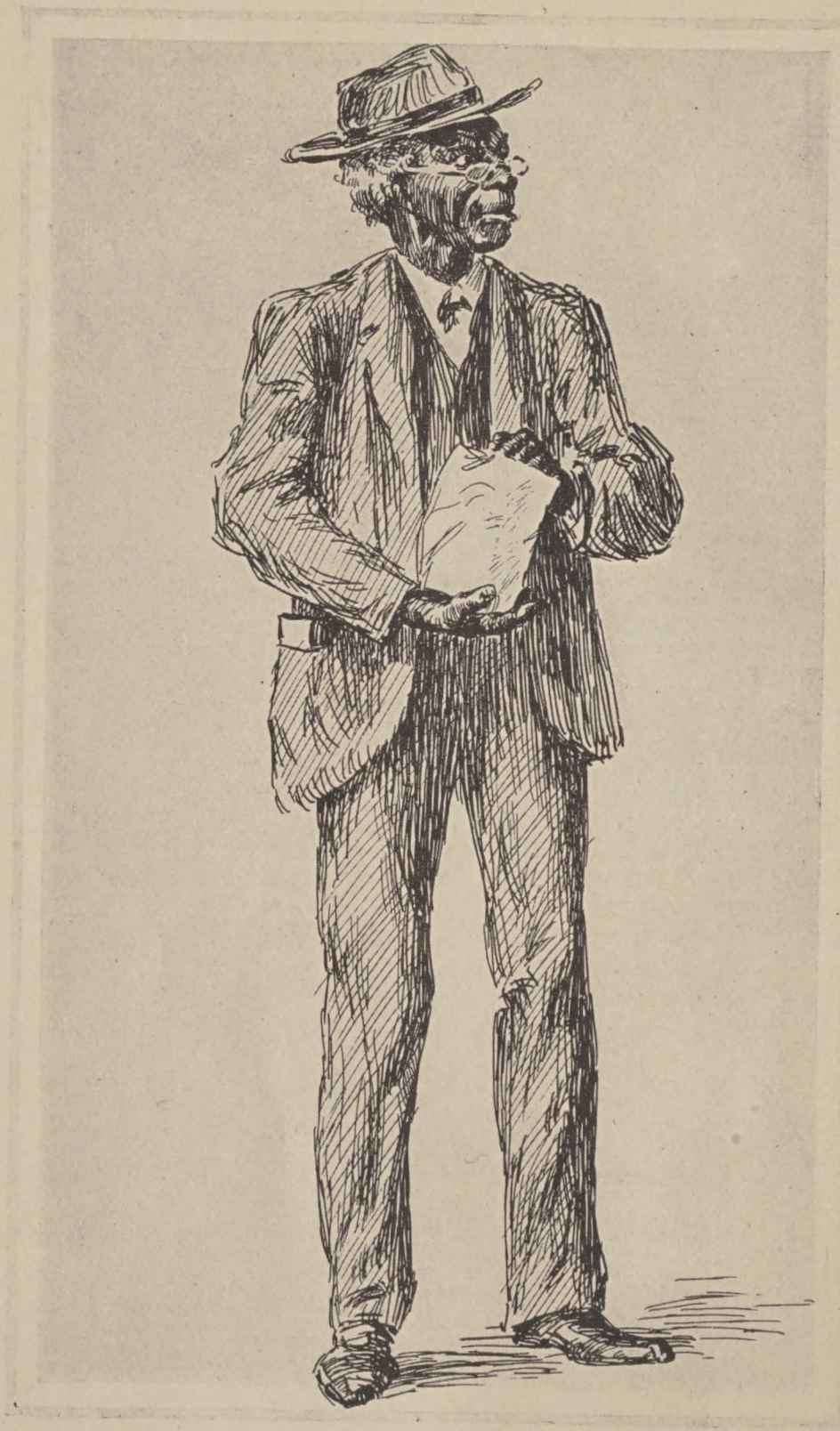
STUDIES IN HEARTS



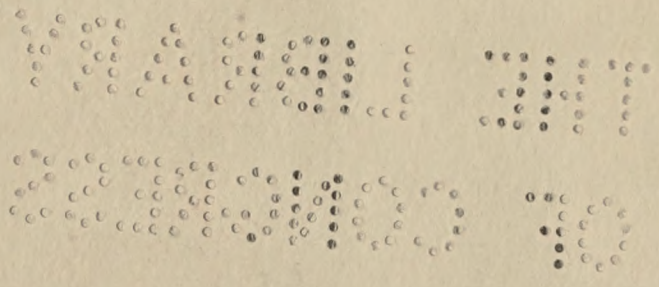
UNCLE ZEKE

Studies in Hearts

BY

JULIA MAC NAIR WRIGHT

AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY
150 NASSAU STREET
NEW YORK



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Studies in Hearts

TWO OF GOD'S HIDDEN ONES

"If you are going to Philadelphia, and are sufficiently pious and impecunious, of course you will board with Misses Mary and Louisa."

This was said in a little village railway station. We were going to Philadelphia, and we boarded with Mary and Louisa. The house was on Market Street, the lower floor being a great hardware store; between this and an adjacent furniture shop was a narrow staircase leading to the living rooms, also a narrow hall running back to the dining-room and kitchen. Evidently, saving hard work and fatigue had not been a prominent consideration when this tenement was secured. In fact, whether or not they could pay the cost was the first factor dealt with by Mary and Louisa in their business problems. They had been born in the beautiful county of Berks, of a family always few in

number and famous for godliness and a remarkable longevity. Eighty was the youngest life limit noted on the scanty pages of the record in their family Bible. Their father had been impoverished by "becoming surety for a friend." When the parents died, these two women, past middle age, had gathered their ancient furniture and small resources and come to this home on Market Street "to take boarders—ministers and elders mostly; they liked to have good people about them."

Mary, the elder by two years, had always been small and very plain: she was much wrinkled; a few wisps of gray hair adorned a rather large head, a light of kindly, universal sympathy shone steadily in her folded gray eyes, and always, no matter how hard the day and how heavy its burdens, the sheen of a peace that passeth understanding rested on Miss Mary's face. Mary did all the chamber work, waited on table, and attended to all the ironing; heavy work for a woman nearing seventy. She had grown somewhat stout, and no doubt felt the weariness of the many stairs she climbed.

Miss Louisa was of a different type: tall and erect, she had been rather handsome in her

youth; her thin hair retained some of its brownness, and was arranged in a little knot atop of her head, and two quaint flat curls wound over a small shell comb on each side her head—a fashion copied, perhaps, from some long-dead ancestors or some antique engraving, which well became her. Miss Louisa did the marketing, the cooking, table-setting, dealt with the boarders, received and laid out all the money, and was a trifle more decided and self-assertive than Miss Mary. Some one *has* to be emphatic in a house full of boarders. Their nearest relative, their father's sister, had lived in the city, and had urged her nieces to come thither. She had seemed fond of them, was childless, and her husband, a merchant and an alderman, had arrived at the great honor of having a street named for him, and putting thirty thousand dollars to his credit in the bank. When he died, the aunt had come to live with Mary and Louisa, promising solemnly to bequeath to them the thirty thousand dollars on condition that they cared for her till her death and allowed no stranger to nurse her. She languished for five years with cancer, and died two years before I met Mary and Louisa.

One of Louisa's many charities had been tolerating a boarder who was a whole year behind with the board of himself and wife. She said they were good people and would eventually pay the bill. They were seeing hard times, and she did not wish to increase their troubles. Kind, ill-requited Louisa! She *did* get that board money—but what did she lose? Educated and plausible, the man felt that his fortune lay in launching a book illustrated with portraits and filled with biographies of "The Benefactors of the State." In this volume Mr. and Mrs. Brown would shine resplendent if the fatuous old invalid left her fortune to the production of the large volume. "Immortalizing her name"—that was what caught poor Mrs. Brown's fancy as she lay and listened to the tempter, while Mary and Louisa worked themselves sick below stairs. To-day such a will would be broken as easily as a Sèvres cup. I think Mary and Louisa made no effort to break the will. They were old, poor, timid, and especially afraid of lawsuits. Their old age loomed before them, beggared.

We had the back parlor. Between that and

the front room was a door, and over it hung an old-fashioned green moreen curtain.

The sisters were with me one day, when Louisa was called to the front room. She let fall the curtain, but did not close the door as she passed to the parlor.

"I have come," said the guest, "to ask for your aunt's picture, to be enlarged as the frontispiece of our great work. We have looked in vain for a portrait of her. You must have one."

"Your people know," said Miss Louisa, "that we were badly treated about the money. For years it had been solemnly promised to us. We are old and worn out, and that was our sole dependence for our old age. Advantage was taken of an infirm, aged woman to persuade her to break her word. If the use of the money for our lives had been left to us, we should not have begrudged the principal going in any way aunt chose at our death. We have no picture for you."

"Will you not reconsider that refusal, and, as we have the money, give us the portrait of our benefactress?"

"No," said Louisa, emphatically.

The next day Mary came to me with a little flat packet.

"Will you mail it for me when you go out?"

"Certainly."

"I don't like to do things without Louisa, or against her ideas," said Mary, "yet, after all, they may as well have aunt's picture if they want it. She would have liked it. She was a proud kind of person that way, and has no children to remember her. I feel just as Louisa does—that we have been wronged. It was cruel and ungrateful, for if we had not let that man board here for months when he could not pay, he would not have been here to influence our aunt. We do fear being paupers in our old age; but God knows the way we take and what is good for us, and He will lead us through. He never does his children harm, you know. It will look right when we get to heaven. If I can only work as long as I live, I shall make no complaints."

"Did you get nothing at all from the estate?"

"Elder Glenn and our minister, and one of our church friends who is a lawyer, spoke to the people who got the money about our case,

and all they would do was to say they needed the money, but would give us a hundred and fifty dollars to keep still! Aunt had been here without paying board for five years, and we had had to get her many things that she would not pay for, besides hiring more help, as there was so much nursing. Our friends had us bring in a bill for expenses, and something was allowed. You see, he got her to transfer most of the money while she lived. He drove her crazy about fame and honor. She was old."

"How much did you get beyond your real outlay?"

"About sixty dollars."

"Sixty dollars for five years' hard nursing! Who did the nursing, dear Miss Mary?"

"I did. I am not as skilled in housekeeping as Louisa. She does not like nursing. I am used to it. I nursed my father and mother. Don't feel that we begrudged aunt. We are glad that we made her comfortable. She was our father's sister. She was a Christian woman: we shall live with her in heaven; we must not cherish hard feelings. And"—with a quick regard for her sister—"Louisa does not —only Louisa—well—felt it more than I did.

She is some younger, and may look to living longer to need the money. And Louisa was very ill last year; in bed three months; cold, the doctor said, but I knew it was disappointment and discouragement. Of course, she feels it more."

Having thus vindicated Louisa, Miss Mary went about her work with a little contented hum, as of a bee among flowers, the song of a resting heart.

Thirty years, when I first knew them, they had been "keeping boarders" in this house. Some of their boarders had been with them for nearly that length of time. There was Uncle John Glenn, bank cashier and church elder. Good Uncle John, whom to know in the beauty of his daily living was an education in Christianity—stout, smiling, sympathetic. All day at his desk in the bank, or in his big chair in his room; never absent from a service at his church, helpful thinker, liberal hand:

> "Full many a poor man's blessing went
> With thee, beneath that low green tent,
> Whose curtain never outward swings."

Mistress Glenn was a fit mate for her hus-

band, a dignified little woman, always clad in flowered silk, her time occupied in church work. We all considered this pair an ornament and credit to 919. They were as a sixteen-quartered escutcheon on a family coach.

There was James Foot, brought to Miss Louisa as a fifteen-year-old country orphan. She and Mary had mothered him.

"James and Charley Ray had our back attic room for twelve years," said Miss Louisa. "They were full of pranks, as boys will be, but we never grumbled at the pranks. We wanted the home to be a *home* to them. Yes, it was a work to keep them from the wiles of the city and the company of bad people; but we held on to them and managed to keep them in the church and Sunday-school. James never was as religiously minded as Charley; he has not come out on the Lord's side yet. And Charley is an elder this three years, and high up in business. Charley never forgets us. He visits us on our birthdays and Christmas, and brings us presents and calls us aunts. But no wonder Charley is so good. Uncle John Glenn has done everything a father could for him. And so he has for James."

"Charley" had gone to a home of his own. James had married a milliner, and he, his wife and son, occupied a small front room. The hearts of Mary and Louisa hovered over these young men as a bird over its nestlings. Poor old gray women, burdened with many sorrows! They lived to walk with James down the Valley of Death, and hear his words of new-born faith and trembling hope. I saw them both, with bitter weeping, bowing over the manly form of Charley, cut down in his prime by a street accident, as if it had been by a bolt from heaven.

There was old Mrs. Cox, nearly blind and extremely captious, who lived with them for twenty-five years, promising, as their aunt had, a bequest; but in dying blood-kin reasserted itself, and she left all to the nephews who had ignored her. However, one of them made out for Miss Louisa a check for extra expenses.

There were casuals—mostly ministers or theological students; the house was a kind of headquarters for these. Vacant city pulpits sent to Miss Louisa for supplies as one sends to a clerical bureau. Not a boarder, but a part of the household, was a colored servant, very old, whose mother had served Lady Washing-

ton when the President lived in Philadelphia—old Ann, shriveled and bowed together. I always thought of the woman in the Gospel, "whom Satan hath bound lo these eighteen years," when I looked at Ann. She was bent over from her hips, so that her face was fixed toward the floor, and "she could in nowise lift herself up." She was all the servant the sisters kept. She washed, scrubbed, and "did up" the dishes. Now and then she helped wait on table. It was rather distressing to have cups of tea and dishes of gravy thrust under one's elbows on a level with one's lap.

"No one else would hire Ann," explained Miss Louisa, "and she would break her heart if we left her to go to the poorhouse. She is a good Christian. Oh, it is wonderful what religious knowledge she has!"

They kept her while month by month Ann's decaying strength left them more of her work to do. They did this for God, and Ann uncomplainingly took what God assigned her, until one day she drew a deep breath, bent her head a little lower over her washing tub, and so died. One minute over the tub of suds in the little back shed, Ann so aching and so bent;

the next, she had heard the new name and walked erect in the gardens of Paradise. "'Tis a rare change, my masters!"

Life for Mary and Louisa was a routine, the most unvarying, rut-running of any life I ever noted. The same hours, the same meals. For breakfast always a fried mackerel at one end of the table, a veal cutlet with brown gravy at the other, and sundry dishes of potatoes and corncakes between. For dinner, dessert, always cranberry pie and bread pudding, and in the center of the table a dish of lettuce with rounds of hard-boiled egg sliced thereon. That dish lent distinction to Miss Louisa's table; it and the salad fork and spoon were a gift from the boarders. I never saw Louisa so incensed as she was by a burly boarder who made a practice of stretching out a long arm furnished with his own fork and picking off prematurely the rounds of egg, sometimes when eggs were dear, taking them all. Poor Louisa! when she considered that the vandal was in debt for his board and was teacher in a "school for young gentlemen," it did seem hard—as hard as the eggs themselves! She was obliged to spoil the symmetry of her table by removing

the salad to the end of the table by Mrs. Cox, who was too blind to see the eggs.

All day the treadmill of work, varied now and then by a call from the clergyman, or the church people, or by Louisa Mill. Louisa Mill was the namesake of Miss Louisa, whose friend her mother had been. Louisa Mill was a struggling widow, trying to raise four children on nothing. In the days when Misses Mary and Louisa had cherished expectations of the thirty thousand dollars, they had promised to provide for Louisa Mill. It hurt them sorely that they could now do no more than give her an occasional loaf, or some boarder's "cast-offs" to make over.

Miss Louisa never would give out a latch-key, and valiantly sat up until the last boarder was in. Late boarders were a great cross to her, she was so sleepy. When Mary's old gray head bobbed and plunged violently from side to side, Louisa inexorably sent her to bed. Mary always obeyed Louisa. Then, left alone, Miss Louisa read the daily paper, the church paper, the Bible and some favorite Commentary, and firmly awaited the tardy boarders. She told me that sometimes when she dragged

herself upstairs at last she found Mary asleep on her knees by the bedside, oblivious of her coming. Well—"So He giveth his beloved sleep." That hour of receiving tardy boarders was the hour for Miss Louisa to call in delayed payments, and remind of ancient debts. Never was landlady so forbearing, so merciful as Miss Louisa. I have known her to keep a whole large family for months without a payment, let them leave in her debt to seek better fortunes, and ask no interest when they paid arrears. I have known her to remain unpaid for three years where misfortunes had crowded her debtor.

"I would not like to be pressed by a creditor myself," said this woman, who, at least as much as any other whom I ever saw, lived by the Golden Rule.

"Tell me, Miss Louisa, do you not lose by your mercy?"

"I never have," said Miss Louisa. "I feel sure that I shall some time be paid, and I always am."

One weekly treat Miss Louisa invariably allowed herself. Mary never indulged in any. What was Louisa's? Every Saturday evening,

when the day's work was done, Miss Louisa took five cents, crossed the street to a confectioner's and bought a nickel's worth of marshmallow drops. This horn of plenty she emptied into a little blue china box, a keepsake, and placed it at her elbow as she mended or read. Miss Mary took one confection with reserve; sometimes, being pressed, she took another; never more. If any of us appeared on the scene, the dear gentlewoman offered us her treat; but somehow we all of us were disinclined to marshmallows.

Boarders came in late Saturday night. Mary went to bed, Louisa read. Her library was small, but sufficient. She read in rotation the lives of Martyn and Brainerd, Bunyan's "Grace Abounding," and a much worn copy of the "Olney Village Hymns."

Miss Mary and Miss Louisa took turns in going to Sabbath services morning and evening. In the afternoon Mary had a nap, a chapter or so in the Bible, and did her week's reading. Her taste was catholic in sermons: Spurgeon, Calvin, Doctor Martin Luther, Bishop Heber, and John Wesley all fed her hungry soul.

Sometimes when my small boy slept and I was otherwise alone, I went down for a little in the evening to see Mary and Louisa. At such times they had one theme, their early home in Berks County. The heat, noise, dust, scrimping, little sleep, toiling of the city, pressed upon them in these long, hard years, and turning backward eyes, they told me of the apple trees that tossed their boughs of bloom against that bedroom window in the eaves; of pigeons fluttering home with a cooing note; of bees homing honey-laden; of cool shadows on the grass; of roses wet with dew; of going to bed while yet the twilight lingered in the west. Dear souls! for them in beautiful Berks the apple trees were always a-bloom and roses were always freshly dipped in dew!

In my going and coming to and from Philadelphia during a series of years, I always saw Mary and Louisa, always a little older, more worn and shabby and gray. Then they had a year's notice that the house was to be torn down and rebuilt for stores. They resolved to fulfill a long, long dream; they would return to Berks County for a year of rest. Some cousins, often

entertained by them, invited them. They would go and taste again the joys of rest, quiet, all the sleep they needed—the glory of lost youth. Dear aged children! they did not know that there are more than "the dead nations" that "never rise again."

They stored their furniture with friends and went their way. I saw them when they returned. Disappointment brooded in the patient sorrow on their faces. "They had found it all so different," Louisa said. "The quiet kept them awake! They could not sleep for stillness, where only crickets chirped and no street cars crashed! They went to bed early and could not sleep until midnight. Country roads hurt their old feet; they could not get along with nothing to do. They were looking for another home and to get some of the old boarders back." They called on me one day while on their home quest. I knew they were walking to exhaustion to save car fare. They had not time to wait for dinner. They went their way brave, patient, weary. As I saw them disappear around a corner, my tardy sense came to me, and my heart smote me bitterly. If they

had no hour to wait for dinner, I might have comforted them with tea and toast. *O mea culpa, mea culpa!*

At last they found a place cheap enough, and set up their faded, worn, scanty belongings. Charley, the good, was long dead. Uncle John Glenn had died during that year of their absence. James Foot had been dead three years, but his widow, the milliner, and her son returned, so did widow Glenn; a few others gathered about them. It was a last valiant struggle for the bread of independence. A year and a little more passed. One evening Mary ironed, with many pauses of fatigue, until twelve o'clock. She slept so heavily next morning that Louisa did not wake her when she rose to get breakfast. While the others were taking the meager meal, dear Mary

> "Passed through glory's morning gate,
> And walked in Paradise."

Here was Louisa, eighty-three—and alone! The life-long habit of having Mary with her had fallen from her like a cloak—but then, God had been very good to Mary. I was not living in Philadelphia then, but that error about the tea haunted me often, like a nightmare.

Several years later I had gone to Philadelphia to visit an old friend. Setting out to walk alone to church one morning, my mind fixed resistlessly on Mary and Louisa, and looking up, I saw near me the milliner. We stopped.

"What about Louisa?" I demanded.

"Well! I'm glad if some one remembers her! How long have you been in the city?"

"Since yesterday." She was mollified.

"Louisa is living with Mrs. Mills. Louisa has not a penny, and Louisa Mills is as poor as poverty. Many of the old friends are dead or moved away. Louisa is forgotten. I know she is suffering for little comforts. I have all I can do to help my son, who has a sick wife and three little children."

Then followed the hasty tale: Louisa had tried to keep house for a little over a year after Mary's death, but found the affair impossible. Her hand had lost its cunning. She could no longer make the wonderful cranberry pies or the marvelous brown gravy; she forgot her accounts, and the rings of egg no longer adorned the salad. She furnished a room for herself with Louisa Mills, and sold the rest of her goods. The small sum that remained to her,

just a few tens, had now all gone, and poor Louisa Mills, supported by the meager wages of her children, could give Aunt Louisa little but kindness.

That forgotten cup of tea and its lacking toast rose up before me. "I neglected you once, excellent Louisa, but on this brilliant Sabbath day you should not be forgotten! Should not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, be loosed from the fangs of want on this Sabbath day?" The pealing bells in the belfries saw me flying from the church toward that humble quarter where the child of fair Berks was lingering out her last paralyzed years.

Louisa Mills herself met me at the door, and incontinently broke into weeping. We went into the beggarly little dining-room, where her two boarders, "young men in the attic," had just finished a late breakfast of fried pork and potatoes. Amid many sobs Louisa Mills told her story. "She hasn't had a cent this two years, and we are so poor I can't half do for her. I give her my best room. I would not do less for her, but it keeps me from letting it. Sometimes she wanders a little in mind, and I

know she wonders why she is not better done by. She is paralyzed from her hips, and yet I have to leave her alone while I do my housework, for I have no help. She is so bad off! She used to be dressed in decent clothes and so neat, but now she has only two gowns, and both worn; only two pair of old stockings, not a wrapper or a pair of slippers—oh, the things she is without! And she is heavy for me to move; it nearly kills me to try it! Oh, what can we do! What can we do!"

For a few seconds I regarded the poor, beggared, weary little woman, and then responded wrathfully, out of an indignation born of thinking what neglectful idiots we who called ourselves Louisa's friends had been.

"Why, I'll tell you what you can do. Wipe your face and cheer up, and go tell Louisa that I am here and coming up to see her. This afternoon you will receive food, clothes, all the little luxuries Louisa needs. To-morrow the church people will begin to come to see her, and after this every week you will have paid you a fair price for all Louisa's care and proper expenses. You will have money to keep a strong girl to help with the lifting and to do work for

you, so that you can stay with Louisa. We don't mean her to die alone. Why *didn't* you tell her church people?"

"I didn't know I should. I belong to another church, you know. Louisa never said anything of it. The minister came a few times; but men don't notice the signs of things; and we are here, off on the other side the city. Bedding, Louisa has enough, except a white spread; her's is all ragged."

She went up the narrow stairs, and I soon followed her. Louisa welcomed me with joy. "It was so good of me to come. So kind to remember her!" She never reviled me once for my long carelessness, never complained of any of us—asked after all, and said "she loved us so much!" She had no cap, such as her aged face and bald head needed. A faded, thin, old black shawl was about her shoulders, and I noted that she tried to cover with it the torn sleeves of her gown. On a table near was the blue china box, long empty.

"I'm a great burden on poor Louisa Mills," she sighed.

"You are not a burden on any one, nor will you be," I returned. "The early Christians had

all things in common. You have a right to share the good of your fellow church members. You have been a succorer of many. You have hindered us all of a privilege by concealing from us how we could help you. It is our right to show our love to Christ by ministering to you. Freely you have given, dear Louisa; now freely receive. You would have thought it strange not to share your all with your sister Mary. You are our sister."

"Oh, how I miss Mary!" said Louisa. "I miss her so on Sundays! We spoke to each other of the sermons, and at night the boarders came in early and we got to bed early. Before we went I read a Psalm and some of 'Pilgrim's Progress' out to Mary. We read it all, Christiana and the children and all, and when we finished it we turned about and began over again."

"It was a Sabbath day," I said, "when a sudden post came to Mary that she was wanted at the court of her King. That morning, I think, the river was all in a great calm."

Louisa looked at me, "and the water stood in her eyes."

"After this, Louisa, we shall all see after

countrymen, it had grown rusty through disuse. Michael Halloran was awkward and ashamed before the girl, and got away as soon as he could, vowing to have the marriage as soon as ever things could be fixed up.

He was as good as his word, but quick as he was someone else was quicker. Within a few days of the marriage Mary and John Hurley made a runaway match of it, and in the hullabaloo that followed it may be doubted that Michael Halloran and Mary's parents had anybody's sympathy but their own.

Michael Halloran retired to his solitudes after that, and it was some years before he made another matrimonial attempt. He was close on sixty then, and looked as if he were rough-hewn out of gray granite. His second venture was more successful. Poor little Mary Carew had not the spirit to save herself from this gray bridegroom, or perhaps the brave lover to help her through with it. Her match was made for her with as sordid a spirit as if she were a young heifer or a mountain lamb. She went through it quickly, but it killed her. She lived for a year after her marriage, a gray little ghost of her gay and innocent former self. Then Nora

was born, and her mother died, being too languid, it seemed, to have the desire to live even for the sake of the little wailing baby.

Michael Halloran had never forgiven Hugh all these years that old slight put upon him, so it was a bitter pill when he was offered Jim Hurley for a son-in-law. However, he, who was as adamant to the rest of the world, was like wax in his daughter's little hands, and he swallowed the distasteful thing with scarcely a grimace. He was disappointed in more ways than one, for he held John Hurley's son no match for his little girl. He wanted something more tangible than a college education and a reputed cleverness. It was part of the peasant primitiveness which belonged to him that he thought contemptuously of these things.

However, Nora had her way in this as in everything, and so it came to pass that she was to be daughter one day to gentle Mrs. Hurley, who began to yearn over her son's promised wife, very human as she was, the farther away her own young brides of Christ seemed from ordinary human needs and desires.

It was surprising how busy those young persons were, how full the long day from their peni-

nel skirts came upon the scene, and the box was full. Thomas went off, like Issachar, stooping between two burdens.

"I want you," I said to my friend, "to write a note to Mrs. Buell about this case. She is the leader of work in that church where Louisa is a member. She is the one to go to see Louisa, and to get the proper maintenance for her and see that it is regularly paid. You set the matter before her, for I do not know her well enough to hint to her that this is not a case for certain little methods of patronage and dictation, to which she is unconsciously given."

My friend laughed, and wrote for some while after dinner, while we others planned for more vigorous and sympathetic looking after of "the poor among us."

About the middle of the week, in company with a box of marshmallows, I went to see Louisa. Louisa Mills, in a state of renovation, met me at the door.

"Well, the change of it! Now she *is* comfortable. Come in. Yes, they came—a dozen of them by degrees, and *so* cordial. Mrs. Buell sent a down quilt, as lighter for her poor bones; then comforts, and the prettiest counterpane!

With them a box for *me,* with three new gray wrappers, six white aprons and a pair of slippers, and a note saying that 'such a kind, good nurse should have some nurse's clothes.' Folks say Mrs. Buell is pretty lofty and high and mighty, but it isn't so. She is the kindest, sweetest lady that can be."

I wondered what Mrs. Buell had found in my friend's Sabbath letter. Evidently, plenty of Gospel.

I went up to see Louisa. So neat and comforted as she looked—the pretty garments, fresh cushions for her great chair, dainty covers for bureau and tables, a big bunch of carnations brought by the minister, who had read to her from the "Olney Hymns" and "Grace Abounding."

"I did not know," said Miss Louisa, with a sigh of content, "that so many remembered me or cared for me. Probably it was my own fault for hiding away."

I thought it was as much the fault of us others who did not keep our aged poor looked up. However, the *manes* of that teacup were partially appeased.

Louisa lived nearly two years after that.

Her ninety-third year had struck and found her calm, hopeful, well cared for, interested in what interested others.

Then when the sweet clangor of the Sabbath bells sounded across the city they called her to enter that Upper Temple whence she has no more gone out.

Those Kirkaldies


HJB

THOSE KIRKALDIES

We came upon the Kirkaldies when we were in London, looking for lodgings "up Islington way." There was the usual "furnished apartment and attendance" in the first floor window. On the door of the house to the left was the announcement "American Dentistry"; the house at the right was decorated by the sign of a physician; below, on the corner, an attorney-at-law commended himself to attention; there were no shops in sight, and evidently the neighborhood was "eminently respectable." A maid, in regulation white cap, apron and list slippers, answered our knock, and showed us to the spick and span closed-up dining-room floor, which had all the newly polished appearance of the apartment waiting for lodgers. After a dignified and due delay, *she* came in, the landlady, middle-aged, plump, kindly, very Scotch and *sonsie,* like her name; our Scotch blood warmed to her. There was a premature grayness on her hair, her mouth had a little pathetic droop, and her eyes held a patient resignation.

Behold the woman with a history! "Miss Kirkaldie?" we queried.

"Miss *Mysie* Kirkaldie," she corrected. "I keep the house. These are the rooms;" and she opened the folding door to the bedroom. All was spotlessly neat, in good repair, but old enough to be very gray, if furniture could get gray with years. Some bits of bronze, silver and fine china hinted of the "better days" that stand in the past of all lodging-house keepers. There were the examples of old-fashioned crochetted lace and crewel work, and the basket of wax fruits, which told of maidens reared in "genteel boarding-schools," and at home accustomed to sitting in the family parlor by the mother and using their needles as proper Scotch lassies should. Yes, it was a nice apartment, but the drawing-room floor is always the best in the house, and we asked for that. "The drawing-room floor is always kept entirely for Miss Kirkaldie," said Miss Mysie, with a little accent of reproof, as if one had suggested some invasion of those penetralia where dwelt in dim stillness the household *lares* and *penates*.

We took the apartment on her own terms, and then Miss Mysie encouraged us by the in-

formation that there were three sisters of them, Miss Kirkaldie, Miss Ann Kirkaldie and herself, Miss Mysie; they lived alone, except that they had the young maid whom they had brought up, and they took lodgers in the dining-room apartment. They were Scotch, from Glasgow, said Miss Mysie, daughters of a Kirk minister, and had been in London for sixteen years.

We took possession, and found that we were in a realm of great cleanliness and quietude, scrupulous adherence to business engagements and comfortable routine. Every day the order was the same; at half-past six in the morning soft gliding of list slippers past our door announced Miss Mysie and Mattie, the maid, on their way to the basement kitchen to prepare breakfast. Later, ponderous steps, making every effort to be inaudible, indicated Miss Ann Kirkaldie in the room over our heads dressing, and presently she came downstairs with caution, to share the meal in the kitchen. This was our signal for rising, and by the time we were ready Mattie had the next room dusted, the fire lit, the table laid. While we ate, the family made a procession to the drawing-room floor,

and then the sound of a monotonous, quite masculine voice gave us to know that Miss Kirkaldie was acting as the family chaplain, her reading and prayer broken by four voices quavering in one of the Psalms of Rouse's Version. More heavy steps above, and Mattie, fleet-footed, carrying up a tray with tea, toast and eggs for the family potentate's invariable morning portion. We plead guilty to watching behind the red brocade curtains to see Miss Ann presently set forth, firm of foot, square of jaw, steadfast of eyes, clad in black, a large, well-filled blue flannel bag on her arm, a Bible in her left hand, and in her right an umbrella, opened or closed according to the weather. Always the same to minute, dress, gait, went Miss Ann, except on Sundays, when she left the house at two in the afternoon, without the bag, and with an intensely solemn expression; for then, as Mattie told us, Miss Ann went to stand by those appointed unto death.

As days elapsed into weeks and nothing amiss was discovered in us as lodgers, we gained a certain intimacy with the family, at least with Miss Mysie and Mattie. Mattie informed us that Miss Kirkaldie and Miss Ann

were engaged in "The Work." Thus she indicated one of the noblest, best-managed and least assuming forms of Christian labor, the Nurse and Bible Woman Mission to the poor women and children of London. No wonder that Mattie said "The Work"; it had nursed her dying mother, and shown her the gate of heaven; it had rescued her and her infant brothers and sisters and set them in Christian homes; it represented to her the Gospel in the nineteenth century.

"Miss Kirkaldie," said Mattie, with the deep reverence one might use in speaking of royalty, "is a lady superintendent. She was Bible woman for one year, just to get acquainted with the people; then she was district supervisor, then lady superintendent. She has fifteen nurses and Bible women and supervisors under her; Miss Ann is the chief of them. They meet in Miss Kirkaldie's parlor every Saturday night. You may have heard them?" We admitted having heard them, but not to any annoying degree. Duly at seven each Saturday evening we had heard the steps of tired feet going up the stair; Miss Kirkaldie's heavy voice in prayer and reading, "the wailing

strains of sweet Dundee," then the murmur of speech as the affairs of the mission were discussed. "I take them up tea, toast and jam at nine," said Mattie, "and they leave at ten. Miss Kirkaldie is a grand superintendent, so good that they kept her on, four years ago, when she got so she could not leave her floor. She gets a salary. Some of the lady superintendents are rich and give their services, but when one is fine, like Miss Kirkaldie, but has to earn a living, then she gets a salary. Miss Ann, of course, gets a salary; all the supervisors, and nurses, and Bible women do; they are women who have to support themselves. Miss Kirkaldie and Miss Ann lay by money each year. It is to use if they get where they cannot do any more work, and to leave Miss Mysie, who has no way of making a living. Some day Miss Kirkaldie will go to the home above, and Miss Ann will take her place; when Miss Ann is called away, there will be only Miss Mysie and me. I shall never leave *her*. I shall wait on her always, and she will never see me want. She took me when I was only four years old. We shall keep together always." Thus Mattie prognosticated her simple future.

Sometimes Miss Mysie brought her knitting and came to sit for an hour with me, and do the talking. "We came here sixteen years ago," she said. "After father died some of his friends urged my sisters to come here and enter the Work, while I kept house. It is doing good, and it makes our living." Then, in very confidential hours, came glimpses of her particular history. Miss Mysie had had expectations—of marriage, of a home of her own, of being sheltered, loved, cared for. She was not a progressive woman, this Miss Mysie, but thoroughly domestic. There had been in Glasgow a sailor, mate of a ship that sailed to the Orient. As soon as he had been made captain, the home was to be furnished for him and Mysie; it was "before father died." So the sailor went off through the wide Clyde lapses, on that final voyage before the home. The captaincy fell to him on the voyage, and then over his fate came darkness and silence. He went out with his men on some business in the captain's gig. It was in the pirate-full China seas, and neither officer, men, nor gig were seen again. No messages came; Miss Mysie hoped on, hopelessly. When the early home was broken up and the

change made to London, she came to do her share, leaving her new address with her father's successor, for *him,* if he came. As the little story trailed off her tremulous lips, Miss Mysie looked out of the window. I think that often and often she had looked into the depths of the London fog and seen it as the thick mystery of those China seas, as if she would draw out of it to her that boat propelled by lusty arms, the captain seated in the bow, while to the music of its oars the captain's gig drew down the years, its little flag fluttering to signal her, "Be of good courage, Mysie, for love is here." Those watchings had given her blue eyes their pathos. I gathered that the elder sisters felt as if their junior had rather tempted Providence and over-passed maidenly discretion by contemplating entering the intricacies and dangers of married life. Still, in a measure they grieved for her sorrow, and labored to provide for her future. They considered that by her nature she was entirely a "home body," and they gave her the house and Mattie.

Miss Ann had also had her romance, of a very different fashion, the deep romance of a daughter's intense love for a father who was

her ideal. Mysie told me: "Miss Kirkaldie was always in the parish work after we grew up. She taught the Woman's Bible Class, superintended the parish school, the Mother's Meeting, the Sewing School, the Infant Sunday School, the Women's Prayer Meeting, the Missionary Society, and taught the young men's class Sunday afternoons. She was busy morning, noon and evening, and was our father's helper. Father lived to be over eighty; he preached to the last. After he was seventy he lost his sight. Then Ann read to him, did all his writing at his dictation, waited on him, and led him from house to house in all his parish visitation. It was in this life my sisters were so well prepared for what they are doing now. I was my mother's helper. I looked after the house, to make it comfortable for all. Mother was busy in the congregation; all the ladies expected to be called on, and visited, and taken tea with; if there were sickness or death, mother must be there, and there were the new babies to be seen. I often went to see the new babies myself; I love children." Miss Mysie gave a little sigh and looked out of the window, but her eyes were introspective. She thought

of days when she had had visions of little chubby night-gowned creatures, flaxen heads bowed low against mother's knees at bed-time prayer. God had made his different choice for Miss Mysie. "Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water, who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; who fed thee in the wilderness with manna which thy fathers knew not."

Said Miss Mysie, "Little children have helped me to learn many lessons. There is my verse, 'The beloved of the Lord shall dwell safely by him, and be quiet from fear of evil.' I have seen little children timid of everybody, crowding close to their parents, feeling safer the closer they were, and quiet from all fear of evil, as they looked out of that safe dwelling. I think of that, and I am not afraid of the years when I may be poor, alone, and old, for if I have God I shall be rich in him and never alone, and his children's hearts are always young." Dear Miss Mysie!

The London Bible Work Society I had known of from my childhood. It was born in

the church of Dr. James Hamilton. Mothers in Israel who listened to that saintly preacher had planned and fostered the mission, and extended it through England and to the Continent. Living in a household that moved entirely in the circles of "The Work," I was naturally more drawn to it. I heard from Mattie of the aged one into whose feeble care had come three helpless little grandchildren; of the bread-winner who had fallen dead from his brick-layer's scaffold; of the woman and six children, abandoned of a recreant husband and father. The desertion appealed to Mattie as a direct blessing of heaven; it was her opinion that the only virtuous act possible to a bad man was to run away and relieve a suffering family of his presence. I heard of the dutiful girl, sole support of an old father, and now crippled by an accident, unable even to provide herself with the needed wooden leg. One evening I went to my little box of dedicated money, and, taking from it several bright, yellow disks, bade Mattie hand them to Miss Kirkaldie "for The Work."

This unexpected largess produced great excitement. Mattie presently dashed to the base-

ment to summon Miss Mysie. Miss Ann, returning with her blue bag, was met on the stairs. There was an evening family council in the "drawing-room," to which all, including Mattie, were called. Next day Mattie told me "the money would do great good; there were pitiful cases 'up Islington way,' which the just portion of society money for that locality could not cover."

Miss Ann called upon me in the evening. She did not, like Mattie, discuss the future. She was not retrospective, as Miss Mysie. That deep romance of her life, when she had walked with her father in steadfast company, was too sacred for speech. She spoke of "The Work." Miss Ann thought that, increased an hundred fold, that work would be inadequate to the great city's bitter need. She found that wickedness, idleness and selfish greed lay behind most of the suffering. There were scores of wicked poor waiting to snatch the help that should go to the honestly needing, the innocently suffering. In spite of the unworthy, there were many of God's hidden ones, his little children, to succor, for whom he would say, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these,

. . . . unto me." Yet, Miss Ann loved the work; it was worth living for; it took hold upon eternity.

Miss Mysie stated that Miss Kirkaldie would like me to call upon her, and at gas-lighting I was personally conducted to the drawing-room. Miss Kirkaldie sat near a bright sea-coal fire; if Miss Mysie was stout, Miss Ann large, Miss Kirkaldie was prodigious. A great frame inclining to fleshiness had, during years of enforced confinement, been enormously built upon. She was fifty-five, with gray eyes and iron-gray hair; her whole personnel suited the resonant tones of her voice. Her rooms were furnished with the heavy mahogany, the thick carpets and draperies, which had belonged to the best room of the Glasgow manse; the huge leathern chair, the high ottoman that held her nearly useless feet, had been given to her father by his parishioners. Her father's mighty constitution, which had carried him through fifty-seven years of arduous pastoral work, was, in his daughter, vigorously doing battle with gout and locomotor "ataxy." I speedily found that the imprisoned lady superintendent knew every

item of the work under her as perfectly as if she had been daily in the field.

Shortly I rose to bid her good-bye. No two women could offer a greater contrast; we had been born a hemisphere apart, but that was nothing to physical and subjective distances between us—only two points of contact, the Scottish blood that cried out in the veins of both, and our fellowship with our common Lord. Miss Kirkaldie saw it, too; there was little that escaped her. She held my hand in a lingering clasp—and her resonant voice rolled like a wave along the room: "They shall come from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God."

A Modern St. Christopher

A MODERN ST. CHRISTOPHER

To lose fortune when all the world seems to be going prosperously—this is hard. To lose home when home is dear—this is hard. To lose friends when the heart is warm and friendly—this is hard. To lose reputation—this is passing hard. But to lose faith, to find the soul suddenly stripped of its trust, its hopes, to find the present orphaned of God's fatherhood, the future desolated of the eternal life—this is a loss harder than all.

"We sit unowned upon our burial sod,
And know not whence we come, nor whose we be,
Comfortless mourners for the Mount of God,
The rocks of Calvary."

There was a man, Harvey Ogden by name, who had experienced all these losses, even to that culminating loss of all. That last came suddenly upon him one lowering November day, when a dull mist driven by raw winds was rolling in from the sea over the sodden land;

the sun had forgotten the world, and heaven had forgotten him.

He stood in a dreary landscape where wet poplars filed along the muddy roads, where the harvests had all been gathered, and the small houses, scattered here and there, proclaimed the poverty of the soil.

Could this landscape ever have been sun-kissed and beautiful? He straightened himself from tightening his saddle-girth and looked abroad. Had he ever found this lovely the year around? Yes; but then he was young, and heart and life had been full of benediction. Now, here, where he was born, his heart had died within him; his heart, his soul, had perished. Heart? Soul? Had he, in any high sense, ever possessed either? Had not his heart been simply a contracting and expanding muscle? His soul, was it not mere animal breath; his own status, was it not merely a little higher, but less stolidly enduring, than that of this dripping ox patiently chewing its cud in a corner of a rail fence?

All his losses had come upon him as the work of one man, who out of jealous envy had falsely accused him of evil, had driven him from a

good position, from home, from happiness. How he had hated his adversary! How he had impotently longed to wreak vengeance upon him! But, at last, in the land of the stranger, years had brought him friends, honor, wealth, and, finally, he had heard the wooing of the voice of the Nazarene, "Arise and follow me," and he had answered, "My Lord, and my God!"

He had made it the test of his new life, of his faith and hope, that he could forgive his enemy. He found that his heart had grown calm and forbearing at thought of him: he no longer craved to tear him in pieces, to wreak upon him tenfold the measure which he had received.

When he realized this change in himself he believed the new life well begun and he rejoiced in the Lord greatly. The old Adam was dead. Christ reigned. He walked in fellowship with the Supreme. How happy he was for a while! Then he began to have doubts of himself. Was the change really so great as he had believed? Was he not self-deceived? He would put himself to a crucial test. He would go back to the place where he had suffered. He would face the enemy who had triumphed. He would feel

the blessed calms of self-conquest, and know that he was forgiven of God by this sign, and that he himself had forgiven his enemy. In the golden Indian summer he began the pilgrimage which was to prove to him his acceptance with God.

As he moved toward the scenes of his early days, a cold change came upon him. The path, once traced in pain and burning rage, brought back, as retraced, burning rage and pain. The summer died from out the landscape, the winter of the world and the winter of doubt had come; his life had the nakedness of Arctic snow-fields.

Finally he left the railroad and on horseback traveled slowly toward the old home. Then the tempest of passion broke upon him, surged over him, wrecked his soul, and cast him, beaten, baffled, and bereft upon the cold shores of doubt —and from doubt he reached despair.

Hate and revenge were rampant still. Then, evidently, he had deceived himself and was himself unforgiven. All that peace, that holy rapture, then? Myth, sentiment, lost imaginations, lingering superstitions of childhood. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the

Lord." *Had* he repaid? No. Then the promise and the Promiser were alike figments of some fair fancy. Perfect love, forgiveness of enemies, doing good to persecutors, praying for those who hate: no, no, it was all impossible, all a dream; there was no such new life of the Crucified within him.

He drove his spurs into his lagging horse; he now desired but one thing, to reach the bank whence, to hide his own sin, Andrew Mitchell had driven him, and there to smite the lie and the life out of Andrew Mitchell, the smug cashier.

Had he a knife? Surely he had. On! he would use it with all his strength. What a craven he had been to let vengeance sleep so long! Now all was lost to him but that one last wild joy. God and the future life were lost, and the present life had in it no good to be counted beside revenge. Oh, then, on!

He almost stumbled over a woman running crying up the road from a little wagon-camp standing beside a smouldering fire at a turn of the roadway.

"Stop, sir. I hope you be a doctor, for here's a man as is dyin'."

"No; I am not a doctor. What has happened?"

"Something has burst in his breast, and he bleeds awful. Stop, sir, will you? Whether you know doctorin' or not, sir, stop, for I'm alone except for the bit children, an' my man a poor cripple. This stranger will die on our hands, an' we're that hopeless poor!"

Harvey Ogden dismounted and bent low to enter the miserable little tent. On a pile of ragged bedding lay a man, emaciated, shaggy of hair and beard, in a swoon possibly. Near to death he looked, while the red stream was yet dripping over his lips.

"Dying of hemorrhage of the lungs." Harvey Ogden gave the verdict with the assurance of a medical practitioner.

"Oh, sir," pleaded the woman, "can't he be got away from here? Yon is all the bed we have, an' this is all the shelter for five, an' he is nothing to us. We were just giving him an' his child"—she pointed to a little creature asleep near the sick man—"a lift for fifty cents to the town below, an' here we had to stop, along of the way he was took."

Unbeliever in everything and full of uni-

versal hate as Harvey Ogden had recently become, he could not let this fellow-creature lie in so terrible a strait. He ran down the road to a small house. A tidy woman in widow's dress opened the door. Ogden hastily explained the situation.

"If you will let me have a room and a bed, I will pay for it, and will send for a doctor, and will stay by the poor creature until, in a day or two, we can move him. Here—there's earnest. Will you get a place ready?"

The woman hesitatingly took the five dollars. "'Tisn't Christian to let a man die yonder in the rain," she said, looking down the road.

Ogden hastened back, folded a quilt into a stretcher, laid the man on it, covered him, and, seeing that the tramp-woman was strong, bade her carry the pallet at the feet while he bore the head. The crippled man followed, bringing the child.

"Where did you pick him up? Do you know his name?"

"Not a thing about him," protested the woman; "he had no luggage but a little packet of food for the child. We took him up ten miles east of this."

For a while Ogden, the widow and her son were busy checking the flow of blood and making the patient easy in a clean bed and clean clothes. Then the son went for a doctor, and the widow washed and curled the child, dressed him in some improvised garments, fed him, and rocked him to sleep, singing to him a hymn.

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"There's no hope," said the doctor. "He won't last six hours."

The apparently unconscious man had heard. He opened his eyes slowly, and said: "Take my boy to my aunt, Jane Thurlow."

Then Harvey Ogden knew him, knew him by his eyes. His enemy, Andrew Mitchell! And with the light of recognition rushing into his face, Andrew Mitchell knew him also.

"You!" he gasped.

"Yes, I am here. Andrew, listen! You are dying. Say the truth before these two witnesses. It was not I that took the bank's funds. Speak!"

Then, with one great effort, Andrew Mitchell raised himself on his elbow, stretched out a long, bony finger, and spoke:

"Curse you, Harvey Ogden! I never had an hour of luck since I saw the last of you! Everybody dogged me about you. Clear you now? No, I won't clear you! Curse you!"

As he fell back the red blood swelled once more past his lips—and ceased—and he was dead.

"I'll make out a burial certificate," said the doctor, who was new to these parts, and to whom this scene told but little.

"Who was he?" asked the widow, looking askance at the corpse. "What did he say about the child?"

"He said to take him to Miss Jane Thurlow. The man's name was Andrew Mitchell." The name burned Harvey Ogden's lips like fire. He realized that he hated his relentless enemy dead more than he had hated him while he was yet alive.

"Andrew Mitchell, was he?" said the widow curiously. "Used to be a bank cashier hereabouts, long ago—ten years ago—defaulted, and ran off. Going to his aunt, Jane Thurlow, was he? He wouldn't have found her. Died two years ago, and left all her money to a church home. You'll help me out of this, won't

you? You brought him here. We can bury him to-morrow in the old farm burying-ground back of our orchard, but we're too poor to take expense."

Certainly it was not right to burden the widow. Caught in the toils of fate, Harvey Ogden set forth in the storm to buy his enemy's coffin, and when it was brought through the cold rain, the cover splashed with the mud of the roads, he aided the widow's son in making this that had been his destroyer ready for burial.

Did he forgive him then? No. A curse and a reiterated injury, these had been Andrew Mitchell's last bequest.

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Noon. The rain had ceased falling, and a yellow light struggled through the vapors. The grave had been filled in and roughly smoothed over.

Harvey Ogden asked for his horse. It was time to move on—objectless. The sleuth-hounds of revenge could not pursue a trail that ended in a grave. Revenge had lost its quarry, but hate lived on. He had buried his enemy—but he hated him still. As for God, God was

further from him than ever, so far off now that he had lost him in cold distance, and no longer accounted that he was!

"How about the child?" asked the widow. "I can't keep him; you brought him, you should take him."

"Where? Poor little creature!" faltered Ogden.

"To the county-house, I reckon. Poor creature surely! He is a sweet child, but I can't do for him. We are deep in debt. You'll pass the poorhouse on your road to town; five miles from here it is. You'll see it."

See it? Of course he would. He had known it from his childhood, and as a child, riding by, had looked with childish pity and curiosity at the miserable inmates—unloved infancy, unhonored age.

The widow lifted up the child to the arms of Harvey Ogden seated on his horse. There was nothing to do but receive him into his bosom and ride away slowly, because of the mud.

The child nestled against Ogden, clutched his beard fast for security, and then slept, and grew rosy, and dimpled, and cherubic in sleep. Then a voice spoke in Harvey Ogden's ear:

"Whoso receiveth one such little child in my name, receiveth me."

Now you cannot doubt the identity of him who in a known voice speaks to you clearly. Harvey Ogden knew this voice; it was his Lord's. Then the man thought of another child—an infant, sweet and guileless, in whose eyes mingled human childhood and eternal mysteries: a child sitting upon a woman's lap in a town called Bethlehem; a child who had consecrated childhood. And now how heavy grew this sleeping child in Harvey Ogden's arms! He weighed like lead, he bore him down. Oh, mighty load! for He who bore the world on his heart had put himself in this little one's place, and the man bent and was crushed under the immense burden.

This child, put into a poorhouse to live unwelcomed, and unloved, and untended all its baby days? Not so; that would be the Christ so outcast in him. This child, to live, one by one, those thirty-three years lived once by the Son of Man, and in them to be delivered over to loneliness, ignorance, sin? Then, in him thus the Christ betrayed? In sleep the child held Harvey fast, and still smiled on. But Harvey

now saw only a thorn-crowned head, a "man with eyes majestic after death." . . . There was a monotone deep down in his heart repeating: "for me—for me." . . . His heart was broken, and, breaking, strangely its life was renewed. His arms clasping the babe were paralyzed—a Nineteenth Century St. Christopher, he was carrying the Christ.

"If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink," said the voice of the Nazarene. This he had done.

"Sick, and ye visited me; naked, and ye clothed me; a stranger, and ye took me in. Ye did it unto me. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom."

What? There was no question now! Was this sun and summer shine breaking over the world? Harvey Ogden had again found his God, never more to lose him, for now He had entered into some subtle, masterful, absorbing relationship to his soul. Doubts? They had vanished like the last folds of the mist; for God was over him, directing all, and in him accepting all, and in his arms, in the person of his enemy's child, he carried—Christ.

He clearly saw it now: his trusting to self,

resting on his own forgiving for forgiveness; his trying to be unto himself his own Saviour. All his fabric of self-confidence had crumbled into dust, and left him shelterless and prone. Then One Divine had lifted him up, and had shown him how the new life had been still working in him, and now offered to receive as to himself all that was done for the little child.

A Pair of Lone Women

A PAIR OF LONE WOMEN

The house was on the corner of a street leading out of Russell Square; a lodging-house, of course. The portion called a hall was so contracted that our prospective landlady was obliged to stand on the stairs while we concluded our negotiations, the hall being only large enough for our two selves and a tall, narrow, spider-legged desk. This desk the housemistress regarded with the awe and pride bestowed by some on a quartering of a coat of arms; her father had used it when clerking in the city.

"Mrs. Vane—a widow?" said the head of our family, as he filled out a little business document.

"A spinster," she replied, with a flush. "At my age, and in my occupation, it is our custom to say *Mrs.*"

"Oh, yes, certainly. We will move in to-morrow."

"A good situation has the house, but it is ter-

ribly run down inside," he said, as we went up the street.

"Very clean, but I doubt if either the undertaking or the furniture will hold together long," I replied. "I think our moderate payments are just putting off utter ruin for a little time."

We moved in. Mary, the one maid of the establishment, received us. "Mrs. Vane was out." It was borne in on our minds that she was off paying a pressing creditor with the money we had given her.

Mary felt it to be her duty to explain the house to us. "She and I have stuck together for ten years, ever since she came here. Yes, here we are just two lone women. The dining-room floor is rented to a druggist and his two sons. They've lived with us a year. *This* floor was driving us crazy, being empty two months. The floor above, three rooms, is let to medical students. *They're* a trial; hard on the furniture, hard to wait on, hard to get money out of, and coming in at all hours of the night. The top floor is let, four little rooms, to some clerk girls; they have a bite of breakfast and go out at seven, and get in at nine at night, and we can't charge them much. Mrs.

Vane's had it awfully hard; she had to pay out for a bad brother, and she had her mother here six years, paralyzed, in the back room below.

"When she died, Miss Vane moved into the third story hall-room, and then into the attic, as we got poorer, and for two years she and me lived in the basement. We feel for each other. I had my folks to see to, and she had to break off her marriage promise, along of having her mother to see to; and my lad went to Australia years ago, and I had to stay to do for my old folks. Hear from them? Oh, they both married years ago. Men in Australia and Dakota have to get married; they can't sit and wait for women who can't come. Work hard? Of course, ma'am, and so discouraging, always in debt, and falling back. We get clean downhearted. But we take turns going to church Sunday afternoons and evenings, and *she* reads a Scripture and a prayer at bed-time, and that keeps us up a bit, knowing that the Lord does our planning for us, and will bring us out somewheres, and there's heaven beyond. She likes to read out that hymn, 'How firm a foundation.' Ever hear it?"

Mary dropped these items of information at

various times, as she "did up the rooms." We felt that Mrs. Vane must have been in straits to put up with us for the price. The two children *did* run in and out, and up and down, a deal, and bring in their mates. When their owners were away, said pair of children drove Mrs. Vane distracted by getting out of the window and climbing along the leads; also dashing along the next lower roof and banging down the sky-light shutter above the cobbler's shop, reducing him to darkness and inarticulate fury. Then, there was the night we went to Parliament. We hung breathless on a debate between D'Israeli and Gladstone, and came home at three in the morning. Mrs. Vane, sitting on the stairs, received us, not with reproaches, but with enthusiasm:

"Oh, I'm glad, so glad, you are come!"

"What! Anything wrong with the children?"

"No, indeed; they're asleep—hours. Oh, I am so glad! I—I thought something had happened!" Only when we were visiting the two sleepers, before retiring, did it occur to us that Mrs. Vane had had horrible apprehensions that, either by accident or design, we might have

fled, leaving those two antic young Americans on her hands. Such an episode, added to her other calamities, must have loomed before her with a peculiar awfulness.

"We told you we were going to Parliament," we said, "and that always sits all night."

"Does it?" asked Mrs. Vane, who knew nothing beyond keeping lodgers.

We never knew from her that the children had called in their particular West Indian friends, and kept up a war dance till ten o'clock. Oh, no, *she* was too glad that we were safely back.

Only a few times did I ever invade the basement. Worn out and shabby, it shone with cleanliness. Mrs. Vane wore white cotton gloves while she toasted bread and muffins. How they kept it neat and well aired I cannot tell; she and Mary slept in two unwindowed ten by ten closets, which had been storage rooms "when the house was a private." They sat in the kitchen together, but differences of rank were duly maintained. By the window, opening on the front area, lay a square of carpet, on the carpet a rocking-chair with a cushion. There sat Mrs. Vane. Mary sat outside

the square of carpet, on a cushionless chair. By Mrs. Vane on the window seat lay her Bible, almanac, account-book, hymn-book and work-basket. On Mary's chair hung her knitting bag and work bag, both derelicts from some lodger. Mary sat down only to eat, and after 6 P.M.; for the twelve day hours she was on her feet. Mrs. Vane cooked for all her sets of lodgers separately whatever they chose to send in. The "coals charge" for the first, third and top floors probably provided her own coal. Mrs. Vane had care of sending out the laundry work, for all but the drawing-room, and she and Mary carefully sifted out all hose, kerchiefs, and small articles of underwear, and laundried them in the kitchen. The few pence of regular charge on these, which they deducted from the laundry bill, probably paid for their household washings. By such small economies they fought the wolf of poverty and debt all day long, from half-past six, when they breakfasted together on toast and cheap tea, to ten at night, when they supped on oaten porridge, seated close by their dying fire.

At a quarter before seven, Mrs. Vane arranged the meager breakfast of "The Attics,"

and Mary took it up four pairs of stairs. At half-past seven, Mary carried up and "laid" the breakfast for the three men in the "dining-room." A quarter after eight saw the cheerful creature arranging the drawing-room, and then bringing the breakfast which Mrs. Vane had cooked for us. The medics rose and shrieked for breakfast at any hour between eight and eleven, eating in relays just as their whims, classes, and homing hours of the previous night dictated. I hated to think how many times a day Mary carried trays upstairs! Yet Mary was always cheerful and grateful, even when her face was drawn and her lips white with fatigue. She "was so thankful to stay in one place," "so glad that she kept well," and "that Mrs. Vane was kind." Mrs. Vane was less cheerful than Mary. She saw the hopeless walls of circumstance closing about her, and already felt crushed by them; yet she was always patient and faithful. Perhaps her heart wound was deeper than Mary's. She spoke of it once or twice in the twilight. She had never forgotten, but would *not* remember, because he was these years another woman's husband, and father of two little girls; how else could his in-

valid parents have been cared for to the end? Yes, parted forever in this world, because of duty to their old people. It had been God's way for them—God knew!

After six months with Mrs. Vane, we went to Hastings, but returning after three months, were welcomed with joy to our former rooms. Mary said there "had been theatre folks in them, making heaps of trouble and very poor pay." We could see that affairs drifted more and more rapidly to inevitable ruin. Sometimes, in our ignorance, we wondered *why* God suffered so much trouble to wait upon these "two lone women." God's silly sheep are always wondering *why* about something.

Again we left to seek Brighton; and reaching London, the season over, I again sought our old lodgings. The crash had come. The walk and street were littered with splinters of wood, wads of paper, wisps of straw. The bare, grimy windows were pasted with the scarlet announcements, "Auction! Auction!" On the house walls were placards, "Lease for Sale." Nobody cared: the cabs rattled by; the barrow-men shouted their wares; across the way a bridal party set off for the parish church;

next door, the knocker was tied with a white glove, because somebody had an heir; and down the street fluttered from a bell pull a long black scarf. Mary opened the door—Mary, looking wearier and worse-fed than ever, her eyes swollen by days of weeping. She led me to the "dining-room," empty save for a broken chair, on which she advised me to sit with caution.

"It's all over," sobbed Mary. "We're sold out. Everything is gone but our few rags of clothes and a handful of worn-out duds in the kitchen. Mrs. Vane and me live in the kitchen; we can stay three weeks longer, and then we will be set adrift. It's worse for her than for me. I can get a housemaid's place at a pound a month, with a ten years' recommend from her; but what can she get? All she can do is keep house and cook, but she's never lived in service and has no recommends. She's nigh worn out her shoes and her strength looking for something. Oh, the world's a cold, hard place for a pair of lone women! I can't abear to leave her. We've held by each other so long. You don't know how good she was. Always her penny for the church plate, and gave me mine for evening. Always a good word for

the old crossing-sweeper, and having her in to warm on very bad days, and always a sixpence for her Christmas and Whitmonday, even if we two went without meat for it. She saved every waste bit from the lodgers' dishes, and all the cold tea, and made soups and stews and hot drinks for the sick and poor over in the mews. Oh, she did what she could—and now she's turned adrift!"

That evening being raw, cold and drizzly, the maid of my new lodgings announced in supercilious tones: "A person to see you," and ushered in Mrs. Vane, more faded, shabby and discouraged than ever. Mary had told her of my call, when she returned from her work quest, and she had come to see me. I placed her in a big chair by the glowing grate, and greatly exasperated the supercilious maid by bidding her "Bring the lady tea and toast." Mrs. Vane rehearsed the tale told by Mary. Things had simply gone from bad to worse, until they could not go any longer. It was hard on Mary, thrown out on the world with not a relation left her. In that, she and Mary were alike, and ought to hold together, but could not. No; she could find nothing. She had one

friend, *his* sister—Clepham way. Not well to do, but comfortable. If worst came to worst, she would ask her for a shelter while she looked further. She hated to burden that friend with her affairs; but soon she would have to go and see her, and ask for help in finding a situation for Mary. Then she hinted that perhaps, in my great land, I knew of some place as housekeeper, or linen-room keeper, or even janitress. I saw that she hoped that I could give her the first mentioned position. Her spirits fell lower, if possible, as I guardedly made it clear that I had to do my own housekeeping, and could not venture to advise her to go to that far new world. She left despondently, promising to return in a day or two and tell me how she fared.

Not hearing of her for a week, I again sought the old place. Mary saw me from the basement window, and the hall door burst open before I could ring. There stood Mary—another, new Mary. Her eyes beamed, hope and content glowed in her face; she evidently had eaten and slept well of late, and she wore a voluminous fresh white apron.

"Come in! Oh, do come in!" cried Mary.

"*She* meant to go to you to-night; *now* I can tell you the whole story. It is just God's doings. *We* can't understand it, but we are so happy!" Mary's voice was full of exclamations and underlinings. She opened the dining-room door. "Could you sit on the window seat? That old chair is gone; we had to use it to cook supper one night. Well, thank the dear, kind Lord we are done burning up old chairs for evermore."

"But what has happened? A housekeeper's place?"

"Oh, I should say so, just! When she came back from you that evening, very dreary and sopping, I gave her a letter from *his* sister, Mrs. Lane, saying to come to her sure next day, early for breakfast. So she set off by seven. She and Mrs. Lane sat down, cozy-like, by a big fire, to a hot breakfast, and Mrs. Lane outs with a letter from *him,* long and earnest-like. His wife had been dead a year, his two little girls were bad off for a mother, and he was lonesome to die, and his big farm place needing a mistress. Would she persuade *her,* Mrs. Vane, you know, to come out and marry him right away? And to end all, there was a check

for sixty pounds for outfit and passage, and he would meet her at the ship in New York; also let her bring the Mary he had heard of, so she'd have right old English helpers.

"She looked another body when she came home that night, bringing twenty-five pounds, and telling me all about it. I had a bit of soup and a potato waiting for her, but she says: 'Mary, eat it at once, for I've had three good meals this day.' We've done a lot of shopping, or she has for both, and I have washed and mended and given away till we're all in order, and each of us with a good new box. She's got a good gray suit to journey in, and a blue to be married in, and some other things; and I've got a new brown for the trip, and a best black wool, and her two best ones made over for me. Oh, we're real well set up, and the folks in the mews are to have all we don't take. They're so sorry we are going, and the church people are so glad for us, and we've had a lot of gifts from them and from Mrs. Lane. Isn't God good to us? We're going to sail the day before Christmas."

That evening Mrs. Vane came to see me. She sipped tea and poured out her heart. "Just

to think, it's all right now to remember him and feel for him—and there's the girls. Do you think they'll like me and call me mother? Oh, I shall be so glad to have them! I've been feeling so poor and lonely and afraid, and here I am to have a home and a family, and all any one can want!"

She said they were going second class, so she could pay for Mary and they could keep together, and she was much delighted that we were to sail in the same ship.

It was on Christmas Day that the shores of England, which had been to them a land of desolation, faded from the eyes of Mrs. Vane and Mary. We looked down upon them from the upper deck, and wondered if there were happier hearts on the great ship.

The Dakota farmer met them at the dock. We wondered if, after the hard buffetings of over sixteen years, he and Mrs. Vane would know each other's faces speedily; but whether or no, they were soon together, and we all adjourned to a hotel, where the farmer had engaged a parlor.

There our eldest hope and his sister were speedily transformed to usher and bridesmaid;

the hotel clerk and a guest or two were called in as witnesses, and the head of our family spoke the words that ended the long, sad years of parting, and made two one.

Mary cried violently and audibly into her best kerchief. Why, we did not know, unless she felt it to be a leave-taking due to short rations and long stairs.

The ex-Englishman had contracted the genial manners of the West; he clapped Mary on the shoulder, saying, "Cheer up, girl; there's a fine fellow on my place will be saying these words with you in a year's time."

Life had dealt kindlier with him than with Mrs. Vane. He was stout, jolly, florid; but we saw her growing fresher and younger every minute, with the great gladness of her heart.

He drew her hand under his arm. "The girls didn't get a Christmas tree this year," he said, "but they're 'lotting on the mother dressing them a real English one next year."

Mary deftly fastened on her mistress's hat and cloak, and they took leave, Mary finding time to whisper to me between her bows and curtseys, "Don't it pass all telling that she and I ain't a 'Pair of Lone Women' any longer!"

"HIPS, HAWS, AND A BIT O' GREEN."

I WAS in the bow-window, trying to catch on my book the reluctant light of the English December day. From near by came the pounding of the waves on the stony beach of Brighton, and through the steep, narrow street the bath-chair men were wheeling home their fares.

A tap at the door announced Mary, the maid who "did for the lodgers." "If you please, ma'am, are you ready for a new centre-piece? It's Saturday afternoon, and I thought perhaps you'd take some of these for a change. Only 'hips, haws, and a bit o' green.' "

"It is beautiful, Mary; yes, I'll take it."

"She is such a poor, honest, hard-workin', lonely old body, ma'am, I feel so sorry for her. Twopence a bunch, ma'am; there are five bunches; will you have two?" asked Mary, hopefully.

"Where does she get anything like that in this big, stony city?"

"Oh, ma'am, she rises by dawn and wanders away out in the country. Then back again to sell, and on her feet all weathers, till dark night. I've known her since I came to the house, five years gone. I'd like to help her, indeed, but I have my own old folks to see to. All I can do is ask the lodgers to buy now and then; and I save up for her the left-over tea, and things that are not wanted again on the tables. She is so contented when I heat them up for her. I just gave her the last of the meat-pie you said you'd not care for more. Such a dinner as she made of it! Then the missis often gives her a penny or two for cleaning the steps, or the sidewalk, when we are busy."

"I'll give you a shilling for them all," I said; and Mary began deftly to arrange the bunches in a glass dish. Vivid red rose hips, darker red fruit of hawthorn, tiny ferns, bits of green holly, and juniper, with blue berries shining over it; with these, ghostly sprays of grass, bleached to dull gray or tan color—an exquisite winter bouquet.

"Glad she'll be!" said Mary, her fresh, cheery, English face shining with delight. "Now she can go home and get dry and warm.

It's pitiful how cold and wet the poor body gets."

"But who would hinder her going home? Her family?"

"She has none, ma'am. She's a lone body. It's the landlady. The rooms are sixpence a day, and no one can pass up at night till the sixpence for the day is paid. Often she's had to stay out till ten, waiting to earn that sixpence, and well for her then if she has a few coals, or a crust, or a candle left over to comfort herself."

Mary went away with the shilling and the empty bark basket. My book had ceased to interest me. There was a deeper pathos in human life; it seemed that there were heart histories in these streets.

Again a tap at the door, and now beside Mary appeared a little old woman.

"She wanted to come up and thank you herself, ma'am," said Mary, doing her part as mistress of ceremonies.

The seller of "hips, haws and a bit o' green" was as faded and wrinkled as a last year's beech leaf. A pair of blue eyes shone with a frosty light under bleached brows and hair, a little

black shawl was wound about her head and neck, another threadbare shawl covered her bent, shrunken shoulders. She reminded me of gnarled, wind-beaten, time-worn, scrubby bushes that cling in barren ground and fight inhospitable elements, surviving barely—even that, we know not how.

"Thank you, indeed, my lady. I am so glad to get all sold out. Now I can go home early, and with the extra twopence you paid me I can have another pen'orth of coal an' a pen'orth o' bacon. You see, on Saturday night I'm so glad to get my washing done, and get to bed early. It takes things long to dry, these chilly nights."

Mary smiled at my mystification, and explained.

"She has no clothes but what she has on her, ma'am, and she's a clean old body; so nights she washes out her stockings and underclothes, and leaves them to dry while she is abed."

"But I've a good flannel night-gown, one of the church ladies gave me," said the old body.

"I think your landlady is very cruel to keep you out of your room till you earn that sixpence," I said. "How would she like it to be kept out, cold, wet and tired?"

"But ma'am, she's only a sub-letter; and she'd be out in the street herself if she couldn't collect from the lodgers, let alone havin' five little children and an old mother to do for! She's not bad to me. She knows I'm honest, and I've lived there six years. Twice she's let me in without the money, but I paid her up, faithful. It's rules, you know. The most of 'em, if they got in without the money, 'd never think more about it. More'n once, when the sixpence took my last penny, she gave me a cup of tea, or broth, out of her own kettle. She lets me dry my night-gown by her fire, when I wash it in the morning, an' she often saves up suds for me when I have no soap. No, ma'am, she ain't cruel."

"You may bring me five bunches of your 'hips, haws and green' every Saturday night," I said, "and when you bring them, come up and see me."

Mary told me that this little old dame "did that street" Wednesdays and Saturdays, going elsewhere other days. I directed her always to save something from our table for a meal for her on the days she came, and to bring her up to see me if I were in the house. I soon be-

came very well acquainted with the old woman. On Sabbath, she told me, they had no rent to pay, as none of them could earn anything; the sixpences for the six days covered the week. I thought seventy-five cents a week high for the little third-story room, but she told me it was "a vast o' comfort havin' no drunken folks in with you, to raise an uproar and steal your bread and tea." Also, she had a grate in her room with a hob, and it was "fine comfort to sit by your fire, and dry yourself, and sip a cup of hot tea. When one had a candle and enough coals to heat water for a clean wash, and to wash one's clothes, it was prime, surely." She had, too, some furniture included in the room rent, a table, a bed and two chairs. She owned the bedclothes, and Mary confided to me that she "didn't have half enough, and nearly chilled nights."

"I should think your clothes would be damp and not fit to put on in the morning," I said to her.

That happened, she admitted. She had "taken cold from damp hose; but Mary, good girl, had given her a pair of stockings, and with two pair she got on well."

"But your other underclothes?"

"Oh, yes, truly. Last winter as ever was, she nearly got 'amony' by puttin' on a damp shift; but now she tried to have a bit more fire when she washed. That time last winter, she had to go to hospital for a whole month. They were very good to her there, and nurse gave her a flannel petticoat, and got the night-gown for her when she came away. All the same, she was too weak to work, and had to go to 'The House' for the winter. They were kind to her at the House, but one liked to be independent, and she hoped not to go there again."

Did she sell these same things all the year round?

"Of course not. They were only to be found in fall and winter, you know. In early spring there was cress an' primroses, also groundsel for the birds. There was furze, too, that some people liked very early, and some painter ladies bought of her moss and lichens and all kinds of of wild seed-pods. There was ivy, too, and pussy willows; and, in spring, hawthorn flowers and cuckoopint and guelder roses. Violets and ferns were very good. Poppies were no good; ladies liked 'em, but they faded on

your hands afore night, after all the trouble o' getting them. Taken all in all, hips, haws an' a bit o' green was the best you could do.

"No; she hadn't always lived in the town. She was country born. Ah, it was prime to be a child in the country! The parish minister had a school for the colliers' children, and she learned to read a bit. She could read her Bible still, the print being big, if the light was good Sundays. Oh, yes, she needed glasses, no doubt; she couldn't thread her needle no more to mend—but glasses cost too dear.

"In the country days it had been lovely—the people worked in the fields, planting, reaping and so on—hard work, but they were happy, and sang, and had enough to eat. Times used not to be as hard as now. She had learned to sew and knit, and had recited all her Catechism. Her brothers and sisters scattered away, and her old folks died. She married. Thomas was a kind man, but he was weakly. She had had five children, but all died, only one, and times got so bitter hard. The farms, you know, were all put into sheepwalks, and then the day-workers were crowded out and had to come to the town. Thomas died, poor man; he wasn't

as tough as she was. The last child, a little girl, was that pretty! When she got up to ten or eleven, the church ladies said she oughtn't to be out sellin' flowers, she should be trained for service. They were mighty good, and they provided Ellen and sent her up near London, to where they train for service, six years ago. She had a letter from Ellen two or three times a year. She had to get some one to read it and answer it; she didn't understand hand-write. The paper, stamp and envelope cost twopence. She didn't always have twopence.

"Now Ellen was put into a place, and she sent the paper and stamped envelope, and she sent her, in the summer, five shillings to buy stuff for a gown. Ellen meant well by her, but Ellen got small wages yet, and had to dress neat or the lady would not keep her. Yes, she thanked the Lord every day that he'd taken care of Ellen. Maybe come Christmas she'd have another letter from her."

"And what did she mean to do on Christmas?"

"Oh, she'd have a good time Christmas! Seemed it made folks kinder just remember how the dear Lord was born—born poor, too,

like poor folks. She sold more things Christmas, and people wanted more errands done. The man where she got her groceries was going to give her a handful of raisins for her pudding."

"What groceries did she buy?" we asked, with amused interest.

"There's the bread, you know—the stale loaves—the tea, a pen'orth now and then, a pen'orth of sugar when I can afford it. Now and then a bit of bacon, and a herring or two, a pen'orth of potatoes for Sunday, or some meal for gruel. Always at one place, and always bring back the paper and string. So the grocer gets to know you, and gives you Christmas raisins?"

"And how about that pudding?"

"Oh, you see I save up all along before Christmas a ha'penny or a farthing, and by and by I have a penny for suet and tuppence for flour, and enough to burn coal from noon till bed-time, and twopence for some good soup bones, and a Christmas dinner I do have—a thick soup and suet pudding.

"If I can, I ask somebody that has none in to eat with me. We must be good to each other,

you know. I sell more hips, haws and a bit o' green Christmas Day. Folks like 'em for trimming, and I go to the mornin' church, and I feel all warmed up like."

Such were the confidences doled out in parts as my old lady came up to see me and bring the "hips, haws and a bit o' green" with which our table shone.

How had she happened to take to this way of making a living? we asked.

"She had to do something, you know, and being country reared, in out-door work, she did not know work and ways to please city people. No doubt it was the country blood in her that sent her to the woods and waysides to pick up things for her living, and she always had so loved things that grew wild-like."

Our party decided that we could not sleep well, knowing that this old creature shivered the nights through. We also felt that we owed it to common Christianity to make a thank-offering for our sight, in the shape of spectacles for her; so Mary was commissioned to fit her with spectacles and buy a good warm bed-quilt. The dame's gratitude was pathetic.

There were two glad-eyed girls with me, and

they were always present to see the little old dame, and they did much planning. She was told to come to us the last thing on Christmas Eve, and bring us some greenery. The girls then investigated their trunks and their purses. They found for their old dame a jacket, a dress skirt, and two woollen under suits. They bought her a black hood, two pair of hose, a large alpaca apron and a pair of flannel-lined shoes. These things they packed in a basket. In another basket I put a pound each of tea, coffee, sugar, cheese, sausage and bacon. When on Christmas Eve the poor body appeared, blue with cold, but bravely smiling, and so proud and happy that she had made our bunches of "hips, haws and a bit o' green" half as large again as any others, we gave her the baskets as a Christmas present.

"All that for me?" she cried, with a little sob, "for me! Why, here I've lived for sixty year, and never hed but one or two wee bits o' Christmas presents! Do, ladies, let me look at 'em here! Oh, I want to know what it all is, and see how good you've been to a poor creature."

She unpacked her treasures, with a running

comment of joyful gratitude: "Oh, how rich I am! Did ever one get the like before! Surely now I needn't stay in bed all Sunday for my clothes to dry. I can go to church and look fitten. The good God put it in your hearts. Yes, I'm not forsaken; he sent you to me, to do for him. It's like I see his own hand held out to me with the things. So many clothes! So much to eat!"

The glad eyes of the girls were filled with tears. For the first time they knew the real worth of money, and saw how much a little of it could do. The whole value of the gifts was within half a pound sterling!

They realized how very narrow and barren some lives are. Mary stood openly wiping her tears, and over the weather-beaten cheeks of the old woman tears of happiness rolled.

Then, out by the door, the Waits began to sing. "Betty Grant will have only dry bread and thin tea to-morrow," said the old dame, "I'll ask her to eat with me. One must do what good one can, surely."

We wished that all the world held and practised her simple adage.

Christmas Day we were just preparing to go

forth and see the merry-making in Brighton streets, when Mary brought in our seller of "hips, haws and a bit o' green." Her face was glorified by joy—she had a letter in her hard, brown hand. "I had to come and tell you, ma'am, and young ladies. I knew you'd be glad. I won't stop you a minute. I'm going to church to thank God! Oh, I felt like falling on my knees in the street, every minute, to thank him. It's from Ellen, ma'am. Would you read it? Oh, but she's doing well. She hasn't forgotten me. See, she sent me ten shilling! When I got home last night, didn't I find rolled in one of the stockings three new shillings, one from each of you? And I had the shilling for the 'hips, haws and a bit o' green' I brought you. Fourteen shilling, ma'am! I never had so much at once before. *Now* I'm sure not to have to go to the House this winter. Oh, isn't God good to me!"

She trudged off to church, letter in hand, as happy a heart as was that day in queenly Brighton. Behind her, up the street, strolled some Waits, making the air ring again with their Christmas carols—the crash of the sea on the beach undertoned, like the thunders of a great

organ, the shrill lifting of the boy voices. To us the day looked glad for the gladness of that patient, thankful soul, which our Father had seen fit to feed, as he feeds the sparrows, with hips, haws and a bit o' green out of the hedgerows.

The Case of Carola

THE CASE OF CAROLA

AN ITALIAN CHRISTMAS EPISODE

THE city was fair Florence. The house was the Palazzo Guicciardini, famous in history, in literature, in tyranny, romance and evangelism. The vast, bold front of the house rose bastion-like from the dark, narrow street and swept in two wings back, enclosing a small garden filled with roses, oleander, myrtle and lemon trees, and resting upon the Arno.

One wing was occupied by the Counts of Guicciardini, the other by a Florentine silk merchant of the De' Medici *stirps*. The great antique front of the house was delivered over to the curious medley of nineteenth century life, with its motley and tragedy, its pathos and parsimony. There were the *bottegas* on the first floor, which we calmly ignored except when we needed fuel; the ex-diplomat and his wife, the ex-court lady, on the second floor, with their household and their tarnished gilt and brocade

furniture; there were the Russian countess and her three nephews on the third floor; above them the Signora who took English and American lodgers; skyward still, the music-master and the dancing-mistress, and the two old ladies who made and mended lace and embroidery. Finally, up among the chimney-pots and roof-tiles, and the boxes of flowers which formed his aërial garden, lived his reverence, the Capellano, who baptized the Guicciardini babies, kept vigils beside their dead, said a daily mass for them in Santa Trinità and pronounced grace at high family festivals.

Among all this ebullient human hive, Carola, old, small, browned and seamed, was perhaps the most unconsidered human unit.

"I hope the lodgings will please the Madame and the service prove satisfactory. Carola is a very faithful, cleanly, industrious creature and perfectly honest. Her one fault is that she is too much given to praying. But what would you have? Madame knows that no servants are perfect! Most of them have *Plenaria Indulgenza,* which enables them to miscount the oil bottles, drink the wine and eat the chops. Therefore, I keep Carola in spite of her pray-

ing, because with her my lire and centessimi are safe."

We ventured to remark that praying seemed a very venial offence; in fact, we had never heard it noted as heading the long count of crimes.

"Virtues," said the Signora, shrugging her shoulders with an air of Kantian profundity, "may become crimes if carried to excess. Madame will see how it is when the breakfast is an hour late, the Signor is cultivating the temper of a raging lion, and the two blessed children are as hungry as kites."

The coming weeks continued this parable: "Yes, Madame, I know the breakfast is late, but, unhappily, the creamery is on the other side of St. Peter's chapel, and wild horses could not drag Carola past without her stopping to pray. I hope the tutor will not be angry with the blessed children for what is not their fault." "Oh, to be sure Madame, dinner ought to be on the table; the vegetables are all getting cold and the meat drying up, but what will you have? I've sent Carola for the salad and the dessert, and she is praying, no doubt, in Santa Trinità. Oh! I must surely dismiss that

Carola; then we shall have a maid who will eat up all the olives." "Yes, Madame, supper should have been a half an hour ago, but, unhappily, the roast chestnut man has moved his stand a block down the street, which gives Carola a church to pass and more praying to do."

One day Carola was in my room, and I thought I would interview her for myself. She had brushed down the chimney-place, washed the hearthstones, piled the embers in a chocolate-colored heap ready to break into red fire at a smart rap from the poker, and laid the *fascine* ready to make a bright blaze when the family came home.

"Carola," I said, "I hear that you have a great deal of praying to do."

She turned about, sitting on her heels, her worn hands clasped about her knees.

"Certainly, Madame. In this so sorrowful world, where hearts have so many burdens to carry and so great, what can one do but pray?"

"That is true, Carola, and prayer is a great comfort and privilege."

"Then Madame does not think that prayer is all useless and that the great Lord has only a deaf ear for poor Carola?"

"By no means, my Carola. The good Lord himself says that 'Men ought always to pray and not to faint;' that he will 'avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him;' that we should pray without ceasing, and that we should ask believing that we shall receive."

"Then, Madame, you do not believe, as the Signora does, that the great Lord has so many kings and queens and lords and ladies that he is angry with a poor old *contadina* serving-woman for pouring out her tears and prayers in his presence?"

"Oh, Carola, on the contrary, he is goodness itself; before his eyes princes and *contadini* are all on a level. When he lived in this world he dwelt among plain, common people, and his brethren in the flesh were simple *contadini.* Perhaps you could tell me some of your troubles, Carola?"

"The heart stories of the poor are but short, Madame. I was born on the hills near Fiesole. We rented our little vine and olive groves of the Count and worked as our fathers had done, but the young people to-day have more pride, and my Giacomo wanted to own the land. He said he would go to America for a matter of a

few years and earn the money to buy our home. It is more than six years since he went. Troubles came in at the door where his feet went out. Jacopo was drafted for the army. Then my husband died, and Jacopo died in Africa. What could I do, Madame? The Count said to me, 'Carola, it needs a man to till the acres, for I must have my rent. When your Giacomo comes again with money in his hands the place is his for the buying; meanwhile I must have a man for a tenant.' So, Madame, I came down here to Florence to service. It is more than four years, and no word of Giacomo. Madame, my heart is breaking. I moan more than I sleep at night. Grief is my bread. I drink the rivers of my tears. All day long my heart cries Giacomo, Giacomo! For what is a mother when her son is gone? I am like a withered weed by the roadside. What is there in store for me? If I fall ill I shall be carried to the Lazaretto; if I am too old to work I must go to the house of public alms. I am a mother without a son, a woman without a home, a heart without comfort. Do you wonder that I must pray?"

"It is the only thing you can do, Carola, and

if you persevere I am sure you will get an answer. The Lord especially says that he hears prayer, that he is near to those who call upon him, and that 'whatever we ask in Christ's name we shall receive.' "

"Madame, there are some that tell me that I am wicked and insult God when I keep praying to him at my work; I pray when I am sweeping, or scrubbing, or dressing vegetables; but what will you have? I must pray or die."

"This is not wrong, but right, Carola; God says that we must pray everywhere and at all times. He says 'pray always,' 'pray without ceasing,' 'pray in the depths,' so it is evident that we must pray while about our daily work."

"Again, Madame, some tell me I should pray to the Blessed Mother and the Holy Saints. That might do very well if I had little troubles that I could get along with any way. But for terrible agonies like mine, that are tearing the blood out of my heart, I must speak to Domeniddio (the Lord God) himself; he only is strong enough to help me. The Blessed Mother might have her favorites, the Holy Saints might be too busy, only Domeniddio can succor me."

"You are right again, Carola. The heart of God is large and tender. He says that he pities like a father and comforts like a mother, that his arm is never short and his ear never heavy."

After this, if our household affairs were somewhat irregular, the Signora, with a spice of acrimony, referred to me as an aider and abettor of Carola.

Christmas week we bought an enormous turkey, the very pride of the Florentine market, and prepared to keep Christmas in home fashion.

In such apartments as these in the Palazzo Guicciardini the kitchen lies nearest the door opening upon the staircase, and you pass it in going to the living-rooms in front or rear. Coming in on Christmas morning, I saw in the Signora's kitchen the reverend capellano, his rusty *tricorne* on his bald head, his threadbare black *soutane* gathered out of harm's way in one hand, his well-darned stockings tightly gartered to his knees, his priestly right hand holding a meat-forklike Neptune's trident, which transfixed our turkey, browning before the big charcoal fire on that pile of masonry which represents an Italian stove. The capellano's face

was as red as the embers, and little rivulets of perspiration trickled down upon the folds of his clerical vest.

Presently the Signora came to us something distracted. "Everything is cooked and will be spoiled; but Carola has gone for the fruit and is making her prayers longer than ever. Surely I shall dismiss her this night."

"If you do not mind the waiting yourself, Signora, set the dinner on, and Carola will be back before we are ready for the fruit."

As the Signora laid the viands, we asked concerning the capellano's presence in the kitchen.

"Oh, Madame, that turkey was so big that the spit would not hold it up. We sent Carola to borrow a key which the capellano has, to strengthen the spit. Then the spit would not turn, and that atrocious bird was resolved to be black on one side and white on the other, which is a diabolical style of cooking for a turkey. The capellano came to see if we could use the key, and finding me with the table to set, the sauces to make, and Carola off praying, he offered to stay and hold the bird in place, so it should not be ruined."

"Blessed nineteenth century," said the head of the house, "to-day his reverence grills my turkey; three hundred years ago he would with equal alacrity have grilled me. Signora, present our grateful compliments to the capellano, and request him to come and help eat the turkey which he has helped to cook."

The Signora returned from her errand, a little sardonic beam in her dark eyes. "His reverence says that 'this is doubtless the finest and best-cooked turkey in Florence; the Signor is, no doubt, a learned gentleman; Madame is admirable to a high degree; the two children are cherubs; but may all the saints forbid that he should ever dishonor his cloth by sitting down to eat with a married priest.' "

The frescoed walls about us rang with laughter, led by the married priest. "Bring a large plate, Signora," said the M. P. (not member of Parliament), "and add to a goodly portion of the turkey part of all the other dishes on the table, and with our regards request his reverence to eat them wherever his conscience will permit."

Our dinner was again in progress, when there was a clatter of feet on the stone flooring

of the hall. The dining-room door burst open, and there, grasping with one hand a big, brown, honest, well-clad fellow of thirty, and with the other an exceedingly pretty girl of twenty, was Carola—Carola, glowing, flashing, flaming, rejuvenated with joy.

"Behold! Madame! It is he! my Giacomo! God has given him back to me. Signora, never again say that much praying is useless. Look at him! He was given back to me at the very altar of my God!"

"Carola, tell us how all this happened."

"Madame, you must know that once when a mission was being preached in the Duomo, I stopped in for a good word. A tall preacher in a white surplice was up in the pulpit, and when he waved his arms over his head he looked like a great snowy bird. All I got of his words was 'To-day, to-day, now is the accepted time.' Ever since then, when I pass the Duomo and see the great altar all light and gold, and flowers and incense, I think that perhaps the Lord God himself may be there, and that now is the hour when he will hear Carola. It was so with me to-day. I slipped in to pray just one moment, and I bent down beside a young man

and woman whose faces were bowed to their knees. When I thought that such, so strong and living, might Giacomo be, a great flood of agony surged over my heart, and I sobbed half aloud, 'Oh God, give back Giacomo to Carola Barci! Oh, send him home from America, and let Carola die on the Fiesole hills, where she nursed her children!" Then the young man beside me caught me in his arms and drew me to the porch saying, 'Mother, mother it is I, your Giacomo; see! I have been up to Fiesole and bought our home. I have looked for you here in Florence this ten days, and to-day Nita and I meant to pray and search in every church in Florence to find our mother.' Then the young woman who had come out to us said, 'Yes, and I am Nita, his wife.' Then I stretched out my arms toward the great altar, and I cried, 'Oh Domeniddio, how much larger is thy giving than my asking.' Then I said, 'Come, my children, I must show you to the Madame, and take her the fruit for her dinner.' But Nita said, 'Delay a minute; we have a little room close by the Duomo, and our baby is there; he is as beautiful as the angels of God; come and give him your blessing.' So I went, and truly,

Madame, that child is the loveliest child that ever was seen."

"And you, Giacomo," we said, "what is to be done now?"

"We will go to our little home on the hills, where we will all work and be happy."

"Did you get none of the letters your mother had written to you?"

"No, Madame; she had them directed to America, and America is wide."

"Did you not write to her?"

"Twice each year, Madame, but on some of the letters I failed to put those little colored things they called stamps. Four of them reached our home. They were directed to my father, the one who could read, and the post-master has them now on a shelf. He said, Why should he give my mother letters addressed to my father, who has gone into the glory of God, where letters do not come? I should for a while have broken stones on the road with that post-master's head, only for the teaching I have promised to follow, and which says we must give place to wrath." Giacomo looked as if he considered his new rule of conduct altogether too strenuous in its demands.

"Come, Signora," said the head of the house, "bring a basket and some dishes, and let us fill them well from everything that is here on the table for these good people, that they may go home together and eat their Christmas dinner with their beautiful bambino; and a blessing go with them!"

"And shall God not avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them!"

Two Mother Hearts

TWO MOTHER HEARTS

A FEW months ago I entered, after nightfall, the crowded station at Kansas City. Having found a chair, I presently discovered that an elderly colored woman was seated next to me. She evidently belonged to that race of faithful, old-time servants that seems now to be disappearing. She was spotlessly clean, wore a black gown, black woollen gloves, a warm black cloak, and held a small black leather bag. Her gray locks came out, here and there, from under a bandanna kerchief, the ends of which were brought about and tied in a tiny knot above her forehead. Her face was profoundly sad, yet full of patience; she made no parade of her grief, but big tears rolled one after another from under her steel-bowed spectacles, and now and again she lifted a finger to wipe the drops away. She looked so lonely there, silently weeping among the careless crowds, that I bent toward her, saying: "Auntie, you seem very sad; I am so sorry for you."

"Yes, misstis, I am sad, for sure. I am go-

ing back to New Orleans. I've just only one daughter, an' she won't be livin' when I get there! She's the las' of my fam'bly, an' nacherlly I thought she'd live to bury me; an' now, I can't even say 'good-bye' an' give her one kiss 'fore she goes away."

"That is hard, indeed; but she may live until you reach her," I suggested.

"Her daughter telegraph me she was at the point of dyin'. I got the telegraph this morning, an' started."

"If she has a daughter, she is at least taken care of."

"Oh, yes, missy. I've much to be thankful for; she has a good home, an' two girls near grown, and a kind husband; she lacks nothing; thank the Lord for that."

"I hope you know, too, that she is God's child, and does not fear death?"

"Oh, yes, missy. There's another thing to bless God for! Sophie's a remarkable good, pious woman. We was all well brought up, Christianly; and that's a thing to be thankful for."

"Is it long since you saw her?"

"Better'n a year. I meant to go visit her

Christmas, but she'll be gone. You see, Miss Laura, she moved up into Missouri, to her son, an' her home broke up. Of course, I had to come 'long with Miss Laura. I waited on her all her life. Miss Laura's older'n I am, an' she's delicate; course, she couldn't get on without me, an' I couldn't get on 'thout her; we're used to each other. I need to wait on her an' 'tend her when she ain't well, and do her little cookin' nice; so I come with her, seein' Sophie was well an' strong, an' nobody needed me like Miss Laura. When the news come to-day, Miss Laura helped me to get ready, an' she read me a few of the good Lord's words to keep my heart up, and we had a little prayer. Miss Laura an' me often prays togedder. She told me to 'member that God takes his chillun home from evil to come, an' she an' me, we'd lived long to suffer much. Yes, missy, I know it is like the kin' Father callin' in his own out of the storm. I feel thankful that Sophie ain't to leave any real little baby-chillun, an' the big girls is good an' orderly to care for the fam'bly. The Lord don't sen' *more'n* we kin bear. Troubles come hard, but his hand measures 'em out to us. Yes, I am thankful the Lord tol' you to

speak to me. It's give me comfort, jus' as I was nigh breakin' down."

She rose; her train was called. "Trust and be not afraid," I said; and light shone through tears and wrinkles, as she made answer, "Yes, missy, I will."

I watched her brisk, sturdy figure departing in the crowd. "Go in this thy strength," I said in my heart. God was holding her hand, and easing the weight of her load.

In a few minutes an elderly, well-dressed woman, escorted by two men, came to the old auntie's abandoned chair. The elder man, coarse, red-faced, of the saloon-keeper type, placed a large portmanteau at the woman's feet; the younger, a refined, frail youth of some twenty-five, said: "We'll get the sleeper tickets." As they moved away, she gave a sigh that was really a subdued groan of agony. I looked at her; above a fur-trimmed coat rose a face white as marble, and—as hard; her great dark eyes were full of anguish, too deep for tears; her black hair rippled in natural waves about what had been a face of remarkable beauty, and was still beautiful.

I felt impelled to stir that icy misery that seemed to grip her heart like a convulsion. I said: "They will come back to you soon."

She looked at me fixedly for a second, then broke forth: "Yes, to-night; but for how long? He will leave me soon forever! Don't you see it? Death has hold of him. That younger one, my son—my last—all I have, and he's going from me! I started a week ago to take him to San Antonio. He was so worn out when we reached here I had to stop over and send for a doctor. That other man is a friend; we went to his house; it's near the station, and he's been kind to us. We came from Minnesota. I've been so many places with him, trying to cure him, and nothing helps! Oh, once I thought to have respectability and money enough, that was enough to make one content! I have that; but my heart burns like a fire. I am torn in pieces with sorrow! I wrote to some one in San Antonio to find me a little home, and I shipped enough goods, and now I see he is going there to die; to die, away from any friends; to be buried far from his brother and his father. And I am to be left alone! Oh, it is wicked, cruel, unjust! How can the Almighty treat

me so!—just because he is strong and I am weak!"

Her speech tore forth with hot vehemence, as I have seen lava tear out of the side of Mount Vesuvius. Here was a fiercely strong, wholly rebellious, undisciplined heart.

I said: "To lose those we love, to be left alone, is a great sorrow; but those whom God takes to himself are set above all trouble, and the way is not long until we may find them again in the bosom of God."

"It is not that I want, it is him. I cannot give him up. To-night, when I lie down by him in the berth, I will think how the earth will soon hold him, and I cannot touch or see him again. Was it for this I gave him life, and nursed him at my breast? God has no right to take him away; he is mine!"

I wanted to divert the fierce torrent of her thoughts: "It is well you have means to help him," I said.

"Oh! what is money? If he and I were working in a ditch, so he was well, I'd be content. I thought of money once." Then she burst forth into reminiscences. She had come from Ireland at fifteen, and for fifteen years

had lived with one family, scrupulously saving all that she could. A lover from her own country showed equal energy and economy. At last they married, went to Minnesota and secured six hundred acres of good land, which they stocked. All went well with them; railroads came their way; towns rose near them; the farm was in splendid order; they had a large, comfortable house and bought a little property in a near village, "to live in when the boys took the farm." The eldest boy displayed great ability, and wished to go to college and become a priest. Only a month before he was to leave home, he was stricken with Bright's disease, and in four days lay dead. "The sky was black about me," she said; "all the world was cold and dead. For three long years all my thought was in that boy's grave. I could not smile nor speak; all I wanted was *him;* I moved as if I was in a terrible dream; I had no thought for the rest, only for him. Well, in three years' time my husband came from the field and lay down on the bed; it was Bright's disease again, and in a week he was buried by the boy. Then I forgot the boy; it seemed as if my sorrow for him was buried deep below my sorrow for my hus-

band. My heart called for him day and night. He called me 'Maggie.' He had seen the old county where I was born; he and I had our memories of all those years together; I wanted him, only him, and not life, nor money, nor the home, nor anything was good without my man. I could not care for things as I had; so we rented the farm and went to the village house, yet still I could see and hear nothing but my man in his coffin. The five years had gone, but I was still the same, so blind, bound with grief. I could not see this boy pining away, hour by hour, till the doctor said to me: 'Woman, wake up; you are likely to lose this one, too.' Oh, then I forgot those two graves! I forgot my eldest born and my man. I thought only of this one dying under my eyes, of Bright's disease, too! I took him wherever they said would be good for him. I lavished on food and medicine and doctors; but he gets worse day by day, and now, any week he may drop out of my hands, that cannot hold him from death. Oh, the pain for the others is forgotten! they are gone; I can give them up and forget them, if only this one could be left me. There is no use to tell me about God's will. I don't want God's will;

I want to keep my son. Oh, if only this last one could be left me. *Then I might be reconciled to the Almighty!"*

As she spoke, she lifted her magnificent great dark eyes with such a look of mingled dread and defiance as I had never dreamed eyes could show. She was as the Niobe in that masterpiece of sculpture in Florence, as she clasps her last child to her bosom, and turns a face of reproach, agony, supplication, hate, dismay, to the gods who have destroyed her family. Some mother in such anguish as this Praxiteles must have studied before he could so write a heart in marble; even to look upon her was a fashion of vivisection!

"Then I might be reconciled to the Almighty!" I carried that fierce utterance with me for days, impotent, awful, pitiful outbreak of a heart arrayed against God.

THE MAN WITH A DRIED-APPLE SOUL

GAFFER LANE, tottering along the sidewalk, paused and looked wistfully at a chair in front of Hans Beck's grocery. It was borne in on Gaffer's mind that Hans begrudged his sitting in that weather-worn old arm-chair. But Gaffer's legs were tired; he was chilly; at home, unless it was very cold, they could afford only one fire, and there was so much washing and cooking going on about that! On this chair the sun shone warm and golden, and there were all the street interests to keep Gaffer's attention.

Gaffer sat down. There was a kind of creepy feeling along his back when he felt sure that Hans Beck's gray eyes were fixed on him through the window.

Hans came out with a basket of apples. "Gaffer Lane," he said, "s'posin' you sort them apples for me. You don't seem to be doin' much, an' you might as well pay for the use

of the chair. Put the all-good apples on this paper, and the all-bad ones in that box, an' the betwixt-and-between ones in this basket. I kin take 'em home for sass."

Gaffer bent to the task. His thin shoulders ached as he stooped forward, his lean hands trembled, for Gaffer's working-days were past.

Mrs. Nott went into the shop for pepper, soda and ginger.

"Where's Ruth now?" asked Hans, anxious to be pleasant to a customer.

"She's living with Mrs. Dalling; a fine place, and such a good lady!"

"I don't call her a good lady," said Hans, tartly. "I call her proud an' stuck-up. Why don't she trade with me? It would do me some good if she bought her groceries here. But no, she sends to the big down-town stores. I call that all folly and ambition!"

"The Dallings live handsomely and entertain a deal; naturally they want the best, as they're able to pay for it. The big stores keep fresher goods of better quality, Mr. Beck. You see, you bid for the trade of us poorer folks."

"All the same, I call her selfish for not helping me with her trade," said Hans.

"There's no selfishness about her," retorted Mrs. Nott. "She's always doing good and helping somebody. She's helped your own kin, Mr. Beck. No end to what she has sent to your niece, Gretchen Kist!"

"Let her. I don't take stock in Gretchen, nor in Kist, her husband. Shiftless lot!"

"Oh, Mr. Beck! People say quite the contrary. They are unfortunate; hard it is for a young man to lose his leg!"

"All carelessness. Other folks don't lose their legs. I didn't lose mine. Then if Kist can't get work enough, let Gretchen take hold."

"They say she does; but with twins six months old, she has poor chance to earn bread."

"They needn't look to me," said Beck, doggedly. "Why did they marry, with nothing to live on?"

"I suppose they loved each other and meant to work. That's the way me an' Nott set up. It's the Lord's will there should be poor folk among us. Don't he say, 'The poor have ye always with you, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good'? Mr. Beck, it is a sin not to share and give. I'm poor, but I love to give all I am able."

"I give," said Hans. "I give my reg'lar share in church—ask the deacons; but I never give to idlers. No getting something for nothing out of me! There; anything else to-day, Mrs. Nott? Thank you. Come again."

Mrs. Nott went out with her parcels. Gaffer Lane had finished with the apples; he looked white and tremulous.

"Come home with me, Gaffer," said Mrs. Nott. "I've a fine fire in the Franklin, and you can sit by it and take a nap in my stuffed chair. We'll have a cup of tea and some doughnuts for lunch. My men folks are off to the wood-lot for the day. Come, Gaffer, have a quiet visit."

"I dunno as I'm tidy enough to go visiting," said Gaffer, looking eager as a child at the invitation.

"Oh, you're always as neat as a new pin; and if your shoes are damp, you can slip on Nott's scuffs. Here, take my arm and let me help you along."

When Gaffer Lane was seated in the big, soft chair before the fire, had his feet in Jonas Nott's slippers and had eaten a slice of hot apple pie, Mrs. Nott sat down to sew.

"I do say," she remarked, "that Hans Beck

is just eaten up of selfishness! I reckon he set you at sortin' them apples?"

"Yes; he is a kind of a driver," said Gaffer; "he wanted me to pay for using his chair."

"Sinful man!" said Mrs. Nott, sharply.

"There, there! Don't be too hard, Mrs. Nott," said Gaffer. "I've long lived, and observed many. I don't size Hans up that way. I believe Hans thinks he's a Christian, but he don't in no way live up to his privileges. He's reg'lar at church, he keeps Sabbath, he gives to the collections, he has a blessin' at table, an' he's living gen'rally a way he s'poses to be right and pleasin' to God. But, you see, he has never made full use of his opportunities. Beck hasn't patterned after the dear Lord; he's forgot to love an' to sympathize, an' his soul has jes' shrunk up small, dry an' hard. I allow, the Lord must have his patience dreadful tried with some of his people. The Lord's so lib'ral an' lovin', I'm sure he don't approve of the poor showin' Hans gives his religion. It makes people talk ag'in religion, Mis' Nott, when we don't show it forth right."

Gaffer took from his pocket a small, hard thing the size of a hazel nut. "I found it on a

stem longside o' one of the best big red apples ever I see," he said, holding the object out for inspection. "It minded me of Hans. 'Pears his soul is all same as a little, hard, dry apple. Lots of folks has dry-apple souls! You can tell this thing started out to be an apple, but it don't have the proper p'ints of an apple. So with Hans; there's things by which you can tell he started to be a Christian, but he don't have the proper p'ints of a child of God."

"I do say, Gaffer!" cried Mrs. Nott. "I love to hear you talk. It's improvin'. Go on."

"That fine big apple, Mis' Nott, had used its privileges an' become what it ought to be. But this little thing, it didn't use the sun to meller it, nor the rain to fill it out to a proper sample of an apple. The rain rattled off its tough skin, an' the sun jes' dried it up. An' ain't it a disgraceful picter of an apple!"

Mrs. Nott took the specimen for examination, looked at it and laid it on the window-sill. "I think," she said, "that the stem has been pricked by some kind of a fly, and that has hindered its growing; the stem hardened up, like."

"Jes so, Mis' Nott, jes' so. I tell you, there's a fly called Selfishness that pricks its way deep

into our souls, an' after that's took possession, it is with us all self and no service, as our preacher dealt out last Sunday. From this sting of selfishness may the dear Lord deliver us! What use on this earth are the dry-apple souls? Why, even pigs can't eat an apple like yon, Mis' Nott."

Now, it happened that Gaffer Lane, comforted by the fire and the warm pie, sat musing on dry-apple souls until he dropped asleep. At night-fall he went home, forgetting the apple. Mrs. Nott found it when she dusted, and, not wishing to throw away the text of Gaffer's sermon, put it in her pocket. There it was when she went to Hans Beck's store for salt and soap. She felt it when she searched in her pocket for change, and, as they were alone in the store, she took the little dry apple and set it under Hans Beck's eyes. Then, kindly and faithfully, she preached to Hans Beck Gaffer Lane's sermon about "folk with dry-apple souls."

Hans heard, flushing, winking hard, twitching his mouth and making inarticulate gruntings; but he put the dry apple in his pocket. He felt it whenever he took out his silver watch,

and that hard, dry, useless, abortive apple told the big watch Gaffer's sermon, and the watch ticked the message into Hans Beck's ears. Had God meant his soul to bring forth fair fruit for the glory of God? And, being bitten of Selfishness, had it become hard, dry, sapless? Was his withered soul a disgrace and not an ornament to the church of Christ? So the Master had come for fruit and found none! Why cumbered he the ground?

One day Gretchen Kist was surprised by a big basket of groceries from her uncle Hans. Gaffer Lane was amazed to have a buffalo robe laid over the chair to wrap his shaky old knees up, and a box set before him for a stool. Also, he was told to make himself at home, and sit there in the sun all he pleased. Some way Hans Beck was changed; he lived not for self, but for service.

"God can work miracles," said Gaffer Lane. "He has made a little, hard, dry-apple soul become soft, mellow, serviceable."

THE WINDOW LADY

I KNEW her well. She was one of those happy natures who are ever unconsciously scattering brightness about them because of their own inner light. Little children and stray dogs and cats followed her in the streets, finding consolation in being near her. She gave them the largess of a smile or a pleasant word. The children had their own names for her—"The sunny lady," "My sweet lady," "The lady of the smile." Perhaps the dogs and cats had their names for her also in their own language.

"Why do you run after that lady?" a woman asked of a little laddie.

"Because she always shines on me," was the reply.

One day, hearing as she walked along the pavement the sounds of altercation behind her, my friend turned. "What are you little lasses disputing about?" she asked. She discovered that the cause of strife was, which of the two

should have the privilege of running on to open a gate through which she was to go.

One of the names child-given to my friend came to have a certain sweet pathos about it. She spent many hours among the books in a famous library. Standing one day in one of the alcoves, reading a reference, she looked through the wide window and saw, almost opposite, a child in the window of a tall house that towered above the library garden. The back of the house overlooked the library, about eighty feet away, and the child was in one of the upper windows, a golden-haired, fair-faced child of four. True to her nature, the lady nodded and smiled, and the child returned the salutation. The lady held up her book to indicate her occupation; the little maid held up her doll. They were now on terms of intimacy.

Every day the reader spent some time in the wide window, and the little child was always watching for her. Every new toy was held up for the lady to see; the child made a block of patchwork, and that, too, was held up for approbation. The wide window-sill was the child's playhouse; and as she made up her doll's cradle, or set out the dishes for "play tea," she

was happier because the lady opposite knew what she was doing. Her mother was called to share her enjoyment of her friend. When the lady appeared, the turning of the child's head and an eager nod made it plain that she said, "Here she is again!"

The child and her mother seemed to live alone in those two high rooms. The mother was neither too poor nor too busy to make her little one small cakes and tiny pies on baking days. These sweets were duly held up for the lady to see, and when the yellow-haired darling had a new frock and apron, she stood on a stool that her friend might have a full view. Several months of this friendshp passed.

One spring day an attendant in the library respectfully asked a young lady who was studying there, "Where is your friend who was here all winter? My little girl became very fond of her. She watched her from the window of the Duane Street house, and now she misses her and asks for her every day."

"My friend was suddenly called to Europe. Tell your little girl that she will see her again. She will be back with the roses."

"My little girl calls her 'The Window Lady.'

All life seemed brighter and more enjoyable to her from the sympathy of the Window Lady in her little joys."

"She will come again with the roses. Take her this pink rose, and tell her when the roses bloom in the garden she will see her Window Lady smiling across them."

A month later the attendant stopped again at the young student's desk. He was changed. His face was sad; his voice was broken.

"Tell the Window Lady," he said, "that my little girl could wait for neither her nor the roses. She has gone into the gardens of heaven. She had placed on the window-seat all her new toys, to be ready for her Window Lady. One day, as she was arranging them, she looked up into the blue sky, and said, 'Perhaps God is looking at me and smiling, just as my Window Lady did—only I cannot see him now.' She was sick but a day or two. Just before she went away, she said, 'I shall look down out of God's windows and smile at you all, as my Window Lady smiled at me. Tell her I didn't go very far, we live so high up near the sky!' "

Then the attendant in his list slippers stole

away with his sad face. He and the mother were lonely, for all they knew the little one was not very far off, but was in the gardens of God and smiling at them from the opal windows of heaven.

She had all her little life lived high up, so near the blue! The dust and tumult of earth had seethed and rolled far beneath her; even its trees and flowers had been away down below her in the enclosed garden.

The Window Lady came again over the sea, and she was told the story of Golden Hair. And now, as a choice treasure, she hides it among her memories, that same Window Lady.

The Servant of Sin

THE SERVANT OF SIN

THERE are passages of the Bible which we read many times without finding them particularly forceful, but which by some experience of our lives acquire intense meaning. The verse, John viii., 34, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin," was to me one of these texts.

It was in Brighton, England. I was reading by a window, when my attention was called by the wheezing squeak of an accordion, pulled at, not played. The day was gloomy, cold, drizzling; the mud in the street was black paste, and in that mud before my window stood a woman, or the wreck of one. Matted gray hair hung about her face and down her back from under a dirty, ragged hood; a man's coat, foul and torn, was held about her by one button; her wet skirt was tattered and draggled about the ankles of a pair of splay, unmatched, broken men's shoes. The woman's wrinkled, brown

throat, her weather-seamed, unclean hands, her lined, hard, fierce, defiant face, all bore the marks of neglect and dissipation. I was ready to give a small coin merely to be rid of such a spectacle. There were some of the street vendors and singers with whom I had formed an interesting acquaintance—this seemed one of the unhelpable. A man of her own age, as dissolute and horrible as herself, stood with a rusty tin lid in his shaking hands, ready to receive donations. I raised the window and duly contributed my threepence, for which I received no thanks.

"Madame," said my landlady, who came into the room to inspect the attendance of the maid in my "apartment," "you really should not do that; she is one of the worst women in the world."

"She looks it," I replied, "and that in itself is a most deplorable destiny. There was no doubt a time when she could have been helped; some time when she might have preferred goodness and decency. That must have been a frightful fall that dragged her to be such a spectacle as she is."

"There are plenty of vendors and singers

who are well-meaning, unfortunate people," said my landlady. "There are some bad enough, who never had any chance to be better; but this woman is not one of them. She is a H——." She uttered the name of one of Brighton's merchant kings. "She has only to speak the word, only to submit to be helped, and she could be dressed as well as you are, and sit and be waited on in apartments like these. She is in that squalid misery because she *prefers* it."

"That sounds like some hideous goblin story. Prefers that squalor, need, degradation, vile companionship?"

"None of it is as vile as her soul, which has deliberately chosen that lot. As a baby, that woman, richly wrapped, was carried along these boulevards in the arms of a nurse; as a little child, she wore white frocks and patent leather shoes, coral beads, and played on the sands, with a maid to watch her. As a girl, she rode in a carriage, and went to one of the best schools for girls in Brighton. She was always violent, lawless, disobedient; whenever she could escape from home, she took herself to the lowest slums as her natural element. It was

not merely that she wanted to drink; she might have taken her drink at home; she wanted her gin in the reek of the gin-shops, among the noise, profanity and fighting of men and women."

"Your story seems beyond belief."

"It is every word true. When her father died, as he had never been able to reform her, he left a sum of money in the hands of her brother, to be applied to her help whenever she would allow herself to be kept decent. Hers is no story of some sudden fall, no pitiful banishment from home; the home was always open; hands were always held out. It was only that she was the slave of sin that she loved vice in all its most miserable, cruel manifestations. What doings terrify other women to name she delights in. She has been carried to the hospital ready to die from brutal attacks of that man who is with her. Her brother, with tears, has gone to implore her to come to his home to be saved, and she has driven him from her with curses. It is not love for the man, for he has been carried nearly dead to the hospital, injured fearfully by her. The lowest tenement houses evict them, to be rid of their fighting. The chief joy of

that creature's life is to go, just as you see her, to the door of her brother's magnificent store, squeak her accordion, demand alms, march to her brother's private office, call him by his Christian name and order him to give her money; then, passing through the store, she proclaims herself the sister of H——. Her friends have had her carried to decent lodgings, made clean, clothed, when she was in a stupor, and, recovering her senses, she has gone back to the den from which she was rescued."

"Perhaps the gracious influence of the Gospel has not been tried," I ventured.

"Madame! And the H——s so religious; of your own church, too! Why, that is the very thing they *did* try. Her nephew was surely one of the saints of this age."

Yes, I knew it. He was one who in early manhood had laid down his life on the foreign field, one of England's most precious offerings to God. How was it possible that of the same kin could come that saintly life, glowing with such Christ-like beauty, and this monster of sin-loving? I repeated, "It seems incredible!"

My landlady was a zealous Methodist, and notable in class meeting. She said: "Why,

madame, is it any more strange than what happens every day? This has a bold look to it, the vice and misery are so very gross; but every day there are thousands that turn backs on Christ to go with the wicked; plenty who refuse heaven; plenty that choose badness before goodness, vile books instead of the Bible. That wretched woman reminds me of the words: 'Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.' I heard a minister say that 'servant' is all the same as 'slave;' and if ever there was a slave that poor woman is one. Yielding to her evil instincts, they have made a wretched slave of her. Oh, isn't it a hardship and a dreadful curse to be given up to one's own self that way! When I look at her, I think, 'Perhaps just such vile misery is what the power of God has rescued each of us from.' We think it strange her refusing all the respectability and comfort the H——s could give her; and yet every day we see people refusing eternal heaven!"

Fiddlin' Jim

"FIDDLIN' JIM"

"STILL going on with that Sunday-school for colored people, Mrs. Dole?"

"Yes, indeed. I never found work that paid better in the good done. I can see the poor creatures improving from week to week."

Mr. Ross shook his head. "I never put any faith in work done in the East End, and now that you've let 'Fiddlin' Jim' come in, I'm sure you'll fail."

"Why shouldn't that poor soul be given a chance to hear the Gospel?"

"Because she don't deserve it. Half the folks in this town have had fits of trying to improve Fiddlin' Jim. She don't want to be better, and she can't be better. She is the most saucy, lazy, untidy, no-account darkey alive."

"Perhaps this Sunday-school is the means appointed to make her better," said Mrs. Dole.

"Don't flatter yourself. She comes to rout you out!"

"She came in and took her place in my class, and has been quiet and attentive. I certainly

cannot take the responsibility of denying any poor soul the Word of Life."

"You'll find she is merely waiting to raise a rumpus and break up the school."

Mrs. Dole went homeward in melancholy mood. This work among a long-neglected colored population was dear to her heart. She paused by the kitchen door and said to Sabrina, who was making pies:

"Sabrina, did your church people ever try to do anything for those colored folks at the East End?"

"No, Mis' Dole; we don't associate with any such trash as that!" said Sabrina, with a toss.

"Their very misery is an appeal to Christian benevolence. Did none of you ever try to improve Fiddlin' Jim?" urged Mrs. Dole.

"Well, Mis' Dole!" cried the scandalized Sabrina. "I sh'd say not! I wouldn't be seen speakin to her! Why, as for stealing' an' lyin' an' fightin', Jim tops all. Lan' sakes! Spec' me to be goin' with Fiddlin' Jim!" Sabrina pinched on a top crust, and cut a neat little round breathing-hole in the center. "Do tell, Mis' Dole, have you took in that Fiddlin' Jim into yo' Sunday-school?" demanded Sabrina.

"She came of her own accord a month ago, and has seemed much interested."

"Oh, lan' sakes, Mis' Dole! Intrusted! She's only tryin' to git yo' off yo' guard laik, an' then she'll whip out her fiddle an' start a dance, or whoop out into a song, or suthin,' to break yo' all up—that's the plumb truth. I'm older nor yo', Mis' Dole; yo' take my 'visement an' turn Fiddlin' Jim out."

"What! Refuse help to a poor, dark soul?"

"Soul? Well, mebbe she has, ef yo' say so, Mis' Dole, but I nebber see no signs of it. Don' she go there her head lookin' laik it nebber see a bresh, dirty shawl pin' crooked at her neck, dirty frock, an' no trouble took to sew up the tears?"

Mrs. Dole's fallen countenance admitted the picture true.

"I thought so," said Sabrina, cutting out tarts. "She too lazy to keep clean, or to wuk. She nebber wuk 'cept to earn her fiddle."

"She has learned to read a little."

"Jes' so she could learn silly, no-'count songs, to sing when she fiddles."

"Where did she get such an absurd name?"

"Her name rightly was Jane James; but Jane

is a quiet, respectful name, not fitten fo' huh, an' as she was allus a-settin' on do'steps fiddlin', they call her Fiddlin' Jim; Jim's short for James, an' James is a kin' o' swell an' propah name, not fitten for her, neither."

Burdened with such opinions of her unpromising pupil, Mrs. Dole went next day to the Sunday-school. She had with her some Sunday-school papers, that were eagerly accepted by all but Fiddlin' Jim.

"Dunno's I keer for 'em, Mis' Dole. They's nice 'nuff, an' true 'nuff, but they ain' pow'ful. I'm a mighty bad lot, an' it takes what's rale pow'ful to get hol' o' me. 'Peared like when I hear you read the Bible, the fust day I come here; it was the pow'fulest readin' I ever heard. I want a Bible."

"Oh, do you? Then I must give you one."

"No, don't. I'd ruther git it fo' myse'f. I'll keer mo' fur it if I struggle to git it. Same way with my fiddle. I wuked weeks fo' that, an' then I sot such store by it I tuk it into bed with me, fear somebody'd come steal it or break it at night. Say, Mis' Dole, is a fiddle wicked?"

"Certainly not."

"Lots of 'em says it is."

"Any kind of a musical instrument can be used for the glory of God and to sound his praise—a fiddle as well as an organ. If you use your fiddle to play and sing profane or wicked songs, then you do wickedly; but the fiddle is innocent."

"Does you say my fiddle can be used for the glory of God? Las' week I sot tryin' to play 'Jesus Loves Me,' an' Miss Kite comes along an' says I was profanin' holy words."

"She was mistaken. Sing and play all the hymns you can. God will not scorn to hear them. God says he will come into every heart that longs for him, and into every home that desires him. He will come to you if you ask him and make him welcome."

"Will he?" said Fiddlin' Jim, with a glad flash of her sullen face.

"Yes. Don't you think if you ask such High Company that you and your home should be as clean and orderly as possible?"

"I nebber kep' nuffin' clean but my fiddle. Thet shines," replied Fiddlin' Jim.

"Try and make yourself and your home shine, if you mean to ask Jesus there."

After two or three days' hard work "making garden," Fiddlin' Jim appeared at the book-store and asked for a Bible.

"There's one—twenty-five cents," said the clerk.

"Oh, I don't want no sech skimpy little letters as them," said Fiddlin' Jim.

The clerk offered another Bible, bound in purple cloth and with red edges. "There, that's nice, large print. One dollar."

Fiddlin' Jim examined it carefully. "Yes, I kin read that. Here's 'and' an' 'thee,' an' 'but' an' 'God'—lots of words I know."

She paid the dollar and carried off the book. It was put into the case with the cherished violin. Then she sat down and surveyed her room. An old tub, pail and broom, a box set on end for a table, while certain unwashed utensils for cooking were tossed inside. Dirty windows, with flour sacks pinned across them for curtains; a soiled, ragged bed, a few neglected chairs and dishes, some untidy clothes cast in a heap on the floor. The only fairly good article was a looking-glass, given her as a joke.

"Well, you are a bad-looking lot!" said Fid-

dlin' Jim, addressing the room. "I never expec' the Lord Jesus here, shuah!" She went to the glass and observed herself critically. "An' you match the place," she said to her image. "Nebber spec' the Lord Jesus lib in de likes o' you! The book an' the fiddle's all there is heah decent 'nuff for him, an' they looks lonesome. It'll take a lot o' wuk an o' airned money to mek this yere place an' pussun so we darst arsk him to please come heah."

She rocked back and forth. The old, lawless, idle nature struggled against this new yearning after better ways, after the Lord of Life.

"It's got ter be done," she said, "'cause I wants him, an' I has to have him; 'cause I'm plumb sick o' what I am!" Then out came the sudden cry, wrung from her by her helplessness, "Oh, Lord, won't you help me to stick to tryin' to do better? If yer don't, I'll give up, shuah!"

Week after week, between hope and trepidation, did the faithful teacher watch Fiddlin' Jim. The rough head became tidy; the soiled shawl, the torn gown and dirty shoes passed away. The great strength of the woman, put

to honest work, won wages, which by degrees clothed her properly and provided her room with the comforts of a home. The busy hands of Fiddlin' Jim whitewashed the room walls and painted the wood-work. Her Bible was as scrupulously kept as her fiddle; and, used as zealously, illuminated her soul.

"I likes to study up things," she said. "Las' week I hunted an' foun' all 'bout John Baptis'. Mighty peart readin', that. This yere week I done foun' out all 'bout Peter. Peter's very pow'ful readin'; it jes' suits me. I'm doin' Teeny's washin, an' Teeny she's teachin' me to read some better."

"What think, Mis' Dole?" said one of the women six months later. "Nan Lane was took very bad sudden—dyin', yo' know—an' no time to fetch a preacher; so some one says, 'Run call Fiddlin Jim, 'cause she's pious, an' goes to Sunday-school, an' kin pray.' So they calls Fiddlin' Jim, and Nan cries out:

" 'Oh, I'm dyin'! What shall I do?'

"Then Fiddlin' Jim, she says, 'Oh, honey, the dear Lord is able an' willin' to sabe, an' he nebber casts out any who comes to him. You jes'

trus' him. Lay right back on him, an' trus' him with all yo' heart!'

"Poor Nan! She says, 'Oh, I don' know how to trus'!'

"Then Jim she says, 'Honey, you has to arsk Jesus to help you trus' him. He'll show you how to do it. He gib you to will an' to do of his good pleasure—the Bible says it.'

"Then Fiddlin' Jim she kneels down an' prays, an' she sot by Nan an' show the Lord Jesus to huh, an' poor Nan she pass away as easy as a lamb, trustin' to Jesus."

Then the teacher who had wrought in faith and humility in a dark place gave thanks to God who had added such jewels to her crown.

"UNCLE GEORDIE"

It was a June day and the sun shone, but no one in the town of Bender seemed to know it. Rather it was every one as if it were "a day neither light nor dark;" a day of a subdued, silver-lined gloom, where the enclosing haze of earthly changes and sorrows might at any moment break and lift, and give wide looks into heaven; when groping hands might for one instant touch the hands of angels, or "brush our mortal weeds against their wings." There was no laughter in Bender, and no tears. Earth and heaven had come very close together for a brief space, and a citizen of earth had "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," become a citizen of glory. This was the "wa-gang o' Uncle Geordie."

It was not like many other goings forth from earth, when only one family, or neighborhood, is concerned; when there is cause for weeping because of helpless infancy, or bereaved age reft of the strong stay, the loving heart-care. Uncle Geordie had gone in reverend age, and


HJB.
HJB.

his own had all passed into the celestial city long before him. Uncle Geordie also belonged to everybody; every household in Bender felt a claim on him, felt a deep gratitude toward him, missed him as a part of its own.

Uncle Geordie was then rich? A public benefactor, he "had built them a synagogue;" otherwise a town library, a fountain, or an opera house? Oh, no; Uncle Geordie, looked at from an earthly point of view, was poor indeed; from a heavenly point of observation, we might see him to be passing rich—in faith, love, hope—in many beautiful and eternal things that had deep fitness for the land into which he had but now stepped.

For thought of Uncle Geordie the village of Bender walked slowly that day, kept their blinds half closed and read their Bibles. In the home, a simple little cottage, which Uncle Geordie had abandoned for the many mansions, in the front room, lay a still white image of humanity, the mystery and dignity of death upon it, and covered with a long, white linen sheet. Near the house, perched on a fence, a row of little lads sat, like a row of pigeons cooing in the sun.

Bobby Tunstall took from his pocket an ancient jack-knife:

"I'm going to put it away to 'member him by, 'cause if I kep' it in my pocket I might lose it. Las' Chris'mas he gave it to me; said he'd had it ten years, an' he was gettin' too old to whittle, so he give it to me 'cause pop hed been out o' work so long, an' mom sick so long, they wasn't a sign of a chance for me to get a Chris'-mas present to home. You bet I liked this better'n anythin'; I'd wanted a knife the longest while! Uncle Geordie was always a feelin' for folks, somehow."

"This house b'longs to Mis' Gray now, 'cause she took care of Uncle Geordie for ever an' ever so long. Mis' Gray says she'd much ruther have Uncle Geordie 'round than own the house; said he saw things so clear an' straight he was just like another conscience to her," said Teddy Bayless.

"He wasn't one bit afraid to die," said Billy Gray, in a low, solemn tone; "he told me so his-self."

"That was 'cause he was so well acquainted with God," said Billy Blake, the deacon's son. "Pop said Uncle Geordie 'bout knew the Bible

by heart, an' made him think of what it says 'bout seein' God face to face, an' 'bout walkin' with God, an' 'bout talkin' with God as a man talks with his friend. Guess he' seen an' heard a lot by this time;" and five pairs of young boy-eyes sought the blue dome, and a sacred silence fell upon the little chattering tongues as the healing shadow of Uncle Geordie's good life passed by.

When the Civil War broke out Uncle Geordie was past fifty by several years, and, like Jacob, "he halted upon his thigh." Unable to go to war, he saw almost every able-bodied youth and man of the warlike little town of Bender go forth to do battle. Scarcely a house in the village had left in it men, except the very old and feeble, or slender little lads.

"Good-bye, boys," said Uncle Geordie, as he saw the plucky column depart. "I can't go to the front with you, but I can be rear guard and see to those you leave behind."

The parson was marching with the rest, and he made reply: "It was a rule in Israel that 'he that tarrieth by the stuff is as he that goeth forth to battle.' "

The men gone, Uncle Geordie took up the

burden of doing duty for twenty-five. Every morning he rose early, and, going from house to house, he performed such acts of household helpfulness as had belonged to absent fathers and sons. He mended broken gates, dosed sick cows, glazed broken windows, mended fences, sawed wood, split kindling, cared for gardens, put on stray shingles and nailed fast loose clapboards. He gave advice, and he went errands; he sat up all night with the sick, put up and took down stoves. From morning to night, and often from night to morning, Uncle Geordie was indefatigable, serving. He lived not for himself but for others, and, like his Lord, he went about doing good. To the limit of his strength, and beyond it, went Uncle Geordie, utterly ungrudging. He led the prayer meeting, superintended the Sunday-school; with the village doctor he ministered to the dying, and often his words of prayer were the last of the sounds of earth that reached their ears. He was "Uncle Geordie" to everybody; not a village child but counted him blood-kin. When Addie Bent's father was reported among the killed, Uncle Geordie took the helpless child and her prostrated mother to his own

home. He comforted the last hours of Mrs. Bent with his promise to be a father to Addie. In his house she grew up, and married Jonas Gray, and as a daughter she ministered to Uncle Geordie's octogenarian years. His substance was small, but he gave a portion to them that had none, dividing his shelter, food and raiment with the needy.

When war was over, and strong arms and broad shoulders were again ready for work in Bender, Uncle Geordie had the habit of helping fixed upon him; and surely there were always the sick and orphans needing his care. It was a familiar word: "Let us ask Uncle Geordie."

If lads were wayward, idle or neglectful, it was Uncle Geordie who saw the springing evil, and he, in his quaint, kindly way, led the erring one right. The parson said if boys never went wrong in Bender it was because they could not, with such a kindly, tender, wise old monitor ever alert for them.

So was Uncle Geordie a part of all the household, or even individual, life of the village: friend, brother, father, to all about him; his life blood flowing in ready sympathy with every life that touched upon his own, constantly ready

to excuse, to pardon, to make peace and pursue it.

Uncle Geordie was a living presentation of the power of littles. He never did what men call a great thing in his life, but he did the innumerable little things upon which so much of life hinges. The spirit of "she hath done what she could" was ever about him; he was a living exemplification of the "gathering up of fragments, that nothing be lost." Fragments of time, of simple knowledge, of little kindnesses, of gentle speech; these were all Uncle Geordie's capital for pursuing a busy, useful life; but, all being consecrated, God was greatly served by him. God in his fellows, for as David, Uncle Geordie's thought was: "My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the upright upon earth, in whom is all my delight."

"It was Uncle Geordie got me to learn a trade." "It was Uncle Geordie encouraged me to think I could fit myself for a teacher." "I never could have brought up my little fatherless boys without Uncle Geordie's help and advice." "Our whole village has had a sample of walking with God." He was a living epistle of the grace of God, known and read of all men.

His clean, active temperament, kindly, hopeful living, brought him far into old age, hale, cheery, active. Nearly ninety years ran his record, and it was a record growing brighter and brighter, until one June noon he entered upon his heritage of perfect day.

Every one in Bender wanted to have Uncle Geordie's body lie in God's acre near those whom he had helped. So they made his grave in the center of the little burial ground, and placed the long-buried wife and children beside him.

No one wanted to place Uncle Geordie's coffin on a hearse; they wanted, as they say in Scotland, "to carry him." Therefore, they laid him on a bier, and the men and boys, his neighbors, divided themselves into groups of six and took turns in bearing the bier on their shoulders. Through the June stillness and sweetness — a mid-week Sabbath of sacred sorrow and love — singing the Psalms of Degrees, "devout men carried him to his burial and made great lamentation over him."

"ME 'N FRILLER."

I SAT in my window looking out upon Russell Square, London. "Come in," I said, hearing a knock.

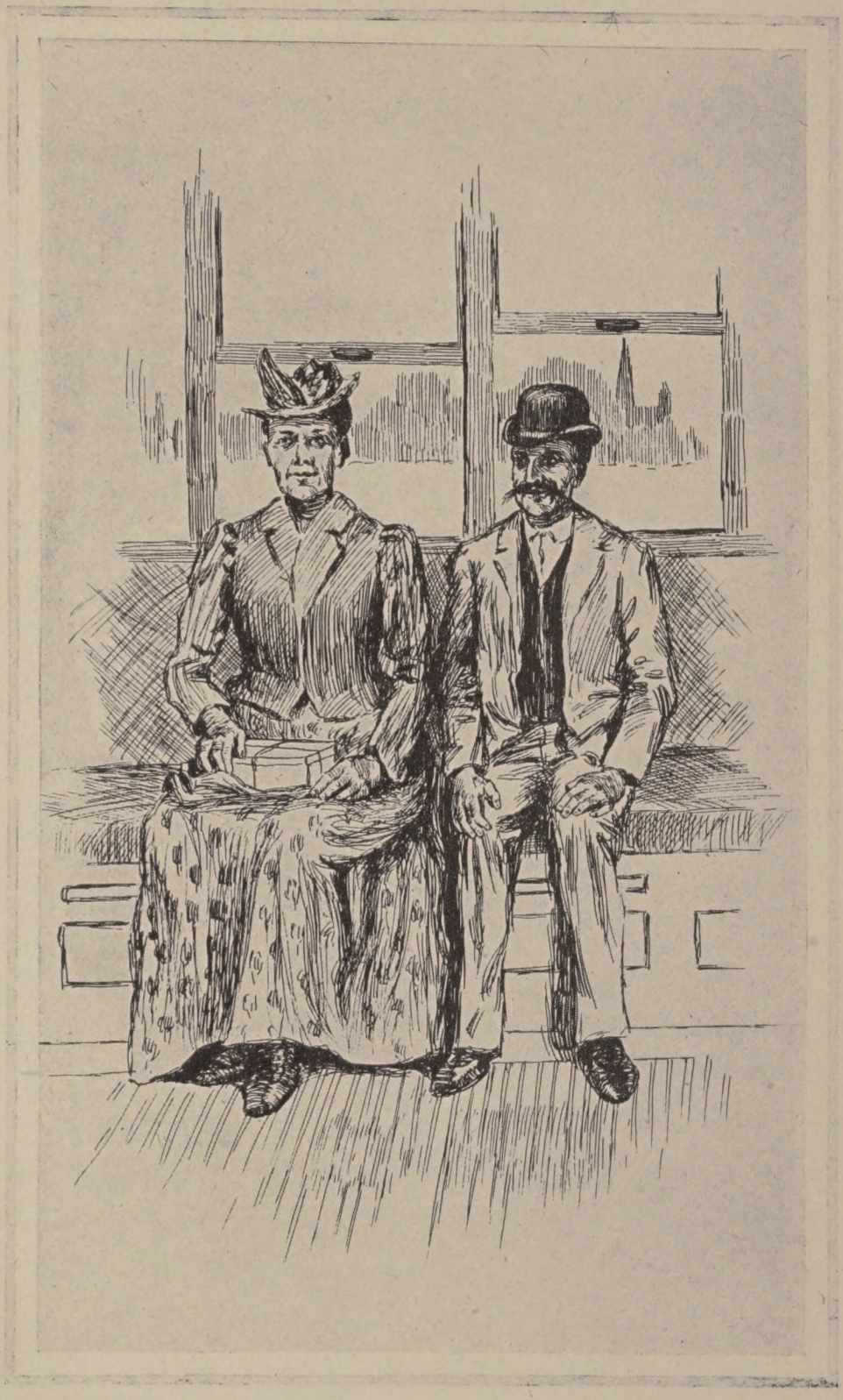
"If you please, ma'am, I'm Friller."

Then I turned. She was a big woman, her once fresh-colored English face furrowed by cares, with hollows telling of meager meals that had failed to satisfy; a pair of brown eyes were indomitably cheery, matching a voice which half a century had not robbed of its courageous ring.

"About the buttonholes," said Friller.

"Oh! can you do them on fine white goods, merino and broadcloth?"

" 'Deed, ma'am, I've done 'em for the tailor on Huston Street this ten year. 'Twas the baker's wife, where you left the card, told me. She sez, 'Friller, go get them buttonholes, an' she bein' a furriner'—ax parding, ma'am—'won't think o' jewin' you to a farden.' "



"I give a penny apiece all around, and find silk and thread."

The eyes of Friller shone with joy. "I'll suit you, ma'am; you'll see."

She looked so honest that I thought of no guarantee for the goods. I simply asked where she lived. "I don't want the articles taken to an infected house."

She named a place, a clean, quiet court. "Top story, ma'am; 'way up high, where there's air and sun, though it's a terrible climb for a heavy body no more nimble on the legs than me. You'd never b'lieve once I climbed haystacks, clear to the top, would you, ma'am? Room looks right down on that little Spurgeon chapel. Hear the singin' reg'lar, an' the prayin' an' preachin', if the man's voice is kind o' forcible. Me 'n Friler leans over the winder-seat an' gets our preachin', as we says, jokin'. Friller never smokes while he's list'nin'—'pears to him onrespeckful like. Why don't we go to church? Land love you, ma'am, me'n Friller haven't had clothes fitten this ten year! Now, I look at you, ma'am, b'lieve I saw you comin' out of that chapel. Says Friller: 'Here's a lady 'mong 'em. Not kerridge folks—she's

walkin'; 'pears to b'lieve "the rich an' the poor meet together, an' the Lord is the maker of 'em all," as the Book puts it;' so I looked, an' it *was* you I see comin' careful down the steps, holdin' old Mis' Gridley's hand, an' led her up to the corner."

"Yes; the old blind lady. She reached out her hand so confidingly to my arm, and said, "Please put me on Hunter Street with my face west."

"Yes'm, that's her way. Lizzie has that many babies she can't go, an' Bill's on the railroad; but church is Mis' Gridley's joy. So Lizzie sets her with her face east, an' she goes to the corner. Then she turns sharp an' goes on, an' asks some one to turn her into Chapel Court. I'll bring them button-holes to-morrer night an' get the others. I've a dozen to do for the tailor yet, at fo'pence a dozen."

"He told me he didn't know of any button-hole maker," I said.

"Well, ain't he wicked! Won't pay a livin' rate hisself, nor yet don't want me to get it from any one else. Don't the Book say that the poor that oppresseth the poor is like a sweeping rain that leaveth no food?"

"I'm glad you speak as a Christian."

"Oh, I'm not so *very* good," said Mrs. Friller, modestly. "Still, when Friller's out of work, an' I'm in, he likes to read the Book 'loud. Friller's way of readin' is to find all the places 'bout the poor. Folks *do* say that poor folks always chooses Rev'lations—that's when they're poor, an' also goin' to die. Me 'n Friller are poor enough, but we don't look to die no ways soon, so we don't care so much 'bout Rev-'lations."

Mistress Friller presently became a familiar figure at our lodgings. She would come in puffing, declaring: "Oh, ain't your stairs easy, compared! Light and wide, an' soft carpet. It's a pleasure to come up 'em, as I tells Friller. Do hope you've more buttonholes. I ain't tellin' tailor Totts. I work for him just the same—have to—but if he thinks he's keepin' me out of a job, let him."

"Do you know of anyone who can run a sewing machine?"

"Don't know anybody can do it better'n *I* can. I *make 'em hum.* Shirt season I work on the Row, an' am classed No. 1. I've got a machine"—with pride. "Not so *very* good.

Got her second-hand. Friller keeps her in order. He can run her, too. Can't make her hum; takes *me* to do that. Friller was a kerridge builder; served 'prenticeship. Worked fifteen years for same boss till the boss broke."

"Could he not get another place?"

"Bless you, no, ma'am. What broke *his* boss broke the rest of 'em, till there's ten men for one job. Germany did it, ma'am. Germany's allus doin' it. Folks took to gettin' kerridges made in Germany, half as cheap ag'in, an' small cost bringin' 'em over. So all the trade fell through. Many's the night me an' Friller, sharp set of hunger and pressed 'bout the rent, has laid awake wishin' as Germany was sunk in the sea. Germany's an awful nuisance. Can't see what the Lord made it for. England's enough—and America"—with curtesy to me. "What's the use of French, an' *I*talyans, an' that riff-raff? Friller 's walked the soles off his boots—an' feet too, lookin' for jobs, an' fit to drop of hunger an' discouragement."

"There is a deal of street work being done now, repaving and so on; can he not get on that?" I ventured.

"Oh, ma'am!" cried Friller in rebuke and grief—"Friller! Why, *that's navvy work!* Friller's a mechanic; he couldn't come down to navvy work."

"I merely thought any work would be better than no bread."

"No, indeed, ma'am. You're so innocent, bein' a furriner—ax your parding—a mechanic like Friller *can't* turn navvy, not if he starves for it. Oh, no!"

My girls were going to Paris for the Salon, and Mrs. Friller was engaged to come and "make the machine hum." The machine was in the parlor, where my meals were served, and Mrs. Friller was brought in by the maid just as I sat down alone to my lunch. She discreetly placed herself at the machine, turning her broad back toward the table with elaborate care.

"Mrs. Friller," I said, "have something to eat?"

"Oh, no, thank you, ma'am; I've had dinner."

I was sure there was a falter in the cheery voice. I put a chop, a potato, a cup of cocoa and a slice of bread and butter on a plate and carried it to the machine: "Eat that before you

sew a stitch. You've had dinner? I know it was a stale roll."

"And a drink of water," amended Friller.

I returned to the table and ate my lunch. Friller by the machine, her back still turned, ate, striving to restrain her eager craving. Somewhere between the table and the machine rose potent that invisible line of social demarcation which made this apartness, the habit of both our lives, seem right. Yet a whimsical notion came to me that angel on-lookers might note it as childishly absurd, and I wondered how far into eternity these earthly tricks and manners would project themselves.

The meal heartened Friller to renewed loquacity.

"Friller will be glad to hear of my treat. Mostly we don't one have what t'other don't get. Sometimes when he's real down, an old mate or master may set him up in a stew or a pepper pot. Friller served 'prentice to Mr. Savery. Day he was free, Mr. Savery says, 'Here's a good man through his time to-day, an', Friller, you may work on here, if so you choose.' Then he gave Friller a suit o' clothes an' twenty pound, an' they fired off the anvil

three times. Sez Mr. Savery, 'Half holiday it is, and the treat is Friller's. Seein' you don't drink, Friller, I advise you to take your mates on the boat to Greenwich an' set 'em up supper.' He did, an' it cost him two pound. That twenty pound was the most money ever Friller handled to once in his life. If we're very down, Friller tells me of them times, an' I tell him of *my* times."

"Tell me, too, Mrs. Friller."

"Born down by Broadstairs, went to the church school and learned needlework. Lady Praed took me to be trained, an' I was second maid for her an' Miss Is'bel for fifteen years, till I was thirty. Then Friller come down from Mr. Savery to do up kerridges, an' was there three months. We got to talkin' over the back garden wall evenings. Lady Praed sez, 'Ann, what's this folly with Friller? Marriage is all nonsense,' she sez.

" 'I know it, ma'am,' I sez, 'an' I wouldn't think of such a thing for no man but Friller.' She laughed out. 'Your mind's made up, Ann, I see.'

" 'I'm terrible 'fraid 'tis, ma'am, it bein' Friller,' I sez. She said she'd see me through,

so she give me a sash an' a white frock, an' we was married in the village church, Miss Maud bein' bridesmaid. Lady Praed she give a supper on the lawn to all the servants, an' me an' Friller an' my boxes went away in the carrier's cart to the railroad. I had two big boxes of dresses, cloaks an' such, Lady Praed had give me during fifteen years, of hers an' the young lady's. She was just, an' divided 'em equal 'tween me an' the first maid. They weren't things for my wear, but I kep' 'em. Bein' thrifty, when we got to London we hired two rooms on Birdcage Walk, an' in the front one I opened a second-hand clothes trade, stocked with them things, and bought more of ladies' maids an' trades people's folks. I was so handy with my needle I made things look fine, and invented them over. I got a fairish trade with concert hall singers and pantomime supes at Christmas. Friller worked at the shop, an' me 'n Friller had plans of getting well-to-do an' having a shop up Hackney way. Then it rained cats an' dogs of misfortunes on us. Friller went up country for a two months' job, and while he was gone the baby came. I went right down with typhoid, doctor said along of

a sewer that had been busted two year under our rooms, makin' 'em all dampish an' smelly. The woman I got to nuss me stole all my stock, and ran the business clean ont. Friller came back, down in the mouth 'cause the boss was broke an' all the men on the street. When we'd paid our bills, we had nothin' left but the baby, a few sticks of furniture an' three pound. No, we ain't never had a day's good luck since."

"And your son?"

"He's a good, steady one. Never had any other. Couldn't 'prentice him, so he does day's work in a warehouse. He's engaged to a nice girl; twenty he is; but they don't look to get married, 'cause they haven't nothing to live on. She comes every Sat'day an' scrubs my floor an' landin' an' my share of the stairs, 'cause I'm so heavy I can't stoop easy. She tries to be darter-like. Sundays, if it's fair, she an' James sits on the park benches an' does their courtin', an' goes to church evenin's—if they have decent clothes. If tain't fair weather they sits an' does their courtin' in our room; me 'n Friller turns our backs an' pretends we don't notice. We pretend a deal at our place, livin' three in a room. I've wanted a screen—

Lady Praed, she give me notions. Now I'm workin' for you, I'm goin' to buy sticks an' cloth, an' Friller he'll make the screen."

There was a pathos in the picture of the young lovers who never expected to marry: the girl trying to show her love to her sweetheart by doing hard tasks for his mother. Friller informed me that "Ellen's fambly lived five in a room, an' Ellen's mother bein' weakly, James carried up coal and water for her, same as if she was his folks." Mother and Ellen lived by box-making. "Sometimes they got bare enough to live on; sometimes not. If not, Ellen never let on."

On Saturday night Mrs. Friller took home a basket of provisions for a Sabbath dinner for her household, including Ellen and the mother.

"We'll all be filled for once," remarked Friller as I handed her the basket.

"Are all your lives so dull and hard?" I queried one day.

"Oh, no! Once in a way we haves the best fun! Last Whitsun Monday ever was we had *times!* James had saved enough to take him an' Ellen to Hampton Court. Night before, sez Friller, 'Ann, wish we could have a bit of

treat, too. I've a sixpence saved.' 'So have I,' I sez to Friller; 'les' go to 'Ampstead 'Eath.' I had a good skirt, but not a waist nor a coat with whole sleeves in it. So that night I took a clear wore-out pair of trousers of Friller's, ripped 'em an' washed 'em, an' put 'em to dry. In the mornin' I rose early an' made a pair o' sleeves for my coat out of them trousers. Friller het an iron an' pressed the seams an' coat good. Then we got a pen'orth of herrings, a penny for two jam tarts—day-old ones—a pen'orth of cheese, four stale buns for a penny. Then you *can't* go to 'Ampstead 'Eath Whitsun Monday 'less you haves a little squirt to play jokes on folks with; so we each had one for a penny, an' that used up Friller's sixpence. We started early, an' walked up to where the ride to the 'Eath cost a penny. There was young folks on the car, an' they joked an' squirted at me 'n Friller like we was young too. We had such good times!

"At the 'Eath we each paid a penny for a cup o' tea, an' that give us a table to eat at under a bower, so we ate our lunch. A man come by, an' seein' us larkin' so jolly, he sat by our table an' shared a big currant loaf with us.

Late at night, we rode back as far as the penny took us each, an' we walked the rest o' the way. We was tired, but we had had fun to last us a year.

"I'm contrivin' an' contrivin' to get enough saved up to go next Whit Monday, me 'n Friller, an' James an' Ellen, an' Ellen's mother. I told Friller it was mighty good of God to send us poor folks such good times an' enjoyment, an' we ought not to be back'ard, but catch at our opportunities."

Mistress Friller and her little party did get to Hampstead Heath that Whit Monday, and I was given to understand that the occasion was a magnificent success.

In English Alms-Houses

IN ENGLISH ALMS-HOUSES

In English literature, whether essay, history or novel, we find frequent mention of English alms-houses, and my curiosity had been awakened concerning a form of charity very different from anything in my own country.

The alms-house is an institution unlike the English work-house or poor-house, or our American "county house" or "county farm." The English poor regard the work-house or poor-house with terror and aversion, but the alms-house is looked to as a happy refuge for the aged poor, if one is so fortunate as to get entrance therein.

Sometimes, from the window of a railway carriage, I had seen on some choice hillside, or near an ancient church, or at the edge of some town, a row of stone or brick cottages, where an arched gateway or the inscription over the door of a chapel stated that these were St. Mary's, or St. Ann's, or Saint somebody else's

alms-houses; or they were named St. Albans, or Bede's, or Swithin's Charities.

Now and then these houses shone new in fresh brick, paint and mortar; again, the thick stone walls, curled tiles and tiny diamond windows bore evidence to their antiquity. Always there was about them an air of solidity, comfort and quiet decency that suggested a benevolence of long standing, in good order, and with ample maintenance. At last I gratified my desire to visit one of these institutions and learn something of the daily life of the inmates.

London is a congeries of towns come together in their natural growth. Towns and villages that once lay several miles from true London, now called "The City," have by their own growth and the extension of the city itself at last coalesced with each other and old London. That which was once field or orchard is now streets of houses and factories roaring with traffic.

Places that were in old times farm steadings or lonely ecclesiastical properties have been absorbed in the expanding metropolis. All these former towns and villages had their one, two or more churches—to us of the land of new

things seeming old in their two, three or five hundred years. Cathedrals, convents, monasteries, abbeys and their dependencies passed at the Reformation into the hands of the State. While some buildings and endowments were entirely secularized, more became the property of the English Church, and with their increasing endowments have been maintained to the present.

During the last several hundred years also, pious and pitiful souls have made bequests of endowments for charities, and of these a favorite has been the alms-house, placed near by and under the care of a church, or, not infrequently, put in the keeping of some town corporation.

These alms-houses are for old men, old women, or, infrequently, for aged couples. The age, character and religion of those eligible to the benefits of the foundation are carefully set forth in the endowment deed, with all the benefits that are to accrue to them.

To be an inmate of an alms-house is not a badge of dishonor; it is often a mark of merit, a certificate of moral character and of good and regular standing in the church. Naturally the alms-houses chiefly belong to the wealthy and

historic Church of England, simply because for many hundred years individuals able to make such endowments were of her members. The younger churches, and those less wealthy, who were not able during some centuries past to make such provision for their needy aged members, have some of them established new alms-houses after the old fashion, but most of them have instead built "Old Ladies' Homes," "Old Men's Homes," "Convalescents' Homes," "Chronic Invalids' Homes," "Disabled Governesses' Homes," and so on; none of them, to my mind, so beautiful, beneficent, dignified and truly Christian as the old English alms-house.

On the outskirts of London, near a great stone church, which with its properties had once been the realm of a rural dean, and earlier of some Roman abbot, I stood one May morning before a row of twenty alms-houses, all as alike as peas in a pod. The buildings were of brick, dark with age. The doorways and window-casings were of stone, the windows small-paned, the roofs high-pitched and red-tiled. About ten feet of dooryard lay between the houses and the low fence along the sidewalk. These yards are undivided, except by the little

gravel walks, neatly kept, which, from the small front gates, led to the narrow doorways. Each front door was near the side of the house and opened into the front room, which had one window with a broad seat. Thus, each house had a door and a window in its front room, and these doors and windows alternated along the entire row. The little front yards, ten feet by thirteen in size, were kept according to the taste of the several possessors. Some were in grass, with some central shrub or evergreen; some were laid out entirely as flower-beds; some were divided geometrically by close-trimmed box, the spaces being filled with gravel. One was a bed of evergreen periwinkle, and on that May morning was gay with sky-blue salvers of bloom. At one of the doors stood a kind-faced old lady, in a dark calico gown and a white ruffled cap.

"I would like to come into your house and hear all about it," I said.

"Come in, ma'am; most welcome," was the prompt reply. "Deary me, I do believe you're an American, and I never spoke to one before! Won't I be proud, though! And every old lady in the houses will come in to call and hear

about it, except Aunt Peggy, and she being bed-rid, I'll go tell her."

The room into which she invited me was about 13x13 feet. It had a grate with a hob on one side, a square of carpet on the floor, a table with a red cover, several chairs with turkey-red cushions, a stand with a work-basket, a book or two, and a pot of geranium. On the walls were various photographs and small pictures; there was a patchwork foot-stool, and at the window was a muslin curtain carefully tied back. There was an air of homely comfort in the place.

The dame soon exhausted her questions about America—its size, wealth, climate, religion and distance. After that it was easy to set her talking about the houses, and her discourse flowed in a steady stream. I merely asked, "What is the age of admission to these houses?" and then the flood-gates were opened. It was a luxury to find some one who did not know all about alms-houses!

"Sixty-three is the age, ma'am, neither more nor less, I was going to say; but then you can be older, as much as happens, but no younger. Seeing sixty-three is the earliest, you'll hard-

ly believe it, though I tell you, we've one old lady, Aunt Peggy, has been here thirty-three years. Ninety-six if she's a day; but there's her birth and christ'ning on the parish register. Yes, to get in there's the sixty-three, and you must be born in this parish, and have a good character life long, and be a member of the church—parish church—and reg'lar in your duties. You gets your name entered on the book for admission, and generally there's several names waitin', and when there is a vacancy the vestrymen looks over the list and appoints according to their judgment.

"Sometimes it's age carries it, or longest waitin', or greatest need—being quite unable to do for yourself and quite without helpers. Nobody can get in who has means of support, or relatives able to do for 'em properly. How is the vacancies made? Mostly by dying. Folks dies, and then some one can get their place. Likely several is waiting for *my* place, but I'm not going to die yet. Yes, I have heard of vacancies being made other ways. In my time, one old lady whose son was enlisted had luck, for he was promoted up for gallantry until he got second lieutenant; then he wrote to

have his mother go and live in nice lodgings, an' be kep' like a lady. We've been to see her. She likes us to come. Of course, she's proud to be done for like that, but she says it ain't so cosey and sociable as it was here.

"Another old lady had a son went to Australia and got rich, and he sent home and had her go out to live with him. She is alive yet. Fifty years ago an old lady got a fortune left her, and she went out. She did not live long, but she left orders for all the old ladies in the houses to come to the funeral, a new black bonnet and gown being give them, and each got five shillings and a mourning ring. About that time one old lady's son-in-law got rich in trade, by accident, and she was took out by him; but *she* always turned up her nose at the folks here and wouldn't look at them. Still, they mostly dies here.

"What conditions are we under? Why, we has to go to church reg'lar, all days when church is open, if we're well. Of course, we has to know our catechism, and be able to read the service. Our time is our own, and we use our money just as we like. We are bound to be orderly, keep clean, quiet houses and not to

quarrel with our neighbors. Sometimes there is an ill-tempered one, but as none of the rest will uptake any quarrels, why, all goes easy.

"What do we get? Why, we gets the house and all that's in it. Then we get tickets for coals enough for two fires, as in yon grate, and four loaves of bread a week. If we don't eat that much bread, our tickets is good for buns or muffins or what we choose. We gets three shillings money each week, and on Christmas we gets a new black woollen frock, a flannel petticoat, a pair of shoes, yarn to knit our stockings, and some flannel for underclothes. One Christmas we got a shawl, one a bonnet, and one a cape, and so it goes round. When we get the new woollen frock, we take the last one for second best, and the third one back for working in, and so on. Whit Monday we gets two caps, a cotton gown, a pair of low shoes, three aprons and some cotton cloth; so you see we're well clothed. Some that are very easy on their clothes has clothes to sell or give away. If we earn any money by sewing or knitting, we can keep it for ourselves, but we're not allowed to go outside to do day's work. We can go visiting all we like; but if we go for over three days we

must let the manager of the houses know where we are. We do our own washing if we are able; if we are not, one of the others will do it, and we pay money or food, or trade work. Most of us uses the room upstairs for sleeping. If we're too old to go up and down, we sleep in this room."

She showed me the neat little bedroom, with chest and pegs for clothes, a wash-stand, bed and chairs—a comfortable place. "When it is cold, we can have a fire above if we save our coal right; when we need a fire above, we don't keep one in the kitchen. Most of us only use kitchen fire the day we wash. Then we boil soup and potatoes; you see, we can make tea, toast bacon or muffins, boil eggs and potatoes, here on this fire. In summer we use only a little fire in the kitchen. Then we get only half as many coal tickets; but most of us have coal saved up from summer, and we trade it, or keep it for extra in winter."

The tiny kitchen was very clean; it had a table, two chairs, a closet for tin and earthen ware. The grate was lower and larger than that in the front room, and had conveniences for roasting and boiling. "Now, ma'am, you

must see our gardens; every house has its garden." She led me from the back door, and there, divided by little wooden walks, lay twenty gardens, thirteen feet wide and eighteen deep. Each had in one corner a tiny tool-house, where a broom, pail, hoe, rake and wash-tub were sheltered. The gardens were now, in May, all planted; lettuce, radishes and onions were growing; each had a few heads of cabbage newly set out; the tool-houses were utilized to train bean vines over; there were some potatoes, turnips and carrots also, and my old lady told me that the gardens were all well cared for by their respective owners, and helped out the living marvellously. "Of course, Aunt Peggy can't tend hers, but Jane Ann does it. Jane Ann's her 'doption."

I was consumed with curiosity to hear about Jane Ann, and my hostess, having shown me certain plants of sage and thyme, the produce of which she traded to the grocer for tea, took me into the house again and held forth about "adoptions." "You see, as long as we conduct well we are as free of what we have as if we had earned it or 'herited it. We are not paupers, and are not meddled with. Most of us

helps out some of our famblies by taking a child to bring up. I've got a granddaughter. She's nine, and she's at the parish school just now. You see, we have bed and fire and shelter for 'em, and we gets clothes enough to be able to make over for 'em, and we can feed 'em if we manage close. The church ladies are kind, too, giving them clothes to do over, and we gets nice Christmas presents, tea, sugar, a ham, sausage, such things, and some of us earn a little. The young ladies of the church are mighty good to us Christmas, and they bring us handkerchiefs and pots of flowers, wool, tea and many nice little things. Be pleased to look into this closet and see the neat dishes and teapot and spoons I have, all given to me by folks.

"We old ladies love to have a tea drinking with a few neighbors. We save on our bread tickets and get some crumpets or buns, and we have a little merry-making, as lively as crickets. Well, I've my granddaughter, and most of them has a niece, or a grandchild, or maybe some poor child taken up in the Lord's name. Aunt Peggy has had three; none of them kin, for she's a lone spinster. First one was ten when she came, and stayed fifteen years. She

went to parish school and to sewing school, learned a trade, married a soldier, went to India, and her man is a sergeant. She writes to Aunt Peggy every year, and sends her a pound every birthday. Second girl Aunt Peggy took was ten, and she stayed ten years. Mighty good, pretty girl. She married a baker over at Hackney. Every pleasant Sunday they come to see Aunt Peggy, and bring her the beautifullest buns or jam tarts you ever see. After she was gone, Aunt Peggy took Jane Ann. Jane Ann wasn't but eight, but the smartest creetur! She has been with Aunt Peggy eight years. She nurses her, and takes care of the garden and house. Oh, Jane Ann's a treasure! Aunt Peggy trained 'em well, and when Aunt Peggy goes, the rector's wife is going to take Jane Ann for nursery maid. When I look at Aunt Peggy and them three 'doptions, I think of the tex', 'More are the children of the desolate than of the married wife, saith the Lord.' And again, 'Her children arise up, and call her blessed.'

"Yes, I've got children. My daughter has a big fambly, and her husband is weakly. They couldn't do for me, but I help them. I

keep their Kate, and I sew a good bit for the children, and I often help 'em out one way an' another. Mothers like to do that, and its Scripter, too. I've got a son; he is steady, but sometimes he is not in work. His wife isn't strong, and they have five children. They get on, and they come to see me Sunday afternoon and bring tea and things for supper, and we are all happy together. I sew for them, and I've gone and tended them when they're sick, so I don't feel useless, but as if I did my share yet in the world. You mostly can find ways to help and be useful, if you look out for them, can't you?

"You see, these alms-houses they was founded by God's people for God's people. You don't feel no way humiliated by taking it; it comes so out of God's hand. You ain't tyrannized over; you are free human beings and can live out your own life here, don't you see? Now the union, oh, that's dreadful! all kind of roughness and restraint—downright abuse sometimes. But here, why, you've your own roof and your own hearth, and your own kin free to come and go; then when the church ladies come and talk with you, why, you feel a real part of God's big fambly."

A Mother's Lesson

A MOTHER'S LESSON

MRS. TEMPLE sat under a tree on her lawn. She had her sewing in hand and sat there to watch Eve, her youngest child, who was at play. Mrs. Temple's mind was neither with Eve nor the sewing; it was set upon a subject which occupied nearly all her day-time hours, "held her eyes waking so troubled that she could not sleep," filled her with anguished cares, and was fast becoming a morbid and dominant sentiment. It was a sentiment abundantly right in itself; nothing less than an intense desire for the conversion of her three elder children—young people of thirteen, sixteen and seventeen years old. They were amiable, moral, obedient, outwardly excellent; but their mother had seen no tokens of an especial work of grace in their hearts, and she felt that they stood in slippery places amid the temptations of youth and of life. She found them unarmed, and more and more as she considered their condition, she became alarmed and desperately

anxious. She talked with her children; they seemed not to understand her state of mind, and were merely troubled for her. She prayed, she took her anguished longings to her God; in prayer, some light would come; hope, confidence would beam upon her from the Word and the mercy seat, and then presently the burden rolled heavily back upon her soul. What had she done or left undone? What evil heredity or lax example had beset her beloved? How long, oh, Lord, how long? She felt as if she belonged to the souls crying under the altar; her health was being undermined; she realized that, but she did not realize the other truth, that her mental health was also imperilled. As she sat there, her thoughts treading their ceaseless, painful round, Eve, her other child, her baby child of about three, was trotting up and down the lawn, talking, laughing and singing to an armful of dolls. Her mother noticed her once, and the swift thought came: "Happy heart, she is untroubled about *her* children!"

Eve dropped one doll, a soldier, from the four or five which her chubby arms held to her bosom. She stooped to gather it up, but a poodle, seeing the bright thing fall, considered

it a challenge to play, and came leaping and barking over the grass, springing up to seize the dolls. Eve shouted, "Go'way!" stamped her feet and pushed at him. The antic poodle still leaped, snapping his white teeth, caught a doll's foot and loosed it again. Eve began to run toward her mother; the dog kept pace with her. She reached her mother and flung all the dolls into her lap. Then she turned, content, leaned back against her mother's knees, rested her head on them, looked up into the canopy of leaves and the blue sky, and hummed a little song.

"Are you afraid of the dog?" asked her mother.

"No; *I'm here.*"

"Are you afraid that he'll get your dollies?"

"No. I put 'em in 'oor lap."

"There poodle is; he wants them."

"But he tan't det 'em; you has 'em."

"Are they my dollies?"

"Yes. We's all 'oors. I'se 'oors; so's my dollies. Loves me, loves zem, don't 'oo?"

Utterly without care for herself or her dolls, the laughing child leaned back and sang, ignoring the barking, jumping dog she had lately

feared. Presently she raised her head and delivered some advice:

"Better go off, Dick. We's all safe. Nossing here for 'oo. Mamma cares for we."

Then a sudden flood of light from the Book illumined Mrs. Temple's mind: "They are mine." "I will save thy children." "As the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine." "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the day that I make up my jewels." "He hath blessed thy children within thee." "Thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children." "He hath remembered his covenant forever." "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him!" "The promise is to you, and to your children." "I have made a covenant with my chosen."

Mrs. Temple looked at Eve; how happy and restful was the child, *because she trusted.* She put her treasures in strong keeping and left them there. She rested upon the faithfulness of love. Once more a little child taught a great lesson.

Uncle Zeke

UNCLE ZEKE

WAITING lately in a station for the train on a "branch" road, I remarked an elderly negro enter carrying a paper bag. His clothing was clean, coarse and warm; his face intelligent, kindly, cheery; his figure alert and strong, feeling sixty years no burden. He went up to a group of young colored girls and offered to share the contents of his bag, remarking, "Wal, I was so pow'ful hungry I jes' hed to go git some crackers."

The girls refused the crackers, evidently from pride, as the station was full of people. The old man nonchalantly went on eating, saying, "Wal, sistahs, ef yo's too proud to eat what the Lawd sen' yo', yo'll tu'n to skiletons fo' long, sho'ly."

As he stood talking to the girls, I noticed that almost all his remarks were followed by approving laughter; he seemed to be an acknowl-

edged wit among his people, while a smile now and then stole over the faces of the waiting "white folks" as some of his quaintly humorous speeches reached them.

Our train had not been long in motion before it came to a standstill, and a brakeman passed through with the usual remark that there was a car derailed and we must needs wait for an hour or two. He then stirred up the fires, and left us to endure the customary delay in our own fashion. We had one ordinary car, where all the women were seated; next behind this, half of a baggage car was fitted up as a men's compartment, and there all the men passengers had resorted. The brakeman inadvertently left the door between the two open, and as there happened to be no smoking, no one closed it. The harmonious monotone of the old negro's voice, coming distinctly to me as I sat not far from the door, indicated that he was doing much of the talking, and frequent bursts of low laughter from his fellows told that they were well pleased with his speeches.

"Fine piece of country, this," said a stranger.

"Wasn't that big house 'way over there the old Chamberlin place?" asked one.

"Yes, sah, it was," spoke up the negro. "I know ev'ry inch of the hill like a book."

"Weren't you one of the old Chamberlin negroes, Uncle Zeke?"

"I was that. All that prop'ty come to the Chamberlins 'long of marryin' Miss Kitty Paul. Miss Kitty had all ol' Major Paul's prop'ty, an' she brought Marse Chamberlin nine hundred acres of lan' an' sixty negroes. I was bo'n on de place, 'bout a year after Miss Kitty kem dar. What's dat yo' askin'? How I like it? W'y, when I got big 'nuff to hev a 'pinion, I liked livin' berry well. I didn't hev nothin' to 'plain of. What wuk did I do? W'y, when I was pretty small I was sot to takin' keer ob de chillun—sometimes de white ones, sometimes de black ones. Didn't make no diff'unce to me, s' long as dey *was* chillun, though mebby I did like tekkin' care o' de white ones bes', 'cause in deir white frocks an' bloom ob ribbons dey looked mos' like flowers. I allus did lub chillun. Mebbe it was cause I was allus tekkin keer of um; an' mebby I was sot to tek keer 'cause I was nacherly so fond of 'em. Cyan't say which it was. 'Nuther thing I took to was readin'. W'en I was rockin' cradle or

watchin' chillun I was allus a-tryin' to read; an' Miss Kitty she see it, an' she hed me larn to read. She set me at a primer fust, an' then at the Bible. I hed a New Testyment, an' then the hull Bible. It was 'bout the on'y readin' book I hed, an' I 'low is was a pow'ful good one, ev'ry way. Miss Kitty said so, an' so did I. Sundays Miss Kitty hed a Sunday-school fo' all us black chillun, an' bimeby, after the Sunday-school, she'd say to me, 'Go, Zeke, you take all dem chillun out yander by the big trees an' read the Bible to dem, so they won't be shoutin' roun' so 'dicklis for Sunday.' Miss Kitty's chillun come, too, sometimes, an' I read an' they read. 'Pears like them was terrible pleasant times, with the sun slippin' down thro' the branches, an' the new leaves jes' buddin' out, er the ol' leaves all fallin' round us laik as a few rainbows hed went to pieces overhead. Sho! them *was* good times!"

"And how did you like the emancipation proclamation and getting free, Uncle Zeke?"

"Lan', sah! w'y, I was clear lifted off my feet! Nebber was so happy any day 'fore dat —*nebber bin so happy any day sence!* Seemed laik w'en I got up dat mornin' the sky mus' be

rainin' gold an' dimon's. Seemed laik de air smell like t'ousand c'lone bottles, an' laik all de birds God ebber made got to singin' dat day, an' sing cl'ar up into hebben! Seemed to me laik nothin' nebber be common laik again. But next mawnin', my! things was goin' 'long in the same ole way, on'y I felt kinder lost an' lonesome laik, same as if some piece of me was gone somewheres."

"You had to turn in and wrestle to pick up a livin' for yourself. Nobody else was 'sponsible for *you* any longer, Uncle Zeke," suggested a man of his audience.

"Oh, well, now," bristled up Uncle Zeke, "we uns of the Chamberlin people wasn't throwed out on de worl' unpervided. Our folks w'a'nt like that. No, sah! The Chamberlins was *white* folks, sho' 'nuff. They give ev'ry one somethin', 'cordin' to his need, or meb-by 'cordin' to his servin'. The fambly hed city prop'ty, too, an' they meant to move to the city to lib. They kep' a farm or so for rentin', an' some lan' they sold, an' some they give to us. Some got their cabin, some a cow, or some hogs, or a hoss an' cyart. Somethin' to start makin' a livin' on. I got four as good acres of

groun' over here by C—— as they is in this kentry, an' I sez so."

"What did you do then, Uncle Zeke?"

"Mandy an' me was merried 'fo' that. We had a cabin on our lan'. Mandy, she did cleanin' an' washin', an' made gyardin, an' I raised co'n an' taters. Fust thing I did was to set off a piece of my lan' for a church for my people. I c'lected some money fo' the buildin', an' I airned some, an' I wukked on it myse'f, an' byme-by we hed a weather-tight church. I'd taken some, fo' den, to preachin', an' I preached; an' what time I hed to spare I raised my co'n an' taters from my lan'."

"That's where you foolished yourself," some one said bluntly. "Better kept your land for corn; you'd got more return. There's no money in these religious doings."

"Well, sah," said the voice of old Uncle Zeke, deliberately, "I s'pose yo' think yo' knows what yo'se talkin' 'bout, but I'll tell *you* I'd be willin', ef I hed it, to give you the ve'y bes' hundred acres in dis yere State, an' keep all chu'ch's an' religious doin's out o' yo' county, an' in sho't time yo' lan' wouldn't be wuth ten cents an acre. No, *sah!*"

"You're quite right about that, Uncle Zeke," said a pleasant voice emphatically. "Tell us how you get on with your church."

"W'y, sir, f'um fair to middlin', er there-'bouts. Col'd people ain' so ve'y thick 'roun' in the kentry, and they's churches fo' them in town. Likewise, I'm jes' a unlarned man. I kin read, an' s'pound the Scripter 'cordin' to my lights, but I'm no great shakes fo' a preacher. W'en my old Mistis heard what I was doin', she sent for me an' give me 'vise-ment an' some simple-like books I could under-stan', an' she hed me learn the Catychism, an' that *was* a hard nut fo' my teeth, but pow'ful nourishin' to my 'sperience; an' once or twict a year I goes an' has a talk with Miss Kitty. I has reg'lar preachin' some mo' an' some less, an' the members 'haves themselves righteously; but it's 'mong the chillun I has the most 'cess. I kin sing; that was one reason I hed 'em to mind w'en I was a little shaver. I loves 'em; I has hopes fo' 'em, an' I'se gone 'bout 'stablish-in' Sunday-schools, an' mekkin' their folkses send 'em to day schools an' fetch 'em up de-cent; an' I has had good 'cess 'mong the chil-lun. The Lord nebber gibe me any fo' my own,

but I've helped a heap ob 'em to grow up Christian laik. Why, I can't bear to hear a chile cry, or see it 'glected. It was readin' how tender laik the Lord was to chillun fust drawed me to him w'en I was little. He took them in his arms; he blessed 'em; he set 'em in the midst; he watched their playin' in the street. The chillun took to him, which proves he was kind an' quiet an' 'couragin' laik, fo' chillun don't take to no rampagious people. Yes, that's what fust drawed me clost to my Lord."

There was a little space of profound silence as old Zeke made this simple, earnest confession of his Master. The gracious Galilean had been suddenly set before the little group of men, some of whom had not found him in all their thoughts.

"I've bin to see Miss Kitty jes' now," said Zeke, who could not remain long silent. "She's eighty, an' as peart an' smilin' as ever; but she's sufferin' onmerciful with rheum'tism. I sez when I come away, 'Well, Mistis, I hopes yo' patience won't break down laik Job's did.' "

"And how did Job's break down, Uncle Zeke?" asked the pleasant voice.

"Yo's a preacher, ain't yo'?" said Zeke. "I thought so. Ain't that a Bible in yo' pocket?"

"A New Testament."

"Oh, then it ain't got the book o' Job in it. I'm pow'ful fond o' the book o' Job. Now, I venture to say they ain' a whole Bible in this car."

"Yes, there is," said somebody, "in my valise."

"I got the Psalms h'yar," said Zeke. "But my whole Bible is too bulky fo' me to kerry roun'. I has big print, on count ob my eyes. Well, now, concernin' Job, he held out pretty well, but his patience give down, an' he got furder under than mos' men. I don't consider that ere a person on this train ebber got so fur down in their 'sperience as to curse their day—an' mo'n that, to go 'way back furder than the day they was bo'n an' do some mo' cursin', no, sah."

Here I, listening in the next car, could not repress a smile as I thought that, except Uncle Zeke, probably every grown person on the train had been heartily "as low down in their 'sperience as Job" more times than one. Also, I thought of the old man's staunch, cheery, pa-

tient spirit, who in a long life of poverty and hard work had never gone so low down as to "curse his day."

"But the New Testament approves Job for what?" asked the man who owned a Bible.

" 'Pears to me 'cause tho' his patience done wore out with his losin' all, 'specially his chillun, an' havin' sickness, an' his friends bein' so onsensible, Job held fast his faith in God an' would not charge God foolishly. He stuck to it, God had the rights of it. Job say, 'Shall I get good an' not evil?' Job didn't go to dictatin' to God what to send him. No more we oughtn't to, for de Lord's kin' an' wise, an' he deals with us fo' our soul's good, an' byme-by we'll see the rights of it."

The train started. The door swung to. An hour later, when we reached our station, the men in their car were still discussing religion. That one plain, humble old Christian had interested all the others in a talk about God and his dealings; the tide of vain or evil conversation had been stemmed, and simply and easily the thoughts of all those travellers had been set heavenward.

THE END.