"Hey, Father! I've come to bid you good-bye."

THE

NEW YORK NEEDLE-WOMAN,

OR

ELSIE'S STARS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE SHOE BINDERS OF NEW YORK," "ANNIE LORIMER," "GOLDEN LIFE," &c., &c.

"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

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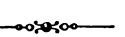
PREFACE.



THIS little volume has been written as a companion to the "Shoe Binders of New York," to show that it is not the rich only who should and can work for Jesus, but that any, even the poorest, whose hearts burn with a flame lit from the altar of God's love, can speak a "word in season to him that is weary." If Elsie Ray in her poor abode, and with her slender powers and means, could win that starry crown of rescued souls, who is there that dare cry, like Moses at the burning bush, "O Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou shouldest [margin] send," until the anger of the Lord is kindled against them?

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CHAPTER I.

NEW YORK "ARABS."

"They have all gone astray."

"TO-DAY," said a friend, "I visited a tenement-house, not the largest, where were ninety people. They were shockingly herded, two or three families in one room."

This observation with regard to one tenement-house holds true of very many in that city of New York, where life's extremes are so closely united. In such an one we find Charlotte Hoffer and others, of whom this tale. Tenement-houses these—not put up for their present use, but homes of fashion once, left be-

hind in the up-town march of the rich and gay. Dwellings on Cherry street, which were homes of affluence and refinement before Fifth avenue was heard of, are now left like the marred cocoon when the butterfly has found its wings and sailed away. I wonder sometimes if those hosts of the wealthy and fashionable that have been pressing up town, shall, when they leave their mortal bodies in the graves where decay and worms hold riot, pass on to better mansions higher up. In Cherry street, where carefully-nurtured childhood once made happy Babel—where mothers and daughters, husbands and sons once gathered about joyful hearths—we go where now the dainty foot of pride would scorn to tread, and climbing dirty and groaning stairways, from one uproarious, gin-smelling story to another, we find Charlotte Hoffer in an attic room. In this room two families live—one consisting of Daniel Hart,

his wife Abigail, and their four children; the other of Michael Hoffer, and Charlotte, his only child. It is already growing dark in the room, for the one dormer window admits but little light at four o'clock on December afternoons. This room had a few ancient chairs, a cracked stove, a rickety bed in one corner; a ragged tick, partially filled with straw, and supplied with a tattered quilt and blanket, in another; and a half broken-down cot in the third. There was also a table, long guiltless of scrubbing, a shelf with a few dishes, all of them cracked or broken, and a forlorn-looking cradle. In the cradle lay a neglected baby, mourning in a pitiful way, as a baby whom distress would not suffer to be quiet, and yet who had never gained either help or caressing by its wailing. At the window, looking into the street through the greasy pane, was Charlotte Hoffer, a girl of thirteen years, with an

angular frame, uncombed hair and dirty face and clothing: she was watching with evident satisfaction the progress of a domestic difficulty in the opposite attic. As Charlotte stood thus the room door opened, and a girl of about her own age came in carrying a pail of water, and followed by a girl of nine, who held several parcels gathered together in the skirt of her old frock.

"There ye stand glowering out of the window," cried the girl with the pail, sharply: "why can't ye take the child a minute if it cries, Lott Hoffer?"

"Take it yerself," responded Charlotte, without turning: "it's none of mine."

"S'posing it ain't, did ye ever do a good turn for anybody in all your life?" said the girl, giving the cradle a jar and putting down the pail.

"No, I didn't," said Charlotte—"not as I knows."

"And why not, then?" said Rhoda,

taking the small parcels from little Jane.

"Nobody never did one for me," said Charlotte, turning her sullen face about, as it was getting too late to see out of the window.

Rhoda lit a tallow candle, put it into a battered candlestick, added some fuel to the dying fire, and filled the tarnished and bent tea-kettle. She then unfolded a parcel, cut off a few slices of pork to fry, laid a loaf of bread on the greasy table, and put a drawing of tea in a broken-nosed teapot; then gathered the rest of her parcels up, and depositing them in a little closet in the wall, locked it and put the key in her bosom.

"Get the dishes on the table, Jane," said Rhoda; "I must take up little Jack. I believe mother 'd let him starve," and lifting the child from the cradle, Rhoda tore off a crust from the loaf, dipped it first into the tea-kettle and then into a

cup half full of molasses, and, giving the morsel thus prepared to the child, sat down near the stove to warm his chilled feet.

"Where's your dad?" asked Jane of Charlotte.

"I don't know," said Charlotte, indifferently; "he ain't been in to-day."

"And you don't want to see him, no more than I want to see mother?" said Jane.

"No, only I ain't had no dinner, and I want him to bring me something to eat."

Jane had finished her task, and crouched down behind the stove to get warm. The weary baby dropped over asleep against Rhoda's arm, and as she laid it in its uncomfortable cradle her father came in and took the chair she had left. He was followed by a boy a year younger than Rhoda, who stood by the stove and warmed his hands, a look of triumph in his eye and an ill-repressed

smile about his mouth—the only smile that had been in that attic for many a dreary day.

Daniel Hart was a bricklayer: his clothes were soiled and his hands roughened by his toil; and there was a settled frown on his brow and a hopeless misery in his eyes that made one's heart ache.

Rhoda proceeded to put her father's supper on the table, and Jane, rousing from her dreamy attitude, said, "Pap, Thompson's girls are going to school and to Sunday-school, and I want to go too."

"Hush up, Jane; you haven't any clothes," said Rhoda.

"Won't you get me some, pap?" whined Jane.

"No," said her father, surlily: "you know well enough what will go with them if I get them."

"But Bell Thompson says it's respectable, and I want to go," persisted Jane.

"Respectable ain't a word for us," said

her father, moving his chair to the table and beginning his meal, the three elder children also helping themselves. Back in the corner, her hands wrapped in her ragged apron to keep them warm, her hungry eyes eagerly regarding the table, was Charlotte. How envious was she of that poor family group, near the warmth of the cracked stove, in the light of the tallow candle, eating bread and molasses and fried pork!

But Charlotte's scowling brow grew lighter; her envy could be gratified in their pain: she heard heavy, unsteady steps on the stair, a body lunging now and then against the wall; and now Abigail Hart blundered into the room, bringing with her in her garments and breath the fumes of the dram-shop.

Here was the secret of the want and misery of Daniel Hart's home. Despite the good wages that he earned and his own constant industry, his children were

ragged and neglected and his home nearly unendurable, because of this monster appetite that banished from the heart of the wife and mother all love for her husband and children, and led her to sacrifice all household comfort to the selfish gratification of her depraved taste.

Liquor rarely made Abigail Hart cross or violent: she was first hilarious, then overwhelmingly affectionate, and thereafter utterly stupid. She was now in the second stage of her drunkenness, and sitting down by her husband, threw her arm across his shoulder, exclaiming,

"Well, Daniel, my man, is this the way ye ate the supper without waiting for yer Abby?"

The irritated man pushed her arm away, and she continued: "It's over sour ye are, Daniel; but a hard boy to manage ye always were, and no one but meself could get along with the like o' yees. Here's your health in a cup of tea, as ye

have nothing stronger. What's the matter, Jane, my lass, that ye are after crying?"

"I want to go to school," sobbed Jane.

"Shure ye shall! To school, and to church, and to the fireman's ball—to all of 'em, honey," said her mother, soothingly. "I'll not see one of my childer crying when I can help it."

"You'd better take up that poor baby you've left since morning," said her husband, sharply.

"The blessed baby!" cried Abigail, getting the child and turning to the stove: "didn't I forget that ever I had him, at all, at all? Come to his mammy, the little jewel!"

"Hush up your crying, Jane," said her father: "don't be fretting after what's respectable with such a mother as you've got to drag you down. Don't you know that I'd live in no such rum-hole as this,

didn't her drunken ways shut me out from decent people?"

Here Michal Hoffer came in, and seating himself behind the stove opened a paper containing a small loaf, a herring and a piece of cheese, and began to eat.

"I want something," said Charlotte, advancing. "I hain't had a bite to-day." Her father kept on eating without reply until he had had all he wanted, when he threw her the remnant of the loaf and a rind of cheese.

"Hallo, there!" he cried, loudly, as he tossed the remnants of his supper to Charlotte, and Daniel Hart sprung up and reached out his arm just in time to prevent his drowsy wife and helpless baby from falling upon the hot stove. Rhoda laid the infant in its cradle, her father helped the stupid woman to the bed, and little Jane, creeping up behind her, soon forgot her wants and disappointments in a sound sleep.

"I often wish," said Daniel, bitterly, surveying his drunken wife, "I could like liquor as well as she does, and forget myself in it. We could both drink and quarrel then until we had killed ourselves, and so have an end of it all."

"Come," cried Hoffer, sharply, to Charlotte, "haven't you got done yet?"

"Yes, but I ain't had half enough," said the girl.

"Go earn more, then. Get your tambourine. I promised you'd come and play at Root's."

Charlotte hung a tambourine over her shoulder by a tarnished blue cord, wrapped a shawl over her head, and followed her father to the groggery where Abigail Hart bought her daily poison.

"I'll go get what peace I can out of a pipe," said Daniel, taking his hat. His departure left Rhoda and her brother alone, except the sleepers.

"I'm afraid he'll get to drinking like

the rest, going there; and no wonder," said Rhoda, indicating the way her father had taken.

"Why don't you try and get Jane out of it?" asked the boy.

"How can I?" said Rhoda.

"Start her to school, and she'd get a little learning, and maybe a little notice from the ladies, and so find a place out at wages."

Rhoda shook her head. "It's no use, Matt; she could not keep a rag of decent clothes to go in. And then it would be only one out of so many," and Rhoda looked about with a dismal face.

"Count me for another," said Matthew.

"Why, what are you going to do?" asked Rhoda.

"Set up for myself and be decent," replied the boy, cheerfully.

"You can't—it's no use to try," said Rhoda, who was completely discouraged with everything.

"See here," said her brother, holding out his hand, with a bright half dollar shining on the palm.

"Where did you get it, Matt?"

"I found it."

"I believe you stole it," said Rhoda, in a matter-of-fact sort of way, with neither reproof nor sorrow in her tone.

"No, I didn't," replied Matthew. "I meant to: I've been looking out for such a shiner for this good while. But I found this, all covered with mud, lying near the crossing, certain true."

"Well, it's all the same, so you've got it," said Rhoda.

"Yes, and then I might have been caught if I'd nigged it; so I'm glad I found it."

"So am I," replied his sister, cordially. "Now what are you going to do with it?"

"Make my fortune," returned Matt, valiantly.

"But how?" urged Rhoda.

"Yes, how?" How was Matthew Hart to make his fortune out of fifty cents, such as many a child wastes on candies, and many a grown person worse than throws away on flashy novels. But hark how Matt unfolds his plan:

"I'm going to set up for a shoeblack. I can buy a brush for twenty-five cents, and a box of blacking for ten, and I can make my own box and strap; and I'll have fifteen cents to live on while I make more."

"Why you ain't going off from us?" said Rhoda, tremulously.

"'Course I am. What is there here to keep me?" responded Matthew with a boy's bluntness.

"Me and Jane," said Rhoda, tears filling her eyes.

"That's so," said Matthew; "but don't you see, Rhoda, that it wouldn't be no use for me to earn money and come here with it. Mike Hoffer 'd be after it at night,"

and Matt turned with infinite disgust toward the cot he occupied with Michael; "or Lottie would get it from me, or mother 'd carry it off to Root's for gin. No, no, Rhoda; I'm going where I can be respectable, as father says he used to be."

"Mind, then," said Rhoda, sagely, "that you don't get about Root's yourself, or take to drinking like lots of boys."

"Bah!" said Matthew with contempt. "I've seen enough of the stuff to wish it all in the gutter. I've hated it ever since mother scalded my mouth with her hot punch when I was a little shaver."

"Where will you go to stay?" asked Rhoda.

"There's a couple of Carter boys," replied Matthew, "that get lodgings at old Sukey Green's for five cents a night, and she gives them better than we get here. I can sleep there and buy my own victuals."

"Sukey Green is so cross," said Rhoda, "that you'll have to walk straight if you stop there."

"I'm going to walk straight," said Matthew. "I'm going to lay by money and be a *gentleman*." Matthew straightened himself up, ragged and dirty, yet there was promise in the hopeful energy of the lad. Perhaps even despondent Rhoda saw it, for she said, "I guess you'll get on, Matt."

"I *know* I shall," replied Matthew.

"Bring your clothes here and I'll wash them, and I'll cook anything you want," said Rhoda.

"I won't want much cooking," replied her brother, "for I'll live on herring and bread and cheese, and such. I'm going to-morrow."

"Are you going to tell father?" asked the girl.

"Not till I get my rig, and then I'll go find him where he works."

Here Charlotte burst into the attic and hurried up to the stove.

"Boo! I'm freezing," she cried, taking off one of the plates to warm her chilled fingers by the embers. No one speaking to her, she dropped her tambourine to the floor, and went on: "I've rattled that old thing at them till I'm tired to death! Dad grabbed the money as fast as it came in, and all I got was a scrap of sausage from Mrs. Root. I banged away until they were all tipsy and fighting, and then I ran off. I wish it was broke, and dad was in jail," and Charlotte gave her tambourine a kick that sent it across the room.

"I don't see," said Rhoda, drearily, "what any of us are alive for. I'm sure I wish I was dead."

"Oh, ho!" said Charlotte, "I don't. You'd better wish we were rich folks and lived up in some of the big houses, where they have all they want."

Matthew had gone to bed, and as the fire and light were both out, Rhoda lifted little Jane to the bed on the floor, put the baby beside her heavily-sleeping mother, and said, "Come, Lottie, let's go to sleep: that's the next thing to being dead."

The next morning Matthew was off soon after he and his father had partaken of a cheerless breakfast of Rhoda's providing: Charlotte had no breakfast, but her father, shaking his fist at her as he departed to get his own morning meal, said, "If you don't take your tamby and go out and earn your own vittles to-day, and give me a quarter when I come home to-night, I'll break your bones."

"You needn't stand staring at me," said Charlotte angrily to Rhoda. "You can stay here all day, while I must keep pounding that tambourine, and then be half killed for not earning what I can't."

"I'm sure," said Rhoda, "I've got mother to manage, and the work and the

baby to see to, and Jane, here, fretting after schools and clothes, and all that."

"I've a mind to go jump into the river," said Charlotte.

"That wouldn't be no use," said Rhoda, miserably: "somebody 'd be sure to fish you out right off."

"Then it would only be getting wet for nothing," said Charlotte, in a jaunty tone, sticking a damaged jockey-hat on the top of her head, pinning her shawl on in slovenly fashion, and going out to her daily employment.

Charlotte Hoffer could remember no time when blows and curses and half-famine were not her portion. She could recall no sheltering home, no joyous child-life, no mother's love. Each weary day had gone by in wickedness and sorrow; only the evil of her heart was drawn out and strengthened by all she saw and heard about her.

Let not the Master of the vineyard,

walking through his Church, say tc any of us, "Why sit ye here all the day idle?" for there is work enough and to spare all about us. As long as there are hundreds of children who, like Charlotte, hear God's name only in oaths, cannot read one word of the Holy Book, are wretched in themselves, and growing up to be the pests of society, there is work enough for us to do; and it behooves us to be up and about it, lest the Lord come suddenly and find us sleeping.

Matthew Hart went from his attic home to see old Sukey Green. Sukey had two attic rooms in a house on a neighboring street, rather a better place than where Daniel Hart lived, and Sukey herself was a tidy, snrewish, saving body, whom Matthew found clearing up, as she said, the attic where she lodged five boys.

"What's wanting?" cried Sukey.

"I want lodgings, like the rest of the boys."

"What you got to pay with?" demanded Sukey.

"I'm setting up for a bootblack. Got a place?"

"Yes," said Sukey. "But 'pay as you go,' is my rule; and keep your face cleaner while you're round here. Five cents each night before you turn in. The lodging's cheap—too cheap—and I only make it pay by getting the money, every cent."

"I'll come to-night," said Matthew; and he went off whistling toward a shop some distance off, where he had heard blacking and brushes were to be had cheaper and better than usual. He was resolved not to get anything to eat until he had earned it at his new business. The brush and blacking bought, Matthew was about to hurry off to make a box for the accommodation of his customers' feet, when the shopkeeper, a pleasant-looking young man, said,

"Hold on, my lad: are you setting up for a shoeblack?"

"Yes, sir," replied Matthew.

"Here's a bit of advice, then: The cleanest lads get the most work. Buy a comb with some of that spare change, wash your face and keep your hair smooth, and you'll earn nearly twice as much."

"All right," said Matthew, pleasantly. "If it will help me on, I'll do it."

"Since you take to advice so properly," said the man, "here's a bit more: 'Honesty is the best policy.' Use only what you earn. Don't cheat or steal. Here, lad, in the back yard is the hydrant, and a bit of soap by it. I'll give you this comb; go tidy yourself, and if a week from to-day you come here washed and combed, you shall black my boots."

"All right," said Matthew; "there's one job ahead."

It is a pity that a word of gospel truth

had not been dropped into such willing ears.

Fully equipped as a bootblack, Matthew sought his father. Daniel was just coming down the long ladder that rested against the building whereon he was working. Matthew waited until his father reached the ground, and then sung out—

"Hey, father, I've come to bid you good-bye."

"What now?" demanded his father, sharply.

"I've set up for myself, and I'm going to lodge at Sukey Green's."

"Well," said his father, morosely, "it's no wonder you're sick of the old place; I am: if there was a war, I'd enlist for the sake of getting shot."

"I want to be somebody; I've set out to get to be respectable," explained Matthew, somewhat touched by this glimpse of his father's crushed heart.

"If you're after that," returned his father, "you've done well to leave us."

"Good-bye, father: I'll come see you sometimes."

"Good-bye, boy," said the father, softened: "if you want to get on, don't take to your mother's drinking ways."

Daniel Hart's employer, standing near, had heard this conversation, and thought he pitied the two speakers: he pitied them just enough to let Matthew black his boots. This, however, was a vast encouragement to the boy, who walked away, his heart swelling with importance, like a youthful heir just come into his inheritance.

While Matthew runs about town seeking his fortune, like the heroes of old-time fairy tales, let us look after Charlotte. The poor girl had but a small prospect of success. Tambourine-girls are looked upon as a public nuisance generally, and where one deformed and sickly, or winning

and pretty, might have gained a few pennies from sympathy, Charlotte, spare, wiry, bold-eyed and loud of tone, with a dismal jockey-hat mounted on her coarse, abundant black hair, was regarded with disdain. All she earned in the morning was spent for her dinner: she was very hungry, and said to herself, as she eagerly devoured the purchase of the last penny, "I'll have my dinner if I *am* killed for it."

Toward evening, however, she began to count the gains of the afternoon, and her heart beat fast with terror as she thought of her father's threat. A vague idea of never going back to him flitted through her mind, yet in the city's low haunts and byways, where such as they congregated, he would be sure to find her. If she wandered off by herself, friendless and moneyless, she would doubtless be soon found by the "police," that terror of the vagrant, and consigned to the "House of

Correction," "the Refuge," or 'The Island"—places of misty horror to Charlotte, though in truth any one of them infinitely better than her present home and associates.

Ten, twelve cents—vigorous beating of the tambourine and unceasing begging—and fifteen cents at last; but it was growing late in the afternoon: she must go home, for far off the lamps were being lighted, and her hope of earning more that day was gone. Yet ten cents more she must have to satisfy that exorbitant monster she called her father. She was hungry again too. Indeed, in all her life she had scarce ever been anything but hungry. Running about in the frosty air had sharpened the appetite partially satisfied on bread at noon. Cold and famine-pinched, Charlotte had no courage to go home and take the beating her parent had promised. What she could not earn she could steal. An old woman,

a vender of small wares on a corner, was packing up her goods preparatory to going home. From her Charlotte stole a piece of cotton lace wound on a blue card. Used to such evil ways, she was not long in finding a purchaser for her booty. A Jew on Chatham street gave her a shilling for the cotton lace, and Charlotte went homeward, munching a dry roll which she had bought with her extra two cents. She entered the attic where we found her the evening before—the room and its inmates much the same, Charlotte herself much the same, only that she was a day older, had grown a little harder and more bitter of heart, and that a day which should have been spent in preparing for heaven had gone by on the broad road that leads down to death.

I lay it much to ourselves, dear fellow-Christians, that these precious souls were going ruinward. What were you and I doing while Charlotte was starving and

stealing and Abigail drinking? I fear me, on our own rather than our Father's business.

The baby was not in the cradle: its mother had it with her, she gossiping about among her neighbors. Rhoda had been trying to wash and clean up the room a little, and was now getting supper, while Jane, a delicate, pretty child, was moping behind the stove, being yet much vexed about the school question.

"Did you earn the quarter?" asked Jane of Charlotte.

"I *got* it," said Charlotte.

"I'm glad you did: now you won't be beat," said Jane, kindly.

"I reckon you *stole* it," said Rhoda, sharper than Jane.

"Mebby I did," said Charlotte, defiantly. "I ain't nowise particular."

Here Daniel came in, bringing his wife and baby.

"Now, woman, stay at home," he said,

angrily. "You've drove off Matthew by your pranks."

"Me drive off me boy!" cried Abigail, who was again good-natured. "I never did! He's the delight of me sowl. Jane, me pet, did ye get to school yet?"

"No," whimpered Jane; "pap won't get me no clothes."

"Daniel, me man, don't be stingy," exhorted the wife.

"It's because you sell all they have for whisky," retorted Daniel.

"I never did," said Abigail, stoutly. "Mebby I *lent* a few pieces to Missis Root to get a drop to sustain me while I nursed the baby. It's a fine man ye are to accuse me; but I'll forgive ye, Daniel."

"Yes, and do just the same again if I bought more."

"Mebby I would: sure you'd not see me die for a drop of comfort, would ye?"

"Comfort!" said Daniel, bitterly: "ye drive comfort from us all."

Unhappy household! In its midst the white wing of the Holy Dove had never folded; the Comforter, sent by the heaven-ascended Christ was not in all their dwelling.

CHAPTER II.

THE HUNGRY SOUL.

'While I was musing the fire burned."

IN the house where abode Sukey Green was a small front room on the second floor, rented by Elsie Ray. Elsie was thirty years old, had been an orphan half her life, and for that half dwelt in this same room, supported by that bright, slim, sharp-pointed and round-eyed instrument we call a needle. All these years Elsie had sewed for one shop: she had worked steadily on every day but Sunday; yet, bound by those cruel pay rates that fetter working-women, all she had been able to gain was a bare support, without laying up any provision for sickness or old age. Elsie thought of these

things sometimes, and thought this way: for sickness, there was the hospital; for age, some old woman's home, and better than either of these was the grave; and, thank the good Lord, a brightness lying beyond; for Elsie had a hope in Jesus. Threading her needle thousands of times for the weary miles of stitches her thin hand wandered over, that small round eye had seemed as the lens of some powerful telescope, through which Elsie looked back on the hard and lonely past, and on the future dull and drear, like long vistas of dropping autumn days.

I told you that Elsie had a hope in Jesus. She had; and still, for some cause yet unexplained, it was a slender and sickly hope, like a plant's growth in a cellar. Elsie read her chapter each day, and offered nightly and morning prayer. Each Sabbath she went twice to church, and the rest of the holy day sat in her room looking over her Bible, musing, and

weary generally; lonesome, too, because she knew scarcely anybody to speak to. What of faith and hope and love she had she would not have bartered away for the universe, despite her poverty; and yet she often wondered why there was no satisfying fullness about her religion; why, instead of being an abundance, supplying all her need, it was rather like a crust to the starving, that would keep from perishing, but not supply flesh and vigor. She shivered in that robe which she had trusted would amply cover all that was chill, rough and bare in her daily living. She had wondered over this by herself in a confused sort of way, for she had no Christian friend to commune with: her pastor knew nothing of her; shy and shabby she sat in a remote corner of the gallery on Sundays, and in the last and most retired of the body-slips at communion seasons, and nobody thought anything about her.

Elsie was very busy thinking on that Tuesday when Matthew came to Sukey Green's to lodge. She had thought as fast as she had sewed all Monday, too; for on Sunday afternoon a stranger had preached at her church, and a new light had come into Elsie's mind, and was rising and growing like the morning. This light was searching out all the dark places of the heart, which Elsie had thrown wide open to let it in. She had been groping in darkness a good while, but she desired light, and "God giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." Under this light the past was unraveling itself. Elsie was learning the reason of hope's sickly growth; of faith being a poor crust instead of a full meal; of love being a robe too narrow for her need. Elsie had been living for herself. She had kept her religion like a fountain sealed, instead of letting its limpid waters gladden her fellow-creatures. The lamp

had been burning under a bushel. How could she grow like Christ, when she was not doing good as he did? The sermon had been on this text: "To do good and to communicate, forget not." Had Elsie done good? had she communicated the knowledge of Jesus to any one, that they might have like precious faith with her? No, verily. No wonder, Elsie, that you found your graces small and poor; "there is that witholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty." And yet, Elsie, we must humbly acknowledge we fall under the same condemnation. And now, seeing wherein she had failed, Elsie began to ask herself, "What can I do? What can one so poor, so ignorant, do? And then I don't know anybody."

"The world is full of people; you can soon find out plenty," said common sense.

"And I can speak, if it is in a poor way," added Elsie; "and there are a

great many little kind things that I can do if I am on the watch for them." Thinking thus, Elsie laid down her work to get her dinner. She was a neat, methodical woman, and she laid the pile of cut and basted work off her table upon one of the chairs; then spread over the table a square yard of snowy muslin for a tablecloth. Next, her plate of blue delf, and a knife and fork well scoured were got from the corner cupboard, and then a small loaf of bread—Elsie made her own —and a slice of cold meat. From the tiniest of cooking-stoves she took her tin teapot, and from the stove-oven a baked potato. Her dinner was now ready, and asking a blessing on the simple meal she sat down.

While Elsie eats her dinner we might look about the room. The floor is bare and clean; there are well-mended paper shades before the spotless windows. For furniture are the two chairs, the corner

cupboard, Elsie's blue chest, the pine table, the stove, and an old-fashioned cherry bedstead, provided with clean but homely bedding, which Elsie's mother had left her fifteen years before. Elsie was looked upon as quite rich in household goods by some of her neighbors, though this which we have enumerated was the sum total of her estate.

All the afternoon Elsie studied the same problem, "What can I do?" She got farther than she had in the morning: she thought that on Sabbath days she might visit the sick; and though she was not learned enough to teach in Sunday-school, she might instruct some of those —and she knew they were many—who never went to Sunday-school. Her attention was then turned to the inmates of this same house where she lived. Beginning at the attic, there were Sukey Green and her lodgers: here was plenty to do at once, and, not to get bewildered

with planning, Elsie concluded to begin her work here, and see "whereunto it would grow." Elsie was not like one, if such there be, who drops seed into the soil, believing that his own power, unaided by sun and rain, can make the perfect fruit. She knew that she could only work well while she prayed well; and as she seamed and felled on the garments over whose sameness she had spent her years of toil, she prayed for grace and strength.

Who has not heard of the little boy's missionary potato? How, when planted, with its yield from year to year, it grew into numerous bushels, converted into as many dollars, and went away over the seas in books and tracts and missionary teachings to tell sinners of their Saviour? Humble little vegetable! its roots taking hold of the damp, moist earth, less than the trees of the field, it towered up to heaven, and stretched its fibres out

through all time and took hold upon eternity! So the life-work of that humble seamstress, Elsie Ray, begun that afternoon in her poor abode, grew far and wide, yielding its harvests again and again, and springing up in heaven-seeking families, and children taught of God, and good words scattered here and there, till none but God can count the increase. Not that Elsie developed into one of the world's heroines, or that ever she became more than a seamstress, stitching away for bread and shelter; but who can estimate the value of one earnest life? who can set a limit to the growing of God's scattered truth?

Her dinner over, Elsie took up her sewing again: it seemed easier that afternoon, because her thoughts vere so busy. She had never heard Spurgeon's remark, that "some Christians are for living *on* Christ, but are not so anxious to live *for* Christ;" but she was beginning to see that

this had been her way, and was seeking out a better.

The latch on Elsie's door was apt to spring out of place at any sudden jar, and about four o'clock that afternoon the heavy step of Sukey Green on the landing, as she came up stairs with a pail of water, caused Elsie's door to spring open. Just at that minute Sukey slipped on a fragment of ice and fell forward, throwing the water over herself, the landing and the stairs. She scrambled to her feet with an oath which shocked the ears of Elsie, hastening to her aid.

"I hope you have not hurt yourself, Mrs. Green!" cried Elsie. "Do come into my room and dry your clothes by the fire."

"I've no time to dry," said Sukey, with another burst of profanity.

"Oh, you will be sick if you stay wet; but please don't speak *so*," said Elsie, leading the old woman into her warm

room, and giving her a chair before the stove.

"Now get warm and dry, and I will wipe up that water, and get you another pailful."

Sukey made no answer, and Elsie, getting her floor-cloth, wiped up the water spilled in the passage-way, and then, taking her shawl, went for more water. When Elsie sat the brimming pail beside Sukey, whose garments were fast drying, the old woman said, "I'm sure I'm much obligated to you, Miss Ray. I don't see why you'd do that much for *me*."

"Because, as neighbors, it is our duty to help one another," replied Elsie, cheerfully. "I live by myself and am often lonely, and have thought you must be too, Mrs. Green."

"I've such a grist of boys about me, I've no time to get lonesome," replied Sukey. "What with tidying up after

them, and washing out three days in the week, and taking in washing for three men on the first floor, I'm nigh overdone. Some folks were born to live like dray-horses, and I'm one; hard work and rough fare."

"I'm sure I'm sorry for you; you must get very tired," said Elsie, gently. "We poor folks can do little for each other but speak kind words."

"You seem to have them on your tongue's end," said Mrs. Green, shaking down her dried skirts.

"I ought to have; but, Mrs. Green, isn't that better than such words as take God's holy name in vain?"

"Oh," said Sukey, unabashed, "that kind comes most natural to me."

"Don't let it any more," said Elsie, earnestly. "I don't want to offend you or be rude, but it is a wrong way of speaking."

"The young cock crows like the old one,"

said Sukey, carelessly: "it's the way I was brought up."

"May I come up and see you?" asked Elsie.

"Welcome," replied Mrs. Green, "when I'm there."

"I'd be glad to come up and see you on Sunday evenings: perhaps you'd like to have me read to you."

"Mebby so. I don't read any myself. I used to, but I've forgot how. I must be going. I took in a new boy to-day to bother me."

Elsie was just going down stairs for water to make her own tea, when she met Sukey's new boy, Matthew Hart. She thought he had a pleasant face, and, as he was a stranger, she concluded to speak to him.

"Well, my boy, how have you got on to-day?" she asked.

"Oh, good," said Matthew. "I earned my supper and my lodging, and a bit be-

sides. I didn't get no dinner, cause it ain't no use to be so babyish as to want every meal, and I've my eye on a red comforter."

"One would be very nice indeed, and keep your neck and shoulders warm. I hope you'll get it."

"I mean to, by Saturday night," said Matthew.

Elsie saw Matthew several times during the two or three succeeding days, and each time spoke pleasantly to him, until the boy seemed to feel quite a friendship for her. Sukey was not forgotten. The old woman was disposed to improve her new acquaintance, and on Thursday evening came to sit a while in Elsie's room, where she was much interested in discussing the relative advantages of making or buying her bread. During this visit Elsie ascertained that Sukey never went to church, had no Bible, knew no prayer, and had no time to think about such things.

Friday afternoon, about dusk, Elsie heard such an uproar in the attic that she ventured up to see what was amiss. She found Sukey, poker in hand, jumping about, scolding and raving in an astonishing manner.

"What is the matter! What is wrong?" cried Elsie, and at last Sukey got breath to answer: "That new boy, that Matthew, has cut his hand, and see! here he runs and spots my clean-scrubbed floor. Only see! and now he is in the other attic, doing as bad!" and Sukey's language was neither gentle nor pious.

Elsie went to the other attic· in the dim light she could see poor Matthew sitting on the edge of his bed, trying to stanch, with a piece of newspaper, the blood flowing from his wounded hand.

"Why, Matthew, are you hurt?" she asked.

"Dreadful bad," said Matthew, with a half sob, for his spirit was as sorely

wounded by Sukey's abuse as his hand by Joe Carter's knife.

"Poor boy!" said Elsie, kindly, wrapping her own coarse cotton handkerchief about the wounded member: "come down in my room and let me do it up for you," and she led him down stairs.

Elsie's tidy room was a pleasant surprise to Matthew. It was warm, lighted by a small lamp, and the lad thought he had never been in so fine a place. Elsie brought a basin of water, a bundle of old rags, and a little bottle of oil, and soon had the injured hand nicely bandaged up.

"Thank you," said Matthew, rising.

"You needn't go just yet; you look pale and tired. Sit down again. Your feet are all wet too; take off your shoes and get warm and dry."

"I left my supper up there in a paper," said Matthew. "I ain't had anything since breakfast. I got Joe's knife to cut my biscuits, and I cut myself, somehow;"

and Matthew used some very bad language about the knife.

"'Because of swearing the land mourneth,'" thought Elsie; then said, kindly, "I'll go and bring you your supper; I dare say you are hungry."

"I ain't had anything since morning," said Matt.

Elsie went for the supper, a small stale loaf.

"I'd got some meat, only I couldn't cook it," said the boy.

"I would cook it for you," said Elsie.

"Would you?" said Matthew, eagerly. "I'll go get some; it would taste *so* good."

He ran out, and soon returned with a little meat. Elsie cooked it for him as she got her own supper, and Matthew sat getting warm and dry, and under Elsie's friendly looks becoming cheerful and easy; and soon told all his own history, spoke of "poor father," Rhoda and little Jane and Baby Jack. Elsie heard, interested

in all. It was a new thing to her to know much of other people or of family life. Matthew mentioned Charlotte, incidentally and in no flattering terms, but Elsie's sympathy went out to the motherless tambourine-girl. Several times, as he talked, Matthew used profane language, and at last Elsie said, as she took her work and began diligently to set stitches, "Matthew, if I were to go now and call your father and sisters hard names and say evil things of them, what would you think?"

"I wouldn't stay here one minute," said Matthew, bluntly. "They ain't never hurt you; so don't go to spiting them."

"If I did so, it would hurt your feelings; wouldn't it?"

"In course it would," said Matthew.

"You have hurt mine this evening just as much."

"I don't know how," said Matthew; "I didn't go to do it."

"You have taken the name of my best friend, my heavenly Father, in vain."

"Oh, you're one of that kind!" said Matthew; "well, I've got used to what you call bad talk."

"But do you not think you could break yourself of it?"

"Perhaps I might, if I saw the use on it."

"It is very wicked to swear; it makes God angry at you. While you take his name in vain he cannot bless you," replied Elsie.

All this was so new to Matthew that it made very little impression on him. He could not understand it. Elsie might very nearly as well have talked Greek to him.

"I'd like to 'blige you about it," he said, "'cause you've treated me tip-top. But it would be so powerful hard!"

"We'll let that pass now," said Elsie; "can you read?"

"Yes, some," replied Matthew.

"I have a book here that I am fond of, but I have little time to read. If you'd only read this chapter for me!" and Elsie handed the boy her Bible, which had been her mother's. The print was large, and the place she pointed out, the story of Naaman the leper. It mattered very little that neither Elsie nor Matthew could call all the words right; that the captain of the Syrian host was called Nam by the reader, and that periods received no more respect than commas. It was an enchanting story to Elsie's guest.

"My! that's nice!" said Matthew, when he ended his reading.

"Thank you for reading it," said Elsie. "Do you think if I should read you some such story on Sunday night, and get a few papers with pretty pictures in, that the other boys would like to hear me and see the papers?"

"Of course they would," said Matthew.

"You can tell them about it, then," said Elsie.

"Thank you, ma'am,' said Matthew, with a mighty effort at politeness; and he rose to leave the room. At the door he stopped and looked about. "I don't see why mother couldn't keep a place as nice as this. Your room ain't so big as her'n, and you ain't no more things than we had afore she sold them. My! If mother was like you, Rhoda and Jane would be just set up entirely!"

Why was not mother like Elsie? In the book wherein Matthew had been reading lay the answer: "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise for the life that now is, and for that which is to come."

On Sunday afternoon, as Elsie came home from church, she met Sukey on the stairs.

"I s'pose you're coming to see me this evening?" said Sukey.

"Why," said Elsie, "I thought of reading to the boys this evening."

"I'm of more 'count than the boys," said Sukey, sulkily; "and then I want to talk to you about bread again."

"On Sunday," replied Elsie, "I'd rather not talk about such things. Some other evening if you please. But if you like, I will come up and read to you and the boys also."

"No," said Sukey; "I cleaned my room up to-day, and I won't have the boys in, spoiling it."

"This plan will be better, then," said Elsie: "you can come down to my room, and I will read there, and that will save fire and light to you."

This last consideration, wisely thrown out by Elsie, allured Sukey to go to Elsie's room to hear the reading. The old woman was snugly established beside

the stove, when Matthew and the two Carters appeared at the door. Seeing their landlady, they hung back, as though doubtful whether or not to enter and fulfill their engagement.

"Come in, boys," said Elsie: "Mrs. Green is going to hear our reading, too." Elsie had drawn her table, with the lamp, Bible, and two Sunday-school papers on it, near the stove; she had moved her chest up to seat two of the boys, and had borrowed some chairs from the lodgers on the first floor; all together, her preparations had more of attraction than Sukey had of repulsion; so the boys came in and sat down.

"Where are the rest of you?" asked Elsie, referring to Sukey's other three lodgers.

"Here's enough," volunteered Sukey.

"They're off on a lark," said Jim Carter.

"That's a pity," said Elsie.

"Just like them," interposed Sukey.

"I don't like larks," said Matthew; "they take off your money."

"If you don't like them," suggested Sukey, who had not yet forgiven Matthew for cutting his hand and letting blood drop on her floor, "you like something else bad."

"Now, Mrs. Green," said Elsie, "these are my boys to-night, and I don't want you to scold them at all. See here, boys, isn't this a nice picture?" She spread out on the table one of the papers, with a large picture of Elijah fed by ravens. The three boys looked at it.

"What a funny man in a frock!" cried Jim Carter.

"He's a Catholic priest," said Matthew. "I've seen 'em."

"His beard is as long as the Jew in the pawnbroker's," said Joe Carter.

"What birds are these?" asked Elsie.

"Crows," said Jim.

"Ravens—birds of the same kind, nearly," said Elsie.

"They've got bread in their bills," said Joe.

"Yes; and the man's going to take it," said Jim.

"Pooh!" said Matthew; "who ever heard of a man taking anything from a bird? More'n likely he give it to them."

"Let's see," said Sukey, getting interested, and looking over Matthew's shoulder.

"Now," said Elsie, "that man's name is Elijah. I'll read you the story about him; and, as I read, you find the places and things on the picture.

"Oh, jolly!" said Joe; "turn the paper round, Jim, so I can see better. Now, Miss Ray, go ahead with your reading."

Sukey sank back into her chair with a very good idea of the picture in her mind, and almost as eager as the boys to see how the story would fit it.

Elsie began: "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab," &c.

To be sure, Elsie called Elijah a Tishite, and said that he went to live by the brook Cherry, but as the boys listened attentively, and at her first word Joe pointed his finger, crying, "That's Elijah!" and presently Matthew said, "Here's the brook!" it all did very well.

The other paper had in it the raising of the widow's son at Zarephath; and though Elsie stumbled a good deal at the name of the Zidonian city, the boys were highly entertained, and pronounced the whole affair "better than a lark."

Sukey, who had dropped asleep toward the close of the chapter, roused up, and said that it was the "nicest evening she had had in a long time."

"I wish Jane could have been here," said Matthew; "it would have pleased her most amazing."

The lingering tenderness and memory for his sisters that hid under Matthew's roughness, touched Elsie: and his love for his unhappy family, whilst it interested her in him, drew toward them also her newly-roused philanthropy.

"Drop in to-morrow evening, Matthew, and we will talk about them," said Elsie, kindly.

The boys gone, Elsie put out her light to save expense, and then sat down by her dying fire to think.

"I must get something more to please the boys, and I wish I had some one to tell me how to teach them, but I don't know anybody at all."

Elsie then bethought herself of that Scripture about asking what we will, and her's being a simple, childlike faith, she put in her nightly prayer a petition for some one to teach her how to teach the boys. And, besides this, she prayed that some way might be opened for her to get

acquainted with Matthew's family and be a help to them.

That had been a good week and a happy Sabbath to Elsie. She felt, somehow, a greater love and hope than she had ever known; the world looked brighter, and she did not seem so alone in it. Instead of feeling like a machine, only useful for seaming and felling, she felt as if her heart and soul had gone out in good work, and were grasping other hearts and souls and helping them heavenward.

CHAPTER III.

ELSIE'S CLASS.

"In the evening withhold not thy hand."

MATTHEW did not forget his invitation to Elsie's room on Monday evening. If he had had a home, he would have been a home-loving boy: as it was, Elsie's room came the nearest to such an institution, and he liked to go there. He told Elsie how little Jane cried to go to school and was only prevented by the lack of clothes.

"You see," said Matthew, "now she runs about the street all day, getting into mischief, and being cold and wet all the time. But if she went to school, she'd feel contented, and have a warm place all the day to sit in."

"Very true," said Elsie, "and she

would be learning how to read and write, and I hope would be taught her duty to God."

"Well," said Matthew, "I want her to learn to do what's right, but there it is; you see she's no chance at all, just because of mother."

"Do you think your father would get her some clothes if he thought they would be taken care of?"

"Oh yes; he gets good wages, and if the dry goods wouldn't turn into whisky as soon as they were bought, she could have them."

"Then why not have her keep them at some friend's, and put them on when she went to school, and change back again at night."

"But we ain't no such friend," said Matthew.

"Perhaps she might do it here," said Elsie; "only I don't know any of your people, and they don't know me."

"I'll tell 'em about you!" cried Matthew, eagerly. "I haven't been home since I lodged at Sukey's, but I'll go to-morrow, and see how they do. I say, couldn't you go with me?"

"Oh no," said Elsie; "I shouldn't like to do that."

The next day, as Elsie was taking her work home, she turned into Broadway and entered a store where she had seen Bibles, hymn-books and Sunday-school books for sale.

"Have you any cheap cards or pictures that would be nice to teach some boys with?" she asked the clerk.

He handed down a number of the articles she had inquired for, and turned to another customer.

Elsie took up the cards one by one. Some of them she hardly understood herself, others she would not know how to interest the boys in; she felt very ignorant and very helpless. "Oh dear!" she

said, with a sigh. That sigh was as a call for help to a young lady who was selecting some books not far off.

She drew near to Elsie and took up one of the pictures.

"These are very pretty," she said.

"Very," replied Elsie, timidly.

"Did you mean to buy them?"

"I don't know: I want something, I hardly know what."

"Maybe I can help you select some, if you will tell me what you want them for."

"To teach some boys," Elsie said, eagerly—"some newsboys and shoeblacks that lodged in an attic over her head. She wanted to teach them Sunday evening, so they would not be larking, but she had never had much to do with boys, and she did not know what they were like; and she was so dull and quiet, anyway." Elsie had grown confidential, but stopped abruptly, fearing to intrude. The young lady's face was ample reason for

Elsie's sudden confidences. She smiled encouragingly.

"That was a very good work; she hoped Elsie did it from love to the Lord and Master."

"Oh yes," Elsie said; "she thought that was all that had ever made her think of it."

"Suppose you take these cards about the life of Jesus, and teach them from them."

They were so beautiful Elsie thought she could not afford them. And then she explained that, being a poor sewing-girl, she had but a shilling to lay out for this matter.

"Perhaps you can get these for that," said the young lady; and taking the cards she went across the store and held a little conference with the clerk. Coming back, she said Elsie could have the cards for what she had named; and while they were being wrapped up, Elsie got

the twelve cents out of a shabby little purse of her own manufacture.

"I wish I knew how to teach them," she said.

"Haven't you taught any?" asked the young lady.

"No, only one evening, and then so poorly; but the boys said they'd come again."

"That was encouraging. Have you no friends to help you?"

Elsie's eyes grew tearful, and a very lonely look, that went to her questioner's heart, settled on her face as she answered:

"No, ma'am; I am an orphan, and have no friends. I am always at work."

"Where do you live?" asked the lady.

Elsie gave the street and number, also her name.

"Perhaps I can come and see you." Elsie's face lighted up brilliantly.

"I will. Here is my address. I'll stop

and see you;" and slipping a little white card in Elsie's hand, the young stranger turned back to her examination of books.

Fairly in the street, Elsie looked at the card, "Sophia Randall;" then she hurried back to her work, ready to think that this was the teacher for whom she had been praying.

The next day or two passed quietly by, Elsie listening for steps on the stairs as she had never listened before; for she had a secret hope of seeing Miss Randall.

On Thursday afternoon this hope was satisfied, for Miss Randall came.

It was a new thing to have any one show interest in her, and Elsie told of her lonely life, of her work, and what she was paid for it; and of the sermon that had roused her up to working for Jesus. She told also of her little field of labor—the attic where lived Sukey and the boys, though but half of the boys had come to see her yet.

Then Miss Randall took one of the cards, and said, "Now, not to interrupt your work, if you can listen well and sew well at the same time, I will show you how to teach from this card; you know what it is—the infant Saviour in the manger."

"Yes, Elsie knew the card; she had looked at it twenty times." She thought the package was wonderfully cheap, not knowing that Miss Sophie had quietly added three shillings to her one to buy it.

Miss Randall was just beginning to speak of the card when a feeble little knock at the door caused Elsie to say "Come in," and a little, frail-looking girl entered, with an old hood on her light tangled curls, and a faded frock draggling about her torn shoes.

"Why, who is this?" asked Elsie.

"I'm Jane, Matthew's sister," said the small stranger.

"And you have come to see me?"

"Matthew said you was so good, I wanted to come," was the artless answer; and Jane leaned against the half-shut door, quite overcome.

"Shut the door and come by the fire; I'll draw up my chest for you to sit on. Lay off your hood, and try to dry your dress. It is too long for these sloppy streets."

"Mother wouldn't take a reef in it," whined Jane; "she can't sew no more."

"This lady is teaching me something. Sit quietly, now, that I can hear all she says," said Elsie, resuming her work.

Jane listened quite as earnestly as Elsie; and soon forgetting her wet dress, she slipped from her seat, and with the damp garment gathered up from contact with the clean floor, her hood dropped over her shoulders, she stood gazing on the picture Sophie had turned for her to see, entirely captivated by that "sweet

story of old" that is for ever new. It was a pretty scene; I think the angels smiled over it well pleased;—that graceful daughter of wealth, intent on teaching of Jesus; the worn seamstress, learning how to instruct her boys; and Jane, hearing for the first time that good word so many dear and happy children hear in their cradles.

"And now, does this little girl go to Sunday-school?" asked Miss Sophie, as she finished her instructions.

"She wants to go," said Elsie, after Jane had shaken her head.

"Mebby I could, too, if you'd keep my things; only pap said it would take so much to get me shoes and hood and frock, and get 'em made; and he don't know you, neither, only from Matt's tell," said Jane, eagerly

Elsie explained as well as she could how matters stood with Jane.

"I have a class of girls, your size, in

the mission-school near here," said Miss Randall; "and I should like very much to have you come. Perhaps, if your father gets you a dress and shoes, I could give you a little hood and cape. I think I know a little girl that has them to spare."

"I'll tease him night and day till he lets me go," said Jane, positively.

"I must go home, now," said the lady. "I will come and see you again. I hope you will be faithful in teaching these boys."

"I'll try," said Elsie; "and now you've been over that card, perhaps I can say something."

Jane resumed her seat by the fire.

"I wish I was your girl," she said to Elsie; "there ain't nothing nice at my house."

"Perhaps you would not like me, if you were my girl always," replied the seamstress.

"Yes I would," said Jane, decidedly; "I see it in your eyes."

That there was anything pleasant or attractive in her eyes was news to Elsie; she had thought they only mirrored piles of blue and red needlework.

"Can't you come and see us?" asked Jane.

"Oh—I'm—afraid not," said Elsie.

"I wish you would," said Jane, disappointed; "and Rhoda wishes so, too: she's afraid to come here."

Elsie felt all at once as if it might be her duty to go as an evangelist to that dreary abode.

"Well, perhaps," she said.

Elsie's perhaps grew, through much persuasion from Matthew, into a certainty; and as the boy had offered to accompany her, and said that his father would be home to see her, so she need not be afraid, Elsie ventured one Sunday afternoon to penetrate a street and dwell-

ing which, though not far off, was much worse than her own abode.

Matthew had added to his comforter a cap and a pair of mittens; and these three articles so much improved his appearance, particularly as his face was kept clean and his hair smooth, that Rhoda looked upon him with sisterly pride.

Mrs. Hart, having been kept in her room all day by her husband and deprived of her usual stimulus, had grown sulky, and utterly refused to stay awake: she was lying on the bed, her loud breathing sounding through all the room. Daniel sat by the stove, with Jane on his knee, uneasily awaiting his guest. Rhoda had washed the baby and his clothes; and, silencing his cries with a crust of bread, was holding him in her arms. Apart from the rest crouched Charlotte, poor, lonely girl!

Matthew ushered Elsie into the room with considerable dignity. Daniel rose

and made an awkward bow; Jane put her fingers in her mouth and looked highly pleased; and Rhoda, under favor from the baby, shook hands and offered a chair. But before she sat down, Elsie had one more to speak to; she crossed the room, and, holding out her hand, said, "And is this Charlotte?"

"Who told you about me?" demanded the girl.

"Matthew," replied Elsie.

"Then you didn't hear no good of me," said Charlotte.

This was undeniably true; still Elsie said,

"Won't you shake hands and come sit down by me?"

"No," said Charlotte, gruffly; "I'm better off by myself."

Elsie took the seat offered her, and naturally the conversation soon fell on the advantages of Jane's attending school, and the ways in which it might

be brought about. Elsie mentioned Miss Randall's offer of a hood and cape, and thought a neighbor would make the dress for a moderate price. She then suggested the kind of goods and the number of yards to be bought; and, at length, Daniel, though somewhat reluctantly, from being constantly defeated in his efforts at improvement, promised to buy the dress and shoes if Jane would be careful of them and keep them at Elsie's. Matthew volunteered to escort his sister to school and to Sunday-school the first time of her going; and Rhoda, unselfishly pleased with Jane's promised promotion, declared that she would do her best, so as to have all ready by the next week.

Abigail had roused up soon after this conversation began, but remained quiet to hear what was being said. Her indignation waxed high at hearing plans thus laid without her consent, and jumping

up, she unexpectedly replied to an observation of Daniel's on this wise:

"What for a man are you, Daniel, to be slandering yer wife? Do I sell me children's clothes? Never a bit I do, but buys 'em wid the labor of me hands, ye lazy creature. And who are you, disturbing me family, and setting up me childer against their nat'ral and proper mother?" she demanded, shaking her fist in Elsie's face.

"Behave, woman!" said Daniel; "can't you let a visitor alone?"

"No," said Abigail, angrily; "I don't want her visits;" and she neared Elsie in a threatening manner.

Daniel sprang up, and opening the door, cried, "If you won't be quiet and decent, go off with you!"

Abigail tramped off, but, alas! to the dram-shop.

"I will not stay longer," said Elsie, rising, "nor will I come again; but

Rhoda and Jane can come and see me; and Jane shall keep her things, as I have said, at my room. Charlotte, won't you come and see me?"

"No," said Charlotte: "I don't care to go with that raft," and she pointed to Jane and Rhoda.

Accompanied by Matthew, Elsie turned to her home. "There's mother!" said the boy, with an expression of disgust; and looking where he pointed, Elsie saw the doomed woman standing in the groggery, raising a glass of liquor to her thirsty lips.

Oh if some one—one whose position and influence would have forced her respect, some one from among the many women who claim a part in Christ's church—had then sought out this sister-woman in her low estate, and with earnest and tender words had touched her heart, had with cheerful encouragement, with gifts, with many means so ready to their hand, lured

her from that path of ruin, she might even then have been saved; might have been freed from her bondage to the demon of strong drink, and have become the careful mother, the faithful wife, the industrious, honest, respected member of society! Indeed, good friends and fellow-Christians, there is grievous sin lying at our doors because of hundreds who drop year after year into shame and everlasting contempt; and I wonder that the echoes of their misery and their perishing cries do not rouse us out of our ease and carelessness and call us out to work for souls—for souls, for whom Christ died! Is his cross of so small value to us that it does not inspire us to zeal?

I think, indeed, that all these moans and cries of the perishing are a terrible undertone murmuring beneath the great command that meets us with every new morning, "Go work *to-day* in my vineyard."

Elsie thought of the fifth commandment. "Doesn't your mother care for you, Matthew?"

"She seems to care, sometimes," said Matthew, "but she cares for whisky more."

"Don't you think you could work on her feelings for you and persuade her to do better? and could not you and your sisters watch her, and go for her when she went there, and coax her home again?"

"No, it wouldn't be any use. Father's tried ever so hard. Are we coming to your room to-night to hear more reading?"

"Yes; ask Sukey and the boys, all to come."

"Ned Moore will come, I guess, but don't let's have old, cross Sukey."

"Oh yes, it may do her good. You ask her, too," said Elsie.

Evening came, and now Matt, the Car-

ters and Ned Moore trooped into Elsie's room. She had sewed later and faster all the week, that she might afford more light and fire for Sabbath night.

"Boys, can you sing?" asked Elsie.

"Not what you'd like," said Ned Moore.

"I'll read you a little hymn from this paper," said Elsie, and she read, "Happy Land." "Isn't it pretty?" she asked; "some time we'll learn to sing it."

As the reading of the hymn was finished Sukey came in.

"I thought I'd come," explained Sukey; "it's nicer down here. Only mebby you don't want me—you didn't ask me."

"I *do* want you," said Elsie, "and I meant to ask you. I'm very glad you've come." She avoided glancing at Matthew, but he dropped his head and looked ashamed.

Elsie passed her card to each one. They all looked carefully at it; she had

folded a bit of paper over the lower edge for them to hold it by.

"It's a baby, lying on a pile of straw, just like poor folks," said Jim Carter.

"There's some men looking at it," added his brother.

"Its mother's mighty pretty looking," said Matthew.

"La me!" cried Sukey, "I've seen pictures like that, loads of times. In Catholic church they have dolls dressed up the like of that on Christmas night."

"Catholic church is gay," said Ned Moore. "I've looked in and seen the priest bowing and mumbling and making such a time, and then the flowers and the figures and all that."

"I have a dozen of these pictures; this is the first one," said Elsie: "some other time I will show you the rest. Look carefully at this, and then I will tell you about it."

That evening's lesson was not less satis-

factory than the last: there was a softened look on all those rough, young faces, and even Sukey's hardened features took a milder expression as Elsie closed by reading a few verses from the second chapter of Matthew.

Elsie, recognizing that the secret of the misery and poverty of the Hart family lay in the evil habits of the mother, greatly desired to do something for her reformation. But Abigail had taken a violent dislike to the seamstress: the poor woman regarded Elsie as an interloper, as one who interfered with her domestic concerns and endeavored to usurp her place in the minds of her children. Unhappy mother, who had never acted a mother's part, and could not recognize the kindness that tried to elevate her little ones! Elsie soon found out the state of Abigail's feelings toward her. Her effort now was to teach the children how they might help their mother. Little Jane had begun to

go to school, and, intent on her good work, Elsie had Rhoda come to her room early on Sunday morning and remain until church-time, and in this time Elsie taught her reading and Scripture questions. Jane accompanied Elsie to church, and in Sunday-school was in Miss Randall's class. Sophie was greatly interested in her new pupil. She gave Jane a pair of mittens and a scarf, and went to see her at Elsie's.

Poor Jane's school-life was not without its troubles. Charlotte had set herself resolutely against all reformatory measures: she tore up Jane's catechisms and library books, until the poor child could not bring home either; she also waylaid Jane on her way to chapel, and threw mud on her new dress; but from this latter pastime Matthew forced her to desist.

Charlotte also was the genius of mischief at her lodging-place. She in-

stilled into Abigail's sluggish mind jealousy of Elsie and opposition to her children; she gave glowing descriptions of the splendid clothes Jane kept at Elsie's room, with hints as to what they would bring; also suggesting that Matthew earned piles of money, which were beguiled from him by Elsie. Evidently Elsie was not the one to win Abigail to goodness.

But why was it that the circle of Sophie Randall's benign influence, which was wide enough to embrace Elsie and Jane, did not extend even to Jane's erring mother? Sophie was not very courageous, and the idea of meeting a drunken woman, such as she had heard Abigail to be, was sufficiently frightful; besides, her father would not have permitted her to go where the Hart family lived. Sophie's father was a good man, an elder in the church; and he looked on well pleased while his daughter taught in Sabbath-

school, and labored for missionary boxes, and freely gave of her abundance to the poor. But she was his only child, his peculiar treasure, and he had shaken his head when he found her going to see Elsie: a visit to Abigail he never would have allowed. In such a den of wretchedness she might be insulted, frightened, or contract some contagious disease; and, moreover, in the very bottom of Mr. Randall's heart was the fear that his child might carry her charities to extremes and be thought fanatical. Pity, indeed, that for these things a soul must be lost! If Sophie wanted to see her little pupil Jane during the week, it was at Elsie's she met her; and the visits Sophie paid to Elsie's room were a rare treat to that worthy woman. There was a delicate, thoughtful kindness about Sophie which Elsie could appreciate.

One dull, chilly afternoon, when the seamstress was almost down-hearted, all

seemed so lonesome and plodding, Sophie's well-known tap was heard at the door. Elsie hastened to open it. The cold air had reddened the young lady's cheeks, her eyes were bright with happy thoughts, her warm furs and merino were a strong contrast to Elsie's faded calico; but the women were both looking to the same home and garments in heaven, so it mattered very little how their circumstances differed just now. Sophie carried a little basket, well wrapped with paper over the handle; the reason for this care was soon manifest: she took from the basket a small flower-pot, with a tea rose-bush in it, having one rose and three buds.

"I thought this would cheer you up, it is so pretty," she said; "it will not be much trouble, and it can stand here in your window and be company for you."

"Oh, it is lovely; I love flowers so!" cried Elsie, with joyful gratitude.

"And," added Sophie, "our cook has just been making doughnuts, and hers are always so good, I brought you a few; just empty them into a bowl; you will find them nicer than the baker's."

It was a pleasant gift, pleasantly given.

On that same afternoon little Jane had left her good clothes at Elsie's, and was running home in her other shabby and insufficient raiment, when she was met by her mother, who had not had enough liquor to make her good-humored.

"Where have you been?" she demanded, catching Jane by the arm.

"Nowhere," replied Jane, who had never been taught to tell the truth.

"You have; you've been to school," insisted Abigail.

"No, I ain't," retorted Jane, stoutly.

"Charlotte says you have," said her mother.

"Charlotte tells lies; you know she does," said Jane.

"Look out now that you don't go: if you do, I'll whip you," said Abigail, shaking Jane with all her strength, and letting her go, breathless.

Leaving her mother to go her way to Root's, Jane escaped to Elsie's, where she arrived after Sophie had departed. She was sobbing so that she could not speak at first, but finally recovered herself so far as to relate to her friend what had happened.

"I am sorry that you told a story," said Elsie, gravely.

"I couldn't help it," said Jane.

"Yes, you could; you should have told the truth."

"But she'd a-whipped me," urged Jane.

"It is better to be whipped than tell a lie. God does not love girls that tell lies."

"I'm sorry I told one, then," said Jane,

who was of a very teachable disposition. "I won't no more."

"You can say, if she asks you again, that you go to school to learn how to be a good girl, and you hope she will let you go, and soon you can read to her from a nice book."

"Well," said Jane, doubtfully, "I'll say it, but it won't do no good. She'll beat me, 'cause Charlotte Hoffer is so mean, and sets her up to it. I wish Charlotte was dead!"

"Oh, Jane!" cried Elsie, "that is a very wicked wish. God wants us to love one another."

"Seems to me," said Jane, weeping, "all I say and do is bad."

"Yes," said Elsie, "we have all of us bad hearts; you must ask God to give you a good heart. Do you pray, as Miss Randall taught you?"

"Sometimes, when I don't forget," replied Jane.

It was not long before Jane's resolution was put to the test. Her mother again attacked her about going to school. Jane admitted that she had been, saying what Elsie had bidden her. This did not appease Abigail at all, but her husband being present, for it was on Sunday afternoon, she was obliged to content herself with angry words. However, she laid up the matter in her mind for future adjustment.

Elsie's little class was prospering: four boys came steadily, two others occasionally. Sukey was always present at the Sunday evening readings, and in her calls during the week frequently adverted to the subjects of which Elsie had spoken on the Sabbath, showing that her mind was dwelling on them. Sophie had given Testaments to the eldest Carter boy and Matthew, promising one to Jim Carter and Ned Moore as soon as they could read. These little books in red binding

were highly esteemed by the boys. Sukey greatly desired one. "Do you think Miss Randall will give me one," she asked Elsie, "if I pick up my reading again?"

"I dare say she would," replied Elsie.

"Will you teach me?" asked Sukey.

"I'd like to, but I am so busy. Suppose you get Matthew to teach you, and you do something for him?"

To this proposal Sukey assented, and bargained with Matthew to teach her to read if she would mend his clothes.

Jane and Rhoda frequently poured into Elsie's ears long complaints about Charlotte, and the more Elsie heard of this unfortunate girl the more she longed to help her. But Charlotte kept herself aloof from all that tended to her improvement. She mocked at the Sunday-school, hooted at learning to read, did all she could to disturb the Hart family, and called Elsie hard names whenever she heard her mentioned. Her miserable,

unloved life had made her very suspicious, and this life seemed growing more wretched every day.

Michael Hoffer, bad as he was, was growing worse. He was engaged with a gang of thieves and housebreakers, and, living in daily dread of discovery and arrest, was even more moody and cruel than before. Charlotte got little from him now but blows: if she did not earn the sum he daily demanded she was beaten and starved; he told her plainly that a certain amount he would have, and if she could not gain it by playing on her tambourine, she must steal it; and so poor Charlotte stole here a toy, there a basket, at another place trimmings, and for all she found easy sale.

While the condition of Charlotte Hoffer seemed thus hopeless, Matthew's affairs looked more cheerful. He had kept up a little acquaintance with the man of whom he had bought his brush

and blacking, and the liking seemed to be mutual, for the shopkeeper inquired into Matthew's affairs with much interest.

"Why don't you go to the night-school?" he asked.

Matthew had never heard of such a place. The merchant directed him to go to the principal of one of the city schools and get information, nor was it long before Matthew was spending his evenings diligently at school.

CHAPTER IV.

CASES IN COURT.

"His mischief shall return upon his own head."

ABIGAIL HART was not ready to let the matter of Jane's attendance at school pass without further comment; but, being now assured that Jane did go to school, and that her clothes were left at Elsie's, she determined one day, when half intoxicated, to put an end to these proceedings.

Her plan now was to make an attack upon Elsie and force her to give up Jane's clothing. Very happily, Elsie was absent taking home her work. Her door was locked. Abigail pounded lustily on the panels with drunken vehemence, demanding that the occupant of the room

should "come out" and surrender "her thieveries." These proceedings not being relished by the other inmates of the house, two men on the first floor, industrious cobblers, took Abigail by the shoulders, and, despite her protestations, conducted her to the corner and ordered her to go home. Abigail stumbled along, pouring forth her maudlin wrath, when in an evil hour she came across little Jane.

"Get me your clothes from that slop-sewer's!" cried Abigail, seizing the frightened child; "get me your clothes and your books, and say ye will never go to school again, but grow up like your mother before you, without setting up for an upstart."

"I can't," shrieked Jane. "Elsie says I mustn't tell lies, and I must go to school."

"Get me your clothes!" demanded her mother.

"Quit Abby, quit!"

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"No, no, I can't, I can't!" said Jane.

Thick and fast rained down the blows on the poor child, and loud were the screams of Jane; while Rhoda, running to see what was the matter, joined her outcries to her sister's.

"Quit, Abby! quit!" cried a neighbor. "Hoot, woman! there's the perlece coming out to ye!"

Sure enough, the uproar had reached the wearer of a silver star; and each of the noisy crowd, conscious of delinquencies many and various, shrank away as he came down the street. Abigail was not unmindful of her danger; flinging Jane violently from her, she hurried to her room. Jane fell and remained motionless. Rhoda bent over her, crying, "Help me, somebody! mother's killed her!"

This brought back two or three of the women.

"It's stunned she is," said one.

"Oh Jane, Jane, are you dead?" cried Rhoda.

The policeman came up and looked at her.

"Carry the poor thing home and bring her to," he suggested. "Where is that woman?"

"Indeed it's Abigail Hart, a drunken creature; and yon she lives in the third attic," said an officious neighbor.

While the guardian of the public peace went after its disturber, Rhoda and two women conveyed Jane home, and carried her in just as Abigail was loudly deprecating the arrest of such a "peaceable, hard-working body" as herself.

"Look at that child!" said the officer, sternly.

"I didn't go to do it," cried Abigail, partially sobered by fright. "I was only correcting her a little for telling lies and the like."

"I guess the law will have to correct

you a little for drinking whisky and the like. Bundle along!"

"I must have me baby!" cried Abigail, weeping.

The officer, seeing a nursing infant, with none but children to take care of it, allowed Abigail to wrap little Jack up and carry him along.

Matthew met his mother thus escorted by the officer, and hastened home to see what was the matter. He found Jane just recovering consciousness, and Rhoda nearly helpless from grief and terror. Charlotte, exulting in trouble of her bringing about, was looking on well pleased, not offering any aid. Indeed, Charlotte had made herself so conspicuous by the delight she took in this painful scene that the officer had especially noticed her. Finding things in such a doleful case, Matthew ran for his good friend, Elsie. She had returned home and sat down to her work; but, moved by

Matthew's tale of trouble, concluded to work later at night, and go and help her helpless acquaintances.

"Poor father! what will he say when he comes home?" said Matthew, looking sadly about the disordered room.

"Let us all make things as pleasant as possible for him," said Elsie. "Make a fire, Matthew, and fill the tea-kettle. Come, Rhoda, dry your eyes, and make up the beds and cradle while I attend to Jane."

Jane was lifted to a chair, washed and combed, then wrapped in Rhoda's shawl and given a cup of tea; then, her feet being warmed and her head feeling quite comfortable, she was laid snugly in the bed Rhoda had made. Next, Elsie swept and dusted the room, cleaned out the closet, and told Rhoda what she had better get from the grocery, and how to cook her father's supper in the nicest way. Charlotte had gone out when Elsie en-

tered, but now came back, as it was getting dark and cold.

"Won't you make friends with me yet, Charlotte?" asked Elsie.

"I don't want no friends," said Charlotte, surlily.

"Now, Rhoda, I'm going home; do not fret your father when he comes in, but make things seem as nice as you can. Come over to my room in the morning; I want to see you," said Elsie, putting on her things to return home.

Abigail Hart being proven a drunken and troublesome woman, and the section of the city where she lived having recently been looked upon as quite disorderly, she was sentenced to two months "on the Island." Thither she went, taking the baby with her. Rhoda heard of this sentence, and reported it, with some tears, to Elsie, when she called on her the next morning.

"You must not take it to heart so,"

said Elsie to the girl; "being without liquor so long may be the means of making your mother a sober woman. Now, while she is gone, you must do your best to make a comfortable home for your father, and have a decent place for her to come back to when she is let out."

"I wish Matthew would come home," said Rhoda.

"I wouldn't ask him to," said Elsie; "this is a better neighborhood than where you are, and he is doing very well; besides, that Hoffer is a bad man for a boy to be with."

"That's so," said Rhoda; "and there is Charlotte. I wish she were gone; I never can do anything while she is there."

"You must pity poor Charlotte, and not hate her. I wish she would let me be her friend; she needs one," said Elsie; "but you can do a good deal, even if she is there. I want you to give your room a good cleaning. Sweep the walls, clean

the windows, scrub the floor and woodwork, and blacken the stove. Then you must get your bedding washed. Do the cradle-clothes first, and then the other bedding, part at a time, so it can be well aired before it goes on again."

"Well, I will," said Rhoda.

"Matthew says he will come and help you carry the water, and I will lend you my pail, and you can borrow another tub from somebody. You had better wash all your dishes and scour your knives and pans to-day, and begin cleaning to-morrow."

"I will," said Rhoda, "and then I'll try and keep clean. I'll sweep and make the beds and wash the dishes every day."

"That is right," said Elsie, kindly. "I dare say you will make a nice little housekeeper."

"And I'm going to get father to buy me some clothes, so I can go to Sunday-school."

Daniel readily purchased soap, sand and stove-blacking for Rhoda's cleaning operations, and half promised the clothes. However, when Saturday night came, he found his wife had been getting things at the grocery to sell for liquor, and his bill there exhausted both his funds and his courage; so he told Rhoda quite crossly that she could not have the clothes, and to say no more about it—it was no use for them to try to be anybody.

Rhoda had worked faithfully all the week, and had now quite a tidy room. She had labored hard to suit her father, and now his harsh ways, joined to the disappointment about the clothes, quite overwhelmed her; many and bitter were the poor child's tears that night. Elsie's room was Rhoda's ark of refuge, and thither she went on Sunday morning to say her lessons and tell her cares and griefs. There, too, the kind Father who watches over all sent Sophie Randall. She had

come to bring some tiny books in bright paper covers for Elsie to give her boys as rewards of merit. Rhoda's mournful, tear-stained face moved Sophie's gentle heart, and she at once asked the cause of the trouble. That the girl was little Jane's sister, that the mother was in prison, and Rhoda, after hard striving to make things better at her home, was now grieving to go to school, were matters soon fully set forth by Elsie.

"Never mind, Rhoda," said Sophie, encouragingly; "it will not be very hard to get clothes. Come up to my house tomorrow morning and I will see about it. And don't feel angry with your father because he didn't get them; poor man! he has a good deal to try him."

Rhoda was greatly cheered by her talk with Sophie, and gave Jane a full report of her words.

"Teacher's so nice," said Jane; "she'll give you a whole heap of things, I know.

I say, Rhoda, it is nicer now that mother's not here, isn't it? Only I'd like to see little Jackey."

"If mother would only be like Miss Ray, it would be so nice to have her at home. Oh, Jane, wouldn't it be so good to have a mother to mend our clothes and be kind to us?"

"Yes, indeed," said Jane; "and I suppose some folks do have just such mothers!"

The next morning, while Sophie Randall was eating her breakfast, the maid reported "just the forlornest little girl that ever was seen," in the kitchen asking for Miss Sophie. This of course was our friend Rhoda.

"Let her sit down by the fire and give her a good breakfast, Kate," said Sophie.

"Yes, ma'am, of course," said Kate: "it's a pity all folks wasn't as tender-hearted of the poor as you, miss."

Rhoda had the best breakfast she had

ever tasted, while Sophie finished her meal in the dining-room.

"What child is it, Sophie?" asked her mother.

"The girl I told you of last night, I suppose, mother. I want to fit her out for Sunday-school."

"You might give her that dark delaine that hangs in the attic; but who is to make it?" indolently asked Mrs. Randall, who had been robbed, by ill health and luxury, of all her energy and self-sacrifice.

"I can make it," said Sophie, brightly; "and there are my boots I bought in the country—she can have those; and won't you give her your purple breakfast shawl that you don't wear?"

"Oh yes, to be sure."

"I'm going to tease mittens and stockings out of Aunt Bessie, as the price of my going out shopping with her," said Sophie, looking across the table at a

pleasant old lady, an aunt from the country, who was staying with them.

"You shall have them if it is a worthy case; but you spoke of making the dress: doesn't this poor child know how to sew?"

"I suppose not, aunt: few girls who live as she has lived can sew."

"But what sort of a woman is she to make, not knowing how to use her needle?"

"Shiftless and idle like her mother, to bring up another generation to be supported by charity. It is rather discouraging," said Mr. Randall; "and yet we cannot refuse to give, I suppose."

"I think, Sophie, that the best thing you can do for this girl is to have her taught to sew, to make and mend. I wonder clubs of you city ladies do not hire some good, overworked, underpaid needle-woman, to spend her time teaching classes of these girls to sew," said her aunt, Mrs. Melville.

"The industrial schools cover that field in part," said Mrs. Randall.

"Yes, but they are far from reaching all cases," said Sophie.

"Poverty is like the daughters of the horseleech, ever crying give, give," said Mr. Randall, pushing back his chair from the table.

"I wish I could answer every time," said his daughter.

"In this one case, Sophie, try and do a thorough work," said her aunt—"not merely giving present relief, but laying a foundation for reform and self-support."

"I will, aunt," said Sophie, "and now I must go down and see the little girl."

Sophie measured Rhoda for the dress, and told her to come on Thursday for all her things. Then, having consulted her mother, she got a basket, and put in it a loaf of bread, some ginger-cakes, a pie and a bowl of pickles. "I want to en-

courage her a little in her housekeeping," said Sophie to her mother.

As Rhoda trudged home with her basket, she remembered that her father had gone off, taking only some cold pork and stale bread for his dinner; and when she reached her room she took a little pail, and put in it a slice of pie, three cakes and some pickles, and ran with a light heart to where he worked. The good news told, and the good things given, Rhoda went home to set her room in the best possible order, whilst Daniel Hart, cheered by the beam of kindness that had fallen over his path from Sophie's higher sphere, whistled as he proceeded with his work.

A long talk with her good old aunt resulted in Sophie's going to Elsie with this proposition: that Jane and Rhoda should go for an hour each afternoon to Elsie's room to learn to sew. On Saturdays they should be there two hours.

Sophie would furnish material for them to make into garments for themselves, and would also pay Elsie a dollar a week for the time she spent on them. Sophie cut and basted the work, and Elsie had only to supervise the sewing.

Elsie desired that Charlotte might be benefited by this arrangement; but just now occurred something that swept Charlotte for a time out of the reach of kindly aid.

Forced into stealing by her dissolute father, Charlotte sometimes secured enough during the day to save her a beating, but at other times did not. On one of the bitterest of January days, Charlotte, shivering and trembling with cold, and faint from hunger, was going home with less than half what her father demanded, in dread of the cruel treatment that she knew awaited her. She stopped at a tidy, but humble dwelling, and begged the kind-faced matron

who opened the door to give her a shilling.

"I never give money," said the woman.

"Oh do give me just one shilling; I am starving and freezing, and want it to pay for a lodging," said Charlotte, weeping, though she would have carried every penny home to satisfy her father.

"That is a bad case for a girl of your size to be in," said the woman. "Haven't you any friends?"

"No," sobbed Charlotte; "I am a poor orphan; do give me just one shilling!"

"No," said the woman; "I cannot give you money. I never do; but if you are so badly off, come in and get warm; I will give you your supper."

This offer was too good to be despised; besides, it put off meeting her father for a while, and she might find something in the house to steal and sell; so Charlotte went in. She sat down near the stove, and having eagerly eaten the hearty meal

provided her, she renewed her entreaties for one shilling to get a lodging. The woman was firm in refusing money; but Charlotte's tears and pitiful appearance had touched her heart; so at last she told her she might remain all night and sleep in the garret. To this Charlotte consented; and being warmed, was lighted to the garret, where a straw bed and a thick comfortable made her a good sleeping-place. As she did not return to her home that night, her father, Michael, concluded she had fallen into the hands of the police.

Charlotte awoke at dawn and began to ponder her situation. She would probably get her breakfast where she was, but after that she must go out to beg or play the tambourine again. Her father would find her in the streets, or, at all events, she must go back to him at night, and then she would be called to account for her absence and for the earnings of two

days. A little gratitude Charlotte truly felt toward this woman, who had fed and lodged her, but her gratitude was not so strong as her fear of her father: her moral sense being blunted by her wretched life, it was easy for her to resolve to rise softly, go down stairs, steal enough to satisfy her father and escape. Quietly she rose and slyly descended to the basement: looking around, a market-basket of clothes that had been ironed and folded the night before caught her eye. It had a handle, and she could easily carry it: at once she put it on her arm, unfastened the area door and slipped into the street. She walked swiftly a few squares, when she was suddenly stopped; a hand was firmly clasping her arm. The policeman who had arrested Abigail had recognized Charlotte, and wondering where she went so early with such a burden, he determined to look into the matter.

"Where are you bound?" he demanded.

"To carry home mother's washing," replied Charlotte, with the promptness of one long skilled in deception and subterfuge.

"Where do you carry it?"

"Up to Nineteenth street," said Charlotte.

"This is rather early in the day to carry home work."

"Oh, but the folks are going off on the cars, and want the clothes. I'm in a hurry," said Charlotte, twisting to get away.

"Where do you live?" asked the officer.

"Up in Catherine street," replied Charlotte.

"I think you're a girl I saw in Cherry street."

"Never was there in my life," said Charlotte.

"Yes, I saw you when I arrested a woman for beating a child."

"I never was near Abby Hart's in all my born days," insisted Charlotte.

"Oh ho! you know all about it! Give me a look at these clothes."

The policeman turned back the towel that covered the basket.

"These ain't ladies' clothes," he said. "They're too coarse, and haven't trimming enough on them. Where's the lace and embroidery for folks that live on Nineteenth street and put out washing? Come, my fine girl, you'll have to step along to the station-house, until we look after this matter."

It was in vain that Charlotte resisted; she was taken off and locked up to await the opening of the court.

Charlotte had never heard that the way of transgressors is hard—that they who sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind—that the wicked are compassed

about by their own wickedness; but though she had never heard this, she was finding it true.

The theft of the clothes having been reported to the police by their owner, the crime was speedily traced to Charlotte, and when she was brought to answer the accusation of theft, it took but a few minutes to prove her guilty. Charlotte, frightened and weeping, declared that her father sent her out to steal, that he beat her in a barbarous manner if she failed to comply with his demands, and that he received the results of her thefts, never giving her enough either of food or raiment.

This pitiful story caused Michael Hoffer to be sent for, and Charlotte's case was laid aside until he was brought. Michael entered the court-room in charge of an officer, simulating an expression of entire ignorance and innocence that was edifying to witness.

"Do you know this girl?" asked the magistrate.

"Mebby I might have seen her some time," said Michael, regarding Charlotte carefully, and apparently making a praiseworthy effort to speak the truth.

"She says she is your daughter, and that her name is Charlotte Hoffer."

"Mebby that is her name—there is more Hoffers than one. But I've neither chick nor child of me own."

"You deny, then, that she is your child?"

"Shure I must tell the *truth*," said Michael, with unction; "she's none of mine."

"Have you not called yourself her father, and sent her out to get money for you?"

"Truth I ain't. If she was my child—which she isn't—I'd be sending her to school and bringing her up decent. I'm an honest, hard-working man, yer honor,

and, savin' your presence, I ought to be carrying me hod now, and not tarrying for a girl I don't know."

Charlotte, her eyes blazing with fury at this unqualified denial of relationship by one who had claimed the right to take her earnings and beat and abuse her, turned her back toward the veracious witness.

"See there! she's ashamed of her lies fornent you all," said Michael, in an exulting tone.

No witnesses were on hand; Charlotte had been clearly found guilty of robbery; she might be telling a falsehood about Hoffer, and there were numbers of other cases to try; so Hoffer was dismissed with a charge to stick to hod-carrying, and Charlotte was sentenced to three months in prison.

Poor Charlotte was carried away to her place of confinement, her father exulting in his successful denial of her

claims—the Hart family rejoicing in being relieved of her society.

There was no one in all the world to give her a thought of compassion or a word of instruction. The magistrate deemed her very hardened—the woman whose clothing had been stolen determined never to be charitable again. No one thought of the long, hard years, in all of which not a single good influence had reached the girl; no one thought of the strong pressure of circumstances which had driven her on in her desperate course; no one thought that she might yet be saved, be reclaimed from her evil career, and led toward heaven.

And yet it should hardly be said, "no one;" for when Elsie heard from Rhoda of Charlotte's fate, the kind seamstress wept tears of pity over a life so bitter and blasted, and in her daily prayers were woven petitions to the Father of Light to cast the brightness of his goodness

and peace into this heart so dark and desolate.

Charlotte's departure made such an improvement in Rhoda's home, and she was striving so hard and so successfully to take care of things there, that Daniel Hart roused himself up to send Michael away, and to have the whole room for his family, and then lived quietly with his two little girls.

Jane's improvement at school was rapid: the child was developing mentally, morally and physically. Her eyes lost their frightened, downcast look; her cheeks and arms, gaining in flesh, showed the good effects of three meals a day. Her voice was no longer shrilly raised in quarrels with her juvenile neighbors, but she had learned some hymns to sing, could count and spell; and now that Charlotte was gone and she could venture to bring home her primer and library book, the evenings were spent in aston-

ishing Rhoda by her reading and descriptions of pictures. Rhoda could not go to day-school: she had the housework to see to, and it was not safe to leave their little property in the attic unguarded. Jane, however, helped her sister with her reading; Elsie taught her on Sunday mornings; and there was the blessed mission-school, where her young soul was fed with heavenly food. The two girls went to church, and Matthew too sometimes accompanied them. Jane tried hard to get her father also to go with them.

"Go yourself, child, if it does you any good; go while you can. Your mother 'll be coming home soon, and then all decency will be over," he replied.

"Oh no, father; we'll show mother such a nice room, and we'll coax her up, and she won't go to Root's any more," said Jane, hopefully.

"You can't do it," said her father; "time and again did she vow and promise

to me, yet went right to the drink again; and now she won't promise at all. I'll not go to church. I've no decent coat to my back, and if I got one, she'd soon sell it. Let me alone, Jane. Let me alone!"

Nobody had ever preached to Daniel that gospel of love that is able to melt the stoniest hearts and to turn the vilest sinner from the error of his ways.

During these days the retribution that dogs the steps of evil-doers overtook Michael Hoffer. He had joined a gang of housebreakers; and having been apprehended one night in his depredations, he made violent resistance, and was secured at last, one of his arms being broken and his face badly cut and bruised. His arrest was soon followed by trial, and a sentence to three years' confinement in the State's prison.

"I wonder what Lottie will do when she gets out?" said Jane.

"She won't get in with us, that's certain," replied Rhoda. "If I was only sure mother would keep straight, we might be respectable yet."

CHAPTER V.

THE HEAVY DOOM.

"I have wounded them, that they were not able to rise."

A MONTH after Charlotte was imprisoned, Abigail's term expired, and she was now to be expected home. It was the last day of February. The room where Daniel lived had greatly changed for the better: it was clean; the beds were made, Michael's cot had been left for rent, and Matthew had mended it, so that Rhoda need no longer sleep on the floor. Rhoda had put in practice her new accomplishment of sewing to patch the bed-quilts and her own clothes. She sat there on that last day of winter, laboriously mending her father's shirt, for her fingers were yet unskillful, and sew-

ing was hard work to her. She was thinking when her mother would get back, and what means would avail to keep her from drinking. She well knew that if disposed to do so, her mother could take in some coarse sewing, and so help to keep the family clothed. She was aroused from these thoughts by a heavy, well-known step on the stairway: it was surely her mother's step, and a natural affection prompting to welcome that mother and baby brother, and anxiety to know how she had returned, caused Rhoda to spring up, dropping her work, spool and brass thimble, and throw open the door.

"Oh, mother! I'm glad to see you!" cried Rhoda; but, alas! that mother had already been to the dram-shop! The fumes of gin loaded her breath; the stimulus of which she had been so long deprived flushed her cheek and made her eye watery and unsteady. One or two

glasses of liquor always made her cross; she pushed Rhoda away from her; then handed her the baby, saying, "There, tend him; I'm sick of it."

Rhoda took little Jack in her arms, her eyes filling with tears. The baby was sobbing and his little cheek was bruised.

"He bumped his face there at Root's," said his mother; "and then he squalled, so they made me bring him home. Your father's been to the grocery telling tales on me, and they won't give me a pound of cheese or of crackers to keep me from starving."

"If you had come home, mother, I would have cooked your dinner," said Rhoda.

"Oh you would, hey? It's a pretty time of day, when the mother of a family has to come to a slip of a girl like you for a bite of victuals! Give me some money. I must have a drink of some-

thing to keep the life in me after the way I've walked; and nursing that great child, too!"

Jackey was by no means a great child: he was pale and puny, as might be expected when the natural food of infancy had been turned to poison by strong drink.

"If you'll lay off your hood, mother, I'll make you a cup of tea to strengthen you up a bit," said Rhoda.

It was a pity Rhoda did not have on the stove a cup of strong coffee to still her mother's cravings.

"A cup of tea! send me to the pump for water as well! Give me the key to yon closet, ye imperdent varlet, an' let me see what I can find."

In the closet was some meat bought that morning to be cooked for the father's tea; there was also corn bread made after Elsie's directions, and a plate of boiled potatoes. Rhoda well knew that were

the key given up, these edibles would soon be smoking before Mrs. Root's villanous boarders: she could not let her mother lay hands on them.

"Oh, mother," she said, "we've worked hard to have a nice, clean, warm room for you to come to when you got home. If you'll only stay contented, I'll do the work and mind the baby; and if you'll go no more to Root's, you can take in sewing enough to dress yourself like a lady."

"Slop-work! me do slop-work?" shouted Abigail. "Take that for such villifying of yer natural-born mother!" and she boxed Rhoda violently on the ears.

Rhoda ran to the bed and placed Jackey on it, that she might defend herself. "Don't, mother," she cried; "do be good."

"Be good yerself, and give me the key," said the raging woman, grasping

Rhoda's arm, and doubling her fist to beat her. Rhoda, remembering what a deliverance a violent use of lungs had brought on one occasion, began to scream with all her might, while with her free arm she interfered with the vigorous exercises of the doubled fist. The uproar had the desired effect: a woman from the room below ran up, crying,

"Hoot, now! Abby Hart! As sure as ye set up the like of your old tricks, I'll go for the perlèce. Let the girl alone, woman! A steady, hard-working child she is; and such a drunken creature as yerself is not worthy of her."

Abigail let go Rhoda, but squared off in boxing attitude to intimidate her neighbor. This having no effect, and Abigail being a coward at heart, she stumbled off to the street, muttering her wrath.

"There's no use of trying," said Rhoda, burying her tearful face on the bed beside

Jackey. "It's all over now. I thought we could be decent."

"Look at that poor baby," said the neighbor, turning to go. "I may be bad enough, but none of mine ever got used like that."

These words recalled Rhoda to her little brother.

"I can do something for you, Jackey," she said, fondly; "poor little fellow! what a hateful world you are in! If it wasn't for mission-school, I'd wish we were all blocks or stones."

She had washed and mended, in her fashion, a few rags of Jackey's clothing, left at home when he was banished with his mother. These she got out, took some warm water from the stove—which truth requires us to mention that she put in the dish-pan—got a piece of soap, and a towel which she had persuaded her father to buy under promise of washing it every day, and then got ready to make

little Jack's toilette. Thinking, however, that as usual he must be hungry, she took from the closet a cup of soup left from dinner the day before, and set it to warm. It was a relief to her burdened heart to make the tiny boy comfortable. After he was washed and dressed, and his thin, light hair combed, she began to feed him. At this moment Jane came in. Expecting her mother's return, she had again left her decent clothes at Elsie's, as for a month past she had not done.

"I've done my sewing, Rhoda; why didn't you come?" she cried, as she entered. "Oh, mother's come! How nice you've made Jack look! Where's mother?"

"Gone to buy rum," said Rhoda, passionately, as Jane kissed the baby; and then she gave her sister an account of what had happened.

"All our good times are done," said Jane, as Rhoda finished the tale.

"Yes: all done," said Rhoda, despairingly. "Here, Jane, you rock this poor little thing to sleep and put him in the cradle, while I wash up the clothes I took off him and get supper." She wrapped the cradle-quilt about the child, who lay cooing out his unwonted contentment on Jane's lap as Rhoda went to work at her small washing.

"I wish I could see Miss Ray," said Rhoda.

"I'd be afraid to stay here alone, lest mother should come back," said Jane. "What do you want to see her for?"

"To ask her what to do?" said Rhoda, the tears dropping one by one into her suds as she rubbed Jack's poor garments —still in the dish-pan.

"She'd say, to do the best you could for father and Jack, and to keep the room tidy, and not to feel too bad; and to pray to God," said Jane, who was learning a little of the efficacy of prayer.

"Jack's asleep, Rhoda."

"Lay him in the cradle, and cover him up. Pull it up by the fire, Jane; he's hardly any clothes on."

"I wish we could make him some, if Miss Randall would give us the stuff."

"I don't like to ask her," said Rhoda.

"I mean to ask her if I can't make Jack something, and not have any more myself," said Jane, standing by the cradle and lovingly regarding the little sleeper. "Let's you and me take good care of Jackey, Rhoda; nobody else cares for him."

"We will," said Rhoda; and in this resolution the two girls felt as if they had something to live for.

Sadly did Daniel Hart's face fall as he entered the room that night and saw the cradle occupied, but no Abigail there.

He turned back the quilt and looked at his child, his rough face working painfully.

"Rhoda dressed him," said Jane.

Daniel made no reply; he left the room for a short time, while Rhoda was putting supper on the table, and came back to eat his meal in silence: the children felt that he had been looking for their mother.

Just as the family were going to bed, Matthew came in. "I found mother on a doorstep just now," he said, "and Joe Carter helped me bring her here; but, father, you'll have to take hold now to get her up stairs, for she is so heavy."

This was Abigail's return. From the time that little Jack was brought home he was the chief care of his two sisters. Jane timidly preferred to her teacher the request that she might make up the calico that had been given her for the baby brother.

"Does he need clothes?" asked Sophie.

"Oh yes, ma'am! He hasn't any, hardly!" said Jane.

"I'll ask my cousin to give him some

her baby has outgrown. I dare say she'll give you a nice bundle. Come up Tuesday and I'll give you something."

"Please, ma'am, I'm afraid they'd be too nice."

"I don't know what you mean," said Sophie.

"Oh, ma'am," explained Jane, blushing violently, for she was by nature a refined and sensitive child, "if they were good clothes mother would pawn them—and—"

"But, Jane, are you so poor as that? does your mother sell things for rent?"

"Oh no, father pays the rent reg'lar," said Jane.

"For food?"

"Oh, ma'am, it's for the drink. Why don't they make laws against selling it, ma'am?" said Jane, weeping.

Sophie, reared in luxury, sheltered by tenderest love, shuddered at this revelation—a mother strip her babe of its clothing to buy herself strong drink!

She had never understood before this verse: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee."

The school was closed. Jane had been standing by her teacher's chair, and now Sophie opened her Bible and read that verse, and told her little pupil of that "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother," of that mighty love that never wearies nor grows cold, of that care better than a mother's, of Him who stopped not at anything, who endured the bitterness of life and death to bring many sons into glory. Jane went home comforted.

Little Jack was provided for, and by much vigilance Rhoda kept his garments from the pawnshop. Abigail seemed more reckless than ever; she was scarcely at home at all: it was astonishing to see the amount of liquor she would drink in a day. To obtain this she stole; she used

her husband's name to get articles to pawn at various places ; she sold her hood, her shawl, her shoes, the pots and kettles from the stove, the best quilt, and even the cradle. In this reckless course her husband could not check her: he went from one shop to another, warning them not to trust her, neither to sell to her nor buy from her. He was barely of middle age, but his face grew seamed with wrinkles, and gray hairs were sprinkled over his head. In moody silence he sat in his room at evening, his arms folded over his knees, grinding his teeth in despair.

That room Rhoda strove unweariedly to keep comfortable: to guard the baby and the remnants of their property, she never went out but on Sabbath morning to Elsie's, and then her father remained at home while she was gone.

Blows and curses were the portion of the two little girls from their unnatural mother. Matthew, who, during his

mother's absence, had frequently visited his family, came no more. Jane saw him sometimes, and he always asked wistfully for "poor father" and "poor Rhoda."

Jane found that Matthew had a new jacket, and that Elsie was keeping two dollars for him, which he had saved of his earnings. Matthew told her that at night-school he was learning to write and cipher, and Elsie reported him as the steadiest of her class. Sophie Randall had persuaded him to go to mission-school. Matthew seemed to make friends everywhere. He was Jane's ideal: she would hold Jackey in her arms and say to Rhoda, "Rhody dear, we'll have Jackey grow up to be like Matthew. He shall not go with bad boys, he must learn to say his prayers, and we'll teach him catechism, and we'll take him to school when he can walk, and make a man of him."

Then Rhoda would shake her head sadly, and say, "No, Jane: Jackey can

never be like Matthew. Mother gets worse every day, and I guess if we don't all get killed, we'll have to go to the work-house or refuge."

"Don't cry, Rhody dear," said little Jane, her own voice trembling: "teacher says God will take care of us; don't forget to say your prayers, Rhody."

Abigail had sold Jane's catechism, primer and library book, and Jane could bring home nothing to occupy the evenings now; though to be sure she had not yet been able to do much more than spell out very easy sentences and look at the pictures. Her teachers all agreed that Jane was a very bright child, and when she went to Mrs. Randall's for the clothes that had been promised Jack, that lady was much struck with the child's delicate features and golden hair.

"She is far too nice a child for such a home," she said.

"Oh, mother!" said Sophie, eagerly,

"let us take her to bring up. Do, mother. We could do so well for her."

"Why, Sophie, what an enthusiast you are!" said Mrs. Randall. "That would never do; we should have no peace of our lives with that drunken woman bothering us all the time."

It might have given Mrs. Randall trouble; and yet she professed to be a follower of Him who for our sake endured trouble and affliction all his life.

Rhoda had heard of people getting desperate and committing suicide; and she began to fear that her father's unhappiness would end in this. If Daniel had then taken his own life, the newspapers would have stated it as "dreadful," and people would have said "shocking," and "what a pity!" The pity now seemed to be, that no one held out a helping hand to this poor fellow in his trials; that no wise, strict laws guarded his domestic comfort from the intrusions of the demon

drink; that others did not join his efforts to rescue Abigail in her downward career.

Dependent as Abigail had become on the stimulus she had used so long, she was half crazy if a day passed when she could not obtain it; again and again had she snatched the bottle from the hand of some weaker inebriate, or from some unhappy child, sent by its parent for the cup of death.

About the middle of April, Abigail for two days could obtain neither money nor liquor; she was ready to commit any crime to satisfy her fearful thirst. She wandered homeward, determined to get from her room something to sell to Root for a drink. She had noticed the affection of Rhoda for little Jack, and she thought that by means of this she could force the girl to give up something to sell. She entered the room, her eyes blazing with excitement.

"Give me something," she said; "I must have something."

"Indeed, mother," said Rhoda, "father hardly brings in enough for us to eat any more; there's nothing in the closet but six potatoes and a morsel of meat."

"Give me something, I say!" shouted Abigail, nearly insane.

"Oh, mother, you've sold nearly everything," said Rhoda, sobbing; "see how bare the room is; who would buy anything we have?"

Abigail snatched the baby from Rhoda's arms.

"I'll sell him!" she cried, wildly.

"Mother, mother, no one would buy a child; give him back to me; do, mother."

"I'll keep him till ye give me sum'at," said Abigail, blundering to the door. Then her eye caught Rhoda's dress; the girl had washed and ironed it the day before, and it was one Sophie Randall had made over for her, as her other one was

all in tatters—a common, brown, shilling calico; and yet Mrs. Root had a girl of Rhoda's size, and might buy it. Abigail turned, put Jackey down on the floor, and endeavored to take the dress off Rhoda. The girl exerted all her strength to save the garment, but in vain; Abigail was large and strong; stronger now than ever, in her raging eagerness she soon jerked away the dress from her struggling, imploring child. Rushing to the door, she stumbled over Jackey, and blindly caught him up in her arms. Holding the dress by one sleeve, she went along the hall with headlong haste. The attic was gloomy, the stairway long and steep; going with furious speed on her fatal errand, Abigail trod upon the captured dress that was dangling about her feet. She stumbled forward, too stupid to save herself, and with a fearful cry fell heavily downward, past the narrow landing, down two long flights of stairs; fell

—herself falling then out of all hope and helping, away from repentance and forgiveness—ah, dear friends, into what gulf of infinite blackness and despairing, may we never know! Fell, crushing with her weight the child grasped in her arms, and freeing him for ever from the wailing and penury and numberless wants and woes that had been his baby portion: in one moment setting him free into the joy and purity and eternal peace of that infant host that stands about the throne of Him who took little ones in his arms and blessed them.

What a shock of horror thrilled Rhoda's heart as she heard that cry and fall! What a swift remorse for the passion that had swelled in her bosom as her mother had robbed her of her clothing! What a wordless, vehement prayer for help, as she ran into the passage-way, and sick and dizzy at the fearful sight of that motionless form crushing little Jack,

held by the wall, striving to cry for help.

Every one knows how soon a crowd can be gathered in the city; and in the densely-populated quarter where this family lived it took scarcely a moment to call together very many people. Those who had been enemies to noisy, drunken Abigail were pitying friends now; and strong arms lifted her still form and carried it up to her room, placing it upon the bed. A kind-hearted woman gave her own baby to a boy standing near, and taking to her bosom the limp, moveless figure of little Jackey, soon laid in Rhoda's trembling arms all that was left of the child that had been so full of life on her lap a few moments before. From the crowd several men ran for Daniel, for Matthew and Elsie, and for two surgeons. All these soon arrived. Matthew knelt down by Rhoda's side, one hand resting on his sister's shoulder, while with the

other he softly stroked the chilling face of his baby brother, tears raining from his eyes over the lifeless brow. A brief examination proved to both doctors that there was no trembling spark of life to be nourished and brightened in either Abigail or the child. It was only left to bury them. Poor Daniel had come home stupefied by the heavy tidings of his loss. He looked at Jack for a moment, with a face almost as white as that of the corpse, then muttered, "I dare say he's better off."

Little Jane had been sent for, and was clinging to Rhoda in a paroxysm of bitter weeping. Hearing what her father said, her tears were checked. "Yes, yes; teacher told me that little dead babies go to heaven," she said. "Oh Rhody, Matthew, our little Jack has got there, all so soon!" Then her eyes wandered to that other dead, and her grief broke forth anew. As for Daniel, standing by the

body of the woman who henceforth could only be to him a bitter memory, he thought of her rather as when young and cheerful, before she had sold herself to the habit of drunkenness. He had loved her then; and now the years of darkness when she was the destroyer of his peace seemed swept away, and he could pity and forgive. He felt what he had hitherto been too downcast and wretched to consider—that by taking her from the city to the quiet country he might have reformed her. Still, it costs money to move, and Daniel had never had a friend or helper.

It took but a few days to finish this mournful chapter of the family's life. One grave held Abigail and her child. The attic was very quiet now.

It was the day after the burial, and Matthew was with his sisters when their father came in from work.

"I can't stand this, children," said

Daniel, in a smothered, choked voice. "I cannot go over these stairs three or four times a day. I cannot come into this room where they have been. We must get away from this."

"Where to, father?" asked Rhoda, helplessly.

"I'll tell you," said Matthew, rousing up and speaking briskly: "there's a good room just across from Miss Ray's—it was left yesterday; and we'll go to-night, father, and see the agent about it. It will be just the place for you; and I'll board at home, and Miss Ray will look after the girls a little and tell them how to do."

"Oh, father, do, do; and then Rhody shall go to school with me!" cried little Jane, jumping up and down.

"No," said Rhoda, "I must stay at home and do the work."

"That's so," said Matthew; "but never mind, Rhoda; next winter you shall go to night-school; I'll take you every night."

"I believe I will do it," said Daniel, sitting down to the table. "I ought to help you along, children, and I will."

"I've got three dollars," said Matthew; "and I'll lend it to you, father, to get curtains, and stove-ware, and such things, to start decent."

Matthew spoke in a magnificent way, quite in the tone of a millionaire; and Rhoda and Jane looked at him with intense admiration, completely dazzled at his financial importance.

"And we'll see our dear Miss Elsie every day," said Jane, "and then we can't help being good; and teacher will not be afraid to come and see us now."

Teacher was very much shocked on the following day at the tale of sudden death little Jane had to tell her. She spoke very tenderly to her pupil on the goodness of Christ in redeeming little children with his own blood, and of the beautiful home where little Jack had found eternal

refuge. She spoke solemnly, too, of being prepared for death, which might come so suddenly, and begged little Jane to be ready when the Lord should call. Then said this little daughter of poverty, quite unexpectedly and with a radiant smile:

"Oh, teacher, I love Jesus Christ so much that I think it would be nice to die!"

"But, Jane," said the teacher, to try the quality of this profession, "do you think you are good enough to go to heaven?"

"Oh no, teacher," replied Jane, with filling eyes; "I am very bad; but, teacher, you know Jesus is so good, it covers my bad all up," and then the smile lit up her face with the glory of faith and peace.

Greatly did Sophie rejoice at seeing such early fruit of her labors. Then, as Jane proceeded to tell her teacher of their plans for the future, Sophie saw there was

hope that this whole family should be lifted up to industry and intelligence—should become good citizens of this commonwealth, and moreover citizens of the New Jerusalem.

In all these hopes and plannings Charlotte was not remembered. She had dropped out of the family of which she had been a member under protest. Nobody cared for her, though she too had a soul to be saved or lost. Elsie sometimes recalled her to mention her in her prayers, but even Elsie was forgetting Charlotte in the new interest and improvement of the Hart family.

Daniel moved into the room opposite Elsie's. It did not take very long to move, for their household goods were very few. Rhoda and Matthew had got the new room very clean, however, and had whitewashed it. Matthew had bought paper blinds for the two windows; by Elsie's advice had purchased, at second

hand, a great calico curtain, which was stretched across the corner of the room, screening off Rhoda's bed, and thus almost making a separate room for the two girls. Daniel at first thought this use of calico superfluous when clothes were so scarce, and also that pots and kettles might have been bought instead; but these his children persuaded him to buy, and soon he liked the curtain arrangement as well as anybody—it made the room look respectable.

It was so quiet at home now, and Rhoda economized so well, that Daniel felt satisfaction in laying out his earnings for his family; and the trifle that Matthew paid a week was saved to buy furniture, that their home might grow more and more comfortable and attractive. Rhoda diligently improved her opportunities for learning to sew, hoping one day to be able to take in work. She also returned to her class in mission-school,

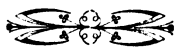
which she had been forced to leave for a while.

The evenings were getting short now, and the night-schools were about closing; soon the small, close rooms of the tenant-houses would be hot and almost unendurable. Elsie thought her boys would cease to come for instruction on Sunday nights; it would be uncomfortable within doors, and after the labors of the day were done they would roam the streets, where they could get a little air and coolness. Elsie's anxious heart took in the possibilities of "larks" and "sprees"—of evil men who are ready to beguile sharp boys into wicked ways, and use them in their thefts and ill deeds—quite ready, when the strong hand of law reached forth, to escape themselves and let the deceived, deluded boy be the victim.

Four of Sukey's lodgers—the Carters, Matthew and Ned Moore—had come to Elsie so much for instruction and friend-

ship, that she began to feel almost as if they belonged to her, and to think of them and be anxious and watchful for them, more as if she were the mother of these four stout lads than Elsie Ray, who but lately had no one to care for her, and knew nobody.

Elsie could not now complain of leanness of soul; charity had made her heart like a watered garden; giving, she had received; her eye kindled with hope; earth was no longer desolate to her; life no more a period of vexing toils, to end in a hospital and then the potter's-field; but it was a season of working for eternity. Elsie was sowing and scattering, and looking for harvestings: she would have sheaves ready for the garner when her day was done.



CHAPTER VI.

SOPHIE'S GIFT.

"By liberal things he shall stand."

APRIL was nearly passed; the advancing spring, the season of promise, was promising much to the long wretched family of Daniel Hart. Matthew and Rhoda were exulting in the new turn of affairs; Jane regarding her improved circumstances with a more chastened joy, with more of gratefulness than exultation, knowing, child as she was, that "every good gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." Rhoda and Matthew had one chief hope and aim—to be respectable; to have home and dress as good as the best of their neighbors; to have some

education, that they might even be in their small way persons of consideration; to lay up a little of the "gold that perisheth," that they might have the dignity of people with money in the bank. Filled with these thoughts, while Miss Randall and Elsie could but commend their energy and propriety of conduct, and Daniel thought them a most wonderful pair of young people, we cannot wonder that there was in them that hardness and selfishness natural to the unregenerate heart, and that as in them there was no fountain of pure charity and no true love to man, which is the overflowing of a heart-spring of love to God, they had no deeds of mercy and no words of sympathy for the destitute and unhappy. They felt indeed a spice of revenge and bitterness to all those who had helped to crush and distress them in their days of adversity.

On one of these last April evenings,

Rhoda had her supper ready and the lamp lighted, for it was late, and her father was working over-hours in a distant part of the city. Matthew sat by the table reading, Jane was near him sewing, and Rhoda, well-satisfied with her day's work, stood by the stove, listening to the singing of the tea-kettle, her thoughts, however, busy with the planning of a new calico dress. Suddenly the door was opened; the intruder stepped at once into the circle of the lamplight: it was Charlotte Hoffer—Charlotte just from prison.

"What are you here for?" demanded Matthew, angrily.

"'Cause I ain't got nowhere else to go," said Charlotte,

"You're not coming here to upset us all," said Rhoda; "we're respectable here, now, and you haven't any right to bother us."

"No," said Matthew; "you're not none

of our folks. Just because you lodged with us, you needn't think we are bound to take care of you. We never wanted you to lodge with us. You sha'n't stay here."

"I'm tired: I'm hungry; I hain't no place to go; I will stay!" said Charlotte, defiantly.

"Give her her supper, Rhody," pleaded Jane, softly; "her father's in prison, and ours ain't."

"That's cause our father's an honest man, and her's is a thief," said Matthew, bitterly, as if poor Charlotte were in some way responsible for her father's conduct. "Yes," he added, "your father's in prison, and you must go where you can. No, Rhoda, don't give her any supper, or she'll hang on all the time; let her look out for herself."

"I can't look out for myself," cried Charlotte, despairingly; "not unless I steal and get to jail again!"

"Do it, then, or what you like; you don't stop here; move out!"

Charlotte stood still, resolutely.

"Move out!" said Matthew, "or Jane shall run for the police. Go, Jane, mind now! bring an officer, quick!"

Jane rose reluctantly to obey, and then Charlotte turned and walked out of the room, with such a face of misery as made little Jane sit down and sob over sorrows she could not relieve.

"There, now! we've seen the last of her!" said Matthew, triumphantly. "She always spited us, and now she's got her pay for it! Don't be stupid, Jane." But Jane only cried the more.

Charlotte went down stairs, stupefied by her utter loneliness. She would have been glad then to see even her brutal father. At the last step she stopped; great sobs shook her coarse frame; she sank down on the entry floor, close up in a corner, and burst into a paroxysm of

grief, groaning and trembling, with her face hidden against the wall where she had crouched.

Elsie had gone out to do her small marketing; and now coming in, her basket on her arm, her dress brushed over Charlotte, groveling on the floor, and the sounds of Charlotte's woe fell on ears never shut to human grief.

"Who is this?" said Elsie, laying her hand on the girl's shrinking shoulders. "Not Rhoda, surely, nor Sukey?" Charlotte but wept the more. "Who are you? do speak and tell me! What is the matter? Let me help you if I can."

"You can't; nobody can, nobody will; everybody hates me. I'll go drown myself in the river. I'm Charlotte Hoffer; that's who I am," broke forth the girl, furiously.

"Why, Charlotte, is this you? I do not hate you."

"Yes, you do," reiterated Charlotte.

"I'm just out of jail, and dad's in prison, and everybody hates me!"

"No, I do not hate you," said Elsie, putting down her basket and bending over Charlotte; "where have you been?"

"Up stairs, where the folks told me Harts lived; Rhoda and Matt abused me and turned me out, and were going to call the perlece to me; and now you'll do it. Go away!"

"Hush, Charlotte," said Elsie, with calm authority. "I shall not call the police, nor shall I let a poor girl like you go out into the streets at night without food or friends or shelter. Come, go up to my room with me, and I will take care of you."

"But I always hated you, and spited you, and never did treat you fit to be seen."

"That makes no difference; I mean to be your friend now; come, child, get up, and go up stairs with me."

Up the stairs, down which she had come in an agony of desolation and despair, went Charlotte, Elsie clasping her hand with a warm, kind pressure. They entered the room; Elsie lit her lamp, put down her basket, and gave Charlotte a chair.

"I've had my supper," Elsie said, "and the fire is out; but I will get yours without making tea."

She spread the little table as for herself, in her own tidy way, put on it bread and meat, and then told Charlotte to sit down and eat all she wanted.

"I'm so hungry," said Charlotte, with a new-born thoughtfulness, "maybe I'd eat it all up."

"Eat all, and welcome," said Elsie; "the Lord will provide more. He always does."

Then she sat down to her sewing, and Charlotte began to eat. She could not handle a knife and fork very tidily, this

girl, accustomed to take her scanty portion in her hands and tear it like a wild beast; but she tried to behave decently, as Elsie was sitting by.

There was a large closet at one end of the hall, for this had been a genteel house once; the closet was empty, and when Charlotte had finished eating, Elsie said, "Charlotte, there is warm water yet on the stove; pour it into that tub, and I will show you where to go; I will give you towel and soap, and you must wash and comb carefully, and I will lend you some clothes of mine to put on."

Charlotte quietly followed Elsie's directions with a new docility; and after an hour spent in the entirely new exertion of taking a thorough bath, she reappeared in Elsie's room. Her thick, black hair was smoothly combed and parted; it was coarse, but glossy, and in shining half-curls looked very pretty.

"What nice hair you have, Lottie!"

said Elsie. The girl looked pleased, and almost abashed; then said,

"Nobody never told me that afore."

"Well, I think so," said Elsie. "Now go empty the tub, and put all your clothes in it to soak in clean water, and after that bring here your soap and towel."

Again Charlotte obeyed. Elsie's next direction was that the towel should be washed and hung to dry, and then that Charlotte should wash the dishes she had used at her supper. As Charlotte stood by the table washing dishes under Elsie's supervision, there was a tap at the door. Elsie said, "Come in." It was after nine, but Rhoda had thought she must run in one moment before she went to bed.

"Oh, Miss Ray!" she cried, eagerly, "only think, Charlotte Hoffer—" She stopped abruptly, amazed at seeing Charlotte, evidently clothed and in her right mind.

"I am busy now, Rhoda," said Elsie,

gently; "I will see you in the morning." She did not want to bring the two into collision.

"Sit down now, Charlotte," said Elsie, when the last dish was in its place in the corner cupboard; "I want to talk to you."

Charlotte sat down on the floor, her knees drawn up and her arms crossed over them.

"Oh," said Elsie, "sit up on a chair like a lady."

Charlotte got a chair, but said, "*I* can't never be a lady."

"Yes, you can," said Elsie. "Now, Charlotte, the world is before you; what are you going to do?"

The girls face darkened as she replied, sullenly, "I can't do nothing 'cept nig or pick pockets."

"But you see that got you into trouble once."

"Yes, and it will again: 'taint never

nothing but trouble for the likes of me. I was borned to it."

"The Bible says we are *all* born to it," said Elsie, gently.

"Needn't tell *me* that," said Charlotte; "*I* know better. All them folks up town livin' in marble houses hain't no trouble: they've piles of money, and more than enough to eat and wear."

"That doesn't make happiness," said Elsie, thoughtfully.

"Yes it does," said Charlotte, firmly.

"Well, as to you, can't you hire out?"

Charlotte laughed in bitter mockery. "Me! a gal what's been to jail, get a place? Decent folks don't sort with jail-birds!"

"Perhaps you couldn't; but can you sew, bind hats or shoes, or do any work?"

"Never teched a needle," said Charlotte. "Never was brung up only to 'nig' and pick pockets."

"And do you like *that?*"

"'*Course I don't,*" said Charlotte, vehe-

mently. "Who wants to be pointed at for a thief? Who wants to be nabbed and sent up? Who wants everybody set ag'in them?" She spoke with breathless energy.

"Well, Charlotte, will you try and learn to do better? will you learn to work and live an honest life?"

"Nobody'd teach me," said Charlotte.

"Yes, I'll see that somebody does," replied Elsie.

"I'm feared I'm so bad I couldn't learn."

"You could try."

There was a long pause. Charlotte's face worked and changed with the earnestness of her new thoughts. At last she turned to Elsie, and in a calm, resolute tone, very different from her usual hasty, defiant manner said, "I will, Miss Ray. I'll try—I'll try with all my might."

"We'll say no more about it to-night, Charlotte. You can go to bed now, and in

the morning we'll talk more about it. Now, before you go to bed, listen while I read and pray to God, who made us and takes care of us."

Elsie took her Bible and read of the raising of the ruler's daughter; then she said, "This is the word of God, and is all true. Kneel down as I do, Charlotte, while we pray;" and then in simple words she prayed that God would bless them both, and help Charlotte to keep her new resolutions.

After Charlotte was asleep, Elsie, stitching busily, thought over all this matter anxiously. She knew if she sent Charlotte away, it would be to go to destruction; she felt that a soul was at stake, and she could not let the girl perish; but how should she help her? Elsie had no friends or advisers but Sophie, and of course if Sophie dared not take Jane into her home, she would not take Charlotte It would be long before Charlotte could

earn anything for herself; and Elsie knew not how she could provide another with food and clothing when the struggle had been so hard for herself. She could teach Charlotte to do their work in the room, but the performing of that small amount of housework was necessary to Elsie's health, as also the walk to and from the shop for which she sewed. Then she felt as if there was a great chance that Charlotte would grow weary of industry and honesty and give up her good resolutions, perhaps even rob Elsie, as she had her other benefactors. However, after prayerfully looking at this subject until midnight, Elsie resolved to perform what seemed to be her duty, and leave the event to God. "The Lord can provide," said Elsie, "and I believe he will: I'll do my best, and I know he'll bless me." Still, to do all she could and not leave anything untried, Elsie determined to beg the favor of a visit from Miss Randall,

that she might get counsel and encouragement from her. Elsie slept the sound sleep that a quiet conscience permits, and was only aroused in the morning by Charlotte making the fire. She rose, and as she dressed she said, "Charlotte, I have no relatives, and you have—" She paused.

"Just as good as none: he denied me, he did," said Charlotte.

"Well, none to do you any good," continued Elsie; "and I've made up my mind if you will promise me you will be a good girl, and mind what I say to you, and will faithfully try to learn to work, so you can soon earn your own living, I will keep you with me. You shall be my sister; you may call me 'sister Elsie,' and I will call you Lottie."

Elsie and all others who knew Charlotte had thought her very hard-hearted, callous and unimpressible; but here the potent touch of Christian charity had

broken down the barriers of resentment and suspicion wherein this outcast had entrenched herself; and with her face buried in her lap she was sitting where she had stooped down to watch her fire burn, weeping soft tears of penitence and gratitude, that were to her frozen heart like dew and showers to the bare March earth—forerunners of the reaping-time to come.

"Didn't you know," she sobbed, "that I hated you, and called you names, and lied 'bout you, and set up Abby ag'in you? Oh, I did, I did."

"Yes," said Elsie, quietly getting her breakfast ready, "I knew it; but we will forget all that now, and go on to better things. We will start new from this day. Come now, Lottie, wash your face and comb your hair, while I get breakfast ready; then we will worship God again."

After breakfast, Elsie told Charlotte how to wash the dishes and put them

away, and then she stepped across the hall to Rhoda's room. Daniel had just gone to his work; Matthew was buckling on his box and brushes. All looked curiously at Elsie as she entered.

"Matthew, Rhoda and Jane," said Elsie, "I have come to tell you that I have taken Charlotte to live with me and be my sister as long as she will try to be a good girl, as she promises she will."

"I don't believe she'll keep it. She'll cheat you, Miss Ray," said Matthew.

"She always hated you awful," said Rhoda.

"I know she did, but it is a duty to forgive, as God forgives us. He can make Charlotte a good girl, and I have prayed that he would."

"Yes," said Jane, eagerly, "he can, Miss Ray, and I know he will."

"I want you all to help me with Charlotte," said Elsie.

"How?" asked Rhoda, anxiously.

"By being kind to her; by never throwing up the past to her; by never acting as if you suspected her; by treating her as you do each other. Will you?"

"I'm sure," said Matthew, "we ought to be willing to do that for you—you've done so much for us. What would we be without you?" and Matthew walked straight out of his room into Elsie's, and holding out his hand to Charlotte, who was wiping a plate with immense care, he said, "Hallo, Lott! I'm right-down glad to see you here. Good luck to you!"

It was a rough, boyish salutation, of course: what else could you expect from a rough boy; but there was heart in it, and I hold Matthew an honorable lad for thus breaking the ice and setting matters on a friendly footing.

"Jane," said Elsie, "can you spare time before school to step up to Miss Randall's, and ask her if she would be so very good as to come and see me when

she has time? You can tell her about Charlotte, you know."

"I will," said Jane. "I'm real glad you took her," she added, slipping into the hall after Elsie and speaking confidentially. "I heard last Sunday about how good Jesus was to folks, and tried to make 'em better, and didn't send them off 'cause they was bad; and teacher said we ought to be like Jesus."

Rhoda had said nothing. She cleaned up her room that morning with more than customary vigor. There was a new thought in her mind. There was something higher than respectability! There was Christianity that wrought such deeds as Elsie's. She could not but see the beauty of doing good for evil; she could not but admire that heavenly charity that shared its crust and hardly-earned shelter with a stranger—yes, with an enemy. Here was something more than human; here was the spirit of such Bible lessons as

she had learned in mission-school, vividly worked out before her.

It needed, however, more than this act of Elsie's to dethrone respectability from its place as the highest good in Rhoda's heart, and give her life a higher and holier aim.

Elsie went back to her work and sewed, while Charlotte zealously tried to carry out her minutest directions about sweeping and dusting and bed-making. About the time the room was in order Rhoda came in. She came because she thought Elsie expected it, and she must come some time; however, she felt rather awkward. To cover up that awkwardness and explain her call, she said,

"Is there anything I can do for you, Miss Ray?"

Elsie thought a moment, then replied, "Yes, Rhoda; Charlotte wants to learn to sew. I taught you, and now, if you have a little time to spare, you can sit down

here and help her; you can show her how to begin, and how to make a good seam."

Thus elevated into an instructress, Rhoda felt quite important. She was ready to be patient and careful with Charlotte, as Elsie had been with her. Not that Jane and Rhoda had by any means finished their sewing-lessons with Elsie; they yet came to her an hour every afternoon; they were able to make a strong and tolerably neat seam and hem pretty well; but the mysteries of fells, gathers, tucks and stitching were yet before them. Charlotte, quite unexpectedly to Elsie, seemed to take naturally to sewing; she threaded her needle and made a knot with considerable dexterity, and held her needle in a handy way.

"You will like sewing, Lottie," said her new sister.

"It's a 'nough sight better than pounding a tambourine," replied Charlotte.

When Jane came home from school, she

told Elsie that Miss Randall would come and see her the next day. She brought also a little basket of cakes from Sophie, which were half for Elsie and half for Rhoda's family.

"I didn't know rich folks were so good," said Charlotte, eating a cake with great relish—the goodness of the cake being a sort of type of the goodness of the giver.

That evening the Carters and Matthew came in to see Elsie. They had all been attending night-school.

"Night-school's done," said Matthew, "and what shall we do? We'll forget all we know before next winter."

"I've been thinking about it," said Elsie; "and now you will not know how to spend your evenings, and I'm afraid you'll get into mischief."

The boys said nothing, but Sukey, who had come in to see how Charlotte looked, here remarked, "Boys are always and for

ever getting into mischief in the city. I wonder they don't go into the country."

"Were you ever there?" asked Matthew.

"Yes, I was," said Sukey, snappishly, "and it was the only decent time of my life. I learnt to be tidy out there, and that's the only good thing about me."

Sukey was getting dissatisfied with herself; she could spell out a few verses in her long-coveted Testament, and the view they gave her of her own heart was anything but cheering. She had not yet taken that other view, wherein sin is lost in righteousness—the look to Calvary.

"I don't want to go to the country," said Matthew. "I'm going to learn a trade and stick to the city."

"Well, I've heard a heap about the country, and Joe and I think we'd like it, don't we, Joe?" said Jim Carter.

"Yes," said Joe; "we'd go and live out there if we could get a place"—Joe's

"out there" being indefinite, like his views of the country.

"I wish we knew how to get a place; can't you tell us, Miss Ray?" urged Jim.

"No," said Elsie, who in all her life had never been out of the city limits "I don't know anything about the country. It must be elegant to see green fields, and great gardens, and orchards and all, but I never did."

"I'll tell you," said Sukey, rousing up: "here's Elsie and me can speak for your being decent lads, with no sassy nor thieving ways, and we'll ask Miss Randall to write you a recommend as such; and just you, Jim, go to the markets every morning early, when the farmers first come in, and stand about until they're done coming, and ask and ask for places for you and Joe, and have the recommend with you. Stick to it till ye get one."

"Do, Jim," said Joe, "and I'll earn enough for us both while you do it."

"It's likely he'll earn a bit doing some little errands for the market-folks," said Sukey.

To this plan the two boys agreed, and only waited for Miss Randall to write them some sort of a recommendation, before they thus endeavored to get work away from the city.

The next day Sophie, chief friend and counselor of these poor people, came to see Elsie. Of course the first business discussed was what should be done with Charlotte. After all, they had only to fix on Elsie's plan and let the poor girl stay with the seamstress.

"I will give her clothes," said Sophie, "but it will be a heavy tax on you to board her."

"I'll eat just as little as ever I can," said Charlotte, with an earnestness that made Sophie's eyes fill with tears, while Elsie clasped the girl's hand and said, "No, Lottie; we will both eat all we want,

and the Lord will provide, as he did for the widow that Elijah lived with."

"What's that?" asked Charlotte.

"I'll read it to you to-night," said Elsie; and before the firm faith of this poor young woman, even Sophie felt humbled.

"Elsie, you are such a nice seamstress, why do you not get fine sewing from ladies, and not do that coarse, poorly-paid shop-work?"

"I never knew anybody to help me get work, and ladies never come to such places as this," said Elsie.

"You could go for the work, and I will recommend you," said Sophie; "and, Elsie, you ought to have a sewing machine and learn to use it."

"I've looked at them working so often," said Elsie, "it almost seems as if I could run one now; but I shall never have such a treasure as that."

"I'll see if I can't get work promised

you right off," said Sophie, "and Charlotte must learn to do this coarse work for you. I wish I could buy you a machine."

"Oh, I could never expect *that*," said Elsie.

"Mother wants a woman to help clean house; the one she generally has is sick," said Sophie.

"There is Sukey is a good hand, and not busy now—she is in her room: shall Charlotte call her down?"

"No, I'll step up there; I never visited her."

Sukey was much delighted by a visit from Sophie. The young lady found her sitting close by her window sewing; her Testament was lying in her lap. After the bargain about the house-cleaning was concluded, Sophie said, "Do you like to read the Bible?"

"I do read it, ma'am, as well as I'm able. It seems like I can't stop, yet it frets

my mind and keeps me a wake of nights, showin' up what a ruined old sinner I am to be sure, bound right straight to destruction."

"But there's a Hand held out to save you, Sukey."

"I don't see no such," said Sukey.

"Do you not believe that Jesus came into the world to save sinners?"

"Well, yes, so I've hearn; but does that mean such old, evil-minded, hard-hearted sinners as I be?"

"Yes, indeed; even the chief of sinners has only to go to Jesus to be saved."

"Well," said Sukey, "that sounds easy; but I'm so most uncommon dubersome about the way."

"You must ask God in prayer to show you what a sinner you are."

"I don't deny," said Sukey, "that I'm the most bitterest kind of a sinner."

"And then ask him to show you what a great Saviour Jesus is, who can save

the worst and lowest, and to give you faith in Jesus as *your* Saviour."

"I'll do my best to remember it," said Sukey; and Sophie went down to Elsie's room again. There she wrote such a recommendation as she honestly could for the two Carters, and left a little money for them, to help them on while they looked for a place. This talk about the Carters led to Elsie's telling her that the night-school had closed, and Matthew did not know what to do with his evenings.

"I will tell you, Elsie," said Sophie, joyously. "They shall have a school of their own. I'll buy a primer, and Jane shall teach Charlotte to read, and I'll get slates and copy-books for Matthew and Rhoda, and an easy Reader, and they can help one another; that will keep Matthew in at night."

"The Lord will surely bless you, Miss Randall," said Elsie, "for all your kind-

ness to the poor. It must be a great thing to be able to do so much."

"Why, Elsie," said Sophie, frankly, "in your way you do more than I do. You literally give till you feel it. I give of my abundance, but you of your deep poverty give what you really need to keep."

"I'm very happy doing it," said Elsie. "I never was so happy in my life as lately." But Sophie's kindly words of appreciation were very grateful and encouraging to Elsie's heart.

"I wish I could buy you a machine," Sophie had said to Elsie. Sophie was naturally liberal, and Christianity had deepened the generous, natural impulse; now Elsie's beautiful charity to Charlotte had provoked the daughter of wealth to love and good works.

It was but a few days after this that the sincerity of Sophie's wish was put to the test. She had two hundred dollars

paid her, the bequest of a deceased friend.

"What shall I do with this?" said Sophie, as she sat at the tea-table with her parents.

"Whatever you choose," said her father, "if it is to buy nuts and candy."

"If I were you," said her mother, "I would get a piece of statuary or a painting, which you could have ever before you as a pleasant reminder of dear Mrs. R——."

Sophie was silent for a while. Then she said, "One hundred and twenty-five dollars will get me something pretty of the kind you mention, ma."

"And what will you do with the rest?" asked Mrs. Randall; "have you any special plan for your seventy-five dollars?"

"Yes," replied Sophie; "you know I told you all about Elsie Ray and Charlotte, and you know I've got some work

promised her, and you said she could have all of ours, mother; and now I want to buy her a sewing machine."

"Why, Sophie!" exclaimed Mrs. Randall, "isn't that carrying your liberality farther than the law demands?"

"Not farther than the law of love demands, mother," said Sophie, earnestly.

"Let her do it," said Mr. Randall, passing his hand over Sophie's head, as he had done in her childhood. "You set us a good example, daughter."

How proud and happy was Sophie, as she went about looking into the merits of sewing machines, and finally selected an excellent one to be sent to Elsie's humble room! How overwhelmed with joy was Elsie when this rare gift came into her lodgings, with the promise of respectability, health and comfort in its clicking needles, that could do so many seams where Elsie's tired fingers could have wrought but one! With a hope-

brightened face, Elsie sought out the patrons Sophie had procured her, and carried home her rolls of fine work, for which she was to have, at last, suitable pay. The time not occupied on these nicer kinds of sewing could be spent on the work she took from the shop, which work, under the auspices of the machine, went on in a merrier fashion than of yore.

Wherever Elsie went her full heart could but pour forth its burden of gratitude to Miss Randall; and so, though Sophie told to none the history of the machine, her good deed was by no means hidden. More than one heart was stirred up to do something on hearing of Sophie's munificent gift, and I doubt not that the increased amount of the bills Mr. Randall dropped into the contribution-plate on Sundays was owing to the example set him by his daughter.

Nor did Elsie, as weeks passed on,

have any cause to regret her generosity to Charlotte, nor Sophie hers to Elsie. Charlotte's course was steadily upward. She changed rapidly, though not without occasional falls into long-formed habits of passion, from the bold, bad tambourine-girl to Elsie's quiet, modest, industrious, younger sister; and this change was manifested both in her manner and appearance. As to Elsie, her sewing gave full satisfaction, and she got plenty to do; her machine worked famously, and, sitting by it, Elsie kept time to its clicking with a happy song.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COUNTRY HOME.

"Let her own works praise her in the gate."

THE plans of the two Carter boys to find places in the country were crowned with complete success. They were hired by two market-gardeners, living near together not far from the city, and with light hearts turned their backs on the scenes of their early toils and privations, to win an honest living from the fruitful soil.

Joe's lot was cast with an elderly and and childless couple, whose kind hearts made him welcome to their comfortable home. Joe was a lad of good principles and warm, loving disposition, and all his gratitude poured forth to those who had

so unexpectedly befriended him. Love begets love, they tell us, and we believe experience has proven the saying true. Joe's love for his employers was returned in such fashion that he seemed more to them like a son than a servant. On balmy summer evenings, when all the work was done, Joe would sit on the porch step, while the old man and his wife—he with his pipe, and she with her knitting—sat in the doorway. Then Joe would tell of the city and its hidden and under stratum of life, and his simple guardians would listen as to a fairy tale. They, good souls! had now and then entered the precincts of mighty Broadway or the glittering Bowery for an hour or two, and dreamed not of the thousand struggling lives that in dingy streets and doleful courts and corners battled with disease, starvation, rum and crime. Now Joe told them of such little newsboys and shoe-blacks as Jim, Ned Moore and himself;

he told of Matthew, honest and earnest; of such as Charlotte and Abigail; of infant sufferers like Jackey; of age desolate like Sukey; of good, true souls, like Elsie's, and wise and kindly ones like Miss Sophie's, pitying and succoring the helpless. To these tales listened Mrs. Morgan, dropping stitches and wiping her eyes, while her good man let his pipe go out time after time. Hearing all these things, these old folks felt quite acquainted with the heroes and heroines of Joe's narrations.

"I wish I could see 'em all," said Mrs. Morgan.

"Pity we couldn't have 'em all out here some time," said Mr. Morgan; and at last one evening the good lady said to Joe: "I'll tell you what, Joseph, when the market cart goes in on Saturday, you shall go with it, and I'll make you up a little basket of our country eating to take along to those folks." Hearing this, Joe

gave a whoop of triumph, and executed three prodigious somersaults, which took him to the front gate, a little white paling affair between two goodly barberry hedges; thence he returned in a fashion that would have set Professor Dio Lewis crazy, walking on his head and elbows, and looking like nothing appropriate to earth, air or water.

Saturday came—the golden sunlight that baptized its dawning not half so radiant as the glory that thenceforth enshrined it in the record of Joe Carter's life. On that day, Joe, arrayed in a clean jean suit, a straw hat, and a pair of shoes, with his basket at his side, perched high up in the market cart, and entering New York as day broke, was, if not a gentleman and a scholar, a prosperous and happy young man; and if his physical expansion had kept pace with the rising of his spirits, Joe would never have been recognizable when he got home again.

Jim had heard of this gala day, and in the gray dawn, as the stars were setting, had waylaid Joe's cart with a paper bag of plums for Elsie, and a bouquet to be presented to Miss Randall with Jim's grateful love.

Happy Joe! Before the sun was hot or high he might have been seen tugging his heavy basket manfully toward his former abode. The contents of that basket were to be divided between Elsie and the Hart family, except a small parcel, tied in a cloth by itself, wherein were some tea, sugar, radishes and biscuits for Sukey. And what was to be found in the big basket? Two pots of golden butter wrapped in cabbage leaves, four snow-white cottage cheeses, scarlet tomatoes and cool, plump cucumbers; slices of pink ham of Mrs. Morgan's own curing, and fresh eggs hidden in crisp heads of lettuce. No wonder that Joe had a heavy load; yet, out of consideration for the butter, and

eager in anticipation of its delivery, he went as fast as he could.

Happy Joe, when at last the basket was set down in Elsie's room, and Rhoda and Jane were called in to see and admire! Then, wonder of wonders! so it happened that Daniel and Matthew were both to be home to dinner that day, and, yet more wonderful, Elsie remembered that this was her birthday, and what a feast there was for her, to be sure! Joe climbed to the attic, and so rejoiced Sukey with the story of his country life, and with the gift brought to her, that she presently began to sing in her cracked voice a tune that must have been of her own inventing, as no one ever had heard the like before.

Though urged to stay, Joe said he had not time; he must get to Miss Randall's, and then back to the market to go home with the cart. Sophie rewarded him for the bouquet with a fine packet of colored

The Arrival of the Basket.

N. Y. Needlewoman. Page 200.

Bible cards and some Sabbath-school papers, and one or two little story-books in gay-colored covers. Out of Elsie's room radiated some of the joy the big basket brought—in plums to a crippled child, some fine tomatoes to a man sick with ague, and part of the eggs to a seamstress with failing appetite and feeble health. It is no wonder that, being the fountain-head of such a stream of happiness as this, good Mrs. Morgan thought that Saturday the finest day, with the coolest breezes, the sweetest birds, and the most splendid growing weather, in all the year. She sang and worked, and the bread rose in a wonderful manner, the butter "came" at once, and the custards were unimpeachable; she quite wondered at evening how she had done so much, so well and so easily, and almost thought she was growing young again. Charity keeps the heart for ever young, as a living spring keeps the grass green about it

through all the year. Happy they who learn the blessedness of giving!

Charlotte went to mission-school with Rhoda, and Ned Moore also was persuaded into the bounds of that kindly fold. And now did Elsie, missing her Sunday pupils, find her occupation gone and fold her hands from those sacred labors? By no means; neither did she go into the mission-school; there were others, Elsie said, better fitted than she to be teachers there. But on Sabbath afternoons, before the church service, which was at half-past four, Elsie found plenty of her Master's work to do. With her Bible and a few text-cards or children's papers in her hand, Elsie sought her pupils from house to house. The crippled child who could only sit in her chair all day, gazing into the streets where she might never run like other children, waited for Elsie's coming as watchers wait for morning. The worn

seamstress, the toiling wife of a gambler, and mother of little ones too small to leave at home or take to church, even if she had had clothing fit to wear abroad, heard from Elsie of the world "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest," and of One who is the "life, the truth, the way."

The oysterman who had a stand by one of the docks—poor fellow! his limbs were distorted by rheumatism, and ague had seemed to shake out of him whatever patience and charity he might once have had—at first tolerated and then welcomed Elsie's visits. He read the tracts she brought, and pondered on the words she said. Sophie had engaged the librarian of the mission-school to keep Elsie supplied with suitable reading for her mission-work; and, without thinking about it or making any definite plan, Elsie was becoming in some sort the Bible-woman of her district, with Sophie Randall for

her manager. Would that every town and city were canvassed thoroughly by these Bible-women and their managers! What better work can women find to do than to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and carry the gospel to the poor?

The summer and autumn passed away. To Sukey, wrinkled and old, friendless and forlorn, had come that new birth whose mysteries were too deep for Nicodemus, master in Israel, long ago. Like Magdalene, Charlotte had gone weeping to the feet of Jesus, and into her broken heart had fallen those sweet words that centuries ago blessed the ears of that penitent one "who was a sinner."

Under the influence with which old things passed away and all things became new, Charlotte's whole life rose before her, and over its misdoings she sorrowed sincerely. The quality of her sorrow was proved by her willingness, where she

could, to ask forgiveness and make reparation for her past offences. She went into Rhoda's room one evening, as usual, for her lessons with little Jane. Sophie's plan of the school had prospered exceedingly, but now night-school would open again, and Rhoda and Matthew would go to it.

"We sha'n't study here like this many more evenings," said Matthew; "Rhoda and I are going to night-school."

"Lottie and I can study together, can't we?" said Jane.

"You can teach me, Jane," said Charlotte, humbly. Then she paused, and after considering what to say, added, "I think you've all been very good to me since I came here, and I thank you for it; and I want to tell you how sorry I am I used to treat you so badly, and tear up your books, and spoil your things, and set your mother up against you. It was

dreadful mean of me. I was an awful wicked girl, but I hope you'll forgive me." Charlotte's eyes were full of tears and her voice trembled.

"Never mind, Lottie," said Jane, affectionately.

"We haven't anything laid up ag'in you," said Matthew.

"I'm going to try to be a Christian," said Charlotte. "I've asked the Lord to forgive me for all my badness, and give me a new heart."

This confession of Charlotte's touched Rhoda; she felt it deeply. She had always thought herself much better than Charlotte; and in her inmost heart proudly believed her own chance of getting to heaven was far better than that of the some-time tambourine-girl. Christ told the Pharisees that publicans and harlots should enter into heaven before them. The self-righteousness of the Pharisee was as filthy rags in the sight

of God, but the righteousness of Christ was a robe and covering, wherein the vilest of the vile could appear spotless in the presence of Him "with whom we have to do."

When Rhoda heard Charlotte tell of finding Jesus and of forgiveness through his name, she turned away to hide her gathering tears; nor was this emotion merely a transient one, lost with the passing hour: thereafter her heart rested not until it rested in Christ.

One Saturday in November, Jane presented herself at Miss Randall's with rather a doleful face.

"Teacher," she said, "father has sprained his arm, so he cannot work, and he is so lonesome sitting at home; and Elsie thinks it would be nice if he had something to read—something to do him good, teacher, if you've got anything; Elsie's books are all out."

"I'll find him something," said Sophie;

and she left the room, while Jane remained sitting near the grate warming her cold hands. On the other side of the grate sat that same good aunt of Sophie's who had urged her to have Jane and Rhoda taught to sew. Her heart had become interested in Sophie's protégés; and, besides, Jane had a lovely, gentle face, that would have won the good feelings of any one who noticed her. The old lady asked Jane about her school, her lessons, her sewing; and Jane's artless accounts of all her duties and her friends called forth now a smile and then a tear from her auditor.

"Do you like to live here in the city?" asked Mrs. Melville.

"Why, I like to be where my folks are, and yet there's no telling how I've thought of such elegant places as where Joe lives—all birds and flowers, great wide fields and trees and hills, and everything nice; it sounds almost like hearing

about heaven to hear of it," replied Jane, earnestly.

"And do you think you would like to go to live with some one in the country, who would take care of you and bring you here to visit sometimes?" asked the lady.

"Oh my! yes, if father 'd let me. Rhoda said Sukey says I sha'n't ever be tough enough to earn my living in the city by sewing or working like her and Elsie."

Here Sophie came back with her basket, long familiar to Jane's eyes, and in the basket she had put some chicken and a glass of jelly, a bundle of bandages for the sprained wrist, and some of the reading Jane had petitioned for.

"I think he will like those books," said Sophie; "and they are 'good' books, too."

"Thank you, teacher, you're so nice!" cried Jane, joyously.

"Isn't she a dear little soul?" said Sophie to her aunt, after Jane had left the room.

"She is indeed," said Mrs. Melville; "I have rarely seen a more attractive child."

"And, aunt, I do believe she is a real Christian."

"Ah, that is better yet than her attractiveness, or rather, perhaps, that is the secret of it."

"I often wonder what is to become of her?" said Sophie.

"I have often wished for such a child as that to live with me; I should like some one to teach and be interested in; some one to wait on me, and help my old eyes and feet; some one to be more companionable than Hannah, who is always busy at the housework. The house has been getting lonely since my daughters married and left me; and after their

visits I miss them so much I am more lonely still."

"Oh, Aunt Bessie!" cried Sophie, sitting down on a footstool at the old lady's feet and grasping her hands, "do take Jane, oh do; it will be so nice for her, and for you too, Aunt Bessie."

"If Sophie has begun to ask for her poor people," said Mrs. Randall, who had just entered the room with her embroidery, "you might just as well say 'yes' at once; she is so persistent that even if she should ask me to give my parlor sofa, or my best bonnet, or, indeed, my whole wardrobe, I should yield immediately."

"Now, mother!" said Sophie, reproachfully.

Mrs. Randall laughed. "I don't find any fault with you, my dear; I was only instructing Aunt Bessie what to expect."

"Tell Jane to come up next Tuesday, and we will talk it all over; if she is suited, and her family will consent, I will

take her to bring up. She is now eleven, nearly, and I may perhaps look to living until she is of an age to be no longer dependent on me."

"May you live a thousand years!" cried Sophie, gayly.

"Yes, countless thousands, my darling, but not here," replied Mrs. Melville.

The next week Mrs. Melville sent for Daniel Hart to come and see her, and proposed to him that she should take Jane to her country home with her, educate her and provide for her wants, and make her capable of taking care of herself when she was old enough to do so.

To such a generous offer Daniel could not but consent. He began to think himself a happy man and his children very fortunate. Rhoda and Matthew rejoiced in their sister's happiness. Everybody who knew Jane thought Mrs. Melville's plan a great favor to the child. Jane had a mind worthy of cultivation, and a slender

frame that needed the bracing of country air and diet. On her last Sabbath, at mission-school, Jane was very thoughtful; she felt the kind Providence that had watched over all. As the school was closing, Jane whispered, "The Lord provided for me, didn't he, teacher?"

In her new home Jane led a busy, peaceful life. By Mrs. Melville's chair she learned needlework, and at the same time learned lessons of Christian living—age giving its lessons of experience to the impressible heart of youth. In the kitchen old Hannah instructed Jane in housekeeping; whilst in the school-house Jane learned the lore of books from year to year, hoping one day herself to fill the teacher's chair.

It needs not to follow her farther. Her heart's love for her family was kept warm by yearly visits, and by more frequent gifts, which Mrs. Melville allowed her to send to them. God had indeed provided

for the little fledgelings of poverty and misery in his own time and way. So will he in his own time and way provide for all who look to him. "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?"

CHAPTER VIII.

FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT.

"I know thy works."

TWO years passed swiftly away. In these years Rhoda had learned a trade. A queer, pretty little trade it was, learned at Sophie's suggestion and followed by Sophie's aid. Rhoda was dressmaker and upholsterer for a large toy store. The owner of this store being a relative of Sophie's, she had thought one day what a fine thing it would be for Rhoda to have the needlework about the toys to do. When Sophie had carefully arranged a plan, she liked to carry it through to success, and she did not rest satisfied until Rhoda was doing a flourishing business for the toy store. But in

these two years Elsie and the Hart family had moved: they had gone to a less crowded and noisy part of the city, where Elsie and Charlotte hired a large, comfortable second-floor room, and Daniel Hart's family had two rooms on the first floor. Charlotte was engaged on the same work as Rhoda, and the two worked together; they were indeed partners in business, with a work-table, two work-baskets, and a stock of needles, pins, thread and sewing silk for capital.

On a spring day, more than three years after the opening of this tale, we might find Rhoda and Charlotte busy at their work. They are in Rhoda's room: there is a table between the two front windows on which are boxes of dolls, rainbow-silks, laces and muslins; and on either side of the table are the two girls. Rhoda, seated near a window where several plants are blooming, was fitting a dress to a large crying baby, while Charlotte stood oppo-

site her companion, bending over a cradle placed on the table, for which she was arranging quilts and pillows, that the crying baby might have a comfortable bed. It was a piece of work made to order, and they were taking more than ordinary pains with it. Rhoda had changed but little, except that she looked older and more womanly; but Charlotte had greatly improved in appearance. Instead of the coarse, repulsive girl we first found her, enjoying the view of a fight from her attic window, she was an intelligent and attractive girl of sixteen. Her waving black hair, which was yet kept short, fell about her flushed cheeks as she bent over her work. Lifting her face and shaking her hair back, "Really, Rhoda, the weather is getting hot, if it is only May," she said; "what nice times Jane must have in the country!"

"So shall we in strawberry-time, when we go to Mrs. Morgan's for that week's

visit. Joe was nearly wild last Saturday at the very thought of it."

"I wonder how many nice baskets full of things Mrs. Morgan has sent us?" said Charlotte, threading a needle.

"It would be hard to tell, they come so often," replied Rhoda.

Charlotte's cheeks were growing a deeper red, but not from the heat of the air or from stooping over her work. "Rhoda," she said," do you know there never comes a basket of things from Mrs. Morgan but I think of that basket of clothes I carried off from that woman who took me in one cold night."

"I don't see why you should," said Rhoda, selecting some lace for the doll's dress.

"I always think of it, and feel so sorry and ashamed."

"Well," said Rhoda, "what's done can't be helped, and you hardly knew any better."

"Oh, yes, I did," interrupted Charlotte.

"Any way," urged Rhoda, "you never got a chance to do any better, for your father wouldn't let you be good if you wanted to. I truly think he was the worst man I ever heard of; I hope you'll never see him again."

"I feel sorry for him, and I can forgive him for all he ever did to me," said Charlotte; "and if he were a good man, I would be glad to see him. Still, if he is what he used to be, I don't want to be with him."

"His time is about out," said Rhoda; "I hope he won't find you. Suppose he should claim you?"

"Elsie talked to Miss Randall about that, and Miss Randall talked to her father: it was only last week. And Miss Randall said if father ever did try to take me away, just to let Mr. Randall know, and he would apply to the court for me; and they would say father was

unfit to have me, and would give me to Elsie."

"Of course I wouldn't go with him," said Rhoda, decidedly.

"And yet I often think if he were in any suffering I'd help him in a minute; but then we never know what we would do till we are tried," added Charlotte, meditatively.

"There's no use of bringing up all these old things; they ain't very pleasant to think about," said Rhoda.

"No; but that matter of the woman and the clothes will keep coming up, and I've about made up my mind what to do about it."

"What is that?" asked Rhoda, anxiously.

"Why, go there and tell her who I am, and ask her pardon for deceiving her so, and thank her for her charity to me."

"I don't know as that is worth while," said Rhoda.

"It will never be off my mind until I do," said Charlotte; "and the sooner it is done the better. So come, Rhoda, we'll get this crying baby finished, and I'll take it to the store, and stop at that house when I come back."

"Well, just as you like, of course. I don't believe I could muster up courage to do it, though. Shall I tuck this doll's skirt, Lottie?"

"No, I wouldn't; put on this edging for a variety. There, now! isn't that a most delightful little pillow-case? What a world of money and trouble are spent on rich children's toys, Rhoda!"

"Yes, but some of us make our living by it. What would we do if rich folks had no more done than poor folks?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. I don't want you to think I am envious of them, for I am not. There is one Lord over all, who is rich to all who call upon him, and He is all we want."

"Yes," said Rhoda, "my hymn in mission-school last Sunday was—

> "The Lord my Shepherd is;
> I shall be well supplied."

"Was it?" said Charlotte; "why my verse for next Sunday is, 'My God shall supply all your need;' and Elsie said this morning she knew that it was true, for she had proved it in all her life."

About four in the afternoon Charlotte set out to take home her work. She wore a light calico dress, with a white apron and a neat little straw hat; in one arm she held a large parcel, carefully wrapped up, wherein was the crying baby in its cradle; in her other hand was a wicker basket containing smaller articles of her work. In this tidy, healthy, every way pleasing young woman, who would have recognized poor Charlotte, who once had prowled about the street, ragged and hungry, beating her tiresome tambourine,

and stealing whatever she could lay her hands on? Truly, "godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

No scheme of philanthropy will ever succeed which is not founded on the religion of Jesus Christ. If we would benefit the poor, if we would change the degraded into honorable citizens and happy families, we must begin by striving to make the Bible the law of their daily life; we must instruct them in the Sabbath-school, and turn their feet toward the house of God: by these means only can any people be effectually aided and improved.

Charlotte first went to the store for which she worked. Her business there finished, she went farther down town, by various familiar streets, and finally stopped at the house where she had stolen the basket of clothing. The dwelling

and the woman by the window looked so unchanged, that Charlotte could scarcely realize what length of time had elapsed since she had stood there a wretched beggar. She knocked timidly. The woman opened the door and asked her in. Charlotte took the chair that was offered her, and for a few seconds sat silent, not knowing what to say. The woman looked curiously at her, wondering for what this stranger had come, and then, as Charlotte did not speak, she said, "If you're looking for lodgings, mine is all took; and if you want a place, why I don't want no help; I and my daughter do our own work."

"I don't want either board or work," said Charlotte; "but I think you are the person who once took in a girl who said she had neither money nor home, and she stole a basket of clothes from you."

"You're right there," said the woman, quickly. "I'll not be done that way

again, be you sure. I've never given a grain of heed to beggars since. They needn't come to me with any of their pitiful stories, for I know they're all of a piece."

"I'm sorry that girl's conduct has set you against poor folks, for it is not likely many would serve you as she did."

"Any or many, it's all one," said the woman. "I made up my mind that time never to stand a chance for getting taken in that way again, and I never will."

"But maybe she was sorry—" began Charlotte.

"Not she—she was a hard piece, past all helping. I reckon you heard all about it; it was in the papers. She set up to claim a man for her father and bring him in to blame for her doings, when he wasn't her father at all. Yes, yes, it was all in the papers," repeated the woman, in whose life the affair of the Stolen Clothes had been the great event, as she

then for the only time had had her name "in the papers."

Charlotte's face and neck grew crimson as she said, falteringly, "She was sorry—I am sorry; for I am the girl that took your things. I've come to tell you how sorry and ashamed I am."

"You, you the one!" cried the woman, looking hastily about, as if to see that her valuables were not to be carried off; but her teaspoons were safe in the table-drawer and her thimble was on her finger; so she again looked at Charlotte, saying, "You, you! Oh, it can't be possible!"

"Yes, I am the one: you gave me my supper and let me sleep in the attic."

"Yes, yes, I know; but then that girl was a rough, ragged creature as ever lived, and you—why, you're almost a lady."

"I am the very one. I was in prison three months, but when I got out a dear, good woman took me and made a sister

of me, and a kind lady was my friend and teacher; and they have made me what I am."

"I never did see such a change in anybody in all my born days," said the woman.

"God has been very good to me; he has shown me my sins, and has helped me to be sorry for them, and I am trying to lead a Christian life; but I could not feel contented until I had come to ask your forgiveness. Will you forgive me?"

"Well, to be sure! Who ever heard of such a thing? I'd just as soon have thought of seeing a roaring lion turned into a lamb! I do wish my daughter was here! Oh, forgive you! Of course I will; I don't seem to have anything laid up against *you*. How *can* it be?"

"It's just as I told you," said Charlotte. "Bad as I was, good people pitied me, and tried to help me. I suppose it was the Lord's mercy put it into their hearts."

"Well, well, well!" sighed the woman. "Hereafter see if I don't think more of them church-going folks. They've done what I thought impossible."

"Good afternoon," said Charlotte, rising: "if seeing me has made you think any better of religion, I'm very glad I came."

"Good-bye! I never was so flustrated in my life; no, not when I got down stairs that morning, and saw all my clean clothes gone from where I left them, on the chair between the pantry door and the entry door, set right up ag'in the wall!" exclaimed the woman, following Charlotte to the door, and quoting from her own established version of the History of the Stolen Clothes—a legend, in her view, more famous and entertaining than any ever said or sung, from the Iliad down to the ballad of Dame Hubbard and her Dog.

Charlotte went out into the street with a light heart: she had performed what

she had felt to be a duty, and though, to be sure, the woman's manner of receiving her confession had been anything but cheering, Charlotte was very glad it had been made. As for the woman, Charlotte's call was a perfect windfall of good fortune to her. The Deformed Transformed was nothing to the tale she had to tell. Before her stretched a long vista of calls upon all her acquaintances, who should listen, overcome with admiration as she told the Sequel to the History of the Stolen Clothes.

As old Homer wandered through Greece in the ancient time, singing of love and war, until seven cities contended for the honor of his birth, this daughter of Manhatta, with her knitting in her hand and her yarn-ball in her pocket, went from house to house, winning for herself shining honors as a romancer in humble life.

When Charlotte returned to her home

it was tea-time. She went into Rhoda's room with the work she had brought from the store. "What an age you've been gone!" cried Rhoda.

"You know I told you where I meant to go."

"And did you really do it?"

"Yes, I did, really."

"And how did she treat you?"

"Not unkindly or badly at all, but not as a Christian would have done."

"Well, if she isn't a Christian, of course you couldn't expect her to act like one."

"No, to be sure not: Christians ought to be very different from other people. Miss Randall was talking to us last Sunday about being 'bought with a price.'"

Here Daniel Hart came in—his face not dull and sullen as it was three years before, but contented and pleasant in its expression. His coarse working-dress was whole and clean, his hair smooth, and his

boots were well patched, instead of being out at toes and sides, as had once been the case.

"Well, father," said Rhoda, "what about Matthew?"

"The boss says he'll take him. He's heard a right good account of him. If Matthew sticks to the track he's taken, he'll do well. A good stone-mason can be a right comfortable, independent chap. Here's a letter from Jane, and she says she is coming to see us next fall."

Rhoda took the letter, while Charlotte ran up to her room to Elsie. Elsie was busy at her machine, and Sukey was sitting talking to her.

"I was just saying to Miss Ray that I'm going to move. I'm tired of that old attic, and I'm looking for a place up this way. I'm going to get two rooms, and I'm going to board some boys—meals and lodging. Ned Moore is going to find me some of the right sort of boys. None

but decent lads need come, and they'll find clean beds and wholesome victuals," said Sukey, advertising herself.

"There are rooms vacant just around the corner: I saw the sign up to-day," said Charlotte.

"Then I'll be stirring to look at them; and I'm going to buy some furnishing with what I've laid up this two year," said Sukey, tying on a stiff, prim little black hood, which she wore all the year round.

"I hope the rooms will be to your liking," said Elsie.

"I'll drop in and let you know," said Sukey.

In another hour Sukey dropped in and said she had hired the rooms; and then, as Elsie and Charlotte had just got their supper ready, they asked the old woman to sit down and eat with them.

It was a pleasant, inviting table. There was no milk and no butter—Elsie could

not afford such luxuries—but there was cottage cheese which Mrs. Morgan had sent, and slices of corn beef and good bread, and even, in honor of their guest, some stewed dried peaches.

Sukey sat opposite Elsie, hopeful in her new plans and content with the present, her old eyes shining and smiles lingering among the wrinkles on her face. Sukey's life had blossomed in old age. The Master-gardener year after year sought fruit, yet found none; but now this cumberer of the ground has brought forth fruit at the eleventh hour! Be of good cheer, ye laborers for the Lord; remember that "with God all things are possible." There are branches sapless and old, gnarled and seared trunks, that shall yet bring forth leaves and flowers and fruit, in such miracles as when Aaron's rod budded.

The spring days sped on, winged by labor; that curse turned into a blessing—

and at last the first of July came, and out at Mr. Morgan's the strawberries grew crimson. One day Joe came to town, driving the market cart himself; and after pots and pails and boxes were emptied at Fulton street, the happy boy drove home with Rhoda and Charlotte in the cart with him, the new sights of the country opening before their rejoicing eyes. What a week followed that glad day of leaving the city! The two girls were up in the dewy mornings, feasting eyes and ears with scenes and sounds before undreamed of. All the day with merry hearts they helped pick the delicious berries, made bouquets or gathered vegetables to be sent to market, feasted on the best Mrs. Morgan's housewifery could provide, and at evening sat on the porch steps, working on some of the trifles that formed their home employment, and which they had brought with them to finish; and listened to Mrs. Mor-

gan's tales of quiet lives like her own, which were, to what their troubled days had been, like the still beauty of the land-locked lake to the tossing mountain streams. Thus for a week they were happy in themselves, and filled with young life the old house—stirring in the hearts of their hosts thoughts of what might have been had God sent children to gladden their home.

"Joe is a son to us," said old Mr. Morgan, to his wife, "but you'll be wanting young hands and feet to help your work along."

The week went by—no shorter than other weeks, but seeming short to the hearts that enjoyed it so well—and Jim, who had spent nearly every evening with his young friends, declared it had been the very nicest week that he had ever seen. On that last evening Mrs. Morgan told the girls that they must ask Miss Sophie and Elsie to pick out some poor

city child, who should be an adopted daughter to him and his wife; and when he came to the city the next week he would bring her back with him.

O feeble seamstress, wife of the drunkard and gambler! this was the haven of refuge opened for the blue-eyed pet of your little band. Poor seamstress! she had heard from Elsie of the land of rest, the Jerusalem above, and now, before her going in, the gates of pearl were open, and to give her light in the evening. The Gentle Shepherd sent one child to Mr. Morgan's, while Elsie took for her own the youngest—a boy whom Matthew and Rhoda claimed the privilege of loving and helping clothe, from love to little Jack, who these three years had sung in heaven.

Good deeds and good words will not be confined; the circle of their influence is for ever widening, until it becomes so large that none dream of the hidden

source from whence these blessings spring. Elsie's good deeds and words, reaching past old Sukey and the Harts, the sickly seamstress, the crippled child, were surely doing a great work. If all of those whom she followed so tirelessly with her gentle ministries should shine as stars in heaven for ever, bright indeed would be the crown of her rejoicing.

The summer passed away; September ripened the harvests, and in October came the golden days of Indian summer. Even in the city this season brought its balmy air, its purple mornings, its inspiring happiness. The streets were filled with cheerful faces—poverty forgot that the summer had been hot and toilsome, and that winter, hungry, keen and cold, was near.

On one of these rare days Charlotte and Rhoda were going in the afternoon on an errand especially delightful to girls' hearts—to purchase themselves new

dresses. The careful savings of the summer were to buy delaine dresses and good shoes for Sundays—even woolen gloves and a morsel of dark trimming for their hats might possibly be afforded. Daniel had given them each money to buy small plaid scarfs, and altogether theirs was to be such a shopping excursion as they had never before known. Charlotte, after much consultation with Elsie, had set her mind on a delaine of black and scarlet check, and then her scarf and hat trimmings must match it, and Sophie had given her a black cloth cape, and Charlotte thought that she should be well satisfied with her outfit.

Charlotte, like the rest of us, had a spice of vanity, and I am glad she had it: it was quite undeveloped when she roamed about the streets and was called "a horrid Arab." She looked very little like the city "Arabs" now, this rescued girl, as after dinner she ran into Rhoda's

room all dressed to go out. Matthew and Rhoda were there, and as Charlotte threw open the door Matthew was saying, "Don't let's tell her—" He stopped so suddenly and looked so guilty and confused, and so indeed did Rhoda, that Charlotte asked, instinctively,

"Dont tell me what, Matthew?"

"Oh-o-o-o," drawled Matthew, leaning back by the chimney and his left foot beginning a violent assault and battery upon his right.

Rhoda got intensely interested in the street just then, but Charlotte looked from one to the other, and said, "Tell me what? I know very well you're talking about me."

"Pshaw!" said Matthew.

"Wasn't he, Rhoda?"

"Yes. Matthew, you'd better tell her; if it was my place I'd think you ought."

"If you know anything that concerns me, do speak out!" cried Charlotte.

"Girls are so inquisitive! I wish I'd kept my tongue, and not told Rhoda; but if you *must* know, why it's about your father."

"What about him?" said Charlotte, gasping, and the red on her cheeks dying suddenly out under the touch of fear's cold hand.

"He's out of limbo," said Matthew; "and I went down along the old place to-day on an errand for boss, and Ned Moore told me your father was lying in Root's back cellar; so folks said, and he and I walked in to see."

"Drunk?" said Charlotte, catching her breath.

"No," said Matthew; "they're hiding him. We walked into the house and down into the cellar as bold as lions, and between the noise in the street and the carousing up stairs in the gin-shop, no one heard us, or we wouldn't have been let see him."

"What's the matter?" asked Charlotte, trembling violently.

"They had a spree and a fight, and in the row Root shot your father through the leg, badly, too, and they were afraid to send him to the hospital, for fear Root would get fetched up for it."

"And he is there all alone—no nurse, no doctor, no friends, in a cellar? Oh, Matthew, it's like a wild beast hiding in a den to die!"

"I tried to feel it served him right for all his badness; but, Charlotte, I *did* pity him, lying on a little damp straw in that dingy place, his face so white and his hair and beard hanging so shaggy about it."

"Don't, don't, Matthew, you're killing her!" cried Rhoda, springing to Charlotte, frightened at the white horror in her face. "Go tell Elsie!"

Charlotte's was an intense nature that Rhoda could not comprehend.

Rhoda's grief would have melted away in a soft rain of tears.

"When did all this happen, Matthew?" asked Elsie, as she entered the room with the lad.

"Yesterday morning," replied the boy.

"We must do something right away. We must see Mr. Randall. Charlotte, shall I go see him?"

"No, I'll go," said Charlotte, roused at once. "I'll go faster than you—I'm all ready." She started at a rapid walk, almost a run; then in her eagerness took a street car for the first time in her life. They were at dinner at Mr. Randall's, but when the servant stated that "Charlotte Hoffer wanted to see Mr. Randall right away, if he would be so kind," the good gentleman went into the hall at once, and Sophie, unable to restrain her anxiety, followed him, for Charlotte had never asked for Mr. Randall or seemed in a hurry before.

It did not take long for Charlotte to make her piteous story plain. "Oh, sir, won't you tell me what to do? Won't you please do something? He'll die there, sir, and they'll bury him, and oh, sir, he isn't fit to die!"

"We cannot abandon a man in such a case," said Mr. Randall. "Daughter, get me my hat and gloves. Come, Charlotte; we'll go to the court and make our statement, and get the man at once; he must be taken to the hospital."

Mr. Randall's energy and kindness were fully successful. Officers were sent to secure the person of the wounded man and to arrest the keeper of the grog-shop. Charlotte insisted upon going with the officers. "If you think you must, I'll go too," said Mr. Randall; and with Charlotte at his side he followed the policemen as they went rapidly through the street.

"I'll show you where it is," said Charlotte, eagerly.

"We know the hole," said an officer.

"He's lying in the back cellar," said Charlotte.

"Must be in a desperate fix, lying there with shot in him," said the man, bluntly.

At last the dismal grogery was reached, and quite unexpectedly to its guilty inhabitants the party of policemen pushed into the rear cellar and found Hoffer lying in one corner on a pile of straw.

Those men, that Charlotte had judged stern and unfeeling, bent over the miserable creature lying in that vile den, and with hands made gentle by compassion lifted him up and carried him out into the light of day. All the man's crimes, his hard and evil life, were forgotten in pity for his misery. The officers saw in him no longer the violator of the law, but a sufferer demanding their gentlest aid. Charlotte thought not that she had heard those parched lips curse her and deny her claims; that his eyes unpitying had

seen her led off to prison; that the cold hands she folded across his breast had rained down blows upon her. She only remembered that he was her father—a man whose life had been from the cradle abandoned to poverty, ignorance and crime; and she saw that life now tossed toward eternal shipwreck and ruin. To rescue him, to help him, to cherish that dying life a little longer until he repented and had learned to pray, this was the eager longing of her heart.

Mr. Randall saw the wounded man laid carefully on a litter. Root was led off in one direction to be taken before a magistrate, and the litter with poor Hoffer was carried toward the hospital, Charlotte following behind. At the hospital her anguished face gained her admittance; she saw the doctor, heard him say the wounded limb must be amputated, and that even if Hoffer did not recover—and his dissolute life had lessened his

chance of recovery—that he would probably survive the operation; and then, having obtained promise that she might see her father the next day, she went homeward.

Charlotte's restless heart could hardly wait for the next afternoon. Rhoda had indefinitely postponed the shopping, out of sympathy with Charlotte; and the two girls worked diligently all the morning, Charlotte in an excited way, with many a sigh.

After dinner she hastened to the hospital, and was taken to the ward where her father lay. Hoffer had been washed and shaven—his hair had been trimmed and clean clothes put upon him. He lay on a little cot, his face nearly as white as the pillow on which his head rested or the sheet that covered his feverish frame. Charlotte went to the bedside and gently touched one of his hard, sallow hands. He lifted his dull, glazed eyes.

"Don't you know me, father? I'm Charlotte," she said.

He looked curiously at her; then said in a weak voice, "You ain't my daughter Charlotte."

"Yes, I am indeed, father."

"You must be, or you wouldn't claim me. But what's come over you?"

"Oh, father, I've found a home and friends and everything I want; but I'm so sorry for you." She took a little stool and sat down beside him, looking into his face with love and pity—poor, miserable wreck of what might have been a good and useful manhood!

"How came they to find me?" asked Hoffer.

"Matthew Hart found out and told me, and I told the folks that got you; you were in a dreadful place."

A feebly-muttered curse on Root was Hoffer's only answer.

"Don't, don't, father! don't talk so.

Oh, father, do try and be good now. You will get well and be a good man."

"I won't get well," said her father, in a hard voice.

"Oh yes, father, you must—you will."

"Ask him," said Hoffer, referring to the doctor, who had taken a liking to Charlotte, and now stood at the foot of Hoffer's bed.

"Won't he get well, doctor?" said Charlotte, pleadingly, turning her anxious eyes on the doctor's face.

"No, he'll never get up," said the doctor, plainly but kindly. "He had better know he's got to die; he has a great deal to do yet."

"Yes, yes, father, preparing for death," said Charlotte.

"What's that?" asked Hoffer, grimly.

"Oh, father, it's repenting; it's being sorry for sin; it's turning to the Lord, and asking him to forgive you and save you."

"Oh," growled Hoffer, "you've turned Methody."

"What shall I do?" cried Charlotte, despairingly.

"You can pray," said the doctor. "You must not stay longer now, but you may come every day; I'll give especial orders."

"And may I read to him and talk to him?"

"Yes, yes, my girl, and may it do him good!"

"And may I bring him something nice—some good things that sick folks like?"

"Yes, bring what you please, and I'll see to it. It will make very little difference what he has now."

"And—how long can he live?" whispered Charlotte.

"A few days, or a week. The time is short, child, for such a work as he has to do."

"Not too short for God," said Charlotte. "Can he see a minister?"

"There is one here every day, who will see him."

So, with this small encouragement, Charlotte went home.

Instead of the nice clothing which Charlotte had designed to purchase, she bought a coarse calico dress and a pair of mittens, and spent the rest of her money for dainties for her father. Day after day this girl, changed by the power of God from the brawler and thief to the earnest, forgiving Christian, went to the hospital by her father's bed to read and pray, and speak of Jesus. The man received what she brought and listened to her words in silence as stony as the grave where he was going. For a week this went on, and then Charlotte went one afternoon to find the cot vacant. Her father, the nurse said, had died the evening before, dropping off quite suddenly

at the last, and had been buried that morning.

"Had he said anything?" Charlotte asked, anxiously. Yes, he had said, "Tell the girl not to fret for me—I'm not worth it."

That was all. Charlotte went home, restraining her feelings until her room was gained; but once there, she hid her face in Elsie's lap and sobbed.

"Dear Charlotte," whispered Elsie, "God knows it all. He knows your grief. He has seen the end from the beginning. You did your duty faithfully, child."

Yes, Charlotte had done her duty. All winter long, as going to mission-school and church, Charlotte's clothing, contrasted in its coarseness with the neat garments of her partner in trade, told that Charlotte had done her duty—that she had forgiven, as God for Christ's sake had forgiven her. That ready, unques-

tioning, uncomplaining sacrifice of her cherished little plans and tastes told that her old vindictive spirit had been conquered by the gospel of love, and that Charlotte Hoffer was verily His follower who blessed them that persecuted him.

Why should we tarry longer over winters and springs, summers and autumns, spent in honest labor, in good will, in kind words and humble charities, such as filled up the daily life of Elsie and the friends she had gathered about her? We find our poor sewing-woman, by following the scriptural doctrine of doing good and communicating, unexpectedly outgrowing the loneliness and narrowness of her life, and gathering about her a mother in old Sukey, sons and daughters of her adoption in Charlotte, the boys of the evening class and the seamstress' baby, and brothers and sisters in the family of

Daniel Hart. When the evening of all time has come, and the Master of the vineyard calleth his servants and reckoneth with them, then shall Elsie stand before him a faithful worker—faithful over a few things. About her on that day what a band of rescued ones shall gather!—souls drawn back from the very brink of destruction by that poor, thin hand that, even while toiling over those weary seams, was not slack in the work of the Lord. For his sake she labored and had patience, and fainted not.

Sophie Randall, too, who has helped so tenderly and truly this humble sister—who has despised none of these little ones who believe in Jesus—shall hear the Master say, "Well done!"

Ah, Elsie! toiling needle-woman still, and yet a king's daughter, kept from thine heritage but a little while, I see thee in thy humble room, bending over seams and hems, thy careful brow already

pressed by a starry crown—a crown that shall one day shine plainly and brightly on thy head before a universe; for "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

THE END.