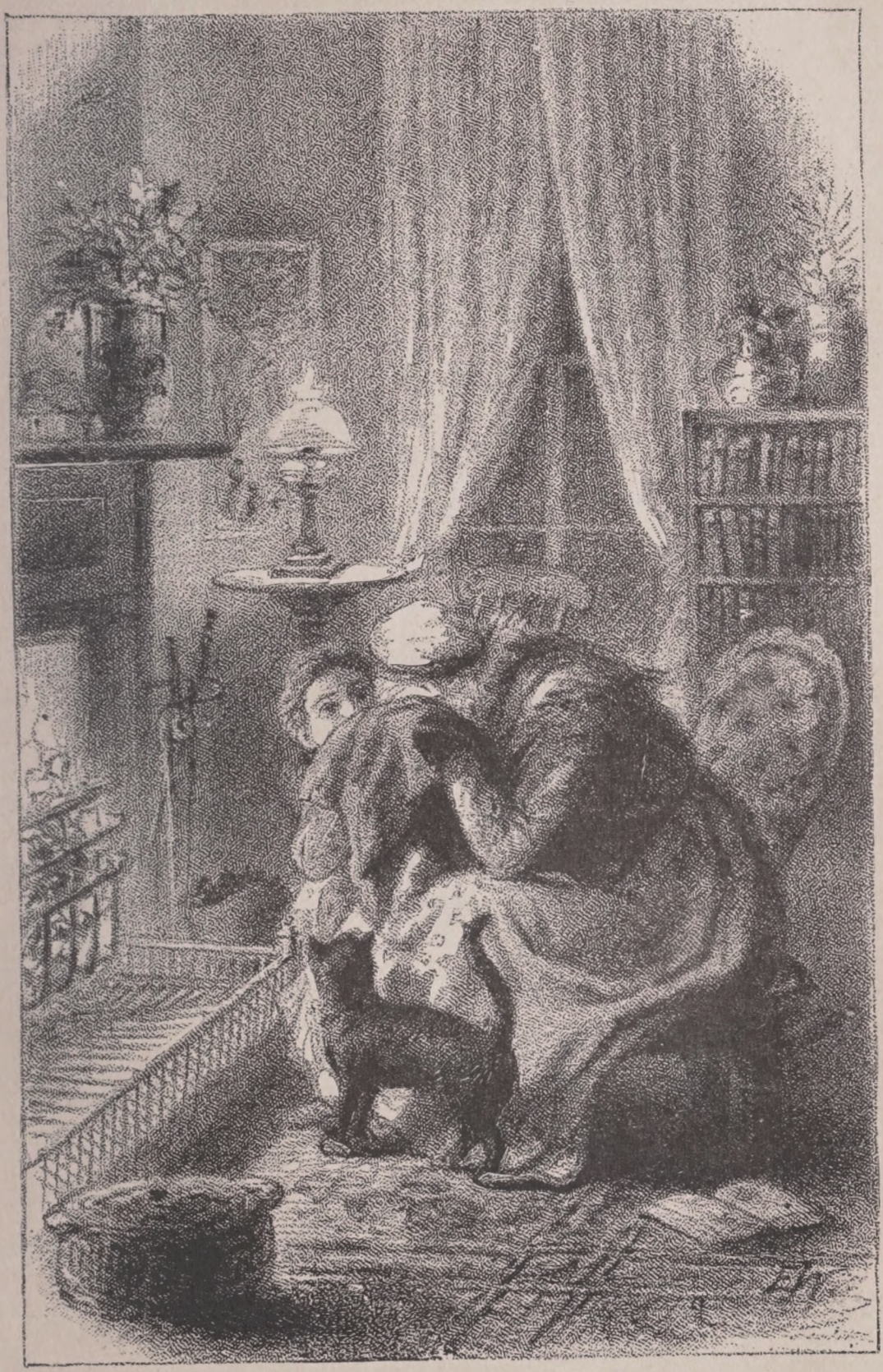
"But she did not know how to snap the long end around the chairs, like she would a coachman's whip—just as that lady did. Now, Molly, let us have our dinner," said Charlie.

Mary accordingly went down stairs, and soon returned with an abundant supply of dainties, which pleased the little folks greatly. She spread the feast in front of the cosey fire, and put Nell into her favorite cushioned rocker. Then they ate and chatted, and were as happily free from thoughts of the future as only children are. That evening, both of them fell asleep earlier than usual, and Mary was left to enjoy a book by the soft shaded lamp. She often remembered that evening—how sweet little Nell was, and how comical Charlie,

how merry their feast together; there was nothing after that quite like it. She put her book down, after a while, and wondered that Margaret had not been back to the nursery since early in the afternoon. Even as she remembered it, the old nurse entered in strange excitement. She gave a quick glance at the sleeping children, and seating herself before the fire, burst into tears. Mary was at her side immediately, thinking she must have had an uncommonly bad attack of rheumatism. But no! She began soon, not so much talking to Mary as with herself, groaning, scolding, and only by degrees making clear what it was that excited her.

"Just to think of it! A spoiled child right out of a boarding-school! The house 'needs a head,' does it? Well, it does that: but *such* a head as she *will* bring to it! A giggling, dancing creeter, dressed to kill, to have the rule over my blessed babies! O dear! O dear! I supposed, of course. it would come some time, but not so soon or in this sort of fashion. I can't stand it, and I wont, nohow. I a' n't worth a cent for work, anyway. I 'll just write to my son in Jersey to get a place ready, for I 'm a-coming."

"What is the matter?" asked Mary, her eyes big with apprehension.



"Matter enough, Mary. That was your new-coming mistress—that gay young lady! Next month she is to be Mrs. English."

"Mrs. English!" echoed Mary. "*She!*" and the child stared blankly into the fire at the remembered contrast between this one with the poodle, and the sweet, quiet lady, on whose grave the first snowflake had yet to fall.

"Yes, *she;*" and Margaret covered her head with her black alpaca apron, and sat long before the grate, groaning dismally at intervals, while Mary stole away to bed, to lie awake and ponder on this strange thing.

For a few days, old Margaret declared that nothing on earth would induce her to stay after the new order of things began; but when she actually set about getting ready to go, her heart misgave her. One night, after she had tucked little Nell into her crib, her bravery all oozed out, and she averred she "never could leave that child, no, never!" Mary was very glad to hear her; she dreaded greatly to have the old nurse go. No one else could tell her a thousand things about her care of the children. Mary was faithful in doing, so far as she knew what to do; but she was wise enough to realize that her care was, after all, only

a child's. Now, it had never occurred to either Mary or Margaret that the remaining of the latter depended upon anything outside of her own decision. Great was the indignation of the old nurse, therefore, when, one morning, Mr. English paid her in full, added a present, to soothe any wounded feelings, and told her very decidedly that he had understood she meant to leave them, which he considered a very sensible plan. She was disabled, by her infirmities, from active work, and ought to rest. Mary could continue to be the acting nurse, and the lady soon to be installed in the house could give all needful oversight and direction. At her time of life, Margaret ought to retire from duty and join her son in Jersey. Now, all this was very well, when Margaret said it herself; but it was quite another thing, coming to her as Mr. English's dismissal. She cried and scolded, and insisted that it would kill her to leave the children. Then she declared that nothing would have made her stay, even if he had gone down on his knees and begged her. In her excitement, she went up and down stairs, as never before since Mary knew her. She was first packing boxes, bags, and chests without number, and then, forgetful of herself, telling Mary exactly what to do in case of croup, measles, whoop-

ing-cough—in each and every accident that might occur to her beloved charges. It was a sorry leave-taking at the last. Down in the kitchen, Margaret had held her head up, lest the servants triumph over her; had carried it all off as a high-handed enterprise of her own, speaking much of her son and his nice country-home open to her; but the last evening, she crept up into the nursery, and showed all her grief to Mary. She hugged the children both into her lap at once. She told how she was the first one to put them into their mother's arms that she might have her first look at them, and the one who took them from her arms when she had taken her last look. She solemnly exhorted Mary to love and watch over them, and begged God to forgive her wherein she herself had failed. Charlie tried, by vigorous caresses, to comfort her, and little Nell softly smoothed the gray hair from her honest, homely face. In doing it, the light shone through her wee hand, and she held it still a moment, up between the lamp and herself, saying, "Is n't that pretty, Molly? It looks like a wose-leaf." And, in fact, the tiny palm and fingers seemed almost transparent. Margaret turned to Mary and nodded her head ominously. By-and-by she said, "It would break my heart, Mary, if I did

not think it was really better to be so. You can't see it so, because you are young; but poor little lamb! This is a hard world for motherless ones, if they are sickly, and I know she'll never be well; the doctor confessed it. 'T was n't just the fall or the sickness; she inherits a feeble constitution."

The tears were running so fast down Mary's cheeks, she could only try to escape from Nellie's questions; and this was the way the old nurse left.

The new mother came the next week.

CHAPTER XIV.

"All thy longings and thy pleadings
Are the voice of God within,
By his Spirit's intercedings
Breaking off the yoke of sin.
All thy seeking for thy Saviour
Is the Saviour seeking thee;
And thy longings for his favor
Are his yearnings deep o'er thee."

MOTHER ESTHER and Hannah Nichols sat together one blustering evening in March. The wind that tore about the firm house and rattled the shutters only blew into a brighter glow the red coals in the grate, and made the pleasant rooms more cosey and bright.

"What makes thee so thoughtful?" asked the elder lady, putting down her knitting and gazing at her companion.

"I was thinking," she answered, "how often in some lives there are times that the soul must cry out, 'Do Thou for me, because of thy great mercy;' times when, in regard to the commonest things of every day, one is bound hand and foot. Then I was thinking, if we Christians heard such a cry, we

ought to be a sort of under-providence, and answer that 'Do Thou for us.'"

"What soul is crying so to thee, Hannah?" asked Esther, simply.

"That Elsie's. She cannot stay always at the Home; she is young and strong. What shall she do? If she goes out for work alone, unaided, she will have the same experiences over again. Should I get her a situation as maid or seamstress by using my influence and by not telling her past history, I might be charged hereafter with deception. If I told it, I do not know any family that would take her. Again, one never knows when one may be mistaken. I believe that she will do well, trying to be a faithful, industrious girl; but she may not always do her best, may get careless, and need patient guiding, kind reproof, charity that suffereth long and is kind. As society is, people hire their servants to do their work, not as subjects for missionary labor. I cannot blame them; many could not, if they would, take into their families those who seem only to need a home in order to live aright."

"Let us take her ourselves."

"For what? Our good, faithful Ellen and Mary have scarcely enough to do, and it would not be

right to displace them, even if Elsie could do the work of either, which I doubt."

The old Quakeress gazed into the fire awhile, and then spoke animatedly, "There is my brother Ephraim's farm! His wife Rachel is a godly woman, and very tender-hearted to the poor. I will write to her to-morrow. If she consents, we will have this Elsie come here and sew for us and for herself this next month. In this way she can earn a good and suitable outfit. On Ephraim's great farm there must be plenty of healthy work, and happy contentment in his family. Last summer old Deborah Hicks died; she had lived with them thirty-seven years."

While Mother Esther talked, Hannah Nichols' face was fairly radiant. She could not have desired anything better for this girl, in whom she had become so greatly interested.

Now it happened that this very night, Elsie, up in her little room at the Home, was asking herself, very sorrowfully, what the future had for her. She was deeply grateful for the refuge given her. She had been much strengthened in her good resolutions by visits from Mrs. Grey, and that lady had been looking for work for her—how unsuccessfully she suspected, but really could not have imagined.

Still there was no outlook for her, and this was to her mind terribly depressing. Many times a day she confessed that she deserved all that had come upon her and much more; but she must go on living, and how and where should she live? The first week of her stay in this place she had in sincere penitence written a long, long letter to her mother in Germany, had concealed nothing from her, but confessed all and begged only her forgiveness and her blessings on efforts to redeem her future from reproach. Mrs. Nichols had read the letter, and assured her that if her mother were indeed the tender-hearted woman she represented her, she would not feel towards her as did her aunt; but ample time had passed and no answer had come back. Every day for weeks Elsie had watched the postman, her heart beating violently as he approached the door, a faint, sick disappointment succeeding as he left no letter for her. In these last weeks Elsie had thought constantly of Germany and of her mother. Heretofore her conscience had made recollection a torture; but now there was a sad fascination to her in going over in memory every detail of her early years—in picturing the home-rooms, the furniture, the simple meals, the plays, the friends who used to visit there, the very dresses her mother

wore, for all began and ended in her thoughts with *mother*.

She thought, what if she were dead, and had died knowing perhaps of Elsie's evil deeds, and not of her sorrow? This used to fill her with a cold horror. On this night it lay on her heart as a dead weight, and she sobbed herself to sleep. But her cry, "Do Thou for me," had been heard. The echo of it had fallen into the mind of a pure woman, rich in faith and in good works. A day or two later, Mrs. Nichols came to the house and called for Elsie. The latter took only time to smooth her hair and glance at the threadbare folds of a dress that could not endure much more patching; then she hastened down to the room which had received her into its warmth and refuge when she had seemed about to be for all time desolate.

"Elsie," said Mrs. Nichols, after a kindly greeting, "how would you like to come home with me for a few weeks, and sew?"

Elsie's face would have answered for her had she been unable to speak; as it was, she expressed the greatest willingness.

"Run up stairs then and get your bonnet and shawl and I will take you along with me. I have arranged it with the matron."

Elsie ran away, trembling with eagerness, and hastening as if she feared some dire accident might hinder her if she was not most expeditious. When once her feet touched the pavement and she was walking, side by side with the gentle Quakeress, in the genial sunshine so clear and sweet, it seemed as if her anxiety was all left behind her, although she saw but a few weeks of security. Mrs. Nichols had no idea of being rash and fully intended to know how Elsie would be most likely to act, before she sent her into quite new scenes. Whether she should ever hear of the farm, depended on her conduct for the next month or two.

To Elsie, Mrs. Nichols had always seemed so much like a sort of ministering angel that she had scarcely classed her, even in imagination, with commonplace individuals, who eat, drink, and sleep in houses. Her soft gray garments, the spotless linen at her neck and wrists seemed a part of her and unassociated with cloth sold at stores and made by dressmakers. It was almost strange to think that Hannah Nichols was really only a woman—only a good and pure one. It came to Elsie in a rush of tender, grateful thoughts that being put thus, as she was to be, into contact with her, she might see what surroundings went to make such a character, or

how such a character modified its surroundings into helps not hindrances. You may be sure she did not so clearly say it to herself; but she thought with a sigh of hearty satisfaction: "Perhaps I can see now all that she means when she talks about 'blessed are the pure in heart,' and how, being that in heart, it creeps out as she says in every way, and people see it and trust one."

At length they stopped before the beautiful house, at whose door Mrs. Nichols entered. Elsie followed her in timid, admiring curiosity through the marble-floored hall into the beautiful room where sat Mother Esther. She left her alone a little while with the old Quakeress, who talked to her very wisely, earnestly, and kindly.

Elsie perceived quickly that she knew her past and yet had hope for her future; this was the inspiration she needed. If good women did not give her up, it was easier to have faith in a Saviour, who had compassion on "the ignorant and them that are out of the way." After a while she was shown her room, a warm, spotless little place, and if plainly furnished, looking most comfortable. On the table were a few books and by the window a low chair and a capacious work-basket.

"We expect you, Elsie," said Mrs. Nichols, "only

to sew or work mornings for us. The afternoons you can have up here to yourself and would it not be well to make yourself with your earnings plenty of plain, good clothing? Then you will be ready if a situation should be found."

Elsie gladly consented, and taking off her bonnet, with a light heart went to her first duties, anticipating what proved to be true that her stay in this household was to be good indeed.

She could not fully understand how wisely they dealt with her; how much thought and Christian helpfulness they bestowed upon her, but she appreciated its results. She worked industriously at whatever she was put to; but it scarcely seemed work to sew under the direction of Mother Esther, who talked much meanwhile in her rare sweet way, or to lay aside her work and read aloud some book which always proved a suggestive or interesting one to her own mind. Sometimes Mrs. Nichols took her out with her for a walk, she carrying the basket, out of which was sure to come some delicacy for a sick child or a suffering mother. There was not an hour in the day when she did not learn something of practical value about household matters; for wealthy as Mother Esther might be, here everything was conducted simply, economically, and

in exquisite order. Moreover, idleness was a thing unthought of, restful and sweet as was all the domestic atmosphere. Every night Elsie laid her head on her pillow, wishing that such a life might last long with her; but sure from many little things that it was to be only for a short time.

One day, several weeks after Elsie's coming home with Mrs. Nichols, the latter was summoned into the parlor to meet Miss Hallenbeck, who had come at Mrs. Grey's request to make a few inquiries about Elsie's well-being and doing. It would be more correct to say that Mrs. Grey wished to know about Elsie, and Miss Hallenbeck called to gratify her own curiosity, as well as to report about the girl. The kindly but curious spinster had always been desirous to know where and how Hannah Nichols lived, and having found out her address from the matron of the Home where Elsie had been, she determined to call at her residence. She would not have been surprised to find her in the humblest locality; she was astonished to be led by the address into a neighborhood suggestive of wealth and aristocracy. But we might as well let her recount her sentiments in her own language, as she that same day reported the interview to Mrs. Grey and Mrs. Stuart:

"I stood on the wide stone steps of that big mansion, and I says to myself, 'Keziah Hallenbeck, Hannah Nichols can't live here' (for, you see, I'd seen that face and figure of hers in the dingiest places, until somehow I always thought of her moving around in poverty and distress); but I rang the bell, and a tidy, quiet girl let me into a parlor that I'd like to have set in an hour and just looked around until I found out what made it so simple, and yet so grand and different from other folks' parlors. You did n't think of money spent there no more than you would in some church, where, if you ever got in on a week-day alone, you know how kind of sweet and solemn it looked—not gloomy solemn, only the sunshine even was different. By-and-by Hannah Nichols slipped in as—well, takin' it all for granted (the splendor, I mean), as if people were what she cared for, and parlors or tenement-houses it was all the same. She said she hoped Elsie was a changed girl; but she was not at all a perfect one, but human, with faults and failings to be borne with. She had worked faithfully, however, for them, and was very glad to be taught and counselled. She said Elsie had spent all she had earned in good, suitable clothing, and that she had resolved to send her to a farm for the summer,

among the Quakers, I took it, or such ones as Mrs. Nichols. She a' n 't like any I ever heard of; she do n't do anything queer. I supposed they sang all their conversation, and went sort of spinning around like tops. Oh, it is Shakers, is it, that do that? Well, any way she is just the same sort of a Christian as the best ones I ever knew in any church. She is a *Friend*, she tells folks that ask her; and this is just the name for her. I sort of thought I would improve the opportunity and find out if she had a husband or any children, and whether she owned the house, and other interesting little items; but I never found out one mortal thing.

"It was a raw, damp sort of day, and I was pretty well chilled through. She made me take off my rubbers and get warm, and she had the girl that opened the door bring me about the nicest cup of tea that I ever tasted. Yes, I was dreadfully curious to know something about herself, as she sat there looking so innocent, with her silvery hair and her ways so soft and dignified; but I got real ashamed of myself, for she went right to asking me about some poor wretches we had been a working for, and she gave me five dollars to get new tools for John Briggs, and made me feel just as she always

does, that nothing is worth anything but to keep one's self unspotted from the world, and to love and work for everybody else twice as hard as ever. She says Elsie grieves all the time that her mother does not answer her letter, and she is afraid she is dead or will not forgive her. Mrs. Nichols said she had to keep suggesting reasons. She told her maybe her mother was sick and could not write herself, and did not want any one to know the contents of Elsie's letter, but will write when she is able; but Elsie says, 'No, she could send me just a message I would understand.' If her mother is like her sister, the woman that we went to see, she is as hard as a nether millstone. I saw Elsie myself; she was doing something for somebody sick in the next room, and she came in for a moment to see Mrs. Nichols. She is as well-appearing a young woman as I ever saw. She begged me to thank you for all your kindness.

"Now I must go right to Thirtieth street and cut a dress for Mrs. McKnight. I told her some day when I had time I would drop in and see if she wanted it done. Maybe she has got tired of waiting; I almost hope she has, for I promised old Granny Wilkes to come in and mend up her old things; her eyesight is about gone. Good-by all."

CHAPTER XV.

"The heart that trusts for ever sings,
And feels as light as it had wings:
A well of peace within it springs."

BEFORE the new Mrs. English arrived, Mrs. Stuart took occasion to talk very plainly of her to Mary. She feared that Margaret, in her excitement, might have unduly prejudiced Mary, and sown seed which would bear unwholesome fruit. She first showed Mary that Mr. English had certainly a right to marry whom and when he chose, that the house was greatly in need of a mistress, and that it was very unjust to judge of the coming one by one single impression formed. She earnestly entreated Mary not to say one word to the children that would make them disaffected, and to keep them from the gossip of the servants. She advised Mary herself to try dutifully to please the coming lady, to serve her in every way possible, and to pray for help, patience, and guidance.

Well, in course of time the lady came, and with her a great deal of excitement. There were recep-

tions, lunch parties, dinners, calls without cessation, and when not receiving company the bride was on a round of gayety herself. All this did not affect the little people in the nursery, for after a few times they were not put out for public inspection, as Charlie was apt to be troublesome and to tease Plato the poodle, while Nellie was always sick after excitement. They liked to sit curled up together in a shadowy niche over the long staircase and watch the people below, then to have Mary bring them cake and ices to feast upon at their ease in the nursery. They did not dislike their new mother. She was very interesting to them as the possessor of many elegant jewels and rich toilets marvellous to look upon. She corrected many defects in domestic arrangements, and she was not unkind to any one. She noticed Nell's increasing weakness, and promised her a French doll if she would get well. Nell obligingly agreed to try, but considering that the old doctor told her father that she inherited the consumption from her mother, the odds were against her. As the winter came on she failed rapidly, but suffered very little pain. She would wake up in the morning and ask to lie still; Mary would bring her breakfast to her, and then, sitting on the foot of the bed, would amuse her,

read little stories to her, or talk. Later in the day she would trot about a little on her unsteady feet, get tired, and call, "My Mollie, put me in bed again, please."

One day she said to Mary, "My own mamma died, did n't she, before she went to heaven?"

"Yes, Nelly."

"I thought so," said the child, gravely winking the lids over her clear, bright eyes. "I remember how it was: one day she kissed me three times at once; next day I never saw her any more. She flew away, most likely, right off, or else the Lord Jesus sent angels after her. Last night, I b'lieve I heard the cook tell black John I was going to be dead, too; does you fink I am?"

Poor Mary struggled with her tears as she answered, "Mrs. Stuart says may be your mother wants you."

"Of course I should fink so," mused the little one, as simply as if their talk was of some pleasant journey. "I fink little girls are better with their *first movvers*. I would have been dreadful, awful lonesome after my movver, only I had you, Molly. I love you, 'cause you hold me softly and do n't scold. How do you fink I will dead myself? I do n't feel springy, as if I could fly up; but I would

just as soon go along wif a nice, pleasant angel, if one comes. Charley says he would n't. He wants to ride in the new carriage. Now get me some candy, Molly, to stop my coughing. The new mamma says if I eat candy I will forget to cough. I do n't have to remember to cough; it coughs itself."

"Mary!" called Mr. English, just outside the door, "come here instantly!"

Mary obeyed, and was as much surprised as frightened to have him first shut the door, and then in a low, angry tone demand, "What do you tell that child she is going to die for? You ought to be ashamed of yourself. She will get well, if you coax her and make her think so; you are making her morbid, that is what you are doing!"

Poor Mary had no idea what "morbid" meant, neither did she understand Mr. English well enough to know that he was one of those men whom grief or the dread of trouble makes ugly, rather than sad. He was proud of his children, little Nell in particular, for she had a lovely face. He was actually foolish enough to think that if she was unwilling to die, she would be more likely to live.

Mary faltered out, "I did not tell her first, sir; she heard the cook say it."

"Well, I say I will not have it. Such talk has got to be stopped; do you hear?"

"Yes, sir," she answered, thinking that she would be very deaf, if she did not hear the imperious voice in her ears. She stole back into the nursery and kissed little Nell, who was curled up in her crib, with a great wax-doll on her arm. Their golden heads were much alike, but the doll's cheeks were far pinker than her own. Mary had been with her but a few moments when the doctor arrived, and following him came Mr. English again, also the new mistress and the poodle. The old doctor did what he usually did: held her tiny wrist in his hand, put his big head close to her heart, and told her she "must be good" to herself; treat herself as she did "pussy—take plenty to eat, a great deal of rest, and keep snug and warm."

To her father's questions he only replied with a shake of the head, and the words, "It is a tiny flame; the least thing may put it out."

"Will not iron do her good, or quinine, or cod-liver oil?" suggested Mrs. English, caressing the puppy; "or may be some sort of cough-syrup? I do n't see why she could not get as well as ever, if she would only stop coughing and get fat."

The doctor looked curiously at the lady before

he remarked, "She might be dosed with a dozen things, but I would not torment her."

"What ails her, any way?" urged Mr. English, moodily.

"She inherited consumption and a tendency to heart disease. That sickness in the summer exhausted her, and she had not constitutional vitality enough to rally. I have all along meant you to understand what I feared would be the end."

"But can't you do something, doctor, to prevent it?" suggested Mrs. English, as if that were quite a new idea which might not have occurred to him before.

He did not answer. Mr. English arose and walked out of the room. Charlie had crept behind the poodle, and felt of its tail in a way to make it very uneasy; perceiving which, its mistress followed her husband, bestowing a sweeping courtesy on the old doctor, who she fancied had been quite dazzled by her charms. She was not hard-hearted, but only empty-headed. She supposed that he merely meant to say that Nellie would never be a healthy child. She was sorry; but then delicate children made very pretty, interesting young girls; she had been quite delicate herself, as a child.

The old doctor sat watching Nellie as she lay smiling at him from her nest in the pillows. He muttered to himself: "It is nothing to be sorry for;" then he looked awhile at the stout boy racing around the room; finally he said to Mary, "Come here."

She readily obeyed, for she was fond of the old man. He pushed her hair back and studied her expression, eyes, and the shape of her head, with something of the interest of a phrenologist; then he said in a genial tone, "If you were my Molly, I should trust you. You want to do right, don't you, little girl?"

"Yes, sir," she returned, blushing, but her eyes sparkling with pleasure.

"Well, dear, be good to your little charge"—he drew her close and whispered in her ear: "she will die soon, and perhaps suddenly. Never leave her alone."

The tears came so quickly, he had to pat her head warningly, while he made little Nell laugh at his funny questions about her doll's health.

"I think old Doctor —— is a croak," said Mr. English, crossly, when his wife rejoined him. "He don't give Nell tonics fast enough. I am going to town to send Dr. Wells up here. Are the invita-

tions out for Thursday? I wish we had not undertaken the party—if anything should happen!"

"Why, what *can* happen?" she asked, surprised. "I am sure Nellie looked just about as weakly when I first saw her."

"Yes, I think she did," he returned, brightening. "I am nervous; it is so unpleasant to have doctors coming into a home and wagging their solemn old heads. May be that child's stomach is out of order; old Margaret said she had no appetite."

"Yes, or her liver—but no, she would be yellow, I suppose, if it was her liver. Oh, I have only invited about ninety, a select little affair; but do be sure and see about the music the first thing. I never tried to dance after such execrable music as they had at the Stewarts' the other night. There goes the doctor down the walk. What a looking gig he does ride in! I do like to see a doctor's establishment all in style. I never want him, if I am sick;" and thus the lady continued to discourse until her husband went to town and left her.

As the week went by, little Nell was very happy, but growing weaker, with a fever every afternoon; however, this made her seem more animated than usual. She was pleased to learn of the party, and listened with interest to all that her energetic

little brother had to tell after his many excursions to the kitchen, parlor, and diningroom, during the preceding day. When the evening came she had some of the fruit and flowers brought her, talked a a little about going down stairs, and gave it up, as she always did now. Mrs. English came up and showed herself in a wonderful pink silk and diamonds. Little Nell admired it, and then fell back on her pillow. By-and-by Charlie ran up to tell how papa had a table in the library, with lots of wine on it, and he had tasted, and it made him "all hot inside." Then the music began. Nellie loved that, and kept long awake to listen to it, while Mary sat with her in bed and kept a shawl around her that she might listen and not take cold.

"The new mamma thinks it is beautiful to be down there and dance, don't she?" asked Nell. "And I b'lieve my movver finks heaven is beautiful too; and she has music there, has n't she?"

Afraid to disobey Mr. English, Mary said hesitatingly, "Your new mamma's dress is just the color of peach-blossoms, is n't it?"

"Yes, and I fink my movver's dress is white, like apple-blossoms. Molly, why do n't they sing down stairs to the music, and not dance every minute? I would like to hear them sing some hymns, when

they get tired of dancing. You go and ask them, Molly."

"I don't believe people sing hymns at parties, Nellie; they never do here, anyway."

"Then you need n't ask. The new mamma says she likes fings the way other folks has them, and I just remember papa do n't like hymns at all. I expect we do n't know very much, but I love you just the same. Now I 'm going to sleep. I 've heard enough of that dizzy music. You stay by me all night, Molly, wont you?"

Mary promised, lowered the pillow with the soft, curly head, kissed the wee white face, and waited to see Nell fall asleep.

"I love papa," she suddenly exclaimed.

"Yes, of course you do."

"And little bruder, and new mamma, and Auntie Stuart."

"Yes; now, Nellie, go to sleep."

"And the servants and the poor ashman, 'cos maybe his soul is n't crocky; and the girl that let me fall into the coal-hole, 'cos I must forgive one another her trespasses."

"Yes, dear; but you will get to coughing if you talk so much," said the motherly little nurse.

"And you, Molly, very much. Now the band

music has stopped a minute, let us say together, 'Our Father in heaven.'"

They said it together, and first Nellie and soon her small nurse drifted away in slumber from the gay sounds of music and laughter.

The early hours of the morning came, and while the last guests still lingered there entered One unbidden. He came unseen, and departed as silently, only not alone. At his coming the little child in the quiet chamber had half awakened, drew a fluttering breath, and was borne out of dream-land into heaven.

The days that followed were the saddest of Mary's life. All was confusion, lamentation, and excitement. The little body, arrayed in exquisite robes, and resting on flowers—the cast-off shell of Nellie—was talked of as Nellie herself. Mrs. English, even in a time like this, could not forget to discuss "stylish funerals" and what is now "considered to be the thing." Mr. English had never been so morose and unreasonable in all his life before. Charlie refused to stay in the lonesome nursery, and preferred more entertaining company than his poor little nurse, who could not look at a plaything without tears. She had not seen Mrs. Stuart for a week, as that lady was not well enough to

come in, and Mary was told to be constantly ready for any services at home that might be required of her. She was kept so busy that she had no time to think of her own future, and indeed might not have thought of it had she had the opportunity.

It was not until several days after the funeral that Mrs. English spoke to her on that subject. She had remained in the diningroom to give some orders to the servants, and after attending to other things she called Mary to her, and said, "Mr. English and I have been talking about you, and what we had better do with you. We have concluded to shut up the house for the present, and go to Europe. It will not be proper for us to go into society these next months, and I can't stand such dulness. We shall take Charlie, of course; but I want a nurse old enough to act as maid for me, dressing my hair, etc. You are altogether too young for that purpose. I believe you have no relations, have you? Well, you are a nice, smart little girl, and I have no doubt you can get a place as nurse or cash-girl, or something or other. Mr. English says that he will look around in the city, and if he finds nothing else will pay the fee at some intelligence-office, and have a place secured in that way. You are too young to get any wages but board and clothes; you

had better be satisfied with these. You never had anything else here, and have had a fine time, I am sure. Mr. English says you had too much liberty when his first wife was alive. I tell you this so that you will not expect more than you can have elsewhere. I hope you will always try and be a good girl."

"Yes, marm," mechanically answered Mary, with a vague impression that a door had suddenly opened out into emptiness, and she had been told to go—where, she knew not.

She was too young to realize how perilous was the departure, how thoughtless the manner of her expulsion; but she was oppressed by a dreary consciousness of being indeed without any "relations." She went silently up to the deserted nursery, and sat down by the cold and empty fireplace, with tender thoughts of Nellie and recollections of her own mother. She had not been so desolate since she wept herself to sleep nights in Catherine Rian's old tenement. How she wished that *her* mother wanted her and that God would take her, as he had Nellie. As she sat shivering there in the cold, she espied the great wax-doll lying half behind a trunk. It was the simple instinct of a child to draw it lovingly out, and in her need of sympathy to fold that

senseless form to her aching little breast, hugging it half for Nellie's sake, half for lack of a companion.

The next day Mrs. English went into the city shopping, and took Charlie with her. There was nothing for Mary to do, and the house was very desolate. She wandered about till afternoon, and was scolded by the cook and waitress, who wished to get her out of the way that they might improve Mrs. English's absence after their own ideas. Mary bethought herself at last to go and tell her story to Mrs. Stuart. A few moments later, therefore, a sorrowful little face appeared to that lady, and a pathetic voice remarked, "I am going to be sent to a situation."

Mrs. Stuart rose from the sofa, half inclined to laugh, for the great blue eyes, so innocently grave, and the little figure wrapped in a heavy shawl, made Mary appear so childish in any connection of thought with "a situation."

"Do you know what the situation is?" asked Mrs. Stuart, drawing her near and kissing her so kindly, that all at once the place seemed warm and sunny to the child.

"Yes, marm, a nurse's, I suppose. Oh no, I do not know where."

"Well, I know, Mary. You stay with me this afternoon, and I will talk to you; then you go back and tell Mr. and Mrs. English that I have engaged you. So soon as it is convenient for them you may pack your trunk, and I will send for it; then you may come and be my little helper. You may live with me, Mary, as long as I have a home, if you continue to love and obey me."

"But what can I do for you?" cried Mary, her face radiant with delight. "At Mrs. English's you know, there was Nellie and Charlie to take care of."

"Never you fear that I shall not find something to keep you out of mischief. After awhile I shall have plenty of work," said Mrs. Stuart smiling. "I am as glad to have you come to me, as you are to come, I think."

"Oh I don't see how you can be! why this was always the most beautiful home to me, and you, why I never can tell you how splendid it seemed that day you came for me at Mrs. Rian's. And you made my mother so happy! She told me you were like the angels God sent to do good in the world, even Mrs. English was not like you to me," urged the excited child who could hardly comprehend the kind offer.

Mrs. Stuart calmed her and sent her home when she saw from her window the English's returning. Mary lost no time in telling them of her "engagement," and Mr. English expressed his approval quite warmly. Mrs. English was also glad; it was so much more comfortable to see people taken care of than to—well to have to be bothered oneself. Everything was therefore easily arranged and Mary went joyfully to her new, and yet already beloved home.

In a few weeks, it was a question in her mind whether, after all, Mrs. Stuart really needed her; but one delightful day all her questionings came to an end for ever. It fell out on this wise: The good old doctor, whom she had learned to respect and greatly like, during Nellie's sickness, came to the house and when he went away he patted her again on the head saying, "There, my fine girl, I have left something for you!"

What he meant was soon evident; for did not Mrs. Stuart send for her to come into her room and see the tiniest baby-girl curled up close to her like a sleepy kitten? And Mary was told that it was to be her baby too and its name was to be "Nellie." Yes, without any doubt, she was "needed" now.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Something for Jesus! Lord, I long to be
A living song of gratitude to thee,
A guiding light, a hand stretched forth to bless
A spirit covered with Christ's righteousness."

ONE beautiful morning, the first of May, Mother Esther found at her plate a letter from her brother Ephraim. After reading it, she passed it to Mrs. Nichols saying, "Will it suit thee to go to-day, Hannah?"

The latter glanced over it, her face expressing pleasure as she answered, "As well to-day as any time." Nothing more was said on the subject, until a half-hour later, when Mrs. Nichols sought out Elsie, who was watering some choice roses. She had a great love of flowers and had taken care of these since she came. Mrs. Nichols watched her a while as she stood in the bright spring sunshine and then remarked: "All our sewing is done. I think there is no more to be found."

The watering pot in Elsie's hand began to shake, and suddenly her face clouded. Did it mean she must move on, and to what or where?

"Have I served you well enough for you to give me a recommendation anywhere else?"

"I am very well satisfied with thee, Elsie. I trusted thee when I brought thee here and now I would trust thee twice as fully."

The color rushed into the girl's face and her eyes filled with tears. Nothing in three years had given her more happiness. Mrs. Nichols had never said "thee" to her before, that was a form of expression she retained only towards the family, her friends or those towards whom she felt some degree of affection, and Elsie had besides a keen satisfaction in hearing herself so addressed because of her German associations with the same pronoun. It was as if Mrs. Nichols had held out her hand and given her a lift up one long step towards a truer womanhood. The future was just as untried before her; but courage had come with the words the lady uttered. She only murmured, "I am so glad."

"Yes, everything is done," continued the little Quakeress. "And now does thee want to go and live on a farm? It is sixty miles from the city where there is plenty of work, but plenty of comfort—birds, trees, flowers, sweet fields and pure fresh air; everything clean and wholesome. Just when the city is hot and unhealthy, everything

there is at its loveliest. I think it will do thee good to see how beautiful God makes the country then; better than all, thee will be with people able and willing to help thee to do right, if thee will do thy part faithfully. It is the farm of Mother Esther's brother, Ephraim Coxe. The family are willing to take thee, and I shall go with thee this very day, if thee choose."

This last was said smiling, and seen to be superfluous; for if ever a delighted assent was written on a face it was on Elsie's. She flew up to her little room and was about to begin her few preparations by packing together the strong, good clothing, now all her own, when a quick sense of God's goodness to her caused her to stand in mingled awe and gratitude. She turned then, locked the door, and fell on her knees, thanking Him for his unspeakable mercy to her, praying for help, strength and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. A while after Mrs. Nichols passed her opened door, saw her busy at work and singing a glad, free song—the first she had sung for months that lengthened into years. That was a decorous Quaker household; but the good woman only smiled to herself and thought, "If her sins, which were many, are forgiven, has she not a right to sing for joy?"

Mother Esther called her an hour before they started, and once more talked to her of simple, every-day duties, of living as in God's sight, of truthfulness, honesty, and sobriety.

"Oh, I thank you so much for all—for all—" was everything Elsie could tell her. "You will pray for me, and ask God to let me hear from my mother, wont you?" and Mother Esther promised.

Mrs. Nichols was soon ready to start, and with many messages for brother Ephraim and the farm-folk, they set out. It was a day when the sky was intensely blue, and as they steamed out of the city it was like rushing into a new world for Elsie. She had not been out of New York since she crossed the ocean and arrived; that seemed so long ago! She glanced at her neat dress, the little travelling-bag at her side, out of the window into the sunshine, back at the sweet, placid woman by her in the seat; and the wickedness and misery of her past were like a dream, or, rather, a horrid nightmare, out of which she had awakened. About three o'clock they stopped at a little station, where was a farmer's wagon waiting for them, and so they were driven along a pleasant country road. After a few miles' ride they came to the great, comfortable house belonging to the farm of Ephraim Coxe.

Elsie thought the kitchen was a perfect picture of cosiness, as she followed Mrs. Nichols over its threshold. Every bit of wood was so spotlessly clean. A tall and ancient clock stood opposite the door, so like one known to Elsie's childhood that she longed to greet it as an old home-friend. In the window-ledges were pots of flowers in bloom, and near by big chintz-covered rocking-chairs. In one of these sat sewing a tall, matronly Quakeress, the widowed daughter of Ephraim Coxe; and near by played her baby-girl.

At that moment the mother of the house appeared in an inner door, an old woman with plain, irregular features, and when she spoke, it was in a voice so deep as to be almost startling. But the plain face was full of goodness, and her manner genial as she bade the new-comers welcome. They did not talk much beyond that to Elsie, but let her feel herself getting used to them; and when the baby-girl stole up to her, nearer and nearer, by-and-by quite into her lap and nestled there, softly patting her cheeks, tears that Elsie would gladly have prevented would trickle from her eyes, tears prompted by what she hardly knew. Hannah saw them (nothing ever escaped her), and she was not sorry, but she only said, "Elsie, does thee not want to go

out and look about the place? The garden is fine. A little later, when the cows are milked, thee can help Elizabeth with the milk, she thinks."

The wee girl toddled after her, shaking her funny little head, and when they were outside the door Elsie caught and hugged her eagerly. It was a long time since she had caressed even a child, and it did her good.

Mrs. Nichols and the young widow came out after awhile, and the latter told Elsie what would be expected of her, as they all walked about in the delicious spring air. Hannah Nichols always liked to go over the farm, and to-day she did it for Elsie's benefit. She enjoyed the sweet smell of the hay in the great shadowy barns, where the yellow light sifted in through chinks, and the swallows twittered up in the rafters. The sun was quite low when they turned back through a pretty lane, bordered with willows just furred over with the delicate green of the coming foliage. Elizabeth finally hastened a little, and taking Elsie in, showed her how to help make ready the bountiful supper; and Ephraim Coxe himself gave her a few grave words of kindness. It was evident there was plenty of work to do here, as on any farm, but the perfect order that prevailed, and the calm, even manner of

executing each and every duty, made all things go smoothly and with ease.

In the twilight, Mrs. Nichols, the mother, and Ephraim, with his daughter, sat together and talked of mutual interests, while Elsie, in a little chamber which was to be her own, sat at the window and watched the stars coming out, listened to the bleat of a lamb, and the near ripple of a stream that ran through the flats. How strange and solemn it seemed, after the roar of the New York streets—strange, but good and restful.

"Does thee wish to go back with me?" asked Hannah Nichols, next morning, while Elsie was straining milk in the great, cool pantry. "Our sewing is done, but there are shopwork-shirts at one dollar a dozen."

Elsie did not seem at all tempted by the offer, and Mrs. Nichols went back without her. As the cars whirled her away from the quiet home, she thought of the girl's surroundings now and what they might have been had no one cared for her soul. Yet how comparatively little trouble it had cost any of the Christian women who had helped her! Not much time, not much expense, only some thought, prayer, and effort.

And now the limits of our story would be too

narrow to tell in detail what life in that Quaker household was to Elsie, so far as each week or month was concerned; but every time that Mrs. Nichols heard from her, she was satisfied. As the season advanced, the beauty of the country was all about her in its novelty, while every day brought new interests, if very simple ones. She made butter and took care of the milk. She learned to cook, and yet had time to sew or to read in the long summer afternoons, when the kitchen was as neat and quiet as a parlor need be. She was treated with the same kindness evinced towards every human being with whom Ephraim Coxe or Ephraim's family came in contact, while towards one of that house her heart went out in an unbounded love to which she gave free expression. This was two-year-old Ruth, the pet of the family. So the year went by, and nothing very noteworthy occurred until September.

It was in that month that Miss Hallenbeck one day arrived at her friend Mrs. Stuart's in quite an excited mood. She had scarcely seated herself and began rocking vehemently, before she burst forth:

"I believe I have made a discovery, or else—I have not! If I have, it is a queer thing, but I believe it is providential. Where is Mrs. Grey? She will be even more interested than you are."

The latter lady, hearing her name, came from a near room, saying, "You excite my curiosity already. Do let us have your discovery."

"Well, I will—only, you know, maybe it is n't any discovery at all. You see, I was going down Broadway the other day, and I stopped at a window in which was a cage of very queer little trained birds that a man was showing off. There were a number of folks standing by, and at first I did not give them a look. When I did, I noticed a woman quite near me. She was about forty-five years old, and I did not recognize her, but I was sure that I ought to, because her face was in some way familiar. She was fair and plump, with blue eyes and light hair, very thick and curly for one of her age. I stood and racked my brains to think where I could have seen her, or if it was that she looked like somebody else. Just then another woman by her side, who had been stopping a stage, gave her a twitch and hurried her into the street to get in. I knew *that* woman at one glance. It was Elsie's aunt, whom we went once to see, and could not move any more than a stone. It flashed across me right off who the other one was—*Elsie's mother!* I had all the time been trying to remember Elsie herself: the same complexion, hair, eyes, and figure. I

never saw a greater resemblance between a mother and a daughter in my life. Well, I went up to Hannah Nichols as straight as I could go, and told her about it. I imagined that the mother had come to this country on account of Elsie's letter, and would immediately seek her out. Mrs. Nichols did not believe that; from the fact of her being with that aunt, she thought she had come before or without receiving Elsie's letter. In that case she would of course hear nothing of the truth in regard to her daughter. Had she come on account of Elsie, she would have sought her at Mrs. Nichols' address, which had been sent her to make sure no return letter would go astray. When we had talked it all over, Mrs. Nichols asked, 'Now, how are we to get a hearing and let the poor woman know the truth, but not as the aunt would render it, if she were forced to tell? You have been once to the house, Miss Hallenbeck.'

"'Yes,' said I, 'and that is the very reason that I might not get access to her if I went again. The aunt would suspect my errand the moment I put foot over the threshold.'

"'Well, I will go,' said Hannah Nichols. 'I have not been shut out of any place where I undertook to enter.'

"We settled that and how she would ask directly for Mrs. ——, etc., when all at once it dawned upon us both at the same minute, that in all probability the woman could not speak one word of English, and neither of us spoke German. I was fairly ready to cry when I thought of you, Mrs. Grey, and how you could talk German. I told Mrs. Nichols I knew you would go with her and tell the whole story. She says no matter what the aunt has said, even if she does recollect you; if the mother will hear all, she does not fear for the result. She thinks it would be wise not to tell Elsie, for in case her mother was inexorable, she need not know anything of it until we had taken some other action. It would break her heart almost to know her mother was so near and would not forgive her. Now will you go?"

Mrs. Grey readily consented, and arranged to see Mrs. Nichols that afternoon, in order that they might fortify themselves before they ventured.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Yet if we will our Guide obey,
The dreariest path, the darkest way
Shall issue out in endless day." TRENCH.

As may be supposed, Miss Hallenbeck awaited with the greated impatience the result of Mrs. Grey's mission. She visited that lady's home on the day, and when Mrs. Grey returned, it was with difficulty she could keep from asking questions long enough to hear a connected story.

"Was it her mother? What did she say? Will she forgive her?" began the eager spinster.

Mrs. Grey made a feint of teasing her by declaring that she was so tired she believed she would take a nap before she tried to talk; but finally she yielded to entreaties and began her story:

"We went directly to the store, and Mrs. Nichols did a little shopping, although we knew, of course, that the family lived over the shop. Well, while she was buying thread, pins, and little things of a very pleasant young girl, she talked in that easy way of hers that always makes whatever she

says seem the most natural thing under the circumstances. By asking which gentleman was the proprietor, she found that he was at the desk, and so not up stairs; then she said, 'Mrs. ——'s sister from Germany is with her, I believe?'

"'Yes, marm, so I have heard some of them say,' answered the girl.

"That was enough. We went out again, rang the bell of the flat, and waited. If the aunt encountered us after we had entered, we must simply out-talk her; but we sincerely hoped to get at the mother alone. Mrs. Nichols told the girl who let us in, after long waiting, to say that a 'Friend' wished to see Mrs. ——.

"Well, we spent five anxious minutes in a little parlor before the woman entered; but then we had no doubt of her being Elsie's mother. When she saw us, she supposed there was a mistake, and managed to stammer in English, 'He is out-doors—is my sister.'

"'We do not want her,' I began instantly in German. 'Do you want to hear good news of your daughter Elsie?'

"She exclaimed, 'My Elsie is dead! She died last year. What do you mean?'

"'She is not dead, and you are being deceived.

She lives—is in perfect health not many miles from you! Now be calm and let me tell you, before your sister returns, what you ought to know. I said it was good news. The end is good; but first I must tell you dreadful things.' And then I began. You can imagine what it was for her to take it all in, and to comprehend in the course of a few moments the events of years. Then the conflicting emotions! In her mother's heart, oppressed with grief at Elsie's supposed death, we had to see a first quick revulsion of horror, indignation, and wounded pride. When we saw this, we were so glad the aunt had not told her version of matters. She had unwittingly helped us greatly by arousing all the mother's love and sorrow by her falsehood, so that we at first found her softened. As I went on, Mrs. Nichols prompting me with the most moving arguments, her pity swept away her anger. The account of Elsie's prayers, tears, and longing for her mother's forgiveness, melted her completely. She understood readily the attitude her sister held, and why she held it. She insisted, however, that no such influence would keep her from her penitent child. She said that it had been a great mystery to her why Elsie never wrote; but when her sister at long intervals sent her a letter, she gave some plausible

excuse: Elsie was busy; Elsie was sick; Elsie was lazy; and of late it was always that Elsie had forgotten how to write German.

"For more than a year her sister had not written to her at all. Great changes had taken place in her own family—two of her children had married well. The youngest daughter and the oldest son were both dead. The latter had laid up quite a little sum of money, and after his death it was found that he had divided it between his mother and remaining brother. This brother, an energetic young man, greatly desired to go to America and work a little farm in some of the Western states. As the family was now in a measure broken up, he begged his mother to come with him, and she consented, greatly drawn by her desire to find out how it was with her Elsie, the child, of all her flock, most like herself. On getting to New York, her sister wished her to stay with her while the young man pushed on westward and selected a home. She had told the mother that Elsie grew very headstrong, left them to learn dressmaking, was taken with fever, and died in a hospital; that the news of her death did not reach them until many months had gone by. The family agreed in these statements, and the idea of questioning them never entered the

poor woman's head. She would in one more week's time have been with her son in the far West.

"Well, before we left she came to the determination to keep her discovery a profound secret for some time, to save both herself and Elsie from possible annoyance. Her sister intends to go out of the city the day after to-morrow on some business of her own; so Mrs. Nichols arranged to call and get Elsie's mother and take her to visit her daughter. She says that after that she does not care what influences the aunt exerts, she will be powerless. Elsie is in face and manner a girl any mother might be pleased with, and no one could ask to have her more sincerely meek and teachable. Trouble, humiliation, and true repentance, have subdued her thoroughly."

"Well! well! I do declare for it!" exclaimed Miss Kaziah Hallenbeck, "if it has not come out just like a story! What will Elsie say? I'd like to see that meeting; Germans are pretty excitable. I doubt if they will behave like the Quakers down there. Did the mother seem like a real nice woman?"

"She did, and like a genuine Christian. She said she was a Lutheran, not a Catholic, like the sister," returned Mrs. Grey.

Miss Hallenbeck continued to rock back and forth and to discourse and question for a good hour longer. By that time it was so late she decided to stay to dinner, and turned the conversation at last from Elsie tc little Mary and the English's.

"Dear little Nellie!" exclaimed the dressmaker, "so she never got over that sickness after the servant-girl dragged her around the city that hot day. Mrs. Stuart, I wish I could have a chance to tell the women, or some of them at least, what foolish creatures they are to trust the souls and bodies of their little, tender boys and girls to ignorant nurses, to tell what I myself have seen and known. Great, stout Irish girls striding over the ground, and dragging by one tiny arm, held almost straight up, delicate children over miles of pavement. I have seen such children cry with pain and weariness, and get their ears boxed with a blow that might have destroyed their hearing. I saw lately a nurse in Central Park push a tiny baby in a little basket-wagon right under the noses of two horses, that, with their knees rasped by the wagon itself, flung themselves back, and let a policeman snatch out the little creature. Without doubt, she took the baby home to some mother, and was careful not to tell her it had come back out of the jaws of death. Oh, well, I

have a theory of my own that that baby had an angel to take care of it. May be some such reason accounts for so many children living that otherwise would die; but if I were a mother, I would n't depend too much on the angels. I 'd leave them for exigences, and for steady, every-day service have a trustworthy human being around my children, no matter who I put up with for trimming my finery and dressing my back-hair. I am only an old maid, but I have used my eyes and ears as some mothers have not, and I get pretty well stirred up. Dear me, how incessantly I have talked to-day! I am sure you must be glad to have me go, and give you a chance to get rested before I come again."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Thou gavest me thy blessing,
From former guilt set free;
Now heavenly joy possessing,
O Lord, I follow thee."

HANNAH NICHOLS frequently visited the farm, especially in pleasant weather. She was greatly beloved there, and the news of her arrival always gave pleasure, and to none more than to Elsie. She was therefore glad to hear Ephraim say, as he entered the house one morning, "Here, Elizabeth, is a letter for thee. It seems to be in the handwriting of Hannah Nichols. Perhaps she will visit us; I urged her to come before my grapes were all gone."

Elizabeth, who sat sewing by the open window, broke the envelope, and said at once, "Yes, she is coming at three o'clock this afternoon." Then, reading on, she grew more interested, uttered an exclamation of surprise, and, rising, carried the letter away to her mother's room. Elsie was ironing near an open door, out of which she glanced every now and then, because the prospect was so

lovely and to her so novel. Early in the autumn as it was, the leaves had begun to turn, and many shades of brown, yellow, and crimson, made beautiful the near forests. The sky was a fair, pale blue, the atmosphere full of a golden haze, and on every side signs of peace and abundance. Little Ruth was trotting up and down the winding garden-path, with her white kitten hugged to her breast, while within doors the same exquisite order and cheerfulness prevailed.

"Elsie," said the deep voice of Mother Coxe, "Hannah Nichols bids us tell thee she will bring thee good news. It is nearly noon now, and thee had better put away the ironing for to-day, and we will have an early dinner, getting our work out of the way before they—before she comes."

Elsie obeyed, spread the snow-white cloth over the table, while Mother Coxe, moving in and out of the pantry, brought to light delicious pies and the great, brown doughnuts that Ephraim liked. The dinner was made ready then, and eaten as all dinners are; the last dish was washed and put away, and every crumb swept from the floor. A great bouquet of gorgeous autumnal flowers was set on the dresser among the shining pans and pitchers; then Elsie went up to her own little room to put

on her afternoon dress. It was only a calico, but in honor of Mrs. Nichols it was a new one, with the neatest of white aprons and a simple bow at her neck. She had taken her sewing, and was going back to sit by the kitchen window, where she could look out at the garden now brilliant with color, and beyond at the winding road, past the woods, along which Ephraim's wagon would bring the guest. But little Ruth came climbing up the stairs, and in her irresistible way begged her to "go walking;" that meant to lead the little one down by the brook, where the banks were low and green. There Ruth loved to sit and peer into the stream, but she never was allowed to go alone "fishing," as she innocently supposed herself to be, when watching the tiny inhabitants of the clear waters. Elsie clasped her hand, and they set out together. Once down by the banks, she enjoyed it as much as the child, if in a different way. Perhaps there are well-meaning persons who would think it wrong for the girl to "enjoy" anything heartily after her sad transgressions. They might expect, and it may be demand, that she have such a sense of her past sins as should darken every otherwise bright experience of her life. It was not thus with Elsie. He who, as she firmly believed, had said to her, "Thy sins

be forgiven thee," had also said, "Go in peace." She had indeed lost almost all the joyous sparkle of her first youth while yet a girl in years, but she was thoughtful, not melancholy, and of late conscious of much quiet happiness. As she strolled along by the water, giving random answers to the little girl's prattle, she heard her name called, and saw Mrs. Nichols coming to meet her, while Ephraim Coxe was at that moment driving the horse and wagon into the barn.

"She must have driven up to the door when I did not see her," thought Elsie. "How good she is to come right off and tell me her good news. Can it be a letter? I never thought of such great good news. It has been so long."

Possessed by that thought she asked, a second after returning the lady's greeting, "Is it a letter?"

"What! Still so anxious for *that*, Elsie?"

The girl's voice trembled as she answered, "I have written my mother's name in my Bible right over the verse, 'Ask and ye shall receive.' I remember you told me once we must understand it as asking 'aright;' but I keep hoping it will be aright. Is it not a letter?"

"No, Elsie, but even better; something direct from thy mother. *She has forgiven thee.*"

All the light of the radiant autumnal day seemed to have suddenly fallen on Elsie's face as she exclaimed, "How do you know? Where did you hear? Oh tell me, do tell me!"

"I should have supposed that it would have occurred to thee that she would try to find thee out long ago, so soon as she ceased to hear direct from thee. I would have crossed the sea for a child of mine, and mothers are alike both sides of the ocean."

"Crossed the sea," echoed the girl vaguely. "Did my mother come and go back?"

"She came, but she never went back," returned Mrs. Nichols joyfully.

"Where is she, oh where is she?" cried Elsie, wildly snatching at the woman, as if she might escape. "Is she in New York?"

"A great deal nearer. Do n't tremble so. Run back to the house, up to thy room, and if she is there, do not—"

The last words were spoken to the wind. Mrs. Nichols laughed gently to herself, seeing how the flying feet of the girl seemed scarcely to touch the path that led over the fields; then she captured the small Ruth, who, forgetful of her Quaker ancestry, had copiously bespattered herself with mud, and

with her returned to the farmhouse. Go swiftly as Elsie might, it seemed she could not go fast enough, that strength and breath would fail her before she could reach the room out of which she so lately walked, all unconscious of what was coming to her there. She gained the stairs, passed the threshold and with one look to her mother's face was in her arms. It was no use to try to utter a word, she could only cling to her like a baby, and cry as if she would never stop, while the mother's heart flowed out in tears almost as uncontrollable. But by-and-by they calmed themselves, and, sitting close together, began recitals, which no one interrupted for hours. There was so much for each of them to talk upon; the mother had all the record of her family life, all the story of the brother and sister who had died, all her plans for the future. While Elsie, once for all, must tell her own experiences, that afterwards there be less need of words thereon. It was only after a long time that Mrs. Nichols smilingly came to bid them remember that "people must eat even if very happy."

No one word could Elsie's mother understand of all that was said by these friends and helpers of her daughter; but Ephraim's kind old face and his wife's warm hand grasp made her at home in this

strange America. She watched the serene face of Elizabeth and sweet little Ruthie, whenever her eyes wandered from Elsie, which was not often.

The next day Hannah Nichols said, "I think that thee had best keep thy mother here with thee for a few days. Ephraim is going to the city Saturday, and she can return with him. I will go and explain her absence to her sister, if she wishes. There are many things thee will want to talk over more at leisure."

"Oh, I am so happy, Mrs. Nichols. I never expected to be so happy! Yes, indeed, we have much to talk over, and I want to ask your advice now about just the most important thing. Have you time to listen to me?"

Hannah lifted wee Ruth into her lap, the kitten clung to her shoulder, and so at their ease in the great chair, Hannah said, "Plenty of time. What is it?"

Elsie hesitated, her eyes filled with tears as she glanced around the kitchen that had seemed to her one of the most beautiful rooms in the world; but even through tears her eyes beamed with gratitude. "Mrs. Nichols, I do love this home so and every human being in it. It has been like a heaven to me. Even you never can realize what kindness,

sweetness, comfort, and plenty were to me after what had gone before—what a real home was. I have thought it would be all I could ever ask to live and die with this family. They have insisted on paying me full wages from the very first, when I would gladly have worked for the comforts they gave me as a matter of course. But now—now—"

"Now things look differently, do they?" suggested the Quakeress, with a beautiful smile.

Ruthie and the kitten rolled over and over in a great frolic before Elsie found words to explain herself.

"Well, it does seem as if the mother and I never wanted to part again. She has lost my brother Herman and my little sister Gretchen; the other sisters are married and taken up with their own families. It would be so lonesome for mother away out West, I am afraid. She does not want to take me away from such good friends, if it is my duty to stay and show my gratitude; but she was saying last night, if I could go West with her, how happy we would be. My brother is an excellent, industrious, steady man, sure to succeed. He is very kind to my mother, and I used to be his favorite sister. He mourned for me, when he thought I was dead. Don't you see what a help and comfort

I might be to my mother all the time, and especially if she were ill or homesick? She never was a hundred miles from home before. Poor little woman, how I have made her heart ache! I am strong and healthy, I know the language and ways of working here, and I understand, too, all her home customs and how to help her make a real little German home out there among strangers. It seems for her sake, as if I never could let her go away off alone to Wisconsin. Then," continued Elsie, the color rushing all over her face, "I myself should feel a little differently there as time goes by. I am very, very thankful and contented here, but—but—even while I believe God has forgiven me, I cannot always put it out of my mind that people don't forget such things. Away out there, my past would be with God and my mother only. I do not want to deceive anybody or to appear what I am not; that is not it at all. I—I only—"

"I understand thee, my child," said the tender-hearted woman, "and there is no wrong in thy wish. I know what the friends here will say at once; they will, with one accord, declare thy first duty to be to thy faithful mother. Go with her by all means, Elsie, and devote thy life to her happiness."

It gave Elsie great joy to have the matter decided so immediately and as if there were but one course of action admissible. She had feared to seem a little ungrateful and too ready to change; but now God seemed to have opened a plain path before her. She sang, as she went about her work, stopping every moment or two to chat with the busy little German mother, who would help, and watched, with wide open eyes, the processes of housekeeping in America, and who was in turn, watched as curiously by the tiny Ruth; for was it not inexplicable to the latter, that queerest sounds without meaning came so readily from her mouth and that Elsie too answered in like manner? She pondered on it for a long time, and then taking her kitten out into the yard, she tried a sort of purely original dialect on it, thinking the to her unintelligible German might also be its native tongue. The "miew" she elicited as a result of her earnest grip she took for conformation of her theory. Mrs. Nichols returned to the city about noon, with the understanding that she was to advise Elsie's aunt of as much of the whole state of affairs as she deemed expedient. She had a shrewd intuition that as long as Elsie had acquitted herself so well of late, and had made influential friends among respectable people, that

the aunt would veer around and be heartily glad, not so much for Elsie's own sake as for that of her own family reputation. She had always told the story written to Elsie's mother. It would now be to her (uurestrained by the claims of truth) an easy matter to say to all outsiders that she had been misinformed as to Elsie's fate; and Mrs. Nichols was sure she would act some such part, rather than that of persecutor. But this was a matter of little consequence save as it affected her own conscience. Elsie would soon be far away from every one, who had ever known her.

Before Mrs. Nichols took her departure from the farmhouse, she turned to Elsie, who was standing thoughtfully by a window looking out at the forest and said, "Thee can go now and cross off as answered that marked prayer in thy Bible. I suppose there is nothing more thee wants accomplished, is there?" she asked half playfully.

"There is," returned Elsie with sudden earnestness; "something I have prayed a great deal about, something I have wanted ever so many times to ask you to do; only I have thought I ought not to lay more burdens on you, and that if it were possible, you probably would have done it unasked."

"Tell me at once what it is," asked Mrs. Nichols, with gentle authority.

"Do you remember," whispered Elsie, with an involuntary shudder, "that I told you how I first heard of you, how I came to go to that place where you found me. A girl (and you told me you knew who she was, for you had but just left her) told me of you and of a place of refuge. I never can forget that night or that girl! Who knows what she had struggled against, or suffered? There must have been some little good left in her. Could n't you find her again? Oh, if you would only try; tell her the Lord Jesus Christ saved me and he will save her. I cannot bear to think a human being helped to rescue me and then was lost herself."

The tears were running fast down Elsie's cheeks and answering ones stood in the Quakeress' eyes.

"I promise thee, Elsie, to search for her, and to take her thy message. I have, at different times, had some influence over her. She is a strange, desperate creature, but I may be able to trace her out, if she is living still; I will try faithfully."

Then, bidding farewell to all the household, Hannah Nichols departed.

CHAPTER XIX.

"If some poor wandering child of thine
Have spurned to-day the voice divine,
Now, Lord, thy gracious work begin;
Let him no more lie down in sin."

It was not so difficult a thing, as might be supposed, for Mrs. Nichols to get information in regard to a person like the girl in whom Elsie was so much interested. Within a few weeks she learned that this "Kate" was still living. In weeks following she heard of her, first in one place, then in another; still a long time elapsed before she actually found her, and then it seemed by a chance. She had gone on an errand to one of the free hospitals, and was passing rapidly through a ward, when coming near one bed, the woman occupying it hastily covered her head. The movement was so rapid it attracted Mrs. Nichols' attention, but she paid no apparent heed to it. A few moments later, however, she reëntered the room unexpectedly, and looked directly into the eyes of the girl whom she had been seeking for nearly three months. She went immediately to her, drew out a chair, and sat

down near her, saying quietly, "I have been looking for you, Kate. I have a message for you. Do you remember how you helped another girl about a year ago?"

"The girl I gave a ticket to--the girl who wanted to get back to her friends?"

"No. Did you help such a one, too?"

"Oh, yes," she replied, relapsing into sarcasm, "I am a regular missionary. I can't possibly recall all my good deeds. I look as if I had spent my life that way, don't I? But why don't you give me up? I would rather you would not talk to me."

"Why?" asked Mrs. Nichols.

The girl would have answered, if she could have put into words the thoughts that always stirred in her when she met this woman. After waiting awhile in silence, Mrs. Nichols asked her if she remembered the evening when she sent another girl to the —— street Home. Then, without giving Elsie's name or all details, she told her the story of Elsie's rescue, of her gratitude, and her desire that Kate herself might be saved. The girl listened with interest, and seemed glad to hear of Elsie's welfare, and really touched by her thoughts of herself.

"She was worth saving," she commented.

"Hardly any of us are worth an effort, and the most don't want to be helped."

"God thinks every soul worth saving," said the woman.

"Why don't he have some care of us, then?"

"Kate, where was your home?" asked Mrs. Nichols, gently, not choosing that time to answer the question, which she meant to answer, notwithstanding.

"When I was fourteen years old I came to the city. My father drank; my stepmother did the same. I was tired of the quiet country. I did not know what I meant to do when I got here, but I went like all the rest. It is always the same story! One thousand of us could not tell any new thing. You never can understand. There was a woman once who talked to me in a park; she said, 'Why don't you turn over a new leaf this very minute? Why don't you be in earnest, and say, "I will be respectable"?' I did not laugh at her. She was kind, but dear me! Why didn't I rise up and say, 'I will be handsome, or rich, or pious'? Saying isn't being. I don't blame anybody, either."

"I understand you, Kate, better than you think I do; but I did not find you, after all this time, to tell you that, considering your past, there is no help

for you. I have come to offer you salvation from yourself, and hope for the future."

"I shall probably never go out again. One side of me is paralyzed, and I feel as if I had about come to the end; so it is of no use. I could not work, and I have no idea I should try," she returned, in a tone devoid of any enthusiasm.

"What do you mean," asked Mrs. Nichols, kindly, "when you speak of 'pious people'? Have you ever read the Bible?"

"I can just remember once going into some church when I was a little girl. I've picked up my notions here and there. I should have remembered, if I had been regularly taught, for I am smart enough at wickedness when I feel like it. The Bible—I should have read it out of curiosity sometimes, if I had ever been where one was. I never have, except in a police court. I've seen them mostly used to swear folks on."

"Do you know what Jesus Christ came into the world for? Think a minute before you answer, and tell me what you really know."

"Well, now I am not trying to pretend I don't know it is wrong to lie and steal and swear and drink and live a horrid life. Of course I know it," said Kate, weariedly.

"Please answer my question."

"What do I know? Nothing; this is clear; so I can tell it right off. I have heard good folks say He loves them, and I suppose He taught them they could go to heaven when they die, because they were so good. Other folks (mostly bad ones) say there never was such a person, and that when we die that is the end of us. I do n't know, I am sure. How can I?"

"Well, Kate, I want you to hear me now. Wont you try and listen like a child who believes what its mother tells it? Let me tell you who the Lord Jesus Christ is, and what he came for. I have plenty of time, and you are not too sick, are you?" asked Mrs. Nichols.

"No, I am not," she answered frankly, the glance of her great, black eyes wandering over the earnest face of the Quakeress. She was always tempted to avoid this woman when she could, because, when she could not, she invariably yielded to her influence, and confessed her sins as to no one else. She was the one human being she wholly reverenced, and would have loved, had she had the courage to love anything.

The secret of the "wonderful success" Mrs. Nichols had in uplifting the fallen, was her unsha-

ken faith in one saying of the Lord Jesus Christ: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." She never tried to lift them up herself, and afterwards to show them the Saviour of the world. She did with the sick and the sinning and the blind, and those possessed with devils, exactly as did the believing ones of old: she "brought them to Jesus," and she expected it to be said, "he healed them." With her open Bible in her hand, and faith and love in her heart, she thus dealt with this woman. It was not therefore any wonder that after awhile the great tears gathered in Kate's eyes, and that she said brokenly, "Of course I will begin to pray and to think those promises over. Why, I do n't want to be lost, if I could be saved. I never supposed there was such a thing as being started over again—being washed white. That seems the very, very best word I have ever heard—white! white! And the strange thing is, that 'God so loved the world,' wicked and all; but I can believe it, and I will tell you why: it explains about you—I mean your hunting me up, your caring all this time whether I was saved or not; you do for me just what he did for everybody. It is the love and pity in you. I never exactly understood it. Well, now, tell that girl I thank her. I am very glad she

is safe; she may live in the world and be respectable. I never could have got as far back as that in people's eyes; but if I can be washed white, it is a thousand times more than I ever dreamed of. Tell her I will think and pray that verse: "Cleanseth from all sin;' was it?"

She looked so exhausted by her excitement that Mrs. Nichols left her for the time, promising to come frequently, and giving her the Testament with marked verses to read.

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Again the warm spring sunshine was making beautiful the cosey rooms at the Stuart home. Mrs. Stuart and her friend Mrs. Grey were sewing; and this time Miss Hallenbeck was actually exercising her legitimate trade, namely, dressmaking. Nevertheless, she was talking at a brisker rate than ever, now of one thing, now of another, stopping at regular intervals to pet and admire the baby. This last was by no means least in the family circle. Mary gravely demonstrated to its admiring mother, six or seven times a day, its superiority over every other infant known to them, and Mrs. Stuart was not at all unbelieving.

"Have I had a talk with you since I saw Hannah Nichols last?" asked the spinster, cutting out

a paper pattern with alacrity. "I don't believe I have, so I must tell you about her letter from Elsie—do you like your dresses pretty middling loose, or don't you?—well, Elsie is delighted with her new home. It is near a little German settlement, and not far from a pleasant town. She likes the country and the climate and the people. She goes to church and to Sunday-school. Her mother is very happy, and although their home is very plain, Elsie wrote that they tried to keep it as neat as a Quaker home, and Mrs. Nichols knew she could not aim higher. Her brother has invested his little property to very good advantage, and was kind to them.

"Elsie sent no end of messages to you, Mrs. Grey—and don't you detest this way of cutting sleeves so short, Mrs. Stuart, that a body's arms must be cold to the elbow?—yes, and I asked Hannah Nichols about that girl I told you of in the hospital—the one that sent Elsie to the —— street Home; and Mrs. Nichols—she preached me a first-rate sermon on that text. You see, after she had given me an account of the girl, I said something that called it out. Mrs. Nichols believes the girl was thoroughly converted; she went to see her every week for three months until she died, and

Kate (that was the girl's name) almost from the first listened gladly to the gospel. She prayed, and read her Bible, and came to an intelligent knowledge of the truth. The night she died—so the nurse told Mrs. Nichols—she kept saying, whenever she found breath, 'Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.' She left her Testament for Hannah Nichols to give to some other 'such a poor wretch as I was,' she said; and they found that she had taken a pencil and marked, as she had read it, every verse about being 'cleansed,' 'washed,' or made 'white.' Those verses seemed to fill her with peace. Well, when Mrs. Nichols told me all about it, I said, 'Was n't it a wonderful conversion—wonderful?' "

"'What does thee mean by wonderful?' said she, in that way of hers, sort of like an inquisitive angel looking into your way of thinking.

"'Why, that it was so good, so astonishing,' says I.

"'Is it astonishing to thee that God keeps his promises? When he says, "Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," does thee think that he does not mean it at all?'

"'Oh' no! Why, sakes alive!' says I. 'I a' n't

so wicked as that. I only mean it is wonderful that such a hardened wretch, as she confessed herself to have been, did repent.'

"'But that does not seem wonderful, either, to me,' said she. 'I think we Christians talk too much at random. Is it wonderful when a soul, condemned for all eternity, is willing to accept full pardon; when a homeless, friendless, wicked woman is glad to be made pure in spirit, glad to awake to a hope that immortal life and goodness may yet dawn for her hereafter? The wonder to me is that everybody does not repent, that every prodigal does not arise and go unto the Father. I believe many more would be saved if we did not dishonor God by our lack of faith. We set bounds for his work. We classify the people we think likely to be converted. We allow a margin for wonderful cases, as we call them, and then we say, in effect, this is all we can reasonably expect. Oh, if we only believed it a truth "worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners!" We read it so in the Bible, but we turn about and translate it to one another as if it meant, under certain conditions (of our imaginations), He will save *some* sinners. Thus it comes that we cry "wonderful" at that which, giving all glory to his infinite

love, ought to be the most expected of spiritual experiences.'

"'Well, you are right, Mrs. Nichols; you are right,' said I. 'The wonderful only applies to his love.'

"'We make mistakes, too,' said she, 'in regard to the difficulty of influencing some "hardened" ones like this Kate. I find very often they need only to be brought face to face with the truth to be self-convicted. They have not, like respectable persons, a shred of self-righteousness to cover them, not an excuse in their mouths; they plead guilty before you can set their sins in order.'

"'That is true, I know from experience with them,' said I; 'but—well—I am glad, any way, that girl died. I do believe her sins were forgiven and she saved for the next world; but in this one, you know—why—'

"'In this world thee does not think His "grace is sufficient" for these? He could save, but he could not keep?' she asked, so gently, I did feel downright rebuked, and I guess I looked so, for she went on, 'I know thee does not think that. Thee only means that there is a sense in which one must reap what one has sowed, no matter how bitter the harvest or how repentant the heart of the reaper

I have not meant to rebuke thee, because I have too much reason to examine myself for lack of faith and of the charity that "never faileth"'—how do you want that side-gore, Mrs. Stuart? as wide as in the black cashmere?—Now the human being does not exist that I would say a pretty thing to for the sake of flattery; but I spoke right out of my heart, 'Hannah Nichols, I think you are about perfect.'

"The tears actually rushed straight into her eyes, and she expostulated, just like an innocent child accused of some wrong. She says, 'I never tried to give thee any such idea. I only spoke what was borne into me as truth. I need to take every word of warning into my own life. I have great faults.'

"'For instance: now tell me just one,' says I, bound to find out a little something about that woman, for she always has baffled my curiosity. When folks ask me, 'Who is Hannah Nichols?' as they are for ever a-doing, I have to say, 'Ask the poor, or wait until you get to heaven.' Well, so I says, 'Tell me one.'

"She waited a minute, musing as sweet like as those pictures of saints you see among the Catholics, and then she confessed, 'Perhaps thee has noticed that I struggle against an evil temper.'

"It's a fact, Mrs. Stuart, I am that blunt I could have laughed outright, but I did not dare, she looked so serious. The idea! But I actually suppose, now, that little Quakeress thinks she owns something that answers to a 'temper.' If she does, she ought to see, just once, the genuine article; but I do n't suppose anybody ever will show it to her—cut this bias very evenly, Mrs. Stuart, or it will pucker on the waist—of course nobody *is* perfect, but some folks do get to be 'living epistles,' and Hannah Nichols is one of them. One Sunday I was in a crowded church, listening to a mightily eloquent preacher, when I spied her, and I declare I forgot everything else, in a revelation, as you might say, of what her work meant. Thought I to myself, 'Oh, what a sermon you would *see*, you great congregation, if suddenly the minister could say, "We will look into the past life of that little woman up there in one corner of the gallery, the one in a gray dress!" And then, like a panorama, should come before them the miserable homes she had brightened, the little children she had fed, the dying-beds over which she had bent, the fallen, heart-broken men and women she had held with one hand, and pointed out the way to heaven with the other.' The tears ran right down my cheeks,

and I dare say the folks in the pew thought the sermon was affecting me powerfully; and so it was—my sermon, only a woman who held her peace was preaching it all unknown to herself. I never can hear that song,

> "'Will any one there at the beautiful gate
> Be waiting and watching for me?'

but I think what a reception Hannah Nichols will get, if all those she has helped on ahead do come a-crowding out to meet her—only, how will she ever recognize the half of them? for, if they are washed white, they wont be the disreputable-looking folks they were on this side, by any manner of means. But how I do rattle on about Hannah Nichols! I don't know as it does any harm, though, for I never talk about her, but I am stirred up to take a new start with that verse, 'Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report'—think on these things, and try to live them as well. I begin to think I never shall know whether she has money of her own or not, how she comes to live up town, whether she ever had any family or not, and a dozen other things; but I don't know as it is any of my business. When folks ask me, 'Who is Hannah Nichols?' I shall just have to answer in her own words: 'A Friend.'"