KATIE LAWFORD'S VICTORY

AND OTHER STORIES

BY L. C. M.

'There are two things which make up the obvious part of life —To Do, and To Suffer. Behind both as cause, before each as result, is one thing greater—To Be.'

'There is a battle to be fought,
An upward race to run,
A crown of glory to be sought,
A victory to be won.'

EDINBURGH: ANDREW ELLIOT.
1868.

EDINBURGH: PRINTED BY THOMAS CONSTABLE

FOR

ANDREW ELLIOT.

LONDON . . . . . SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO.

,, ... HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO.

GLASGOW . . . . . DAVID BRYCE AND CO.

DUBLIN . . . . . W. H. SMITH AND SON.

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KATIE LAWFORD'S VICTORY

CHAPTER I.

KICKING AGAINST THE PRICKS.

'. . . My cross I cannot bear:
Far heavier its weight must surely be,
Than those of others whom I daily see;
Oh! if I might another burden choose,
Methinks I should not fear my crown to lose.'

CAN'T help it: I do think it hard and cruel: there never was any one so miserable as I am!'

Very shocking words, I hear you say, dear reader; how could any one say such things? But if you will listen a moment, you will perhaps acknowledge that it was rather a hard case. Katie Lawford was a young girl of nineteen a year ago she had been bright and well, and now she was altogether on her couch, wheeled from one room to the other, and often suffering much. Active, joyous, full of life and energy, full of plans

for usefulness and kindness to others, she was suddenly called on to give all up, and take instead the work of patient bearing and waiting. True, the doctors said there was hope; she might get better in time. But what was that to Katie? she *did not* get better. Spring passed into summer, and summer in turn had given place to autumn and winter, and spring had come again, and brought no change. She was as ill as ever. Poor child, she *did* find it hard, and she did not bear it well. It had come upon her suddenly, with little warning; and she had been so active and happy, and had so little thought of this, that when it did come, she rebelled and fought against it. She hated being ill, hated her couch, with its many arrangements for her alleviation, hated the pretty rooms fitted up solely for her use, and with a view to her special comfort and pleasure; and wearied, and tried, and scolded the gentle mother, who did every possible thing love could suggest to make the burden less heavy. And so it came to pass that Katie was miserable, and made her mother very unhappy; for though after the fits of rebellion there would come fits of repentance and sorrow, yet it must be owned she was not a good or patient invalid, and was going the way to estrange all her friends by her

fretting and anger at her really heavy cross. Do you think I have drawn a very ugly picture of a very shocking and unloveable girl? Ah! you must wait before you judge her, wait till your life is clouded and darkened just when it was brightest, and your fond hopes of a happy, active, useful life dashed by such a blow. We read of so many 'invalids' all patient and resigned; but they don't become so all in a day, without any struggle or time of hard fighting; and it is about Katie's fight I want to tell other invalids, hoping to help and cheer them; and so, this bright, clear spring-day, when the trees were budding in all their fresh green, and the blue sky and white fleecy clouds looked so lovely from Katie's window, and her room was sweet with fresh flowers and plants in pots, she lay in the midst of all the luxury and beauty around her, heeding it not, only crying out, in the depths of her despair and misery, 'It's hard and cruel, and there is no one so miserable as I am!'

'Katie, love,' said her mother gently, 'I wish you wouldn't say such things. You forget whom you are accusing of being hard and cruel.'

'I can't help it, mamma; what is it but hard? It's not as if I'd been bad and selfish before; I wanted to help you, to make home so happy, and

we would have done so much together, so much good. Only think of all the plans we had when Edward married and went away; and now there's nothing left. It's all over; nothing left but to lie here and suffer. Mother, you don't know, you can't know, how dreadful it is.'

Many people in Mrs. Lawford's position just then, would have reproved Katie, stopped her passionate words, and pointed out to her how very many blessings she had left, how much to be grateful for, how much worse it might have been, etc.; but Mrs. Lawford was a wise woman, even if her own loving tact had not told her that such suggestions would meet no response from the poor girl just then. The time was not come for finding food for gratitude in what yet remained, and her experience of Katie warned her that any such reproof or answer would but influence her anger, and bring forth a fresh storm of passionate misery and complaint. So she came and sat beside her couch quietly, and only answered: 'I know it, my poor darling, nobody can know how terrible it is to you except yourself. But, Katie, you are much to me yet; what would I do without you, dear? and we shall maybe find ways of usefulness we never should have thought of.'

'Not as I am now,' said Katie. 'No, one can do

nothing thus. Oh, it is hard!' she exclaimed, with another burst of crying.

'Katie, you will make yourself quite ill,' said her mother gravely; 'and indeed you must not, for *my* sake, darling.'

Katie was quiet a while, and then began again: 'Mamma, Dr. Grant was here this morning—what did he say?'

'You saw him, Katie,' responded her mother.

'Yes, I saw him. He made me so angry; he's always saying he hopes I shall get better, and he looks so glum and cross if I say it's hard; as if it wasn't hard, and bitter, and miserable. If he would only look at my side of the question, and think what it is to have such a fate. When I was so full of plans and hopes, and life was just beginning for me, to be laid on the shelf like this, and cut off from *everything* worth doing. Only a little fall on the gravel walk, and here I am, and have been for a year already! But he does not sympathize, not he! He only said, "I wish you could only see some of my other patients," as if I wanted to see more sick people, and hadn't enough of my own to bear. What did he say to *you*, mamma?'

'I don't think you would like to hear, Katie,' responded her mother quietly. She was standing near

the window now, looking out; her eyes were turned away from her child that she might not see her tears.

'But I *will* know!' cried the impetuous daughter; 'I must know; as if anything about my illness does not concern me most! Mother, tell me.'

The mother did not refuse. Long ago she had found out that the best way in the end was not to cross Katie more than she could help. It did no good. She watched her opportunities, and tried to put in a good word, or prompt some kind act on Katie's part, as often as she could, and was content to bide her time, and hoped yet that the time would come that her poor tried child would see things in a truer light; and so she turned a deaf ear to the suggestions of sundry friends and relatives as to her behaviour to Katie. She ought, they said, to punish her, to lecture her, to leave her by herself in her despair; but the mother knew the nature with which she had to deal better than all her advisers. See knew the great, strong spirit, so full of earnestness and resolution, and passionate feeling, which lived in that not very robust little form; for Katie was small and childish-looking. She had not brought the child up from babyhood, and watched and trained the development of her character, to despair of her now.

She knew that in time the earnest spirit would come to the light, perhaps all the more fully for the terrible conflict going on now. But it would take time, ay, and care, and love unspeakable; but she had hope yet, long as it was, hope that Katie would 'be good,' and that some day peace and happiness might come out of all this darkness; and so it came to pass that while Katie hated all the lecturers and reprovers, who what she called preached, she clung to and loved the gentle mother, through all her naughty, terrible times, and listened to her, if not always, at least when she would have listened to no one else. And now the mother was thinking how she should best tell her what the doctor *had* said that morning; for Katie had guessed right, with her usual quickness, that something more than usual had passed between them; and when the second impatient 'Tell me, mother,' came from the sofa, she turned, and came and sat down by her daughter again.

'Did he say, as usual,' said Katie, in a bitter tone, 'that I should get better, and give no other reason for it, than that there was no reason I shouldn't?' 'When was it to be?' she went on, with a sharp tone of irony, that the mother well knew was only the veil for the intense misery of her poor child's heart—'at Christmas, or New Year, or when? Do tell me.

He's like a prophet, only unhappily his prophecies don't come true. I wish he'd remember how hard it is to lie here, and be a little sorry sometimes.'

'He *is* sorry, Katie. You must not say that, dear. He is grieved beyond measure. He would do anything he could to make you better or more comfortable. You must not think he doesn't care.'

'He might show it more, then,' said Katie, with a faltering voice.

'Do you make it very easy, my child?' said her mother gently.

'What did he say, mother?' asked Katie, without replying to the question.

'He *is* unhappy about you, Katie. You know, dear, you wished to be told everything. He says it grieves him extremely to see you going on in this rebellious way. As a doctor, he feels it destroys half your hope of recovery to be always fretting, and crying, and kicking against the pricks in this way, and as a friend, Katie—'

'Do *you* think I shall get better, mother?' interrupted the young girl.

'Not as much as he does, darling. You know I am not naturally sanguine, and I think he is; but, Katie, that's exactly why I am more and more anxious you should take up your burden bravely. If

it were for a few weeks only, our being unhappy would not much signify, but it does seem sad to be miserable for life, my child. Don't you think so?'

'*Do* I make you miserable?' asked Katie, very quietly now. She was calm again, and was thinking; something in the grave, gentle face of her mother, the mother she loved so dearly, struck her now, for the first time,—a worn, sad look that had not always been there.

'How can I be happy, dearest, when you are so miserable? Are we not everything to one another? You are all I have left, Katie darling, and it does grieve me to see you thus.—Not only the being ill, my child,' she added quickly, as Katie was going to burst out again, 'I grieve for your suffering, dear; I would, God knows how willingly, do anything to make it lighter, but, dearest, what makes me far more unhappy, is this sad rebellious spirit in which you take it.'

'Was that what Dr. Grant said, mamma?' asked Katie wearily.

'Something like it, dear. He begged me to speak to you, for you would not let him, to warn you, and plead with you to try to bear it more patiently. Katie, you must not think he is not sorry for you. He said it went to his heart to have you, the bright

happy child he had known so long, laid low in this way, and suffering so sadly; but,' she added, in a lower tone, 'he was disappointed in you. He had hoped that before this you would have resigned yourself, have become more patient, and more willing to make the best of what yet remained to you. He thought so highly of you, loved you, my child, so much, and it did grieve and disappoint him very much to see you still—thus—.' The mother paused. She was afraid of hurting her darling. She knew, better even than the friend and doctor, how tender and loving a spirit lay beneath all this rebellion and violence. But Katie didn't break forth as usual. Perhaps she was weaker to-day. Perhaps she was beginning to see a little of what she was doing, enlightened by the sad, grave face she was looking into; and Katie, hot and passionate as she was, was not one to be able coolly to contemplate giving another, and that other her dear mother, pain. She did not speak for a few moments, and then a knock at the door, and a summons for her mother to 'speak to somebody,' relieved her from the necessity of answering at all. But the warm, loving embrace showed the patient mother that at last she had not spoken in vain. Somehow she felt more hopeful than she had done yet, and she had

never lost hope, that her child would come out of the fiery trial purified and strengthened, and find peace. She could wait patiently, sowing little seeds here and there when the moment was favourable, and then leave the rest in the Father's hands. He would teach her poor Katie in His own time, for nothing could shake the mother's faith, that *at heart* Katie wanted to be good, *was* good, only she was upset altogether for the moment by this great trial, till it almost seemed as if *her* Katie was gone, and some changeling come in her place.

Meanwhile Katie lay back on her couch thinking —she had always been a thoughtful girl—and as she lay looking at the soft white clouds floating past the window, she wondered if the doctor was right, and she *was* killing herself by fretting. She shouldn't much mind; she thought life had ceased to be worth anything to her. Life! in two rooms, even though they were almost fairy rooms in their beauty—why, it was not worthy the name. And then there came back visions of *her* plans for life—the school, the district, the wonderful imagination for making other people happy and enjoying herself; for Katie had much invention, and often spent a world of thought and care on some little present, or surprise for a friend. And she and her mother were to have gone

about together and seen all the beautiful places. Why, just before her accident, they were thinking of a delightful journey to Scotland—what walks they could have enjoyed; what a life *that* would have been among the hills and the heather, for five or six weeks, and then home for the winter, and to be busy! They had so many little plans, they two together; and instead—. But just when the thoughts were about to become rebellious, and picture the last year in its all too vivid colouring of suffering, and restraint, and painful memories, of struggle and wrong perhaps—for Katie's conscience, though overborne by her cries and miseries, was not always altogether silent in those days,—the word 'together' suggested a picture of a different kind. They were together yet; what if they should be parted soon? what if that grave, worn look should mean that the time was coming when Katie would, not lay *her* life down, but have to go on her way *alone?*

For the first time since she had been ill, Katie said, and shuddered, 'I see *how* it might be worse;' —not suggested now by the unsympathizing visitor or doctor, whom she could suppose rendered callous to *her* suffering by the sight of greater, or made the *point* of some weary sermon on ingratitude for her many mercies. Times without number Katie had

raged against those 'Job's comforters,' as she called them, and wished—poor child! it was not an unnatural wish—that they might just be in her place for a while, and feel what it was like, and see if they'd be so ready *then* to count up *their* blessings. But it was very different now. The look she had noticed for the first time to-day gave life and intensity to her dark picture, and the thought that she had helped to make 'mamma miserable' added to its reality, and brought very hot tears to poor Katie's eyes—tears, not of rebellion or anger now, but of very genuine sorrow; and an earnest desire to be different rose in the invalid's mind—a desire so earnest as to be almost a prayer—that she might begin *now* to be more resigned, more patient, not to have any more of these angry, passionate bursts of misery. She would try to think—to feel, as the people said who came to see her—that it was all ordained by God, all sent—that He knew what was best for her, and saw that she required all this discipline.

That was all very good, doubtless, but it didn't comfort our poor, weary, tried Katie one bit. She had not felt so bad before; she had tried hard to be good, even while she was happy and well. She wished she hadn't been made so as to require so much discipline and suffering. It seemed to her

very strange that she couldn't be made good without all this misery. She almost wished she'd never been born. But there was one thing in all the confusion and misery of her thoughts, one thing to hold fast to: she would try with all her might not to make mamma miserable. She'd try to look cheerful, if she only could, and not to say those hard things about God and fate, and being unhappy, and wishing she were dead, which always brought the sad look to the gentle face, and the soft words of entreaty 'not to speak so,' to her lips. She didn't wish she were dead, really, to leave mamma all alone,—so she'd try not to say it; and with these thoughts, and holding fast by the one resolution, and wearied with contending feelings, and hushed by the birds singing outside, and the soft breeze coming through the open window, Katie fell asleep.

CHAPTER II.

HELEN CLARE'S VISIT.

'Those weary hours will not be lost,
Those days of misery,
Those nights of darkness, tempest tost,
Could I but turn to Thee.

With secret labour to sustain,
In patience, every blow;
To gather fortitude from pain,
And holiness from woe.'

OUR invalid was a girl of strong will and resolution. If once she could what she called 'see a thing,' she would set herself to do it bravely and earnestly. It was often difficult to make her see it, but, once done, the rest, that is, the acting upon it, was sure to come in time.

And the thought with which we left her in last chapter did not fade away with her waking. The anxiety about her mother, once stirred, slept no more. She did not say much, but she tried hard to hide the depression and unhappiness she felt about herself, for *that* was not altered. Just as hard and cruel as ever it seemed, that she, who could and

would have devoted her life to her mother's happiness, should be, instead, the cross and burden of that mother's life. That was the way she put it, poor child, and a very dreary way of looking at it it was.

But it made her mother unhappy that she should say so, and so the whole energy of her nature was turned to keeping silent, to not expressing, as she had been wont to do, all the sadness and weariness she felt. It went on for some time, and some of her friends thought her 'improved,' and hoped she was 'becoming more resigned;' but her mother almost wished the passionate days back. Then, at any rate, when Katie wasn't miserable visibly, she might hope she was happy, or at rest; now, she only felt that her poor child had the misery of hiding her feelings, in addition to the feelings themselves. It was hardly a change for the better, the mother thought; but it *was* one step forward, if only a little one. Somebody was thought of besides herself, and though Katie didn't recognise it, this was a step in the right direction. But somehow she and her mother were not quite as comfortable together as they had been, and Katie rather rejoiced one morning when the post brought a letter from an old school-fellow, who proposed, if she were well enough

to receive her, to pay Katie a visit. With all the eagerness for 'change' invalids know so well, the young girl pressed the acceptance of the offer, and insisted upon answering that very day, that she would be delighted to see her, and hoped she would pay a long visit. 'And then, mamma,' pursued Katie eagerly, 'you 'll go and see one of my uncles, or some one, and get a rest. I 'm sure you 'll be much better for a rest.'

'Do you want to get rid of me, Katie darling?'

'What an idea, mother! Of course not, only you know Helen Clare can take care of me, and then you can have a change. I 'm sure you must want one, mamma; it 's more than a year,' she added, with the faltering voice in which she often alluded to her trouble, 'since you 've been away.'

'But I 'm not tired, Katie,' said her mother, looking wistfully at her daughter.

'But, mother, you look it; I 've thought so some time; I 'm sure it 's bad for you to be so shut up with me.'

'Don't look at me so, darling.'

'Oh, mother!' she burst forth; 'it is so hard to be nothing but a cross to you, to be able to help you in nothing, I—I who ought to be your stay and comfort, and would have been, but for *this*. Oh, it is hard!'

'Katie, I'd hoped you were getting a little reconciled.'

'I'm not then! I never shall be reconciled. How can I feel it aught but hard, always to see how much there is to do, and not be allowed to do it? But I'm not going to say things,' she added resolutely; 'I'll not make you miserable any more that way. I see now I ought to try not to cry out so, it hurts you, and it can't help me. Nothing will help me ever,' she finished, in her old bitter tone.

'*Never* is a long day, Katie mine. My dearest, I must hope that some day things will look different.'

'The days of miracles are past,' said Katie, 'and nothing less could help me. You know now Dr. Grant talks much less about my getting better,—which is a great relief,' she added, as an afterthought.

'It was not that sort of miracle I was thinking of, dear, but of the days, which I firmly hope to see, when my Katie will have won her way to the light through darkness, and find that, out of even a great trial, which seems all evil, good may come—or rather, that her father has not taken *all* her blessings from her in removing one — the greatest. Katie, I heard of some one the other day, who declared that her life was richer and fuller, as an

invalid, in bed altogether, than it ever could have been had she been well.'

'I don't believe it; that 's just the way "good" people always talk. It means nothing,' pronounced Katie, somewhat impatiently.

'And yet it was true,' went on Mrs. Lawford, 'strictly true, and she was not what you call a particularly "good" person either. Cut off from the active life she would have liked to have led—liked as much as you, Katie—she turned her whole mind to getting as much as she could out of what was left. She wanted to be useful, and presently she found that the very fact of her not being able to go about gave her more time to employ for others. She used her head and hands, planned and executed many useful works, making others her messengers, and thus doing two works at once.'

'She must have been very clever.'

'She must have had good capacities certainly, but I don't know that so much was owing to that as to her determination, steady and persistent, to "gather up the fragments that remain." It amounted almost to a vow, to do and be *all* she possibly could to everybody, because she could be so very little, she would have said; but it was more than most manage to be who have the full use of all their powers.'

'Was it *then* she said she gained by being ill?'

'The particular occasion, I remember, of her feeling that so strongly, was when she had become friends with a physician who introduced her to several very pleasant literary people. Such a friendship as his was a very rare gift of itself, but it brought others in its train; she got to know, either personally or by description, so very many of what she used to call "great men." And that had always been, from early youth, her *beau-idéal* of enjoyment and life; and not being at all clever enough, or even cultivated enough to have been likely to attain to it by herself, especially if her time and thoughts had been spent in the whirl of social life, she in time learned to feel that the illness which had given her time to think, and brought her in contact with thoughtful people, was almost a blessing rather than a terrible infliction.'

'Well, she *must* have been a happy and contented spirit,' said Katie doubtfully.

'I say, *in time*, Katie; and I don't mean for a moment that she was habitually glad to be ill. Of course that was not the case; I only mean that she ended by finding some things in her illness which belonged to it, and could not have been hers in health, which were things she valued, and felt to be

some compensation. But I daresay,' added the indulgent mother, 'she didn't *always* feel so.'

'Are you telling me a story, mother, or a fact that has happened?' asked Katie, fixing her clear sad eyes on her mother's face.

'It's true, Katie. Do you feel it so very impossible? Well,' she went on, 'I daresay you do *now;* and I know how wearisome it is to have a state of mind attained to with difficulty, and for a time only, perhaps, held up to us as a pattern for our imitation. I did not mean to do that at all, dear. And now, when is Helen Clare coming? for we must settle about it.'

And it was settled that she should come in a few days; and what with the expectation of her coming, and her arrival, they were very busy, and had not much time for talk, for it was also settled that Mrs. Lawford should go from home. Dr. Grant quite agreed with Katie that her mother had better go and have a complete rest and change. Her visitor was well able to take care of her—all the care needed, besides what a kind doctor, and a nurse devoted entirely to 'Missis and Miss Katie,' ever since the marriage of the former, could give. So Mrs. Lawford went away, not without many an anxious thought, but really feeling the need of it enough, to submit,

to the almost necessity of going, and fain to be satisfied with the doctor's and Helen's assurances that they would do everything for their patient that care and love could suggest; and so Helen and Katie settled down to their quiet little life together. It had been a long-promised visit, and they had very much to say to each other.

Helen Clare was one of those gentle enthusiastic natures, full of love and admiration for others, and for Katie particularly. Though nearly four years older than her friend, she admired her extremely, and in many ways looked up to her. Katie's fresh thought, impulsive disposition, and strong resolute will, when once that will was awakened, had been Helen's admiration, and would have been her envy, if she had not been so good, from the first acquaintance. They had been at school together for a year —Helen, the monitress, and acknowledged head of the whole party; Katie, the youngest, the pet, the new-comer—and between the two there had risen up one of those earnest life-friendships which are not common, but when they do exist resist all change, and are 'till death does part them.'

That they were so unlike one another was perhaps one of the reasons why they were so attracted to each other. But whatever might be the cause, the

two were almost inseparable, and when, at the end of the year, Helen went home to stay, many were the promises of future meetings and visits. And each time they met, it was to be, if possible, greater friends.

It so happened, however, that they had not seen each other since Katie's accident and consequent illness, and, like many another young girl who has always been well and strong, Katie was no letter-writer. So there was a great deal to tell, and Katie poured all her sorrows and complaints into her friend's patient and sympathizing ear. It must be acknowledged, however, that Helen was not by any means the best companion Katie could have had at this time. She had never been ill herself, but she was one of those sympathizing spirits who need no 'fellow-feeling' to make the griefs of others almost as real to them as their own. She had been the confidant of all Katie's hopes and plans for her home life, and she felt it very sad to see her, as it seemed, cut off from all these, and condemned to idleness and misery; for Helen thought it was the saddest thing she had ever heard of, and told her friend so openly. Miserable as poor Katie had felt her fate to be before, it became infinitely worse in the light of her friend's sympathy. It was not

Helen's kindness, her untiring efforts to please and amuse her friend that was the mistake; she was indefatigable in trying to interest and give her pleasure; she brought her pretty gifts from town, ransacked libraries for the most entertaining stories, filled her album with choice photographs, and her windows with seeds and plants of all kinds 'that she might see them grow,' and in everything had but one thought, 'What poor Katie would like,' and 'how to please her.' It was not all this that was the mistake, but that she encouraged her friend to feel her misery more and more acutely by dwelling upon it, and letting Katie dwell on it; by allowing her to exaggerate it to that degree that, after a while, the two were of opinion that no trouble ever had been so great as the one Katie Lawford was called upon to endure, and more, that none could wonder at, or ought to blame, any amount of impatience, of rebellion, of ill-temper, on the part of one so tried. A mind so truthful as Katie's would hardly believe this really for any length of time. Conscience would awake soon, and let her know how false a view she had been nursing, and rouse her to some effort to think and feel differently; but with Helen the feeling was altogether true and genuine.

That in like circumstances she would not have

felt so, never seemed to occur to her. She was so altogether gentle and unselfish herself, so ready to acknowledge her own inferiority, even in points where she was anything but inferior, that she never thought of comparing herself to Katie; and if she had, she would only have thought how likely it was that the 'poor dear' should rebel against such a fate, —she, who was so full of high aspirations, of longing to be useful, and of an activity to which her quieter self never aspired. She would have been the first to be shocked and grieved at her work, had any one pointed it out to her,—showed her how she was encouraging her friend, whom she so loved and admired, in downright rebellion against God's will, and the burden which He had laid upon her; for Helen was an earnest and religious girl, and if she had *seen* it, could never have borne that either she herself or her darling Katie should do so wrong. Yet it was not an unnatural mistake to fall into. Happily there was a silent but observant watcher of all this, who was even now turning over in her mind how she could enlighten the unconscious Helen.

CHAPTER III.

NURSE'S WARNING—REMONSTRANCE.

What is life, Father? A battle, my child,
  Where the strongest lance may fail,
Where the wariest eyes may be beguiled,
  And the stoutest heart may quail.
Where the foes are gather'd on every hand,
  And rest nor night nor day,
And the feeble little ones must stand
  In the thickest of the fray.

Let me die! Father, I tremble, I fear
  To fail in that terrible strife.
The crown must be won for Heaven, dear,
  In the battle-field of life.
My child! though thy foes are strong and tried,
  He loveth the weak and small,
The angels of heaven are on thy side,
  And God is over all.

A. A. Proctor.

This was the old nurse, who, as we have already said, had been with Katie from babyhood, and who loved her dearly. She had been wellnigh heart-broken at her darling's illness, and grieved over her sadly; but, like Mrs. Lawford, what grieved her most was that the 'dear child' should take it so hardly. If it was the Lord's will she should lie there for long,

perhaps all her life,—well, it was a grievous thing, and one which she (nurse) would have died to prevent if she could thus have averted it; but still it was the Lord's will, and it was sad for a poor lamb like her Katie to be 'tearing herself agen the pricks with struggles.' She knew her mistress was wise, and would do far better than she could to help the child to be good; but she was not so sure of this young thing, though she had won her heart at once, to reign there for ever, by her unwearied kindness to her nursling. But Missis not being at home, she must, she thought, say a word of warning to Miss Helen. So accordingly, one night when Katie was settled in bed, she went to Helen's room, ostensibly to help her to undress, but really with a view to administer a little dose of advice meanwhile.

Helen liked her very much, and received her cordially, began to talk as usual about what was indeed their one engrossing thought, Katie, and presently nurse said, 'Miss Helen, maybe you'll not be offended if I say a word to you about Miss Katie?'

'Of course not, nurse.'

'Well, miss, I've been thinking that maybe you're forgetting a bit when you talk to Miss Katie, who it is that has ordained that she should be ill.'

The good old nurse was not a woman of many

words, and had dashed into her subject at once without any circumlocution.

If Helen had been accused of telling a lie, or some other heinous offence, she could not have felt more puzzled and astonished than at this attack. She had been brushing out her long hair when nurse had abruptly made her accusation, and her hand dropped on her knee, and the brush on to the floor, as she looked in wonderment at the grave, kind, old face, which she was wont to tell Katie resembled a picture of some fair old lady of ancient times. She could only say, 'Nurse, what *do* you mean?'

'My dear, I mean just this, and you will excuse an old woman speaking out to you. I don't deny that Miss Katie, bless her, has a hard trial to bear, but I don't think it doing the kind thing by her, to make it harder, and that's what I'm afraid you're doing.'

'I, nurse!' ejaculated poor Helen, 'why, I'd do anything in the world for Katie!'

'I know it, Miss Helen, and you've done a deal already, and many a time I've thanked you in my heart for all the pretty things you bring her; but you would do more for her yet, miss, if you helped her to see that the Lord hadn't been so hard upon her after all.'

Helen looked, as she felt, shocked, but she didn't speak.

'You see, my dear, I've known Miss Katie from a baby; if only she could get it into her heart that she was not so badly off as many a one, she'd be less fretful and cross, I know.'

'But, nurse, it *is* hard, it's no use pretending it is not.'

'Well! but, miss, it's the Lord's sending for all that, and she's got to bow to His will, and you are not helping her, Miss Helen,' persisted the old woman calmly.

'I don't believe any one would bear it better—such a blow as that,' pursued Helen thoughtfully.

'That has not much to do with it, Miss Helen,' said the old woman firmly but respectfully; 'she's no choice about bearing it, only she may do so well or ill. It's our place to help her to do it well; and you see, miss, while you are encouraging her to feel it so *very* hard—such a dreadful thing that has happened to her—she feels that the Lord has been hard upon her, and, as it were, treated her ill, and so she frets and kicks against the pricks, and, poor lamb, they hurt her a deal more than they were ever meant to do, or would, if she'd lie still under them.'

'I do see what you mean now, nurse, though I

never meant to do anything so wrong as to make her rebellious, my own darling Katie !' said Helen.

'I know you didn't mean it, of course, dear, or I'd never have spoken to *you* about it ; only I did think if, when you had a chance, you would put in a word to remind her that it really might have been worse. She has some things left, poor dear : there's Missis ; and then many a one hasn't such a doctor, nor yet such plenty of money as they have. She might do a deal of good, and give a deal of comfort, if she would look about her, and try ; only, while her heart's set on what she can't do, she doesn't see it. Only, Miss Helen, take care, for some have forgotten, with Miss Katie, that though a word in season is good, out of season it's anything but that, and she's much set against what she calls preaching.'

Left to herself, Helen sat long thinking over the advice she had had, and wondering how to do better in future. Her eyes once opened, she did see how in some ways she had mistaken what was best to do. As nurse said, it was for Katie's friends to help her to see the good that was left to her,—she saw the evil plain enough, poor child. Besides, as Helen sat thoughtfully by the window watching the stars, she remembered that this great trouble must be permitted to come to Katie for some good purpose ; and

then there came to her mind some words of a dear old aunt of hers, to whom, speaking of sorrow, and saying, she supposed sorrow always purified people, 'My dear,' her old friend had answered, 'not always; it depends exactly upon how you take it. If you accept it, and try to get good out of it, there is nothing so purifying as trouble; but if you don't take it rightly, if you harden yourself against it, it only embitters, and does you harm. It is like everything else—one of God's rich opportunities of good, stepping-stones to perfection; but he never *forces* us to use them, only gives us opportunities.'

Was Katie neglecting to use this opportunity? Was it going to harden and embitter that loving, bright spirit? Helen, with her eyes opened as they now were, could see signs of this, and they distressed her very much. And then she began to perplex herself as to how much was her doing. Had Katie been so before, or was it only since she came? But, after all, it was no use thinking of that. *Some* of the mischief was her doing at any rate, and she must try to undo her work.

But the more she thought, the less any light seemed to come; and she could think of no better plan than to try and keep off the subject of her friend's illness,—to occupy her, if possible, with other

things. She could not pretend not to feel Katie's lot hard; she had not seen enough of the suffering of the world to judge of it, as we learn to judge of things in time, by comparison with others; and she was far too truthful and outspoken to be able to conceal her view of the case, had she tried, from clear-sighted Katie. She might hurt and vex her by refusing to listen, or by scolding her for being impatient, but that would gain nothing; and yet, she could not go on 'encouraging her to feel the Lord hard upon her,' as nurse intimated she had been doing. The more she thought about Katie, the more she loved her, and the less she could bear to think of her not being altogether good. At last, after many vain thoughts, she remembered a certain talk Katie and she had had one evening at school. It flashed upon her like a bright vision now. The fair young girl, whom in those days the grave, orphan Helen felt so very much younger than herself, sitting on the floor at her feet, and resting her head against her knee. She could see now the little hands clasped together so firmly, and hear the clear, low, enthusiastic voice—

'Helen! I think I'd rather go through anything than not be made good. I couldn't bear for God to leave me to myself, to be naughty and self-willed. I

don't know about being burnt like the martyrs ; burning must hurt so horribly ; but it would be soon over. Yes ! I do think I'd rather even be burnt than not be made good. Fancy going to heaven, and hearing God say to me, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Only think, Helen, what a glorious welcome it would be ! I hope God will help me to be good—make me good—even if I have to suffer many things for it,—good, you know, as He *meant* me to be—His own child.' Helen had forgotten where she was, in the brightness of the vision. It was no dream, only faithful memory unfolding a page of her never-erased book to the earnest prayerful spirit that was asking help so fervently, to be a really faithful friend in this difficult strait. Leaning her forehead on her clasped hands, Helen Clare saw it all, the whole scene in its smallest details, and heard the young voice, so full of resolution and earnestness, devoting its possessor to 'suffer many things' to be made good. What things were they, she wondered, that had been present to the young brave heart in that hour ? Had she altogether forgotten those Sunday talks at school ? Very likely ; for Katie was one who passed rapidly from one phase of thought to another ; not that she was fickle or changeable, but she liked her thoughts to 'blossom into deeds' as rapidly as possible, and

never rested with the thought merely. If she couldn't make it a deed, it seemed to pass from her mind, and give place to another. *Doing* was Katie's forte, her delight; feeling and thinking were only steps to the great end of doing; and now, doing was out of the question; suffering, bearing, must take its place. What wonder that, as the loving-hearted gentle Helen bowed her head again in the solitude of that room, in bitter sorrow for her darling, she cried out that a martyrdom worse than burning had come upon Katie,—longer and hardly less terrible; and that she honoured and looked up to the youthful martyr as somebody singled out by God for some great work, 'to give light to all that are in the house'? 'But she must not lose her crown,' thought the good friend. 'We must help her, high as she is above us all, lest she fail to go through bravely with the great baptism which is to raise her so high.'

The next morning Helen rose, full of high resolves and plans how to lead and help Katie to see what she had seen the previous night. But she found, as many of us do, that it is a great deal easier to do mischief than to set it right again. She had spoiled and indulged her patient, in talking of herself to that degree that she was not willing now to talk of anything else; and all Helen's gentle attempts to check

the fretting and complaining, only brought forth fresh moans, and complaints that she (Helen) was getting tired of her. Bitterly did Helen regret, during the next few days, that nurse's warning had not come sooner, and prevented her doing so much harm. Like many another loving spirit, she took to herself the whole blame of what, in fact, existed long before she ever came at all, and gave herself no rest from reproaches. Tender and gentle as ever to her friend, and full of the most loving consideration for her, she saw clearly enough now how far she was from the patient, brave martyr she had pictured her, and the sight made her very sad ; for she felt that it was true nevertheless ; Katie was to be 'made good,' and this terrible trial had come for this purpose ; and how very grievous it would be if she missed the opportunity, and was only hardened by it. Poor Helen, they were hard days for her, and she scarcely knew how she got through them herself, though to outward appearance she was just as gentle and attentive as ever ; and even nurse saw no great change in her, and almost thought her warning had been disregarded.

But as if to help Helen in her difficult task, just at this time Katie became much worse, and was obliged to keep her bed altogether, and required so much doing for her that nurse and Helen were both

kept busy; and there was no time, even if Katie had been up to it, which she was not, for much talk on any topic. And as often happens, she appeared, even if she was not really, much more patient and submissive when more ill. Either so much was not expected of her, or people expressed more sorrow for her increased suffering, and were more anxious about her, or she was really more patient and brave about bad medicines and sharp remedies than about enforced stillness and idleness. Certain it is that nurse, friend, and doctor all united in thinking Katie marvellously improved, and were quite satisfied with her, and vied with each other which could be kindest to her, and express their sense of the improvement in divers little ways. This was particularly pleasant to Katie—in the doctor especially. He was an old friend, and had been a friend from her childhood, and Katie hated to have him think ill of her, and half her bitterness against him was not so much for the things he said, for his being cross with her, as from her conviction, long before her mother had spoken to her, of her old friend disapproving of her, and having expected better things of his favourite. So it was doubly pleasant to have him as cheery and kind as ever again, and to lose the feeling that he had ceased to like or care for her, which had been

vexing her even while unacknowledged. The only trouble was that her mother hurried home on hearing she was worse, which Katie was very sorry for, and made her promise to go again as soon as ever she was better, and on her couch once more, the hated couch, which somehow did not seem quite so hateful after a good while in bed.

But Katie didn't make much haste over getting better, and the summer was half through or more before she was 'as well as usual,' and able to be left again —not alone with Helen this time, for a dear aunt of hers, an elder sister of her mother's, had promised to come and stay perhaps all the winter with them, and Katie had been very fond of her before her illness. She had never seen her since, and rejoiced in the prospect of Aunt Margaret's visit as she had not rejoiced over anything since the sad day that made her an invalid. Aunt Margaret was as active still as she had been once, as fond of doing, and would sympathize more than anybody with her terrible fate. Perhaps Katie would have been less anxious for Aunt Margaret's visit had she known that the old lady had offered herself with a strong feeling in her own mind that 'from Mary's letters, the poor child was clearly bearing her trial very badly, and needed some one to show her a different view of things,' and

Auntie felt that she could perhaps do this enlightening better than most, for she understood her niece, and loved her most tenderly, and in olden days Katie had been wont to take her advice, and act upon it too, in a way which that much-abused 'advice' rarely enjoyed. So Auntie came, and mamma went to finish her holiday, and the warm greeting was given and received; but a great many days went by before wise Aunt Margaret did anything except make her own observations, while making acquaintance with Helen and renewing that with her niece.

CHAPTER IV.

AUNT MARGARET'S VIEW OF THINGS.

'The glorious band, the chosen few
On whom His spirit came,
In whom their trust was laid, they knew,
And mock'd the cross and flame.

They climb'd the steep ascent of heaven,
Through peril, toil, and pain.
O God ! to us may grace be given
To follow in their train.'

'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'

It was with Helen that the task of enlightening began, quite unintentionally, as it happened, for though Aunt Margaret had come for the express purpose of helping her sister and niece to a happier state of mind, she never thought of setting about it in a business-like way, and 'feeling it her duty to lecture and scold.' Her duty, she thought, was to make everybody who came in her way as happy as she possibly could, and she had been making friends with Helen, and talking to her about her home and interests, and had grown to like her very much.

And the liking was mutual, for Aunt Margaret, or Miss Herbert, as at present Helen still called her (though she soon slipped into the more loving appellation of 'Auntie'), was not a formidable old lady by any means. Always beautifully neat, in her rich black silk dress, and red shawl, and cap of net, white as a snowdrift, she was as fair a picture of age as ever delighted an enthusiastic girl. Yet she was very active still, never for a moment unemployed. Either some pretty needle-work or homely stocking was always progressing in her busy hands. But there was no bustle or fuss suggested by her incessant activity, it was all done so quietly. And she liked to talk and be talked to by young people. Nobody so ready as Aunt Margaret with sympathy and help, only it was sympathy with the strong rather than the weak part of you; she was ever more ready to encourage you in what you could do, than cry with you over what you could not. I don't think any one ever went to Aunt Margaret for sympathy and came back snubbed or disappointed; but always with a feeling that after all the grievance was not so great, or, if such were possible, full of some plan for removing it,—for Auntie was fertile in plans and resources. On the day in question, Helen had passed from her own concerns to Katie's, and

was bewailing her fate to Aunt Margaret; then, mindful of her thoughts on that night some weeks ago, she told Miss Herbert about them, and finished with, 'If only Katie could take up her martyr's cross bravely, then she would get her crown, and be happy.'

'Martyr's cross!' repeated Miss Herbert quietly; 'my dear, to what is she a martyr?'

Helen looked up astonished. 'Miss Herbert, don't you think it's a *very* sad thing for her to be cut off in this way from all possibilities of usefulness, let alone all the suffering she has to bear—just when she was so full of aspirations and hopes; so anxious to be useful—and to do for others?'

'Stay, my dear,' interrupted Miss Herbert gently. It was hardly an interruption, for Helen had paused, from mingled indignation and want of breath. 'Let us go into this matter quietly and dispassionately. Katie is very very dear to me, and I am very sorry for her, but I don't think she is—and I, for one, have no desire she should be—a martyr.'

'Why?' said Helen; 'what is there higher? What is greater than to be willing to die for God—to lay down health, happiness, everything, even life, at His bidding? I do call Katie's a long martyrdom.'

'I will answer your questions in order, my dear Helen. *To live* for God I think much higher than to

die for Him, and I don't think Katie *is* called upon to give up all, or nearly all ; and that is why I don't want her to think herself a martyr.'

'But don't you want her to *be* one—to bear it all heroically, without a murmur, always patient and uncomplaining—suffering all things, and never repining at anything? O Auntie,' persisted Helen, 'I don't understand you a bit ; I think that's the grandest thing one can fancy?'

'Well, my dear, you can fancy it?' said the old lady quaintly. 'I don't wish to deprive you of that picture which you have drawn so vividly, but I don't wish my niece either to be, or to imagine herself, the centre figure of it.'

Helen did not like the tone of this speech, and received it in silence. She was not sure whether Miss Herbert was laughing at her, or at things to her sacred and serious, and the idea of this latter being the case made her quite miserable, and she did not like being laughed at either—very few people do, and young people always detest it. Miss Herbert was too kind to hurt any one intentionally. She saw Helen was hurt, and hastened to remove the impression.

'My dear child, don't think I'm a very worldly old woman, who has nothing better to do than laugh

at your high thoughts and imaginings; but, my dear Helen,' she added very gravely, 'this is a matter on which it is very important we should come to a right understanding. It is important for Katie,' she added, after a pause, 'that her friends should not mislead her in these matters.'

Helen remembered her former mistake, and how grieved she had been about it. She had made *one*, the truthful girl acknowledged to herself, perhaps she was just making another; and as she looked up into the beautiful old face, she felt at once that there was upon it the light of an almost heavenly wisdom and kindliness. This wise old lady, who had lived so much longer, and suffered too! Helen knew that she was far more likely to judge rightly than she was, who had had so little experience; and the bright face, clouded for a moment, cleared again, and Helen said, cheerfully and lovingly—

'I shall get a cushion, Auntie, and come and sit down there beside you, and you'll tell me what you mean. I've made one mistake already about Katie, which maybe nurse has told you of, and I don't want to make another, and I want to know what you mean. Don't you care for martyrs?' she added, as she settled herself in the favourite position, and leant her head against the arm of Miss Herbert's chair.

'Not so much as you do, my dear, I daresay; I honour and respect those great men and women who have died for the faith in all times; but, dear Helen, I love, and honour too, far *more*, those who faithfully *every* day try to please God, try to do right because it is right, and He wishes it.'

'But about Katie, Miss Herbert? Surely hers is an exceptional case?'

'I wish it were, my child, but in these days it seems to me there are a great number who are invalids; but even if she were alone in the world, singled out by God for the endurance of the greatest trial, and I don't deny—don't think it for a moment—that she has a heavy trial, but I don't want her to bear it like a martyr.'

'How then?' asked Helen thoughtfully.

'As a little child,' was the reverent response, 'for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' There was no reply, and Miss Herbert went on quietly, after a little pause—

'I don't know how others may be able to bear things,—heroically, perhaps, without a murmur, but I don't wish to see that in my Katie, and I'm glad I don't, for I know I should be disappointed. I want to see her accept it all, pain or pleasure, health or sickness, from her Father, as a little unspoiled child

does, not "ashamed of tears," not stoically "determined to die and make no sign," but ready to make the best of everything, and get as much good out of everything as is possible. I saw two little children once,' went on Auntie, 'who reminded me of this, and showed me, as children often do, more of the meaning of the Bible teaching than anything else does. There were staying with me two little girls, May and Ada were their names; they were to go a grand picnic, nutting, and root-gathering, and blackberrying, and have tea in the wood, boiling their own kettle, and doing all those things which make the joy of a picnic. When the morning came, it rained, and they couldn't go. It could not be put off, for they were going home to town next day. It was *all* to be given up. Well, it was a terrible thing. They had been planning and counting upon it with never a thought of rain, or anything coming to prevent, for the weather had looked as settled as it could be for a long time, and I grieved for the little things. But it was very curious how differently they bore it. They both cried a good deal, and were very unhappy for a while, but after that, May looked up and said, "Well, it couldn't be helped, what had they better do?" and entered into all the plans for making amends for the disappointment. She made a pie, I remem-

ber, and learnt how to knit, and tidied some drawers, and at the end of the day, as she was going to bed, told me, "Well, Auntie, it's been a very nice day after all."

'And Ada?' said Helen, who had been listening intently all the time.

'Ah! Ada was not a pleasant picture. Nothing May could do, or I could do, or nurse could do, turned her mind from her one sorrow. She cried, and moaned, and fretted, and said how hard it was, and at last made herself quite ill, and everybody else very uncomfortable, and she had to go to bed. It certainly was anything but a nice day to her, poor child, but that was not *because* of the sorrow, or the loss of pleasure. Of the two, May might have felt it most, for certainly her chances of having such another pleasure, for ever so long, were of the smallest. But she, you see,' said Aunt Margaret, with her rare sweet smile, 'accepted it like a little child,—cried, and was comforted.'

'I see,' exclaimed Helen eagerly, 'that's what you want Katie, indeed all of us, to do, and you don't think Katie is altogether different from others, only has had a great trouble.'

'Exactly so,' agreed Aunt Margaret, 'I think Katie's work is like that of God's other children,—

to make the very best of what she has left to her, to use to the utmost what remains. I don't mind her thinking it hard, poor child, *I* don't see how she can well do otherwise just at present; especially,' continued the old lady, with a very quaint smile, 'as she takes for granted that all her powers and all God's gifts are taken away, when the real truth is, that only a part, and as far as the usefulness to others is concerned, not a very great part, is gone. It 's a terrible enough trial,' said the old lady, her eyes filling with tears, so that she had to take off her spectacles and wipe them before she could go on with her knitting 'for my blithe, active, wee Katie, without her taking ever so much more than the good God meant her to have. We must try and help her to see that there is something left, which may grow into a great deal some day, if she'll cultivate it and make the best of it. I must go to her now, dear, so good-bye; and you had better go and take a good walk, and come in fresh and bright to dinner. Make the best of your walking powers while you've got them, dear, for you don't know how some day you may feel you'd give the world to be able to do what you are doing now. I daresay Katie does often, poor dear child.' And the old lady went upstairs, full of the tenderest compassion for her niece,

and liking better than ever the sweet gentle girl, who was so ready to listen to reason, and be convinced; 'but she was going to make a grand mistake,' thought the old lady, with some amusement, 'teaching my little childlike Katie to feel herself a martyr. But the child 's too childlike, bless her, to have taken much of it in, except just on the surface. But it 's time she left off crying now, and betook herself to her pie and her knitting, like my wee May. Ah! little woman, you never thought what a lesson you were to old Auntie that day. Not you. How true it is that of such is the kingdom of heaven! God grant my little Kate may become one of them.'

Miss Herbert found it, however, a much more difficult task than she had anticipated to make 'Katie leave off crying;' it is much more easy to spoil than to unspoil, and there was no denying our invalid *was* spoiled. To every attempt of Miss Herbert to help her to see the brighter side, Katie turned a deaf ear, or commenced at once a moan about the hardness of her fate, or 'Auntie didn't understand,' till at last, strong in her great love, Aunt Margaret *determined* to make an impression, even at the cost of sharp pain to her darling. Katie herself would thank her one day, or, if she didn't do that, Miss Herbert was sure she would be thankful she had

come to feel differently. There was little need to seek an opportunity, for when Helen was out, or for any reason the aunt and niece were left alone, Katie's hardships and deprivations were always the burden of the conversation. Accordingly, one day when she finished a long complaint, with the words, 'But, however, one has got to be resigned,' Aunt Margaret, who had been knitting silently for some time, said quietly, 'Resigned to what, my dear?'

Katie's eyes opened wider, and she looked at Miss Herbert inquiringly, but as nothing further came, and the old lady was clearly expecting an answer, she replied—

'To God's will, I suppose. He has ordained that I should be ill, should have to lie here, able to do nothing—'

'Stay a moment, my child, before we proceed to enumerate all the blessings He has deprived you of; let us consider first, what *is* His will. You must of course be resigned to that, or you *will* be miserable. Now, what do you think His will is in this matter? for it is no light thing to mistake it,' continued Miss Herbert gravely, 'and cry out rebelliously that we cannot bear a cross He has never laid on us.'

'Well,' replied Katie, with some petulance, 'I

suppose no one will deny that I've got to lie here and do nothing, and—'

'Who told you so?' asked Miss Herbert quietly.

'Aunt Margaret,' said the invalid angrily, 'I'm not going to be laughed at! I won't bear it; it's hard enough!'

'Katie,' said her aunt gravely and sadly, 'I'm *not* laughing; I see nothing to laugh at in the matter, but much that is very sad and grievous. I ask you again, How do you know you have to lie and *do nothing?*'

The young girl was awed by Miss Herbert's look. Aunt Margaret was one to inspire respect, and at times a little fear, from the extreme gravity of her manner when she was sad or serious, and now she was both; but something in the grave sweet face reminded Katie of old days, when she had lived with 'Auntie' for months together, and hardly known a care or grief of any kind, and she could not keep up any vexation against her. It was in a subdued, sad tone she answered—

'I can't do anything worth doing; I wish I could; and I'd made so many plans of usefulness—I'd meant to do so much before this came.'

'Tell me some of them,' said Miss Herbert quietly. 'Forgive me, if I pain you, my child.'

Katie's lips quivered. She thought her aunt very unkind indeed. She 'd never known her like this before; but as she *was* so unkind there was no use fighting; she 'd just answer all her questions one by one, and then she couldn't say she was behaving ill. Aunt Margaret saw that some such thought was in her niece's mind, and was rather glad. If she *did* answer plain questions, it was just what would help her to see her own mistake best, so she took no notice of the impatience of the reply, 'Well, there was my district, and the school: I can't do them, can I?' but answered very quietly, 'And what else?'

'Helping mamma all ways,' said Katie, her eyes filling with the ready tears, 'and doing all manner of things for every one. You didn't think me so selfish and bad, Auntie,' she added reproachfully, 'in the old days, at Beechwood.'

'I don't know who said anything about "selfish and bad," my dear,' responded the old lady quietly, with a quaint smile hovering about her mouth, though she wouldn't let it come; 'but now, Katie, just let us have a quiet talk about all this. First, there 's the district. Now, if you are still wishing to do this, I know a nice, quiet, steady woman, who would do it admirably, coming to you for directions. With her you might do it all as well, and better than

if you could walk as much as ever. She would bring you the account, and arrange everything with you once a week, or twice if you liked.'

'That's not the same; that's not my doing it.'

'It is the same as to the thing being done, whoever does it, and that's what you want, I suppose? Mrs. Wells cannot do it without your help, for she has no money, and not your ready invention. Now,' continued Miss Herbert, who saw that Katie's strongholds of misery were breaking down one by one, 'she could also teach a day in the school, you choosing the books; and if you like preparing and writing out notes for the lesson, *that* would be doing a great deal. In fact, Katie, I rather think you and Mrs. Wells together would do it much better than you could alone even; and as *that* is out of the question,' she added tenderly, 'it is at any rate better than nothing.'

'But that was not all,' urged Katie; 'it wasn't only the poor people, Auntie, it was everybody I wanted to do for.'

'My little woman, you would have had plenty to do; but, Katie, I do not see that you are cut off doing anything except going errands for them.'

Katie laughed, in spite of herself, at the droll turn Aunt Margaret gave her sentence, but she was grave

again in a moment, and looking wistfully at the old lady, who had ceased her knitting and come to sit close by her, she said—

'O Auntie, indeed it is hard! You must not say it is not, for it's not true,' and Katie broke down then, and cried bitterly.

No one could have accused Aunt Margaret of harshness then. Her eyes were nearly as wet as Katie's, as she tenderly put her arms round her niece and fondled her, as if she had been a tiny child.

'My little darling,' she whispered, 'don't fancy I'm not sorry for you, and don't think it terribly hard; but that's just why it grieves me so to have you make it harder, by imagining all sorts of miseries which you are not called upon to bear. You *can* employ yourself on your couch, darling; you know you can write, and read, and work for others, in a hundred ways, if you set about it; and would it not be much better to do so than to go on fretting because you cannot do some things? God does not ask you to do *those*, darling; only what you *can* do.'

'I see, Auntie,' said Katie at last, after a long pause; 'you think I might try and employ myself more, and make myself useful to others too.'

'I do, darling, and I think you will see it too more and more. Katie, your cross is heavy enough, dear; it always will be. To one of your active disposition it will very likely always be sharp suffering to be so often tired, and to be debarred from doing so many things. It will be hard enough, dearest; don't you add to it, and take more of it than your Father means you to have.'

'I am tired,' said poor Katie; 'so very tired now!'

'You 'll rest a little, darling, won't you?' said Miss Herbert tenderly; 'and, Katie, you 'll forgive my having hurt you. I couldn't help it, dear. I didn't know how else to make you see what some day you will be glad to have seen. Ah, my little one, I wish I might bear some of your trouble for you.'

And Katie was kissed, and covered up, and the soft green blinds drawn down, and she was left alone —to sleep, Aunt Margaret hoped; to think, she herself wished.

And she *did* think more to the purpose than she had done for many a long day. Had she then been taking it all so much more hardly than was meant— than she need have done? Memory carried her back to her childhood, to her young life at school. Her longings to be 'made good,' even by suffering.

And this was the way she was to be answered. And it was God, the Father, whom she knew, she believed, (though in this distress she could not *feel* Him) to be good, and wise, and loving; and she—she had kicked against the pricks, rebelled, and refused to be taught or to learn. She did not make any plans for the future in that sad hour; she was too weary for that; she only tried to see where she had been so wrong, and recalled many a talk with her mother, in which *she* had tried to show her what she would not see, that God had not taken *all*,—some fragments were left, and these, like the lady her mother had spoken of, it was her duty to gather up. It was all very confused, and she was very unhappy, and the thoughts didn't tend to cheer her, though they had their use; but at last the puzzle was too much for her, and she fell asleep.

Refreshed and restored when she woke, she found Aunt Margaret sitting in the room waiting for her waking; but she was only very tender and loving, and didn't talk any more then. But they had many another long talk after, though it would take too long to tell how Katie progressed in that upward path, on which she took the first step that day, when she asked Auntie 'for some work' that very afternoon. It was a very dreary uphill path, for she had gone on

so long doing nothing, and indulged herself in complaining, that it was very difficult to get back to her old diligent habits, and try hard to be cheery. Retracing wrong steps is never easy work, and it is hardest of all when the body is weak and suffering; and things which are matters of no moment to strong people are all great works of self-sacrifice to the invalid. But it could be done, and it was done; Katie fought on bravely from that day; little by little she learned to employ herself, and to seek interests and usefulness outside. It would be too long to tell in how many little ways Aunt Margaret helped her; the daily suggestions of things which might be done, and the help she gave in the doing of them; the pretty bits of needlework she was sure 'so-and-so would value' from Katie; the letter she encouraged her to 'write instead of me, for I'm busy this morning;' nor how at last, though it was a long business, she persuaded Katie to install Mrs. Wells as her almoner and district visitor; and how the invalid found that in time she knew nearly as much about her people, and cared for them individually, as if she had known them personally. How grateful they were for the interest felt and the kind things done by the 'young lady, who was ill herself, and knew what sickness was,' Katie never knew fully,

though sometimes her heart ached with the overwhelming gratitude expressed 'for so very little.' Very earnestly did the young girl work on, full of sorrow for her past fault, and of steady determination 'to do better now;' to build anew the life which had been so grievously changed and saddened by her illness. To be everything she could to her mother, even while she felt keenly how much less she was than she might have been, had God willed it so; to do every little thing she could for any one that came in her path became her aim in life, to be steadily pursued as a daily work; and when at the end of her six months' stay Miss Herbert left them and went home, it was with a glad and hopeful heart: not that she felt her darling's trial to be *less*, but *greater*, than she had done; but she knew now she was on the right road, and had learnt the lesson of her little May, to make the best of what yet remained, and she did not despair that more sunshiny days might come in time.

CHAPTER V.

SUNSHINE AT LAST.

'Onward! the goal thou seekest
Is worthy the quest of a life;
And love can give to the weakest
Courage and strength for the strife.

High is the prize above thee,
In the light of that golden sky,
The ladder's *not all* in sunshine,
Whereon thou must climb so high.'

It was on just such a bright spring morning as the one on which we first saw her, that we find Katie Lawford again after two years. Two long years of confinement to her couch, of discipline, of suffering, years of conflict too, you can see by her face, which is older much than it was two years ago. Outwardly, very little is changed around her. It is the same room, with all its pretty furniture and arrangements for comfort and pleasure, only it has more the appearance now of a business room, and looks as if a good deal went on in it. There are one or two more pieces of furniture, with drawers and shelves, which speak of methodical arrangements and work to be

done. One of these, a marvel of roominess and convenience, in the smallest possible space, stands by Katie's couch, where her hand can easily reach all over it. The couch is the same, except that her position on it is a little less recumbent than of yore. Nothing is altered there but the face of the invalid, which has undergone a marvellous change since we saw her last. What if it does look older, more suffering in some ways? What it has lost in beauty of form and complexion it has gained in expression. A bright, happy look of 'life' has taken the place of the dissatisfied, complaining expression which, two years ago, too often was to be found there. She looks busy too, as well as happy, as if she had plenty to do, and found pleasure in the doing it. A pleasant little low laugh echoes from the couch while we are looking at her, and makes her mother look up cheerily from her writing at the table at the other end of the room. A very fair picture it is her eyes fall on. Katie, with eager and enjoying eyes, is dressing a beautiful wax-doll,—one of those marvels of beauty and naturalness which modern invention has made to delight the little ones of the present day. It is dressed like a baby, and is nearly as large; and as Katie bends over it, adjusting the delicate little garment, you feel that the destined owner of the beautiful thing will

not in this case take more pleasure out of it than the giver.

'Who is it for, Katie?' asked her mother, who had been away for a few days, and only returned the day before, or she who shared all her daughter's work and pleasure would have had no need to ask.

'It's for little Ellie Stanley, mamma; won't it be fun to send it her? You know the doctor told me one day how dull she was in bed, and shut up for so long. Everybody's afraid of them, because she's got scarlet fever, or has had, for she's getting better of that now, and can sit up. Don't you tell, dear; I don't mean any one to guess, where it comes from. Nursey's got a way of sending it, so that, if they do guess, they'll think of some one else. They don't know me, you know, mamma. Just fancy how she'll enjoy it, and how it will help to pass away the hours. It's got three sets of clothes in this box, and a bed at the bottom.' And Katie leant back to survey her work with all the pleasure of mingled satisfaction in its 'being really nice,' and in the fancy of the joy it would give.

Mrs. Lawford looked at her daughter with eyes overflowing with love and thankfulness. Invalid as she was still, and probably always would be (for Katie was as well now as she was ever likely to be, and this

was one of her best days), the mother felt as if she could not be grateful or thankful enough to the good God who had, step by step, led Katie to see that all was not taken from her, and that she might yet make her life, if she tried hard, one of usefulness, not without some pleasures; and she had tried hard, worked faithfully and steadily, battling with herself every inch of the way since Aunt Margaret had spoken so seriously to her two years ago, and now she was reaping some of the fruits of her labour, and finding happiness and reward in what she did.

'We must put it all away, mother!' Katie went on again, after a moment, 'before the doctor comes, because, if he sees it, it will spoil all the fun, for he may tell them, you know. There, she's finished now, and I've written those notes for you. What have I got to do next? By the way, where's Helen, I've hardly seen her yet?'

'You're such a little woman of business, Katie; I think she's gone for a walk.'

Katie gave a little stifled sigh. Even now, to hear of people going for a walk, always recalled her own walking days painfully; but she answered brightly, 'That's right, we will have a good talk after dinner. And then, to-morrow, Aunt Margaret will be coming. How funny! we have none of us met for these eigh-

teen months, and now we shall be all here together again !'

'I'm writing to Aunt Margaret, Katie, what shall I say for you ?'

'You may tell her the best piece of work she ever did was giving me Mrs. Wells as a "missing link," or whatever one should call her. She was here to-day, mamma. Auntie was quite right when she said I should get to manage almost better with her than by myself. Anyway, one can't flatter one's-self about doing much, or I might get conceited when the people are so horribly grateful ; that's one good thing,' finished the young girl, more to herself than aloud.

And presently there came a visit from Katie's old friend the doctor, and you would almost have thought she was his partner in his profession, of universal comforter and helper, by the many little contrivances she had ready for his various patients. A cushion for one, and a shade for some pair of weak eyes, and a story-book for a sick child. Katie didn't so much as know their names, and they did not know hers ; but it was wonderful what a world of life and interest her doctor had opened up to her in this way. Who so likely as the invalid who had suffered herelf, to know what would comfort and please some other

sufferer? She would not have said now that she hated sick people, and had enough of her own sickness to bear. She would almost have been vexed if she had not been told of any 'new case' which needed anything she could supply. Oftentimes nurse's fingers were kept as busy as her own, carrying out the funny little contrivances her inventive brain was always concocting.

Helen Clare, much as she had always admired Katie, was wellnigh lost in wonder at the progress she had made. She saw her consulted by her mother about everything, apparently always ready for new work, and getting through what seemed to Helen so much, that she wondered how it was possible in the time; for, as we said before, Helen was not over active or efficient herself. It seemed to her that Katie must be almost triumphant at what she had accomplished, at the progress she had made; and she longed to hear some expression of this from her friend. She could not understand the grave, patient look which, when she was not actually working, or eager about something, soon replaced the look of life and happiness that came when she was busy.

Something of this sort she expressed one day, when they were alone together, and half asked Katie 'if she didn't feel how gloriously she had conquered.'

'Conquered what?' asked Katie quietly. She was working at some of her never-ceasing employments, and lying back on her couch, and she didn't look up.

'Why, you know'—Helen hesitated a little; somehow she felt as if they had changed places, and Katie were the matured older spirit now—'you know you weren't always like this, dear.'

'Oh, you're thinking of the old naughty time, when you were here before. Well, it would be poor work if I weren't a little better than that. I wish you'd forget it, Helen.'

'I don't want to forget it, darling! I think you must be so glad, so pleased to feel you have conquered it all and come to the light. Only think how many people you make happy now, and are useful to. Your mother was telling me. O Katie, don't you feel glad, satisfied now?'

'What do you expect me to say, Helen, dear?' Katie asked very softly, and lifting her eyes to her friend's face, 'that this is the lot I should have chosen?'

'Well,' responded Helen doubtfully, 'not exactly; but don't you feel you have got your wish of being good, and doing good to so many, and being almost more useful and valuable than if you were well?'

'I cannot tell about that, Helen, dear. I'm very

glad I'm so busy, and have plenty to do; and it's very nice when I hear of giving pleasure; but I'm not good, as you think me, Helen. I'm sure I must be bad, very bad,' she went on, her eyes filling with tears, 'for I cannot get to feel so grateful and thankful as I read of other people being, in far worse troubles than mine. I must do the best I can, and be as busy as I can, for it doesn't do to think too much. Are you disappointed, Helen, dear?' she went on after a pause, with a bright smile.

'I can't help being a little,' Helen said. 'I thought you couldn't but feel satisfied, almost glad—glad to have won such a victory over yourself—to have conquered so much, got on so far;' and Helen stopped, looking at her friend with eyes overflowing with love and admiration.

'In short,' responded Katie lightly, 'you meant me to feel glad "with the stern joy which warriors feel, in foemen worthy of their steel." Well, there's a good deal in that; only, you know, one may feel sorry too that the enemy was so bad and strong, as well as glad our steel has wounded him. And then, Helen, dear'—Katie was grave again for a little—'I've not quite, or nearly, conquered my "foemen." And every day I see *sadly* how little ground I've gained. But some day'—she went on gaily, hearing

her mother's step in the passage—'I'll write all my experiences, and give them to the world, for the benefit of invalids and their advisers. Letters, mother!' she cried eagerly, as Mrs. Lawford entered. 'That's right; one, two, three, four. Helen,' laughed the invalid, as she gathered them up delightedly, 'whatever else you do, if ever you are ill, cultivate your correspondence. One doesn't feel half so cut off from the outside world if one makes full use of the post—known and unknown correspondents, you know; and as one will most likely never see them, there's no danger of the catastrophe occurring as in *L'Amie Inconnue!*'

Helen laughed, and left her friend to the enjoyment of her letters. Somehow she was saddened by what she had heard. It looked like a forced making the best of things, instead of being naturally happy and at ease. But Helen fell into the usual error, of forgetting that moral battles are not fought once and for ever. It is *always* working, always fighting to win, or to keep the ground. She wanted to ask Aunt Margaret about it, for she was not sufficiently at home with Mrs. Lawford to talk openly with her about either Katie's or her own difficulties and puzzles; but when Aunt Margaret came, there was so much to tell, and they were so busy, that some time passed

without Helen finding an opportunity. And so it happened that nothing was said on the subject till one Sunday afternoon, when, Mrs. Lawford being out, the three found themselves together once again. They had been telling Katie of the sermon; and the text, 'Be not weary in well-doing,' had been the subject of much quiet talk.

Presently Katie said, 'It is rather well it says that "Be not weary," for one gets on so very little, even with trying hard, that one is sure to get discouraged. It sometimes seems as if the more one tried the worse one became.'

'It *seems* so,' responded Aunt Margaret, who detected the sound of weariness and trouble in the voice, hard as Katie was evidently trying to be neither bitter nor melancholy. 'Haven't you found out the reason?'

'No,' said Katie. 'I wish I could.'

'Do you remember the hill near my house, Katie, and how, when you were a little girl, you used to think it such a little hill; and one day we started to climb it, and you thought you never should get to the top. You said it was such an aggravating hill; there was always another on the top when you got to it.'

Katie laughed; 'Yes, and sat down and cried, I

remember, because of it, Auntie; it was the queerest shaped hill, wasn't it?'

'It's just like the hill of life, little woman. When you think you've gained your point, you have to go on to something higher yet, which was not visible before; and you feel just as far from the top as ever.'

'Will it always be so?' asked Katie, after a long pause, very gravely now.

'Always, in a measure, I think, darling. The standard rises rapidly, Katie, and the higher it rises the less perfect seems your work. Yours has risen much,' Miss Herbert added, with a funny little smile, 'since I was here before.'

'Why?' asked Katie, only half aloud.

'Why?' responded the old lady, 'why, because you've worked up to it; and the more you work up, the higher are the views of His "upper alps," which God gives us. And you find it hard, my little Katie, because, to change our comparison, you are rowing up the stream, not drifting with it.'

'Will it always be hard?' asked Katie; 'because—because it is so weary sometimes. I feel as if I should like to lie down and rest, and have done; but that's wicked, I know, only one does seem to make so little way.'

'Those who steer up stream, with a high wind

against them, always feel they've only made a very little way in comparison to the loss of breath and weary hands: but to those on the shore it does not always seem so. Besides, darling, the wind is not always equally high, nor are the rapids *all* along the river. There come hard, difficult times, dark times, and then presently the wind drops or shifts to your side, and the tide runs less strong, and you get on swimmingly for a little, and get your breath again. And there's another little lesson we all have to learn, or should learn, only some never learn it, and that is to have patience with ourselves.'

'With ourselves?' said both girls in astonishment.

'Yes, I think so; just as much as with others; always supposing we are rowing up stream, you know, trying hard to conquer the bad in us, and cultivate the good. Then, when we get discouraged, we mustn't throw it up, but be patient; and remember that what we are trying for is *perfection*, and so great a thing cannot be, and God does not intend should be, attained in a day, or in two years, or'—she concluded in a low voice—'in this life.'

There was a long silence. The twilight was deepening, and one little star was shining through the window right upon Katie's face. Presently she broke the silence with—

'It's a great comfort sometimes to think that "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life." One does not need it always, for when one is busy one doesn't think about things being hard; but one can't *always* be busy.'

'But the more we are so, the better and cheerier we shall be, I think,' said Aunt Margaret cheerfully.

'Yes; and after all,' said Katie in a much happier tone than she had spoken in yet, 'it doesn't much signify about being tried here, if only we are sure we are trying to be good, and to do what little we can, as well as we can—even if it's only a little it's something, and some day it may get to be more; and some day, too, we shall see why everything that troubles us has been allowed to be; and then,' she added in a low reverent voice, 'we shall only be so sorry not to have done more and better, and always trusted, and always remembered, how God loved us.'

And we may leave her there, this little Katie, whose illness was so heavy a burden, and whose uphill fight seemed so hard. Nor have we wrongly named her's a victory, though to herself it would never seem one here. To those friends who watched her lovingly, to the mother who knew her best, it appeared not one victory only, but a succession of

them,—a constant daily fighting of the 'good fight.' And as years went on, we need not doubt that she, in common with all who are faithful and true, found the fight easier, and the way less hard,—not much, perhaps, for fresh efforts require ever fresh strength, and a more willing heart, and in that they 'forget the things that are behind, and press forward,' eagerly, 'to those that are before;' the ground gained seems poor and little in comparison with the height of love and duty to which earnest hearts aspire; but of one thing we may rest assured, that whatever good or painful thing the coming years held for our Katie, they brought her the fulfilment of her old wish, that she might be 'made good;' for are we not promised that 'they who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall' one day 'be filled'?

LILIAN EARNCLIFFE'S DREAM.

'Lovingly they come to help us, when our faith is cold and weak,
Guiding us along the pathway to the blessed home we seek;
In our hearts we hear their voices breathing sympathy and love,
Echoes of the spirit language in the sinless world above.
Seeing all our guilt and weakness, looking down with pitying eyes,
For the foolish things we cling to, and the joys that we despise;
They have been our ministering angels since the weary world began,
And thus still are watching o'er us for His sake who loved man.'

LILIAN was a little girl of ten or eleven years old. She lived in a pretty village, where she had many friends, and had a very kind mother, and a brother and sister of whom she was very fond, and who dearly loved her. What a happy little girl! Yet our Lilian's life was not quite such a sunshiny one as you would suppose from all this, for Lilian was an invalid! She was not ill, as you were, little reader, when you had the measles, or the scarlet-fever, and were so very miserable for some days or weeks, followed by the time when you were getting better; and your mother seemed to have nothing to do but sit by your bed, or

rock you on her knee; and your father brought you pretty things from town; and aunties wrote letters to the little sick child, or sent toys and books to beguile the long hours and days when you could not go out; and then there was the first coming down-stairs, and the first going out, when everybody was so glad to see you down again. And when, at last, you were quite well, you only remember the time as one which was very wretched at first, and then rather pleasant, because you had no lessons to do, and everybody petted and attended to you.

Lilian was not ill like that; she had been ill so long she hardly remembered a time when she was well, she was only able to move about a little in the house, and be wheeled out in a perambulator in the summer days; in winter she could not go out at all. Yet, though it was very sad for Lilian to have to lie so much on her couch, and not to go out, or go to the pleasant Christmas parties, as her sister Clara and brother Harry did, or work in the garden, and play, and go to school, Lilian was not, by any means, unhappy. She did her lessons with her mother when she was well enough, and she could sew very neatly and make all kinds of pretty things, because her friends were all so sorry for the little invalid, that they sent her patterns and taught her how to use them.

Then Aunt Susan, who lived in London, often sent new pictures and books; and Lilian could read long before Clara, who was only a year younger, but who played and ran about so much, that she did not learn so fast as she might have done.

Yet when Lilian was in an unhappy mood, which happened rather often, for her illness made her very sensitive and thoughtful, she felt as if she would be perfectly happy to be like Clara. She would give anything to be able to run errands like Clara, and be as useful to her mother; for Lilian, like many of us, was apt to think that it would be a great deal pleasanter to have things different from what they were. She forgot that she could be useful, if she liked, in a great many ways that her sister could not. It was true, Clara was good-nature itself, she was never tired of fetching things for her darling Lilian, or of taking care of her garden where she could not work herself. She was always ready to carry the gift of broth or jelly to the sick woman down in the village, and did her more good by her bright looks and kind words, than even the nourishing food she carried could do. To Clara, who had never been ill for a day in her life, it seemed the height of misery not to be able to run about, and her pity and love for Lilian knew no bounds. If one of their friends, or even Harry,

ventured occasionally to suggest that 'Lilian might just as well do this bit of sewing, or mend that kite, or plait that whip-lash, while they went to play, as she had nothing else to do,' Clara was up in arms directly, and very angry at their unkindness. 'Lilian was ill; *they* did not know what it was to be always ill. She was sure she should do nothing but cry if she were like her, and how patiently Lilian bore it.'

Still the fact remained, in spite of the little champion's defence, that Lilian was not quite so quick at seeing the things she *could* do as she might have been, while she longed and wished to do those she could not. She was a good, obedient child, and if her mother wished her to do anything, she did it cheerfully and at once; she really wished and tried to be good, but she had been a little spoiled by the care and attention her illness required, and she was so accustomed to *receive* from others, that she forgot sometimes that she should also *give* and *share*. When two or three new story-books came from Aunt Susan, it seemed quite natural they should all be for her; and while she was reading one, she did not think of lending the others to some friend or sick child in the village, as Clara certainly would have done.

In short, our little Lilian was in danger of becoming selfish and taken up only with herself. It made

her mother very anxious to see this, and she did not know well how to help her, for Lilian generally was ready to do anything her mother asked her, though she did not think of it herself; and she was apt to fret a great deal, and be unhappy if she were found fault with. One Sunday morning, after church, Clara came in joyously with some snowdrops, the very first that had flowered that year, and they had blossomed since morning. Lilian loved *all* flowers very dearly, but most of all the snowdrop. The winter was her most dreary time; and when the snowdrops came, they always seemed to speak to her of spring and happier days. This year they were later than usual, and she had anxiously watched for them.

Clara had planted some in the most sheltered part of the garden, and had been to them every day to bring in the first whose heads should peep above the ground. And to-day, here they were, six little dainty white things, looking almost like snowflakes turned to flowers by the spring sun.

Lilian kissed and fondled them almost as if they were living things, and they were put into a glass close beside her couch. It seemed as if they were dearer than ever this year, they had been so long in coming.

Presently, Clara and her mother came in, ready for

church, and as she stood beside her sister, Clara said, 'Lilian, would you mind very much sending one or two of the snowdrops to little Mary Wilson? She has been in bed so long, and her mother told me she said yesterday, she thought the snowdrops would never come.'

'Oh, no!' said Lilian, 'I cannot; not my own dear snowdrops—I've waited for them so long. There will be some more to-morrow, and she can have them then.'

'Well, never mind,' said kind Clara, 'she does not know any are out, so it will be no disappointment to her; and you are so fond of them, I believe you think they are fairy things, Lilian, and can talk to you.'

'Come, Clara,' said their mother, 'it is time for us to go.'

The mother's face was grave and sad as she bent to kiss her sick child.

'Mother!' said Lilian, 'you are not angry with me, are you? Am I wrong not to send them?'

'I'm not angry, Lilian, only sorry—sorry that my little girl should have so many opportunities of being kind, and should think of herself first of all. What were we reading this morning, Lily, about our Saviour who pleased not Himself, and was the servant of all? and you said you wished so, you could be His disciple,

and had been among the little children whom He blessed.'

Lilian was left alone; she heard the door close after her mother and sister, and felt very sad. There were the snowdrops still on the table, but where was now the pleasure of having them? They only seemed to say, 'Unkind Lilian, you should have let us go!' There were her books,—her favourite hymn-book with the hymn she would say to her father after tea, and her Bible, and the Sunday stories she was so fond of, all within her reach. Kind, thoughtful Clara, never forgot to leave them so, but they only reminded her of Clara's unselfishness; Lilian could not read, she could only think. Then it came into her mind how Harry had wanted a new cover for his Bible, and her mother had given the cloth and she had never made it, though she had meant to do so. But then she did want to finish the mat that she was making, and that was for somebody—for Aunt Susan. Was she always to give up everything she was doing, and to do whatever any one asked her? Poor Lilian was getting puzzled and unhappy. All alone, with her sad thoughts, and her eyes full of tears, the more Lilian tried to think, the more tired and miserable she became, till at last her thoughts became more and more confused, and presently she fell asleep.

She dreamed she was in a large and beautiful garden full of brilliant flowers and shrubs. Beautiful butterflies flitted from flower to flower, and bright insects ran upon the ground. In the garden were children of all ages : some were playing merrily in parties on the grass, or gathering the fruit and flowers that grew so richly around them,—some were weaving the gathered blossoms into garlands and wreaths. A flood of glorious sunshine poured into some parts of the garden, while others lay more in the shade. There were children also in the shadier paths ; some were sick, and lay on little couches, or moved about slowly, by the help of crutches. As Lilian gazed earnestly on the scene, she perceived that the air was full of tiny white forms, like flakes of snow. In the sunshine as in the shade, they hovered about, sometimes falling to the earth and vanishing quickly, like snow on an April day. But as she looked more attentively, and at those nearer to where she stood, Lilian saw that they were not snow, but beauteous little fairy-like creatures in human form, whose business evidently was with the little children in the garden. She saw them float near to one, and whisper something in its ear, and the child forthwith looked round, and generally moved as if obeying an order given, or a

wish expressed. But it was not always so. Many of the children were either too much engaged in their play, or with themselves, to mind the whispers of the little messengers; and, where this was the case, it soon appeared that fewer of the snowy little fairies approached them. Some cross and solitary children hardly ever saw or heard them; and, as Lilian could gather from their talk as they passed her, they hardly believed that there were any fairy messengers at all. Not so others. One little girl in particular was for some time so near to her, that Lilian could watch her easily, and even hear some of the messengers whisper their errand to her. Sometimes it was to help some child who had got entangled in the briers, which grew thickly at the edge of the garden,—sometimes to comfort one who had fallen on the path and got hurt, or to soothe some little one who had been left out of the others' more lively play. Busy and happy as this little girl was—and she played as merrily as any, and wove her garlands and gathered the flowers as diligently as the most diligent—it never seemed as if she were too busy to listen to, and obey, the whisper of the messengers. And Lilian thought that they came to her far more than to all the rest. It seemed sometimes as though she were always listening to the

tiny fairies as they crowded round her, and yet she had always had more than time to do each errand before another came,—sometimes it was only to speak a kind word to one close to her, or to help to pluck a flower for one whose hand was too small to do it: but, however small and short the message, it was rare that the little maiden failed to comply with it; and, while apparently so fully occupied by the heavenly messengers, she seemed to get on as fast as any one of the children with her own garlands or her plays. Lilian soon saw that many of these errands, and those to which she listened most readily, and ran most quickly to fulfil, were about another child, who was in a shady part of the garden very near to her —one of the sick ones. She moved about a little in the part of the garden where she was, but she could not go on to the lawn, where most of the children played, and where, as it seemed to her, the brightest flowers grew. There were many flowers close beside her,—flowers which only needed the sun to fall on them to be as bright and fragrant as the brightest and sweetest in the garden: but this little maiden's part was overshadowed by a tree, and it was not often that the sun pierced through the thick leaves, and reached her where she lay. The little messengers, indeed, were as busy in her part of the

garden as in any other; but when they whispered to her, she hardly seemed to hear, or her eyes were so dim with crying, she could not see to what they pointed. The little girl Lilian had been watching was constantly coming to her, bringing her flowers and fruit, cheering her with her kind words and caresses, and making sunshine in the dark path by her bright looks; but the little invalid could never see or hear the messengers who came to her, so that often they would turn away disheartened from trying to tell her their errand, and whisper it into the readier ear of her sister. Yet the poor child longed to hear, longed to receive the messages, and, as she thought, longed to obey them too; but she *would* go on thinking the messengers could not come into the dark path, and that their words of kindness were of no use to her, who could move so little. *She* could not run to that child who had fallen on the path at the other side the grass,—she could not help to disentangle that other whose frock had caught in the tiresome briers of the hedge, as her sister did. No: she certainly could not; for she could only move a little, and slowly. In no way could she get beyond the path where she had been placed. But then, as Lilian could hear perfectly, the messengers never asked her to do *these* things.

Those who came to her asked her to weave the garlands of flowers the others brought her, or to answer kindly and lovingly when her sister came to her, or to take care of some other child's garland while she went to play. All Lilian's interest was excited about this poor child. Her face was turned from her, so that she could not see it; but it seemed to her that she knew all the thoughts, and heard all the longings and sad complainings, of the little girl. And she could see, what the child could not, the many messengers hovering over her, or turning sadly away without delivering the message, which could be given to no one else, because it was meant for this one alone. If she had watched the happy child earnestly, Lilian watched this sad one with tenfold more eagerness. Besides, she seemed to know so much more about this one. She heard the messages almost before they were spoken. It seemed now to her, in her excitement, as if all the fairies in the garden were clustering round this one little child, who alone of all the children would not, or could not, listen to them. Sick and lame as she was, it seemed to Lilian she was the most favoured of them all, because so many of the heavenly messengers came to her. She forgot the merry children, and the bright flowers and sunshine of the garden. She

forgot even the bright child she had watched so long in her longing desire to help this one,—to make her see that the messengers were all within her reach,—speaking to her every moment, while she would not listen. It was all in vain. The child's eyes were so fixed on the brighter part of the garden, she could see nothing nearer. She longed so much to mingle with the merry party on the lawn, and to hear the messengers she thought she saw *there*, that she never noticed those nearer. The flowers her sister had brought her fell from her lap into the dust of the walk, —she crushed many others in her restless and impatient efforts to move towards the sunny lawn. It seemed to Lilian, now, that the time was coming to an end. In her eagerness she felt that the only hope for the child was to awake now from her delusion about the messengers being only in the sunny part of the garden. Already many messengers had fallen to the ground, and disappeared; others were turning sadly away, as Lilian thought, for the last time. In a little while it would be, perhaps, too late; many of her companions had left her already because she would not mind them, but was always looking and longing for the sunny lawn! If the messengers all left her too, *how* sad and lonely she would be! As these thoughts passed through Lilian's mind, her

eagerness to warn her became too strong to be repressed. She pressed against the barrier which separated her from the garden, but it would not give way, and let her through. 'If somebody would only tell her,' she thought. If they would but show her how many messengers are round her, how many more than in that place where she wants to be. If she could only see, before it is too late, how many are behind her. There! another such a beautiful one has faded away! none ever will know what it said, because she would not listen! In her love and earnestness, Lilian called out loud to the child to listen. She turned towards her, and Lilian caught sight of her face. It was her own! This misguided child, whose blindness she so pitied, was herself. She awoke. The bright garden, the merry children, the fairy messengers, the brilliant flowers, had all vanished—all but the soft beams of the setting sun, which were streaming in at the window almost into her face, and in the sunshine stood the glass of early snowdrops on the table beside her sofa—the snowdrops which she had refused to share with her little sick friend in the village. One more lost opportunity of being kind, one more disregarded message of the snowy messenger. How many such crowded now into Lilian's awakened memory! The

tears that had filled the eyes of the dreaming Lilian at the sad blindness of her unknown self overflowed as she recalled the real opportunities she had lost. They could not return, most of them were gone for ever; like the disregarded messengers of the garden, they had faded away; but others might come, perhaps it was not yet too late. As she lay thinking, the door opened, and Clara bounded in, followed by her mother.

'Here she is,' said the happy child, 'what has she been doing with herself while we have been away? Why, I declare, mother, her books are all just where I put them. She has not opened one: I do believe she has been asleep. Why, Lily, darling, what is the matter?'

Lily hesitated.

'Do you think, Clara,' she said at last, 'it is too late to—to—take the snowdrops to Mary—now? I would so like to send them, but I 'm afraid it 's too late.

'Oh no, it isn't! I may go, mother, may I not?' cried Clara. 'I 'll be back again before it 's dark. Do let me.'

The mother gave her consent. The six snowdrops were put in a tiny basket, and Clara ran off on her errand, saying, 'Mary will be so pleased; I wish you could see her when she gets them.'

And then with her arms about her mother's neck, Lilian told her wonderful dream, and the thoughts that grew from it, and finished with 'Oh! mother dear, I see it all now, and how selfish I have been, and how many things I might do that I've not done. Will you remind me, whenever you see a messenger come, and I do not listen? Oh! mother! you *don't* think it is too late.'

'It is never too late, darling,' replied her mother, 'for any of us to try harder to do right, and to obey the messages our Heavenly Father is always whispering to us. And, Lilian, there is this about your dream which I think you missed seeing in your life. God only asks you to do the things you *can* do; He does not expect you to do the same sort of things as Clara does when He has not given you the power to run about. The messages that come to you are different, and you need not fret after hers.'

And so endeth Lilian's Sunday dream, and we do not doubt that before the week was passed, Harry did not need to ask again for his new Bible to be covered. And though no change came suddenly over Lilian after that day, she did not ever forget her dream, and every day she became more watchful to do for others all that she could, and more grateful for all that they did for her; and before very long,

she had learned that, like the Lilian of her dream, she had as many and as great opportunities of being useful and kind as any other little girl, now that she watched for them, and tried to let none slip past her, and be wasted and lost.

WHO IS YOUR NEIGHBOUR?

Thus said Jesus, 'Go and do
As thou wouldst be done unto:'—
Here thy perfect duty see,
All that God requires of thee.

If thou wouldst obtain the love
Of thy gracious God above,
Then to all His children be
What thou wouldst they should to thee.

ONE of the most touching stories of the New Testament is the one which, told to the lawyer who sought to gain eternal life, has come down to us to show us what our duty to our neighbour is, at this present day.

I like to fancy the Jew starting on his journey. He has occasion, perhaps business takes him, or he goes to see some friend, to go down from Jerusalem to Jericho. It is not a very long journey, though it is fraught with some peril, as the portion of desert which has to be crossed is sometimes infested with robbers.

However, we do not hear that our traveller was afraid, probably he would have regarded the affectionate fears of his family rather as foolish on their part; so he bids them good-bye cheerily, and goes on his journey.

'And he fell among thieves.' He was only one, the robbers were many, and they take all from him, clothing, money, everything he has, and besides, wound him sadly when he resists their endeavours to rob him. And when they have got all they can they leave him there by the way-side, careless whether he lives or dies. And he is likely to die. It is no way-side in England where he is left; the noonday burning sun of the desert beats upon his uncovered head as he lies on the sand. His wounds pain him doubly in that dry heat, swarms of flies and insects teaze him, and what air there is, hot and unrefreshing, only serves to raise the desert sand which gets into his wounds. He thinks of his friends, of his home, of his life so nearly ended, of unfinished work, unfulfilled resolves. It is a very dreary hour; and it is hardly likely any one will pass that way. They might, but the chances he thinks are against him. Perhaps it will be too late if any one does come. He feels faint and thirsty. No! he will have to die there, all alone in the desert.

He hears a step: some one is coming along. He can hardly lift his head, or raise his voice so as to be heard, but he tries. He sees a priest, passing, one of his own countrymen, a Jew; surely he is not going on without so much as speaking to him. Alas! the steps die away—the priest is hurrying on to Jerusalem. He might be contaminated, or get into some trouble. His mind is full of sacrifices and services, which are his business, he thinks. This, of touching a wounded man, is not his, so he passes on. Will he not be haunted for days by those pleading eyes, that now ask for help, and wish many times, when it is too late, that he *had* stopped, and done what was needful? Meantime, while he is pursuing his way, the poor sufferer, disheartened and hopeless, is bearing as best he may the hot sun, and pain of his wounds.

Steps, again. A Levite! surely *he* will help, though the priest did not. How anxiously his ear is strained to catch the sounds. Yes! he really is coming nearer, he is close to him, looking at him. But he only looks, he gathers his robe closer round him, lest it should touch the poor wounded man, and 'passes by on the other side.'

And now, all hope is over. His own countrymen pass him by. Perhaps, his conscience whispers that

he has passed sufferers by under not very dissimilar circumstances. Weary and hopeless, he doesn't even raise his head when the regular jog-trot of a mule is heard afar off. He is going to die, he has no strength left to look up and see who it is. And if he had, he would hardly have been much cheered by what he saw. The man comfortably journeying along, on his sleek mule, is a Samaritan, looked down upon and hated by the stricter Jews, such as our poor wounded friend. He can expect nothing from a Samaritan—why should he? He would not, in prosperous days, have exchanged a greeting with him—yet he can't help hoping nevertheless. If the man should help him, how differently he would behave in future, should he get well. But as he approaches, he thinks how often he has made contemptuous speeches about Samaritans, and hope dies away.

Seemingly the good man on his mule has no such thoughts. He stops and dismounts, and comes close up to the poor sufferer with a cheery word of sympathy, 'Why, my poor fellow, how came you in this plight, robbed and wounded; but I think I can help you, I'm something of a doctor myself.' And going to his saddle-bags, well filled with all that he was likely to require, he brings oil and wine for the wounds, and

dresses them, and gives the thirsty man drink from his water bottle, and lifting him on his mule, steadying him the while with supporting arm, he walking by the side, presently they come to an inn. Perhaps the Samaritan is well known there, having often occasion to spend the night on his travels. At any rate the master of the inn receives him and his poor wounded companion, and the good man takes care of him. The next day he has to leave and go home, but he does not leave without finishing his work, providing for the needs of the sick man until he should be able to provide for himself. The landlord will see to him and he pays him for the care. 'It is my business,' says he, 'here is money; if you spend more, I am often passing this way; when I come again I will repay you what you spend, only see to him that he wants for nothing.' How satisfied and content the good man must feel when he goes home on his mule. Not that he feels he has done anything very extraordinary; he does not need thanks. Probably when he was thanked he would say, 'Nay now, my good friend, say nothing about it, it is all quite natural; you would have done the same by me, had I needed it,' and the grateful Jew would feel more and more repentant for all his despising of the poor Samaritans.

I daresay some may say, '*This* does not apply to me: *I* can't think how any one could be so cruel as that priest and that Levite, and leave the poor man to die in the road. *I* could not be so inhuman.' Well, I daresay not. In our day it is not so common as at Jerusalem, in the time about which the story is written, that men should be attacked by highwaymen and left half dead; but these stories are intended for *our* learning, and so let us try and find some way of applying this which will touch us. For, let us remember that there are many little ways in which all can help their neighbours, without waiting for them to be in the *great* troubles of life, when there is rarely any want of true Samaritan kindness, and self-sacrificing neighbourliness, especially among the poor. For the sick, there is often so much consideration that there is no need of pressing the lesson of the good Samaritan home, on that side. But there are other times in which we might help neighbours besides times of sickness. For instance, that poor woman in the next court. Her children are so young, and so many of them,—true, some go to school, but when she wants to clean up or do a bit of washing, the baby is sorely in her way, and a neighbour might take it awhile, as also that next child who is only a baby too, and keep them out of

the way for a bit, and amuse them. It is such *every* day little acts of kindness which everybody *can* do; and for that very reason, many people don't do them, because it is not their business, or it might have been done by some one else. It is sometimes said that it is easier to do a great act of kindness than the daily small ones, but it is the daily ones we are called upon to do.

Few are called to active service,
Few great sacrifice to make;
All to *daily acts* of *kindness*,
All in duty's claims partake.

I once read a story of a little girl who was set by her mother to try how much good she could do in an hour; it was wonderful how many things she found to do, first her little sister wanted her to help to make a doll's frock, then her brother wanted her to look out some words in the dictionary for his task, then she read aloud to an old lady who was blind. Now, I daresay, for the sake of the story, a good many things were made to come in the hour, which might usually be spread over the day; but if we were to do all we could think of, for each other and our neighbours every day, and put it before us as 'something to try for,' I think we should find plenty. Each one can tell for himself a great deal better than any one for him, *what* he can do for his

neighbour, in little things or great things: but the story tells one or two things very clearly. It tells us that our neighbour is *any one* who wants anything that we can give; it does not matter whether he is rich or poor, or whether he is particularly agreeable, or whether we know him, or care for him. Then we are to do *all* we can for him, not to do a little and then let him go without the rest. Then, if *we* see the need, it becomes *our* business; we are not to leave the kind deed undone, because some one else may come and do it. If *we* see that it *wants doing*, we are the people to do it. 'Each one for himself,' was not the motto of the good Samaritan, nor yet 'I'll not meddle with what does not concern me: he is not one of my people,' but rather, 'Let me do what good *I can* in the world; all I *can* do which I see wants doing.'

GO THOU AND DO LIKEWISE!

LITTLE MEGGIE,

THE WEAVER'S DAUGHTER.

Little acts of kindness, trifling though they are,
How they serve to brighten this dark world of care.
Little acts of kindness, oh! how potent they
To dispel the shadows of Life's cloudy way.

Little acts of kindness, nothing do they cost,
Yet, when they are wanting, Life's best charm is lost.
Little acts of kindness, richest gems of earth,
Though they seem but trifles, priceless is their worth.

IN a big room in one of the large old-fashioned houses in Spitalfields lived Karl Bernard, the silk-weaver. Some of these houses are large, and rich folk once lived in them; but they have gone away to other parts of the town now, and in the large old-fashioned rooms, families of very poor people live. What stories those rooms would tell if they could speak, of all that has happened in their old worn walls, of the rich and great, and large and small

people, who have lived in them. But with that we have nothing to do, only with Karl Bernard and Little Meggie, in the big room, divided in two by a curtain, and the tiny cupboard of a room next to it, on the third storey of the big old house in that Spital-fields lane. Perhaps you may think it an odd name, this of Karl Bernard; but Karl's father was a German, and had come over long ago, and married an English wife, but he called his boy Karl for love of his old country and home. There was not much foreign about Karl except his name; and a certain handiness about cooking, and making the most of things, and keeping his house neat and clean, which many of our poor men, and indeed poor women, do not possess. But he was a grave, silent man—what his neighbours called 'shut up.' He did not care to go among them, or talk to them. Very honest and saving, he paid his rent and worked hard, and tried to get work, and in the bad times often nearly starved rather than go into debt or be beholden to any. He was not an ill-natured or cold-hearted man, but ever since his young wife's death, he had liked best to live quite quiet, and see nobody, except the one treasure of his heart, his little daughter Meggie. Poor Karl! the world had gone hardly with him. He had had a great many troubles and sorrows, and they had rather

soured him to all the world except Meggie, as sorrows will when we take them hardly. He had had many disappointments, and every year that silk-weaving trade got worse, less and less was done by the hand-looms, and more by steam and machinery; and steady and hard-working as Karl was, he had difficulty enough to keep the wolf from his door. But there was still Meggie, and she was a real sunbeam in that dark, old house; such a bright, happy, loving child she had always been, and so clever. It was Meggie who kept the room clean, and did everything for her father. She kept his house, so to speak, mended his clothes, cooked the frugal dinner when there was any to cook, and kept all as clean, and bright, and fresh in that poor room as in the handsomest house in London. And she did something else for her father which he did not know of. Harmless and inoffensive as he was, Karl's silent, close ways, which they called sulky and proud, would have made many enemies among the neighbours, but for Meggie. Who could resist her? Who so ready as Meggie to mind a neighbour's baby, while its mother went to the shop? Who so kind about bringing some toddling little creature safe home from school? Every one was sure of a bright look and smile from Meggie as she went past the open doors on her way

to and from school; for Karl wanted his darling to learn everything she could, and though she could not *always* go to school, because of the many things to do at home, she went as often as ever she could, and she worked so hard to learn everything, that she was the forwardest in the school, as she was the pet everywhere. And some of the love which seemed to spring up all round her flowed over to her father, whom she loved so fondly. After all, they said, proud and surly as he might be (he really was only sad, and silent, and solitary in his ways), he was honest and hard-working, and paid his way; besides, he was Meggie's father.

I don't think Meggie could help loving and being kind to everybody who came in her way, and plenty of people did come in her way in that crowded Spitalfields lane; but the little maiden had her own plans and desires, which she worked at very steadily. Sunny and light-hearted as she seemed to every one, like a bright bit of summer in the dark house, Meggie had her grave, earnest thoughts, her purpose in life; more thoughts, and graver, than little maidens of eleven years old generally have when they are in more comfortable circumstances. Meggie knew what it was to be hungry and tired, and though she worked with *a will*, and put her heart in it, she often

wished she had more time for school, and was not so tired at nights. Besides, she was her father's friend and companion, and shared all his thoughts. She knew all about the work stopping and the steam machinery, and the few orders that came to the Spitalfields weavers for velvet and silk fabrics, and Meggie's great longing was to do something that could earn money as well as save it. She knew how to mend, and turn, and patch her own clothes and her father's (and so did he, for he was very clever with his hands, and had taught Meggie many things), so as not to need many new ones, and yet be always tidy and clean; but Meggie did long to earn some money, and really help her father, for she did not know all the help her love and cheerfulness were to him, though she knew he could not have lived without her. Karl had taught her well, and was himself a thoughtful, religious man; and if his religion was a little grave and sad, yet God was not forgotten in that poor room, and many earnest prayers went up to Him for help and blessing. And Karl thanked Him every day for his own darling treasure, his Little Meggie. And Meggie, too, had many things to thank Him for, and to ask for; but she always asked for her one great wish,—to help her father.

But I have not told you all there was in that room

yet, and it was something that was nearly as great a pet of Meggie's as she was of Karl's. But I must go back a little. Some three years before, an old German organ-player had come to the neighbourhood, and had lived near the Bernards for some time. But they had known nothing of each other, until one day Karl accidentally heard that the old man was to be turned out of his room for rent. It was Meggie who told him, and he forthwith fetched the old man and his few goods, and his organ, and made up a straw bed in the little cupboard of a room I told you of, opening into theirs. The old man's most precious possession was a German bullfinch, which was very tame, and could pipe several airs. Such a bird could have been sold in London for two or three guineas ; but the old man would have died almost rather than part with 'Tony,' as he called the bird. For several months Karl and Meggie nursed and took care of him. Happily at that time Karl had been able to get nearly full work ; and when the old man died, it was with a blessing on his lips for the kind friends he had found in his trouble, and leaving his little companion and friend, Tony, who had already become a favourite with both Karl and Meggie, to Meggie's care. And the bird had really become so wonderfully tame and accomplished,

could do so many tricks, and sing so beautifully, that he was quite a companion to both father and daughter. And so they went on, loving and happy in one another, however hard the times were, or however little work Karl could get; for his steady, industrious habits and well-known honesty insured him *some* work, though it was but little, as long as any was to be had anywhere. But a great trouble was coming, so great that had poor Karl, ay, or even Meggie, with her more joyous and buoyant spirit, known of it before, they would have prayed to die rather than be so tried. And yet, as you shall see, this great sorrow brought many blessings with it, and was indeed a blessing in disguise, as so many of the sorrows which our loving Father sends us prove in the end to be.

'Father,' said Meggie, one morning, 'you'll have done that work to-day, and take it home, won't you?'

'Yes, little one, but not till about eleven. I can't be back at noon to see you.'

'Well, then, father! I'll tell you what we'll do! I'll take a bit of bread with me, and stay between schools with old Alice Greaves, who is blind. I'll read a bit to her. You know, father, time is *something* to give, when one hasn't aught else; and I'll be home to meet you by five. It's a long way, and

you'll hardly be back sooner, so I've got your dinner ready for you before you go. Good-bye, daddy, darling.'

So Meggie kissed him, and went off to school. And Karl worked on silently, listening to Tony's piping, and thinking how dear and good Meggie was, and how thankful he was for her. And when the work was done, he started on the long, tedious walk to deliver it, and perhaps, as he hoped, get a fresh order. It was late in the afternoon before he returned, and when he entered the room, tired and hot with his long walk, there was no Meggie. Could she be hiding? No! that was not Meggie's way. Somehow she and her father, having only each other, could not, even in jest, frighten one another, and Meggie was always punctual and exact. When she said she would be at home, she never missed. Karl took the hat he had thrown off, and, full of miserable anxiety, started off to go to the school and learn about his darling; but just at the door a quiet, neatly dressed man met him, and asked if his name were Karl Bernard.

'Yes! what do you want with me?' said poor Karl.

'You have a little daughter. She has met with an accident!'

The man could not go on, for poor Karl interrupted with—

'Take me to her, quick!'

As they went along, the compassionate hospital official, for such the man was, told Karl what he knew of the accident. How the little girl had been knocked down by a carriage, and carried to the nearest hospital. How much she was hurt was not known yet, beyond that one arm was broken. But she had been quite sensible, and told them where she lived, and how to find her father, and begged them to tell him kindly and gently; for 'father and I are all alone, and have none but each other.'

Very quickly the two men walked, and presently got to the hospital, and Karl was taken into the ward where Meggie was, and along the rows of beds till he came to the one where lay all that he cared for on earth. What a meeting it was, between those two who had parted so short a time before! They did not talk much, for poor little Meggie was too much hurt, and her father too unhappy, for many words; but she told him how kind all the people had been, and how kind the nurse was, and how a lady who was over the nurses had already been to see her; and then she begged him to bear up, for she should be better soon, and come back to him, and she

should pray every morning and night to the good God to help them both to bear being parted. And parted they had to be very soon, for the nurse kindly told Karl he must not stay longer then, but that every day at the same hour he might come and see Meggie, and she would send him word if she wanted him particularly at any other time.

For a great many days, even weeks, after this, Meggie was too ill to think of anything, except bearing the pain without crying out. It was a very sad, sad time. Every day Karl came to see her, and went away, when he was sent away, sadder and more miserable than he came, to his lonely, desolate home, where even poor Tony seemed to pine for his little mistress, and was very silent and still, though Karl never forgot to feed him for Meggie's sake. He worked as much as he could, but he didn't care for it any more. He went without food often, and didn't care—he cared for nothing but Meggie. But now and then neighbours would come in, as they never did before, and ask after Meggie, and say comforting, kind words to the poor man ; so that he did not feel quite alone in the world, and he bore with them because they loved Meggie, though he would rather have been alone with his sorrow.

One of Meggie's school companions used to come

every day and straighten up the room very carefully while she was at the hospital, and put the kettle on for Karl's solitary tea, and then go away before he came back. And one day Karl found the kind girl and thanked her, and talked to her awhile about his Meggie ; so she went home and told her friends that Mr. Bernard was neither sulky nor proud, but just heart-broken about Meggie. So she went on doing her self-imposed task with more spirit than ever ; and one day, a month after Meggie's accident, Karl actually came round by their house to say Meggie was better, and—wonderful improvement in the grave, silent man—consented to have a cup of tea in the tidy kitchen of the thrifty house-mother. It was all Meggie's doing ; Meggie had done endless little kindnesses to these and many other people in her bright days, and so they could not help being most anxious to help and comfort her poor father in his trouble. And so went on three long months, while poor little Meggie lay on her hospital-bed making friends with all about her, by her loving, friendly ways, by her patient bearing of the long, hard, painful hours, and by her grateful thanks for all that they did for her. For everybody was very kind, and did all they could, but poor Meggie did not get well. Her arm did get quite well, but she had hurt her back,

and that did not; and it soon became evident that, though she could get pretty strong and well in health, she would never be able to walk again. Here was a blow to poor Meggie, with all her hopes and plans for helping her father! But she was not told this all at once, neither was he. The kind, clever doctors went on trying all they could, and the lady who visited there, the wife of one of the doctors, read to her, and taught her, and gave her and lent her many books, and it was she who at last, when Meggie had learnt to love her dearly, gently told her what they thought about her, and that though she could soon go home to her father it would be always to lie on a little couch, and never to run about any more.

Oh! what sad tidings these were! It took poor Meggie many, many days to make up her mind to it and to bear it; but she begged her father might not be told until she could tell him herself. The kind lady who had so often visited her, and whose name was Mrs. Clifford, came to her the next day with a little bag of work. 'Meggie,' she said, 'I've noticed how neatly you sew and do things with your hands; if you like, I will teach you some work by which you may earn something to help your father.'

How glad Meggie was then, and Mrs. Clifford that very day began to teach her how to embroider on

muslin. What pains the little scholar took to learn, and how she practised when the lady was gone!

That day when poor Karl called to see his darling, he brought Tony, as he had several times done, to see her too. But he was very sad about him to-day, and as Tony was singing in his cage on the bed, Karl told his daughter how bad the times were, and how, do what he would, he could not get work, and he had had to sell several things, and there was now nothing they could well spare except Tony. Poor things! they couldn't well spare *him*, and he twittered about and piped his best, and came on to Meggie's finger and kissed her, as though to beg they might rather starve together than be parted. Meggie's heart was very full.

'Father, must he go?' she said.

'My darling, the rent is due, and we must be honest; I could not put off paying, and yet keep what would find the money, and more too.'

Well, there was no help for it, only Meggie begged for him to come again to-morrow, and got him to promise that nothing should be done till to-morrow. What was to happen before to-morrow, Meggie couldn't say; but at any rate the evil hour was put off, and she would see the dear bird again.

The next day kind Mrs. Clifford came again to teach her the embroidery, and she soon saw that her little favourite Meggie had something on her mind; and presently, by kind questions, drew from her that she was not fretting, as she thought, over her illness, but about the darling bird. And just then Karl came in with the bird and cage; so Mrs. Clifford and he had some talk about the hard times, and how hand-loom weaving was getting worse than ever, and about Karl's powers, and hopes, and fears, and, finally, about the bird.

'It *must* be sold,' Karl said; 'ay, Meggie, darling, you'd rather let him go to some one as would care for him, than let the landlord seize him for the rent?' —'I'll tell you what I can do,' said Mrs. Clifford; 'if you like I will buy him, and you shall redeem him from me, Meggie, when you can. You will soon gain money with your new trade of embroidery, for which I can get you plenty of orders.'

And so it was settled, Mrs. Clifford gave Karl three guineas, and heard from Meggie all about the feeding and petting of poor Tony, and with very sad hearts Meggie and Karl said good-bye to their pet, and Karl carried him to Mrs. Clifford's carriage, and did not forget to thank her gratefully for her kindness to Meggie and to himself.

'I'm a plain man, ma'am, and I've no words to thank you; but God will bless you for being so good to my darling. It seems as though everybody had been so good to her and me lately, though it's sorely I miss her at home. Might I ask, madam, does Dr. Clifford think she might soon come home to me?'

Mrs. Clifford said she would ask him, and told Karl she would think of all he had told her about the weaving, and she drove away.

Well, I must get on with my story, or you will think it is never coming to an end. Soon after this Meggie was sent home from the hospital; she was better, so that she could use her hands quite freely, but she could not walk, though she had not much pain—hardly any, except sometimes. But if she had lost the power of walking, she had gained a great deal. She had gained some firm, kind friends who would never lose sight of her, in Dr. and Mrs. Clifford, and the matron of the hospital. She had a trade in the beautiful, fine embroidery which Mrs. Clifford had taught her, by which she could gain ten shillings a week, and Mrs. Clifford was unwearied in getting her orders.

The day she went home the matron took her in a car, and the poor child was sadly tried and shaken; but what a surprise there was for her, the big, dark

old room had been coloured and papered freshly; the dividing curtain was of fresh clean chintz; on the window-sill, which was large and deep, and old-fashioned, stood some pots of common myrtle and geranium, such as had a chance of living even in that murky atmosphere, and before the window a little couch most comfortably arranged with pillows, just to suit her best, with a table beside it. But two things were missing—her father's loom and Tony. There was a good tea on the table, all looking so bright, and clean, and tempting, and Karl looking happier and brighter than Meggie had ever seen him. He had had hard work to keep the secret: what talk he had had with Mrs. Clifford and with the doctor! It was they who had had the room done up, and they had persuaded Karl to give up striving to continue a weaver, and to take the place of master in their Day Ragged-school, and get a regular fifteen shillings a week. Some years ago Karl would almost rather have starved, but everybody had been so good to his Meggie, and her loving, kind ways had made so many friends, that he had learnt that one must have to do with one's fellow-creatures, and give and take kindnesses. He was wonderfully warmed and softened by finding such good friends; so the loom was gone, —sold, not to be redeemed, but three five-shilling

pieces were put by already for the redeeming of dear old Tony ; and our readers will not doubt that, before many weeks were over, Tony filled his former place in the window, and, we may add, in a handsome new cage given to him by Mrs. Clifford.

And now we will say good-bye to Meggie and her father. No one will doubt that Karl at least was happier, trying to do good to others, and doing his new work in the same diligent spirit he had done his old one, and with more success ; surrounded too, as he soon was, by kind friends, grateful pupils, and, moreover, having always with him his bright, happy-hearted, loving, little Meggie. And Meggie had gained her great wish of her life—helping her father, and being nearly as much *to him* as ever she was, even though she had to lie on her couch. She had a trade in which she could earn nearly as much as would keep them. And though, of course, they would have much rather the accident had never happened, it may be doubted whether they would rather have gone on in their old shut-up life, than been, as now, beloved by all their striving neighbours, and having Dr. and Mrs. Clifford's constant friendship and frequent visits.

HARRY HUNTLEY'S SELF-DENIAL.

A SUNDAY STORY.

'For the heart grows rich in giving,
All its wealth is living grain;
Seeds, which mildew in the garner,
Scatter'd, fill with gold the plain.

Is the heart a living power?
Self-entwined, its strength sinks low;
It can only live in loving,
And by *serving* love will grow.'

'For we *must* share, if we would keep
Our blessings from above.
Ceasing to give, we cease to have;
Such is the law of love.

IT was a bright sunny, spring morning. The leaves were just bursting, all fresh and brilliant from their many-coloured lovely sheaths; a great horse-chestnut on the lawn already showed its spikes of flowers. In the sunniest window of a little rose-covered cottage sat a happy little party—a mother and

two children, a boy and a girl: the boy, perhaps, about eight, the girl a little younger. On the little table before the mother lay an open Bible, and the children had theirs also open between them. It was nearly school-time, Harry's cap and Minnie's white sunbonnet lay ready on the table, and the satchel of books beside them; but after breakfast, and before school, the mother always read a chapter with her children, and they had just read it now.

'Now for the verse, mother,' spoke up Harry; 'it's Monday, you know.'

There was a little pause; then the mother spoke clearly and gently, '"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Let us take the first part only, this week, my children, "Let him deny himself."'

'But, mother,' said Harry, 'I don't understand. The time's passed for that text. We don't have to suffer for being Christians now. Wasn't that meant for when people were burnt and tortured? I heard our minister say the other day, that instead of being a reproach and dishonour, the cross was a glory, and worn even as an ornament.'

'I do not think,' she replied, 'the time is passed for that text even now, though Christians are honoured. Nevertheless, Harry, *I* think the time

for self-denial *is always here;* indeed, self-denial is the whole spirit of the Bible-teaching, and is as much needed now as it was then, and there is no real Christianity without it. Now, go; you can think it over on your way to school, and we can have some more talk to-morrow morning.'

There was a little bustling after the satchel and cap and Minnie's bonnet, a warm kiss to each from the mother and a merry good-bye, and the cheerful voices died away down the lane. The mother stood a moment by the window, thinking, 'The time over for self-denial, was it?' She smiled as she thought of the joyous boy's words, and then looked grave. She knew well enough how much of the 'bygone' quality was needed in daily life. Was she wrong in inculcating on her children thus early the need of it? She thought not. She would see what they made of it for themselves, and then explain. Ever since they were old enough to understand, it had been her habit to read a chapter every morning with them, and to choose a verse to be the motto for the week on Monday. She chose it for them. She was a simple woman. The Bible was to her a book to be *obeyed.* She herself tried, and she taught the children to try *to obey* the commandments they found therein. And they took a text every week, and thought about

it, specially, because it was easier to give their minds to one subject at a time.

But we are forgetting the children down the pretty shady lane. They went side by side, Harry whistling softly to himself. Presently he said, 'I don't see it. What is the good of denying one's-self for nothing? Denying means "saying no" to one's-self. Where's the use? I don't think God wants us just to refuse ourselves pleasure for nothing; mother does not want us to do so, I know. I say, Minnie, what do you make of the verse? I mean to ask mother to change it.'

'I wouldn't, Harry,' spoke little Minnie in her gentle voice; 'mother knew what she meant. Didn't you see her stop before she spoke? It always means she's thought of what she says when she does that.'

'Well, but Min, what does it mean? If we are to deny ourselves, we might as well shut our eyes going down this lane, because it's pretty to see; and you might not gather those primroses, because you like doing it.'

'Harry dear, don't,' pleaded Minnie; 'don't speak so. You know *it must* mean something right, because it is in the Bible. It's only that we don't know enough that makes us think it doesn't. I don't think we are to give up pleasures which are no

harm; it can't very well mean that, unless it's for practice.'

'For what?' echoed Harry.

'For practice, to learn how. We learn other things so, by doing them often. But there's the school bell, we must make haste, Harry; let us run.'

And they both ran and were only just in time, and what with lessons, and the promise from the mistress of a day in the country for all good children before the holidays, very little thought was given to the morning lesson. Coming out of school, however, there was always a little play in the field by the school-house, and the children had each their friends. Quiet little Minnie was a pet among the girls, while Harry, bold, good-natured, and generous, always ready for any fun, was a favourite with nearly all. On this day the children went home all together, several who lived beyond the cottage accompanied Harry and Minnie to the gate, and then said good-bye.

'Stay a bit, Harry,' said Minnie, 'I want to tie up my nosegay of primroses for mother, it's all coming to pieces.'

Harry stayed, leaning over the gate looking after the children who had left them.

'I just hate that boy West,' muttered he to him-

self; 'regular selfish fellow. Might be nobody but him in the world.'

'What is that you are saying, Harry?' said his sister, 'I can't hear.'

'It won't do you any good if you do. I can't bear that boy Tom West. Just fancy him; he brought two balls to school, and, ill-natured fellow, would not lend one to play fives with. We wanted to play a game and could not, because nobody had a ball but him. It's always so with him. "It's mine, you shall not touch it," with all *his* things. I just paid him off this time. I had some string, which he wanted badly; I'd rather have burnt it than let him have it, when he is so selfish.'

'Oh! Harry, I wish you hadn't.'

'Hadn't what?' cried Harry.

'Hadn't done it, what you call "paid him off," Harry. I *wish* you had not, when you did not like him for being selfish.'

'Well, now I come to think of it,' said Harry candidly, 'I wish I had not either. It wasn't quite right; but, Minnie, the fellow does want a lesson. He thinks of none but himself. It's my belief he never does a thing he doesn't like for any one. Come along, Minnie, we will go in. After school we must have a good gardening, there's plenty to do.'

After school, and after helping Minnie with her gardening, Harry left her to finish some weeding, and went to lean over the window-sill and talk to his mother. He was a thoughtful boy, and he liked to talk over all his thoughts and plans to his mother. He had always been used to this. He had been thinking over the morning text a little, but he was chiefly full of Tom West, who had been rough and unkind again that afternoon, not to him only, as Harry indignantly said, but to the others. He refused to lend his toys, and wanted to be first in everything. So Harry carried his anger against Tom and all his other thoughts to his mother, and, leaning in at the window where she was sitting at her work, told her all about his day, finishing up with, 'I'd a hard bout with myself, mother, not to fight him this afternoon, when he was so insolent, but I remembered you, and I didn't.'

How pleased his mother looked, but she only said, 'Harry, I thought the days for self-denial were long ago passed.'

'Oh, mother, that reminds me, I want to talk about that text. Does it really mean that we are to vex ourselves for nothing, as the old monks used to do?'

'No, my boy, I don't think it does; but I *do* think,

Harry, that if we are to "do to others as we would that they should do to us," we shall constantly have to exercise self-denial, and, therefore, it is better for you to practise it now while you are young.'

'Why, mother, I have you to make me do right now. You would not allow me to do very wrong. When I'm a man I shall have to do for myself.'

'And how shall you set about it, my boy, if you've never learned? If you were to be a carpenter, you would have to serve an apprenticeship for so many years to learn the trade; and if you are to do for others, and be kind, when you are a man, it is not wise to think only of yourself while you're a boy.'

Harry looked puzzled, and did not answer. He liked, as he used to say, to see things himself; not merely to be told. His mother went on:

'Harry, in your garden you sow the seed you wish to come up, don't you?'

'Why, of course I do, mother.'

'Well, and what should you think of a boy who, wanting a garden full of beautiful flowers, were either to sow nothing, or to sprinkle, or even carefully plant groundsel and dandelion, and then wonder at the garden having no flowers in it?'

'I should say he was a fool, mother, or mad.'

'Well, so should I, if he knew any better; yet this is very much what you would be doing if you waited to practise these virtues, to learn self-denial, for instance, until you were a man. It is quite true that I can teach you now, I can watch and forbid you to do a selfish thing, but that will not be nearly so good, or help you so much, as if you saw for yourself, and tried to do for yourself even now.'

'But, mother, when I am a man, I shall be strong enough to manage myself, and not be selfish.'

'Ah, Harry, suppose that in your garden you want to transplant a tree, do you wait till it is old, or do you not find that then it is too late? You could not move that lilac, which was in the way where it was, and would be so very pretty somewhere else, because it was too old. It is very much the same in your soul's garden. The great part of what has to be done, must be done while you are young. If you go on till you are fifteen or sixteen, thinking of no one but yourself, or always considering yourself *first*, and what *you* like, and what is good for you, this self of yours will have grown so strong that you will no longer have the power to conquer it. Every time you yield to it, it grows stronger.'

'But, mother, I yield to it every minute. I'm always doing what I like, without thinking.'

'That is natural, and will not do you much harm; but if a question comes before you, whether you are to please yourself *or another*, it is *then* I want you to practise giving up; just because, in a thousand things every day, you innocently do please yourself. In the one thing, perhaps, where you must choose between your own pleasure or that of another, choose the other.'

'I see,' said Harry thoughtfully, 'I ought to have given my string to West. I was as selfish as he, and he has no mother to teach him.'

'Poor boy,' said Mrs. Huntley, 'I 'm afraid he will grow up a selfish man, and be very unhappy.'

'I don't know about unhappy,' said Harry; 'he 's rich, he will have lots of nice things, and do all he likes.'

'So he may, Harry, and yet be unhappy. Nobody loves a selfish man. He will be left by all, inasmuch as *he is* selfish, and he will not have the pleasure of feeling that God loves him, and that *is* a great pleasure.'

Harry was silent for a while, then he said slowly, 'Mother, out of all the boys he 's the only really selfish one. How is it that men get so selfish, when so few boys are so?'

'And you see now how people get selfish. Per-

haps because they don't fight against it. They go on just anyhow, as you would say, never thinking about it. Perhaps their mothers yield to them, because it 's easier, just as they yield to themselves, and every year self grows stronger as they grow, till they feel as if whatever happened they *would* have their own way. Determination is a fine, noble quality, Harry; it leads to much that is good and manly, but it must ever be determination to do what you think *right*, because it *is* so, not because it is *your way*.'

'I begin to see, mother. Selfishness grows so fast, and gets so strong, it's like the white convolvulus; one has to watch and root it out every week, yet there 's always enough left, however much one works.'

Mrs. Huntley smiled. 'Yes, just so, Harry; and the best plan with self, though it will not answer as well as with the convolvulus, which creeps *everywhere* like self, is to plant plenty of the little flower of kindness and consideration for others. Whenever you can, you ought to put others first.'

Just then Minnie came up, flushed and hot, with her watering-can and spade, and the conversation dropped. Harry helped his sister to put all the tools carefully by, and they went in to tea.

It was not long before an opportunity occurred for our little hero to put his self-denial in practice. The next day was Wednesday, and a school half-holiday. Harry and Minnie had planned to go an excursion to certain woods, where grew some forget-me-nots, hyacinths, and various other riches for their beloved garden. Minnie, who delighted in these walks with her brother, rejoiced over it all the way to school, planned how, after school, she would go to a blind old lady to whom she always went on Wednesday to read for an hour. She would go before dinner, and mother had put off dinner half an hour to give her time, and then they would have all the long afternoon for the walk. Coming back from school alone, Harry was met by a boy, older than himself, and a great friend of his, Charlie Williams. Charlie was the boy whose friendship his mother most encouraged. Carefully brought up, and a fine, generous lad, Mrs. Huntley always enjoyed Harry's being with him. So the invitation he brought for a long afternoon's fishing in the river near his father's house, was beyond all things tempting and delightful,—all the more tempting, because these invitations were not frequent. Charlie was an only boy, at school most of the year, and he often brought older schoolfellows home for the holidays,

and was himself a great deal older than Harry; so it was a grand treat to the young one.

'You will come, Harry, will you not? I'll stay while you ask your mother.'

Charlie would never have dreamt of asking Harry to do what his mother disapproved. Harry hesitated. He did long to go, but Charlie had no sisters, and Minnie would be left alone at home. Self whispered, 'Kind Minnie would much rather I went, I so seldom have a chance. I can go plant-hunting any day.'

'Now is your time for self-denial,' murmured conscience; 'now show selfishness you are not going to be his slave. Minnie would rather you went, because she is so unselfish; but why is *she* the one to give up? You know she generally gives up her wishes to yours.'

It was a hard struggle. They were at the gate. 'I'll just go and ask my mother,' said Harry slowly.

'Do,' responded Charlie, 'I'll wait here,' and he leaned whistling on the gate. 'I say, Harry, tell your mother I want you to come *now*, and dine with us. It will be so late to wait till you've done dinner.'

More temptation for poor Harry. How he hoped his mother would say 'No,' or help him, but he

hoped in vain. Mrs. Huntley was not one to *require* sacrifices of her children. She faithfully showed them the *right*, and urged their doing it, but in particular cases she often left the decision to themselves. Had Charlie been a boy she disapproved of, Harry would have been forbidden to go. No one was firmer than Mrs. Huntley in matters of right and wrong. When once she said 'No,' it was useless to ask again, but she knew that to have any value to himself or before God, Harry's conquest of self must be spontaneous. She knew her boy well, and, before the words were all out of his mouth, she could guess exactly what he was feeling and wishing, and how great the temptation was.

'You had planned something else for this afternoon, had you not, dear?'

'Yes, mother, but—' began Harry.

'You may go, if you think it well,' said Mrs. Huntley, gently, 'you know I never refuse your going to Woodlands. Charlie is a boy I like you to be with, but I fear Minnie will be disappointed.'

Harry turned away slowly, and went towards the gate. Very slow were his steps for a moment; his mother watched him, hoping—perhaps praying—that he might conquer himself, and win what she well knew was a *great* battle. Still those slow steps,

but he was getting near the turn which brought him within sight of the gate, when he suddenly looked up, and ran down the path. She could not see him any more, but she knew she might rejoice over her brave boy.

'Charlie,' said Harry, as he reached the gate, 'I had better not go with you to-day, thank you.'

Charlie was surprised. Harry had told him of no engagement, and he knew well enough that Mrs. Huntley liked him, and liked Harry to be with him. He would have asked, but somehow Harry's face, though frank and open enough, did not encourage him to be curious. He only said, 'Well, I'm sorry.'

'So am I, very,' said Harry, 'but I really can't come to-day; thank you for asking me all the same,' and they parted.

And Harry ran back to the house, and only said to his mother as she kissed him, 'Don't tell Minnie, mother.' He knew Minnie, kind, unselfish Minnie, would regret the loss of his pleasure for him, more than he did for himself.

An hour afterwards they started for the woods, with the basket and spade and trowel for the plants, and a basket of cakes and fruit for an early tea in the woods.

What a happy afternoon it was! So sunny and yet so fresh, such abundance of flowers and roots of all the kinds they wanted, that when they had disposed of the contents of the prog basket, it was filled, and their handkerchiefs and the front of Minnie's frock were pressed into the service to carry home the treasures. And then there was a visit to a certain farmhouse, whose mistress was a friend of Mrs. Huntley's, and she made an offer of certain bantam fowls, which had been Harry's especial desire for months, to add to their little poultry-yard at the cottage. And then they went home, and after tea to bed, and when Harry, alone in his little room with his mother, said his prayers, and thanked God for his very happy day, he hardly remembered, among all the pleasant things that had happened, the one great effort he had made in the morning.

It was as his mother wished. She did not want to make him glory in his victory over himself. But if he had forgotten it, or remembered it only as one of the things he 'ought always to do,' the fruit of that little seed of self-denial was not lost.

Later on in life, when Harry was a man, and the memory of childish things, perhaps little noticed at the time, came back strongly and clearly, that one

conscious effort, and the time which followed, seemed to him as a kind of awakening, when he had first set his face steadily in the path of denying himself and considering others first; and if this was so, as it is with many, Harry's self-denial was not thrown away.

HILDRED'S GREAT WORK.

'Work ! for it is a noble thing,
With worthy end in view ;
To tread the steps which God ordains
With steadfast heart and true ;
That will not quail whate'er betide,
But bravely bear us through.'

'To do the necessary duties of any station, that is easy enough; but to gather up all its outlying opportunities; to be ready to lend a helping hand here, to give a kind word there, "to fill," as we say, "our place in life," instead of leaving it half empty; to be entirely in our work for the time being,—this is what makes all the difference between being great or commonplace, between being useful or useless.'

'Since *service* is the highest lot,
And angels know no higher bliss ;
Then with what good *her* cup is fraught,
Who was created but for this.'

ONE fair summer afternoon a number of girls might have been seen coming out of a pleasant house, situated just outside one of our large towns. That they were coming out of school was evident by the books they all carried, as likewise by their manner,

peculiar to school-girls, of rushing out of the house; not that it was done with great noise or confusion, oh, no! Miss Crawford's young ladies were much too well taught for that; in short, they were school-girls. And now they have all gone on their several ways home, separately, or in twos and threes, according as their paths lay together,—all save one, who still lingers at the garden gate. A pretty little pony-carriage waits to convey her home, but Alice Chester takes no notice of the pawing of the horses, or of the evident impatience of the servant at her apparently unreasonable delay, as, leaning against the gate-post, she taps her little foot against the step. But now the house door has opened for a second time, and a black-robed figure appears, whereupon Alice Chester darts forward with the exclamation—

'Oh, Miss Hildred, I thought you were never coming!'

'And in what may my coming affect you, Alice Chester?' was the somewhat ungracious reply.

'I wanted to ask if you would go home with me to dinner? Now don't refuse, Hildred!'

'But I do refuse. You must excuse me, Alice.'

'It is not kind of you, Hildred,' said Alice, turning away with a sigh, and the tears of disappoint-

ment hardly kept back from her eyes; but she made no further attempt to change her friend's determination, knowing, perhaps, from experience, how useless any such endeavour would be. Perhaps Hildred was a little touched by the evident disappointment her decision caused, for as Alice turned away she placed her hand on her shoulder, saying, in much softer tones than she had before used,—

'I cannot go this evening, Alice, dear, which need not grieve you, for I am in one of my disagreeable moods, and no fit company for a bright young thing like you.'

'Bright!' began Alice, but she checked herself to say—'Yes, I have fancied all day you were not well. Are you?'

'Well enough in health, child. But now go: remember you will keep Mr. Chester's dinner waiting, and I Aunt Agnes's tea. Good-bye.' And Hildred moved resolutely away, leaving Alice to enter her carriage, and go alone to her stately, but not over happy home. At first Hildred walked with a quick, impatient step, but as she proceeded it gradually grew slower, so that by the time she had reached the little rose-covered cottage, where she dwelt with her Aunt, it had fallen to its accustomed pace.

'I am rather late, Auntie, darling, but I hope you are not tired,' said Hildred, as she entered the little room, and approached a sofa whereon a lady was lying. 'Auntie' might have been tired, but if so, the calm, sweet face that was turned with a bright smile to greet her niece's entrance showed no sign of the fact.

'You are tired, my love,' she said, as Hildred, flinging off bonnet and cloak, knelt down by the sofa and leaned her head against her Aunt.

'Has it been a hard day, dear?'

'No harder than usual; no harder than teaching a set of stupid children from morning to night always is. But oh, Aunt, I'm sick to death of it! Am I for ever to spend my energies at this treadmill of teaching children their A B C, and never have any higher object in life? I who could do so much greater things. Oh, I wish I had been a man, to have done some great thing for the world, and given my life to its doing!'

Miss Forley stroked her niece's hair, murmuring softly the while—

> 'Who sweeps the house as for Thy sake,
> Makes that and the action fine.'

'Aunt Agnes, don't talk to me like that, it frets me. I want to be, to do, to suffer, and—O dear!

to have to teach, teach, teach all one's life, and never look beyond that !'

Perhaps it was as well that Hildred's speech was here interrupted by the entrance of Susan with the tea-things, which served to give a new direction to her thoughts for the moment.

'Alice Chester wanted me to go home with her to dinner,' she said, handing a cup of tea to her Aunt.

'And would you not have liked it, dear? I hope you did not decline on my account.'

'No, indeed, I preferred coming home. It's no great disappointment not to dine at Wellbrook.'

'But, Hildred, you are fond of Alice Chester?'

'Yes, nobody could help liking her, she is so bright and true-hearted—very different from the other girls. If only she were poor, in the same station as myself, I could love her as a sister.'

'And why not while she is the rich heiress?'

'For that very reason, Auntie. They would say I courted the heiress, and nobody shall say that of me! But that is not all—' and (tea being over) she pushed aside the table, and again kneeling by her Aunt's side, began to play with the ball of coloured wool from which Miss Forley was knitting. 'But that is not all, Auntie, I'm not used to

the grandeur of Wellbrook Hall, and it oppresses me. I 'm only "plebeian," you know.'

And Hildred laughed gaily.

Miss Forley smiled also, but the smile ended in a half sigh as she said,—

'You think too much of these things, my love; we are all apt to do so, but if we lived more in the constant presence of the All-loving Father, we should be less troubled by these distinctions, remembering that the greatest among us cannot be more than a dear child of His, and the least of us is no less.'

Hildred looked up into her Aunt's face; a face over whose beauty neither sorrow nor long years of physical suffering had in any wise cast a shade, except, indeed, to give an added grace of softness and serenity; and, as generally happened, the fret and worry faded from Hildred's mind as her Aunt's peace communicated somewhat of its own calm to her.

'Now, let me see the day's work, please,' she said, reaching Miss Forley's desk. 'Is it a story for the little ones or for the grown-up people to-day?'

Miss Forley smiled, but made no answer, save to put a number of papers into Hildred's hand, saying,—

'There it is, dear,' whereupon Hildred began to read—

CLARA LINDSAY, OR THE DIGNITY OF LITTLE THINGS.

'We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in fingers on a dial.
We should count time by *heart-throbs.*
He most lives, who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.'

It was a soft, bright morning, one of those most glorious days of early autumn, when the trees are just donning their brilliant hues, and the very flowers have a more gorgeous colouring than at any other time; as though nature were making one dying effort to put forth all her love and beauty.

At the door of a country house, such as are dotted all over England, a house some few miles from a large town, but sufficiently surrounded by garden and trees to feel like country, there stood, on this bright autumn morning, a young girl; she too, like the house, just such a one as you might see every day, fair and youthful, though past the 'sweet seventeen' which, whatever poets may say, is often too undeveloped an age to be very interesting. Yet the face was one at which you would turn to look again, not for its beauty, for it had no particular beauty, but ~~for~~ a certain sadness; an earnestness that seemed to be looking questioningly into the far future. It was a good, sweet face, and yet in the

eager, thoughtful expression there was a certain dissatisfaction and unrest, as though its possessor were sighing after a peace not yet found. She was not looking at the beauties around her; it might be that her spirit was drinking them in unconsciously, and being nourished thereby; but she was not occupied with them. The gaze she turned towards the sky, so bright, so exquisitely sparkling that lovely morning, was too intent and earnest to take in the beauty of the scene. It seemed as if she were asking for more light from that blue heaven, and her thought, could it have been translated into words, might have been this :—

'How dreary life is! Is mine, I wonder, always to be spent in these weary, paltry, little things; one day just like another; one continual round of mean, worthless, little cares? Nothing I do is of any use. If I were to die to-night, no one would miss me; mamma and papa and the children would be sorry, of course, but there is not one thing I ever do that would not be better done by some one else. It's not that I've not enough work to fill the day, there is plenty, but what is the use of it? Sewing, letters to write, paying calls, dressing flower-glasses, reading —the reading is well enough, but what's the use of improving one's mind if it's never to have anything

to do? And I could do great things, I *feel* I could, if only I had the chance. I know I have powers, they can't have been given only to make me miserable. If I were like Emily now, she 's only a year younger than I am, and she wants nothing but these paltry things; she 's quite satisfied; she said only the other day she couldn't understand the rubbish people talk about woman's work and mission. I do believe she 'd be quite content to play croquet and make calls for the rest of her life. And yet'—the truthful thought went on—'she is less often cross than I am; she is always kind in her way, and light-hearted too. People like having her, and it is no wonder, she 's so bright always! They can't like having me—'

'Clara!' called a voice from the house, startling the girl from her reverie.

'Yes, mamma;' and she turned at once and went in.

'Clara, my love, please arrange these flowers; Emily is gone out, and papa likes to see flowers about; you are not busy I think, dear, or I would do them myself.'

Busy! how glad she would have been to be so, though *not* with arranging flowers. But the mother's voice was cheery and pleasant, and the daughter,

discontented and foolish as you may have thought her, was obedient and good. She wished to do right, honestly and truly, and was seeking for light, which none are left to seek for long.

She commenced her task, but listlessly and without interest; and though a phrenologist would have said there were both taste and ideality in the head bent over the flowers, though the hands busied among them were well formed and skilful, yet the task was not deftly done, and proceeded but slowly.

They were a curious contrast, that mother and daughter, and the thoughts of both were worth considering just then. The mother, bright, active, and young-looking for her age, doing the work she was busy with, rapidly and cleverly; there was no dreaminess in her cheery face, life was not a dreary thing to *her* at any rate. She looked like an embodiment of the lines—

> 'Earth has no place for idlers;
> Life has no time for dreams.'

Yet there was a world of loving earnestness in her face too, but it was the fruit of years of rich life-experience, work, and observation. The result, too, of sorrow outlived and conquered; in it likewise was peace,—the peace of an active and thoroughly unselfish life. She had married, before she was twenty,

a man who had his way in the world to make, and what with her struggles to manage well, and be a good wife to the husband she dearly loved, together with the care of a large family of little ones, some of whom only paid an angel's visit to this earth, that mother had never had any time for dreams, or much for thought. Now, however, she was pondering about the daughter who stood before her.

'She is not happy,' thought the mother. 'I can see that she doesn't care for the same things Emily does; and yet, poor child, she wishes to be good. She always does what I tell her directly, as if she were twelve instead of twenty. I shall be having her ill soon—so many girls are now-a-days. The doctor says it 's want of something to do. I 'm sure I don't know what more to give her to do! Everybody's work is made up of little things, if they 'd only think so. I suppose they would say she wanted a "sphere." Girls always do now. I wonder how it was that in my day we never wanted spheres! Poor, dear child, I wish she could marry, though I don't know that she 'd be happy then, she 's got into such a way of not caring for anything. I wonder if she 's got any trouble, but no! it 's not very likely. Well, she does want to do right, and be good, so she will see her way soon, only I hope she won't get ill first.

If she could but see, poor dear, that women never do have anything but a mass of little things to do; it 's the heart they put into them, that 's the thing. I wish she 'd talk to me, and then, perhaps, I could help her; but she does not ever talk much, and maybe she 's all the while thinking I don't care, or see. Ah! mothers see a great deal.'

And then, with a few cheerful words to her daughter about the flowers and the bright day, the mother gathered up her work and left the room.

Wanting a sphere! Have then the souls of women expanded, like their skirts, so that the spheres that once held them comfortably, crowd and pinch them now? or is it rather that the mother's simple solving of the question is the true one—that all lives, both greater and lesser, are made up of the same paltry little things, and that the difference between them is in the spirit in which the little things are done?

The flowers at last arranged, Clara sat down to write a letter. Here was an opportunity of giving both comfort and help, had she but thought so, for the cousin to whom she was writing was in trouble and anxiety. Her husband was in difficulty, and a child was sick; but it would never have occurred to Clara that her letter was of any importance or worth taking any particular pains to say the right thing, or

to be cheerful over what she did say; consequently it was a depressing production, and not at all calculated to cheer the individual to whom it was sent.

Happily there was another letter going from upstairs to the same quarter, a hasty line from the busy mother, who remembered that her niece needed sympathy and help, and thought that maybe a word, though she had hardly time for more, would show the child she was not forgotten. And the 'word' was one of love and encouragement, reminding the anxious young wife and mother that there were loving eyes watching over her yet, and that the trouble and anxiety did not come unsent. Was such a note, though it did not cover half a sheet, not worth the writing? What the result of it might be none could tell—possibly not a great one, but surely, at least, worth the effort, which was not very overwhelming either.

Living not far from Mrs Lindsay, in a little cottage of her own, was an old nurse of Clara's, one of those good old servants who, with their shrewd common sense and strong affection and devotion, often prove themselves better advisers and helpers than more highly educated friends. They often take a more straightforward view of life and things, less clogged by conventionalities, and less blinded by the

dust of selfishness. They have the wisdom of the child, often the highest wisdom given to man. Just such a woman was Clara's nurse, and dearly did they love each other. The old woman had left her situation in Mrs. Lindsay's family some time ago to live alone in this cottage, yet surrounded by friends. Her mistress would now and then come in to see and have a chat with her, and often unconsciously gathered help and advice from her old servant. Thither then, on this bright autumn day, Clara bent her steps; not at first though—there was a visit to be paid, and she found herself wishing that the invalid to whom she was going might not be able to see her. She was dull and pre-occupied; but it would be taken amiss, perhaps, she said to herself, if she did not call. However, her wish was gratified; the invalid friend was not able to see her, and with a feeling of relief she turned to nurse's cottage.

'Well, my darling, and so it's you! Bless your bonnie face!' was nurse's greeting; but perceiving the slight shade on Clara's face, she quickly added, 'but you don't look like yourself this morning. What's wrong, dear?'

'Nothing, nurse; only I'm tired.'

'Tired! Have you been far? Into the town, I daresay, getting something pretty for Master Walter's

birthday. I've not forgotten that it's coming in a day or two either; I've got him as pretty a pair of bantam fowls as you'd find anywhere.'

'Have you, nurse? He'll be very pleased. No, I've not been to town. We are going this afternoon, but I don't know what to get him. He'll not care for anything I give him.' This was said in a tone half-desponding, half-peevish. Clara's dissatisfaction and discomfort were certainly beginning to tell upon her temper.

'It's hardly likely he should, Miss Clara, if you don't care to get it, or to think what he wants,' responded nurse gently.

'It's not that, nurse. You know I'd be glad enough to buy him anything, if I knew what he would like. How came you to think of the bantams? I never can think of presents.'

'Maybe it's because you don't try, dear,' said the faithful monitress. 'He was here in the summer, and admired my fowls. I couldn't well let him have them just then—though he would have been right welcome, bless him!—for the little lady at the white house was so ill, and they couldn't get her to fancy anything but bantam eggs, so I wanted all mine then for her. I was sorry until I bethought me that Master Walter would be at school most of the

time ; but as soon as I could spare the eggs I determined to try and rear some for him. They are a rare kind, I know ; farmer Lawrence, as gave them to me, said so, and I 've been very successful. They are as pretty as the old ones, I do think. But what am I thinking of? Will you have something, Miss Clara? if you are tired, you 'd better.'

'No, thank you, nurse, I 've not been far ; I 've only come round by Miss Clifford's, but she could not see me. It 's not much use calling ; only people take offence if you don't.'

'Miss Clifford doesn't take offence, dear. But I should have thought you would have known by now that she never sees any one in a morning ; she 's often very glad of some one in an afternoon.'

'Oh, but nurse, one really can't be expected to remember everybody's hours and times!' said Clara. 'Nurse,' she continued, speaking quickly, as if she were anxious to change the subject, though in truth she had been absorbed all the time, and had scarcely listened to what was said,—'Nurse, I wish I might go away, and do something worth doing. There 's nothing to do at home, and I 'm very unhappy. I know I could do almost anything ; I feel I could! I wish I had to earn my bread ; *then* I should feel that I had an object in life ; but this always going on,

doing nothing to speak of—it's miserable! I wish I'd been born, now, like Miss Nightingale. Nurse, I must tell you,' said Clara, speaking rapidly and sharply, for she did not wish to cry, and the tears would hardly be kept back,—'I do wish we were poor at home, and I had to work for them—go out as governess, or something. I wish they'd let me go and train for a nurse; *that* would be worth doing. Do you think they would, nurse?'

'I can't tell, Miss Clara, but I know *I* would,' said the old woman quaintly.

'Would you, nursey? Then I'm not foolish,—mamma always says you have such good sense.'

'Not so fast, Miss Clara; shall we talk over this a bit? As you've nothing to do, belike you can stay here awhile. There, take your hat off. If I say I'd let you go, dear, it's just because I know you'd be back again right soon.'

'Nurse, how unkind of you!' cried Clara; but smiling in spite of herself at the good-natured way in which this was said. 'I did not think you would have laughed at me.'

'I'm not laughing, dear, I'm quite serious. What sort of things now do you suppose you would have to do if you went to be a nurse?'

'Oh, nurse, I would give my whole soul to that

work ; only think of the lives that are saved by the good nursing ! think what Miss Nightingale has done !'

'Well, dear, you have not answered my question ; but I'm pretty sure Miss Nightingale has not done anything by thinking it not worth while to try. It appears to me—for your mamma lent me her little book the other day—that the difference between her and most people is just this, that *she* thinks every little thing of importance. Now, my dear, *you* think you are not to be expected to remember that a lady you've known for several years cannot see you in a morning, but Miss Nightingale expects her nurses to remember much smaller things than that. She says you never should speak to a sick person whilst they are moving ! I think, dear, you'd be apt to call that fanciful.'

'Well, nurse, perhaps I might think it was because she is ill herself, and these things affecting her particular case, she fancies they do everybody.'

'Now, dear, I think it is because she has always been used to take notice of little things, and has observed that what people generally think too trivial to matter, makes all the difference between good and bad nursing. It is because she does that—takes into account all the *little* things—that she is so useful, and does such a deal—she does it thoroughly. Now,

Miss Clara—you don't mind my speaking out to you, dear, you that I've nursed on my knee—that's just what *you* don't do. You don't do things thoroughly. Now, just let me ask you, what is the good of going to Miss Clifford at all?'

'I don't think there is much,' sighed Clara.

'Well, I think there might be a good deal,' responded the old woman, warming to her subject, for her nursling was very dear to her, and she saw plainly how wrong Clara was. 'Now, just tell me what you think you were born for—what God sent you here for?'

'Nurse, I don't know—I never—' hesitated Clara.

'You think you can do great things, you told me just now; but suppose He wanted you to do little ones well first. Suppose there are no great things in themselves, but all are little ones heaped together! You say you want something to do, and whenever anything is given you to do, you think it not worth the doing!'

'Nurse,' interrupted Clara, 'it's *not* given me to do! Nothing I have to do is work; I'm not obliged to do it.'

'I say it *is* given you to do, because you've thought of it,' answered the old woman quickly. 'If you go to any one, say Miss Clifford, at all,

why must you go at an hour when she can't see you, and not when you might amuse her?'

'I can't amuse her, I'm dull,' said Clara.

'Then, why are you dull?' continued the persistent questioner; 'you've brains enough. Child, take my word for it, if you "don't remember," and "can't do" things of that kind, it's because you don't really care to do them. You *think* you do, no doubt, and go on with grand thoughts and dreams, forgetting the commandment, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."'

'But these are such worthless, small things,' pleaded Clara.

'Does it say, "Whatsoever things you think great," Miss Clara? Besides, how dare you talk of small things?' went on the nurse, forgetting, in her eagerness, that it was to her, she was wont to call her young mistress, she was speaking. 'Is it such a small reward for your thinking to go and see a sick lady, that she should be cheered for an hour by the sight of a fresh young face? And you don't know how much good you might do if you put your heart into it, and did your utmost. Suppose you were to try and think *how many* things you could do for her, or your mother; never mind their being *little* things. Child, if you go on as you

are doing now, take my word for it, you'll come to repent it bitterly some day. You've nothing to do with whether things are great or small; you've got to do everything for everybody that you can think of. No fear of your not having enough to do if you do that, and it's what we are all here for. Not Miss Nightingale only, but you and me; to work for others, to please them, to do all we can for them; and it's not work to think meanly of, Miss Clara,'—and the somewhat raised voice sank low,—'it's the very same work God is doing always; and because we are His children He lets us do some of it too.'

There was a silence of several minutes, and then Clara said,—

'Nurse, how do you mean that God works so? I don't understand.'

'Just this, darling, that He is as particular over the little things as the big ones, making the tiny flower as perfect in its way as the oak-tree; and then, look how careful He is of the little insects even, teaching the butterfly where to lay her eggs, so that the caterpillars shall be born on the kind of leaves they eat; and,' she went on earnestly, 'look at His ways with us, how often He sends some little thing to comfort us just when we are low and want

it. I 'm sure it happens a'most every day that something turns up to help me along just at the right moment, and is not *that* His sending?'

'Yes, I see that,' replied Clara, 'but I don't quite see what it has to do with us.'

'Only, dear, that He works in that way, taking care of the very smallest thing, and thinking nothing too mean or little to bestow His thought on—watching over us, so as to send the little comfort or lesson just when we need them. How can *we* talk of things not being worth while—of these little things not being big enough, grand enough for us to do? What is worth while to the Great God is surely worth our while.'

'Oh, nurse, I don't mean that; you couldn't think I was so wicked. It 's not that, but it seems to me that He does these things. He doesn't leave them to us.'

'Do you think so, dear? Well, now, He just *does* give them to us to do. If you think a moment, the comfort very often comes through somebody. Didn't you tell me the other day how a letter had come just when you were wanting it most? What was that, but that the good God put it into somebody's head to write just what you wanted most? But, Miss Clara, dear, that is what to me is most

awful about it; there is a great deal that's sweet and happy in the thought, but it's rather terrible. If God means some one to have a comfort, and offers to us the work of giving it, and we neglect the opportunity, they may miss the comfort God meant them to have, and that would be very sad—very sad,' repeated the old woman, 'and yet I've known it happen; leastways I've thought so. Ah, darling, don't you miss doing anything you do get told to do, or you'll be very sorry when you know how much you might have done, and it's too late to do it.'

There was a long pause, but presently Clara looked up to say, somewhat hesitatingly,—

'Then you think, nurse, that these little things I've been despising, are the work we've all got to do, only more or less of them; that God has set us just that, to think and care for, and be kind to all the people we know of who want either comfort or help or anything, even company?'

'I do think so, dear. I'm an old woman, and don't know much but what I've watched and seen for myself these many and many years, but I do think so; and I think you'll come to see it too when you are as old as I am, and some day, dear, you'll come to see that these little things are not so very little either; they have more effect on the

world than some of the larger ones, because they come over and over again every day.'

'Well, nurse, perhaps you are right, and I'll think of it,' said Clara, rising and putting on her hat with a quiet, grave manner, very different from the impatience with which she had taken it off; then kissing the old woman warmly, she said, 'Ah, nurse, you are a dear, good friend; I don't know what I, or any of us, would do without you.'

Clara went home, and she did think of all her nurse had said—thought of it to some purpose, for she presently began to see that nurse was right. The little things *had* more influence for good or evil in the everyday life than what she had called larger ones. If she could not save a life, or rescue anybody from misery, she could at any rate make them more or less happy in a thousand little ways; and she learnt another lesson too, that she was a great deal happier herself when busy thinking and acting for others; but perhaps we could hardly call that learning, though she found it so practically; for as every day brought fresh suggestions and thought for others, she had less time to think whether she herself were happy or unhappy. But these things are not accomplished in a day; and it was many days, perhaps years, before Clara felt—as every one

who would not be miserable should feel—that she was busy, 'had more to do than she had time for;' but she did attain to it at last, and felt too, that whatever she did, no matter how little it might be in one sense, was not mean or to be despised, in that it was what God Himself had given her to do.

'Hum! that's a word to me, I suppose,' said Hildred, as she laid down the last sheet of paper.

'It was not meant for you, dear; but if the cap fits and feels comfortable, I don't mind your wearing it.'

'But it doesn't feel comfortable, and you don't understand me, Aunt Agnes! Now, here am I, just eighteen and half, and I've been two years at this drudgery of teaching, and see no hope of anything else in all the future. I do well to get sick of it! Nursing! I don't know that I should choose that; but, oh! to do anything to help the world on, ever so little. I wish I were a man, and then I *could* do a work for God.'

'Stay, my dear; this work you are so anxious to do for God, is it something He has given you to do, or is it some piece of fancy-work, so to speak, that He has not required at your hands, but that you would like to make Him a present of?'

'Aunt Agnes, what do you mean?' exclaimed Hildred.

'I mean, my dear, if the latter has been your thought, that the Creator, to whom the "earth and the fulness thereof" belongs, has no need of aught from the hand of His creature; and that the only acceptable offering in His sight is that of a lowly heart, willing to spend and be spent in His service; and life is not to be spent in vain longing to do some great thing that He has not and does not require from us, but in doing the duty that lies nearest, whether it be teaching, or fulfilling little offices of everyday life—perhaps even dining with a friend.'

Hildred looked up quickly, saying,—

'You think I ought to have gone with Alice Chester?'

'Nay, love, only yourself can judge of the ought. But we both know that although Alice is surrounded by all that wealth can command, the dear child is not happily situated. A gloomy and austere father, and a stepmother who devotes her whole life to gaiety, are not the best aids to an earnest girl just awakening to the realities of life. And we know, likewise, that she looks to you as to one whom she considers to have made some progress on the road, to guide and help her in the path she desires to tread.'

'I wish to goodness she didn't then!' was Hildred's quick exclamation. 'It vexes me more than I can tell to hear her take so unquestioningly whatever I say, as if she had no mind of her own. I've no patience with her! Now, Aunt Agnes, why are you smiling? It's true.'

'What is true, dear? That you dislike to have Alice look up to you? It is, indeed, a weighty responsibility, that by so doing she lays upon you to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called; but, then, you desire a great work to do.'

'But not *that* work; not to have Alice Chester tied to my apron-string! But—but you don't understand, Aunt Agnes.'

'Do I not, my dear child; do I not?' said Miss Forley earnestly, as, laying aside the knitting with which all this time she had been busy, she put both her hands on Hildred's head, 'Did you never hear the story of my missionary fever, Hildred?'

'Your what, aunt? No, I never heard; what was it?'

'When I was about your age, I happened to read the *Life of St. Xavier*, which, followed immediately by that of Henry Martyn, completely roused me from the apathetic and easy sort of life I had till then led. I longed earnestly, as you express it, to do a work for

God and the world, but my idea took the decided bent of missionary labour. Of course it was impossible that I could at once start for India, which I had decided was to be the field of my endeavours; but I nursed the hope that, as soon as I should have the right of disposing of myself, I might go; and meantime, I took to distributing tracts and visiting the poor in their homes. No, my dear, I did not achieve any great result'—as Hildred seemed about to speak. 'Indeed mine was but very surface work, and though it interested me for a time, I soon began to feel it so. About that time your father—he was a visitor at the house, even in those his student days—introduced to us a real live missionary and his wife, a Mr. and Mrs. Greenwood, who, after a seven years' residence in Africa, had left their mission-station for a holiday among their English friends. They were good, earnest people, devotedly attached to their work, and solemnly thankful for the success which they believed had attended their efforts to spread the Gospel among the heathen. You may be sure that all this served to add fuel to the fire of my enthusiasm. I had fully determined in my own mind that I would accompany them on their return to Africa, as assistant to Mrs. Greenwood in her labours; and all my efforts were now exerted to gain my parents' consent to the step.

This was the subject of my thoughts by day and of my dreams by night; and at last hope began to whisper softly that I should gain my heart's desire, and be permitted thus specially to devote myself to God's service, and then—'

'And then, Aunt Agnes?' asked Hildred eagerly, for Miss Forley had stopped, and leaned her head dreamily upon her hand, as if her thoughts had gone back to those olden days, and she had forgotten her niece's presence; but roused by Hildred's question, she went on :—

'It was decided that I should go, and I was making the final arrangements for my departure, when I met with the accident which made me a cripple and an invalid for life; and the day on which I expected to set sail for the mission-station, I learned that my future life must be passed upon a sofa.'

'Oh! Aunt Agnes, how could you bear it? I wonder the disappointment did not kill you. I think it would me.'

'Nay, Hildred, people are not so easily killed,' said Miss Forley, with a slight smile, but continuing: 'Nevertheless, the disappointment was terrible. It seemed to me that there was no longer any goodness or justice in Heaven to thus snatch from me the desire of my heart at the very moment of its fulfil-

ment, and when too, as I kept telling myself I had sought, not a selfish gratification, but to extend God's glory and devote all my time and energies to His service. Here was I compelled to life-long suffering, and debarred, as I then fancied, from all future enjoyment. I grew moody and irritable, and made my life as great a burden, not only to myself, but to all around me, as I possibly could. I wished myself dead, and if others did not, it could only be from their great goodness. It was about that time, when my moodiness and discontent had reached a point beyond which it was hardly possible to go, that I became acquainted with Alice Chester's mother. Ah, Alice! no words can ever tell the debt I owe to you!'

'What did she do, aunt?'

'It was not so much what she did or said, as what she was; for she, more than any one I ever knew, wore "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," and seemed to bring, wherever she came, an atmosphere of purity and gentleness that rested over all she touched or looked upon. She was then a fair, delicate girl, accustomed all her life to suffering and ill-health, with but rare intervals of freedom from pain. Yet, withal, she was surely one of the brightest and most unselfish creatures that ever trod God's earth. In her, I have often since thought, the child-

likeness so commended by our Lord attained its perfection. Everything had interest for her, the least and most trivial, as well as the greatest thing; and that not because she was frivolous, but the very contrary, and because whatever she did, her desire was to do all to the glory of God. She did not seek for some great thing to do, nor was any given her, but in her quiet walk of daily life she shed abroad an influence that many a heart acknowledged, and the fruit of which is not even yet all gathered.'

There was a short silence after Miss Forley ceased speaking, then Hildred said—

'How sad for Alice to have lost such a mother! I wonder if she remembers her at all?'

'Very little, I should think; she could not be more than three years old when her mother died.'

'Did you see Mrs. Chester, aunt, before she died?'

'No, dear, I never saw her after her marriage; they went abroad immediately, and poor Alice never returned. She died at Rome, you know.'

'Did she write to you, aunt?'

'Some few times; some day, perhaps, I may show you the letters, but not now. Though, if you will pass my desk, dear, I will show you some she wrote to me once when I had gone up to town

for the better treatment of my illness; she herself was ill, confined to two rooms at the time. I chafed very much against my enforced confinement; I could not make out how Alice contrived to endure the same martyrdom with such cheerful grace, and I had asked her how in the world she managed it. Here was her answer.' And as Miss Forley spoke, she took from her desk a packet of letters, and choosing therefrom one or two, put them into Hildred's hand. Almost reverently Hildred opened the first, and read,—

'You ask me, dear Agnes, how I contrive to amuse myself during the hours I can neither work nor read, and if I never feel "awfully dull?" To say that I am *never* dull, would be laying claim to far greater philosophy than I possess. Still there are many little amusements which help invalid life to cheeriness and endurableness, which are, in short, its just compensations. Of course well people would not enter into these amusements, would probably laugh, or, worse still, overwhelm us with contemptuous pity at their mention; because, forsooth, their own opportunities and enjoyments take so much higher and wider a range. Happily with their opinion we have nothing to do, so passing by both laughter and pity, we will acknowledge ourselves

to be a pair of invalids, desirous only to make the best of our position.

'To begin then. I suppose that you, like myself, are laid up part of the day in a back room, with a view only of roofs, walls, and sky, and the rest of the day in a front room, looking on a street, where, if the noise harass and weary you, you may yet, as I hope to show you, find amusement in the passing of carriages, etc. Let us begin with the morning. You may be able to read, write, and work a great deal lying in your bed; but some scraps of time are likely to find you doing none of these things, but lying back *idly*, some would say (the well people aforenamed)—I say *wearily*, hoping for rest. And then thoughts obtrude themselves of how long it is going to last; whether you will ever be any better; how bad your pain is; and worse thoughts, perhaps. *We* know full well their nature and their range, but there is no need to particularize; they are not tonic thoughts, and had better, therefore, be laid aside with that last medicine that did no good. Now for my amusements. Not the sky, though if it be fair and blue it will suggest many a thought of the Love which surrounds us on every side; and if it be cloudy, there may come thoughts of the "sun behind the clouds still shining," and the hope of a good, or

at least a better, time yet to come. But *this* is not to be classed among the small amusements; this and the many thoughts suggested by the ever-changing sky, now bright, now overcast, now gold and crimson in its conquering evening glory, are rather to be spoken of under the head of "great helps," to speak like a preacher, which I don't want to do.

'In the mornings, apart from your own resources, the amusements I know of are only two, the cats and the birds. "The cats!" you exclaim. "I hate cats!" But you don't need to hate them, they are not coming near you. If you watch long enough you are sure to see a cat; and if you are low and dull, a cat is better than nothing. You may see many cats, and then you can't have better fun. There! look at that one! She's a pet cat; you know by her silky fur and fat sleek appearance. How daintily she picks her way over the wet, smooth slates, and now, as she disappears, you can fancy her welcome home by a rapturous mistress, who feared the beloved object was lost. There are innumerable diversities in the race of cats, as studied from a back window. There are, besides the pet cat, caressed and spoiled, who evidently thinks herself somebody, the forlorn cat, whose kittens have been feloniously made away with; the starved cat,

gaunt and uncombed, prowling about seeking what she may devour, and suggestive, to the vivid imagination, of the agonies of the little boy next door, whose family of guinea-pigs has been lately increased, when he hears the death-shriek of the precious Benjamin of his flock of pets. Poor little lad! the grief is sharper to him than many a greater one will be, as he grows to manhood.

'Then there is the sleepy cat, purring in the sun —you can fancy you hear her; the cunning, clever cat, watching her opportunity with a world of sharp intelligence in her face. See again, that one picking her way gingerly over that well-glassed wall. She will take no harm, and will be down upon anything precious which the unsuspecting householder (who thought, innocent creature! to protect himself from pussy by that ingenious contrivance) keeps in the garden below. Chickens, or rabbits, or guinea-pigs, nothing comes amiss to the hungry cat. Then, after a while, you will recognise your cats. You will see what time they come, and how long they stay, and which way they go; you will weave fancies for yourself about their homes and surroundings; you may even, dear, notwithstanding that shake of the head, come at last to look for the return, and enjoy the sight of, the cats on the wall, and this, not

because you are deprived of every other solace, far from that, but because you have learned—what everybody must learn in some degree, and an invalid first of all—to make the most of little things. There is a sense in which the intellectual powers may rise, not sink, into taking pleasure out of a strange cat on a wall.

'Now, I will suppose you moved to the room looking into the street. In the first place, then, there are the carriages. You may fancy it a very dull occupation to watch carriages going by. Perhaps it is, if you only admire the horses, and do not speculate about the inmates. But, thank goodness! there is no law against such speculation, and it will afford you many hours of amusement. One can tell a good deal about carriages from merely watching them out of a window. In the first place, there is your own doctor's carriage, supposing he uses one. I was once laid up in lodgings, where my doctor's carriage passed my window on its way to the stables twice every day. It was quite wonderful how much I got to know of his movements by that one fact, and how many funny little romances I used to weave out of his going out at unusual hours. Then there are other doctors' carriages, which we invalids know to be such by an instinct peculiar to our race. In some towns I am acquainted with, a gentleman

alone in a carriage, in the middle of the day, is certain to be a doctor, whether the carriage be a brougham, a gig, or a barouche, or a curious contrivance in the shape of a velocipede on four wheels, which a certain young doctor of my acquaintance imagined in the recesses of his fertile brain, and forthwith had made, and in which he used to travel, I should be afraid to say how many miles in the twenty-four hours.

'In a strange town you cannot be sure of your inferences, inasmuch as other gentlemen besides the doctors take "carriage exercise." Though it would be difficult to describe exactly the difference between the carriage of an M.D. and that of an ordinary individual going home from town, still there are distinctions, as every invalid knows quite well,—at least if she have been long enough a member of the Freemasons' Lodge of Invalids to understand the signs thereof.

'However, you decide that the carriage-and-pair just now going by the window is a doctor's. For the purpose in hand it does just as well that you should think so as that you should know for certain, and your amusement commences. You take your seat (metaphorically) by the side of the gentleman in the carriage, whom you invest for the time with all the

charms possessed by your own chosen and favourite medical friend, and proceed on his rounds with him. If the carriage stops at the house opposite, it is a great assistance in the start, because the getting out, and the servant opening the door, may suggest ideas. But in any case it is only the first start that is difficult; once settled in the carriage, invested for the moment with the fairy prince's invisible cloak, and the interest of your drive commences. You see how anxious your doctor is about the first patient on his list, but how the next is getting well beautifully, and doing him credit. You picture the pleasure with which he is received at one house, and the anxiety with which he is waited for at another. You do not need to fancy any depressing cases that morning. The beauty of the amusement is, that you can make it just what you like.

'If you prefer to pay only one call with the doctor, you can fly back from the first house, whilst, if you like to carry on your imaginings, you will have mental occupation for an unlimited time. Suppose you try my plan for once, and then you will see if you are not deeply interested for at least a quarter of an hour, and by that time you will be sufficiently rested to proceed with one of the recognised occupations of your sick life.

'To return to the street, however: the amusement contributed by the other passing carriages is all of the same nature, different only in degree. It consists in wondering. You wonder where they are going, and who the people are, and what they are going to do. That one, for instance, comes in every Tuesday and Friday, "to shop" evidently; you know that because it returns filled with parcels, and, if your eye be pretty quick, you can tell, by the nature of the parcels, sundry little particulars which are not without interest. If there be children in the carriage too, a certain class of parcels is indicative of a children's party, and if you care to do it, you can (metaphorically again) take your place in the carriage, and go home to the party until it is time for your own tea.

'Then there are the cars and carriages going to and from the railways, and there are pictures and romances without end to be made out of these. Are the inmates of the cars glad or sorry to go? Are they sent for in haste, or are they going home from a holiday out? Are they children going to school, or triumphantly coming home for the holidays? It is a pity one can so seldom see faces in these vehicles, for one can learn so much from even a passing glance at the face of the occupant of a carriage, though he or she should be quite unknown to you.

'Now I come to the last of my amusements—the opposite neighbours, the postman, and the unknown friends—though this last is hardly to be named an amusement so much as a real joy. About the two first I have very little to say, because they do not differ greatly from the carriage amusement. Of your opposite neighbours you may learn a great deal, and take in them a far more intelligent interest than in the mere passers-by. You see the goings-out and the comings-in; you see whether there are children, and if so, what they are like; and, if circumstances lend themselves to it, you learn a great deal more of them than you would have imagined possible. You see little things happen, and you piece these on to other little things, and if your imprisonment should be a long one, the dissected map of their concerns may be almost perfectly put together;—and this without any unseemly curiosity on your part, or any undue interference with their liberty. You will ask no questions, make no inquiries; and I am bound to say you may be entirely mistaken in the inferences you have drawn; but it will have served the purpose of cheering you, and done nobody any harm, that you should have made some pleasant pictures and fancies out of your opposite neighbours, even though they have no reality whatever.

'And then there is the postman; and who has letters, and who has none, who has several every day, and who has only one or two in a month. You may wonder whether they contain pleasant news, and have been anxiously waited for—and then you wonder whether there will be one for you, and who it will be from. But no! that is hardly a safe amusement, and we invalids have often too hard work to keep up our spirits to afford to *give* ourselves any disappointment. Better keep your mind off your own letters coming or not coming, and keep it only on the visible letters of your opposite neighbours as the postman goes down the street.

'I must bring this long letter to a close without telling you of my last amusement, but you shall have it in my next.'

Silently, without any comment, Hildred laid down this letter, taking up the next in turn, which ran thus:—

'So, Agnes dear, you think my amusements "very stupid,—cats and carriages and opposite neighbours, and such foolish little things." Ay, but, Agnes, if you are going to despise little things, you had better go the world round in search of health, for you are likely to be the most terrible burden to yourself and your friends. For the worst of this invalid life, or

the best, as the case may be, is that you are thrown necessarily on yourself for amusement and occupation, and you can't, when you feel low-spirited, get up, put on hat and goloshes and rush to a shop, or to make a call, or take at once a mental and physical "constitutional" through the muddy lane. Even if you can go out at all, it is at a regular time; you are more or less dependent on others, and must consider them, or report yourself selfish and exacting to a certain internal monitor, who probably requires more, and is less easily satisfied than when you were in robust health. No! come down to little things, and you may have yet a not unhappy life, a not unuseful life, even though you should never know again what ease or health means.

'But now to return to the subject of amusements —my unknown friends, real joys, as I said before, of a sick life. Unhappily they are not producible at will, and I don't know that I can explain my meaning better than by telling you about one I had a year or two ago. If your sick life should give you one, or more than one, you will be a really favoured individual; but I can't tell you how to get them, only to remember that there are such, and should an opportunity of gaining one present itself, don't miss following it up.

'Some years ago, our house in the country was being altered, and I was staying for six months in town. I hated town, and chafed against the necessity of being there; I could not employ myself, and used to look out of the window a great deal more than I should dream of doing now—unless, indeed, I lost the use of my hands. Well, as I looked, I used to see day after day a carriage—a doctor's carriage, which I knew well, though it was not my own doctor's—at the opposite door. After a time I used to watch for it, and wonder who was ill there. One day there were two carriages; more and more I wondered and speculated, but I heard nothing till one afternoon my own doctor's carriage made the third.

'Now I shall know, thought I, who is ill there, and what they are ill of; and the interest in the unknown invalid, which had been gradually increasing, rose now to fever-heat. However, curiosity, if curiosity it were, was destined to receive a rebuff. My Esculapius was a silent man, given to repress undue curiosity, and any questions I dared put only obtained that he had been called in by the other doctor. She, the young lady, was not his patient. He believed the name was * * *—"Good-morning!"

'But for me this was more than enough. A young lady—like myself then—ill, very ill apparently,

as three doctors were necessary (I had only one), and all my sympathies were aroused at once. The doings of that house became my great interest in life; the comings and goings; the delicacies the poulterer sent for her dinner; the visits of the doctors, their faces grave or cheery as they came out of the house. One day I had some flowers sent me, and it came into my head to send them over to her. I could laugh now at my fears and tremor as to how they would be received, and my hesitation at sending them. I did not know so well then how seldom invalids are given to thinking things liberties. The flowers were received with grateful but somewhat formal thanks from the young lady's mother, and I took courage to repeat the attention as often as I could. In due time there used to come little pencilled notes from that young girl, necessarily very short—only a word of thanks,—but I should be afraid to say how they were looked for and cherished on my side the street. Then I took to writing to her, but the answers could never be more than a few words. What people unversed in the quaint relationships of "unknown friends" would have called the "intimacy," did not progress; but I don't think we needed anything more; I know I did not. I used to dream sometimes of being sent for to see her, but

that never happened. Once only I saw her, and it was in this wise: looking out of my window in the dusk, watching the lamplighter, and speculating as usual on the dark opposite house, I saw my doctor go up to the door and ring. In due time he was admitted, and, I suppose, hearing the bell, and guessing who it might be, my invalid's mother lit the gas in the drawing-room. In a moment the whole room flashed into distinctness, for the blinds were not down. I took it all in at a glance: the little couch drawn near the fire, the slight figure upon it, with the head turned a little away, so that the features were not discernible. The door opened, and the doctor came in. I *saw* him speak to her. I could fancy I heard the familiar voice sound through the room. I saw her hand put out to shake hands, and the face turned a little my way, when the mother, suddenly remembering, I suppose, that those outside would see, somewhat hastily pulled down the blinds, and I never saw her again. The cold weather set in, and the only thing I could hear about her was—"Ah, poor thing! she will not get better; we keep her in bed now." And I went home, but the interchange of flowers and little notes went on. I remember how the new year opened, and she still lingered, longing for the snow-drops. I too longed for them,

for her sake, and the first basketful of flowers, among which were some early snow-drops, I left myself at the house (for I could drive out then), just an hour before she died. But they told me she saw them, even the snow-drops, and bade them "thank her."

'Years have passed since then, and I have had several other "unknown friends" under like circumstances. I have corresponded with people for years whom I have never or only once seen; but the unknown friends have gradually become known, and loved with an almost sisterly affection; and the correspondents have become intimate friends, with whom a visible acquaintance would hardly be a gain. But alone among my most precious experiences of a somewhat sad time, stands that of my unknown friend, "Emily * * * Died January 11, 18—, aged twenty-one,"—the only relic I possess of her being that little heap of pencilled notes, almost illegible, and containing each but a few words. Yet I shall never forget her, and I feel more and more assured that my unknown friend and I shall not meet as strangers in that bright world to which she has gone, and where we shall not see each other as "through a glass, darkly, but face to face."'

Silently, as she had done the first, Hildred laid

down this sheet, but she did not immediately open the one she still held in her hand, but, leaning her head against the sofa, sat very still for some minutes, until Miss Forley spoke—

'Hildred!'

'Oh aunt! I'm so sorry. I wish Mrs. Chester had not died.'

'Ay, I have wished it often these fifteen years past; but it is best as it is. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord," murmured Miss Forley, speaking softly, and half to herself.

After a short pause, Hildred looked up to say—

'Aunt Agnes, I know now what makes you so interested in all that concerns Alice Chester; it has sometimes puzzled me, but I understand now it is for her mother's sake, and because you want to pay back to her some of the good her mother did you.'

Miss Forely smiled, as she answered—

'You must not fancy, dear, that I am of such an independent disposition as yourself, unable to receive the smallest favour unless I can see a chance of repaying the same in kind. No, I must plead guilty to loving Alice simply for her own sake, and without any reference to what I owe her mother. That obligation does not weigh on my spirit, and I entreat, dear, that you will not let it weigh on yours.'

'You are too bad, Aunt Agnes! I know you think me very foolish, but—'

'No, dear, not *very* foolish; only a little unwise at times; but now, love, if you are not going to read that letter, but only twist it in your fingers that way, you had better let me replace it in my desk.'

'Oh! I beg your pardon, aunt!' said Hildred, turning hastily to the unread portion of the letter, that for the last few minutes she had been rolling into all possible shapes:—

'Some people talk of deep study and hard reading as a resource for invalids, but the case must be peculiar, and the brains robust, whatever the body may be, for this to be possible; and unhappily, or perhaps *not* unhappily, the two act on each other; but there are resources left, even when hard study is not one of them. You will have your known and unknown correspondents, and there is always a pleasant little excitement in receiving letters. Thus you will be able to do many a little thing for others—other invalids especially. The very sensitiveness which makes it an act of brave resolution not to cry out when people will bang the fire-irons or slam the door, gives you also a delicacy of perception which is much to be envied. It will teach you exactly the kind of thing that would suit and add to the comfort of some

other sufferer you know of,—the shawl, or pillow, or other contrivance that you have found useful in your own case. And these things are not expensive, made to order—exactly what will suit, contrived, if not made, by your own hands and heart. They will give you plenty of thought and occupation, and cost less than many another thing you might do, and then they give, oh, such pleasure!

'Is it not the good God's own loving gift to those to whom He has denied health, that whatever they are able to do for others should ever be received with such gratitude and pleasure? I know not, but this I do know, that invalids may well be jealous over every little thing they can do for another, be that other sick or well; for they can't do much, and what they do is ever most tenderly received. Then this same keen perception may be used in other ways. You will know quicker than another when your nurse is tired, or your doctor needs to be cheered, rather than depressed by "a string of troubles." You will know and rejoice over his ring, when no one else knows it from a common ring, and catch the footfall on the stair, which has very precious "music in it," if he be the right sort of doctor. All this is the bright side of the fire-iron trouble which every invalid knows so well, and dare not acknowledge, lest she be thought fanciful.

'And then, again, don't be ashamed of taking

pleasure out of your "little things." There is a hymn of Faber's, made for invalids—

> "How shall I bear the cross which now
> So dread a weight appears?
> . . . . .
> Bear gently, suffer like a child,
> Nor be ashamed of tears;
> Keep quietly to God, and think
> Upon the eternal years."

'Suffer "like a child;" ay, and rejoice like a child. Don't be ashamed of liking pretty things. If I had my way, all invalids should always be dressed in pretty, delicate colours, light colours, fresh and fair, and this if no one ever saw them but themselves. No object but that of doing double penance should ever make an invalid dress in dreary dun-coloured things. It may be hard work to be dressed at all, but if you are dressed, it is no harder to have something pretty on, and it is a thousandfold more cheering. Take a child's pleasure in pretty clothes. There is no law, spiritual or temporal, requiring any one to make an object of herself because she is ill, and of all times it is then one suffers most from doing it.

'Children's books, children's toys even, are all invalid pleasures. Dressing dolls for known or unknown little girls is royal amusement, and has the great advantage of the things being small, soon finished, and easy to handle. Then there are funny little experiments, always amusing to show to any one

who comes fresh, though of course the novelty passes for one's-self. Next time you have some one to spend an hour or two with you, and conversation flags, ask her if she ever tried how many pins she could put into a wine-glass full of water without spilling. Gather up the pins of the household, or, if you have a shop near, send for three ounces, so as to be sure of having enough ; then fill your glass as full as ever you can, and proceed to drop the pins in, point downward, one by one. If you have never tried you will be amused by the result ; but you must be careful to keep your hand steady, or the water will spill. There are plenty such baby experiments to while away a weary hour, when work is out of the question ; and they have a "deterrent" effect, as solitary confinement is supposed to have on felons ; they keep you from dreary thoughts.

'One thing more. If it be true that to enter that kingdom we are all seeking, it is needful to become as little children, then we invalids have rare opportunities. Our life is necessarily very much that of the child ; dependent in a great measure upon others, obliged to do not what we would, but what we can, often weakened by long suffering to a painful and (if you so regard it) humiliating degree. What is an invalid but a child? Full of feelings and terrors sometimes, of which a man or woman in health might well

be ashamed--weary with exertion that a baby would rejoice in. Still it lies with an invalid to choose the good or evil side of child-life, to be *childish* or child-like. As a child, she must live in the present; what use looking to a future full of suffering, or a past full of struggles? Like a child, weak and dependent; like a child, worried with trifles, crying, perhaps, at little griefs. Yes, it may be all this; but like a child too, it rests with herself to be trustful and patient, making little hourly efforts with the wonderful persistence of an unspoiled child, turning herself resolutely from the denied comfort as a child does from his broken toy, with a murmured "I will be good;" like a child she may be cheered from "darkest depths of woe" by a flower, a funny thought, or a suggestive carriage in the street.

'There is no choice, dear Agnes, as to being in many senses like a child, since it is God's will that you should be an invalid; but it does lie with yourself to try for, ay, and to win, before very long, some of the child-likeness which is the bright side of this sick life; and however dark may be your dark clouds, it is a glorious, golden lining to have such rich opportunities of becoming one of the dear children of whom is the kingdom of heaven.'

'So then, according to Mrs. Chester and Aunt

Agnes, it would seem that, either for invalids or those in health, the great business of life is to be interested in and do well the little things.'

'And according to Hildred?' asked Miss Forley, smiling.

'But, aunt, if everybody should devote themselves to just *living* from day to day, never looking beyond the daily duty, who would do the world's work?'

'The thing is not, my dear, that we should not look beyond, but that while looking beyond we should not stumble over, or pass by the little things that lie at our feet. To every one of us God has unmistakably appointed these duties, and the neglect of them may be the reason why many being called so few are chosen to advance the world's progress.'

'But, aunt, what do you mean about many being called and but few chosen? Are any called who are not chosen?'

'In a sense, yes. It seems to me that all are called who, like you, have the longing to advance God's work; but it is only the few who—strengthened by the discipline of the faithful performance of daily duty—are able, when opportunity presents, to pass from vague longing to definite action, who are chosen.'

Hildred made no answer to this, but sat with her head bent thoughtfully upon her hand.

'Well, Hildred?' said Miss Forley.

'I was thinking, aunt, of that old story of how Gideon chose his men. I suppose it might be taken as an illustration of the subject. They were all called down to the water to drink, but it was only the three hundred who lapped who were chosen to go forth and win the battle.'

'And you think—'

'I suppose Gideon chose these men, because, seeing them so easily adapt themselves to the exigencies of the case, he felt they were to be depended on in unforeseen circumstances. They were the men to overcome bravely the little difficulties; and so, after all, we only get back to the starting-point.'

'Which is—?' said Miss Forley.

'Nothing but what you taught me long ago, namely, that the object of life should be, in the words of the Catechism, "To labour truly to get mine own living, and to do my duty in that station of life into which it shall please God to call me."

'Depend upon it, my dear Hildred, that that *is* the great work God requires of us; and if you can do that cheerfully, your birth into the world will not have been in vain.'

Hildred rose from her seat beside Miss Forley, and leaned silently against the mantelpiece, but after a few minutes she turned to her aunt, with an attempt at cheerfulness, saying—

'Well, aunt, until I can lap like a dog, I will not again cry out to go forth to battle; in other words, until I can faithfully perform all the duties of the station to which God *has* called me, I will endeavour not to murmur for a higher one.'

'But you are not satisfied, Hildred; not content.'

'Ye—s, that is, no, aunt; to be honest, I am not satisfied; perhaps I shall grow so in time; but as yet it all seems so poor and uninteresting.'

'Poor and uninteresting enough, if we forget one thing.'

'What thing, aunt?'

'That we are not here to do what is interesting and pleasant to ourselves, but to serve others always and everywhere, even though that service may never rise to greater dignity than the offering of a cup of cold water.'

'But, aunt, that is just what I want to do, God's work of helping His children.'

'God's work, but not Hildred's,' said Miss Forley, smiling. 'You want, my child, to serve the world, but not to help Alice Chester; you would like to regenerate a nation or a town, but not to help a tired, stupid child through its lessons.'

'But indeed, aunt, I do try to be patient and kind, but you don't know how hard it is.'

'Ay, but I *do* know how hard it is; but therein

lies the dignity. It always seems to me that these little daily duties are so many love offerings that we can bring to God constantly afresh, every hour if we will. Now, Hildred, just let me ask you, which you would prefer, and which do you think would make the room look pleasantest—neatly arranged vases of wax-flowers, beautifully made, or a bouquet of fresh sweet roses from the garden every morning?'

'Aunt Agnes, you are laughing at me. How can you ask?'

'But you don't answer me.'

'Why, the fresh flowers, of course; they make the room look inhabited and home-like; as if somebody were there caring for one, not once, but always every day.'

Miss Forley turned and took both Hildred's hands in hers, saying—

'And that, my dear, is your work in life, your "great work," to give to God daily fresh-gathered flowers; not the bouquet of artificial ones arranged and presented as one costly gift, but gathered each day, presented each day; the flowers of loving words, loving deeds, and little efforts to please every one who comes in your way.'

There was a pause, and Hildred sighed; perhaps it was too much to expect that she would at once cheerfully give up her cherished hope of one day

stepping beyond the narrow circle within which her life was placed, and doing something in the world beyond. But Miss Forley went on—

'It is difficult, dear, so difficult, that many people prefer the artificial nosegay, on which they can bestow a great deal of thought and cost once for all, and then offer it, and be satisfied. They are content if they keep it in order and dust it; but then, you see, the temple lacks the sweetness of the freshly gathered, dewy flowers, and the house does not seem inhabited by a loving, ever-present spirit. And think for a moment, love, how different the world would be if everybody were bent on this work of strewing these flowers of kindly words and deeds in their neighbour's path; how much happier and brighter if we were all striving—

> "Not narrowly men's claims to measure,
> But question *daily* all our powers,
> To whose cup can we add a pleasure,
> Whose path can we make bright with flowers."'

'Ah, would it not,' cried Hildred enthusiastically; but the next moment she added despondently, 'But it's no use; nobody does.'

'Do your part, my love, without regard to others. Sow such seed as you have, and you know not how great a harvest you may reap.'

'Yes, aunt, I know, and I will try.' Just then the clock struck ten, and Hildred started up. 'How

late!' she exclaimed, 'and you ought to be in bed, auntie. I hope you won't be wearied with this long talk. Talks generally are not much worth, but this one, I hope, will leave some fruit. You have made me see much more clearly than I did. And, auntie,' she continued in a tone of resolution, 'I'll do my "great work" yet, and give the daily offering of fresh flowers.'

'God bless you, my darling, and help you along the path; it is not an easy one to tread, but it leads towards the light, and when most hard and difficult, we may always remember whose footsteps we are striving to follow, and the remembrance will incite us to unwearied efforts in well-doing. Good-night, love.'

And we too will say 'Good-night' to Hildred and Aunt Agnes, for it would be too long and tedious to follow Hildred through all the long path of ministry to others in which she tried to walk. Those who feel as she felt, and long like her to do a 'great work for God,' will be able to remember and fancy for themselves many of the 'fresh flowers' she gathered, as the days went on, bringing fresh opportunities of every kind; and in the sight of God, who marks every sparrow fall, and every mite which is cast into the treasury, such faithful if lowly service is by no means despised.