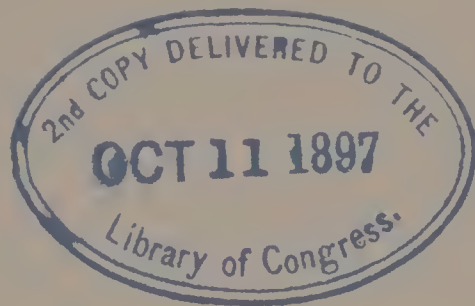


SINKS OF GOLD



HARRIET A
CHEEVER



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“NOW! UP! UP, SHE COMES!” (p. 10.)

LINKS OF GOLD

BY

HARRIET A. CHEEVER

*Author of "St. Rockwells' Little Brother," "Little Jollyby's
Christmas," etc.*



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LINKS OF GOLD

CHAPTER I

AN ESCAPE

“WHEW! did you hear that, Jack?”

“Yes, but I did n't want to notice it.”

“Let 's turn back.”

“I 'd rather not.”

“Aha, my boy! this threatens not to be altogether a matter of choice. I 've an inkling of a suspicion that we 're in a fix, so to speak.”

Two fine specimens of robust young manhood were taking long, even strides across the ice on Sky Pond. With arms stretched at full length, crossed, and a hand resting on the shoulder of his companion, Jack Lor-

raine and Arthur Fredricks had skimmed like sea birds half-way across the pond, which was nearly square in its unusual shape. The best track for the skater lay directly in the centre of the treacherous stream.

“I never knew a warmer January sun,” observed Arthur, removing his closely fitting cap and wiping the perspiration from his face. “I suppose we should have been warned and not have come out so far. We must exercise some diplomacy, my boy, in picking our way back.”

“We ’re both ducks at swimming.”

“Yes, but that does n’t signify, come to meeting an ice hole.”

“No, I suppose not.”

While talking, the young men were cautiously curveting about, feeling surprised at the crackling all around them.

“Question is,” began Jack Lorraine with a smiling, unconcerned air, “whether we ’d better keep on to the farther end, then take

the long walk home, or turn about and skate back the way we came."

"What's that I see shining ahead?" asked Jack.

"Water, unmistakably water on ice," answered Arthur.

"How far out are we? nearly two miles, is n't it?" asked Jack again.

"Yes, it would be far nearer to keep on, if possible, but I see that is out of the question. Let's make for the shore as we came."

Back they started, going singly this time. Some strong undercurrent, warmed by the many open spaces near the banks, must have wrought a singularly speedy change in the condition of the ice, for it seemed as though at nearly every stroke the creak and strain of a "breaking up" sounded in the ears of the expert skaters who skimmed lightly along.

"I never remember hearing or reading of ice giving way in this sudden manner," said Arthur Fredricks, "but I suppose we should

have taken warning from the open condition of the pond at the sides and by this roasting sun and also by the deserted look of the skating ground.”

“ Oh, we ’re all right, I guess,” said the off-hand Jack. “ I felt a creak or two when we first struck out, but I didn’t suspect that things were actually shaky until that tremble came underneath us all at once, but I think now—O grandfather ! ”

Jack’s long length went down with a crash. The ice, treacherous indeed, far beyond their knowledge, had given away in one weak spot and Jack’s leg had slipped through the aperture, which widened with incredible swiftness as he struggled to extricate himself.

“ Keep off ! keep off, I say ! ” he cried as Arthur cautiously crept near to offer ready assistance. “ If I can ’t scramble out by myself, there ’s no use for us both to go down. Now then ! ”

Jack gave a gigantic pull, and had nearly

drawn himself out when he slipped back again, an ominous crack resounding all about him as he again partly disappeared.

“It ’s so outrageously slippery,” he called, “I can ’t get the least purchase on anything to hold on to.”

“I ’m going to lie down flat and creep towards you,” said Arthur. “I do n’t propose to go home alone.”

“For goodness’ sake keep off!” cried Jack; and his panting voice gave Arthur a fresh idea of his friend’s peril. “I ’m going to make another lunge and want the whole pond to myself for it. Now then; up I come!”

Alas, no! down he went, slipping farther as another cracking sound accompanied the fresh failure.

Arthur Fredricks pulled off his overcoat, then hastily pulled off also his long cardigan jacket. Down he lay flat, creeping slowly toward Jack, the jacket in his hand.

“Now, my hearty,” he said softly, “I

do n't feel anything but the merest bend as I crawl in this fashion. Just you clutch the other end of this jacket and give a quick leap upward and I think we'll land you."

Jack made no demur. The situation was far more serious than he had imagined it likely to become. Arthur crawled along on what appeared the firmest part and tossed ahead the stout woollen jacket. Jack seized the other end. "Now! up — up — she comes!" And sure enough, Jack's long length was again out of the water.

"Cautious there!" warned Arthur as the ice seemed ready to settle and separate in other places. "I'll crawl backwards, and you keep hold of the jacket till we reach the spot where I left my overcoat; it is comparatively firm there."

Once on their feet again, the young men divested themselves of skates and proceeded to feel their way along. This was much the safest way, as the caution with which they went enabled them to avoid the more

dangerous places. On nearing the shore at last, they concluded not to say anything about the peril encountered. But just as they left the pond, Mr. Hoostan came along—a man who at times indulged altogether too freely in strong drinks.

“Was you in the pond, Mr. Jack?” he asked, looking hard at Jack’s rather pale face and suspiciously wet trousers.

“Oh, I only made a slip and got my legs pretty wet,” Jack replied indifferently. But at the saloon Mr. Hoostan told an exaggerated story about Jack Lorraine’s having been in Sky Pond and, he guessed, nearly drowned. So it came to pass that Dr. Lorraine heard the news before finishing his round of visits that afternoon, and as so much of the adventure had leaked out, both Jack and Arthur truthfully told the facts.

“My!” said a rough, kind-hearted man whose unfortunate propensity had also brought him to the place where Mr. Hoostan was telling more than he knew. “My! but

would n't there 'a' ben mournin' at the Roads if Dr. Lorraine's only son and Mr. Fredricks' only son — a mighty smart lawyer is Squire Fredricks — had been a-laying dead to-night, a-drownded at Sky Pond ! ”

“ O girls, come into this house, do ! ”

A breezy, handsome girl of about eighteen, with flying, silky hair and a vivacious manner, had hastily thrown open the front door of an imposing-looking mansion and called impetuously to a group of four young girls of her own age who had happened to meet on the sidewalk.

“ Dares n't ” — from Isabel Trenton, a laughing girl, grown suddenly sober. “ Do n't know as it would be safe. What 's the excitement ? ”

“ Come right in this minute, every one of you. I 've struck an entirely new idea and am afraid my whole brood of magnificent intentions will fly away unless I relieve myself of them soon.”

“Oh, bless us, girls, let 's hurry!” And pell-mell, at Addie Fredricks' invitation, the four rushed up the stone steps, jostling and crowding each other in their pretended haste.

“O-oh!” cried Susie Follansbee, “you stepped right on my foot!” And she hobbled into the library with brows drawn together while looking at Rebecca Lorraine.

“Sorry, Susie,” said Rebecca, “but you know, dear, I had to put my foot down somewhere. Still,” she added soothingly, “I should have known better than to expect I could find room for my feet on the upper step when you got there first.”

“Please respect the size another time,” said Susie, her face still askew with the aching foot.

“Nobody notices me,” began Addie Fredricks, pensively tucked in the corner holding a hand over one eye. “Miss Isabel Trenton over there serenely looking at paintings nearly blinded me whisking the fringe of her cape right and left.”

“ Did I, Addie ? ” And Isabel, always merry-hearted, rocked back and forth in a great velvet-cushioned willow chair and gave way to a round peal of laughter.

“ Perhaps you summoned us, Pauline Van Werter, for the purpose of establishing an impromptu hospital,” dryly remarked Rebecca ; “ if so, I think you may plume yourself on having achieved a great success.”

“ Well, are you ready to hear my plans ? ” asked Pauline, who had been laughingly regarding her chatty friends.

“ Oh, come now, it ’s only fair we let Poppy state her magnificent intentions,” said Isabel, “ or she may forget them as she hinted.”

“ It ’s all simply enough told,” began Pauline flushing a little, “ but honestly, girls, I ’m tired of not being of any particular use in the world. And Dr. Compton’s sermon Sunday almost scared me. I know papa gives pretty nearly what they ask for at the church in charity, but when Dr.

Compton spoke of the final account that favored ones in this world must render some day, it sort of woke me up. Then when Jack Lorraine had that struggle on the ice, I thought what a little thing might take life away. So I want to do a little good if I can, and I read in one of papa's papers about a missionary in one of the Comoro Islands, off Mozambique, in Africa, you remember, who called for funds towards building a chapel there. And my idea was, that if we all got together and planned for a fair or a sale, some time in March, perhaps, we might be able to help him. Now, what do you say?"

"Isn't the place rather far off?" asked Isabel, struggling not to smile.

"Oh, that need n't make any difference; papa will tell me how to open a correspondence with the missionary when we get ready."

"Well," chimed in Rebecca, who for her age was gifted with an extra amount of good

sense, "we'll surely help in any good work you want to start, then we can talk over what had really better be done;" and she darted a look full of warning at Isabel.

"Yes, indeed, we'll all help," began Susie, cautiously, for she had caught Rebecca's look of warning at Isabel's question; "but as usual," she continued, "a good deal will have to depend upon the twins."

They all breezed out at this, laughing and chatting and asking what new "dreadfulness" had developed with that interesting pair. But Susie only shook her golden-brown head, and declared there was nothing new, only the same story of a couple of the most incorrigible little monkeys imaginable, forever up to all the mischief they could think of, and constantly claiming her attention and care.

"Where should we hold the fair?" asked Addie.

"Right here," answered Pauline. "Papa

says I might put cotton coverings over the carpets in this room and in the parlor. Much of the furniture could be carried upstairs, the statuary set back in corners of the parlor, and that would give us plenty of room. Papa was amazingly sweet about it all. I shall keep the sale open two evenings. Won't that be fine ? ”

“ Yes, indeed, it will ! ” said Isabel. “ It will be a lovely place to hold a fair ; everybody 'll come.”

“ Just what I want ! ” exclaimed Pauline. “ If everybody comes, we shall be sure of making a lot of money. Now here it is the first of January, and we can have two months and a half to work in. We can get our relatives to help us, perhaps, but so far as assistance goes, can 't we keep the whole thing mainly in our own hands without saying a great deal about it at first ? ”

“ Yes, I think so,” said Rebecca Lorraine. “ We can organize in an easy manner ; then talk over, as I said before, what we will

make and the best way in which to help along some good cause."

It was agreed that the next afternoon the girls should meet at Pauline's again, at two o'clock, after which the friends took their leave.

"Girls," said Isabel as they moved away, "did you ever hear such a veritable 'Borrioboola Gha' plan in all your lives?"

"Oh, but do n't you know," broke in Rebecca, "that it would be a thousand pities to oppose too suddenly anything of that nature that Pauline might propose?"

"What made you give me that terrible 'beware' look?" asked Isabel, "when I asked if the African—Mozambique—Comoro—Indian Ocean place was n't rather far off?"

"Yes, I saw that look," said Susie, "and was nearly frozen into silence."

Rebecca laughed a little. "Well, we all know, girls," she said, growing suddenly sober, "how much Dr. Compton, and all of

us too, for that matter, have wished and wished that dear, proud, indifferent Pauline would show the first sign of interest in anything approaching to serious matters. Now this object *is* remote enough in all conscience, but I was so delighted to have Pauline acknowledge that something was waking her up and making her realize, even faintly, that her soul must be cared for, that I would have fallen in with almost any plan that would increase that feeling on her part."

"But there are such serious needs close at hand," said lively Isabel. "Only think what a mission building would be here at the Roads."

"I do n't believe it would be quite right to let Poppy think we approved a plan that we did n't," said Addie; "and she has a neat little will of her own, has pretty Pauline Van Werter. Is n't it best to speak right out?"

"Well," said Rebecca, "I believe I'd rather go the whole African, Mozambique—

what is it?—Comoro?—Indian Ocean plan, than let Poppy's new ambition entirely die out. I tell you it's a hopeful sign, children dear."

"Yet I should hate to make a load of pretty things that the proceeds might be sent to the Indian Ocean," said Isabel in her resistless spirit of banter.

"Oh, those twins!" cried Susie. "How do I know they have any heads left on their shoulders? I must go."

"Well, remember 'Borriboola Gha' via the Indian Ocean, to-morrow at two," laughed Isabel as the friends dispersed.

CHAPTER II

VERONA ROADS

SUCH was the somewhat foreign sounding name of a fair suburb ten miles from one of our capital cities.

“What a fine place the Roads is!” said Jack Lorraine, while sauntering towards the station one bright, winter morning.

“Yes, fine it is,” returned Arthur Fredricks. “Here are your gay city conveniences all made to order, with enough of respectable quiet to keep one’s nerves in an even condition. Then again, there’s always enough going on to make things sufficiently lively. Pretty nice people in our sunny little township, moreover. I do n’t see but what, take it all in all, there might be some

difficulty in finding a much more desirable locality.”

“I wonder if the usual number of city people will come crowding into town with the June roses?” observed Jack.

“Oh, probably. Dr. Compton’s preaching has great interest for many of the summer boarders. And the doctor preaches a telling sermon, no mistake. By the way, you’ll be going in for some of your father’s laurels before long, won’t you, Jack?”

“Thinking of it,” replied Jack with characteristic brevity. “I do n’t know any profession that, according to my idea, goes ahead of a physician’s. And the study of medicine has attracted me ever since I used to try pa’s pills and peep at the pictures in his medical journals.”

“Just the way I feel about the law,” said Arthur. “Lucky chaps we are to have our ‘paters’ to give us a start right in their tracks. It’s a blessing we do n’t all want the same business, is n’t it?”

“You ’re right there, my lad, but it takes a heap of study for the professions.”

“Yes, and a heap of application in any business whatever. Mr. Trenton, Isabel’s father, was telling father the other night, in my hearing, some of his experiences while he was getting ready to be the first-class photographer and artist that he is. Phew!” ejaculated Arthur, looking up meditatively, “let ’s see, he had to go abroad, stay a year at Antwerp, another in Germany, living mighty close as to quarters, food, and all other expenses, then he served a year with an old painter of considerable note, living on almost nothing, while learning the art of mixing colors, practising on tints and all that. Now, look at the studio he occupies in the city. By the way, I see Isabel has returned from that ‘finishing school’ and settled down at home.”

“I heard awhile ago,” said Jack, “that Mr. Van Werter was so expert in judging of Japanese goods of different kinds that it was

hard ever to deceive him. He used to visit Japan every other year and do his own buying ; now he selects from catalogues and sends a man over every little while. He must be one of the richest men here. And see what a fine little mistress of the house Poppy makes. Must be all of ten years since her mother died."

"Susie Follansbee is a little picture of a housekeeper, too," said Arthur with more feeling in his voice than he was aware of. "Lucky her father has that big dry-goods place with its ready-made garments for her to draw from ; she has her hands full with those twins to look after."

And it was, indeed, lucky for Susie, for she too, like Pauline Van Werter, was motherless. The twins, Benny and Billy, were "regular customers." But this does not mean of their father's house of trade or any other well-known place of business ; but in the broader, more democratic sense, which means that for two small boys, not yet six

years old, they were “Masther hands at iv’ry sly bit o’ mis-*chee*-vousness that ivir plagued a woman of all wurrk, an’ set iv’ry one in the nayborhood by the earrus,—that they be!”

Such was the verdict of the long-suffering Belinda, who answered most commonly to the name of Blinda, modified now and then to the softness of Blinny, when patience and mercy were coyly sued for by the twins.

“Oh, ye need n’t go Blinnyin’ me!” the girl would burst out in justifiable indignation, when some fresh naughtiness or trick would cause delay in her work. Yet the soft-hearted girl would endure almost anything sooner than enter real complaint against the trying little culprits. Their mother had faded quickly with a fever, and let but a fit of crying succeed Benny and Billy’s being sent early to bed without cookies for supper—they invariably sinned in company—and Belinda was swift to conclude that the natural flush upon their

cheeks was a "sure sign o' the faver," that might sweep them away before the dawn.

"Thin 't is meself cud nivir bide in the plaace widout the two of thim to kape me awake wid their thricks an' their thrumps, bless their wicked little sowl!" Belinda would croon in kindly regret.

As for Susie, with all the laughable adventures and situations she showed up with so much glee, there was more or less pathos about it all. There were wakeful nights and wearisome days. Yet she copied in their training many things she could remember of her mother. Every night after the frolicsome twins were in bed, she heard them say their prayers, then with true motherly instinct would draw from them a recital of the day's doings. At this the children, with reckless candor, with smacking of lips and often with squeals of satisfaction, would enjoy recounting their oft-times naughty deeds.

Then Susie would "have a little talk,"

just as her mother used to have with her. How much repentance lurked in the giggles and chuckles that floated to her ears as she left them to their slumbers would be hard to say, but certain it was, that each day's evil with that pair was sufficient unto itself, and Susie, with her blithe nature, could only trust that the God to whom she never forgot to pray would have her little brothers in his keeping.

Just before starting for Pauline's the next afternoon, Susie told the twins she was going out to call, and they must be good little boys, mind Belinda, and stay in the yard.

"Oh, I'll be a 'markably good boy," said Benny glibly; and Billy, who always echoed what Benny said, observed, "Yes, an' I'll be good as he is."

But alas! as Susie turned to leave the room she happened, in glancing back, to see in a mirror the reflection of Benny, who, with a sidelong look at her retreating form, thrust

out a little red tongue as far as he could get it.

“Benny,” she said sternly, turning toward him, “what does that mean? Do n’t you intend to be a good boy?”

“The groc’ry boy does that,” said Benny, “it ’s man-ny.”

“No, Benny, there ’s nothing manly nor pretty about that, and it seemed to say, ‘Oh, I ’ll be naughty as I can be soon as sister has gone away.’”

“Well, I was goin’ to be horwid,” confessed Benny with a cavalier air, “but I won’t be now.”

“Yes, I was too,” piped Billy, “but I ’ll be good, trooly rooly.”

On starting out Susie encountered Mrs. Hoostan, an industrious Scotchwoman, and wife of the man who so drew on his imagination in spreading the story of Jack Lorraine’s adventure on the ice. Their only child, a young daughter, was in a precarious condition from some hip trouble. Mrs.

Hoostan washed the tessellated marble floor of the bank, scrubbed clean the woodwork of the schoolrooms, and chiefly in the town's service managed to care largely for her little family of three. Her intemperate husband sometimes aided her, but a large part of the time was only an added burden.

"How is Melly?" Susie inquired as Mrs. Hoostan came rapidly towards her.

"Oh, puirly enoogh, miss," came the reply, "puirly enoogh. I do a' I can for me lass, but she gets weaker richt alang. I'm sure it's mesel' hae tried a' the doctors an' med'cine I cud, but still me lass gangs doon. Dr. Lorraine be tellin' me I ought to be sendin' her tae the 'ospital, but whare's th' monny to coom fra' to pay th' costs? 'T is harrud to see me bonny girrul soofer, but I canna' see her gang awa' till I hae th' means o' payin' mesel' for her coomfort."

"I should think the town might help you out," said Susie, "or—where do you attend church?"

“Hoot, miss!” exclaimed the mother, “an’ ’t is nivir a moment I gets for th’ kirk, though Melly did like weel the Soonday-school. But ’t is th’ Roads is verra back-handed in helpin’ a puir body oot, an’ I’ll nae ask for it. There’s puir William Wansted that broket his arrum las’ Michaelmas, nigh four moonths ago, an’ hae nivir seen a goot day sine, an’ th’ toonship only gi’s him a dollar and a half a week, an’ his wife an’ a lame bairn to look oot for.” And Mrs. Hoostan hurried on.

Susie hurried also and reached Mr. Van Werter’s house just as the clock struck two. She was the last to arrive, although she was not late.

“Why, what a prompt little committee it is!” Susie exclaimed as she entered the library to find Rebecca Lorraine, Isabel Trenton, and Addie Fredricks seated with wraps and gloves taken off, and all in readiness for the discussion before them.

“You see we want to be ‘forehanded,’ as

Grandma Van Werter used to say, throughout the whole affair," Pauline remarked in her usual breezy way. "I've been talking it over with papa," she continued, "and if it is proper, I should like to tell a little definitely what it appears to me would be a few good plans to start with. First, then, had n't we better organize to the extent of appointing a president, a secretary, and a treasurer?"

"Yes, I think that would be advisable," said Rebecca.

So it was speedily arranged that Pauline should be president, Addie Fredricks secretary, and Rebecca Lorraine treasurer. It was also thought best to call the enterprise a sale, that word being preferable to the more pretentious one of fair, inasmuch as it was to be carried on in a private house.

CHAPTER III

DISCUSSION AND DECISIONS

“Now,” said Pauline, “we ’ll have everything just as attractive as possible at our sale. To begin with, we must have five tables, one for each of us. The extension table from the dining-room will be very nice for one side of the parlor, then papa has some plain, medium-sized tables that he uses at the store at Christmas time, and he says we can take four of those. About covering them, as they are only rough and plain”—

“Oh, I ’ll tell you what would be pretty for those,” Susie Follansbee said as Pauline paused. “Papa, I know, will let me have some different colored cambrics, pink, blue, yellow, red, and white. Candy looks fine

on a brightly covered table. Oh, and I should n't wonder," she went on, "if papa had some old style lace curtains or perhaps some coarse mull we could catch on to the cambrics and make the tables very pretty."

"Do n't you think we should each need an assistant the evenings of the sale?" asked Pauline.

"Yes, we should," promptly answered Isabel. "One of the girls in my former Sunday-school class would be delighted to assist me, I know. There is Lilly Snow; she is a bright, pretty little thing. She must be all of fourteen, and is as active as a busy bee. I think I'll settle on Lilly."

"And I might ask one of my scholars," said Addie Fredricks. "I suppose Lora Torrence would be overjoyed to be 'in' such a fine time as that. She would be sure to look like a little fairy."

"If I thought my only little sister would keep mum as far as Jack is concerned," began Rebecca, "I'd have Dora assist me, and

she must, anyway, as to one thing. For a twelve-year-old she can make change as correctly as a much older person, and when it comes to dressing a doll, I must say she has the most astonishing faculty of any one I ever saw. Aunt Laura, who was with us when Dora had that long season of lameness from spraining her ankle, taught the child to sew beautifully. She has a little trunk full of the choicest pieces of silk, laces, and embroidery. I heard her wishing one day she had an army of dolls to dress. But I do n't want that brother of mine to know anything of this affair until the last moment possible. He 'd have his whole class in college out here volunteering their help, I 'm afraid, beside teasing me in a hundred ways."

"It would be nice to have some dressed dolls, I think," said Pauline, "and Dora might have a part of your table for them ; would n't she promise not to say anything before Jack ?"

“ Oh, yes, she 'd promise quickly enough,” said Rebecca, “ and the little dear would be loyal too, only you know she just idolizes Jack, and no wonder, for he makes a perfect little goose of her, petting her all the time. You see, being in his twenties, he seems quite advanced to Dora. But once let Jack find out she was dressing a phalanx of dolls and ” — Rebecca paused and drew a long sigh. “ Well, I can 't tell how it would come about, but I believe that somehow, by hook or by crook, my brother would have the whole thing at his tongue's end before Dora dreamed of such a thing. He 'd sit up nights and go without his meals to ferret out anything he suspected we girls were about and were keeping to ourselves.”

Pauline laughed merrily. It was no secret among the friends that Jack, gay, noble-featured Jack Lorraine, was seldom answered nay when on sundry occasions he invited Pauline Van Werter to accompany him to concert, lecture, or party of pleasure.

Others, it is true, were equally desirous of showing so charming a young girl frequent attentions, but this seemed in no wise to trouble the light-hearted Jack.

As for Arthur Fredricks, four years older than his sister Addie, he was already in his father's law office in the city, taking ludicrous pride in frequent allusions to his "partner"—an assumption of which he enjoyed the joke to the full.

Susie Follansbee had been so quiet up to this time that all at once Isabel Trenton rallied her. "Why, Susie, where are you?" she said. "Here I've picked out my assistant; Addie and Rebecca have theirs. I suppose Pauline has selected hers long ago, and who is to be yours?"

"I don't know as I'm quite ready to propose mine," Susie answered. "Suppose we hear from Poppy first."

"If it would be agreeable," Pauline began, "I should like to invite my cousin, Madeline Hunter, of whom you have all

heard me speak, to make me a visit and take in the sale. She lives in Chicago and declares she never has any nice, cozy times. Everything there, she says, is on so large a scale one loses all personality and can't enjoy half as much as though once in a while things could be carried on in a less gigantic manner. Madeline is a very taking girl and I know would not only come but would make us some beautiful things if she were given the opportunity. I want to leave the matter entirely with you," she added with pretty grace, "but I thought it might add *éclat* to the occasion if a young lady from some other place who would take a lively interest in our sale were to be present with us. I can promise Maidie would fall right in and be one of the most interested of us all. Our mothers were sisters, very dear sisters, and Maidie, whose mother died a year after my mother left me, is a little older than I am. As I said, she will be sure to come if I invite her."

The very cordial response this proposition met from all her friends at once convinced Pauline of the warm welcome her cousin would receive, and then they fell to arranging the furnishings of the five tables.

There was to be one table of fancy articles. For this, Isabel Trenton said her father would give some beautiful photographs, some colored, some plain, and of prominent people and famous localities. "For many of these I will make fancy frames," Isabel added, "and it may be papa will throw in an oil painting or two, cute little ones of some value;" and Isabel being a cherished only child, it was not feared that her contribution would be at all a meagre one. A little further on in the discussion Isabel proposed fanciful contributions to another table through some of her friends.

Another table was to have only useful articles. "That's where I'll come in," said Susie gleefully. "Perhaps we sha'n't all care to stand at the table we furnish the

most articles for. I'll make papa give me lots of material that with comparatively little work can be made into very useful articles. I think aprons will be my specialty. I only wish we had more time."

"Oh, well, ten weeks is a good while," said Pauline, "and we can't very well make it later, as it would carry us too far into Lent. Easter comes late this year. Now about the candy table? What shall we do about that?"

"I'll make a lot of candy," said Rebecca. "Home-made candies are always in demand. I make several kinds, and I know Addie makes delightful candy."

"So does Isabel," laughed Isabel herself. "But for two nights we shall want a pretty good supply."

"I'll make dozens and dozens of cornballs," said Addie Fredricks; "and what about Hetty Shockmeyer? Would n't she be pleased at being asked to do something for us in that line?"

“I was waiting until we got around to the candy question before speaking about my assistant,” said Susie Follansbee. “I know it would be such a real joy to Hetty not only to help us, but to be asked to share this interest to the extent of standing behind one of the tables, that if it is thought best, I should like to be at the candy table and have Hetty with me.”

This gained at once the unanimous approval of all present.

Hetty Shockmeyer was a young German girl whose parents during a four years' residence in Verona Roads had acquired an excellent reputation as manufacturers of fine candies, chocolate sweets and sugared fruits, greatly to their profit. During this time, Hetty, a member of Susie's class, had become an enthusiastic young Christian. No more active member of the Young People's Society was in Dr. Compton's church than sunny Hetty Shockmeyer. At Christmas time she had made and filled fifty candy

bags to be hung on the glittering tree at the vestry.

“ Well, now four tables are arranged for,” said Pauline. “ What about the fifth? Shall we have flowers? ”

“ It seems as though we must have a flower table,” said Rebecca, “ only flowers are so expensive, especially just now.”

“ I ’ll tell you what we might do,” said Isabel. “ Suppose we have a table of flowers, part natural, part made of paper. I have two aunties who make the most perfect paper flowers imaginable. You would think a bunch of their sweet peas were really garden flowers. They make poppies and mount them on wire covered with green tissue paper to be used as lamp shades or screens ; and snowballs, tinted perfectly, they make in the same way. Really, you never saw anything to surpass them of the kind. They ’d delight to send me a great variety, I know, if I asked them.”

“ I think that would be quite an idea,”

said Pauline briskly. "And then papa has a friend in the city who is a florist, and he went somewhere in the country to visit his conservatories not long ago. I'll invite papa to call on him and solicit a donation on easy terms, or papa would buy me some flowers. I will see to that part."

It only remained now to assign to each one the particular table at which she was to stand. So it was agreed that Pauline Van Werter and her cousin, Madeline Hunter, should have the flower table; Rebecca Lorraine and her sister Dora the dolls and juvenile goods; Addie Fredricks and Lora Torrence the useful articles; Susie Follansbee and Hetty Shockmeyer the candy; Isabel Trenton and Lilly Snow the fancy articles.

They chatted merrily for a while, each telling of friends, nearly all of them out-of-town relatives, whom they meant to press into service.

Addie Fredricks with much merriment told how her grandma Fredricks took hick-

ory nuts, put a stick in one side and in the stick inserted arms, then painted faces on the nuts,—or got grandpa Fredricks to do that part,—using the point of the nut for a nose. Then she rigged them up as dolls for penwipers. “You ’d never dream, girls,” she added, “that an old lady of seventy-five years could make such perfectly grotesque, comical figures, and dress them out in such fanciful ways as she will. The skirts stand out like balloons, and—of all the countenances!—well, you shall see.”

Then came a moment of silence, and the girls looked quizzically at each other. After another moment, Susie said, as if struck by a sudden thought:—

“Oh, Pauline, we thought perhaps we had better discuss the object of our sale for a little while.”

“Yes, so we had,” said Pauline readily; “papa is going to tell me how to open a correspondence with the missionary at Comoro very soon.”

Then Rebecca, Isabel, with eyes dancing, and Addie again looked at poor Susie, who tried to speak steadily and bravely; and there was a ring of Christian frankness in her young voice.

CHAPTER IV

HOW THEY SETTLED IT

“HAS it ever occurred to you, Poppy dear,” Susie began gently, “that perhaps we all, you quite as much as the rest, would really enjoy our good work more heartily if it was for some object nearer home? We found, in talking it over, that Africa seemed so remote and means of communication were going to be so sluggish and all that, it might be better at the outset to reconsider that part of the scheme. Do n’t you think yourself it would be a satisfaction to see the outcome of our efforts?”

Pauline looked rather blank. “Why, I thought,” she said, flushing a little, “you were all taken with my idea and liked it. I

looked carefully into the matter before speaking of it, although I know I announced myself quite suddenly yesterday." She stopped as if completely taken aback and regarded her companions with rising color.

"Well, it's just like everything else," said Addie in an off-hand way; "at first a plan may appear attractive and just what it should be; but come to look at it more closely, the question will arise whether that is the best scheme after all."

"But please understand one thing clearly, Pauline," said Rebecca, and she spoke with great earnestness, "we will all go straight to work on the Comoro plan if you want to hold to your first purpose, or if altering it is going to spoil your pleasure or take from your interest. You started this movement and we want to follow your wishes. The truth is, some kind of a charitable organization beside the Roads Benevolent Society could do a great deal of good. Then there are cases of need, sort of private cases, I mean, where a

band of workers such as we might become could do very acceptable service. So we might think of it and compare ideas and settle finally what our object shall be.”

Here, indeed, was a new showing of affairs. Pauline, dignified and ladylike, sat listening, her heightened color and quicker breathing alone indicating a little inward conflict between pride, tenacity of purpose, and true affection for these stanch and honest mates.

Then Isabel Trenton began in a slow, hesitating way, unlike her naturally easy manner of speech: “I have a sort of unthought-out idea that we could form a kind of Home Missionary Band. That is the idea in the rough. I should n’t want so staid or pretentious a name, but how pleasant it would be if we should form a quiet little band among ourselves, raise money from time to time, and use it whenever any one of us should hear of a case needing immediate aid.”

“In that case it would have to go on from

year to year," said Pauline, "and might lose some of its freshness and interest, or whatever makes it appear so pleasing in first starting about it."

"Ho! not a bit of it!" exclaimed Isabel in her merriest tones. "We need n't stop to consider that now, but if we should become known as The Bounteous Sisterhood, or The Helpers of Respectable Unfortunates, or The Ever Ready Succorers, or 'wot not' as Tony Weller would say, why, I for one should rejoice in having anything so inspiring to think of."

Isabel's jolly speech proved just what was needed to break up the slight constraint that had come over them under the strain of trying to divert their willing efforts from an unacceptable channel. After that, a free, good-natured, and outspoken discussion followed, to the relief of all.

"It would be something pleasant to work for summers," admitted Pauline genially. "I begin in August to make presents for

Christmas time, and although I enjoy making gifts for my friends, I must confess it used to come over me last summer that I ought to be doing something—something with more real profit in it. And then that sermon made me downright nervous.

“Papa laughed,” she went on, “when I first told him of my missionary plan, and said, Well, he guessed it was about time I did something useful in the big, round world.” Pauline stopped a moment, then went on softly, “And then, do you know, girls, I think papa was right on the point of saying something quite particular, he looked so solemn—a few words about my mother, perhaps, though he never does speak of mother. But he only patted my head and went out of the room looking very thoughtful.”

“It occurs to me,” said Susie, who had not spoken for some time, “that we could easily divide our profits if it were thought best. In that way Poppy could still send perhaps quite a nice little sum to the Comoro

missionary and we could aid to some extent the needy ones about us. I met Mrs. Hoostan on my way here ; ” and Susie went on and repeated the conversation she had had with the Scotchwoman on the way to Pauline’s.

“ Naturally I could not help thinking,” Susie continued, “ how beautiful it would be if some of our number could go to that poor, anxious mother and say, ‘ Mrs. Hoostan, send Mellie to the hospital and see what can be done for her and our little guild will pay the bills ; we can do so easily.’ ”

“ Oh, I shall go with the rest,” said Pauline cheerily. “ I did hate for a moment to abandon my original plan,”—and she unconsciously threw a spice of regret into her tone,—“ but I can understand how satisfactory it is going to be to us all to see the good resulting from our sale, so I withdraw my proposal entirely.”

“ But you can’t withdraw from being at the head of the movement, whatever it ac-

compleishes," said Susie Follansbee, "neither can any one rob you of the credit of having set this special ball a-rolling. I'm sure, Poppy, I think the time may come when the rest of us will have cause to envy you the distinction."

"What a pretty little speech it was!" exclaimed Pauline, throwing her white hands, palms outward, up toward her shoulders. And she smiled happily as if entirely mollified concerning any discomfiture she might have felt for a little while.

"If we should sell out early on the second evening," Pauline went on, "we can have it understood that people are invited to remain and enjoy a social hour or two. In that case we can circulate among our patrons and play the hostess each for herself."

"Oh, about an entrance fee! what shall that be?" asked Isabel Trenton.

"Dear me!" said Pauline, turning her head aside as if at remembrance of some recent conflict, "such a scene as I had with

papa about that! He put his foot down that I should n't, absolutely should not, have an admission price. He said his house had always been free to any one choosing to enter it as a friend. 'But, papa,' I argued, 'if two hundred people should come here one night and a hundred and fifty the second, there would be nearly ninety dollars at twenty-five cents each.' Then he said he would rather give me outright what might be taken at the door. I said no, the others would not like that at all. Well, we talked! and we talked! and we talked! Finally papa gave in, but declared he meant to publish in the *Verona Roads Chronicle*, that it was Mr. Van Werter's daughter Poppy, not Van Werter himself, who allowed his house to be turned over to the interests of a 'paid concern.' Oh, I did have the greatest time!"

"Poor Poppy! What a conflict she did have!" laughingly crooned Isabel.

"Oh, I did now, and no mistake!" insisted Pauline.

“ Well, it was too bad ! ” said Isabel ; then suddenly changing her tone she asked, “ Oh, Poppy, won’t you go to our Young People’s meeting to-night ? I wish you would ! ”

“ Oh, I think not,” said Pauline quickly ; “ I never do, you know.”

“ Yes, but I think perhaps it might help matters very much if you should,” persisted Isabel. “ We want as many as will, of the young people, to attend our sale, and I think it would give them more of an impression of your being one of us, if they saw you at the meetings occasionally.”

Pauline darted a suspicious look around, probably without meaning to.

“ I think what Isabel says may be true,” said Addie, “ although such a thing has not been mentioned among us. The idea is a brand-new one, but really, Poppy, I think Isabel shows herself wise in her generation.”

“ Well, I ’ll think of it,” said Pauline, evidently reluctant to give her consent.

“ I might as well call for you, anyway,”

said Susie ; “ it is right on the way, so there ’ll be no harm done if you decide not to go.”

“ Papa likes to have me at home evenings when he is,” said Pauline, and she glanced down at her handsome crimson house-dress with white quillings in the neck and sleeves and graceful ribbons floating from the waist.

“ Oh, yes,” said Isabel, her white teeth gleaming with an amused smile, “ and papa lets his little darling go to sundry and divers places of amusement of an evening with beautiful resignation, and consents to her changing her dress whenever she chooses, and papa would n’t either stamp or scold if his Poppy wanted to go once in a while to a prayer-meeting. Honestly, Pauline,” she went on, dropping her bantering tone, “ you ought to know what good, solid meetings we have. I think you would enjoy them.”

“ Well, Susie can stop for me if she chooses,” Pauline answered, “ and I ’ll see how I feel when evening comes.”

When the little meeting was about to break up, Pauline proposed that in a week, after having learned how many family friends could assist them, they should meet at her house again.

“Then we can form some definite idea of what our contributions are likely to be,” she added.

“Isabel, what possessed you to ask Pauline to attend the meeting to-night?” asked Rebecca as they started homeward. “I was afraid she would think it was a concerted plan. She treated all of us to an awfully suspicious look.”

“I spoke simply because it occurred to me,” said Isabel. “I was afraid I had been a little hasty on the instant, for I caught the look you speak of. But I thought Addie disabused her mind quite cleverly of any impression she might have had as to our planning to say anything. But I really think we are sometimes led on almost against ourselves, as we might say, to speak words we

had not intended to, and that was how I came to ask Poppy to go with us to-night. After all, it is Pauline herself I can't help thinking of."

"I hope she will go with us to the meeting," said Susie.

CHAPTER V

JACK NONPLUSSED

BUT Susie and her friends were disappointed. Pauline met her at the door at meeting time, still in her crimson dress with satin quillings and floating ribbons, saying she felt tired and not quite equal to the exertion of going out. "And then it was going to be such a capital chance to write to cousin Madeline," she added, "I could not resist the temptation. Thank you for calling, Susie ; some other evening I might like to go."

Yet Pauline had by no means made up her mind to begin any attendance on the prayer-meetings. She had felt herself stirred to go comfortably about doing some

good, but it would be an altogether different matter, she told herself, to assume being so seriously inclined as to go to "week-day" meetings.

"Well, now do n't let 's ask Poppy again at present," suggested Rebecca as the four friends walked part way home from meeting in company. "According to my way of thinking, it is going to be the wisest plan to let her act entirely as she chooses in going or staying."

"Just what I had resolved on," said Isabel. "I 'm not sorry I asked her to go to-night. She can 't say no one has invited her to make one of our number on Tuesday nights. Pauline will be drawn in with us in time, and she knows that we would welcome her gladly now should she incline to come with us."

A week from the day of the first meeting at Pauline's the friends again met there, as agreed, but for some reason Rebecca was late in appearing. When she came it was with a flutter, as if she had hurried away at the last

moment. Pauline, who was on the outlook, opened the door before she had a chance to ring.

“Oh, I ’m so glad I did n’t have to wait outside a moment!” panted Rebecca, sinking into the first chair she came to. “I nearly ran all the way; for what do you think? Jack ’s at home! Came last night, and is going to be at home, what ’s more, for three or four days. Fortunately, I had put Dora’s dolls out of sight, and the child seemed relieved that none were around when Jack announced himself. Dora has twelve dolls in the house already and is overjoyed at the prospect of making the most of their clothes. Fortunately also, I had told Dora nothing about this meeting, so if Jack questions her as to my whereabouts, as he is sure to do as soon as he misses me, the child won’t know where I am. But I feel exactly as though he would make his appearance any moment. I slipped away ‘unbeknownst’ to any one.”

“If the bell should ring,” said Pauline, “I’ll draw this door to, and if I should find Mr. Jack Lorraine outside, I will invite him into the parlor. It would be a suspicious circumstance to find us in conclave, for, intimate as we are, we are not often together in the same house all at once.”

Comparisons as to the amount of work to be done by the young ladies, and articles already promised from friends, convinced them that there would be no mean supply for the various tables by the middle of March, the time set for the sale to take place.

“We’ll press our brothers into service then,” said Addie Fredricks, smiling over to Rebecca. “By that time they’ll be willing to do anything for us, because of our thoughtfulness in not troubling them before.”

“That reminds me,” said Pauline, “we shall want a wagon-load of evergreens to twine about and to put along the edges of the tables and at the ends.”

Then the girls began telling what some

of their contributions were to be. Isabel Trenton said that her father had promised her a beautiful collection of photographs, such as she had spoken of the week before. "I shall make frames for many of them," she added. She also was to be given two little oil paintings, which if sold would add quite perceptibly to their receipts, and her aunts were going to send a great box of their paper flowers.

Addie Fredricks was jubilant over the fair promises of several absent friends. "Every one I wrote to responded right away," she said, "and seemed to regard it as a privilege to do something for so 'praiseworthy an object.' That is what Grandma Fredricks called it. She is going right to work on a whole regiment of hickory-nut penwipers."

"Papa Follansbee is just a treasure," said Susie, who like the others was in high glee at her pleasant prospects. "He said I should have yards and yards of 'damaged

cambric,' which of course meant perfectly good material, although not of the finest quality, which we do n't want. And he said he would see to it that Benny and Billy should be among our best customers."

"Oh, the twins must come," said Pauline; "it will be fun to have them here."

"Well, possibly a little while the second evening," said Susie, "but I should feel far easier to have them at home and abed. That is the best place for children in the evening, and I'm afraid it would be but little fun for me to know they were here, for there'd be no knowing what mischief they'd be up to if they went out in the evening and got a little excited, as they would be sure to. Papa would promise to take care of them, but he is so easy, and they're so quick. I think they'd far better stay quietly at home with Blinda."

Matters all were promising. It was not thought needful or advisable to meet to-

gether for sewing, as each could do her work best at home.

“When shall we begin to advertise our sale, and what means shall we take for it?” asked Pauline.

“Shall we put it in the *Chronicle*?” asked Susie.

“Oh, no,” said Rebecca; “would n’t that be making it rather too general and public for our modest undertaking?”

“It would save papa’s putting in that other notice,” said Pauline with laughing eyes.

“I know something about as effectual as advertising,” said Addie. “We can simply tell our acquaintances, and tell them to tell their acquaintances, and also inform Arthur in due time.”

“And I know something ahead of all that’s been proposed yet,” — from Rebecca Lorraine, — “we can tell Jack!”

“We won’t have any restrictions as to age,” said Pauline, “only it must be under-

stood that really little people must be accompanied by parents."

At that moment the bell rang. Pauline intercepted Kate, who had started to answer the ring. At the door stood Jack Lorraine.

"I thought," he said in his pleasant, insinuating tones, after having greeted Pauline, "how restful it would be to lounge in your cheerful library a little while, and I was not sure but I should find that my beloved sister Rebecca had preceded me, as she took herself off without proper excuses directly after dinner." Jack meantime was turning with the familiar grace of an old friend toward the library where the door appeared to be partly closed.

Pauline received him in state with a mischievous "No, you do n't" in her eyes. "Please walk in this way," she said carelessly, "I'm receiving in the parlor to-day, and—how happens it I have this pleasure?"

"Girls," said Rebecca as the parlor door closed, "that boy will just as surely manage

to peep in here before he goes away as that we are alive. It is unusual for the doors in this house to be closed, and that sagacious pill knows it. Let's creep softly up to Poppy's room and leave the door wide open after us. Come now, and do n't drop a glove or a handkerchief, or the least trace of anything that will give us away."

Quickly and on tiptoe the girls mounted the stairs to Pauline's room, which fortunately was over the library. Here they talked together in low tones, planning and comparing notes. Jack stayed so long, Rebecca was about to propose their creeping down the back stairway and out by the rear door, when the parlor door opened. At that Rebecca stepped into the hall, to call Pauline as soon as Jack should depart. The few words spoken in the lower hall were not distinguishable, although Pauline's light laugh reached the quiet maidens in her room.

As the front door closed Rebecca leaned

over the banisters and called softly, "Poppy! Poppy! we're all up here."

"Oh, I've told a fib!" laughed Pauline as she ran over the stairs, "for what do you think! When Jack stepped into the hall he gave a sniff and said, 'You tell my dear sister 'Becca, please, that she had better make use of something different in the way of perfumery from her favorite violet, if she thinks of running away, and then covering her tracks. Violet is quite pungent, you see.' Then he looked me right in the eye and said, 'Is—ah—does my sister, Miss Rebecca Lorraine, happen to be in the house now, Miss Pauline?' And I answered, I thought truly enough, 'No, she was here soon after dinner but she has gone now.' I thought you had all slipped out the back way, but I'm glad you hit on something more sensible than that, after all."

Very soon the friends dispersed. Not a word had been said about the meeting in the evening, and Jack Lorraine, who would

be pretty sure to go, had not alluded to it. But Pauline remembered it was "Young People's" night.

"If I had gone last week, I should have gone again to-night probably," she said to herself. "Those four girls are all safely in the church," she murmured dreamily, "and I could be too, if I wanted to, but I do n't want to be in the church for some time to come; I want to enjoy myself."

And the old fallacy that religion and church membership shut out high spirits and natural enjoyment for the young filled her mind for a moment.

Then something else occurred to her. "I wonder what made me say the girls were all 'safely' in the church?" she mused. "Can 't a person be just as safe outside the church?" She stood quietly thinking a moment or two, then added in a girlish way, not devoid of sadness: "I do n't care, I can 't help a kind of lonesome feeling, just as though the girls, all but me, had taken pas-

sage for some pleasant journey and I was left behind. I should feel better about it if either they were like me and did n't much care for church matters, or else if I had been inclined that way all along, and was one of them every way. Perhaps if my mother had lived I should have thought more as my friends do. At all events, I am not going to brood over anything I can decide for myself at any time."

That ended her reflections for the time being, but the truth was, Pauline could not be long enlisted in an enterprise bringing her closely and constantly in contact with her pleasant, happy friends without realizing that in some respects they were not equally yoked together, and she did not enjoy the feeling.

Early in the evening, as Pauline was sitting in the comfortable library, a book in her hands, she all at once heard the voices of some young people chatting cheerily as they went by.

“That sounds like some of your companions, does n’t it, dear?” said her father, as through the window lowered at the top the sound floated in.

“Yes, papa,” she replied. “I think it is Susie Follansbee, and Addie Fredricks and Arthur. Possibly Isabel is with them.”

“What’s going on to-night?” asked her father as he turned a leaf of his paper.

“It’s the Young People’s meeting at the church vestry to-night.”

“Ah, the Young People’s meeting?” repeated her father inquiringly.

“Yes, this is the night for it. It is held every Tuesday evening.”

“And you do n’t go, daughter?”

“No, papa, I’ve never been yet. I do n’t exactly belong there as yet.”

Her father said, “Ah?” again, then returned to his newspaper.

Pauline looked up from her book and was relieved to find her father apparently absorbed with the day’s news. Then happen-

ing to glance at his head as he sat a little before her on the other side of the library table, she was surprised to see how gray he was growing. She had never noticed it before. She thought with a momentary pang, which she could not have explained, what a good father he had been, how kind and indulgent, and she wondered if she had made him quite as filial a return as she might have done.

“I suppose he’s mourned for mamma and missed her more than I’ve had any idea of,” she thought; “but then, I never could say anything to him about her as long as he never mentioned her to me.” Then as the little feeling of compunction lingered she thought again: “I’m sure I do n’t see why I need have the least reproachful feeling, so far as serious matters are concerned, with papa. It is natural for parents to try to influence their children in such things, and papa has never said one word to me about religious matters further than to ask

me if I was going to church on Sunday mornings. I guess he does n't care for things of that kind."

But for some reason Pauline could not fix her thoughts on her book. Her eyes would keep straying over to where her quiet father sat reading his paper. And every time she looked, it surprised and impressed her more and more that the silver gleamed so plainly through the closely cropped but shining hair.

"If I ever should care about those things," she thought finally, "I should certainly try and influence papa that way too; and if I ever do go into the church, I shall surely invite papa to go with me. He is such a dear papa!"

CHAPTER VI

ONE TUESDAY EVENING

EVERYTHING went briskly forward now that all preliminaries were settled. Jack Lorraine had returned to college ignorant of what was in the air, thanks to Rebecca's nonchalant manner and Dora's matter-of-fact replies to a few leading questions which he put to her, thus allaying any little curiosity which that student of medicine might have been inclined to indulge.

Hetty Shockmeyer, elated and flattered that Miss Pauline Van Werter called in company with her dear teacher, Miss Susie Follansbee, and asked if she would like to donate some candy to their enterprise, gave happy hints, with merrily twinkling eyes, of the quantity and variety of "sweets" she

should have ready in good season. Her delight was truly amusing upon being further invited to stand with Susie behind the candy table. "I won't whisper it even to the sugar but only to mine mutter," she promised, when the young ladies said that for a few weeks they wished to keep the matter quiet.

Every time the girls met each other reports were stimulating, for the articles soon began to arrive from the friends who had promised their aid. But friendly and intimate as the five girls continued, nothing more was said to Pauline about attending the Christian Endeavor meetings. At first she felt relieved that it evidently was not the others' intention to do so; but after a few weeks her feelings changed. She had not forgotten Isabel's remark that other young people of Dr. Compton's society would feel she was more one of them if she attended the meetings, and she began wondering if it would be so.

"If I could bring it about now in some

easy, natural way," Pauline said to herself, "I would not refuse to go to one of the meetings, but I think it is doubtful if I am asked to go again."

About the same time Susie said to Isabel: "I do n't know what makes me think so, but I can't help thinking that if any of us should ask Poppy to go with us some Tuesday evening she would consent at once. I seem to feel it instinctively."

The next Tuesday evening, as Susie and Rebecca were on their way to the vestry, Pauline Van Werter came out of her door all dressed for a walk.

"Why, you 're just in time," said Susie with a little satisfied laugh, "and we did n't even have to call for you."

Pauline laughed a little in turn. "I'm on my way to Miss Curlew's," she said; "she's making me up a few small ribbon bows. I did n't say what I wanted them for, but they're to put on some stylish morning caps I'm making. I took one apart that

Madeline Hunter once sent me, and am making several from the pattern. They are very convenient for ladies who dust their own parlors, and I think will sell very well. Now here 's the milliner's. Oh, sho!" she added, having tried the door, "if she is n't locked up! But what 's this notice?" And Pauline read from a paper inside the glass door, "Open at eight o'clock."

"Now, I 'll tell you," said Susie, speaking in a low, mock confidential tone, "Miss Curlew has been to the city for some fresh ribbons, the nice little milliner that she is, and if you should keep right on with us to the meeting we should be out before nine o'clock, when Miss Curlew shuts up; then you could drop in on the way home and get your bows just as easy!"

"And we 'll all wait outside or go in with you, so nothing shall scare you," put in Rebecca.

"Ho! I 'm no such coward as that," said Pauline, keeping right on.

Not another word was said about going or returning, Pauline simply walking along with Susie and Rebecca, until on reaching the vestry she went in without a demur. Addie soon made her appearance, seating herself beside Pauline on the settee, and in a moment or two more Isabel went up the aisle, taking her seat at the desk on the platform.

“Why, is Isabel going to be Dr. Compton to-night?” Pauline whispered to Susie, a look of amused surprise in her eyes.

“Oh, yes, we’re all expected to take charge when our turn comes,” Susie replied. “Dr. Compton won’t appear until the close of the service, if he does at all.”

“Why, I never could do it in the world!” said Pauline, sobering completely, and looking at Isabel as though she had suddenly become a natural curiosity. That Isabel Trenton, light-hearted, laughing Isabel, quicker than any of the rest to see and appreciate a witticism, fun-loving, merry

Isabel, that she, of all persons! could seat herself before a vestry full of young people, and some not so very young, either, and keep her countenance, and carry on a serious, earnest service! Well, Pauline actually trembled from a feeling of excitement not unmixed with some sympathy for Isabel in her trying position. "She is used to such a different kind of 'carrying on,'" Pauline thought with a forlorn inward smile.

But there was something in her friend's tone and manner, steady and self-possessed, as she gave out the opening hymn and read the first verse, that calmed Pauline entirely, and induced the mental verdict, "She will go steadily on to the end, and will not falter nor break down."

From the outset Pauline was both surprised and impressed. She had not realized that there were so many young people in the society where she attended church. She had known nothing, either, of how the meetings were conducted. The hymns, bright,

inspiring, and full of melody and power, so familiar to all in the assembly except herself, were new and sounded very pleasant to her unaccustomed ear.

Isabel read slowly and distinctly the story of the ten virgins, five of whom were wise and five foolish. Her unfaltering voice, in its even, serious tones, sounded new to Pauline, and carried weight with every succeeding verse. "She is a noble girl!" thought Pauline, "a dear, noble girl! standing there so calmly and bravely, reading the Bible to us all. I thought I knew Isabel Trenton, but I had never seen this new phase of character before. Does Addie Fredricks 'take charge' when her turn comes? And do Rebecca Lorraine and Susie Follansbee? I suppose so."

Then it occurred to Pauline that after all her surprise and questionings she had never known one of these friends to either do or say the least thing that need reflect on the character of a Christian. "Only I can't



“ISABEL READ SLOWLY AND DISTINCTLY.”

think of religion apart from an idea of self-denial or austerity," she concluded.

Isabel said a few words about the parable, but only a few. The application was too plain to need enlarging on. Then she asked if some one would offer a short prayer, not forgetting to ask that every one in that room might be wise, not neglecting to have the lamp of life furnished with the oil of the spirit of Jesus Christ—a light so freely given to all who would but take it.

Rebecca Lorraine arose. Midway in the prayer Pauline thought, "I *must* cry!" It seemed as if she could not keep the tears back, yet she was determined they should not come. "If I'm going to be as emotional as all this," she tried to say severely to herself, "I'd better not come to the Young People's meeting again."

Rebecca knew for what she wanted to plead, the burden of her prayer being that all people everywhere, and all who were near and dear, yet were "out of Christ,"

might be brought into his safe fold. Very softly she prayed for the young in "the temples of learning," who, in the full pride of life and the pleasures of youth, might forget to furnish oil for the lamp which must be kept burning against the coming of the Master, and which would light the way to a better life than this fleeting, transitory one. Some of these petitions lodged in Pauline's memory.

Remarks were spontaneous and to the point, the prayers brief and simple. Dr. Compton toward the close added a few words of entreaty that all who had failed thus far to furnish themselves with the light of the Saviour's love, would be guilty of such neglect no longer.

The entire service was like a revelation to Pauline. Would her companions seem the same to her on the way home as they always had? Would they laugh and jest and talk of indifferent matters, leaving all serious considerations behind them in the

quiet vestry? She waited for one of them to speak first.

“Did n’t we have a good meeting?” asked Rebecca as they all began walking homeward.

“Yes,” said Susie. “The truth is, I particularly needed that meeting to-night. As to that, I always need our meetings,” she added; “but Benny and Billy have been up to all sorts of capers to-day, and I did n’t blame Blinda when she called them ‘the most agger-ri-vating little tikes.’ But I never get a little discouraged but what one of our meetings sets me all right again. Did you notice that poor Harvey Nicholls prayed the dear Lord to give him the oil of patience, for he felt that patience was what he most needed to keep him in fit condition for the indwelling light of the Saviour’s presence? I thought just that one sentence would last me a long time.”

“How Harvey Nicholls has improved!” said Isabel. “I feel something akin to ad-

miration for him when I think how he has persevered and been determined to keep on doing his part, until now the really pitiful confusion that used to assail him whenever he tried to speak or pray has gone entirely."

"Did he used to be confused?" asked Pauline. "I wonder every one is n't, but I thought what he said in prayer was particularly good."

"Well, it used to be dreadful," said Susie with a little involuntary spasm of laughter "but he was bound to keep on. I remember one night he tried to tell a little story at a children's missionary meeting. The story was about two little boys, and before the story was half finished they were both girls, and poor Harvey had n't noticed the change. And now he offers a prayer that helps us all."

"Oh, dear me!" suddenly exclaimed Pauline. "Here I've gone right past Miss Curlew's, and forgotten all about my little bows!"

“Never mind, we ’ll all go back with you,” said Susie; “it ’s only a little way, and we should like the walk. Blinda never goes out Tuesday evening; she understands that is the evening I must always have for myself.”

Back they trooped to Miss Curlew’s and in they all went.

“Good evening, my dear young ladies,” said a little lady behind the counter; “so you ’ve all been to meeting to-night, I take it; who led?”

“Miss Trenton led to-night,” said Susie. “The meeting was lovely.”

“Ah, you ’ve come for your bows, Miss Van Werter, have n’t you?” Miss Curlew went on. “Well, they ’re all done; and very pretty bows they are, too. You like pretty things, do n’t you, my dear? Well, I remember your mother, she was a very pretty creature herself—I think you favor her considerable in features—and very fond she was of nice, tasteful things in dress.

But she was very fond of a good meeting, too, just as I see you are, my dear. I can remember sitting just back of her at a prayer-meeting one night and noticing how beautiful and white her neck was down under her hair, and she grew quite affected while the minister was praying. See what a thing it is to have a good memory, my dear. It must have been all of twelve years ago I sat behind your mother that night, and our old minister, Dr. Preston, was praying for the unconverted—those who were greatly beloved but were out of Christ. And I can see now how the pink went creeping over your mother's white neck until it was all pink as a shell, and the dear lady was crying softly with her handkerchief before her face. Well, well, you was a little mite then, and I do n't suppose remember anything about your mother. Do you remember her, my dear? She must have been in heaven all of ten years, I should say."

Pauline replied that she had some recol-

lection of her mother, as she was eight years old when she died, but she was sorry to say the remembrance grew distant and uncertain as the years went by. Then, as the bows were neatly ready in tissue paper, deftly tucked in at one end and tightly twisted at the other, Pauline took the soft parcel and the girls bade Miss Curlew good night.

“It’s just impossible to feel provoked with Miss Curlew, she is such a gentle, kind-hearted little woman,” said Isabel as they walked away; “but how she does run on!”

“They say she’s as good as gold to her trying old father,” replied Rebecca, “and as patient as a saint. I could n’t find it in my heart, as Isabel says, to get provoked with her, but she does go on pretty briskly once she begins talking. I hope she did n’t try you, Poppy.”

“Oh, no,” Pauline said, “I did n’t mind her at all. I’m quite used to her, you know.” But her companions noticed that

she seemed sober and a little less inclined to talk than usual.

At the next corner they met Arthur Fredricks, Addie's brother.

"Ah, good evening, young ladies," he said, lifting his hat and beaming on them in the strong gleam of an arc light. "Whither away, my bonny birds?" he asked with the familiarity of an old friend.

"We 've been to meeting," said Isabel quietly.

Arthur gave a sweeping glance around, which rested at last upon Pauline.

"Well, 'pon my honor!" he exclaimed. "What was the subject?" he asked, going naturally around to Susie Follansbee's side.

"It was the story of the virgins," answered Susie promptly; "the story of five who took oil for their lamps, and of five who had no oil. You remember it," Susie added, "and how at midnight the Bridegroom came, and five poor virgins were shut out."

“Y-e-s, I remember,” said Arthur. “I suppose you lassies take that word for word.”

“Indeed we do,” said Isabel; “and so do your good father and mother, and Dr. Compton, and scores and thousands of learned, intelligent men and women everywhere. We take it for just what it illustrates. So do n’t be foolish, Arthur, and go pretending to take side issues to what has stood intact all these years.”

“Oh, I believe the Bible from cover to cover,” said Arthur; “but you little girls take everything so literally. Still,” he added with the superior air and kindly condescension of an older brother, “I suppose it helps make things run smoothly to take these things unquestioningly.”

“Well, I guess if you had two little twin brothers to ‘run,’” said Susie in a tone of superior assurance in turn, and that nearly convulsed the others for a moment, “and they set out every blessed day of their lives to ‘run’ everything and everybody around

them according to their own little monkey conceits, you would find it a surpassing comfort to accept very literally whatever proves a real support and aid. It may seem 'man-ny,' as little Benny said one day in place of manly, to question the exact literalness of this passage and that promise, but I often catch up my Bible, beside my regular reading, and open to what my eye may fall on, and I *never* fail to find something to lean right on. So you must n't go telling me, Mr. Arthur Fredricks, that in my need I take the Bible too unquestioningly. I'm only too glad to!"

"Oh, you're all right, Susie," Arthur replied so kindly that the drift of conversation changed a little, for Susie's stout voice had trembled a bit as she concluded.

Entering her room for the night Pauline said to herself: "I suppose poor mamma was crying that prayer-meeting night about papa's being 'out of Christ.' I've heard that expression twice to-night. But those

girls talked about religion and the Bible just as if both were a natural, indispensable, and pleasant part of their lives. If that is the way a Christian life works, helping and cheering people, I think it must be a pretty —good—thing—to—have—”

CHAPTER VII

THE RESCUE OF THE DOLLS

IT wanted but ten days to the time set for the sale. Two chests in Mr. Van Werter's house were full of beautifully made articles, as it had been thought advisable to carry things there as they were received or finished. Jack Lorraine was at home for a day or two and Rebecca knew would be on hand when the important days for the girls came around. But she still thought it would be better to keep quiet about the plans which they had succeeded wonderfully in keeping from him.

It happened that Pauline and Rebecca had met in the street that morning, only ten days distant from the sale, and at Rebecca's request, Pauline went home with her to see

the four dolls that Dora had finished dressing the day before.

“We will go up to my room,” Rebecca said, “as Jack will be in the sitting-room, and poor little Dora has managed faithfully to keep everything out of sight. But I know where she hides the dolls.”

Accordingly the two girls went in, and, seeing nothing of Jack, went immediately up-stairs. Rebecca opened the door of her room, then started and looked back with a queer little grimace at Pauline. There sat Jack, a beautifully dressed doll dangling on each knee, and two others sitting in state on chairs placed close beside him.

“Such a family!” he said, smiling blandly. “You will excuse my getting up, I know, Pauline, for you see I could n’t without disturbing my little ones. Sit down, ladies, sit right down and tell me all the news. When does the fair open?”

“What are you talking about?” asked Rebecca, looking at him with well-feigned

astonishment. "And do be careful of Dora's dolls," she added; "she's been dressing them with extreme care. Are there four of them?"

"Oh, yes, this four and four more, and still another four," said Jack, "and my! won't the doll table make a pretty show? Say, can't I be doormat or something when the time comes? or perhaps I'd better be the ticket man. You've no idea how I'd rake the money in. You'd better say 'Yes,' and done with it, for you know you can't get along without the junior pill of the family when the time arrives. You shouldn't have been afraid to tell your uncle about it and had his invaluable assistance from the outset, but fortunately I'm one of those forgiving chaps that won't lay it up against you—trying to be so astounding sly. Now guess how long I've known all about this pleasing little scheme?"

"Jack, what nonsense are you rattling on about?" asked Rebecca, while Pauline took

up the dolls, exclaiming over the loveliness of their beautifully made clothes.

“ Did Dora really dress these all by herself? ” she asked.

“ Yes, these I believe are entirely her work,” Rebecca replied.

“ Are your tidies all made, Pauline? ” Jack asked with an air of solicitude. “ Because if they ’re not I ’ll have a whole regiment of fellows down from the ’varsity tomorrow, and you ’d just be surprised to see the way they can knit and crochet. Tom Collins heels his own socks in a way to delight your heart; does it in the dark. And oh, before I forget it, the class orchestra sends its compliments and will be very glad to furnish music at nothing an evening; gives its services, you know. Awfully generous, philanthropic lot, that orchestra.”

“ Pauline, will you explain things to this lunatic? ” asked Rebecca, smiling in spite of herself. “ He seems to have some peculiar phantasm coursing through his brain.

I've heard that such fixed notions never should be combated."

"Then another thing," Jack went on, ignoring Rebecca's little speech entirely, "you see I do n't want to forget any of the messages the fellows sent. Maitland's father has a splendid conservatory, and Will sends his best wishes and wants to be informed whether it was seventy-five or a hundred little posies you wanted sent, to sell at ten cents apiece. A posy is a small bunch of flowers, you know, and Maitland had just as soon make it an even hundred as not. Better make it a hundred, ladies, for do let 's make a success of the thing as long as we've gone about it!"

"Dora 'll just about cry her eyes out to see you handling her dolls," said Rebecca. "She was going to let you see them, I know, when she got ready, but the poor little thing wanted to surprise you and show them herself. Now see how you 'll spoil all her fun."

“Not a bit of it,” said Jack; “the dolls can all be demurely in place before Dora returns from school.

“The whole story* of how I found you out is a very simple one. One of the dolls wrote me a letter. It said this: ‘Dear, kind Dr. Jack Lorraine; reverend sir,’—that’s because I’m a reverend senior,” interpolated Jack,—“‘If you will please call at your father’s house and proceed to the attic store-room and open the great green sheet chest, where comforters are kept in the summer, but are very scarce in the winter, you will find there four young ladies who want liberating the worst way. Pray come soon and rescue us! There have been ever so many others of us here, but they have mysteriously disappeared, one by one.’

“Even had not a few hours of home life been close upon me,” continued Jack, “I should have flown at once to their rescue. Now you must admit that facts are stubborn things. Home I rushed, to the green chest I

repaired. Now, if you think best to return these festive creatures to their dark retreat, why, all I can say is, 'I've done faithfully what I could for them.'*

Rebecca was about to speak when Jack again took the floor. "Only one word more, ladies. If you will allow me a conspicuous corner of one of your tables, it will afford me great pleasure to contribute, for the delectation and benefit of visitors and patrons at the coming fair, a dozen boxes of 'Lorraine Junior's new Patent Pills for Insomnia,' six red flannel 'Lorraine Chest Protectors,' a scalpel in a velvet case, also a small case of curiously formed bones."

Pauline burst into a peal of laughter in which Rebecca good-naturedly joined. "Jack," she said, "you're a jewel! You can't think how delighted I am to be saved the trouble of explaining our project to you. Now, no matter how you found us out, only please do n't say too much out in town for a day or two, because we're intending to

call on a few persons we want to invite specially to be present at our sale; not fair, if you please, Jack, but sale, and we would like to notify them before they hear particularly of it outside. The whole project is Pauline's. She originated and proposed it, the rest of us only falling into line at her call."

Pauline flushed at Rebecca's generous meed of credit. "Oh, I only roughly outlined a kind of scheme, you know, Rebecca, that occurred to me because my conscience pricked at something Dr. Compton said in a sermon. I don't take any praise to myself at all, for what could I have accomplished without the help of the girls in carrying out my very imperfect idea of doing a little good in the world?"

Jack Lorraine's handsome face straightway wore a puzzled, quizzical expression, while his dark eyes drew up in a suppressed smile.

"Far be it from me," he began patroniz-

ingly, "to interfere in the least with the spirit of so commendable an effort, and believe me, not even to an idiot that does n't know what his name is, will I divulge a word of this affair until you priestesses of all charity, say, 'Speak.' But I've always been afraid there was a tendency toward a mild kind of fanaticism among Dr. Compton's young people, that heretofore has not appeared to have touched you, Pauline. Not that I think it will harm any one," he added benignly, "only I had considered you an exception to the general rule."

"Now, Jack, please do n't talk that way," said Rebecca anxiously. "You know very well there's no one respects everything pertaining to religion, and the church, and all that, more than you always have, so where's the use in talking against your own convictions?"

Jack laid the dolls carefully on the lounge, put his hands in his pockets and began pacing to and fro. "Well, now, honestly,

Becca," he said, and this time with a genuine ring in his voice, "I confess to being on the fence of late with reference to some things that up to a short time ago I regarded as simply not to be questioned. But you see the more a fellow gets out into the world and hears other men talk, and some of those young theologues are mighty sharp, brainy chaps, you can't help wondering if some preconceived ideas may not be all at fault, and if after all we have read our Bibles understandingly and caught at the real meaning of its teachings."

Rebecca was too wise to attempt cutting short Jack's unwelcome reasonings, but Pauline had been to another meeting and confessed herself interested in what she had heard.

So Rebecca sat passively listening and hoping that once Jack had delivered his opinions he would be content so long as no counter remarks were offered.

"Then you do n't think it's all so very

important?" said Pauline inquiringly, and Rebecca caught the slight accent of relief in her tones, in anticipation of the reply she evidently expected.

"Oh, I did n't say that, Pauline, not by any means; I only own frankly that at present I am on the fence, as I said, as regards my convictions on some points I once thought admitted of no questioning as to their meaning. It makes a very interesting study," he added with the slight air of assumption a bright, young student is often given to affecting, "and one finds great diversion in reading up different trained intellects on these topics. I agree heartily with that Frenchman, Renan, that had there been no God revealed to man, we should have to invent one. Men must have some object of worship, and some kind of sacred belief has been fused into the heart from the earliest history of the race, so becoming a necessity to man's nature. But just what to accept as one's settled belief

concerning certain doctrinal points, aye, there 's the rub ! ”

“ I should n't suppose it would be very hard for a thinking, intelligent man to find out his own convictions,” said Rebecca. “ If you intend to be a physician, and you seem to have no difficulty in believing you are, I only hope that, as you once said you meant to, you will follow in papa's footsteps. I once heard papa say he had had to turn minister at more than one sick bed and comfort poor souls when there was nothing more that could be done for the body. I've often thought,” she added, “ I would rather be a doctor of medicine than of divinity, because then one so often has an opportunity of curing both soul and body. With all your statements, Jack, I believe that if this very day you were called to aid some poor dying creature, who begged to know how he could meet his God in peace, you would direct him straight to the Saviour of souls, and all little useless questions of this and

that actual belief would never occur for a moment."

"Well, now that is very true, Becca. I do n't oppose a word of that; at the same time I am inclining more and more to study out the Bible for myself. But you'd just be surprised to hear my sturdy defence of everything I've been taught on these subjects when I'm talking with the fellows. Oh, I'm never going to let go of the main beliefs; you need n't be afraid."

"Then do n't, pray, talk as if you were questioning them, brother mine."

"And now," said Jack in a different, lighter tone, "having demonstrated my knowledge of the important affair soon to take place, and having, as it were, pledged myself to keep a little quiet about it, until implored to do otherwise,—as I soon shall be,—and furthermore having expressed my desire to render substantial aid, may I ask the object to which your swiftly in-rolling funds are to be devoted?"

“That is but partially decided,” said Pauline as Jack looked to her for reply. “We have agreed among ourselves that in certain local directions our humble aid would be very acceptable, and as these needs most strongly present themselves we hope to extend help and relief to some truly deserving objects.”

This was Saturday; a week from the next Wednesday the sale was to open for two succeeding evenings. On Sunday morning Dr. Compton preached a strong sermon from the text, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” In forcible language he depicted the different gods forever striving to crowd from his rightful place in human hearts the Lord, Christ Jesus. The world, love of the world, and chiefly resistance of a Saviour’s leadership, were constantly inducing this unspoken, yet decided protest, “We will not have this man to reign over us.”

He startled some of his hearers by saying, “Disguise it as you may before your

fellow-men and also to your own hearts, there are those before me this day who are in reality saying these forbidding words concerning the gentle Christ, and both the Father in heaven and the Son know who you are. And while you maintain that attitude toward the Saviour, the goodness of God still enfolds you like a garment, for his sun shines alike on the evil and the good, yet remember, your soul is in danger, for it is a perilous thing to be out—of—Christ.”

“Dear me!” thought Pauline, “I wonder how many times I have got to hear that last ominous expression. And is it really true, I wonder, that unless we are Christians we occupy a position that is perilous? Dr. Compton does n’t often preach in that way. He generally dwells on the love and compassion of the Saviour.”

“Papa,” said Pauline that day at dinner, “do n’t you think Dr. Compton sometimes has a dreadfully severe way of putting things?”

“I think he always says what is true, my daughter,” was the quiet reply.

Pauline said nothing more then, but afterward when she was by herself she murmured reflectively: “I wonder if papa Van Werter is a Christian? One of these days I mean to ask him. Only I ’m afraid when I do there might be a scene. I never have had what might be called a scene with papa.”

CHAPTER VIII

INVITATIONS

Two or three days had flown. The time had come for spreading abroad the fact that a sale of useful and fancy articles would take place at the residence of Mr. Norman Van Werter on Wednesday and Thursday evenings of the week following. Jack had received a note and his tongue was unloosed, and he assured the young ladies in reply that he was inviting all friends he met to be present at the sale, to bring all the money they possibly could, and to invite every one they knew to come, within a radius of ten miles.

Moreover, it proved true that an orchestra of college lads had volunteered their serv-

ices for the two evenings, for, to her surprise, Pauline was sent a note in which the leader had begged of Jack to be informed accurately at what time the last train at night would leave Verona Roads for the city.

“I’ve written him that the 10.15 will be just his figure,” wrote Jack.

The meeting Pauline had proposed for a few final considerations was being held at her home, the five friends all present in the library.

“Oh, I know how Jack discovered our movements,” Pauline said. “Papa told me a few days ago that he had seen his friend, Captain Maitland, and spoken to him about getting some flowers for our sale, and papa said he showed a good deal of interest and asked several questions concerning the affair, then sent his best wishes for success, and said he should take great satisfaction in sending me quite a present of flowers from his conservatories. I was stupid not to think of it right away, but of course Captain Maitland

told his son Will, who lost no time in speaking of it to Jack."

"Yes," said Rebecca, "that is all plain enough, and Jack knows of old that things were often concealed in the green sheet chest, so it was easy enough to surprise us as he did. However, I do n't care a pin. We kept things pretty well from milord, considering, and Dora was delighted at the praise he bestowed upon her dolls."

"Now, about those personal invitations," said Pauline; "there is old Colonel Pellington; who had better see him? And there's Miss Frobisher; who had better call on her?"

"Mamma suggested something to me this morning," said Addie Fredricks, "that I had n't thought of before. Suppose any one should offer us a contribution; what had we better do? accept it?"

"W-e-ll," said Pauline thoughtfully, "that had n't occurred to me either, and really, for a small affair like this I think we

are going to have about all we should be likely to sell. Still, we could n't refuse a kindly offer, and when you think of it, the flowers and the music are donations from outside."

"Yes, and Jack's bones," added Rebecca.

"Oh, we must in all courtesy take anything that is offered," said Isabel Trenton. "At the same time it can easily be understood that articles are not solicited."

"That will be the best way," said Pauline. "And now about Colonel Pellington."

"What's the use of asking him?" asked Isabel. "He is rich, it is true, very rich they say, but he never visits anywhere, never is seen in a public assembly, seems to ridicule church-going and never has been inside of a church since any one can remember."

"Yes, but this is not a church affair, as Rebecca once said," answered Addie; "and what we want to do is to give ample opportunity to help us to people who can do so if

they will. And then as an old and prominent member of the community, I think it would be highly proper to give the colonel a special invitation. It might please him; who knows?"

"Another thing," said Susie; "we all happen to belong to the same society, and we do n't want to give this enterprise the idea of being at all a denominational affair. I wish we could say right out that it is simply a movement begun and carried out in the spirit of the Master. That is so, is n't it, Pauline?"

"Yes, certainly, Susie. That was distinctively my idea in proposing it."

"Then I think," continued Susie, "that without saying so in a way to seem queer at all, we can give something of that impression in inviting the very few we intend to see personally."

"Well, I move," said Rebecca, "that Pauline and Susie call on Colonel Pellington; Susie will know just what to say, and

Poppy had best go, because if she did n't he might not consider the invitation as hailing exactly from headquarters."

"And I move that Pauline and Rebecca call on Miss Frobisher," said Addie. "They may not exactly enjoy it," and Addie's eyes danced, "but the call, 'bitter but wholesome,' may be productive of much good."

Miss Katherine Frobisher, one of the chief landowners of the place, occasionally attended Dr. Compton's church, and quite as often was seen at the chapel services. Whether she had any settled religious belief no one knew. She lived alone with her servant and housekeeper in a great house near the park, dressed richly, rode often in solitary state in the finest carriage the local livery stable afforded, and was known to have contributed spasmodically to charitable objects. She was a tall, fine-looking, silent woman, whose reserved, repellent manner had secured her what she seemed most to

desire, almost complete isolation from her fellow-beings.

“I think it might be kind to invite Miss Curlew,” said Pauline. “The little woman is fast growing old, is sensitive and easily pleased. I might drop in on my way to meeting Tuesday evening, just before our time of opening, and say we should all be happy to see her.”

Every girl of the four was inwardly rejoiced at hearing Pauline speak of attending the meeting as a matter of course, especially on the eve of the sale when she might easily have made her busy state an excuse for remaining at home. But Isabel only answered quickly, “Oh, yes, that would be very kind, Poppy; we won’t let you forget it.” Then it was arranged that Dr. and Mrs. Compton, and the chapel minister and his wife should be invited, from neither of whom any entrance fee would be accepted.

“I am expecting Cousin Madeline the last of the week,” said Pauline. “I doubt

if Maidie ever attended a prayer-meeting in her life, but I don't think she will have the least objection to going with us. Madeline's mother was very, very good, just like my mamma, but Maidie says that is the reason she died young. I think Maidie would be actually afraid of becoming too good. She says saints of any description never live long;" and Pauline's little hand went up to her face, leaving only her laughing eyes visible.

"Dear me!" said Isabel, who invariably reflected a smile from other faces. "In the delightful, sunny ideas that prevail nowadays in connection with a Christian life, I thought everybody had dropped that old-time notion that religion is n't a thing to live by. And if one but lives aright, death is only the entrance into a thousand times happier life than even this one."

"You really believe that, do n't you, Isabel?" said Pauline a little curiously.

"Believe it? Why, I know it, actually

know it, Poppy dear, beyond the shadow of doubt."

"Well, I must say I think it is beautiful to make it such an everyday affair," said Pauline, a wistful expression stealing into her face.

"The truth is," began Susie's cheerful voice, "the cause of Christ often suffers because of utterly false ideas entertained by people who know almost nothing of the value and comfort of being a Christian. But people everywhere are coming up to a better understanding of these things. Our young folks are helping largely to prove what true Christianity means, and as time goes on it is going to be more and more the habit of the world to follow Jesus."

Then the girls went their way, promising to make their calls at once.

At Colonel Pellington's Pauline and Susie were received with distant, stately courtesy. Upon making known their errand the gentleman inquired with pronounced delib-

eration, "And what, may I be permitted to ask, is the particular cause to be aided by the proceeds of this sale at which I am invited to be present?"

The studied inquiry might or might not have contained a bit of veiled irony calculated to confuse the youthful callers, but it only acted as a stimulant to self-possessed Susie.

"We hope," she said in a straightforward, unabashed way, "to establish a little fund to be strictly devoted to doing good right here in Verona Roads. We have heard of a painful case where a worthy mother is unable to secure proper treatment for a suffering child who may be deformed for life if not aided. We know also of an honest, steady man whose little family are reduced to great straits because of an infirmity shutting him off entirely from ability to work. We do not expect to do great things, but," Susie added with one of the most genial of smiles, "every Christian who is so disposed can do

some good in such a great, needy world as this."

"You have found out the needs of the world early."

The dry, caustic remark troubled Susie not one whit. "Well, I have had to shoulder some rather unusual obligations early," she said cheerily, "because of having to give up my mother several years ago, and partly assuming the care of a little family, but I am aware that my knowledge of the world is still exceedingly limited. We shall hope to see you next Wednesday evening and Thursday also, if convenient," she said pleasantly, rising to conclude the call.

"There are five of us interested," said Pauline, "and we thought that, as one of the older citizens of Verona Roads, it was only proper that you and a few others be specially notified and invited to be present at our sale."

"I thank you very sincerely for your consideration. I presume your father antici-

pates considerable enlivening from this sale, Miss Van Werter?"

"Oh, papa was terribly opposed to some features of it at first," said Pauline, her face breaking into a dimpling smile. "He would not listen for the longest while to the proposed admission price of twenty-five cents, but after he found how anxiously I had set my heart on making a success of our little attempt, he finally yielded, but not very willingly, I must confess. Papa holds to fine, old-fashioned ideas about a man's house being his castle and free to all his friends, but this is an exceptional case, I tell him, and he can play the house is mine for a couple of evenings, so I can be as calculating as I please."

Her merry look almost drew the reflection of an answering smile from the set, yet regular features of Colonel Pellington's Roman-like face.

"Your father has the knightly instincts of a more chivalrous age than this," he said

with a grave salute as the young ladies turned away.

“I feel like pussy-cat Mole that jumped onto a coal, and in her best pettitote burned a great hole,” said Pauline, her face twitching. “How do you feel, Susie?”

“Just as natural as can be,” said Susie with a comfortable little shrug. “Nobody trod on my skirts, for I never pretended I knew the whole world by heart. That was our dear friend’s own idea. But—remember I told you—I should n’t be surprised one atom if Colonel Felix Pellington appeared at our sale as large as life next Wednesday evening, and enjoyed himself, too.”

“Oh, nor I either,” laughed Pauline. “I think he might come out of respect to papa and his chivalrous age, but he can’t get in for less than twenty-five cents during the temporary transfer of the house to my ownership. I noticed,” she said, growing sober, “that you managed to speak of it as coming under the head of a Christian’s duty

to do some good in the world, Susie, and I thought it was brave of you, too."

The next day Pauline and Rebecca called on Miss Katherine Frobisher, one of the largest taxpayers of Verona Roads. Miss Frobisher received them in a parlor filled with elegant and massive furniture, and was herself the picture of an unbending, imposing dame as she settled herself in a deep-seated, sculptured chair, slightly adjusted her heavy silk dress, and waited to be informed as to the cause of so unusual an event as a call from two blooming young girls.

Once made acquainted with their project and told simply and politely, as Colonel Pellington had been, that a few persons seemed entitled to a special invitation, Miss Frobisher showed so decided though dignified an interest in the object of their visit, that Pauline quite surprised herself by giving in detail the manner in which it had been started, her own blind wish to do some-

thing of use in the world, the discussions and decisions to which the idea had given rise, the hearty coöperation of her friends and their hope of making a success of what they meant should be a very pleasant occasion.

Miss Frobisher thanked them in the formal manner natural to her for honoring her with an invitation, said she should not forget it, but was careful, the girls thought, to make no promise of being present.

“I suppose,” she said in an unsmiling way, “that you young ladies are quite enthusiastic in religious efforts, and satisfied as to such conclusions as you may have reached concerning religion itself.”

Pauline’s eyes fell, but Rebecca replied modestly, yet without hesitation: “I do think it is the thing that makes life bright and—satisfying.”

“I am very glad to hear any one speak so decidedly on any subject,” Miss Frobisher replied, “there is really so little of which

we can speak with certainty. I suppose you have the feeling that is apt to be strong with the young, that nothing could shake your faith, no matter what might come?"

"No," said Rebecca, "I do not think God would let my faith be shaken, no matter what might come."

"Well, faith is a beautiful thing," said the lady.

Throughout the call both Pauline and Rebecca fancied they saw a longing look in Miss Frobisher's eyes; "just as if a hungry soul was looking through them," Rebecca said on the way home.

"I'm afraid the poor lady has had some kind of a past that was sad," said Pauline, "and it may be she let go some of her faith or had none to help her. She seemed to me almost morbid on the subject."

"I do n't see," Rebecca said, speaking with some force, "what in the world any one who has no faith in Christ has to fall back upon when trouble comes."

“ Well, I should hate to grow old without it,” said Pauline brightly. “ It may be all well enough to slip along while one is young and there is everything to enjoy, but I think something of the kind must be needed as people grow old.”

Rebecca did not want of all things to “ preach,” neither could she let such an opportunity pass for saying a word for the greatest comfort and safeguard of her life, so she only replied in the same bright way in which her friend had spoken :—

“ I find it a lovely thing to have while I am young, Poppy dear.”

CHAPTER IX

PREPARATIONS

ON Saturday came Madeline Hunter, and Rebecca invited Pauline and her cousin to visit her on Monday evening to meet Addie Fredricks and Arthur, Isabel Trenton and Susie Follansbee. "A very informal company," Rebecca said, "as we are so near an important occasion, but we ought first to get acquainted with Poppy's cousin."

And an informal company it was, but sparkling and full of pleasure. The Western girl "took amazingly" as Arthur Fredricks observed, yet it was noticeable that, as usual, wherever Susie Follansbee went, Arthur was soon at her side.

The young ladies were delighted with

Madeline Hunter, whose burry Western speech and affectionate, utterly unconventional manners were winsome in the extreme. She was a showy, brilliant girl, who showed her likings in a lively, demonstrative way. Once during the evening when Isabel was looking at a book of fine illustrations and said cordially, "Oh, Miss Hunter, you must come and enjoy these with me," the beautiful girl immediately knelt beside Isabel to look over the book with her, and said in a caressing way, "It was so lovely of you to want me to share your pleasure in seeing these pictures; and do n't, please, call me 'Miss Hunter' again."

And yet Madeline Hunter had a mind of her own, and had decided opinions, and an outspoken way of expressing them upon occasions. "What a power for good—or otherwise, that young lady might become!" thought Rebecca in her usual womanly way.

The friends did not remain very late at

Rebecca's home, as Tuesday morning the preparations for the sale were to begin in earnest. They were to be completed so far as the rooms, the covering of the carpets and the coverings of the tables were concerned, leaving nothing to do on Wednesday but to put the different articles in place, which would be quite enough for the day of the sale.

Accordingly on Tuesday the friends were all assembled at Pauline's soon after nine in the morning. Jack Lorraine and Arthur Fredricks—who said his “partner” had given him a day off—and Daniel, the man who attended to the furnace and did outside chores at Mr. Van Werter's, soon had the superfluous furniture moved up-stairs, the cotton coverings tacked with sufficient security over the rich carpets, and the five tables in place. Then Jack and Daniel departed in quest of a load of evergreens, while Arthur remained to assist in any work too difficult for the girls.

By the middle of the afternoon the tables were ready to receive the goods, and very pretty and festive they looked. The different colored cambrics were covered, part of them with coarse Swiss mull, part with wide meshed lace which Mr. Follansbee easily found and presented for this and perhaps subsequent occasions. Along the edges were tacked rows of evergreen, and a small tree at the end of each table was so placed that egress was just possible for the attendants.

Hetty Shockmeyer was to send her candy early in the afternoon of the next day, as she wanted everything as fresh as possible; but one box of excellent confectionery had already arrived and, placed in glass dishes on a table covered with scarlet cambric and lace, was tempting indeed.

“Now we ’d better go home and get rested for meeting time,” said Addie, as the little finishing touches were about completed, and the articles already marked with prices could soon adorn the tasteful tables.

Madeline Hunter started. "Why, bless me!" she exclaimed. "Is it to a prayer-meeting you go, right in the midst of all this brightness?"

"Certainly it is," replied Isabel, toward whom Madeline from the first had seemed particularly drawn. "We couldn't get along without our own special meetings, no matter what else was claiming temporary attention. That is the regular, vital engagement with us all."

"And you go too?" she asked in a drooping, half-comical attitude, turning to Pauline.

The girls felt it rather a critical moment.

"Oh, yes, I go too, Maidie," said Pauline, laughing a little. "And I must go to-night," she went on a bit hurriedly, "because on the way we are to stop and invite a little milliner to come here to-morrow. She's an amusing little body that used to know my mamma. You must see her."

"I never go to a prayer-meeting," said

Madeline, a suspicion of resistance in her drawn-up figure.

“Oh, but you will with us,” said Susie in a matter-of-fact tone, keeping busy meantime pinning a bit of refractory evergreen to the lace, “you see it’s grown an actual necessity to us little Verona Roaders. Why, I could no more do without our Young People’s meeting than I could without—without—why anything I *must* have!”

“And yet you all keep alive,” said Madeline with so comical a look it was impossible to help laughing at her. “But I can’t imagine,” she went on, “a prayer-meeting being a necessity to young people like us right in the midst of fresh, beautiful life;” and she spoke in a tone quite unlike the usually happy, unrestrained one natural to her.

“Well, I can promise you, you would soon feel the necessity of it,” said Susie, turning around, her sunny face puckered into a deprecatory expression, “if you had

the responsibility resting chiefly upon you of training a pair of irresponsible, unthinking little midgets, who are always going to remember what sister Susie said, and did, and what she taught them. Oh, dear!" she said suddenly, breaking into a half wailing kind of a laugh, "did you notice, girls, that neither of them was at Sunday-school a week ago Sunday?"

"Yes," said Isabel, "of course I noticed they were not in the primary department, and I've been on the point half a dozen times of asking where they were."

"Well, it's the greatest story!" said Susie, bubbling with laughter at the recollection. "You see, once in a while those little peeps take a notion that they won't go to Sunday-school. Now I intend that they shall be just as regular in their appearance at church and Sunday-school, when they are well, as they are at the kindergarten on week-days. Why should n't they be, pray? I should consider it a great weakness on my

part to let them go irregularly to school during the week just because of a childish whim.

“ Well, I never give Benny nor Billy mince pie ; it is the one thing they never can eat, and it’s no food for children, anyway. I shouldn’t make mince pies only that papa is so fond of them, but the little boys understand, and so does Blinda, that for them it is always a forbidden luxury. But a week ago Sunday it rained quite hard at church time, you remember, and as I had so much of a cold I did n’t think it prudent to go out, and unfortunately papa forgot to bring home rubbers for Benny and Billy as he meant to Saturday. But it cleared beautifully during the morning and became dry underfoot, so I said we would all go to Sunday-school, I suppose greatly to the disgust of my small brothers, who had got their minds all made up to stay at home.

“ Shortly before dinner time, as I sat reading, supposing that Benny and Billy

were looking at picture books as I had left them doing, Blinda came bustling into the room and said: 'What 'll ye be thinkin', Miss Susie, as thim little rascals has been up to now? They 've climbed on a cricket top a chair an' fetched down a big mince pie off the shelf in the kitchen pantry, an' the two o' thim has eet half of it altogether.'

"Well, I called a court and summoned the accused. They came with the proofs of their guilt all over them; faces with spice lodged in dabs here and there and settled in the corners of their mouths. But the total lack of repentance in their hard little faces was what appalled me.

"'Benny and Billy,' I said, 'did you get a mince pie and eat half of it?'

"'Oh, we eat a good deal more 'n half right down,' said Benny, with an alacrity that evidently did him good, and Billy of course echoed the confession with the same cheerfulness. And what do you think? those little heathen boys had been eating all

that pie out of a solemn belief that it would make them so sick they could n't go to Sunday-school! Think of that!

“ ‘ Well,’ I told them, ‘ you know what sister always does when you have eaten anything that hurts you. Now, you can both stay here a few moments, and if you go out of the room I shall tell papa.’ ”

“ I went for the rhubarb and mixed two small, but strong, doses without any sugar. Oh, if there 's anything on earth the small souls of my little brothers loathe more than any other it is rhubarb! But I never flinched,” said Susie, with a turn of her head indicative of invincible resolution, “ and by the time I got through administering my corrective, papa came up to see what all the noise was about. Mince pie and rhubarb combined on the same countenances was too much for him, and I saw his shoulders shaking as he went down-stairs. But—I—do n't—believe,” Susie concluded with slow emphasis, “ my little brothers will employ

just that method for keeping away from Sunday-school again."

There had been ripples of suppressed amusement all through Susie's narrative, but no one had wanted to interrupt her.

"Oh, I must see those twins," said Madeline Hunter, her splendid teeth still showing with broad laughter. "Poppy has told me ever so many funny things about them; they must be a mighty enterprising pair. But it is a responsibility, is n't it?"

"Yes, a very serious one, and I feel it," said Susie; "for with all their amusing pranks they must be taught judiciously. And, oh, dear! sometimes I feel so weak and tired! Papa is just as good as he can be, but so easy! But you must n't make any mistake about papa," Susie hastened to add, "he is decided enough in business affairs and a stanch Christian man; but I'm afraid Blinda hits it when she says, 'Thim little limbs comes it over their fayther like imperors iv'ry time.' I suppose he always remem-

bers they have no mother," said Susie with a sigh.

"You must bring them to-morrow night," said Pauline; and Madeline Hunter said, "Yes, do!"

"No, not to-morrow night," said Susie; "it would be too much of an anxiety on opening night; but Blinda can go out Thursday night as usual if she wants to, then perhaps they can come for a while with papa. He won't want to keep them here very long; so he can take them home and try to put them to bed. Likely as not I shall find them cutting 'round trying every bed in the house when I get home."

"Well, now, I must go," said Rebecca, and her rising was the signal for a general dispersion.

"We'll stop for you to-night," said Isabel as she and Susie linked their arms at the steps.

"Yes, do," said Pauline, "I'll be all ready."

On the way to meeting Isabel Trenton

walked with Madeline Hunter, who made her appearance with Pauline, and Susie Follansbee with Pauline.

“Maidie thinks just as I do,” said Pauline, “that it’s something entirely new to have one’s Christianity brought in as a natural part of one’s daily life and conversation. She says everything connected with religion has been a kind of horror to her, and yet my uncle has been a church member for years. But don’t you think older people, those of the past generation, grew up with more of an idea of reserve on such subjects than young people do now?”

“I have no doubt they did,” said Susie. “It is our Young People’s societies that are making religion more a recognized part of the lives of the young to-day.”

“I suppose my uncle scarcely notices in that great driving Chicago that when he occasionally goes to a prayer-meeting, Maidie has an excuse for not going, as she says she always has, but she attends church with her

father usually Sunday mornings. But to have a prayer-meeting a real assistance and pleasure to young people instead of a dread and a something to be avoided, Madeline does n't seem to be able to understand at all. I think the idea half repels and half attracts poor impulsive Maidie. She looks at me incredulously when I say and insist that I am getting almost fond of the meetings. I have n't told her how they are carried on ; I thought I would n't. The methods surprised me ; I think they will her. Here we are at Miss Curlew's."

The little milliner was delighted with her invitation and said she had heard something about the expected sale and thought how pleasant it would be. She beamed on Pauline and Susie with so pleased a face that they were thankful at having remembered her with a special request to be present.

A little rosy-cheeked, dark-eyed maiden of sixteen sat in the leader's chair when the girls reached the vestry. Madeline Hunter

gave Pauline one swift look of inquiry and astonishment when the composed little thing gave out the opening hymn. During the reading of the Scriptures by the same young girl Madeline sat motionless, one hand pressed hard against her cheek. She did not move when Addie Fredricks offered a short, feeling prayer. She still sat without moving when Isabel Trenton, bright, engaging Isabel, arose and began repeating a little poem beginning :—

How do I love Thee?

Listen, dear Saviour, while my heart

Tries a reply to frame—

And as the sweet words flowed on, Madeline listened with tears in her eyes.

CHAPTER X

THE SALE

BRISK fingers soon made the tables beautiful on Wednesday morning, the only question being how best to dispose the lavish display of articles. Dora Lorraine had done wonders with her dolls in every way. At the outset she went to two large toy houses in the city, escorted to the door by her mother. She told one of the proprietors at each establishment why she wanted some dolls, and succeeded in buying, at a merely nominal price, a dozen beautiful dolls left over from the holidays, one gentleman inviting the interesting child to come again should she want more.

To dress twelve dolls, some as babies in

long clothes, three as brides, and the rest in appropriate evening dresses, all in the course of six weeks, was too much, Mamma Lorraine thought, for any school girl to attempt unassisted. So Aunt Laura, who had taught Dora to sew beautifully, was invited to make a little visit and help the child, whom she always had regarded as "her baby." But, as Rebecca said, the four that Jack had discovered she had dressed entirely herself. They made a beautiful array on what came to be called "the doll table," and were ludicrously offset by eighteen diminutive dolls of another description, at none of which any one could look without bursting into laughter.

Yet there was no small amount of genius discernible in Grandma Fredricks' hickory nut penwipers. They wore tiny mob caps, ruffled around the edge, giving a peculiar piquancy to the little, wizened, sharp-nosed faces. "Your grandfather printed the countenances, as his hands were steadier

than mine," Grandma Fredricks wrote; and quite a "face artist" the old gentleman showed himself, for with pen and ink he had produced some decidedly remarkable effects. The little black skirts, some of silk beruffled and beflounced, stood out nearly straight, with the layers of skirts beneath them. Others had outside skirts of black broadcloth, with dots of colored embroidery silks worked in. Some had lace crossed surplice or Quaker fashion across their prim little breasts, while others were adorned with pert little ruffles.

"Such a quantity of them!" Madeline Hunter exclaimed. "Your grandma must have sat up late, I think, to get them up so exquisitely." They were indeed a unique lot, and the doll table, with its many other juvenile goods, was sure of being well patronized.

The table of useful articles, to be tended by Addie Fredricks and her Sunday-school scholar, Lora Torrence, would attract people

with its sensible showing. Susie Follansbee's aprons were a study. There were long gingham aprons to delight the heart of a neat housekeeper, clothespin aprons of fancy tickings, pretty school aprons, fine aprons for cutting out work at the church sewing meeting, and a few dainty, expensive, laced-trimmed ones for fair waiters at a church sociable. These were offset by Pauline Van Werter's pretty caps and equally pretty knitted things, convenient for the head or the shoulders at the seaside or for the home piazza in summer. Some of these things were contributed by Susie's out-of-town relatives, and added to these were several useful things from Mr. Follansbee's city emporium.

The table of fancy articles was one at which to linger reflectively. Isabel Trenton and her former pupil, Lily Snow, had charge of this table. Isabel's father had opened wide his heart and his hand, in recognition of the young ladies' laudable enterprise, and

colored photographs in plenty were scattered here and there, some in velvet frames, a few in hand-painted ones. Two choice little paintings in oil, daintily framed in gilt and offered at what would be considered less than cost, would net a pretty sum if purchased.

A large tray in Madeline Hunter's capacious trunk had come laden with sweet things, as Pauline had called them; and sweet they surely were in point of fragrance. Flat, quilted silk cushions, scented with sachet, for the lining of bureau drawers; picture flies, with painted corners and fringed edges; pincushions of satin, lace, and ribbons; table scarfs, and corner mantel bows of wide ribbons, all sachet perfumed, made up Madeline's lavish offerings.

The flower table, with Pauline Van Werter and Madeline Hunter standing like flowers amid flowers, was a wonder of beauty, ingenuity, and sweetness. The paper flowers made by Isabel Trenton's aunts were as perfect as human fingers could make them.

A slender vase from Mr. Van Werter's store of foreign goods held a bunch of sweet peas which faithfully reproduced nature's matchless shape and coloring to the last degree of human skill. Another bunch of the same flowers, in a little old-fashioned pitcher of Japanese ware, looked as if just culled from a delightful country garden. Dahlias, phlox, snowballs, and sunflowers were also skillfully set up on green covered wire stems for lamp screens, and at noon there came a variety of nature's beauties from the Maitland conservatories.

The candy table, under the care of Susie Follansbee and happy Hetty Shockmeyer, was a saccharine delight. The home-made candies came out beautifully. Many of these were disposed on curious Japanese trays from the importing house of Mr. Van Werter, and designed to be sold at catching prices. Addie Fredrick's cornballs, heaped high in glittering pyramids, were sure to fall into the waiting paper bags. Hetty

Shockmeyer brought so generous an offering that a portion was reserved for display the second evening.

Also at noon arrived an unexpected contribution from little Miss Curlew. It was only some bright-colored papers cut in rounds or oval, the edges scalloped and pinked, the paper thick and glossy as if varnished. "Just to be used as mats or little trays," the note said that came with them. Some of the pink cornballs looked very pretty on the green mats, the white ones on the red mats, and so on. "How kind! how touching! Why, how *very* kind of that dear little woman!" said Madeline Hunter in her warm, hearty way when she saw the simple gifts.

Dr. Compton, the beloved pastor, sent an ingenious picture, drawn with pen and ink, showing a few of the prominent scenes in the "Pilgrim's Progress." "The work of a few idle hours," he wrote pleasantly. It was in a light frame of white silk with

violets embroidered here and there, the delicate work of Mrs. Compton.

“ Well, I should say a man was refreshingly idle while tracing out work like that ! ” said Isabel Trenton. “ I think papa would want that for his studio right away if he saw it, ” she added. “ I hope he will have the chance of buying it before any one else does. What a handsome contribution ! ”

Just as the girls were going home at noon to dine and then dress for the evening, there came a large box, brought in by an expressman.

“ What can it be ? ” said Pauline, who in her surprise said nothing to the man who brought it ; in fact, she had only seen him going out of the door, as the box had been carried into the back entrance. “ Knock it open, Daniel, ” she said to the man, who fortunately was in the kitchen. “ I hope it is n't crockery ware, ” she added, thinking of the tiny Japanese cups and saucers on the fancy goods table.

No ; on opening, it proved to be fruit of the finest kind—oranges of phenomenal size, mandarins, apples that looked like wax, skinless figs, and beautiful pears, a rarity for the season. A card on the top of all bore the name, “ Miss Frobisher.”

“ Well, bless her heart and soul and all the rest of her ! ” cried Pauline with a merry little squeeze at the card as if it might have been Miss Frobisher’s hand.

“ Well, to think ! ” said Rebecca. “ From that unapproachable ‘ duchess,’ Jack used to call her. I believe it pleased her that we called. Now if she ’ll only bring herself to-night, oh, won’t it be joyful ! ”

“ Well, she had a first-class invitation,” said Pauline ; “ but all I can say is, if she should come, it would be the first time I ever saw her in any kind of a building with other people, except sometimes at church and once in her own house.”

“ Nothing from dear brother Pellington yet,” said Susie with a resigned air and a

forlorn pucker of her mouth and short little chin. "I'm afraid that Poppy and I did n't make quite the fascinating pair that Poppy and Rebecca proved."

"Oh, no knowing," laughed Pauline. "Colonel Pellington may come and buy us out for all we know."

The rooms on the first story of Mr. Norman Van Werter's house were like a bower of beauty, light, and fragrance when evening came. "Much like a beautiful picture," some one said afterward. Stationed at the door was Daniel, grandly arrayed in a blue coat with brass buttons, which he proudly wore when acting as a kind of private policeman at Mr. Van Werter's store during the holidays. A little table with a delicate satin cover had been placed near the door, and at this sat Jack Lorraine, rapidly slipping quarters into a beribboned Japanese basket.

True to its promise, the college orchestra had arrived and was already sending sweet,

enlivening strains through the large rooms and spacious hall, all flooded with light. Coats and hats were piled high on the wide carved table in the hall, on the hat-stand and deer's antlers mounted on the wall. People came and came, a continuous stream, until it seemed as though half the population of Verona Roads had flocked to the novel affair. Verily, Jack had done his part well.

Miss Curlew, in an amazing little evening bonnet, evidently gotten up for the occasion, pressed to the flower table, where she stared in undisguised admiration at Pauline, brilliant with excitement, and beautiful in a dress of light-blue silk very simply made, and at Madeline Hunter, who, all in white, looked perfectly dazzling to the good little milliner.

"You may not know it, my dear," she said smilingly to Pauline, "but people are having to wait their turn to see what you have for sale. We come in relays, actually

in relays, my dear, so dense is the crowd. Ah, what beautiful sweet peas ! ”

“ Perhaps you ’d like those for your show-window,” said Madeline, who made herself delightfully free and agreeable to all who stopped at the flower table ; “ they are very pretty and quite reasonable.”

“ Ah, yes,” said Miss Curlew, “ it would be a great pleasure to buy anything of you, I am sure, my pretty dear ; but I am afraid I must select something less perishable, for beautiful as the flowers are, they so soon fall away.”

“ Oh, but these grew on wire stems,” said Madeline gayly, “ and a woman made them, and they ’re warranted to last a whole season ; ” and the merry girl held vase and flowers aloft in her white fingers. “ The price marked includes vase and all,” she added.

Miss Curlew exclaimed in astonishment. “ Really, quite a ruse,” she said in her little sentimental way. “ I never suspected their

genuineness. Please mark them sold at once. Nothing could be prettier for my show window."

The flower and candy tables were in the library, the fancy goods, useful articles, and toys, including dolls, in the parlor, which was wide and deep, considerably larger than the library. People had not come merely to look on, as the swift sales testified, and Arthur Fredricks had to be despatched in haste first from one table, then another, to get change from Jack Lorraine, who was fortunate in having taken a hundred quarters alone. Verona Roads had come prepared to pay its fare.

All at once a majestic figure strode into the hall—a man with a fine but forbidding face of a Roman cast. The tall form towered above nearly every one else present. Pauline, behind the flowers, exchanged a perfectly sober look with Susie Follansbee behind the candy, as Colonel Felix Pellington slowly picked his way to the flower table.

“Flowers, flowers, pretty flowers,” said Madeline Hunter in a soft, low tone, and bewitchingly holding an exquisite bunch of rosebuds and lilies of the valley before the sedate colonel. He looked steadily for a moment, as if unable to help looking at the radiant Madeline. Then regarding the flowers as if trying to determine whether quite so large a bunch was meant for a buttonhole bouquet or to be carried in the hand, he asked soberly, “What are these for?”

“For only a dollar,” said the quick-witted Madeline, a flashing smile revealing her superb teeth.

Colonel Pellington’s face relaxed involuntarily as, struggling to get at an inner pocket midst the jam, he said, “I’ll give you a dollar, young lady, for your wit and your flowers, if I can reach my pocketbook.”

He had succeeded in paying for his purchase and was about turning away when he collided slightly with a tall, grim, yet stately featured lady, and there, to Pauline’s great

satisfaction, was Miss Frobisher, evidently trying to reach the flower table. As the colonel brushed against her he bowed with with old-fashioned stateliness; then, perhaps glad to rid himself of an incumbrance, he said gallantly, "Madame, permit me;" wherewith he presented the rosebuds and the lilies.

"Oh, but you must have a buttonhole bouquet for yourself!" said the sprightly Madeline. "Here is one; the prettiest I have, and only fifty cents."

"Ah, you have persuaded me again!" said Colonel Pellington, solemnly receiving the little bunch of flowers and slipping them into a buttonhole. But the press prevented his immediately moving away, and his gaze wandered again to the flowers, which were arranged with great taste.

"We want to sell this king bouquet," said Madeline suavely, "our largest and handsomest trophy of the flower table, to a good Samaritan who will carry them to some



MADELINE AND THE COLONEL.

sick person where it will do real good. You see the young ladies who got up this sale did it with a purpose," she added, her burry Western turn of the "r" giving distinctness to what she said; "and if some one would buy it,—we only ask three dollars,—smell of it awhile, then carry it to some sick person, it would serve a double turn. We'd mark it 'sold' and keep it on the table till the close of the evening if any one wished us to."

"Very well, you may mark it sold," said Colonel Pellington, his severe face actually breaking into a reluctant smile.

CHAPTER XI

THE SALE CONTINUED

“OH, are n't you tired, Maidie?”

It was Pauline Van Werter who addressed her cousin, at the same time sinking wearily into a deep-seated chair.

“Tired? No, indeed!” cried Madeline. “I'm too nerved up and pleased to be tired. I never enjoyed anything so much in my life. When I go back to Chicago I think I'll have to persuade papa to let me tend in a flower store. Was n't it just lovely, and what a crowd! Uncle Norman, did n't you think it fine?”

Mr. Van Werter, who was walking slowly up and down the nearly deserted room, regarded his enthusiastic niece smilingly.

“Yes, I rather enjoyed seeing so many people together,” he said.

“Oh, papa, you were beautiful to every one to-night!” Pauline exclaimed, jumping up and linking her arm in her father’s as he walked. “I was so glad to see you appear to enjoy talking with Colonel Pellington and Miss Frobisher, two of our specially invited guests.”

“And it was so nice,” said Madelinē, “to see the gratification in little Miss Curlew’s face when you went walking around the rooms with her after some of the people were gone. I just loved you for that!”

“My dear,” said Mr. Van Werter, “that was a very little thing to do, not worth mentioning.”

“Well, it’s the little things I believe that make people happy in this world,” persisted Madeline. “Oh, dear, I wish this sale was going to last a month!”

“No, dear me!” cried Pauline, “I’m

afraid there would n't be much of me left. You see I felt the anxiety of a hostess; perhaps that's what tired me so."

"Well, come now, let's say good night," said Mr. Van Werter; "it is later than you think, and there is likely to be the same crowd to-morrow night, I imagine."

The next morning in trooped the merry friends to "fix up" for another night's sale. "Jack says there were at least two hundred people in these rooms last night," said Rebecca, "and the receipts will doubtless show it."

"Now do n't fail to bring those little boys to-night," said Madeline to Susie Follansbee. "I love children just as I do flowers; it always makes me feel happier to see them around."

"Oh, I do n't know," said anxious Susie. "If there should be such a crush as there was last night, what could we do with them?"

"Why, your father will take care of them

all right, Susie," said Pauline reassuringly. "You need n't feel a bit anxious here in this house."

"Yes, papa 'll mean to," Susie rejoined, "only he is so absent-minded, and they are so quick. Well—we'll see."

It was plain at a glance that more than half of the articles were gone or marked "sold," some being left for looks' sake until the end of the sale. Mr. Trenton had lost no time, as Isabel had predicted would most likely be the case, in buying the pen-and-ink sketch by Dr. Compton; and Mr. Van Werter had purchased one of Mr. Trenton's oil paintings, to be presented to Dr. Compton when the sale was over. Miss Frobisher had secured the other oil painting.

Will Maitland, who presented himself early the first night and promised an equally prompt appearance on the second, bought two or three of Madeline's fine pieces of fancy work, remarking that they were the very things he had long needed for his room at

college ; and Jack Lorraine purchased Dora's very handsomest doll for a little girl whose acquaintance he said he had scraped, that lived on a little by-street near the college, but was very, very poor.

Colonel Pellington had turned Madeline's charitably inclined remarks about the large bouquet very neatly upon herself. Before leaving the house he had again made his way to the flower table. " I came," he said with his usual stiff courtesy, " to present you with the flowers I purchased, begging you will do me the favor to present them in turn to some sick or ailing person. I rarely make calls myself, and my circle of acquaintance includes at present no one whom I think would be particularly benefited by even so fine a collection of flowers."

" Oh, but I thought good Samaritans were always men !" Madeline retorted.

" You can transform yourself temporarily into a Dorcas, who I believe is always a woman," replied the colonel.

“I shall have to say they were really your gift,” said Madeline seriously.

“That will not be at all necessary,” said Colonel Pellington as he moved away.

Thursday evening beheld the same bright rooms, tripping music, and happily gathering crowd at Mr. Van Werter’s house. The twins with twinkling eyes, clasped hands, and furtive looks crept close at their father’s heels.

“Oh, yes,” said Susie as she caught glimpses of the cunning little fellows moving quietly about; “they’re quiet enough now and very demure; but I hope,” she added, looking at Hetty Shockmeyer, to whom she was speaking, “that papa will keep his eye on them.”

Miss Curlew appeared a second time in the crowded rooms; so did Miss Frobisher, who visited each table in turn, seeming to feel the fascination that youth and fresh spirits usually possess for an elderly and solitary person. Colonel Pellington did not appear a second time.

A little past the middle of the evening, when navigation had become difficult, Isabel Trenton espied Mr. Follansbee looking about the room with a peering, anxious expression.

“ I do believe he ’s lost the twins,” Isabel said to Lilly Snow. “ All is, if he has, the Fates help him ! ”

In the hall Dr. Compton was searching vainly for his overcoat. “ Let me help you,” said Mr. Van Werter. “ In such a crowd as this, it is easy for a coat to get displaced.” But the coat could not be found.

“ I was looking for my hat,” said Dr. Lorraine, who “ between calls ” had stopped to look in upon the young people and their many friends.

“ In a hurry, doctor ? ” laughed Dr. Compton. “ Perhaps your hat has gone in search of my overcoat.”

“ Oh, no ; no special hurry,” said the doctor good-naturedly. “ I thought I might make one or two brief visits, then come back

for my wife, who I see is quite fascinated with all this merry bargaining. Quite an idea of the young people's, is n't it?"

Mr. Van Werter was beginning to feel concerned about the minister's coat and the doctor's hat, when stamping feet outside caused Daniel to quickly open the door. The peaked helmet of a policeman was visible as two astonishing objects were thrust into the hall.

"Here's two young bloods," said the policeman brusquely, "as say they're visitin' at Mr. Van Werter's. All is, if they are, I recommend they be took care of."

Jack Lorraine's boyish roar of laughter brought Mr. Van Werter nearer the door, followed by Dr. Compton. There, the picture of humiliation and confusion, stood the twins, each habited in an overcoat which trailed nearly a yard behind him, soiled and dusty from contact with the sidewalk. On Benny's small head was a derby hat which reached to his neck behind. Billy's head

was adorned with a tall, stiff beaver which covered it entirely, only his face from the eyes down being visible. Roars and peals of laughter caused a general turning toward the hall, all who could hastening to get a look at the ridiculous pair.

“ Oh, what naughty little sons ! ” said Mr. Follansbee mildly, both relief and regret in his face and voice.

“ The coats were an easy matter ; but how in the world did they manage in this crowd to get hold of these hats, and then slip through the dining-room as they must have done ? ” said Arthur Fredricks, who was anxious Susie should not know at what people were laughing.

“ Oh, the crowd helped them, ” said Mr. Van Werter, who was vigorously brushing Dr. Compton’s overcoat.

“ Yes, but these hats ? ” persisted Arthur, looking up at the high pegs.

“ We tooked a cane an’ popped ’em down, ” explained Benny.

“Took ever ’n’ ever so long,” piped Billy; “had to wait so long for folkses’ backs to turn round.”

Then it turned out that two or three persons had seen the little fellows at the rear of the hall seemingly amusing themselves in a quiet way, but had thought nothing more of it.

“Well, you ’re a precious pair, the two of you!” said Jack Lorraine, his rich voice rounding out with the merriment the escapade of the twins afforded him.

Poor Mr. Follansbee insisted on taking them right home, but Arthur Fredricks urged his allowing them to remain, promising to himself take “proper good care” of them. “They won’t get away from me,” he added. And fearing that, as Arthur suggested, if Susie found the twins had departed in disgrace, it might entirely spoil the evening for her, Mr. Follansbee yielded.

By nine o’clock the tables were actually cleared, everything having been sold. Then

the young ladies circulated through the ranks of purchasers, each constituting herself, as Pauline had advised, a hostess among her guests. For nearly another hour there was a pleasant chatting of many voices, after which a few still lingered.

“Where are those twins?” suddenly asked Susie Follansbee. “Oh, I suppose papa has taken them home long ago,” she added.

Coffee, sandwiches, and nut cakes were to be served in the dining-room to the members of the obliging orchestra, Will Maitland, and a few others that Pauline had asked to remain.

“Oh, come, girls,” said Pauline, “here it is nearly ten o’clock and that train leaves at quarter past; we must go out at once.”

As Pauline entered the dining-room, followed by quite a little train, she burst into a hearty laugh, echoed almost immediately by others. There sat Jack Lorraine and Arthur Fredericks, each with one of Susie Follans-

bee's long gingham aprons tied around his waist, and one of Pauline Van Werter's pretty dusting caps on his head, with Miss Curlew's tasteful bows galore. And held in the lap of each was a twin, contentedly sucking an enormous orange.

"O Jack Lorraine and Arthur Fredricks, you sinners!" cried Susie. "Don't you know better than to give those children oranges at this time of night?"

But Benny placidly relinquished his, saying the juice was all pinched out, and Billy held his out toward Susie, saying with an angelic smile, "Here, Susie, you can have the rest. I can't get any more juice out; there ain't any left."

The little treat had to be hastened more than Pauline liked, but the college lads assured her they could despatch a good deal in a modicum of time, and so it appeared, for the neat piles of sandwiches and abundant supply of nut cakes disappeared with pleasing alacrity, while Pauline and Made-

line had all they could do to pour the coffee with sufficient rapidity.

At the end of another half-hour the friends had all gone, Jack and Arthur making deft bundles of their caps and aprons, which each asserted had been purchased for their sisters, hoping they would convey a hint of how useful they could be made in the kitchen in the interests of their dear brothers.

Then the house grew quiet and the sale which had been such a great success was ended.

When the girls met at Pauline's the next afternoon, the carpet coverings had been removed, the rooms swept, the furniture replaced, and everything was in the usual order.

"We expected to do something toward restoring this condition of things, Poppy," said Rebecca; and the others spoke of having had the same expectation.

"No need," said Pauline; "I was quite pleased to find that Daniel and Kate had

taken out the tables and got the rooms partly in order before Maidie and I made our appearance this morning.”

Then they set to work to find out just what had been realized. Pauline went to the safe and brought a box heavy with money. After going over it three times it was found they had just three hundred and five dollars, which was handed over to Rebecca as treasurer.

“One hundred of this, Jack says, must have been taken at the door,” said Rebecca, “for he feels sure that two hundred people were here each night. Only think how people flocked to our sale!”

“Perhaps we ought to have hired a hall,” said Isabel Trenton.

“No,” said Pauline, “we should n’t have done nearly as well. One thing that gave glamour to our little undertaking and made it so pleasant was having it held in a private house. Should we ever repeat it, we must repeat that part of it too.”

“ I think it added a great deal of interest that Poppy was at the head of it all,” said Susie Follansbee ; “ I know it did.”

“ Oh, well,” said Pauline, “ I ’m just delighted with our success, and I shall enjoy seeing the good we can do with our little fund. Papa owned that he was glad to see people looking so happy in his house. I took occasion to say I thought the twenty-five cents for admission was all right, and he said, ‘ Oh, well, people know I had nothing to do with that.’ Dear, proper, proud old papa ! ”

“ We shall have money to do good with all through next winter, I think,” said Rebecca. “ Now what shall we do first—go and see Mrs. Hoostan ? ”

It was agreed not to be in a hurry to distribute what they all had worked hard for. But Pauline and Susie were to call the next day, which would be Saturday, at Mrs. Hoostan’s and tell her that Melly should go to the hospital and try what could be done

for her there. But it was further resolved that on Monday Pauline, Madeline Hunter, and Susie Follansbee should visit the hospital in the city, state the case, and make as advantageous terms as possible. Then Melly was to be taken there immediately.

Madeline screamed a little at the idea of going to such a place as a hospital, especially as Pauline said, "Maidie, you *shall* go!" But when Pauline said indulgently, "No, you need n't go one step if you do n't want to," the rollicking girl all at once straightened herself with a womanly air and said she had secretly hoped they would ask her to go with them ever since they began talking, and she would n't miss it for the world.

"Now, Isabel," said Pauline, as the time came for the friends to take their leave, "Maidie wants to walk along with you on the way home and have you direct her to William Wansted's little house. She wishes to make a call, all by herself, and present poor Mr. Wansted with an elegant bouquet

which Colonel Pellington bought and then left for her—because of her own recommendation, mind you—to give it to some sick or ailing person.”

The beautiful bouquet was in the library still fresh and fair. “ I think it will do the Wansteds all good to see such a great, lovely, cheery collection of flowers as that,” said Addie Fredricks.

“ I shall tell him they are a present from Colonel Pellington, who paid for them,” said Madeline.

Which she did, carrying sunshine, perfume, and delight into the humble abode. She was to hear from her call at a future time.

CHAPTER XII

AT THE HOSPITAL

THE truth was, neither of the trio had ever been inside of hospital walls before, and Susie Follansbee was the calmest of the three girls as they ascended the broad stone steps of the building.

“ I ’m trembling like a leaf,” said Pauline as she stood before the ponderous door.

“ I ’m making believe tremble, too,” said Madeline ; but her brightly glancing eyes were not suggestive of any great amount of trepidation.

“ Why, we ’re not going where there’s any sickness,” said Susie. “ All we want is to make arrangements for poor Melly ; so come on, the sooner we are in the better ; ” saying which she led the way into the hall.

An attendant took the message after showing them into the reception room, and in a few moments a gentleman appeared, glanced rapidly at the girls and waited to learn their errand.

It soon appeared that Melly could be regarded partly as a charity patient. The terms made admitted of her remaining at the hospital for twelve weeks, at the end of which time it could be decided as to the probability of ultimate recovery. At Susie's inquiry if Melly could be visited and how she would be situated, the doctor asked if they would not like to see the ward where Melly would have a cot.

The girls exchanged glances. "Yes, I should like to," said Madeline Hunter, "if my friends would." And whatever the others might have thought, it was too late to demur, for, with the promptness of a trained official, the doctor was already leading the way through the hall.

It was a new lesson for the gay, easily

moved Madeline Hunter, fashionable, world-loving Pauline Van Werter, and tender, motherly Susie Follansbee.

The spacious ward, in reality a hall of itself, was uncarpeted except for strips of matting along the centre between the rows of cots. Everything was exquisitely neat, each bed having a clean spread over it, and beside it a small stand and a chair. Before several was a screen completely hiding the patient. On some of the stands were flowers in tumblers.

The girls paused first at a cot near the entrance, whereon, bolstered high on pillows, was a little girl of four or five years, holding a rag doll close to her heart. The little creature was nearly as white as the sheet about her face and hands, and so thin as to suggest merely a shadowy presence. But at Madeline Hunter's surprised stare the tiny face smiled, smiled all over—the blue eyes, colorless cheeks, and white little mouth.

“Why, you little darling!” cried impulsive, affectionate Madeline. “Why, you little bit of a white flower! what brought you here? Little sweet, can you tell me?”

The doctor, who at first made a movement as if to check the too ardent girl, thought better of it and let Madeline caress on. One little hand was already in hers, while Madeline with the other perfectly gloved hand was smoothing softly the tiny face.

“I got sick,” said the little girl, “and papa bringed me here.”

“Where’s mamma?” asked Madeline.

“Mamma up in heaven,” said the mite. “I’ll get all well pritty soon; nurse says so. Won’t you stay all day?” And she looked with childish delight at the sweet, brilliant face bending over her.

“Could n’t, little love,” said Madeline; “but I’ll come and see you again, and I’ll bring some pretty flowers and perhaps some nice grapes. Now remember, I promise you;” and she turned abruptly away.

“There! I should cry my heart out if I stayed beside her a moment longer,” she said. “I reckon hospital scenes are a little too much for me.” But the girls who had looked sympathetically on were following the doctor through the ward. Madeline hurried forward for a word with him.

“What is the matter with that little girl?” she asked.

“Consumption,” he said.

“And won’t she get well?”

“No, there’s not enough of little Teena for that. Her mother was a frail child of seventeen when she was born. Her father, some years older, is none too steady. The child will slip away soon, and it will be better she should.”

“Oh, how can you be so cool about it!” said Madeline.

The gentleman beside her looked without surprise at the young, quivering face. “I see it every day, you must remember,” he said not ungently.

Just then they paused beside a screen which the doctor drew partly aside. A girl of their own age looked placidly at the visitors. Beside the cot was the usual stand with a tumbler filled with beautiful hot-house flowers. A little dish of bonbons was also beside it.

“How do you find yourself to-day, Callie?” asked the doctor in a low, pleasant voice.

The girl laid down a light book she had been reading. “A little stronger than I was yesterday, thank you,” she replied. “Are you Christian Endeavorers, or Epworth League, or simply untitled Christians?” she asked so naturally and serenely that it seemed impossible not to return her frankness in an equally natural manner.

“Oh, dear, no! I’m just a sinner,” said Madeline, dropping her voice to an unusual key for her, but going close to the young invalid. “Miss Follansbee there is a Christian,” she went on, “but I can’t say I am; perhaps more’s the pity.”

“ And you ? ” softly asked the brown-eyed, all too fragile girl, looking at Pauline, who flushed uncomfortably at the gentle question.

“ Poppy ’s almost a Christian, I ’m afraid,” put in Madeline, unconscious of the impression conveyed in her always honest speech.

“ Oh, my dear, pretty friend ! ” said the sick girl deprecatingly, “ I ’m where none but straightforward, candid words can pass my lips, and the time is short. If only one of you is a Christian, I must beg that you let it be your very next concern to become such, you who are not now. Why, being a Christian is the sweetest thing in the world ! What a lovely Christian you would make ! ” she added, as if unable to resist the spell of Madeline’s brilliant complexion, faultless features, and the charm of manner which drew people irresistibly to notice her.

The doctor had strolled away, as if aware that at this cot there might be a lesson impressed that was well worth the learning, and not to be hurried over.

“ Oh, but things are so hard, so unjust ! ” said Madeline, her voice full of tears. “ Why, up there near the entrance is a little tender thing, the child of a child, that is dying ; not more than four or five years old, and actually dying ! ”

Madeline repeated the sorrowful word with a lingering utterance as if to impress its entire sadness on herself and the others as well. “ Now how can a kind God let a little thing like that suffer and die in a hospital ? And then look at you, that ought to be up and about, enjoying this beautiful world instead of lying there, sick and helpless. Oh, I think it’s cruel, cruel ! ” And Madeline brought her hands together with a vigorous snap in emphasis of her hasty opinion.

The fading girl beside her smiled into Madeline’s distressed face. Without a vestige of reproof in her soft voice she replied, “ You see, you do n’t know God.”

“ No, I do n’t ! ” responded Madeline in a way that made Pauline and Susie smile in

spite of themselves. "I can't help it if it's wicked to say so," she added after a moment. "But I'm afraid of him. Now, aren't you, Pauline?" she asked appealingly.

"N-o, not exactly," said Pauline. "I've never thought very much of God or of Christ until of late," she went on, looking at the invalid; "but for a few weeks I have been attending a Young People's prayer-meeting, and I have been surprised to find how like a friend my companions regard the Saviour, now that they have come to—to—really get acquainted, as you might say."

"That's just it," said the sick girl; "only acquaint yourself with the dear Father in heaven and his Son, the blessed Saviour, and no lovelier friends could be known. And then, this dear girl is so entirely mistaken as to what it is for a Christian or for a little child to die."

"Are you going to die?" asked Madeline simply.

"I'm hoping very soon to truly live,"

was the almost joyful reply. "A year ago,"—and the voice was so low the girls drew a little closer to hear,—“I could scarcely keep my dancing feet quiet a moment. I was poor and obliged to take care of myself. I worked in a millinery establishment where they were kind to me, and I enjoyed holidays and evenings to the very utmost. My life was full of gayety and thoughtless pleasure. One night a Christian girl in the store invited me to go to a prayer-meeting with her. I did n't want to consent, but she was a kind girl who had done me many favors, so I went with her and was really so surprised that I determined not to go again, for I did not want to be a Christian. But soon afterward I took a terrible cold which never left me. For six months I defied a tender voice that urged my giving up the whirl I was constantly in; then I had to lie down and think. My Christian acquaintances flocked to see me, aided me in many ways, and finally I was brought to the Saviour.

“ Now I do n't feel that God is cruel. Oh, no! He is exceeding kind. For had I gone on in health and strength I might never have loved him nor accepted the salvation of Christ. Do n't wait until sickness, or perhaps misfortune, forces you to the Saviour's side. Serve him now in your beautiful youth and health when service can mean so much. I have but one regret as I lie here; that is, that I would not heed my Saviour's call while I could have done so much for him.”

“ Well, I 'm sure,” said Susie, speaking in the kindest of tones, “ you are still able to do much for the Master. Speaking so freely is an acceptable service, I know, and then patience and resignation preach very convincing sermons, especially from young people. We look for resignation from older people, but with the young it goes for much more. So I think you are still permitted to do a great deal of good.”

“ Ah, yes! but not what I might have done once.”

The last reply was merely whispered, and the girls seeing her exhaustion turned pityingly away. Other cots were visited where the occupants were convalescing, and some nearly recovered. "After all, what a blessed institution a hospital is!" said Susie, when they had again reached the street.

"I can't help thinking what a friend Christ is," said Pauline with a quick flush.

"O Poppy, dear," said Susie lovingly, "I'd rather hear you say that than anything else in this world! I only hope we shall have you with us, heart and soul, before long. All of us four would be so glad to have you join us."

"Oh, no," said Madeline, shaking her head. "You need n't say that and go leaving me out. I want to belong, too."

"We should be only too glad," said Susie cheerily, "to welcome you also to our Christian sisterhood."

"No, no, I did n't mean just that either," said Madeline. "I can't say I'm ready to

give up some things that I know are downright worldly, and that church members have no business to indulge in. If ever I am a Christian," she added vigorously, "I mean to be an up and down one, and no pretending."

"Yes, I 'll warrant you would be, Maidie," said Pauline laughingly.

"I promised to see that little kitty by the door soon again," said Madeline, "lying there dying with her doll in her arms, and I mean to, certainly as soon as a week from today. I suppose you and Susie can come too, can 't you, Poppy?"

"I do n't think I had better go quite so soon again," said Susie, "because you know I shall want to go once in a while after Melly Hoostan is there. She will be a sort of ward for us all to think of, and we must try to 'tend up faithful,' as I heard Daniel say the other night."

They had found that Melly Hoostan could probably be admitted to the hospital on

Tuesday of the week following, and the girls stood ready to pay for her removal. The next Monday Pauline and Madeline went again to the city, each carrying an offering of flowers and fruit, for Pauline wished to carry something to Callie, and Madeline could not have forgotten her promise of a week ago.

The little Teena by the door was having a "bad day," but the blue eyes smiled as Madeline bent over her, holding the flowers so that she could inhale their sweetness. But Madeline realized something of the child's weakness when even the fragrance of the delicate blooms seemed nearly to choke her.

"She can have them at a little distance," said the pleasant-faced nurse who was hovering near; "but it would take only a little to stop her breath entirely."

"Does she know she can't get well?" asked Pauline aside.

"Oh, no," said the nurse cheerfully;

“the little creature will open her blue eyes and find her mother some day; that ’s all there will be to it. She has n’t suffered much, and she won’t suffer; it will all be very easy for her.”

“Do n’t you think it’s awfully sad?” asked Madeline.

“Not one bit, my dear. It ’s a thousand times sadder to see some children get well. That soft little baby will never know a temptation nor a fear nor a real pain. The sad thing is to see the poor, broken-down sinful men and women that come here. I can tell you we see some tough sights.”

“Oh, why does n’t Jesus Christ save everybody?” said Pauline, as if the cry was wrung from her young heart.

“Why does n’t everybody that can, help people to know of Jesus Christ?” said the nurse, as if the query half discouraged her. Then she added tersely: “No matter how many dark lives go out, there are always plenty left to redeem.”

“Maidie, I’ll tell you what it is,” said Pauline as they turned slowly away, walking toward Callie’s cot, “I feel as though I had been forging links for a chain I cannot break. I did n’t know what I was doing either. First, that sermon Dr. Compton preached, and Jack and Arthur’s danger on the ice, set me thinking; and I proposed the sale with a distant idea of doing good in a far-off region of Africa. The girls took hold like heroes, but I can see now, with great tact and kindness, led me to alter my original plan for one far better. Well, it’s been just like the house that Jack built. The preparation for the sale drew me somehow into the meetings; the sale has brought me into contact with Melly Hoostan and her mother; they have brought me to the hospital; the hospital has made me acquainted with Callie, and the solemn words that nurse has just spoken, and—Maidie, I believe I’ll have to be a Christian before I get much farther! Now, here is Callie’s

cot," she concluded as they reached the wide screen that both remembered.

Downstairs they had asked for the little Teena and had been told they could go right up, as the nurse was with her at the time. Then, so earnest was Pauline with what she had to say, that they strolled by themselves to the place where Callie lay.

"I suppose we can peep and see if she is asleep," said Pauline, looking around; and seeing only another nurse some way off, Madeline said, "Oh, yes," and darted around to the side of the cot. It was empty.

"Poppy!" she gasped, starting back; "Poppy, she's gone! What do you suppose it means?"

Pauline looked first at the cot, then at Madeline. A quite elderly nurse was approaching. "Where is Callie?" Madeline asked breathlessly.

"She is dead," said the nurse softly but with no painful accent whatever.

“Why, but we saw her only just a week ago to-day,” panted Madeline.

“Yes, dear ; but the sick are dying every day. Callie breathed her last at daybreak last Wednesday morning, and it was just like a child’s falling asleep.”

CHAPTER XIII

“ IT WILL BE ALL RIGHT ”

PAULINE and Madeline left the hospital with sober faces.

“ It scares me, does n't it you, Poppy? ” asked Madeline. “ Only think how sudden! We were talking with Callie one short week ago ; now it 's all over! ”

“ No, it does n't exactly scare me, ” said Pauline. “ I can 't say, either, that it is so very sudden, for when you think of it, Callie had been sick a long time. Did you notice what the nurse said just before we left the ward? ”

“ No, I was saying a few words to little Teena. ”

“ She said that that would be Melly's cot where Callie had been. ”

“ How dreadful ! said Madeline. “ And yet,” she added in the next breath, “ I do n’t know as I should be nervous on that account if I had to lie there myself. I ’m not a bit cowardly in that way, I do n’t believe.”

“ I do n’t think these things seem nearly as dreadful to me as they would have even a month ago, Maidie. Somehow, I ’m changing. I can’t tell how, but it seems as though something beyond myself was drawing me into different ways of thinking and of looking at things.”

“ You do n’t think you ’re a Christian, do you, Poppy ? ”

“ Oh, no, I do n’t believe I ’m anywhere near one. But one evening Miss Curlew, that little milliner, you remember, said something to me about my mother. Of course, I do n’t remember mamma very distinctly, I was so young when she died, but Miss Curlew told how she cried one night at a prayer-meeting when the minister was praying for those who were ‘ out of Christ,’ and

I almost know she was crying about papa, because he never has been a church member."

"My papa's a church member," said Madeline, "but I've always been thankful he never talked to me about church affairs. I always think young folks are about done with the earth and are all ready for translation when they get religious, and I'm not ready to be translated yet. Just look at Callie! Honestly, I'd rather be gay and live the longer."

"Just the way I talked a little while ago, Maidie. But you must remember that Callie confessed she cared nothing for these things for months after she was sick and in danger. And then, just look at our young people! Where could you find a merrier, more laughing girl than Isabel Trenton? And in fact all of them. See how her religion helps cheery little Susie with her great cares! The first time I went to a Young People's prayer-meeting Isabel led, and I

thought my heart would burst. I do n't see what made me feel so."

" Well, I cried slyly, and could n't help it, Poppy, when I heard Isabel repeat that poetry. It affected me when that little black-eyed thing got up and began reading the Bible, but I managed to sit up and behave myself until Isabel began, ' How do I love Thee?' See how I remember it! I wonder if I 'm very deep?" Madeline went on. " Sometimes I think I flush out so and am so quick to show my feelings I do n't go down quite as far as I might."

Pauline laughed outright. " Maidie, you are the funniest girl I ever saw," she said. " Yes, I 'll answer for your depth. I should n't want to see you make a wrong turn, because, for all you seem so loving and pliable, I think once your mind was made up, you 'd stick!"

" Papa says I 've got an awful will," said Madeline thoughtfully; " but I 've had to reach conclusions for myself ever since I

was little. But I think you're right, for when I once make up my mind to anything I do n't believe I turn quite with the weathercock. Poor papa found that out, I reckon, when he was advising me to make sure that I knew what I was about when I kept refusing Eugene McPride. They say he is worth half a million in his own right and will have as much more one of these days. But I knew what my objections were, and he was not at all the man for me."

"The half a million did n't tempt you then, Maidie?"

"Not for a moment. If he had been possessed of different morals, I should have felt there might be some hope for him, but as it was, I would n't consider him, nor his fine education, nor his money for an instant."

"There, you see, Maidie, for all you're not ready to be a Christian, you can't help feeling that stamina of that kind is a sort of anchor or safeguard."

“Yes, and do n’t deny it,” said Madeline stoutly.

It had touched Pauline’s heart and moistened her eyes to hear poor Mrs. Hoostan’s expressions of gratitude on first hearing what the young ladies were going to do for her unfortunate Melly. Now, when Pauline called in the afternoon with Madeline and Susie to say definitely that they would be ready to receive Melly at the hospital the next day, she burst forth into fresh thanks, mingled with motherly solicitude at the near parting.

“’T is the gude Lord will hae a care o’ my lammie,” she said, “an’ I’ll nae greet for her but luke aloft an’ tak’ courage. Th’ lass will soon gang hame again, after th’ gude physicians hae helpet her. Belike she’ll coom back to th’ auld hoose-place her ain bonny sel’ again.”

“Shall I stop for you on the way to meeting?” asked Susie as they were about to separate after the call. “I may not see you to-morrow to know.”

"What do you say, Maidie?" asked Pauline.

"Oh, yes, I'll go while I'm here," said Madeline. "I know Poppy likes to, and I really quite enjoy the meetings myself."

The subject the next night was resignation to the will of God, and although she had not mentioned it to Pauline or Madeline, it was Susie Follansbee's time to lead the service. The meeting was not a sad one, yet Susie was very thoughtful on the way home. Arthur Fredricks had been present, as he often was, and after he and Addie had left Susie at her gate he asked Addie if she did not think Susie had seemed a little downhearted.

"No," Addie replied, "Susie is often quiet and thoughtful. But then it may be she was a little anxious, for she mentioned that Benny did not seem at all well this evening, and she should hardly have felt like leaving him unless her father had been going to remain at home."

“Always those twins!” said Arthur. “What a little mother Susie is to them! I hope the little scamps will grow up to appreciate her.”

“Why, Susie loves them with all her heart,” said Addie. “She trembles if the least thing ails them.”

The next morning as Addie was on her way to inquire for Benny she met Dr. Lorraine, who stopped his horse to speak to her. “You had better not go to Mr. Follansbee’s,” he said. “One of the little fellows is sick, and it promises to be a pretty hard case of scarlet fever.”

Addie turned back reluctantly. She would have gone on had she followed her own inclinations, but in the face of the doctor’s warning she did not think it right.

For several days whenever any of the friends met, the first question was as to Benny’s condition, which Rebecca could generally answer accurately. But reports grew steadily discouraging. Susie’s aunt,

who used to live with her before she left school, came to assist in the care of the sick child, and Blinda, who mourned and lamented in no stinted measure over Benny's condition, declaring to all she saw that he was "the best little feller," took charge of Billy, "nivir lettin' me eyes off 'n him," she averred, but keeping him continually away from the room where poor unconscious little Benny was lying quietly enough at last.

It was Madeline Hunter, gay, heedless, loving Madeline, who was to carry comfort to poor troubled Susie, making for her a little green oasis in very truth midst her desert of anxiety and unrest.

Pauline had openly avowed her intention of going to see Susie, if only for a moment, but her father had decidedly protested, and she was far too filial a daughter to disobey. But Madeline was not present when her uncle had so resolutely opposed Pauline's putting herself for a moment in the way of possible harm. She felt, however, that

should she say anything, Pauline might object to her going. But Benny had been sick ten days, and during the wearisome, anxious days and nights not one of Susie's young friends had ventured near her. The scourge so dreaded by all parents, whether contagious or not, was regarded as being so, and not one of the girls could be exposed to the risk of visiting her now.

“It is so piteously hard,” Madeline murmured to herself, “to think of that dear, good little Susie shut away in that dark, silent house with never a young face to cheer her for a moment. I know the way perfectly. I'll creep around to the rear door and ask to see her just for the littlest moment and then I'll walk an hour so's to be sure and not bring anything home to Poppy. I've had the fever and so has she, and see how Dr. Lorraine has to go right into such rooms and then go where his children are. The good Lord knows I would n't do anything I thought was harmful or wrong, but

I must just show how I feel. I'd want some one to, if I was Susie."

Madeline made an excuse, which was the truth, that she wanted to do an errand at Miss Curlew's, and as Pauline was going on a little business errand, they started off in different directions. No thought of personal danger occurred to Madeline as she turned toward Susie's house, and she acted out her own kindly, generous self when Susie, pale from watching and anxiety, came creeping into the sitting-room.

"You little dear! You poor, dear little soul!" crooned Madeline, hugging and kissing her with unaffected warmth. "I thought it was a shame for you never to see a young face all this dreary while. I sha' n't tell Poppy I've been here, because I ran away. The girls would probably all have been here, only you know parents are so afraid of one's catching the fever, and I only just came to let you know we are all as sorry for you as we can be. Now it will be some-

thing to know we're all thinking of you every day, won't it? You did know that before, but it will be something cheery to have been *told* of it, won't it, dear?"

Susie burst into violent weeping. Madeline's bright presence, the affectionate tones, and soothing, caressing words were too much for her overcharged heart, and for a few moments she sobbed audibly, unable to check herself or to speak a word.

"Oh, have I made a mistake?" said Madeline. "Did I do wrong to come? I only meant to help you, dear. I had to come and say how sorry we all are, but I suppose Dr. Lorraine has done that, and perhaps it was enough."

"Oh, no, no!" said Susie between her choking sobs. "It will do me a world of good to have seen you. And I don't believe any harm can come of your sisterly kindness. I'll never forget it, never, no matter what happens. But weren't you in the least afraid on your own account?"

"Not a bit. I'm never so much afraid for myself, I think, where any danger is concerned, as I am for others."

"But suppose you should get sick?" persisted Susie, who was weak and nervous. "What should you do?"

"I sha' n't," said Madeline; "but if I should, papa would come right on, take me to the hospital and watch over me like a Trojan. But I sha' n't get sick. Now, how is Benny?"

Susie had calmed a little during Madeline's easy speech. "Oh, this cry will do me so much good," she said. "My heart has been aching for some such relief, but I would n't give way. Now, I am so thankful to have relieved myself. Benny is a very, very sick little boy. It is dreadful to see my little active, roguish brother lying so still, or tossing in the fever calling for me, and I standing right beside him, trying to make him realize my presence. But it's all right, Madeline, all right, my dear; the will of God

will be done, and as we heard at the meeting that last night I was there, our part is just to try to be trustful; and whether the precious child stays with me, or goes with Jesus to his mother, there will be no mistake! Oh, but I want him so to stay with me!”

Poor Susie burst out afresh for a moment, but by an effort controlled herself. “I’ve been so proud of my little brothers,” she went on; “so proud of my care of them; so amused at their cunning pranks and their roguery! I know that if darling little Benny should leave us, it never could seem the same again here at home—it never could; still, it is such a comfort to believe that there will be no mistake, and that it will be all right. I know the girls are praying for me, and dear papa is praying, and—oh, yes, whatever comes, it will be all right!”

The repeated cry of Susie’s trusting heart touched Madeline.

"It is a great thing to trust in God, isn't it?" she said.

"Why, it's everything! everything!" cried Susie. "Oh, be a Christian, Madeline," she said with a sudden intensity, "there'd be no end of good a girl like you could do. I mean—be a better Christian than you are."

"Me! I'm not one side of a Christian yet," said Madeline with that unintentional drollery of expression which often caused a smile in serious moments. Then, after kissing Susie again and calling her "a good, patient little dear," Madeline went away and walked more than an hour, as she had promised herself she would do before returning to her uncle's house.

At the end of another ten days Benny was convalescing. There had been a night when neither Susie, her father, nor her aunt had left Benny's side for a moment, and good Dr. Lorraine had stayed until past midnight and returned with the dawn.

Billy remained in perfect health. "Look at him thin for the tough little bean he is," Blinda said, kissing him. The doctor predicted that, with the care Benny would be sure to have, his return to health would be speedy.

A few weeks afterwards when Benny was eating about seven meals a day, Susie was taking a short walk in the bright spring sunshine, Isabel and Addie beside her. "I can tell you what it is," Susie said, indicating Madeline Hunter, who with Pauline and Rebecca was sauntering on just ahead, "I believe *that* girl is not far from the kingdom of God."

CHAPTER XIV

LINKS FROM A FORGE UNSEEN

IT was a tempestuous night such as sometimes visits the earth in mid-April. A month had slipped away since the sale had taken place. Melly Hoostan was reported a hopeful case, and the young friends had visited her at the hospital when in the city. Little Teena was drooping like a delicate flower, but always brightened at sight of any of the young girls. She invariably singled out Madeline Hunter, whose radiant smile and cooing words seemed to draw the little child irresistibly to her with signs of admiration and love.

But this unusual mid-April evening was closing in with a wild, cold, dreary rain.

The wind whistled mournfully through the budding trees, and the snowdrops and hyacinths bowed their little heads, swaying pitifully in the chilly blast.

In his wide, cheerful library Colonel Felix Pellington sat listening to the sheets of rain beating against the windowpane. In his hands was a magazine which he was reading in an indifferent way, as though only half interested in the article before him. It seemed as though some spirit of the stormy air was moving the man to unusual reflections, for all at once he laid the magazine on his knee and, with his elbows resting on the cushioned arms of the easy chair, clasped his hands in thoughtful attitude.

Did the restless, crying wind emphasize his lonely condition midst the comforts surrounding him on every side? Did the harsh, unsympathetic storm drive inward, forcing recognition of the condition of his heart, long shut to better impulses? Was con-

science struggling to assert itself in his sturdy but repressed nature?

There was a slight rustle along the thickly carpeted hall, and a servant entered and handed him a letter. "A man dripping with the wet said he had been asked to hand this to you," she said.

"Do you know who he was?" asked the colonel.

"No, sir. He said he did not think any answer was expected to-night."

The woman vanished, and Colonel Pellington regarded curiously for a moment the stiff chirography and common-looking envelope which he held in his hands.

"A woman's writing, I should say, and one not accustomed to writing letters," he mused. The next moment he had taken a dainty paper cutter, with handle of silver and blade of pearl, and neatly opened the envelope. The missive, at which Colonel Pellington's eyes opened widely as he read, contained these words:—

Honored Sir,—I take my pen in hand to write you a few words, which I hope you will not think it too great a liberty for me, I am sure. I have wanted to thank you for a long time for the great kindness to us all nearly a month ago, which you showed. But I have never happened to meet you in the street since, and did not think it proper to call on a gentleman like yourself to say my thanks. But the beautiful flowers you paid for at the sale of the young ladies, then had sent to my poor home, did a sight of good, such as you could n't dreamt of their doing, and my man could n't take his eyes off them, and kept saying, "To think of Colonel Pellington being so good and kind! May the good God bless the dear gentleman!" If anybody ever says you do not much care for the feelings of poor folks, I shall say it is not true, they do n't know about it. Please do not feel angry with me or think I am bold, but my husband's arm, which was broken last September, will not knit, they say; the doctor complains his living is too low, but I do all I can, and my Sammy has been a cripple from his birth. I do all I can, kind Sir, I really do, but the cold weather lasts so unmerciful, and with the town only giving me a dollar and a half a week, one for him and a half a one for Sammy, and I working on shoes all I can get to do, we cannot beg, Sir, till the last minute; but what with the rent and all, I cannot get the money for a little coal, and we do shiver so with only a little wood to burn and that most gone, I did get up my courage to ask could you kindly send us a little coal. Husband says I ought not to be afraid to ask a good gentleman for a little coal who would send us a great, costly bokay. I bless God for the bright bit of cheer it made for us, and God will bless you for it, Sir, even if you do not think best to send the coal. I am very dutifully and respectfully,

HANNAH WANSTED.

P. S.—He sends his regards most kindly.

Colonel Pellington threw the letter on the

table after replacing it in the envelope. "Not a badly written letter," he muttered, "nor badly expressed." Then he went back to his reflections. Presently he muttered again, "I suppose it was that witch of a girl at Mr. Van Werter's who carried the flowers to this woman and said I sent them, or gave the impression that I did. I remember she said she must do something of the kind. I ought to have forbidden it decidedly. Now see what comes of departing from my regular rule of declining all invitations. One thing growing out of another, just like a chain clinking along, because of my yielding to those merry creatures who came inviting me to their sale, as they called it.

"Well, there's no denying I rather enjoyed the affair. First time I'd been into a bright, crowded room in years, and I would hardly confess the weakness to myself, but I actually almost wanted to go the next night. Mercy I did n't; no know-

ing what the complications might have been."

He was silent for some time after that, then resumed: "Seems to me they were extremely pleased, for poor people, at having a great bunch of hothouse flowers given them. Rather a high-flown gift for a quiet person like myself. I wish that laughing girl had known better than to use my name."

The man's reflections were still longer this time, but after a while he again drew forth the letter. "Let's see," he said, "what's that about the Lord's blessing me? Oh! he's going to bless me whether I send them coal or not. Well, it's a novel thing to say of me, I guess. I wonder—"

He cut short what he was about to add as the blast sent the rain in a hissing torrent against the wide glass pane, and a shrill sweep of wind went wailing around the corner of the house. Colonel Pellington looked around him, glanced at the wood fire sending up a crackling, cheery blaze, glanced at the

crowded bookcases, at the pictures on the wall, at the dainty cutter with which he had opened poor Hannah Wansted's letter.

"I wonder if they are cold to-night?" he murmured. "Well, if they are, so are thousands of others. I could n't relieve every one who might take a fancy to ask me for fuel. I wonder what set those girls out to earn money to help the poor, and why, if that was their object, they didn't help this woman. They surely know all about her. Perhaps they did help her some. I wonder if that laughing witch set the woman up to writing me this letter?"

When Madeline Hunter carried William Wansted the flowers, she had also carried a generous bag of fruit and some candy, the nice odds and ends left from the sale. She did not discover that the family were in any particular stress at that time; if she had, she would surely have said so, as the Wansteds were people they would willingly have aided.

Colonel Pellington did not feel self-condemned at once, and fly about, eager to send relief to the Wansteds' door that night. Men so long encased in a selfish, indifferent life do not open wide their hearts at the first call of distress even that moves them. But he had spoken of a clinking chain, never dreaming that God was at the end of it, and that he could not resist being drawn with its links, try as he might to break them.

All night the harsh storm raged. The blinds, secure as they were on the rich man's house, creaked and strained in the bitter wind. "I do n't think I ever knew such a storm before in mid-spring," he said to himself at midnight. An hour later he arose from his bed to fasten a wedge in the window frame. He had just succeeded when there came a moment's hush in the elements, a moment of such profound quiet that some whispering voice seemed speaking to his innermost soul. Peering forth he could only see the glistening pavement drenched where

the violent downpour had beat mercilessly along. Then with a sob and a rising of the wind the clamor again began.

Colonel Pellington returned to his couch, but not to sleep. He was not nervous. His iron frame felt no approach of a tremor as in imagination he again heard the quiet voice that had whispered in his heart. But memory, the haunting power, was at work. All along the track of a prosperous business life the man looked back, feeling, to his honor be it said, a momentary flush of shame at the barren showing. Honest he had been to the letter. But at never a fireside except his own had glowed a fire of his kindling. By never a bedside had a helping hand of his been stretched in kindly aid. Never a child had laughed in thankful glee at a holiday toy or bag of sweets his money had paid for. He was, however, a man of iron nerve. He made no resolves, arrived at no definite purpose as to any future deeds. He did think that, come morning, he

might send a half a ton of coal to William Wansted's little house. Then he turned over and slept, his last waking thought being, that perhaps he might go himself to William Wansted's and tell the truth about those flowers. Then, if he saw evidences of great poverty, he would decide in how far it was best to help them.

The storm did not cease with the night, although the wind went down. The air was almost frosty as Colonel Pellington in stout overshoes and a great enveloping mackintosh ventured forth, the first man he met remarking on the danger the cold atmosphere might prove to the fruit trees. Colonel Pellington went immediately to William Wansted's, where he was ushered into the living room, and looked around in surprise at the neatness yet bareness of the apartment. He almost shivered in his warm garments while talking a few moments with the cheerful, loquacious little woman who gave him no opportunity of denying having sent the

flowers until she had poured forth afresh her delight, and her man's delight and Sammy's delight at the beautiful gift. "They are sweet yet, sir," she added, producing a paper box in which rose leaves and other faded flowers were carefully preserved.

"I did not really send those flowers," began Colonel Pellington—

"Oh, I know, sir!" broke in the eager woman as the colonel's slow speech made her suppose he had paused; "that handsome creature said you paid for them, but would n't bring them yourself, or something like that, but we bless you for them just the same; and it was your goodness made us bold to ask the favor that we did, and please, sir, can you say it did not offend you?"

Colonel Pellington somehow could not say to the thankful, beaming little woman that he really had nothing to do with her receiving the flowers. He had on some occasions met and scantily aided the wretchedly poor, but here was a new phase of poverty, where

well-meaning, respectable people needed many of the common necessities of life. The husband with his good right arm in a sling sat in a high-backed wooden rocker. A boy of ten or twelve was at a table eating some oatmeal with a sparing quantity of black molasses over it; and without really knowing it, Colonel Pellington noticed the effort the child made to swallow the food.

“Did n't it occur to you,” the colonel asked with a grim smile, “that flowers were a strange present to send you?” and he looked directly at William Wansted.

“No, sir, not at all,” was the unhesitating reply. “It is common to send flowers to the sick, and the poor get but few. We're the kind as are grateful for anything. The young lady brought fruits left from their sale, and some sweets. I suppose there were not a great many things there to help us much.”

It was a new *rôle* for Colonel Pellington, being looked upon as a donor, a friend, a

man whom God would bless. He rather liked it. All at once he began asking questions, curious, inquisitive questions, and, man fashion, without mincing matters. How did they live? What did they have to eat? Could nothing be done for Mr. Wansted's arm, nothing for Sammy? And it was a straightforward story of poverty, half-hunger, and inability to meet pressing needs that he heard. Dr. Lorraine had tended her husband kindly, never asking for pay, but said plainly the services of a "special"—she meant specialist—would be required to effect a possible cure. For Sammy there was no help; a cripple he was born, a cripple he would be through life. The willing, overtaxed wife and mother worked often far into the night striving to meet the wants of her dear little family, and all so grateful for flowers.

"I'll send around some coal and provisions," said Colonel Pellington as he arose and took up his umbrella, and before Mrs.

Hannah Wansted could break into a vortex of thanks, he was gone.

Some hours later, near noon, Rebecca Lorraine knocked at the door. Her father had asked her to carry a pail of soup to William Wansted's, left over from dinner the day before. Just inside the door, Rebecca paused in astonishment. Boxes and bundles littered the table, a man was shoveling coal into the shed, Hannah Wansted was talking and crying with all her might. William Wansted kept pressing a handkerchief to his eyes.

"Oh, it is you is to be thanked!" cried Hannah; "you and all the other blessed young ladies that begun a good work and set things going for our help."

Rebecca stood patiently holding the pail of soup, not quite seeing the way clear to set it down while Hannah ran on: "First, that pretty beauty brought the flowers, and I was that grateful to Colonel Pellington for his part in it, I wrote my thanks and made bold

to ask just for a little coal. He was here himself this morning, the colonel was, and will you just look at the goodness and mercy of the Lord! Tea, coffee, sugar, syrup, crackers, lots of things and *beefsteak!* But do forgive me, miss, I might have let you hold that pail all night, my dear."

Once out of the Wansteds' habitation, away sped Rebecca for a little call at Pauline's. There with rippling little laughs of satisfaction she recounted the items of her call at William Wansted's.

"I said it was just like a chain," Pauline began, "the way things go on, and it is, is n't it now?"

"Oh, and if I'm not glad I caught that rigid old colonel in the meshes!" said Madeline. "My! I'd make quite a Dorcas of him if I had time. I only wish I could meet him. I'd tell him what a good, kind Samaritan I think he is, and then would n't he feel grand!"

CHAPTER XV

FIREMEN'S DAY

PAULINE had been very desirous of keeping her cousin Madeline with her until they could go in company on their summer outing. But Madeline insisted that she must return to Chicago before the last of May, as preparations were needed before her flitting to the Adirondacks, where she hoped Pauline would meet her in July.

"I do n't believe I shall go away as early as usual this summer," Pauline had said. "I usually go in June, but I think it's a very long time to leave papa, and I notice papa is growing gray, and I want to be all the comfort to him I can."

"As if you had n't been like wife, sons, and daughters," laughed Madeline.

At heart Pauline felt there were other reasons that made her reluctant to leave Verona Roads as early as in previous years, and she thought that perhaps she ought to own this.

“To tell the truth, Maidie,” she went on, “I think there is a growing interest among the young people in our church, and has been for several months. I own freely to an increasing interest in our prayer-meetings, and all things considered I shall be in no haste to go away until really hot weather sets in. You know a great many people come here for the summer, but of course I need a change, and papa always wants me to have it.”

“Well, I would n't have believed prayer-meetings could have possessed the attraction for me that these have,” confessed Madeline. “I shall quite miss them when I go back.”

“Why not try those in Chicago?” suggested Pauline. “It seems a pity to abandon the habit after having fallen into it.”

“Mercy on us!” cried Madeline, “the girls I go with *never* are seen in such a place. Why, they’d look at me as though they thought I’d ‘gone strange,’ at the mere mention.”

“Well, but think of the good you might do,” persisted Pauline. “You know just as well as I do, Maidie Hunter,” she added vigorously and laughing a little, “you could lead your associates even to a prayer-meeting if you wanted to. I know from little things you have inadvertently let slip that you rather lead in your circles.”

“Yes, but I’m in no shape to lead Allie Bumstead, Helen Carroll, and Jessie Potter to a prayer-meeting. Why, I’m ‘out of Christ’ myself, Poppy child.”

“I think that sounds very sad, somehow, Maidie.”

“Yes,” rejoined Madeline, turning soberly around, “it struck me as being kind of awful the moment the words had passed my lips.”

The conversation was here interrupted by Kate, the maid, who came to say that Miss Trenton was in the library.

"I've called," said Isabel after greeting her friends, "to see if you would n't like to come to our house to-morrow to see a part of the firemen's parade. They usually have it in the fall, but for some reason they have decided to have it the first week in May, so have set to-morrow for the day."

"Papa said something about it this morning," said Pauline, "but I did n't know it was to be so soon."

"I've seen Susie and Rebecca and Addie," Isabel continued, "and they agreed with me that it would be pleasant to see them pass our house when they are all fresh soon after forming into line; then we could go out and find some convenient place where they congregate, not far from the Common, and see the men climb the aerial ladder and all that." And so it was agreed to do.

“What is Firemen’s Day?” asked Madeline after Isabel had gone. “Is it just a procession?”

“No,” said Pauline, “it is more an exhibition of steam fire engines and all the rest of the trappings than anything else. We have two steam engines and one chemical fire engine here at the Roads. I believe our department is quite proud of its equipments. Then they come in from Rockford, about seven miles from here one way; and from Chester, five miles in another direction and nearer the city. Late in the afternoon there is a supper at the hall. Oh, it is quite a sight and very gay, I can assure you. Every one is out, there is a fine parade, a brass band, and all together considerable of a jubilee.”

The next day the usually quiet streets of Verona Roads presented a lively, festive appearance. Flags waved in various directions, and bunting was freely draped about the town hall. People of all ages and of

varying conditions seemed to have sprung like mushrooms from every quarter. From the broad-paned windows of Mr. Trenton's house, six young girls, all tastefully attired, looked forth upon the buoyant throng.

Soon the procession came in sight, the local fire companies having met the others at a given point, and an attractive show they made. A portly drum major, black as ebony, resplendent in a bright red coat with gold lace trimmings, preceded the band in conscious grandeur, twirling high a golden mace in dizzily revolving circles, varying the action by dexterously thrusting it around the back of his head with one hand and catching it with the other.

The engines, with brasses and nickel platings burnished until the sun's rays glancing athwart them seemed nearly blinding, were decked with streamers of ribbon and bunches of beautiful flowers. Scarce as garden flowers still were, there was no lack of adornment in the way of exotics as the

glittering engines had dashed into town before forming into line.

From the wheels of the Rockford engine, which were twined around with evergreens, also hung baskets of flowers ingeniously fastened so as to revolve with the wheels without becoming inverted.

Four large, magnificent horses, two abreast, attached to the hose carriage from Chester, were a marvel of strength, glossiness, and beauty of build. Their heads and necks, clean shaven and as smooth as a cat's, shone and gleamed in the light of the sunny day. From under their chins dangled long chains of gilt carried under and fastened beneath their bodies. As if conscious of their splendid appearance they ambled daintily along, their long shining necks curved haughtily, the chains glancing and the flags waving proudly.

“Oh, how pretty! How more than pretty!” cried enthusiastic Madeline as the imposing pageant swept by.

“Come,” said Rebecca, “now let’s go over by the Common and see the men climb the ladder.”

They were soon in the vicinity of the Common, getting a comparatively good place on some steps to view the men whose intrepidity, cool heads, and sure footing admitted of their literally leaping up a ladder held upright, fully eighty feet in the air.

“Oh, dear, how terrible!” said Isabel as the hushed throng watched the perilous ascent.

“It is such a dizzy height even to look at,” said Pauline, holding her hand before her eyes. “I really can’t endure to quite look,” she added, yet peeping nervously out of the corner of an eye.

The man having clattered to the top of the ladder, stood upright, took a look around midst the breathless silence of the crowd, then came partly down from the giddy height, when the ladder was tilted a little, and he

swung himself with easy agility on to an awning some feet below. The people broke into a loud cheer midst clapping of hands, and the band began an inspiring minuet.

The girls waited while another man accomplished the daring feat, and then Susie proposed their taking a walk to what was called the old part of the town. "It is only a pleasant distance," she said, "such a lovely day as this." They all were ready to leave the pushing crowd, and so paired off, "three tiers, two and two," Addie Fredricks said as they turned toward the more deserted streets. Their way lay beyond the Common, and they were passing through the pretty spot when Madeline remarked upon its beauty, and some one proposed they should sit down awhile on the iron benches and listen to the band just far enough away to make the music sound very pleasant.

Time ran faster than they thought, chatting midst the green grass already cut evenly and shining in the sunlight. It was nearly

an hour before they started up and resumed their walk. After going some distance they crossed the railroad track and were soon in a portion of Verona Roads where old-fashioned, stately looking houses were set back some distance from the sidewalk with broad, green terraces at the front. The wide sidewalks were shaded by gigantic trees, reminding one how

“The children of men arise and pass
Out of the world like blades of grass,”

while the stalwart trees stand fair and tall, unshaken by wind, unmoved by storm, until a century or more has passed over their heads.

“Oh, I am so sorry Madeline can't stay into June!” said Pauline. “Everything is so beautiful with us now and will be until the trees grow dusty and droop with the heat.”

“But two months is a long time to have been away from home,” replied Madeline; “and papa wrote, I thought, a bit plaintively

in his last letter that he should be all ready to welcome his tall little girl whenever she appeared. But this has been the very pleasantest visit without exception that I ever made. I can't tell how I enjoyed the sale, and so many things have arisen in connection with it, I can't help hoping you will have another next year and that I may be there to see. I thought that poor girl's death at the hospital, the one they called Callie, was sad, although she was so ready to die ; and I know little Teena is just at the gates of Paradise, but for all these things there has been nothing to really mar my enjoyment, and I only wish you could all come to Chicago and make me a good long visit."

There was some laughing and chaffing at this as the girls proposed accepting the invitation and starting off in a body.

"Here is Miss Frobisher's grand old house," said Pauline as they approached a large, comfortable-looking mansion which,

like the others they had passed, was set back from the road, but with a graded lawn in front.

“What a lovely old house!” said Madeline, and she was about to add something else when Addie Fredricks suddenly stopped. “Hark! what’s that?” she said. On the crossing they had left well behind them, a train had dashed by, sending back a long, loud shriek after the manner of flying locomotives.

“I heard the whistle of the engine,” said Susie Follansbee.

“No,—there! Oh, what is it?” cried Addie.

A distinct clatter and din was rising on the air. Wild cries, thumping, flying hoofs, an indistinguishable uproar was increasing so rapidly that the girls in alarm unlatched Miss Frobisher’s gate, sprang into the court, and ran up the long, shallow, stone steps. Almost at the same moment the front door opened, and Miss Frobisher stepped out,

dressed for a walk. The lady looked for a moment in astonishment at the half-dozen girls grouped on the steps.

“Something has happened!” said Pauline Van Werter as the loud noise drew near.

The street was wide where Miss Frobisher’s house stood, and from the steps it was easy to look far down the winding road. The short warning had scarcely escaped Pauline before there was a wild flashing of brass mountings, a fierce, onrushing sound like a terrible stampede of ungovernable horses; there were sparks of fire under pounding hoofs, a mad, appalling, oncoming race, a sudden snapping it appeared of reins and chains, one loud, united cry of command, then—chaos!

The girls gave involuntary exclamations of terror, and even self-possessed Miss Frobisher ejaculated, “O Lord of mercy!” as with a terrible crash two steam fire engines and a hose carriage mixed in a struggling,

awful mass of kicking or prostrate horses, escaping steam, and alas! worst of all, wounded men.

It was but a moment or two later that a flying mob came rushing pellmell upon the scene, which had reached the climax almost at Miss Frobisher's door. The policemen were on hand with remarkable promptness and did their utmost to extricate the men whose terrible position and loud cries for release, once heard, were not soon to be forgotten. One engine was completely overturned, another had careened and was resting against the long hose carriage. All four of the powerful horses attached to the latter—alas for their recent pride and sleekness!—had fallen, and the two belonging to the overturned engine were also down. Men divested of all superfluous outer garments, with arms bared, were wrestling with the horses half dead with fright and bruises. It took nerve to quiet and control the dazed brutes whose rolling eyes, distended nostrils,

and quivering limbs pleaded for pity in their mute distress.

Miss Frobisher and the girls stood on the steps and with averted faces listened to the loud clamor which hushed now and then at an effort more gigantic than the others. Soon men arrived with crowbars, and it became evident that the drivers, hurled from their seats when the collision came, were speedily to be extricated, and the street grew quieter at once.

Miss Frobisher declared she felt faint and proposed they should all go into the house and remain until at least a portion of the great crowd all about the sidewalk should disperse.

The girls were only too glad to avail themselves of the invitation, as it would have been difficult to pass through the gate and away, so close to the house was the scene of disaster. They had sat in the fine old parlor for about half an hour when a man ran up the steps and rang the bell violently.

"I have let both my maid and housekeeper go out," said Miss Frobisher as she immediately arose to answer the loud summons.

The man who faced her made no parley as to his errand. "Say, madam, can an old fireman be brought in here? We can't move him but a precious few steps or he'll die right before our eyes. Bless God there's no one killed outright, but Captain Rollins may die unless he has a bed at once. A surgeon happened to be in the crowd, and says everything depends on immediate action."

Miss Frobisher looked blankly at the girls. "I have n't got a bit of nerve," she said, "but if some of you young ladies will help me open a room and get a bed ready, the poor injured man is abundantly welcome to it."

"You need n't do the least thing, ma'am, only provide the bed," said the man. "Our comrades are as deft as women, come to a case in hand like this."

“Very well, you can bring him in.”

Miss Frobisher hurried up-stairs, followed by Rebecca and Susie.

In a few moments the room was in readiness. Rebecca stood ready in the hall to show the men the way. The rest remained in the parlor with Miss Frobisher. They sat there motionless when the men entered the house silently, and went rather laboriously over the stairs.

CHAPTER XVI

A LITTLE TENDER LINK

IT transpired that on Firemen's Day some races were to be in progress with the lighter fire carriages, and men running afoot were to draw them with ropes. So it was arranged that two of the fire engines, and the hose carriage with the double team from Chester, should be put up until after the races and the supper at an engine house just over the railroad track.

No one knew whether the men driving were unduly excited by unhallowed stimulants, or whether the horses had become unusually restive because of the glitter, the music, and the loud cheering surrounding them. Some men beside the drivers were

perched on the engines ; several were clinging fireman fashion to the hose carriage. It was more than the drivers could do, even by sawing at the strong curbs in the horses' mouths, to arrest them at the track as the thundering train was close upon them. By the mercy of God the track was barely cleared when the train roared by, sending back the wild screech at which a quiet horse will gather himself up in sudden alarm.

Control of the horses had been almost lost when the mad scamper across the track had been taken, and it only needed the fierce whistle to render the terrified animals blind with fright. It was thought they rushed abreast of each other, then one engine shot ahead, and the horses in their desperate fear tried to turn, so mixing all in a hopeless overthrow. A few of the men leaped off, so perhaps saving their lives at risk of the fearful jump.

Three men were so badly injured that their lives were nearly despaired of, but

after a few days it was thought all but Captain Rollins would live.

“I really think,” said Pauline to some of her friends a few days after the accident, “that we ought to go to Miss Frobisher’s and inquire if there is any way in which we could aid her. It is true some of us called the next day and asked after Captain Rollins, but I think we should offer to help her if we can.”

“So do I,” said Rebecca. “We were ready enough to ask her to our sale, and she came both nights, leaving not a little sum behind her. So although I do n’t see what we could do, we could at least call and offer our services.”

“How many of us do you think had better go at once?” asked Pauline.

“You and I invited her to the sale,” said Rebecca; “suppose you and I go and make the offer, and take Madeline with us.”

“The offer must include us all,” said Addie Fredricks,

“Very well, that is what we will do,” Pauline answered.

The next day the three girls called. Miss Frobisher received them cordially, but with a doleful look. “It does me good to see some fresh young faces,” she said, her own fine countenance lighting a little as she spoke. “I don’t think there is much you young ladies can do, yet there possibly might be one direction in which a little service would be acceptable. The members of the fire department are very kind and efficient in watching the poor sufferer at night, but of course they are all men who are employed during the day.

“The day nurse whom they have hired is a very good sort of woman, but the sick man has some wants she does not appear to meet as she might. There has been no time since he was injured that Captain Rollins could be removed with safety, and I understand he is a man without family and no means to speak of, so he is welcome to his bed here.

I know it is a comfortable one. But does it not seem strange that, after living in strict retirement for years, my home should be invaded through so painful a circumstance?"

"I think you consented very willingly and very kindly to having the poor hurt man brought here," said Pauline.

"Oh, I'm a woman with a woman's heart, I hope," responded Miss Frobisher. "I never thought for a moment of refusing to merely shelter the poor man; he is one of a class who defend us and our property and do it nobly, and I could not be ungrateful enough to forget it. And it is really no inconvenience to me to have him here, as it would be to a great many."

Miss Frobisher paused as if a little at a loss how to express what she wanted to say further. After a moment, however, she resumed:—

"The fact is something like this: I have my beliefs, and I have my disbeliefs, and I am not altogether ungodly. I never was.

But here is a fellow-being dying under my roof, a man not very far from his threescore years and ten. A few days ago he was full of vigor, with an active, wiry frame, and felt himself 'good,' as he expressed it, for ten years more of busy, useful life. Now here he is stricken down in a moment. He has cared nothing for serious things and is, I think, superstitiously opposed to seeing a minister.

"I wish your good father could have been called," Miss Frobisher added, looking at Rebecca, "for I know he is a Christian man, who would think of a man's soul as well as his body, but Dr. Loud was summoned the first day, and so has kept the case. That surgeon, who it appears was here from Chester at the time of the accident, came yesterday for consultation with Dr. Loud, and they agreed that the internal injuries had been so great that Captain Rollins is not at all likely to recover. Nor do they think he will linger long. He does not know just the con-

clusions arrived at, but I think he feels sure they were not favorable.

“ Now, what I thought was, that possibly you young ladies might take turns in coming to read a little while each afternoon, soon after dinner, which is the sick man’s best time. You might begin with the newspaper, and then, without consulting him, from a small Testament which you could carry in your pocket, read a few words each day. I will have such a Testament on the table in the hall, and you could select a few verses before coming, if you chose, and so know just where to turn. That man is going to die, and I think it is dreadful to think of his slipping into eternity, or, as Dr. Compton would say, into ‘ the next room,’ without some proper preparation. Dr. Compton says we are in eternity now, but it is this ‘ next room ’ Captain Rollins ought to be willing to think of.”

Rebecca spoke first in reply, assuring Miss Frobisher she would have the cordial

consent of at least four young ladies to do as she had hinted. And Pauline with a rising flush said she must be considered a fifth one willing to do what she could.

“I would offer to come,” said Madeline Hunter, “but there is a little child dying at the hospital in the city, who, they tell me, watches for my visits, asking for me continually as she grows weaker. So on the days when my cousin Pauline comes here, and perhaps oftener, I will go to my little Teena. And I—ought to read my Bible for myself to begin with. Pauline does so already, I know.”

The frank girl could not help the word of truth at the end of what she had to say.

Miss Frobisher, with all her erect, distant carriage, unbent visibly as she bade the girls good-bye. “The day nurse is a poor reader,” she said. “My services would soon grow prosaic and distasteful in the sick-room, so I am glad and relieved to find that it is not all pleasure you young people are willing to

think of in this world of stern realities and discipline.”

This was Saturday. On Monday Rebecca Lorraine went to Miss Frobisher’s for her first reading by Captain Rollins’ bedside. On the way home she stopped at Pauline’s.

“What did Captain Rollins say,” Pauline asked, “when you finished reading the Bible?”

“Not one word. He never made a remark, no more than as if he had not heard. He showed some interest in what I read from the newspaper, but when I closed the Testament which I had had in my pocket and produced rather as a matter of course, he simply lay looking around without a comment.”

“Oh, dear,” wailed Pauline, “I’m afraid my voice will go all in quavers when I come to the Bible reading part. My turn comes to-morrow.”

“Never mind, Poppy,” said Rebecca cheerily, “that’s the thing for us to do, and

unless he absolutely forbids it and refuses to listen, we must keep right on."

After the Tuesday evening meeting, at which Pauline was as regularly present now as her friends, the others were anxious to know how she had fared in the afternoon with her reading, which naturally enough had been a dread, as it was a different matter for her, dear child! than for her companions, whose habits had been such as to render the service far easier.

"Well," began Pauline, "I fared perhaps a little better than 'Becca. During the newspaper reading he was evidently quite interested. After I had produced the Testament and read the little I did, he said, 'Did n't I understand you was Norman Van Werter's daughter?' I said, 'Yes, Mr. Van Werter is my father.' 'Does he take much to the Bible?' he asked. I told him my father was a man who always had respected religion and I thought wished me to. I should have felt like resenting his manner

in questioning me had he been a well man, but I choked back all such feelings and tried to answer as kindly as I could. Then all he said was, that religion was a first-rate thing for women and children, but he had an idea men could get along with a pretty small dose."

"And it's only a small dose we give him at a time," said Addie Fredricks.

"Of course," Pauline resumed, "he is a sick man; one who has thought or cared very little about God, I am afraid, and, I should suppose, one also who has not been accustomed to what would be considered the finer things of life; but now it is the man's soul that must be thought of."

The girls remembered how they had once said it was Pauline's precious soul they wanted to think of, and now, so soon, she was expressing solicitude for the soul of another. Link following link indeed!

But Pauline had something yet to say. "I can't help thinking," she began, "that

I assume a kind of false position in reading the Bible to that man, just as if I was a Christian myself, when I am not. I felt nearly impelled to tell him so this afternoon; then I was afraid it might weaken any little influence the reading might have had over him, unconcerned as he seemed."

"You were doubtless wisely prevented from saying any such thing, Poppy," said Susie Follansbee's motherly voice. "I think it would have been unnecessary and a mistake. You make no false profession in simply reading the Bible to a sick man, so don't let that trouble you, dear. I'm afraid when it comes my turn I shall have to put in a comment or two."

"He is a very sick man," said Rebecca. "After papa had been talking with Dr. Loud a day or two ago, he said it would be a very unusual case if a man injured in that way should recover."

"Then pray let us do all we can while we can," said Isabel with energy.

“Where is Madeline?” asked Addie Fredricks. “I’ve been going to inquire ever since we met.”

“So have I,” said two others at once; and Pauline replied: “Maidie went to the hospital this afternoon, and just before supper there came a telegram for me, saying that little Teena was only just alive, and she could n’t leave her. Just like Maidie! But papa is going into the city, so she can come out on the last train, if she will. We don’t want her to stay at the hospital all night, unless she feels she must.”

At eleven o’clock, when the last train came in from the city, Madeline Hunter returned with her uncle. Something in her face stopped the question on Pauline’s lips as they met.

“She’s gone home,” Madeline said with a queer, repressed little smile. “I was holding the little rose leaf when she slipped over the brink, and it seemed to

me I just watched a little link slip out of sight."

That was all until the girls were preparing for bed.

"I shall never, never feel about death again as I always have up to this time," Madeline began in the repressed, quiet manner that had characterized her smile, and meantime combing out her long, dark hair. "And I'm so glad, Poppy dear, that I've had just this experience while I'm young. I've always thought, as most girls do, that it must be awful, perfectly awful, to see any one die. But when I reached the hospital this afternoon, I saw at a glance it would soon be all over with that little tender baby; and if you'll believe it, the kitten knew me! Far gone as she was, she stretched out her little waxen hands and kissed me when I bent over her. All she could say was 'Stay! stay!' in short, panting breaths. And I said 'Yes, little darling, Maidie'll stay.' She kept dropping asleep after that. On open-

ing her blue eyes she would smile up into my face. And what do you think was the last word she said?"

"What was it, Maidie?"

"After she'd drooped and drooped, until I certainly thought the little spirit had fled, she all at once looked into my face again and said faintly but clearly, 'Come!' The next moment her little head fell forward. The nurse laid her head back against my arm,—I did start for a moment, for the light had gone out of the blue eyes,—but the nurse closed them very gently, and then the sweetness of that little, little face!

"The nurse said, 'I'll take her now,' but I said, 'Oh, no, not yet; let me have her a little while. I want to look at her, and look at her. I may never hold an angel again.'

"I can't explain it, Poppy, and you may think it fanciful, but I had the strangest feeling. It didn't seem strange at all at the time, but I felt exactly as though I had *almost* peeped into the kingdom of heaven.

O Poppy!" she cried in a sudden tone of weeping, "I believe Christ came himself and lifted that baby out of my arms into his own!"

Then, with her hair falling like a dark shower over her white shoulders and arms, Madeline buried her face in her hands, and, for the first time in her life, Pauline saw her beautiful cousin perfectly convulsed with weeping.

Nearly a week had passed, and it again became Pauline's turn to read to Captain Rollins. She could not help dreading it, especially, as two days previously, when Isabel Trenton had been reading, the man had what the nurse called a "weak spell," and Isabel had been stopped in the midst of her Bible verses and went in to sit with Miss Frobisher, who said it was a great comfort to have a young person around when her house was so sad and solemn. It had been quiet before, but now there was a shade over everything.

“ Yet God has surely ordered all this for some wise, kind purpose,” Isabel said with such an assurance of simple faith that Miss Frobisher replied in a new tone for her:—

“ I’d give much for your unquestioning faith, child; but God has seemed far off to me. I called to him once in dire distress, but he did not answer.”

“ Oh, he answered, dear Miss Frobisher ! ” Isabel exclaimed softly. “ We ’re particularly taught to believe in our prayer-meetings that God answers just as truly when he does not answer in our way as when he gives us what we ask. God *never* failed to hear and answer a cry that went up to him from a human heart, and he must have answered your troubled prayer in the best way in his sight.”

“ But if it altered your whole life, my child ? ”

“ He heard and answered just the same.”

“ You ’re very sincere in believing it,”

said Miss Frobisher with an intent, questioning smile.

“I know it, Miss Frobisher! I *know* it!”

CHAPTER XVII

“ PRAY, GIRL, PRAY ”

As Pauline was entering Miss Frobisher's house to take her turn at reading by the sick man's couch, she met that lady going out.

“ I have an errand down town, Miss Van Werter,” she said, “ but the nurse will sit just inside my room and I shall not be gone long. Captain Rollins seems quite comfortable to-day, and I cannot help thinking there is some change in his state of mind for the better. He asked me yesterday whose turn it was to read, and when I said Miss Follansbee's, he said, ‘ Oh, the little girl who makes bright remarks as she reads along ! ’ I said I thought you were nice young ladies,

and he smiled as if secretly amused and said, ' Yes, they 're a pretty cute lot ; they whip out their little Testaments every time, but they know enough not to read too much at once. ' "

This encouraged Pauline, and it was a bright, sweet face that met the sick man's eyes a moment later. But although Miss Frobisher had said Captain Rollins appeared more comfortable that day, it struck Pauline that his face was much paler than when she saw him before, and there was a shrunken look about his features that she noticed without, after all, thinking much about it.

The newspaper occupied her for some time ; then Pauline took out the Testament. She had thought that the words read at the church Sunday morning would be very appropriate for her to-day, and she was composedly reading how the Lord was " not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance," when some sound arrested her attention, and she looked up to see Captain

Rollins with his eyes fixed upon her face, and laboring for breath. She thrust the Testament quickly into her pocket and ran for the nurse.

“Oh, another weak spell!” said the nurse, going quickly to the bedside and raising Captain Rollins’ head. “Will you please get me that bottle on the table,” she said, “and hand me a teaspoon?” She slipped another pillow deftly under the sick man’s head and tried to make him swallow something from the spoon.

Pauline trembled like a leaf as with an effort Captain Rollins succeeded in swallowing the liquid, but the labored breathing did not ease, neither did he cease to follow Pauline with his eyes.

“I think he wants to speak to you, miss,” said the nurse; and bending close to the pillow and speaking slowly and distinctly as if his hearing might be going, she asked, “Did you want to say anything to the young lady?”

There was an evident struggle to speak, but the words could not come, and Pauline was wondering if she could slip out of the room when Miss Frobisher appeared in the doorway, and oh, what a relief! Madeline was with her.

“I thought I’d come over and walk back with you,” Madeline began; “and Miss Frobisher asked me to come up;” but at a glimpse toward the bed Madeline started in surprise, while Miss Frobisher repeated under her breath the words of the nurse, “Oh, another of those weak spells!”

But the effort the sick man was making had grown truly piteous, and Pauline, who felt greatly calmed by Miss Frobisher’s and Madeline’s appearance, began to wish he could find strength to articulate.

At length, by what appeared a supreme forcing of the will, Captain Rollins called out hoarsely, “Pray, girl, pray!”

The command staggered Pauline completely. What could she do? Never since

she was a tiny girl at her mother's knee had she heard her own voice in prayer. She looked helplessly at Miss Frobisher, the nurse, Madeline, then at the sick man, whose eyes were still calling for a prayer. She wished one of her mates had only been in her place; any of the others would have prayed without a moment's hesitation or embarrassment. The thought helped her. A word from Madeline helped her still more.

“There is n't much time to lose, Poppy dear. Why do n't you pray?”

Why indeed? The simple query stimulated her. She went close to the bed.

“Speak loud,” whispered the nurse.

And in a clear voice Pauline only said: “Our Father, which art in heaven, save this man. He wants to be saved. Dear Father, save him for Jesus' sake, and—save us all. Amen.”

When Pauline looked up, the sick man had closed his eyes as if satisfied, but the laborious breathing went on. Then, to the

relief of all, Dr. Loud was announced, and Miss Frobisher Pauline, and Madeline went to the parlor.

After what seemed a long time Dr. Loud appeared. "I think," he said, "there will be no recurrence of extreme weakness to-night. Captain Rollins has rallied again and is breathing without effort. I trust this suspense may not last much longer."

As nothing further remained for the girls to do, they soon took their leave.

"What an experience!" exclaimed Pauline as they turned away. "Really, Madeline, I scarcely know what to think of it."

"Well, I'm sure," began Madeline in her easy, common-sense way, so reassuring at such a time, "I think you ought to be thankful that God let you help that poor man as you did. One thing is certain, he grew quieter and must have felt relieved as soon as he heard some one asking God to save him. I wish it had been me. I'd have been glad of it all my life."

“Madeline!—I’ll tell you what it is!”—
Pauline stopped short in the street and spoke with such sudden vehemence and so much evidence of pent-up feeling or conviction that Madeline regarded her curiously.

“Well, dear, I’m listening; what is it?”

“I’ve *got* to be a Christian! It’s no use standing out a moment longer. When I said, ‘Save us all,’ I really prayed for myself as much as for that poor man. I’ve been feeling it all along, ever since—oh, soon after I began going to our prayer-meetings, and mingling more constantly with those girls whose sincere Christian lives are such an example. I believe there is something contagious in it all. I sha’ n’t say anything about it to the others just at present, because I want to tell papa before I tell any one else except you; but there is no true living out of Christ, and I feel it through and through. Now I shall have a talk with papa, just as soon as I can conveniently; then I shall go to the next

Young People's meeting and get right up and tell of my new resolves. I wish you were going to be here and could follow me."

"Well, you see, Poppy dear, I'm glad to have you do what you think is right, as glad as can be, but I'm too honest to pretend a single thing I don't quite feel. If I should go back to Chicago and tell my friends I had become converted, there'd be the greatest powwow you ever heard!"

Pauline gave a little fleeting shudder of laughter at her cousin's characteristic expression, but Madeline without noticing it went soberly on:—

"Papa never says the first thing to me about serious matters, no more than Uncle Norman does to you. I shouldn't be surprised in the least if he took it for granted that I am a Christian at heart." After a moment she added:—

"There has been so much to enjoy ever since I came here that I shall always feel

that the pleasure went far ahead of anything that was sad or somber. As for that blessed little angel that took a notion to me and wanted me to mother her a bit, I think there's something in my nature that rather springs to a chance like that. It does n't seem to me as I look back on it like one of the sad things in life any longer, but more like one of the glad things. I said the other day that nothing had happened to mar my enjoyment of this visit, and right upon it came that accident. But it does n't exactly mar my enjoyment. Fact is, we must have some shady things in a world like this.”

“Yes, and I mean to be prepared for them,” said Pauline. “And I hope it won't be long before I shall hear you have made up your mind to be the Christian you might be, Maidie.”

“Should n't wonder a bit if you heard it any day,” said Madeline. “Once let me feel way down in my heart that the time has come when I must say as you have,

'I can 't stand out a moment longer,' and I sha' n't stop for anything. When I become a Christian, I shall be one all over."

Pauline looked at her beautiful cousin and smiled. "I do like to think what a Christian you will be when the time comes," she said.

Greatly to the astonishment of every one, Captain Rollins seemed slowly to revive, and gave signs of creeping back to life again after the critical afternoon when Pauline's voice of prayer had penetrated his dulled senses. The next time he was read to, which was not for two or three days, he did not hesitate to express gratification at the gracious words falling on his ears.

"I must 'a' come pretty nigh slippin' off while Mr. Van Werter's daughter was askin' God to save me," he said to Susie; "for I recollect just hearing that much, then seemin' to fall away into silence."

Susie followed up the important subject with all the seriousness she thought safe

with so feeble a man, and was rejoiced at the quick confession which followed.

"Oh, I ain't goin' to pretend I did n't feel I'd made a great mistake when I thought the end was come," Captain Rollins added. "I'd expected to go as I'd lived, sort o' indiff'rent; but if I die or live, I'm goin' to let right out that I've give up all unbelief. My comrades begin to talk as if I was goin' to get about again, after all. If I do, they'll find I've changed my idees a good deal since I got hurt."

After a few more days it was decided that the sick man could be removed without great risk, and as it was going to relieve his comrades as well as perhaps hasten his recovery, he was taken to the hospital. And when eventually he crept back to comparative health, it was to retain strong hold on the repentance he had felt on what was so nearly his deathbed.

The day after his removal Rebecca proposed that all six of their band should call

in a body on Miss Frobisher. "She has had a melancholy time of it," Rebecca said, "and I imagine is naturally inclined to depression, so I think it will cheer her if we make a little friendly visit." The girls all thought the proposal a good one.

On the way to Miss Frobisher's the next day, Colonel Pellington's towering form came in view at a turn in the road. At sight of him, Madeline's face broke into a dangerous show of mischievous dimples. "Oh, here comes my dear colonel," she said; "now for it!"

As the dignified man drew near, he lifted his hat gravely to the young people, but paused involuntarily at Madeline's bright face smiling up at him with a genial expression as though she had something to say.

"I only wanted to thank you," she said, "for having been the means of causing me to make a call long to be remembered. I hardly know as it is called for, or exactly

proper for me to say anything to you about your goodness to poor people ; but if you could only hear the blessings called down on your head and the gratitude that the Wansteds hardly dare express in your hearing, I'm sure it would do you good. That poor, patient man sat so long holding his right arm, and the poor woman wondered for such an age if the tide was ever going to turn, that when you turned it for them, she just thanked God and has sung hallelujah ever since. I really thought I ought to tell you something of the joy that your gift of flowers only started.”

“ I was a little surprised at being addressed with reference to those flowers from the parties receiving them,” said Colonel Pellington with a quiet smile.

“ Were you ? ” asked Madeline, opening wide her eyes in innocent wonder. “ Why, I tried my best to choose the very worthiest objects my limited knowledge of the people here enabled me to think of, on whom to

bestow them, and they made the Wanstedts so happy."

"Have you a mother?" asked Colonel Pellington.

"No," said Madeline, sobering. "My mother died when I was a little girl, but I have a father, and I'm going back to papa in a few days. I've had a lovely visit."

"I presume your father indulges you considerably;" and the colonel wore a more indulgent smile himself than he was at all aware of.

"Oh, dear, yes! I'm all the family papa has, so we indulge each other ridiculously. I wish you knew my papa. You'd be sure to like him."

"I have rather enjoyed meeting his daughter," said the colonel; "and perhaps I ought to say," he added, assuming his usual gravity of expression, "that the acquaintance may not have been entirely devoid of benefit on my part;" and he again lifted his hat, this time in token of parting.

The girls had sauntered along, but paused for Madeline to join them.

“ Oh, such a victory ! ” squealed Madeline in a way to make the others shake with laughter.

“ Maidie, what did you say to him ? ” asked Pauline, a note of genuine consternation in her voice. “ Do n’t you know everybody is more than half afraid of Colonel Pellington ? ”

“ Well, now I reckon, Miss Poppy Van Werter, that same Colonel Pellington has just confessed my acquaintance may not have been without benefit to him,” said Madeline with an assumption of sudden importance. “ He asked me if I had a mother,” she added more gently, “ and I told him of losing my mother when I was a little girl ; and I just ached to say it was to papa he must address a little note if I had misappropriated his flowers and he considered me in need of some parental training and counsel. But I was afraid that would

sound too free, so I only spoke lovingly of papa and said I wished he knew him. I can assure you, Colonel Pellington is not a formidable person at all, only approach him in the right way; and I approached him in the right way, you see."

At Miss Frobisher's the girls made a truly pleasant call. "I am glad to see each one of you," Miss Frobisher said, seating herself so she could face them all. And when the long "little friendly visit" was ended, they were urged in no uncertain terms of cordiality not to forget her, but to "come again soon."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TALK WITH PAPA

STILL another week had gone. Madeline Hunter had packed her great trunk and gone back to Chicago, much to the regret of the young associates who had known and liked her well. "A girl no one could help becoming fond of," had been the general verdict.

"Why, it seems as though Maidie had taken half of the house with her," Pauline said on meeting night as she joined her friends. "I knew I should miss her, but I didn't realize how desolate it would seem without her."

Before Madeline's departure she had been with Pauline to make three special calls. At William Wansted's the young ladies

learned of Colonel Pellington's continued benefactions.

"I do really believe," Mrs. Wansted said, "that it only needs to wake some people up, and they 're as much surprised as any one else at the chances there are for helping others, and makin' them happy, those that have a good deal to try them, I mean."

"Oh, no, thank you," she said in reply to something Pauline had suggested, "we sha 'n't need any other outside help long 's I can keep at my shoe binding, and we're so encouraged in other ways. We have fuel for chilly days, thank the good Lord! and that's a great thing for weak, ailing people; they feel the cold so, even in mild weather. Sammy, over there, has some beautiful puzzles and 'cut up cards,' I call them, that are no end of pleasure to him. There, he's putting the United States together this minute, and I'm 'fraid he'll get to doing it so quick by and by there won't be so much fun in it any more. But then

he's got England and Europe to match besides, ain't you, sonny boy?" and she smiled over at Sammy, too busy with his dissected maps to find time to notice his mother's visitors.

At Mrs. Hoostan's, relief was visible in one direction, discouragement in another. Melly was promised ultimate cure, and although the treatment caused considerable weakness at first, yet the mother rejoiced at the assurance of better things for her child than she had once dared hope for. But Mr. Hoostan had been indulging in a more protracted spree than usual, and poor lame Melly's presence was sadly missed by her mother at such times.

"What a pity it is that Mr. Hoostan can't keep sober and at work, and let the drink go!" said Madeline, for the woman had suffered too long and too openly to make any secret of her husband's failing.

"Ay, leddy, he has nae wark at presint," said Mrs. Hoostan, "an' 'tis no bein' oot o'

wark I would say a word about, an he wad bide in the hoose an' keep sober. But 't is discouraged he be, an' no wonder, for he hae got the name noo that no man wants to hire him. I think cud he but make a fresh start he micht do better, but 't is hard ivry way for a mon thet dreenks."

The third call was at the hospital, where a cheerful face greeted them. Melly was on a little iron bedstead undergoing the process which the surgeon now had no hesitation in saying was putting her on the road to recovery. If it must be tedious, it would pay in the end.

"Why, if the sale never effected another thing," Pauline said merrily to Madeline when they were on the way home, "only think what it is going to be to that lone crippled girl to be on her feet and to walk again! That of itself would have been worth while, and it is not going to take a third of our money."

"Well, Jesus Christ is not on earth now-

adays," replied Madeline, "to tell lame people to walk, and to say to sick people, 'Be healed,' but I sha' n't forget when I get back to great roaring Chicago how Christ enables good people to help the lame and to comfort the sick. What a great thing it was, Poppy, for you all at once to get up courage and offer the little prayer you did for that sick man! Only think what it did for him then, and promises to do for him in the future!"

"I was thankful he lived," said Pauline thoughtfully. "I was glad to know my prayer, so brief and imperfect, was answered."

Madeline turned on her cousin a look of astonishment. "Well, what did you expect as to its being answered?" she asked.

"I mean answered as I wanted it to be, Maidie," Pauline replied, feeling the just rebuke at her lack of faith. "But I know I should n't want to trust to such brief repentance. It seems altogether too venturesome."

"Shockingly venturesome!" said Made-

line. A little more and that man might never have had a chance to ask even for a last prayer. But he had the chance, the prayer went up, and he must have made some sign for himself, I think, because even then he appeared satisfied. Yes, Poppy, it was a very close call, but your prayer probably became his on the instant."

And serious to the last, as their conversations often were, Madeline, caressing, witty, genuine-hearted Madeline, rejoiced when others saw and recognized their higher duty, yet seemed convinced the time had not yet come for her to acknowledge allegiance to the Saviour she said she loved, and meant to follow openly "some time."

But Pauline had never for a moment wavered in the resolve that was born within her as she turned that day from Miss Frobisher's door. Communion with her own heart only served to strengthen the convictions that had gradually yet deeply taken root within her soul. And the time had

come when she wanted to make known to others the bright new hope she cherished.

“But how to tell papa?” she thought, “and what will he say? He will not oppose my entering the church, I know, but I do dread speaking to him because he never has said a word to me on such subjects.”

Then she recalled the night back in the winter when she had divulged her plan of the sale, and fancied her father was on the point of saying something “particular” to her, but had desisted.

“Well, we’ll have a talk now at any rate,” Pauline assured herself over and over again. “The very first time I see a good chance of not being interrupted I will certainly tell papa all there is in my heart.”

The “chance” was close at hand. It was a dull, showery evening, and as the darkness slowly deepened Pauline sat exactly as she had once before, just back of her father on the other side of the library table. The room was cheerfully lighted, and Mr. Van

Werter, absorbed in his newspaper, knew nothing of the intent look with which his daughter was regarding him. Now, as once before, the gleaming light showed plainly the threads of silver in his hair.

“Yes, papa is getting real gray,” Pauline thought again. “He is grayer than when I noticed his head before. I wonder if he grieves for mamma still. Poor papa! how long he has had to live without her. I wish I could do something to make him very happy; he has been such a *dear* papa.”

And having reached the same conclusion as when she first noticed her father’s changing hair, Pauline all at once said in a little, husky voice :—

“Papa!”

“Yes, dear,” said Mr. Van Werter without glancing up from the paper, which was evidently interesting him at the moment.

“Papa, I wanted to talk with you a little while.”

“Yes, child, in a minute;” and Pauline

was glad of the minute in which to quiet the rapid beating of her heart.

Mr. Van Werter evidently thought the talk was merely to be a request for money or some easily settled matter such as Pauline often had to present. Perhaps the silence occurred to him, for he soon laid down the paper and said pleasantly, "Well, daughter, I am all attention."

"I wanted to tell you something," said Pauline, suddenly realizing how difficult her father's reticence on some subjects was making it for her to proceed.

The first thought that flashed through Mr. Van Werter's mind at noticing Pauline's flushed face and hesitating manner was of Jack Lorraine. In that case he would have preferred being interviewed first by the young gentleman himself. The thought may have revealed itself in his face, for as his expression became a little more set, Pauline wondered if he suspected what was coming, and if so, if it was going to try or displease him.

“Then I must be brave,” she resolved, and the thought nerved her as she said still huskily :—

“Papa, I want to join the church.”

Mr. Van Werter’s eyes suddenly fell. “Well, my child,” he said, “I certainly shall not oppose you.”

“I have been thinking of such things a long time, papa.”

“Yes, dear.”

“It began, I think, ’way back when I first wanted to get up the sale, because I did n’t feel quite satisfied to be visiting and living just a gay, useless life. And all at once I felt as if something was drawing me toward better things.”

“Well, daughter, I’m glad you want to be true to your best impulses.”

Mr. Van Werter sat stroking his mustache a little quickly, an action natural to him when at all moved ; and Pauline, in hopes to control the nervousness she felt, got up and began walking up and down the floor.

“ I wanted to tell you about it first of all,” she continued, “ because of course I should not take so important a step without your knowing all about it, and I did not want you to hear of it first from any one else.”

“ That was perfectly right, my dear.”

“ I began going to the Young People’s meeting very soon after I told you one night that I never went, and I thought it was beautiful that Rebecca and Isabel, and Addie and Susie, all took so much comfort and delight in their religion. Now the time has come when I feel perfectly sure that I love the Saviour and want to profess my love before others. So I have made up my mind to join the church, but I— O papa ! I do n’t want to go alone ; I want you to come too ; you’re such a *dear* papa ! ”

Pauline’s voice had been growing shaky from the beginning of the last sentences. Queer, pitiful little quavers came creeping more perceptibly with every word she spoke, until she stood before her father and uttered

the last plea in a cry that was full of tears.

“ My precious child, come here ! ” Mr. Van Werter opened wide his arms, and Pauline the same instant was gathered close to her father’s heart, just as when she was a little child.

“ O papa, ” she said, stroking his cheek, “ I ’ve wanted so to tell you all about it. How like a chain of beautiful gold links circumstances have been bringing me right to where I could n’t keep ‘ out of Christ ’ another minute. And I was in Miss Curlew’s store one night, the very first night I ’d been to a prayer-meeting and—may I tell you something she said about my mother, papa ? ”

“ Yes, Pauline. ”

The voice was so solemn, Pauline began with a feeling of caution, but she went softly on, telling of the meeting of years ago, when Miss Curlew had sat back of her mother at a prayer-meeting and had watched the beau-



“WHY HAVE N'T YOU BEEN A CHRISTIAN, PAPA?”

tiful white neck grow pink with emotion as the minister prayed for those who were "out of Christ." Suddenly a great drop splashed on Pauline's hand, and the cheek she was still stroking became wet with tears.

"O papa, perhaps you'd rather I had n't told you," she said, wiping her father's cheek with her dainty little handkerchief.

"I'm very willing always, Pauline, to hear anything of your blessed mother. She was not only fond of a prayer-meeting but was a sincere Christian, if ever there was one. It broke my heart when I lost her."

There was a pause, then Pauline said, "But, papa, you have n't really lost her. I think it may have been partly my mother's love that has been influencing me all these weeks."

"And papa has n't made it any easier for you, has he, my own little dear?"

"Oh, well, there have been a great many things to make me very thoughtful of late,"

Pauline said; and she told him of her experience at Miss Frobisher's with the apparently dying man who called on her to pray.

“ I scarcely knew what to do,” she said, “ but Cousin Madeline reminded me that the time was short and asked me so naturally why I did n't pray, that the next moment I was asking God to save the man, and then asked him to save us all. And on the way home I told Maidie I had got to be a Christian. Perhaps I was really one before that, but I have had no doubt of it since.” Then she asked simply :—

“ Why have n't you been a Christian, papa ? ”

“ Probably for a very wrong reason, my dear child. I resisted the Saviour, for I was a money-getting, money-loving man, when your darling mother tried every way in her power to induce me to think of such things and to sit beside her as a church member. Then she died. And God gave me the money I had wanted in abundance, but took from

me my richest, dearest treasure. I shrink from the confession, but I had the feeling that, seeing I had refused to take the step your mother so desired to have me take while she was with me, I would not turn about and follow her wishes after she was gone. And not even the sense of remissness I have felt regarding my example as a father has been strong enough to make me do what I refused to, when it would have given your mother such joy. How many times I have wished she might but know how thankfully I would go with her into the church, if only the privilege could again be mine ! ”

“ But, papa,” began Pauline eagerly, “ she would know all about it if you became a church member now. I know she would ! Why, when I am joining God’s people, I expect my mother will be very near me. And I want you to come with me. I noticed one night when I first began thinking seriously of those things that your hair was turning gray and I made up my mind ”—

Pauline's voice was growing choked again—
“that if I ever did go into the church I
would beg you to go with me because I must
have you and—and—you've always been
such a *dear* papa.”

Mr. Van Werter took Pauline's tearful
face in his hands, kissed her affectionately
and said in a low voice, “When you enter
the church of Christ as a member, my little
dear, I should n't wonder if you found papa
was all ready to go with you.”

CHAPTER XIX

“ COME ”

IT was a touching sight when a few weeks later the proud yet humble father, still in the prime of life, and his beautiful child, stood up together to unite themselves with the people of God.

“ What set Pauline out all at once to take such a stand ? ” Jack Lorraine asked Rebecca on the way home from the Young People’s prayer-meeting on the night when Pauline, rather pale but with a firm voice, had announced her resolve of becoming a professing Christian.

“ It is n’t ‘ all at once, ’ Jack, ” Rebecca replied. “ I think Pauline has been veering that way for a long time. Her first reach after solid things was after she heard Dr.

Compton's sermon last winter, in which he spoke of 'a final reckoning,' when the favored ones in this life would have to render a true account, and I think your peril on the ice at about that time also set her to thinking. It was a feeling of uneasiness about her spiritual condition that prompted some action on her part, the result of which was the sale."

"I can't help thinking," began Isabel, who with Arthur Fredericks was walking just behind Jack and Rebecca, "how wise you were, Rebecca, to advise our falling in with almost any plan, rather than have Poppy let go of her first serious purpose. How beautifully everything has come out! I was disappointed," Isabel went on, "that that brilliant Madeline was after all so little impressed with our meetings, and went back to her thoughtless life the same as ever. It may be a long time before Verona Roads has a more animated visitor than she was."

"Ah, well, we can't tell," said Rebecca,

“ with just what memories and impressions Madeline Hunter returned to Chicago. She was by no means a shallow girl, though she was one of the most amusing ones I ever met.”

“ So Poppy considered herself one of the ‘ favored ones ’ ? ” said Jack, going back to Pauline.

“ Every one is favored,” Rebecca answered, “ who hears the gospel preached. Did I tell you, Jack, what Miss Frobisher said about papa, when Captain Rollins was at her house ? ”

“ Not that I remember, ’ Becca.”

“ She said she regretted that my good father was not called to the case, as she knew he would minister to a man’s soul as well as his body. Do n’t forget that, brother mine, and after you get through with your researches and come to some definite conclusions as to the teachings of the Bible, remember about your good father and why people desire his presence at critical times.”

Rebecca more than half expected a bantering reply, but to her surprise Jack said seriously, "Oh, it is my intention to begin practice as father did, I hope, as a Christian. I had an idea I had intimated as much before. I never could stand by and see an utterly indifferent person gliding out of life without a word of warning that I could give, for little as I may know, I know beyond the shadow of a doubt that that is not a safe way to enter another world."

Rebecca only said, "I am so glad, Jack!"

"Of course I always meant to be a pill of the right kind," Jack added sententiously.

It had not greatly surprised the four friends when Pauline came out as she did, fearlessly taking a stand for Christ. They might not have looked for it quite so soon, but it had been their prayer that she might become one of them in the church, and they looked confidently for the answer in due time.

One beautiful day in sunny June, some-

where near the end of the month, Isabel and Susie were passing Pauline's, when she appeared at the open window, accosting them in the same words as she had once before.

“ Oh, girls, come into this house, do ! ” Only to-day her naturally breezy manner was more subdued, and Susie thought, as she looked at her, that there were traces of recent tears about her eyes.

“ I 've had a letter from Cousin Madeline, ” she said as Isabel and Susie seated themselves, “ and all that surprises me about it is, that what she writes has come so soon. ”

“ Has she come over to our side, soul and body ? ” asked Isabel with a smile.

“ You must read and see, ” said Pauline. “ Of course the letter is written in her own peculiar style, and it would n't be Maidie not to say things a little differently from what most people would. Here it is, ” she added, handing the letter to Isabel. “ Suppose you read it aloud ; I should be glad to hear it again. ”

Isabel took the letter, which was written in a legible, rolling hand. "The very writing looks like Madeline," said Isabel; "free and clear, attractive and no trouble to read, yet must be read to be understood." Then she began:—

My own dear Poppy,—Did you ever before see such a perfectly beautiful June as this? Because I never did. Did you ever see the flowers smile up into your face the way they do now? I never did. Did you ever know the song of the robin to be so clear and sweet as this blessed, blessed June? I never did. Was life ever before such a glorious, joyous thing to you as it is to-day? It never was to me. Does it seem to you as if you must have become somebody else, because of the sublime peace that broods like a white dove all about you? That is the way it seems to me.

I stood before my mirror this morning and said, "Oh, yes, you're the same Madeline Hunter you've always been, that is, ever since you've been anybody, and you have n't changed in looks outside, for all the new life that is exulting within. And this is the same old world you've lived in for nearly nineteen years, for all everything has taken on a new look to you. Why, Poppy, I listened with patience to a hand-organ outside our window this morning, and you know that peculiar kind of instrument was always my especial detestation. I threw ten cents to the poor Italian grinding it, and when he lifted his cap to me his face was beautiful! 'T was the image of God, Poppy dear, that made it beautiful to me, and it is the image of God, oh, my cousin, that is transforming, re-creating, and making everything sublime for me to-day.

Now you know it; know the whole story: what it is that

has touched everything with new beauty and brightness, even when things were bright for me before. You're saying to yourself, "I do verily believe that cousin of mine, Madeline Hunter, has become a Christian so soon!" Yes, so soon, Poppy, dear. And let me tell you why. Don't you think there's a little bit of the mule running through human nature? I do. While I was in Verona Roads I did n't want to listen too attentively to a sweet little voice, which, to tell the truth, has never ceased to sound in my ears ever since I first heard it, a little voice that has said one short word to me, and then hushed forever—that is, "forever," as relates to time. But I do n't believe but what there's more depth to me than any one might think who perhaps only judged from the surface and when I could n't help bubbling over with jollity and the natural pleasure of living. I'm bubbling yet. But I've had a very sober, serious, searching time with your cousin, Madeline Hunter.

One night after I'd heard all day that continual little cry, "Come, come!" I turned around on my pillow and said a bit petulantly, "Oh, dear sakes! I might as well listen, think it all out, and find what that little voice means, and where it wants me to 'come' to." Then I grew very quiet indeed, and let the little voice talk on. I thought of how I had held that little motherless baby close to me, much as its mother would have done, and was glad of the privilege. Then I thought of her giving me the last kiss she was ever to give any one in this world, and how soon afterward she raised her little drooping eyes to my face, and said, "Come!"

Well, you remember, Poppy, my saying that night how it seemed as though Jesus Christ came near and took that little child from my arms into his. And as I lay there in the quiet night I thought to myself that it was not only the voice of the little fading Teena that said "Come" just as she started for Paradise, but it was also the voice of the Saviour that called me. I knew then that I had been trying not to hear that voice of loving invitation, the Saviour's voice, and I began to cry.

Then I thought how foolish it was to lie there crying instead of doing something to make up for being so cold and ungrateful, when all the time I was feeling the tightening of the links of love all about me. I think perhaps I have really loved the dear Master a long time, but had to go to Verona Roads to find it out. But I was sincerely grieved that after a kind, gentle call had been in my ears for weeks I had refused to listen. Well, I did n't know how to pray anything except the Lord's prayer, not one bit. But you know it does n't take me long to act, once I make up my mind to a thing. And I had decided to pray. So I just said in all sincerity, "My dear Saviour, I'm Madeline Hunter, and I'm ashamed and, oh, so sorry, that I have n't listened to your tender voice before this, calling me to 'come.' But here I am, soul and body, and I give nothing by halves, it is n't my way, so please take the whole of me and show me what I can do. I won't resist you any longer, and I'll do my level best to bring Allie Bumstead, Helen Carroll, and Jessie Potter into the fold I want to creep into—way in, so far I never shall be at any distance from my Saviour again. Amen."

Why, Poppy, it was just as simple as could be. Only saying, "I come," and there I was a Christian. I could n't sleep. I got up and read my Bible. Then as I could n't sleep a wink I prayed again. I love dearly to pray. Then I sat there in my white flannel loose dress and wrote three notes; one to Allie Bumstead, one to Helen Carroll, another to Jessie Potter. I was just as calm. After that I went to bed and went to sleep.

In the morning I awoke in the same calm, quiet frame of mind, but it was a new day, a new June, a new life. And will you believe me! Every one of those three friends I wrote to were not only willing but glad to come and talk over my new life with me. They've been just like butterflies, flitting here and there on pleasure intent, and I never mistrusted that any one of them realized that she had a soul. Certainly they never recognized any of its wants. But Jessie

Potter, the beauty of them all, confessed she had sometimes almost longed for something better to think of than her opera bonnets and party dresses, and preparations for a whirl of gayety all summer long. Should n't wonder an atom if it was just as you said, Poppy. I may be able to lead my associates to a meeting of prayer. If I can, I shall.

Now I want to say something else. I've written as if life was all joy with no lowering clouds. Well, it is to-day. But I know as well as any one can tell me, that if I live long enough it won't be always so. Trouble is part of life, and I know it. And Christians are often deeply tried and afflicted. I know all that. But you know you said that day you decided to be a Christian that you were going to be prepared for the discipline of life. So am I.

But I shall always thank God for one thing, Poppy, just as you can too, dear. I came into the kingdom with great happiness, and midst all favorable surroundings. To my nature this was exceedingly helpful. Affliction or misfortune did not drive me there. I wish all young people could be induced to begin a Christian life while things are bright around them, before trouble comes, or age comes, or the conditions are such as to rob the beautiful experience of an external brightness which it would be always pleasant to remember.

I felt a little quiet for a few days, just as you remember I felt after little Teena went heavenward, but I think something in my face must have told the story, for I saw that papa, to whom I found it a little hard to tell things, looked at me inquiringly two or three times. Finally he said one morning, “What is it, dear? Seems to me you're looking very bright to-day.” And I said “Papa, I think I'm a Christian.” And he said in a very happy tone, “Well, child, I'm thankful to hear it! Perhaps I should have talked with you about such things, but I knew—or thought I knew—you'd be a Christian some time. In fact I did n't know but what you were one already. I'm sure you've seemed good enough to me.” I said, “No, I've never been

a Christian until now." That may explain why he never has said anything to me on the subject. Really, I think parents ought to look after their children in such things. But papa is rather off-hand, like me, I reckon, and so did n't think.

Now I've written all about the good news and must stop. Perhaps I could have told it all better when we meet next month, but, mercy on us! I could no more have kept it to myself all that time than I could have flown on the wings of the wind to whisper it into your dear ear. Give a great deal of love to our friends Rebecca, Isabel, Addie, and Susie. Speak of me to Melly and her mother when you see them, also to the Wanstedts. I would like to be remembered to them and by them all. A very egotistical letter, but this once you will overlook it, I know. It could n't be otherwise.

I wish I could attend your next prayer-meeting. How happy it would make me to do so! Ours do not come up to yours. They do not seem as homelike, but I mean they shall in time.

Very, very hearty love to dear Uncle Norman. Write soon to your very loving cousin,

THE NEW MADELINE HUNTER.

"Is n't that a beautiful letter!" exclaimed Isabel softly.

"Yes, more than beautiful," said Susie. "It seems to me a glorious letter."

"Dr. Compton says," began Susie thoughtfully, "that we constantly discredit God's power and might in thinking it must take him just so long a time to act."

“ How true that is ! ” said Pauline. “ I began praying for Maidie’s change of heart as soon as I rejoiced in my own. But I did not expect a speedy answer to my prayers. It appeared to me as though a certain process must be necessary before the thing I asked for could come to pass. I suppose we try the Lord in not expecting at any moment what we ask him for. It never occurred to me that the call was already in dear Maidie’s ears which was to bring her to Christ.”

CHAPTER XX

JOINING THE LINKS

ONE day early in the fall, Kate the maid went to Pauline's room and handed her Miss Frobisher's card.

It was a great pleasure to have the reserved lady call upon a young girl like herself, and Pauline went quickly to the library where Miss Frobisher sat awaiting her. After the exchange of a few commonplaces, Miss Frobisher inquired if it was the intention of the young ladies to have another sale during the winter or spring.

"We really have scarcely thought of it yet," Pauline replied, "but it is quite probable we might. The funds which we realized in the spring are not more than half

expended. But as cold weather comes on there will be sure to be plenty of calls to which we shall gladly respond as long as we can. We all find it delightful to meet these calls. Sometimes," she added, slowly, as if half reluctant to speak her mind,—"sometimes," she repeated, "we have thought of larger benefactions as perhaps a possibility of the future, through our efforts.

"We have thought, in talking among ourselves, that some kind of a building is needed in Verona Roads that might serve as a place for holding light entertainments, possibly a mission Sunday-school, and especially a reading room, where young men and young women who are employed through the day could have the privilege of reading some secular and religious newspapers, magazines, and perhaps a few scientific journals. This has only been suggested, because it would of course take considerable money to start an enterprise of the kind, and still more to keep it going. But do you not

think it would be something in which all our townspeople would be interested?"

"Indeed, I do," said Miss Frobisher with an expression of interest in her tones that surprised Pauline. "And I came here to-day, my dear Miss Van Werter, to make a formal, or rather a friendly proposal which you and your friends can talk over at your pleasure and see what you think of it. But first I am willing to say something of the enlivening and rejuvenating—I do n't know what else to call it—influences that you and your friends have been the means of bringing into my retired, and I am afraid unwholesome, habit of life. I wish to thank you for them.

"It dates, of course, from your calling and inviting me to attend your sale. That invitation, at first, I very nearly decided must be declined, as a matter of course. Then I reflected that it had been very pleasant—it surprised me to think how pleasant—to see two young people sitting for a little

while in my parlor telling me of their bright, fresh plan for raising money with which to do good. And after thinking it over, I concluded to go one night and see how it would appear to be one of a large company, and, also, I felt attracted by the thought of seeing what your sale was like.

“ Well, you know how it was,” Miss Frobisher went on with the pleasantest smile Pauline had ever seen on her face. “ After going one night I could not make up my mind to forego the pleasure of being present a second time. I told myself it was childish to go twice, ‘ all at once,’ but I think now it was the wisest thing I could have done. It was all far more cheering to me than you would think.

“ Now I’ve been thinking that what was so pleasant and helpful in your home might be equally pleasant and cheering within my own doors. And the more I’ve thought of it, the more I’ve felt inclined to think of it, until I made up my mind to come and see

you and make a distinct proposal. What do you think your friends would say to having another sale, the last of the winter, to be held at my house for two nights also, the proceeds to be devoted to whatever cause you may choose? I think the one hinted at would be a most worthy one. And I will say to you in confidence what you may repeat to your friends, but please let it go no further; I will add the same amount of money that is made at the sale, so doubling the proceeds."

"Why, I think what you propose would be delightful!" said Pauline with enthusiasm, "and I know I can answer for my friends, who will think the same as I do. How could they help it? Miss Lorraine has spoken as though a second sale might be held at their house. You may know they have a very long parlor and sitting-room adjoining at Dr. Lorraine's, but it would hardly be as convenient for Rebecca, because of the larger family, as for me, and I doubtless

should have insisted on having it here in case we tried the experiment again. We all shall thank you, however, for the offer of your house, and for the other generous offer which will seem like a great incentive, I know. It seems to me," she went on, "that in a place where there are so many professing Christians as in Verona Roads such a building as I have spoken of might easily be gotten up by subscription."

"Oh, but, my dear," Miss Frobisher said deliberately but with some emphasis, "a great proportion of our wealthy people are not even churchgoers. I've often thought of it, and say what one may, a pleasant occasion such as you young ladies gave us attracts everybody. And if you liked we might make a little more of an affair of it by having it open during the two afternoons as well as evenings, and also selling ice cream. There is plenty of room in my great house, and I'm not sure but it would be a great pleasure to consider an annual affair of the

kind could be expected at the same place. It is quite time I did more pronounced good in the world, and frankly, my dear, your way of going about such work quite attracts me." Then she inquired for Madeline.

"We were together over four weeks this summer," Pauline answered, "and as we both"—she had been determined to say something of the kind if she could—"as we both have decided on a new kind of living for the future, we had a delightful time talking over our new hopes and aims."

Miss Frobisher only said a little questioning "Ah?" instead of making some direct inquiry, as Pauline had hoped she would.

"We were neither of us very serious-minded girls," Pauline went on with a smile, "when we went about our sale, but some of the events that followed led us into a more sober way of thinking, and resulted in our becoming linked with the church and its interests. It is pleasant to speak of it, because so much that is pleasant has come

into our lives in connection with all this. My four companions here in town were all church members some time ago."

"Yes, so I thought when I proposed their reading to Captain Rollins," Miss Frobisher answered; "but I thought you and your cousin very happy young ladies when I first saw you."

"And so we were," responded Pauline; "but then I had such mistaken views of a Christian life, and so had Madeline. It sweetens everything, I find."

"Well," said Miss Frobisher with what Pauline thought a little heartsick smile, "if religion sweetens a bright life, it might a shaded one, perhaps."

"Oh, it must be that it would!" said Pauline.

Miss Frobisher's call was a long one, but there was sufficient time before supper for Pauline to run over to Rebecca's, and then to Susie's, and report Miss Frobisher's call. "She wanted us all to go and see her after

we had talked matters over," Pauline said gleefully, "so let's go in a bunch some day and tell what we think of her plan. Only think what possibilities may lie ahead for really doing much good! Some of us must see Isabel and Addie very soon."

"Would n't it be beautiful," said Susie, her eyes shining at the thought, "if little by little we could draw Miss Frobisher into the church? I think she has been a very unhappy woman with all her money; but if in one way and another she could be led to see the beauty and helpfulness of an active Christian life, how much it would do for her! If we should make our religion seem lovely to her, then if she would drop in to the Friday evening meetings occasionally, and if Dr. Compton should get in the habit of calling once in a while, as he would if we gave him a hint that he would be welcome"—Susie paused.

"Links! links!" said Pauline, "that is just the way they are forged on."

“I hope Madeline will visit you this winter, whatever we do,” said Isabel.

“Oh, she is going to!” said Pauline. “I can almost see that big trunk being packed in anticipation of her coming to us again. Maidie was very urgent that I should visit her, but she can come here much more easily than I can go to Chicago, because Uncle Richard travels a great deal of the time; his business requires it; and I absolutely cannot leave papa.

“You can’t think how confiding papa has grown,” she went on. “He always was affectionate, but now he is so caressing and makes so much more of a companion of me. We talk freely of mamma, always a barrier in our conversation before I talked with him about my new resolves. I hated to be away from him in the summer, but he and Uncle Richard took a vacation and spent a fortnight with Maidie and me at the Adirondacks. We had a gorgeous time. There were open-air meetings on Sundays at the

place where we were that were simply heavenly, I thought."

And now it only remains to say that from all present appearances it is quite probable that before a great while the delightful suburb of Verona Roads may boast a plain but substantial little building, wherein many a pleasant, profitable hour may be passed by any one choosing to visit the reading rooms, from which no one will be excluded. For should the great rooms at Miss Katherine Frobisher's fine house be thrown open, and youth, music, and glancing lights invite a willing company to come and leave behind them of their substance what is to benefit 'the Roads' in so philanthropic a manner, no doubt another great success will be scored for our young Christian friends.

"It's all very well to do good in that way," said Pauline, "but what I am impatient for is to see Miss Frobisher an out-and-out Christian. I proved that it is only follow-

ing the Master afar off as long as we mince matters by doing good in pleasant, profitable ways, but are withholding all the time *our own selves*, which is the offering the Saviour wants."

"Patience, Poppy, patience!" said Susie Follansbee; "we must let God work in his own way. We will pray for our dear lady and believe that all in good time God will bring her near to himself."

"That is the way you all did with me," said Pauline smiling.

At Mrs. Hoostan's humble dwelling light has flown in at the door. Melly is at home and doing finely. She cannot jump nor run but she can stand firmly and without effort. The doctors say that the older she grows the stronger she will be.

Encouraged by the few signs gleaned from the Wansteds' bettered condition, Pauline gathered up courage one day and called a second time on Colonel Pellington, known to be chief owner in a local industry

employing several hands. It was uphill work talking with Colonel Pellington, Isabel Trenton laughingly declared, because of the great height from which he had to look down on people of ordinary stature. But Pauline persevered in Mr. Hoostan's behalf, and after all the colonel proved himself no mean ally in the good work carried on by the girls. He gave employment to Mr. Hoostan, who promised to keep sober and prove himself worthy of his hire.

"All is, if he keeps needing encouragement, we must keep encouraging him," Addie Fredricks remarked with hopeful logic.

It was a surprise, even to their sisters, when Jack Lorraine and Arthur Fredricks entered the church as members in company.

"I thought I stated my intentions quite plainly one evening," Jack replied, when Rebecca said she was delighted but a little surprised.

One day when Pauline called at William

Wansted's she was pleased to notice his arm had escaped from the customary sling.

"It's going to be slowly bettered, miss," said Mrs. Wansted in a low, mysterious voice. "I can't tell just who's paying the bills, because I'm forbid. But somebody found out how Dr. Lorraine had said that a surgeon who was a special"—she could not learn to say specialist—"could maybe help my man if he was to treat him; and bless God, miss, the special has been here, and my man is going to be bettered"

"Miss!" she suddenly asked in a tone of rising energy, "do you think a man must be in the church to be a Christian?"

"I think there must be love for Christ in the heart to be a Christian," Pauline replied, "and that makes a true follower of the Saviour want to enter the church, I believe."

"Well, can't love for Christ come out in good works, miss?" and poor little Mrs. Wansted's brow was drawn up in a look of anxiety.

“I think it often does, without doubt, Mrs. Wansted.”

“Well, then, I think I know a tall, rich man, miss, who must at least be trying to be a Christian, for he is that good to poor folks that makes them wish him every good thing. I only wish I could tell you his name, but I can ’t, miss, because I ’m forbid, himself forbid me.”

One night, after another Tuesday evening meeting, the five friends stood talking before Mr. Van Werter’s house.

“I have no further fears for the twins,” said Susie Follansbee. “I used to say I should do the best I could, and leave the rest to God. Then I would go on worrying as to whether I was doing just right by them, and as to how they might after all come out. Now I ’m still doing my best, and really leaving the rest to God and not worrying. My little brothers will come out all right, I feel sure.”

“I can see,” Pauline began, “that when

I proposed the sale at our house, it was the beginning of a desire to serve God ; and now it seems as if poor Miss Frobisher was asking to follow in the same direction. If she only knew it, there is a very direct road up to the throne of God, simply by the gate of prayer."

" Yes, Poppy, that is very true," said Isabel Trenton, " but do n't you think it is often best to let a person seem to take their own way in making the approach heavenward ? "

" Why, certainly," said Pauline, " as I said to Susie the other day, that was the way you did with me."

" Oh, we must stand by Miss Frobisher by all means," said Rebecca ; " and although we know how simple direct approach is to our Father in heaven, yet if through such pleasant avenues as she now proposes she is brought into touch with higher things, as I think she will be, and her life becomes consecrated to the Saviour's service, why, we shall be only too glad to aid in such a charm-

ing way. But we must begin, and pray for her individually."

"Yes, and for Colonel Pellington too," said Pauline; "he is on the right road also without doubt."

The rest were not slow in pledging their prayers in behalf of each.

"Papa says Captain Rollins is a truly converted man," Pauline added, speaking softly. "He saw him one day in a store, and he went right up to papa, and began telling how much he owed to some good young ladies of the Roads."

"How encouraging that is!" said Susie. "One of these days when our mission building is up, there will be an abundance of practical work for us all to do."

"Yes, and there is always work to be found in the vineyard of the Master if only there is willingness to do it," said Rebecca.

"Just like links of gold," Pauline added, "link following link, and all beautifully joined by an unseen Hand."

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