# THE ANGEL FAIRY

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# ANGEL FAIRY:

## MARGERY'S CITY HOME.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THY KINGDOM COME."

"Thy Will be done as it is in Heaven."

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# THE ANGEL FAIRY.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE FAIRY IN TROUBLE.

"WHAT a risk for such a child to run!" said a gentleman to himself, as, riding in an omnibus, he noticed a little girl who ran from the footpath and sprang upon the step of the stage.

The next moment he saw the lash of the driver's whip quivering in the air.

"Stop! stop! it is a girl!" he cried out, quickly.

Perhaps the driver did not hear the loud call; at any rate he did not heed it. The heavy lash cut across her thinly-clad shoulders, and the door, flung open, struck

her in the back, and threw her violently to the ground.

The gentleman sprang out of the omnibus, and a tall policeman came quickly from the side-walk, for the street was thronged with vehicles, and the child lay motionless among the crowding carriages and carts. A number of people gathered around, jostling and pushing one another, to see what was the cause of the excitement; so that when the policeman, having lifted the little girl in his arms, turned to go back to the footpath, he could scarcely force his way.

"Stand back, there!" he shouted in a loud voice. "Give the girl air!"

The crowd swayed as the clear tone of command rang out, but in a moment it had drawn together again; and it was only by dint of thrusting one aside here, and elbowing another back there, that he succeeded in struggling through with his burden.

"Can I help you?" asked a voice; and, looking up, the policeman saw the gentleman whom he had seen descending from the omnibus.

As he spoke the lips of the child moved;

and as if she thought that he had addressed her, she said, feebly:

"My basket, please."

"Had she a basket?"

"I think I saw one go spinning off as she fell," said the officer.

"Please," whispered the pale lips again; "please, my basket. It's got two cakes the lady gave me. I saved them for grandfather's supper;" and a pair of dark-brown eyes were lifted pleadingly to the policeman's face.

He looks across the street, and saw, lying in the gutter on the opposite side, an old basket, crushed and broken by the passing wheels.

"Here, my lad," said he, hailing a boy who was pressing toward the inner edge of the ring which encircled him, "fetch that basket, will you?"

"Ay, ay, sir!" said the boy; and the next moment, dodging between horses, drays, and carriages, he had seized it and brought it to its owner.

"Where's the cakes?" she asked, in the same feeble whisper.

"They're all right," said the boy, peep-

ing under the cover. They've all got into one corner, and the wheels ain't touched them. Hallo! he exclaimed, as he caught a view of the face resting on the officer's strong arm; "if it ain't Old Peter's little fairy!"

"Do you know her?" asked the policeman, noticing that the child's eyes had closed, and that the boy's loud recognition had passed unheeded.

"I should think so. She lives in our house, in the basement. Oh, my! won't old Peter be in a way, though? He sets a heap by that young one. Is she very badly hurt?"

"No. She's more frightened than hurt, I think. Where does she live?"

"Come on, and I'll show you. It's only a bit from here, in Wooster Street. But it's up a dark alley, and I doubt you wouldn't find it alone."

The policeman smiled at the idea that he could fail to find any house so near his beat, but he only said, "Come, then," and walked off with his light burden; while the boy slung over his shoulder the shoeblack's foot-rest which he had carried in

his hand, and tramped along beside him, very proud of his position.

As the officer moved away, the gentleman who had spoken to him before said:

"The child looks very poor. If you find her parents in want you may send them to me;" and he slipped a card, with his name and address on it, into his hand.

"Very well, sir."

"This is the place," said the boy, pausing at the entrance to a damp court.

Two or three children, who stood there, drew back and gazed in awe-struck silence at the tall policeman carrying their playmate in his arms. As he turned into the alley, and walked rapidly toward the house, they followed, keeping pace as best they could with his long strides.

"I think that you'll find the key in her pocket," said the boy. "She always carries it with her; and the door is locked."

"Here it is," said the officer, thrusting his great fingers into the tiny pocket and drawing out the key. "But are there none of her people at home?"

"She ain't got no people, only old Peter!"

"Who is old Peter?"

"Her grand-daddy."

"Hasn't she a mother?"

"No, nor sister, nor nothin', only the old man."

"Then who takes care of her? Who has tided up this place so neatly?"

They had entered the room. The policeman had laid the child upon the bed, and now stood looking around with a troubled air. The small room was as clean as hands could make it. The bare floor had been nicely swept, the scanty furniture dusted, and set in its place; and the few articles of glass and crockery in the open cupboard shone with hard rubbing.

"'Tis herself did it—the little one there. She is but nine years old, but she's the finest house-woman ever you saw. She's taken care of the old man for a year back."

"Well, she must have some one to take care of her now. I am afraid she is hurt more than I thought."

"I'll call Mrs. Conroy, she'll see to her. Hallo, there, Mrs. Conroy!" he shouted, standing at the foot of the stairs.

"What's wanted, Ned?" asked a voice in a rich Irish brogue.

"You're wanted, Mrs. Conroy," replied the boy. "Margie's got hurted, and a policeman's fetched her home."

"What's come to the child?" said Mrs. Conroy, a pleasant, round-faced Irishwoman, hurrying into the room, and bending over Margery with a frightened look. "How did this happen?"

"She fell off the steps of an omnibus," said the policeman. "I thought at first that she was only badly frightened, but I begin to think that I had better take her to the hospital, especially as there seems to be no one to look after her here."

"No, no," said the woman, "don't take her there; 'twould break the grandfather's heart to be parted from her—so it would. She's fallen into a kind of faint; we'll bring her to, I'm thinking. There ain't no bones broke."

She had been carefully feeling the child's limbs, and now, sending Ned for some water, she began to bathe the white face upon the pillow.

"There, then, Margie dear, what was

it?" she said, tenderly, as the long lashes began to tremble on her cheek. "What was it hurt you, poor lamb?"

"My basket—my cakes," she whispered, trying to raise herself.

"Lie still now, there's a dear."

"Your cakes are safe," said the police man; and lifting the crushed basket from the floor where the boy had dropped it, he laid it on the bed beside her. "The basket is broken, but the cakes are all right."

"They're for grandfather's supper," said Margie, looking at Mrs. Conroy.

"Yes, dear. He'll get them. Where are you hurt, Margie?"

"I don't know, but I feel so queer."

"How quare, darlin'? tell Mother Conroy. It is your head it is?"

"No; it's my back. *Oh!*" and she gave a sharp cry of pain as the woman touched her.

"I'll go up to the dispensary and send you a doctor. He can tell whether it is necessary for her to go to an hospital or not," said the policeman. "Can you stay with her for a while?"

"I can so. We 'll see to her betwixt us. The old man 'll never listen to takin' her away. She 's the very light of his eyes; he 'll never hearken to it a ha'porth."

"Well, I will send some one to her; and I 'll call in myself in the evening, and see how she 's coming on. Good-bye, little one."

"Good-bye, Mister Policeman. It was good of you to carry me home," said Margie, as he left the room.

Half-an-hour after, to Mrs. Conroy's surprise, the dispensary physician came in. It was not often, as she knew by experience, that a call for help was so quickly responded to; for where hundreds are needing immediate assistance, the last comer seldom obtains a speedy answer. But the kind-hearted policeman had interested the doctor so much by his story that the little girl was the first patient he visited.

He looked very grave when he saw her, and graver still when she told him that she felt very tired.

"And my legs won't move," she said, anxiously.

When he left the room he beckoned Mrs. Conroy to follow him.

"You think she's very bad doctor?" said she.

"Yes. I am afraid she is crippled."

"Crippled is it? Not for the life, sir? don't be tellin' me that."

"I fear so. I will come in again to-night. In the meantime be careful to do just as I told you about the medicine; and don't tell the child how much she is injured."

"What did the doctor say, Mrs. Conroy?" asked Margie, as the woman re-entered the room.

"Oh, he didn't say nothin', dear! only told me to give you the physic, and to rub your poor back."

"Yes, he did say something more," said Margie, confidently. "It isn't right to tell a story, Mrs. Conroy."

"Now, never you mind, Margie. Just lie down, and go you to sleep. Then you'll waken a deal better, perhaps."

"I'll have to know sometime," said the child, looking up with a very wise, old expression on her young face. "You might just as well tell me now."

"Faith, but you're as old-fashioned a little thing as ever I saw. Well, then, he did say as may be you might be a bit lame for a week or so. But you needn't mind that; we'll take care of you."

"Oh, dear! and who'll mind my house?" said Margery.

"Don't you trouble your head about that, darlin'. Rosy and me'll see to the house. We'll see the old man gets a pick at somethin' to eat, and a cup of tay, too."

Mrs. Conroy tried to laugh, but the attempt was feeble, for her kindly heart was filled with pity for the crippled child, worrying already, at nine years old, with the cares and anxieties of a woman.

"The house," a room fourteen feet by sixteen, weighed heavily upon her mind now that she felt herself useless. But in a moment her thoughts turned to an object far dearer.

"And grandfather's cakes; you won't forget them, Mrs. Conroy?"

"What cakes, then, dear? I heard the policeman discoursin' about cakes, but I didn't see them. Will they be in the basket?"

"Yes. A lady in the street gave them to me, and I saved them for my grandfather."

"He 'll get them, honey. Now I 'll send Rosa to bide with you; and you 'll just take a sleep, while I see to my man's dinner."

She smoothed the pillow beneath her head, and left her. The child lay for a while looking listlessly around the dreary room, and finally sank into a deep slumber.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE DOCTOR'S VISIT.

ABOUT seven o'clock that evening old Peter Bray came walking slowly up the street, carrying on his shoulders a large placard, on which was printed, in huge, red letters, the word "BEST." He was one of six old men who carried these placards, advertising "Smith's best coffee, for family use," and the word which fell to Peter was "Best."

As he toiled on, wearied with his long tramp up and down the street since early morning, it made his heart glad to think of the little girl whom he hoped soon to see springing and dancing to meet him. He thought of her as he had seen her that morning, running about nimbly on her bare feet, preparing his breakfast, putting the kettle on the fire which he had

kindled, spreading the table, and making the tea with all the gravity of a grown woman. She was a treasure to him, this delicate child of nine years old. They were a strange pair to be left solitary, save for each other, in the world. An old man of over eighty linked to a child of nine years.

But he had reached the entrance to the alley, and no Margery had come tripping out to meet him. He looked up and down the street before he entered the court, but not seeing her, went in.

"I say, old Peter, your gal's been brought home by a policeman!" shouted a voice from one of the upper windows of the tenement.

The old man glanced up anxiously, but seeing only a boy who made a daily practice of teasing and annoying him, passed on without noticing what he said.

"Where's the fairy?" he asked in a voice that quivered with age and weakness, as he opened the door of his room.

It was a pretty name for her. Slight and fragile, yet full of life and energy, bright and merry as a bird, she seemed to

this fond old man like something different from all other children, and he always called her by this pet name.

"Where's my angel fairy?" he repeated, receiving no answer.

The next moment he had placed his big board against the wall, and hurrying across the room as fast as his trembling limbs could carry him, bent over the bed and gazed in frightened wonder at the child.

She was sleeping heavily. Her face was very pale, and her forehead drawn as if in pain.

He had last seen her standing at the entrance to the alley, where she had gone with him to give him a last kiss. "To make him strong for his long walk," she had said. He had looked back at her as she stood there, her brown hair floating in the wind, her face rosy with the cold morning air, poised on one foot, and with her hand on either wall to support herself, as she leaned out to catch the last glimpse of him. She had looked so bright and beautiful to those dim old eyes. And now, what could ail her, lying here alone, in evident suffering?"

Just then the door behind him opened, and Mrs. Conroy came in.

"Ah, Peter Bray, it's yourself, then, is it?" she said, in a whisper. "Margie's got hurted a bit. Don't you be afeard now. She'll be better by-and-by."

And then she told him all that she knew of Margery's accident, trying to make as light of it as she could.

"Don't you be frettin'," she said kindly. "Just you go to my room and get your bit and sup, while I stop with Margie. My man is takin' his supper now, go you up and help him."

But Peter would not leave the child, so she brought a cup of tea and some bread and bacon down to him.

"Come, now, sit down and pick a bit," said she, placing the plate on the table. "It won't do to lave eatin', you know, Mr. Bray. If the little one should get bad, she'll need you to take care of her. You must keep up your strength for her sake."

So he sat down at the table and tried to obey, but he could not eat; the bread seemed to choke him, and even Margery's cakes, which Mrs. Conroy placed beside

him, failed to tempt him. He drank the tea, but rose from the table having scarcely tasted the food; and she saw that it was useless to press him.

"Well," she said in her cheery, pleasant voice, "I 'll be goin' my ways. There 's the young ones to put to their beds, and the father to see to. If you 're wantin' me you 'll just call me, will you?"

Peter sat beside the bed to watch the child, but at that moment a knock on the door roused her, and when her grandfather said "Come in," a gentleman entered.

"It 's the doctor," said Margery, trying to raise herself.

"Lie still, lie still," said he, coming toward her. "Good evening," with a bow, to the old man. "Is this the little girl's grandfather whom the woman up-stairs mentioned?"

"Yes, sir. Is she very bad, sir?"

"Oh, she 'll do," said the doctor, lightly, with a look at Peter, which Margery understood more quickly than he.

"You needn't be afraid to tell before me," she said, earnestly. "Please to let me know if I am going to be lame."

"You want to know all about it, eh? I am afraid that you may be lame for some time; but we'll see about that. How do you feel?"

"I've had a long sleep, and I feel as if my feet were lost."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I don't know how to say it; but it seems as if they weren't anywhere."

The doctor slipped his hand beneath the cover, which had been thrown over her, and laid it heavily on her slender ankles.

"Does that hurt you?"

"Does what hurt me?" asked Margery.

"My hand on your feet;" and he pressed more firmly upon them.

"It isn't there."

"Yes it is. See,"—and throwing back the coverlet he showed his strong hand bearing with all its power upon her bare ankles.

"No, it doesn't hurt me; I don't feel it at all."

A half-sob choked her voice as she spoke; she was growing frightened. But she caught a glimpse of her grandfather's

startled face, and laying her hand on his, as it rested on the bed, she said, hopefully:

"Never mind, grandfather. He says it's only for a while."

"That's a good girl!" said the doctor. "Does your back ache very badly?"

"Yes, it does ache, a good deal."

"Mrs. Conroy must bathe it with that liniment. I will come to see you to-morrow. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Margery, cheerfully.

But when her grandfather had followed the doctor from the room she struggled up on her elbow, although the movement gave her great pain, and, bending forward, listened eagerly.

"I am afraid that she will never walk again. I think that her limbs are paralyzed," said the doctor.

Margery did not understand the last sentence, but she understood the first, and her heart sank within her. But her grandfather was coming; he must not see her look sad. She smiled at him as he came in, and he tried to smile back, but it would not do; and the old man, weaker than the

sick child, laid his head down upon the bed with a groan.

"Poor grandfather!"

The little hand stroked his white hair softly; then it stole down to pat his wrinkled face.

"Poor grandfather!"

When she said it the second time, he raised his head and tried to speak.

"Don't tell me, grandfather; I know I can't be your little woman any more."

"Oh, my Margery!" he said, "my fairy! You will never dance in the sunlight again."

"No, grandfather; but we won't be afraid. The good God will look after us. He was very kind not to let me be killed to-day. He didn't take your Margery away. He let me live; not to take care of you any more," her voice quivered, in spite of herself, at the thought of relinquishing that precious duty, "but to love you, and for you to love. Don't cry, dear grandfather. See, I don't cry. You know Jesus told us to say, 'Thy will be done.'"

His manhood, worn-out and feeble as it was, was shamed by her courage. He lifted

himself up, and tried to force down his sorrow out of her sight, into the depths of his own heart.

"No, my Angel Fairy," he said, as soon as he could speak, "you need not cry. You are a brave girl. And we will trust in the goodness of the Lord. He has always taken care of us before, and he will now. But, oh, why should he send us this?"

"There's the reason, grandfather."

She pointed to the placard which fronted her, as it leaned against the wall where he had placed it when he came in. His eyes followed the pointing finger.

"B E S T."

"It was best, or God wouldn't have allowed it to happen. That is what my teacher said last Sunday. Oh, I can't go to the Sunday-school any more!"

The thought broke her down. Her womanly fortitude gave way, and clinging to him she sobbed, and sobbed, the more violently for the restraint which she had before put upon herself.

She was but a little child after all. Placed by God's hand in a position of authority rather than of dependence, the

support rather than the charge of this feeble old man, her powers of endurance and her self-reliance had been strangely developed: but she was, after all, only a little child. And so she lay there in her grandfather's arms, crying as if her heart would break, until, perfectly exhausted, she fell asleep.

By-and-by he laid her upon the pillow, and stretched himself upon the floor beside her. His heart was heavy;—they were very poor, his scanty earnings being their sole dependence; and Margery must have medicines, and nourishing food. But after a while her words came to his mind—"God will look after us;" and as he thought on them his weary eyes closed, and the old man and the little child, alike weak and helpless, slept side by side.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE SOLDIER'S MESSAGE.

IT was the day after Margery's accident. She had been alone since her grandfather went out after breakfast. Mrs. Conroy had come in early in the morning to put things to rights for her, but then she had gone out to work, and had not yet returned. Rosy had peeped in at her when she came from school, but she had not stayed long, and the time had passed very wearily for Margery.

Her grandfather had left her very unwillingly; but he knew that he should lose his place if he were absent even for a day, and he dared not run such a risk. The long hours had been very tedious to him, too, as he walked up and down the crowded streets, thinking of the lonely child at home,

and many a kind heart was touched by the look of patient sadness in the old man's face, and more than one generous hand slipped money into his palm that morning.

By-and-by, as Margery lay listening for her grandfather's tread in the yard, she thought she heard it, and she lifted her head so that she might catch it more easily. There was a step coming up the alley, but it was too firm and strong for Peter Bray. It came nearer, sprang down the two or three wooden stairs which led to the basement door, crossed the narrow entry, and then some one knocked at her door.

"Come in," said Margery, wondering who it could be.

Who should it be but her friend of the day before; the policeman who had carried her home!

"Well, how are you coming on here, Margery?" he asked, as he came forward to take the hand eagerly stretched towards him. "Does the doctor think that you are much hurt?"

"He says I'll never walk again," said Margery. "He told me what was the

reason, but I couldn't understand the words; only he meant that I'd lose the use of my legs. I will never be able to move them any more."

The burst of sorrow and distress which had shaken her the night before was past. She spoke as quietly as the doctor had done when, in answer to her earnest inquiries that morning, he had told her the whole truth. The policeman looked at her in wonder. This little child taking up the burden of life with such strong resolution and patience was a riddle to him.

"You take it very easy," he said.

"I felt very sorry at first," said Margery. "But it was the good God let it happen. If it hadn't been best for me to be lame, he would have kept me well."

"Who taught you that lesson?"

"My Sunday-school teacher, and my father."

"Where is your father?"

"He is dead."

Margery's voice fell very low as she said those words. She paused a moment, then went on:

"He was a soldier. He was wounded at

the war, and died a few days after. Here is what he sent me."

She put her hand beneath her pillow and drew out a pocket-book, worn and stained.

"That is his," she said, taking from it a Maltese cross. "He sent it to me by another soldier; and he sent this bit of paper. He was dying when he wrote it, and so it is hard to read; but grandfather and I spelt it out, and now I can say it by heart—'Good-bye, my little Margie. Take care of grandfather, and cling close to your Saviour.'"

"He must have been a good father," said the policeman.

"Yes; he was the best father. We cried very hard, grandfather and I, when he went away. I was only eight years old then. Look there, what he painted for me. He was a painter, and he made me a great many pictures; but I like that best of all."

She pointed to a picture hanging on the wall. Two flags crossed, and floating above them a white banner with a cross upon it.

"When he went away he lifted me up in his arms and let me hang that picture up

in our other house—we didn't live here then—and he said, 'Margie, stand fast by the flag, and by the only banner which must ever float above it.'"

There was a sound of a shuffling step in the yard, and the sad look on Margery's face changed in an instant.

"There's my grandfather!" she said, joyously.

Peter Bray paused at the door, looking in surprise at the unknown visitor.

"This is the policeman who brought me home yesterday, grandfather. But I don't know your name," she added, turning to her new friend.

"My name is John Hardy," he said, smiling, as he rose to shake hands with Peter Bray. "You have a smart little granddaughter here, sir."

"Yes, yes, she's a good child; but she's in a pretty bad way now. How have you passed the day, Fairy?"

"Pretty well, but it was very long," said Margery. "I wanted to get up and sweep the floor, and get your supper."

"Do you do all that?" asked John Hardy. "Such a little thing as you are?"

"Indeed she does," replied the grandfather. "She has done it for a year past, and she is but nine years old."

"She tells me that she has lost her father," said the policeman, gently.

"Yes, sir, that's true. He was the last I had, and the Lord called him away, too. Not ten years ago I had four likely sons; but they've all been called home before the old father. And now this new sorrow has come to me, and the only little one is laid by. Ah, you should have seen her when she was herself—the sprightliest, merriest child on God's earth; and the best worker too. Why she'd be up in the morning early, and before seven o'clock she'd have the floor swept and the room cleaned up as neat as a new pin. By nine she'd have the breakfast cleared away and herself nice and ready for school. And when I'd come home of an evening, here she'd sit with her book or her bit of sewing, the table spread for our supper, and the kettle on the fire, waiting for me. I call her my fairy, for she's a marvel to me; so small and slight, yet so full of strength and wit for her years. Ah, that's what she was;

but she's broke down now. God help her!"

"Don't fret, grandfather; don't fret." She spoke soothingly, as if he had been the child and she the parent. "We shall do very nicely."

"Did your son leave you very poor?" asked Hardy, thinking of the card which had been intrusted to him."

"He left us a small sum, and expected to be able to send us more; but he was killed in his first battle, and I was robbed of what little was due him. The day I drew it I was very tired, and, coming home in the omnibus, I fell asleep, and when I awoke my money was gone. Then I fell sick. What with the grief, and the loss of my son and the money, I gave way; and this child nursed me through months of illness. When I got well, the money my boy had left us all went for doctor's pay and medicines. We had to leave the rooms where we had lived while he was with us, and a kind friend of mine, who owns this house, lets us live here rent free. If it had not been for him we would have to go to the poor-house; for I could never

earn enough to pay even a small rent. 'Tis all I can do to keep us in food."

"You have had a hard time of it," said the visitor. "Perhaps I can help you. A gentleman in the street gave me this card yesterday, and told me that if you were in want you might apply to him."

He took out the card; but Peter Bray drew back, and his face flushed, as he said:

"I have never come to that yet, and I never will, if I can help it. I live here, paying no rent. Of course, that is charity, and may God reward him who shelters me and my child; but I have never begged. Keep the card, Mr. Hardy; we will try to fight it out yet, without asking any help but God's."

There was a something grand in the old man's look and manner, as he refused the offered aid, which touched Hardy with admiration.

"Well, you know where to find it, if you make up your mind to use it," he said, replacing the card in his pocket-book. "Now, I must say good-night. I shall come in again, little one—may I?"

"Oh yes; please do!" said Margie.

John Hardy went out, wondering how it was that such a feeble pair should be so ready to do battle with the world, asking no aid from any human power. He did not know, because he had never felt it himself, that there is a strength which is strongest in our weakness—that strength which God gives to his people in the time of their need.

He was a kind-hearted, easy-tempered man; the world had always been a pleasant place for him; and, strong in his young manhood, he had never felt the need of higher strength. It seemed to him, as he looked at Margery lying there helpless, with no one to care for her but that old man, himself almost as weak as she, that the child's heart must sink within her at the thought of what lay before them; yet she had not seemed to fear.

She had said, "Don't fret, grandfather," in a cheerful voice, as if she had not the smallest dread of the future.

And it was not childish thoughtlessness which prevented her from seeing and feeling the truth. She was too old and wise

in all her ways to allow him to suppose that. No, she saw distinctly all that her life promised of poverty and hardship, and yet, child as she was, she did not fear to meet it. The more he thought of it, the more he wondered. John Hardy the strong policeman, the stalwart man of the great city, had a lesson yet to learn from Peter Bray's crippled little angel fairy.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A FRIEND FOUND.

WITH a very thoughtful look on his face the policeman walked down the street, trying to make up his mind how he could best aid this strange couple, in whom he had become so suddenly interested. By-and-by he took the card from his pocket again, glanced at it, and then, changing his pace from a slow, deliberating walk, to a quick determined step, he passed through the narrow, dirty street, and turned toward the more respectable part of the city.

Half-an-hour after he was ringing the door-bell of a handsome house in a fashionable street.

"Is Mr. Raymond in?" he asked of the servant who opened the door.

Just as he put the question, a gentleman

came toward them from a room which opened from the hall. He looked curiously at the man, who, recognizing him at once, had stepped forward.

"Ah," said he, as the light from the hall-lamp fell on John Hardy's face; "I know you now: you are the policeman to whom I gave my card yesterday. Come in."

He led him into the room which he had just left. It was a cozy, pleasant place, lighted by a great fire blazing brightly. A young lady, who was sitting in an arm-chair in the glow of the dancing flames, rose to leave the room as they entered.

"Don't go, Lily," said Mr. Raymond. "This is the policeman who took care of that little girl of whom I was telling you yesterday. I suppose," he added, turning to him, "that they have sent you to me for help. Is the child much hurt?"

"Yes, sir; the doctor says that she is crippled. Her spine is badly injured by the blow she received from the door of the omnibus. But, although I have come to you for help, I must not let you think that they have asked it. The child lives alone

with her grandfather, who is her only relative. The old man earns a few shillings a-week by carrying advertising-boards in the streets. That is all they have to depend upon, even now, when the child is sick, and needs—the doctor says—strong nourishment. But I have called on you, Mr. Raymond, on my own responsibility. They scorn the idea of begging; but, if they are not assisted, it seems to me they will starve. So I was bold enough to take the matter into my own hands, sir."

"I am glad you did so," said Mr. Raymond, pleased by his visitor's frank, hearty manner. "Where do these people live, and what is their name?"

"Their name is Bray, and they live in Stanley Street."

"Why, father," exclaimed the young lady, who had been listening attentively to John's urging of his cause; "can that be my Margery Bray? She lives in Stanley Street."

"Her name is Margery, ma'am," said John. "She is a small, slightly-made child, nine years old."

"It must be the same," said Miss Raymond. "She is in my Sunday-school class. The poor child! I will go to see her at once. Father, can you take me there now?"

"Not to-night, Lily. You could do her no good by going this evening, We will see her in the morning. It is strange that she should turn out to be one of your scholars. If they need help to-night," he said, turning to the policeman, "I can send them assistance. Are you going that way?"

"Yes, sir, I must return to that neighbourhood; but I do not think it necessary to do anything before morning, and I should much prefer that you should satisfy yourself of the truth of my story before you trust me with your charity. You have nothing but my word to depend upon, you know, sir."

"Yes, I know that," said Mr. Raymond, smiling. "But I am not afraid that my money would be lost if I did place it in your hands."

"Thank you, sir," replied Hardy, colouring with pleasure; "I am glad to have

gained your confidence: but, if I may say so, I think it would be better for the young lady to see the child. I would not like to have them know that I spoke to you, and it would seem quite natural that Margery's Sunday-school teacher should interest herself in her. I should be glad to help them myself, but my wages will not allow me to do much, as I have already my mother and six young brothers and sisters to support."

"You have done quite right in coming to me," said Mr. Raymond. "I will take care that they do not hear of your visit, if you say so. We will see in the morning that the child is made comfortable."

"I feel that I ought to thank you personally for attending to my scholar," said the young lady, coming forward and taking the honest policeman's hard hand. "You have been very kind."

"I've done nothing but my duty, ma'am," said John, "I couldn't leave the little thing to die for want of proper food and care."

"We will see that she has both," said Miss Raymond.

Then John Hardy bade them good-night, and went out.

"What an open, honest face that man has!" said Miss Raymond, when she and her father were alone.

"Yes; he laughed at my willingness to trust a stranger. I suppose that a policeman learns too much for that; but I could not help confiding in that manly, trusty look of his."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER.

IT seemed as if a flood of sunlight had rushed into Margery's room the next morning, when, hearing a knock on her door, she said, "Come in," and Miss Raymond entered. Never was a little girl more glad to welcome any friend.

"Oh, my dear Miss Raymond!" she said; oh, I'm so very glad to see you!"

"And so you are sick, Margery! I am sorry to see you lying here," said the lady, placing a basket which she had carried in her hand upon the table, and seating herself by the bedside.

"How did you find out about it?" asked Margery.

"My father was in the omnibus from which you fell, and when we were talking

of it last night, I discovered that the little girl whom he had seen hurt was my Margery. And I thought that she would like to see me. Was I right?"

"You know you were right," said Margery, looking up lovingly into the sweet face which bent over her.

"And now, I want to know how much you are hurt, and all about it."

"I'm very badly hurt, Miss Raymond. The doctor says I'll never walk any more. I wouldn't mind it so very much, if it wasn't for my grandfather; but what am I going to do with him?"

"You must not trouble yourself about that, dear. He will be taken care of. The good Father knows what is best for us all. This is a very hard trial for you; but I am sure that my Margery knows that it must be best for her, or God would not have sent it."

"Yes, I do know that Miss Raymond; and yet it seems so strange. When grandfather is so old and so weak, how can it be good for him to take away all the help he's got? How can it be good for me to be a burden, instead of a comfort to him.

Sometimes, when I shut up my eyes and don't look at poor old grandfather, and the lonely room, nor at myself lying here, I don't feel so afraid to think; but, oh, I have to shut them very, very tight. If I get even a little peep at grandfather when he isn't looking at me, it frightens me to think of what will become of him."

"But, Margie, that is not trusting God, dear. God loves your grandfather even better than you do. We must not feel, because we cannot understand him, that he does not understand us. Don't you remember, in our lesson last Sunday, that verse in which it said, after telling how Lazarus' sisters had sent for the Saviour, 'Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus; when he had heard, therefore, that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was;' as if his love for them was the very reason of his apparent neglect of their prayer? I suppose poor Mary and Martha thought this very strange; but the Saviour was not ready to answer their prayer just then. He wanted to show the unbelieving Jews his great power; and so he let Lazarus die,

that by dying he might be the means of bringing glory and honour to the Saviour's name. Perhaps, Margery, Jesus means that this heavy trial of yours shall glorify him; perhaps he loves you so much that he has laid you down upon this weary bed, in order that you may do something for him. Would not that be a great joy for you?"

For a moment the child lay quiet, awed by the solemn thought; then she said softly:

"Miss Raymond, am I not too little?"

"No; no one is too small to serve the Saviour, if he chooses to use one. Why, Margery, you might be a missionary in this dark alley. You could teach every child here about the Lord Jesus. You will have more influence now, lying weak and helpless, than you could possibly have had if you had remained well and strong. Perhaps, dear, this is just what the Master has laid you down here for."

"Perhaps it is," said Margery, in a very grave tone. "Miss Raymond, I'm sorry I asked him to let me get well if he don't want me to. Last night I was pretty con-

tented, but this morning I felt very sorry about it when I saw poor grandfather getting his own breakfast, and I asked Jesus very hard to let me get well; oh, I asked him very, very hard. Was that bad of me?"

"No, dear. We must ask him for all we want, but still, we must try to say, 'God's will be done!' Can you say that, Margery?"

"Yes, I can now. Oh, Miss Raymond, I'd be so glad if the dear Saviour would let me be his missionary. Do you really think he will?"

"Yes; I am sure he will. And now, will you try to remember, when you begin to feel troubled and anxious, that Jesus has placed you here because he needs to have you in this very place; and that if he takes away one help from your grandfather, he will be sure to give him another; that he knows what is best for him as well as for you?"

"Yes, ma'am, I will try," said Margery, hopefully.

"And now we must see what is in this basket," said Miss Raymond. "Isn't it time for you to be hungry?"

"Oh no, ma'am; not till noon."

"What did you have for breakfast?"

"I didn't want anything then, ma'am."

"Then I should say it was time for you to be hungry. Now, I am going to play at keeping house with you. You are to be my mistress, and I am to be your servant, and cook your dinner. Please, ma'am, where shall I find a plate?"

"In that cupboard, ma'am," said Margery, with a shy laugh.

"You must not say 'ma'am,' to your cook, Mrs. Bray. Ah! here are the plates."

"I'm afraid," said Margery, apologetically, "that you won't find them very clean. Rosa Conroy washed them, and she is such a careless child. She broke a plate and a cup this morning. I'm afraid she'll be a great cost to me if she doesn't learn to be careful."

Miss Raymond could not help smiling. Rosa Conroy was in her Sunday-school class also, and she knew that she was quite as old, if not older, than Margery.

"Well, Mrs. Bray," she said, "I'll wash the dishes this time, and I promise not to

break anything. Now, I want a bowl, ma'am."

So Margery told her where to find one, laughing now merrily enough, to show that, wise and thoughtful as she was, she could enjoy a joke as well as any other child.

When Miss Raymond had reached down the bowl from the shelf, she took out of her basket a bottle, nicely cased in wicker-work, the contents of which she poured into a tin cup, which she placed on the stove. Then she took out some thin, crisp biscuits, which she put on the plate.

"I 'll have your dinner ready in a moment, Mrs. Bray," she said, as she stirred the liquid in the cup. "It will be hot very soon."

When it was ready, she brought it to the bed, first spreading a white napkin on the cover.

"Do you like beef-tea, Margery?" she asked, as she placed the bowl beside her.

"I don't know, ma'am. I never tasted it."

"Then try it now. Wait a moment, and I will feed you."

She put one arm around her, and raised

her up. The nice hot beef-tea and the biscuits tasted very good, for the little girl had scarcely eaten anything since her accident. Bread and bacon did not tempt her weak appetite, and her grandfather had nothing better to give her.

"There, Mrs. Bray," said Miss Raymond, as she laid her back upon the pillow, "I think that you will feel better now. If I bring or send you another pot of soup to-morrow, will you promise to eat it all, as you have done to-day?"

"Oh, Miss Raymond, it is too much trouble for you. This is plenty; I don't think I'll want any more to-morrow."

"I don't think you know anything about it, Mrs. Bray. Here is a form of jelly, which you must eat. This is medicine; it doesn't taste very badly, but it will make you stronger."

Margery looked into her face, with her brown eyes full of tears.

"What a dear, good teacher you are!" she said, tremulously,

"Am I? I am very glad you think so. There comes my father up the alley. He said that he should come back in an hour

for me; so I must go. Come in, father," she said, opening the door for him. "This is Margery."

"I am very sorry to see you so ill, my little girl," said the gentleman, bending over her.

"Oh, don't say you're sorry, sir," said the child. "Miss Raymond says that my Saviour must have laid me here because I could do something for him here that I couldn't do anywhere else. I am not going to be sorry about it any more. And she says he's going to let somebody see to grandfather. But, Miss Raymond ——"

"Well, dear?"

"God has never sent any jelly before, so I don't think he'll send it very soon again, and I'd like grandfather to have this."

"You may give him the half of it, if you will eat the other half."

"That will do. He wouldn't take it all. He never will eat anything good unless I have half, or more."

"Then share it with him. You can play at a tea-party with it. Good-bye; I will try to see you to-morrow."

She kissed her and went out, leaving the

child, whom she had found sorrowful and distressed, full of hope and peace.

She had done very little. One short hour had been spent in the service of this young disciple, yet He who has said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me," saw and accepted the offering. A child's aching heart comforted, a child's tears turned to smiles, a child's wavering faith confirmed and strengthened—she thought but little of it all; but there was One who thought of it, and wrote it in the book of his remembrance, that she might "in no wise lose her reward."

## CHAPTER VI.

### MARGERY'S FIRST EFFORT.

"ROSA," said Margery, the next Saturday morning, when they were alone together in her room, "I want to have a Sunday-school here to-morrow."

Rosa Conroy was standing on a stool by the table, with her chubby arms elbow-deep in a tin basin of suds, in which she was washing the dishes that had been used for breakfast. She turned quickly round, splashing the water all over herself and the table as she did so, and fixing her laughing eyes on Margery's face with a wondering look, said:

"A Sunday-school here! in this room, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"And who 'll be the teacher?"

"I will," said Margery, gravely.

For a moment the blue eyes stared at her in silent amazement; and then, clapping her hands together, Rosa broke into a peal of merry laughter.

"And who 'll you teach?" she asked, as soon as she could speak.

"Any one who 'll come to me. You needn't think it so funny, Rosa, dear. I 'm in earnest."

"But, Margery," said Rosa, somewhat sobered by her seriousness, "you are too little to teach. You don't know how to teach."

"I know that Jesus is our dear Saviour, and I can tell other people that. That is what all Sunday-schools are for. They 're only to teach children to love him. I think I can do that if he will help me, and I 'd like to try. Will you help too?"

"Oh, I couldn't teach nobody," said Rosa, her eyes twinkling again at the thought. "I 'm all the time laughing, you know; I 'd spoil everything."

"But you could get me some scholars. Can't you ask some of the children, who don't go to Sunday-school, to come?"

"Why, Margie, they'd only tease me! Just think how I'd laugh if anybody asked me to go to school to a little girl!"

"If they told you that the little girl was lame, and that she was lonely and wanted some one to talk to, would you laugh then?"

"Oh no; I would go."

"And so would the others. Won't you ask them?"

"Well; maybe I will. Who'll I ask?"

"Your brother Will, and Edward Dolan, and——"

She was going to enumerate several others, but Rosa's look of dismay stopped her.

"Those big boys!" she exclaimed: "they won't come."

"You must coax them, Rosa."

"Oh, I wouldn't like to; they'll make fun. I'll ask some girls."

"I'll tell you what to do," said Margery, whose heart was set on asking Edward Dolan: "you tell the boys that I want to see them to-night, when they come home, I will tell them all about it myself. Will you?"

"Yes; but, Margery, I can't see how you'll teach those big fellows, and you so little."

"I don't know much, but the Lord Jesus knows a great deal, and he'll teach me what to say. The first Sunday I'm going to tell them all about him. I don't mean all the things he did, but just about his own self.

"And how will you say it?" said Rosa. "It's very easy to think of, but it's so hard to tell it. Somehow the words won't come. Often in Sunday-school, when Miss Raymond asks me something I know what she means, and I know what I mean, too, and yet I can't get at it to say it."

"Yes; I feel so too, sometimes," said Margery. "But the Lord Jesus will help me to tell the children about him, because he likes everybody to know. I'll try, anyway. And you won't forget to ask the boys, Rosa?"

"No, I won't forget. But I don't think they'll come," said the unbelieving little Rosa.

"I think Ned will, because I've asked God to make him."

"Does God always do what you ask him?"

"If it's good for me he does; and I think it will be very good to teach Ned to love the Lord Jesus."

Rosa did not answer. She thought that romping, wild Ned Dolan, would not be a very apt scholar; but she did not say so, for fear that it should grieve her friend. She went away, when the dishes were washed and the room set in order, promising to do what she could to win both of the boys.

In the afternoon, she came to Margery in great delight, with the result of her efforts.

"Oh, Margie," she said, "I've got four scholars for you! Three girls and a boy. Will won't come. When I told him, he only said, 'You get along with your nonsense!' But don't let's mind him; we'll have a real nice school without him."

Rosa's success had made her look upon this new idea with very different feelings from those which she had entertained in the morning.

"And Ned? Did you ask him?"

"I saw him just now, but I didn't tell him about the Sunday-school. I only said, 'Ned, Margie wants you to come and see her to-night.' And he said he'd come when he'd washed himself."

"I knew he would," said Margery.

"How did you know?"

"I felt it. This morning after you went away, I was thinking how you said you didn't believe he'd come, and I felt so bad I cried. And all of a sudden somebody seemed to say, 'Margie, if you want to work for your Saviour you mustn't fret because you can't do just as you choose about it. If he wants Ned to come he'll send him.' I didn't cry any more after that, but I've felt as if he'd come to-morrow. Don't you think that God will see it best for Ned to be a good boy, Rosa?"

"Seems as if he would—don't it?" said Rosa, reflectively.

"Yes. But whether he comes or not, we mustn't be disappointed. Whatever happens we'll know it's all right—else God wouldn't have it so."

"Do you think so, Margie? That's

what Miss Raymond says; and, when I'm sitting listening to her, I try to feel so, too. But then, when I see so many strange things, I can't understand it. There's such lots of people who have such hard times. Why does God let there be so much trouble?"

"I can't tell. I don't understand it very good, myself. But I *know* it."

"I like to hear you say that," said Rosa, who had crossed her arms upon the bed, and, with her chin resting upon them, sat gazing into her friend's face. "It seems different from when Miss Raymond says it. She's a grown-up lady, and she knows so much; but you're a little girl like me, and it seems so different when you say it."

She had her hours of thoughtfulness, this merry, careless child—hours when her young brain strove hard to master the perplexing questions which came up before her in her daily life; and this was one of them. Margery's earnestness had infected her. The little cripple had, unconsciously, already begun the work which her Master had allotted to her.

For an hour they talked together—two

young pilgrims on the journey of life, seeking to find out the strait path, and to walk faithfully in it. Perhaps Rosa did not quite know what she sought; but there were in her heart to-night thoughts and feelings which had never stirred it so strongly before—a chaos of half-formed purposes, of indefinite plans, a desire to do and to be something better—while yet the resolution to set about the task was not fully taken. Where all these new feelings and impulses had sprung from she could not have told, but something made her cling with a new fondness and love to Margery.

A veil had been drawn slightly aside. She had had a glimpse of a life higher, nobler, holier than her own, and her innocent heart turned at once toward the new light. One drop from a pure, fresh spring had touched her lips. She did not know that she was thirsting for the water of life; but its cool sweetness refreshed her, and she turned her face toward it. Her feet were not yet firmly planted in the road which leads to the living fountain, but they were tending thitherward.

## CHAPTER VII.

### EDWARD'S VISIT.

EDWARD DOLAN was rather surprised by the invitation which Rosa gave him to visit Margery. He knew the child, having seen her often playing in the street; but, beyond having spoken together a few times, they had no acquaintance with each other. But he had a sort of liking for "the fairy," and so, when Rosa told him that Margery was lonely, and wanted him to go in to see her, he consented readily.

All his life long Edward had been his own master. His parents had died when he was a baby, and the only real friend he had ever known was Mrs. Conroy, or "Mother Conroy," as she was called by half the children in the neighbourhood. She had taken compassion on the lonely orphan,

and had given him many a supper when he would otherwise have gone hungry to bed; and now that he had grown big enough to earn his own bread, the boy still looked to her as his one friend in the broad world.

He was a rough, burly fellow, used to all kinds of hardships, and fully able to take care of himself under any circumstances. His hands were blackened with his coarse work, and his face bronzed by exposure to the weather; but there was a pleasant twinkle in his keen gray eyes, and when he smiled, his whole face seemed to brighten as if a sunbeam had flitted across it.

Margery had liked to meet him as he went out to his day's work, and always had a smile and a pleasant word for him; and when Miss Raymond had suggested to her the idea of trying to do some good to those around her, almost her first thoughts had been of Edward. She had often seen him playing marbles on the Sabbath, or going off on excursions with the other boys, and she knew that he had no one to teach him the lessons of love and holiness which she had taken so joyfully into her own heart.

It was quite dark before she heard his

heavy step in the entry. She had been alone, waiting for some time, having asked her grandfather to go up and sit with Mrs. Conroy, while she tried her little arts of persuasion with the boy; thinking, with her womanly tact, that he would be less likely to resist her if they were alone together.

"I'm so glad to see you, Ned!" she said, when he came. "You didn't mind my asking you to sit with me a while—did you?"

"No," said the boy, "not if you was wantin' me. I thought it queer for you to want a great fellow like me; but if you're pleased, I am."

He felt rather awkward in his new position, and sat, twirling his old, torn hat in his fingers, studying the floor very closely. Margery saw his discomfort, and set herself to the task of placing him at his ease.

"Wasn't it you that told the policeman where I lived, the day I was hurt?" she asked him.

"Yes; I showed him up here."

"It was very kind of you. I hope you

did not lose any money by taking up your time?"

"Oh, no. The gents mostly gets their boots cleaned in the mornin' early. I get more jobs in the mornin' afore ten o'clock than all the day after. To-day's been a pretty good haul."

"How much did you make?"

"A shilling afore half-past nine."

"Oh, what a lot!" exclaimed Margie.

"Yes; I hit on a good spot this mornin'. Seems all the gents wanted to be shined, twelve pair of boots at a penny a pair ain't a bad morning's work. And then I got a few more afore noon. But trade ain't always so good, you know. On a wet day sometimes, now, I don't make nothin'."

His shyness was wearing off already, and soon they were talking together like sister and brother.

"Ned," said Margery, after a while, "will you do me a favour?"

"I wouldn't go for to say no," said the boy; "but I'd like to hear what it might be first."

"I want you to come in here again to-morrow afternoon, at three o'clock."

"That ain't a very great favour. I have no objections to comin', but what makes you so fixed as to the time o' day?"

"I'm going to have a Sunday-school, and I'd like to have you come to it."

"Phew!" Ned gave a long whistle. "Why, that's for small chaps, Margery!" said he. "I'm too big to play at Sunday-school."

"It won't be play at all," said Margery, earnestly. "It's going to be a real, true school. Please, Ned, do come."

"Who's coming, besides me?" asked Ned. "Any big fellows?"

"Only three girls and a little boy. But you needn't mind that. I want you very much."

"Oh, I'll come in of an evenin' again, Margie. But I don't like the Sunday-school. I'd feel like a donkey sittin' here, with you bits of girls, playin' at school."

"But, Ned, I tell you it is not play; it's real earnest. You know I'm so hurt I can't go to my school, and so I want to have one here. Don't say no, Ned. I'm so lonely here all the long day, and I want you so bad. Please, say 'yes.'"

She laid her hand in his rough, hard palm, and looked entreatingly into his face.

"Just come this once," she said, for he had given her no answer. "If you don't like it you needn't come again."

His whole boy-nature revolted against it. Playing at Sunday-school with three or four children! And yet the pleading of those dark eyes stirred him powerfully. There was in the boy something of the chivalric spirit which leads a great heart, conscious of its own grand strength, to yield to the weak and helpless. She looked so small and so feeble lying there, and he felt the young, strong life bounding so joyously through his own veins.

"Oh, Ned, I'd be so glad if you would only come."

And now two bright tears sprang into her eyes, and vanquished him.

"Why, you queer little thing!" said he, "I don't see what you want with me: but if you feel so very bad about it, I'll come."

"Thank you, Ned; I'm so very glad. You're very good to me;" and the hand which lay in his clasped itself tightly

around his big fingers. Edward had never felt such a touch since he was a baby. He had a dim remembrance of a hand that used to pet and fondle him, and a pair of soft eyes which looked lovingly into his own: but the recollection was vague and shadowy: he could recall no distinct feature of his mother's face; only now, as he sat beside Margery, that close clasp seemed to call up some old, faint remembrance.

"I think I might as well be taking myself off now," he said at last, rising from his seat.

"And you won't forget to-morrow?" said Margery.

"No, I'll be along. Don't you be afeard," and the boy went out, thinking of the morrow with mixed feeling of repugnance and pleasure.

"I'll be a fish out of water among them young ones," he said to himself.

And then the thought of that small clinging hand thrilled through him with a new sensation of delight.

"Ain't she a queer little thing?" he thought.

But he made up his mind, as he threw himself upon his bed that night, that if the world were full of such "queer" people it would be a brighter place than he had yet found it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

SHORTLY before three o'clock on the Sabbath afternoon, three bare-footed, thinly-clad little girls, sauntered slowly into the yard of the tenement in which the Brays lived; each holding back and urging her companions forward.

If Margery had sent them word to come to her "house," as she termed it, to play with her, they would have run in blithely, but they felt a sort of shyness about going to Sunday-school in the room of a sick child, with that child for their teacher. And Margery, laid helpless upon her bed, never again to run and jump, seemed strangely different from the Margery with whom they had been used to frolic and play.

"I say, Janie, you go in first," said Maggie Riley, drawing closer around her face the ragged hood which covered her head. "You know her best."

"No;" said Janie, who was a very timid child. "I don't like to."

"I'll go; come along," said Dora Fett, a flaxen-haired little girl. "Only you must hold near to me."

The others promised to follow closely, and Dora sprang boldly down the steps, and rapped on Margery's door.

She welcomed them very heartily, and they sat down near her to wait for the boys. Soon the little boy, of whom Rosa had spoken, came in. He entered the room rather noisily, but seeing that the three girls sat, each on the edge of her chair, looking shy and bashful, he sat down on the edge of his chair, shy and bashful, too.

The next moment Ned opened the door.

"Come in, Ned," said Margery, seeing him hesitate. I want you to sit by me. Perhaps you'll have to help me."

"Now," she continued, as he took the seat which she pointed out to him, "we

mustn't any of us feel like strangers; because we've come here to talk about the dear Saviour, who is a friend to every one of us. I suppose you all know about Jesus Christ?"

Two of the girls nodded, Maggie shook her head, and the boy said, "I don't." Ned sat still, looking out of the window into the yard.

"Then, I think we'll have to begin at the beginning," said Margery. "I'll just tell you a story. Will you like that?"

They all nodded, except Ned, in answer to that question.

So she began to tell them that wonderful story, so often repeated, yet always new, of the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord. She told them how he was laid in a manger, his kingly head lying low among the stalled cattle, while angels struck their lyres, and sang praises unto God for his infinite mercy to sinful men; and how the birth-night grew luminous with a strange, new light, as if the clear shining of the father's face did lighten it.

Then she spoke of his docile, gentle childhood.

"Oh, isn't it nice," she said, earnestly, "to think that he used to be a child, just like us? Once he was as little as that boy sitting there, and afterward he was as big as Ned. Every one of us can think, 'Once he was just the size of me.' It makes you love him more to think that you're the same as he was. Now, are you tired? Shall we leave the rest for next Sunday?"

"No, go on Margery," said Ned; and the other children all assented eagerly.

So she told him of his blameless, pitiful life, and of his cruel death. The room was hushed to a holy quiet. Four rapt young faces were bent forward in intense interest to listen to the earnest voice, as, swelling now with indignant pity, sinking now in tearful grief, it repeated the touching story.

And another face, which had been averted, was turned toward her. Edward Dolan had heard the name of Christ before. In awful blasphemy and profane jokes it had often fallen upon his ear, but he had never heard the history of his life; and now, told in those serious, but ardent tones, it came home with power to his heart.

"Oh, how we ought to love him!" said Margery. "Just think of all that he has done and suffered for us; and all he asks us to do is to love him, and to be good. Even if any boy or girl has been very bad indeed—if they have swore, or stolen, or lied—Jesus will love them just the same, if they will only be sorry and stop doing such things."

"But, look here, Margery," said Ned, earnestly, "what's a fellow to do? Suppose he is sorry he's bad, and has a mind to try for something better, he can't turn straight round and do all that you say the man wants him to."

"Don't say 'man,' Ned," said Margery, very gravely.

"You said he was a man."

"Yes; but he is God's Son all the same He is a man to love; but, Ned, he is God to obey."

Her voice was very solemn. For the moment he did not answer, then he said quietly:

"But, Margery, I don't seem to understand it. A fellow can't leave off swearin', and lyin', and all sich, just in a minute.

Supposin' he does promise to stop, and then does it again? what then?"

If you made up your mind to love the dear Saviour and to be good, you wouldn't do such things as you spoke of on purpose —would you, Ned?"

"No. That would be awful to do it o' purpose. If I made a bargain, I'd try to stick to it; but a fellow might forget, you know."

"I know it; and so does this dear Jesus, who was once a boy himself, know it, Ned. He never asks us to do what we can't do. You see, his being just like us makes him know all about us; and he can tell just what we can do, and what we can't. So, if you do forget, and act wrong sometimes, he'll forgive you again and again, if you are really trying to serve him. Are you going to try, Ned?"

"I don't know!"

It was the only answer he could make. The story had thrilled to the very depths of his soul, quickening into new strength every innocent feeling, every good impulse, which yet lived there: but such feelings and impulses were few and weak in a heart

which for thirteen years had been learning lessons of vice and wickedness. He did not know whether he intended "to try" or not, but a new desire, a new hope had arisen in his darkened mind. He could not see his way through the fog which obscured his sight, yet his eye had caught a faint glimmer of light, which in time, by God's good help, might kindle into the full blaze of perfect day.

"I don't think I can talk any more to-day," said Margery, after a short silence. "I am very tired. Will you all come again next Sunday?"

Her scholars gave a willing promise, and tripped out into the cold, wintry air, with hearts all warm and glowing.

"Wasn't that a beautiful meeting?" said Maggie, when they reached the street.

"Yes," said Janie. "I won't be afraid to go in first again, Dora."

"She talks lovely," said Maggie, her face unusually sobered. "I 'm not goin' to tell lies no more, 'cause Jesus don't want me to, and he 's so good."

"Will you come next Sunday, Ned?" asked Margery, when the others had gone.

"Yes I will. Margery——"

"Well, Ned?"

"This is all right true, isn't it?"

"Just as true as true can be," said Margery, solemnly. "It's awfully true, Ned; for if we don't believe it we will be lost. But we won't ever be lost if we trust in Jesus," she went on, after a pause. "He'll surely save us. Oh, Ned, he is so, so precious!"

The boy wanted something precious—something to love, to trust, to lean upon; and at this moment his lonely heart yearned toward this Saviour, this friend of the friendless. But he did not tell this to his young teacher. He promised that he would come back, and left her to go out into the terrible life of danger and temptation which had hitherto been his only school.

All seemed to work together for the blighting of that tender little seed of faith and love which had been sown in his heart this Sabbath afternoon. Would it be choked by evil passions? Or would the gentle dews of God's grace distil upon it, and the sunlight of his love fall in upon it,

until the springing plant lifted its head and spread its tiny leaves in the soft, sweet light, growing slowly into a strong and noble tree, which should bring forth much fruit?

## CHAPTER IX.

### A HOME MISSIONARY.

THAT evening John Hardy came in to see Margery, and found her looking very pale.

"What ails you to-night?" he kindly said. "Do you feel worse?"

"No. I'm tired; that's all."

"I think she is doing too much for her strength," said her grandfather. "She has started a sort of Sunday-school here, and she is the teacher. I'm afraid it's more than she ought to do."

"I should think so, too. You had better not make a work of play, Margery."

"What does make you all call it play?" said she, in a very grieved tone. "It is not play; I'm going to be a missionary."

John Hardy smiled. "I thought a mis-

sionary was a man who went across the seas to teach the heathen?"

"So it is. But Miss Raymond says that I can be a home missionary. I saw a home missionary once. He came to our Sunday-school once. He wasn't lame like me; but I suppose he was sick or something, so he couldn't go out much, and had to let his heathens come to his own home."

"From across the seas?"

"No. Miss Raymond says there's plenty of heathens in the town here. Anybody who doesn't know anything about God and Jesus Christ is a heathen."

He made no answer to that, but after a time he said, "You look so tired, I wonder if you would lie more easy in my arms. Would you like to try?"

"Yes, very much," said Margery. "Sometimes Mrs. Conroy raises me up for a while; but grandfather's hands tremble so he can't carry me."

The policeman wrapped the coverlid closely about her, turning it back under the poor, motionless feet, which used to dance so lightly, for the room was damp and chilly. Then he lifted her in his

arms, making a comfortable cradle for her.

"How nice this is!" she said, as he walked up and down the floor. "Mr. Hardy, do you love little girls?"

"I've learned to love this one very quickly," he answered, smiling down at her. "Just think, Margery; last Sunday night I did not know that there was such a child as Margery Bray."

"But Monday morning you did—didn't you? Is grandfather asleep, Mr. Hardy?"

"Let us see."

He crossed the room to where the old man sat, with his hands folded on his knees, and his head dropped upon his breast.

"Yes, he has fallen asleep," he said softly.

"Then I'd like to tell you something. Please take me to the window."

He carried her to the window, from which, looking straight upward, they could see, far beyond the tall roofs of the front houses, a line of blue sky dotted now with twinkling stars.

"Mr. Hardy——"

"Well, Margery?"

"That's where I'm going," and she pointed upward. "Home to my mother and father, and the dear Saviour."

"Oh, no, little one, that is foolish fear. You feel sick and weak, I know; but you are not in any danger of dying yet awhile. You mutsn't get frightened."

"I'm not frightened," said the child. "Why should I be frightened to go to my dear Jesus? Mr. Hardy, you don't know Jesus, do you?"

"No, Margery; not as you do."

"How do you mean, not as I do?"

"I believe that there is a God; but he is not lovely in my eyes."

"Oh, Mr. Hardy! don't speak so!"

"Why not, Margery?"

"Because he is so dear and good. I can't bear to hear you say that."

"I don't know," said John Hardy, almost angrily, "how you can think that he is dear and good as you say, when you know that he has brought all this trouble on you and this helpless old man."

This child had obtained a firm foothold in the young man's love. Attracted to-

wards her from the first by her pretty face and gentle manners—seeing her almost every day, she had crept into his heart in a way that astonished even himself; and he revolted against the fate which had overtaken her, as if she had been one of his own.

"He knows best," said Margery, softly. "It is his will."

"Yes, that is what you are always saying, and what all the preachers say; but how it can be best I can't see. Here are you and your grandfather, pushed down, down into the very depths of poverty—sick, helpless, and almost friendless—while thousands of wicked sinners are rolling in riches and enjoying every blessing. Is that what you call love?"

He forgot in his excitement that he was talking to a child; but she answered him.

"It does seem strange, but there is a good reason somewhere. Miss Raymond says perhaps I can do something for God lying here, that I couldn't have done if I had been well and strong. I've made a great prayer to God, Mr. Hardy.'

"For what, Margery?"

"That he would let you love him. If he hears me, and I know he will, won't that be a large pay for being lame?"

He was so touched by this proof of her affection for him, that, for the moment, he could not answer.

"I know he will let you see how precious he is," she went on. "Perhaps not while I am here, but when I am with him in heaven, he will show you that his will is always good."

"Don't talk about dying, Margery. I hate to think of death. What would your grandfather do without you?"

"That is the only thing which makes me frightened," said she, a little tremulously. "But God can take care of him."

"It can't be," said John Hardy, "that this courage of yours will last. You will not feel so when you know that you are dying. Why, child, the boldest tremble at the thought of death!"

"Do they?" said Margery, simply. "Then they are not so tired as me."

"But don't you dread being shut down into the dark grave?"

"Yes;" she said, with a slight shudder; "I don't like to think of that very much. But, oh, Mr. Hardy, if you loved Jesus, you'd think so much of being with him that you'd almost forget that. Don't you think, if Jesus loves us so much, that he makes us forget that lonely time under the ground, just by showing us how sweet it will be to see him, that he must be very good?"

He did not reply to her question. He only said, "Poor little Margery!"

"I don't see why you call me 'poor,'" said Margery; "only I know, by the way you say it, that you're sorry for me: but, Mr. Hardy, I think I'm gladder than you."

"So you are; and so you will be, if your faith does not fail you at the end."

"It won't fail me at the end," she said, confidently. "Don't you know Jesus says, 'I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself?' Do you think, when he comes for me, I shall be afraid to go with him?"

He could not understand her. He was

a man who must have proof and testimony for all in which he believed; she was a little child, who sat humbly at Jesus' feet and learned of him; and so it was that the little child found rest and peace, while the man struggled on, weary of his doubts and fears, yet refusing to cast them aside until he should *understand* God.

## CHAPTER X.

### ALMOST HOME.

WEEK after week rolled on, and Margery became weaker and weaker. Every day she seemed to look more fairy-like, as her slender figure grew even more slight, and the large brown eyes sank deeper in the pale face.

Miss Raymond did all that could be done; but beef-tea, wines, and jellies, although they might give a temporary increase of strength, failed to benefit her permanently. Thinking that her own physician might think of something which would help the child, Miss Raymond brought him to see her; but he shook his head sorrowfully.

"She is completely broken down," he said. "Her constitution never has been strong, and it is worn out."

A dark frown gathered on John Hardy's face when Peter Bray repeated to him the doctor's words, as he came in—which he did every evening now—to see his favourite.

"Worn out at nine years old!" he said, bitterly. "It is hard. I don't care what you say about contentment and submission to God's will. It is very, very hard!"

"You will not always think so, Mr. Hardy," said Margery.

"Why not, Margie?" His voice softened when he spoke to her.

"Because you will see how it is by-and-by. God will show you. Would you think it hard if he took poor, old, tired grandfather home, when he wants to go so much?"

"No; I suppose it would be best for him."

"But if I had never had that fall, Mr. Hardy, and God had taken grandfather away above the stars, where he will never be tired any more, what would have become of me? I'd have been left here all alone. I would not have known you, and Mrs. Conroy is too poor to help me, so I would

have been left a miserable little beggar. Oh, you mustn't say God is hard! he's made it all right. He's going to take me home first; and there I 'll stand beside the gates till grandfather comes—it won't be long, and we 'll walk together in that beautiful country. Grandfather says this is a weary land; but I don't think it is, with him and you and the Conroys in it; it seems a very nice land to me: only the other land is the best, because that has our dear Saviour in it. Oh, it will be so beautiful to see him! And dear father and mother, too!"

He did not answer, but sat, with his head leaning on his hand, thinking. What was it that made this child jubilant at the thought of that death which made him, strong man as he was, quail and shrink? It was not that she was tired of life. She had been very poor; but she had been tenderly loved and cared for, and the joyousness of her disposition had made life very bright for her. What was this something which could bear her up in the hour of her weakness, which had taken away her anxious fears for her grandfather, which

had filled her with such a sweet, patient trust?

She would have told him that it was "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding;" but he would not believe that, and so he sat there chafing angrily at the thought that now, at nine years old, she lay dying, worn out with the anxiety and toil which had rested on her young shoulders. He did not reflect that her work was done, and now her reward was waiting for her. He saw only that an innocent child had been crushed by the weight which had been laid upon her. She, looking farther, by the aid of that keen sight which faith gives us, saw the love which had guided her, giving her to the desolate old man as his help and comfort, and then, her work finished, taking her away from the loveless life she must have led without him up to the blessedness of heaven.

For some weeks Margery kept up her little Sunday-school in spite of her growing weakness; but one Sabbath evening, after the children had left her, she fainted from exhaustion, and the doctor forbade her to try to teach them again. So, when they came

trooping in on the next Sabbath, she only said a few words to each one, bidding them good-bye.

"I 'm going away," she said, gently, "up to heaven, to that dear Jesus we used to talk so much about; and I shall wait for you there. Will you all come?"

They told her softly that they would try and were leaving the room, when Maggie Riley turned back to say, eagerly, but in a choked voice:

"Margery, I won't tell lies any more. When I swept the crossings I used to say: 'Please, sir, give me a penny; my mother is sick,' when she wasn't sick a bit; but I won't never say it again."

And Margery's eyes grew bright as she kissed her, and told her to ask the Saviour to help her to be his child.

And then Edward Dolan came. The children had told him the sad news, and he had hesitated to enter the room; but he had a longing to see her once more, so he ventured in.

The hand which stole into his to-day was so small and thin that it seemed lost in his great, rough palm.

"Ned, have you tried to be Jesus' boy?"

"Not much, Margie," he said, candidly. "It 's awful hard to be anythin' but bad."

"I know it is; but you must try, Ned. I shall watch you from the sky, and if God lets his angels help the people down here, I'll ask him to let me help you—shall I?"

He would have said "Yes," if he could. As it was, he wrung the tiny hand which lay in his, and went quickly out of the room.

The home missionary's work had not been in vain.

## CHAPTER XI.

### REST AND JOY.

IT was a soft, warm day in April. A heavy shower had washed the earth, cleansing it from all soil and dust; and now the sun had broken forth, shining down radiantly from the blue heavens, as if he were trying to show how fair this beautiful earth of ours can be.

John Hardy walked slowly up the street that morning, toward the home of the child who had grown so dear to him. He was fond of children; but never before had one crept so closely into his heart, and he was very sad as he thought how probable it was that he should make his last visit to her to-day.

He had spent the past evening in that basement; and, while he was there, Peter Bray had come in, looking more worn and

weary than ever, and, in answer to his sympathizing words, had said:

"Ay, ay; it is too hard work for a man of fourscore: but I shall never take that walk again. Mr. Brooks paid me off to-night. He says I'm not fit for duty any longer."

And when the young man had protested indignantly against his being thrown aside, Peter had answered:

"It was all right, John. I was not able to do my work. And he dealt well with me. It is only Tuesday, yet he has paid me the full week's wages. I shall do nicely."

And then he sat down in his rocking-chair beside Margery, and, folding his hands on his knees, remained there, silent; only looking up, from time to time, to smile lovingly at his grandchild when she spoke to him, or stroked his bent head caressingly.

The policeman was off duty for the whole day, and he had promised to spend it with Margery; for the child, looking smilingly into the grave face of the man whom she clung to and leaned upon, even

more than she was conscious of, had said:

"Come early to-morrow; I don't think I'll be here in the evening."

As he entered the room, about nine o'clock in the morning, he saw the doctor leaning over the bed. The next moment he had lifted his head and spoken a few whispered words to the old man, who sat just where Hardy had left him the night before.

But Peter Bray took no notice of the physician. He seemed to see and to hear no one save his dying grandchild. His eyes rested constantly on her face, and when she spoke he would answer her; but no one else could gain his attention.

"Let me speak to you," said the doctor "He does not seem to understand."

John Hardy followed him to the door.

"The child is dying; she cannot live more than three or four hours. Shall I tell her, or will you?"

"I will tell her," said Hardy; and the physician went out.

Margery's eyes met Hardy's, as he turned to go back to the bed. He knelt down

beside her, bringing his face on a line with hers.

"Margery——"

"I know what you are going to say," she said, lifting her hand to wipe away a tear which was rolling slowly down the young man's face. "I am going home very soon."

"And you are not afraid, darling?"

"Afraid of what? Of going to Jesus? Oh, no!"

The blue-veined eyelids sank slowly upon her cheek, and she lay in a sort of dose—only her clasping fingers holding his telling that she had not yet answered the Master's call.

And John Hardy sat upon the edge of the bed, and watched her. This was the time that he had waited for—the hour in which he had supposed that her childish faith would give place to dread and terror. He had thought that she would shrink and tremble when she saw the dark river of death flowing close at her feet, and knew that she must step down into it alone; but the little feet were dipping into the first waters of the on-coming tide, and she did

not falter. She could leave this bright world, which, even from that miserable basement, looked gay and joyous on this sweet spring morning, without one thought of fear or reluctance.

He knew, in his inmost soul, that only the love of God himself could so uphold that weak, helpless child. All his doubts and unbelief were swept away. He could see now how, through all her short life, God's hand had guided her, fitting her for this very hour—this hour which had shown him that the God whom he had looked upon as a hard taskmaster was, in truth, a tender, loving Father; and he bowed his head upon his hands, saying—"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

For more than an hour he sat there, looking back over his own life, and seeing, now that his eyes were opened, how he, too, had been led and controlled by that same love in which Margery trusted.

As he watched her quiet, peaceful face, he longed to tell her what she had done—how, by her unwavering, holy faith, she had led him home from all his wanderings. And then he thought perhaps she should

never rouse from this stupor, would never have the joy of knowing that, at the very close of her young life, God had permitted her to lead an erring soul to the Saviour whom she loved.

He bent over her, and whispered, softly:

"Margery."

"Yes."

The long lashes did not stir, and her voice seemed to come from far, far away.

"Do you understand what I say?"

"Yes."

"I have something to tell you."

The brown eyes flashed wide open, and fixed themselves on his face, with an eager, questioning look.

"I see it all, Margery—all the love and mercy which have guided your life and mine. My little child, through God's good grace, you have brought me to see the precious love of Christ. I, too, can say, 'Thy will be done,' now."

She tried to clasp her hands, but she was too weak. He saw the effort, and, folding them together for her, laid them so upon her breast.

"Now tell him how glad we are," she said.

And, kneeling upon the hard boards, John Hardy told the Master, whose service he had so long refused, how "glad" he was to give his life to him now.

As he rose from his knees, he saw that Margery's eyes were resting on her grandfather. His glance met hers as it turned from the old man. The trouble which had shaded her brow for an instant passed away, as she said, gently :

"God will take care of him."

And then she sank again into the quiet state from which his words had aroused her.

All at once she stirred, and seemed to try to raise herself.

"What is it, Margery?" he said, bending closer.

"Lift me up. The gates are open. He is coming! Hush, hush! don't you hear the music of his feet?"

The tinkling feet seemed to draw nearer, nearer, until they came and stood beside the lowly bed.

She stretched out her eager, trembling hands.

"Dear Lord Jesus, take your little Margery," she said.

And he took her.

John Hardy laid the fair head down upon the pillow, and, leaning over the old man, spoke his name. But he did not answer, and so he stole softly away, leaving him alone with the dead child.

After a time he went back into the room, Peter Bray had risen from his chair, and was kneeling beside the bed; his worn, furrowed cheek lying close beside that of the child. John laid his hand upon his shoulder, speaking tenderly to him. Then he bent his head, and looked searchingly into his face.

Margery's prayer had been answered. God had taken care of him.

# GIVE ME THY HEART.

PUT your hand upon your left side, my son, and tell me what you feel beating there.

"My heart."

Suppose, now, you were very wealthy, owning a large, beautiful house, stables with fine horses and carriages, fields and orchards, and, also, thousands of pounds in gold. And suppose God had favoured you with some new and very precious blessing—such as curing your mother when she was very ill, and just ready to die—and you wished to give him some thank-offering, what, of all you owned, would he like best?

"My heart."

Yes; you remember his words—"My son, give me thy heart."

Some children have very hard hearts.

They are unkind to their companions, and cruel to animals. They pull off the wings and legs of flies, and are fond of throwing stones at birds and chickens. I read of a boy who would break one leg of a chicken that he might enjoy the cruel sport of seeing it limp along on the other!

But there are some people who do none of these cruel things, and whose hearts, notwithstanding, are very hard. They are always ready to do a kind act. If a child dies in a poor family, they will give money to bury it. They will do anything they can to relieve suffering in any human being. They shed tears over a tale of sorrow. And now, you will ask me how I know that such people can have a hard heart.

Did you ever see a marble statue? It is a piece of marble, cut into the shape of a human being. Some of these statues are very beautiful. Now, fill a room full of these beautiful things. Place them in regular rows, with their faces all one way. When all is ready, let some eloquent orator rise up and deliver a powerful and splendid oration before them—will they pay any attention to what he says? Will they

smile, or frown, or applaud, or condemn? Let some one rush into the room, and cry "Fire! fire!" Will they be alarmed? Relate before them the most touching tale that ever melted the human heart. Tell of that father who, while famine and pestilence swept over his country, came to those who supplied coffins to the poor, to obtain one for his child. Then he came for another, and another, until he had buried all his children. Then he came for one for his wife, and having put her body into it, lay down beside it and died himself! Would any of these statues shed one tear? Why not? Ah! they carry in their bosom a heart of stone!

Now, let me tell you of some of the signs of a hard heart.

1. One who hears the commandments of God and pays no attention to them has a very hard heart.

Will you believe me if I say that such a heart is harder than a rock? It is; and I can easily prove it.

There, in a waste howling wilderness, is a vast multitude of men, women, and children, and cattle, and all that host has

not one drop of water to drink! There are no springs, no wells, no streams. Every one is in danger of dying from thirst. Every voice is crying, "Water! water!" The beasts are lying on the ground, unable to stand. The little boy cries, "O father, I am so thirsty!" The little girl calls, "O mother, give me water!" But the only water in that dreary region is that which runs down the cheeks of the sufferers!

But God heard their cry, and told Moses to take his rod, and go to a rock that stood near by, and smite it. He did so. And as Moses struck the rock, God told it to send out water for those famishing multitudes, and it obeyed! It opened its mouth and poured out a river of cool, pure, sparkling water! And oh, if you could have seen those people how they rushed to drink!

The hard, insensible rock obeyed the voice of God. And whoever, man, or woman, or girl, or boy, hears God say, as he is now saying to you, "*believe; repent;* give me your heart; keep the Sabbath holy; love, and read the Bible; pray;

confess me before men," and does not obey, has a heart harder towards God than that rock in the wilderness!

2. Then, when the goodness of God awakens no serious thoughts, it is because the heart is very hard.

Has not God been very good to you? Suppose he wanted to do the very best thing he could for the comfort and happiness of children in this world, what could he do better than to give them two friends like father and mother to love them, and watch over them, and teach them, and pray for them? Now, my child, do you ever thank God for your father and mother? If not, do it soon, for to-night one of them may die!

But one little girl says, "I have no father." Yes, you have. There is "our Father which is in heaven," and have you not sometimes thought that your mother seemed to love you more than ever, since your father died and left you wholly to her care? "But," says little Charlie, "I have neither father nor mother—both are dead." Still, my little orphan, you have friends, perhaps a very kind aunt, or uncle, or both;

and a kind Sabbath-school teacher, who not only tells you of Christ and heaven, and prays for and with you, but is ready to do you any kind service possible. And God gave you these kind friends. And in many other ways God has been good to you. And I have no doubt that I could take you to many a house, where you would see children so poor, and ragged, and wretched, that you would acknowledge yourself very happy in comparison with them. And every comfort and joy you have, every hour of health, every recovery from sickness, every time you wake in your bed and see the light of the new morning, and rise up singing like the lark, all, all, is from the goodness of God.

See that ox eating grass in the field. How he keeps his head down, and moves right on, eating away, as if he had made that sweet grass all for himself, or as if he had bought and paid for it, and never sends one look up to heaven, from whence it came.

But now, look yonder at that little chicken drinking. With every mouthful of water, it lifts its head towards heaven,

as if giving thanks to God, who sent it down from the clouds.

Now, a child with a good, tender heart, will, like the little chicken, often look to God in thanksgiving; while he that carries within his bosom a hard, bad heart, is like the ox that eats, and eats, and eats, and never once thinks of the God who makes the "grass to grow for the cattle, and the herb for the service of man."

> "When goodness brings my God to view,
> With all his heavenly charms,
> This stubborn, this relentless heart
> Would thrust him from its arms."

Is this the case with your heart?

3. Again: any one who can carelessly hear the invitations of Jesus has a very hard heart.

I once saw a man in a great city, who had come a hundred miles in search of something. What do you think it was? It was his son! That son had run away from father, mother, sister, and brothers. And here was his father seeking him. And he had to go over a hundred miles more, before he found him.

And there is One near you, who came

not a hundred miles merely, but all the way from heaven, to seek your soul. And now he stands at the door of your heart, and asks for admission. "Behold!" he cries, "I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me." When any one asks you to come to Christ, that is a knock at the door of your heart. When you hear any one pray for your soul, that is another. When any one of your relatives, friends, or acquaintances dies, that is another. When you hear anything in a sermon that makes you think of your soul, and your sins, that is another. And whenever God, or Christ, or heaven, or hell, or your sins, or your danger, comes before your mind, that is another knock of Jesus by his Spirit. And he cries: "Open to me, for my head is filled with the dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. Open, and I will take away all your sins, and I will put on you a white robe, and when you die I will take you up to heaven. Open, for I want you to live for me, and work for me, and save souls for me. and then I will make

you shine as the stars, for ever and ever."

4. That is a hard heart that is not troubled on account of its sins.

Every one has committed a great many sins. David said, "Mine iniquities are gone over my head." And Isaiah said, "All our *righteousness* are as filthy rags." God commands us to love him "with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength;" and every moment any one lives without loving God thus, he breaks that commandment, and commits a sin. But you have never loved God thus a moment in your life!

Then you have sinned in doing what you ought not to do, and you have sinned in not doing what you ought to do. You have sinned in your thoughts, and sinned in your words. You sin in the morning, and at noon, and at night.

You have seen a big black cloud in the sky. Your sins are a big black cloud about your soul. Do they trouble you? Do they make you unhappy, and sometimes keep you awake at night? Why, sometimes the best of God's children are so troubled

at the thought of their sins that they are almost afraid to come to the communion table. Do yours give you no trouble?

A little girl had a sick mother. That sick mother told her to do something, but, instead of obeying, she became angry, and left the room, shutting the door hard after her. On her bed she began to think how unkind she had been to a sick mother, and she could only get to sleep by promising herself that she would do so no more, and that in the morning she would ask her mother's pardon. Early the next morning she rose and hastened to her mother's room, but lo! there was no mother in the bed! Looking round, she saw something in another part of the room covered with a white sheet. Lifting one corner and peeping under, what should she see there but the face of that injured mother pale in death! Oh, how she wept to think she should see that mother no more; and how bitter was her sorrow at the remembrance that the last word she ever spoke to her was a word of unkindness!

5. In the next place, let me ask you if you can hear the story of what Jesus did

and suffered, and neither grieve for his suffering, nor love him for his works. If so, it is because you carry within your bosom a heart of stone.

On the north-east coast of England there is a group of small islands, around which the waves dash and roar, and over which the sea-fowl screams, but on which nothing grows. One morning the wreck of a steamer was seen dashing upon the rocks among those islands, and nine persons, nearly exhausted, clinging to the wreck.

From the window of a light-house, a mile away, the old keeper saw them, but shook his head mournfully, and said, "Impossible! we cannot reach them; no boat could live in such a sea!" But oh! it made the heart ache to see those nine human beings slowly perishing there! And the keeper's daughter said, "Father, they must be saved!" "My child," said he, "no man could row a boat through such a surf." But, she replied, "Father, I will row one oar." And she did! The boat was got out, and she and her father entered it, and through the wildest sea that ever swept round a wreck they rowed that boat,

and they brought off all those nine sufferers!

And these men, thus saved from a terrible death, went home telling all the way the story of that girl's heroism. In London, a large sum of money was collected and sent to her, and for a long time travellers would go far out of their way to see that heroic girl, Grace Darling.

Now, our world is a great wreck, and one of these days it will be utterly destroyed. And it is full of people perishing in their sins. And when they sink it is into a sea, not of water, but of fire. "The wicked shall be turned into hell."

And there was only One who could save them, the Son of God. And he could save them only by dying in their place. But he could not bear to see them dying so.

"With pitying eye, the Prince of grace
Beheld our helpless grief:
He saw, and, oh, amazing love,
He ran to our relief!"

He left heaven. He was born in a stable His cradle was a manger. Herod tried to kill him while he was yet a babe. He grew

up. Sometimes he slept on the cold mountain side. "He had nowhere to lay his head." He went through crowds of men who hated and shouted after him, and abused and cursed him. One night he was in such distress that the blood, instead of going through his veins as usual, came out like big drops of sweat on his skin, and rolled down in great red streams to the ground! Oh, what did the grass and flowers of Olivet think when they felt the blood of the Son of God rolling down upon them! There was one who, while pretending to be his friend, gave him up for a little money to his enemies. And wicked men gathered around him, and they made sport of him. They spat in his face. They took some vines that had long sharp thorns on them, and bent them round into a wreath, and set it on his head. Then they blindfolded him, and struck him on the head, and told him to prophesy who it was that struck him.. Then they nailed him to the cross, and killed him. Then they buried him. But he knew all this before, and went right through it all just to save poor sinners like us, and take us up to heaven; and

there are millions singing there in heaven now, that he carried up thither. And he is all the time taking more. Maybe he has taken, or is taking, your mother or your father up to heaven.

Now, there are people that hear or read all about Jesus, and his works, and his sufferings, and never feel one throb of admiration, and never shed one tear. Can you? If you can, what a heart you must have!

> "To read the sorrows thou hast felt,
> Dear Lord, an adamant would melt;
> But I can read each moving line,
> And nothing move this heart of mine!"

Is it, now, any wonder that God speaks in such fearful terms about the human heart? He says it is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." He says it is "abominable and filthy, drinking in iniquity like water." He says it is "enmity against God."

But there are hearts so tender, that the remembrance of the smallest sin will draw a tear of sorrow from the eye. If the thought of God's goodness comes before

them, their hearts throb with a gush of grateful love. Sometimes a text of Scripture will melt them. So will a thought of poor sinners dying all around.

And God dwells in such hearts as these, "Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit."

Would you like to give your hard heart for one like this? Oh, I know some One who can make it tender in a moment! There is One in this house—there is One by your very side—who can do it! I cannot. Your dear mother cannot. Your father cannot. Your Sabbath-school teacher cannot. No; but God's Holy Spirit can. And he is here! He has done this for millions, and he is willing to do it for you!

Pray to him! Ask your parents—"O father, mother, pray for your child, that the Holy Spirit may give him a tender heart." Ask your pious brother and sister to pray for you. Ask your Sabbath-school teacher. And pray for yourself. Go, kneel down,

and ask him to take away your hard, stony heart, and give you a soft, tender heart of flesh! Go say—

"Just as I am—without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!"


*Edinburgh: Printed by R. Sanson.*

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