

heels. And Mr. White followed his nephew to the stable to request that he would be a little careful what he did about anybody in the poor-house, as any trouble with the Joneses might defeat Mr. White's nomination to the judgeship of the Court of Common Pleas.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A CHARITABLE INSTITUTION.

WHEN Ralph got back to Miss Nancy Sawyer's, Shocky was sitting up in bed talking to Miss Nancy and Miss Semantha. His cheeks were a little flushed with fever and the excitement of telling his story; theirs were wet with tears. "Ralph," whispered Miss Nancy, as she drew him into the kitchen, "I want you to get a buggy or a sleigh, and go right over to the poor-house and fetch that boy's mother over here. It'll do me more good than any sermon I ever heard to see that boy in his mother's arms to-morrow. We can keep the old lady over Sunday."

Ralph was delighted, so delighted that he came near kissing good Miss Nancy Sawyer, whose plain face was glorified by her generosity.

But he did not go to the poor-house immediately. He waited until he saw Bill Jones, the Superintendent of the Poor-House, and Pete Jones, the County Commissioner, who was still somewhat shuck up, ride up to the court-house. Then he drove out of the village, and presently hitched his horse to the poor-house fence, and took a survey of the outside.

Forty hogs, nearly ready for slaughter, wallowed in a pen in front of the forlorn and dilapidated house; for though the commissioners allowed a claim for repairs at every meeting, the repairs were never made, and it would not do to scrutinize Mr. Jones's bills too closely, unless you gave up all hope of renomination to office. One curious effect of political aspirations in Hoopole County, was to shut the eyes that they could not see, to close the ears that they could not hear, and to destroy the sense of smell. But Ralph, not being a politician, smelled the hog-pen without and the stench within, and saw everywhere the transparent fraud, and heard the echo of Jones's cruelty.

A weak-eyed girl admitted him, and as he did not wish to make his business known at once, he affected a sort of idle interest in the place, and asked to be allowed to look round. The weak-eyed girl watched him. He found that all the women with children, twenty persons in all, were obliged to sleep in one room, which, owing to the hill-slope, was partly under ground, and which had but half a window for light, and no ventilation, except the chance draft from the door. Jones had declared that the women with children must stay there—"he warn't goin' to have brats a-runnin' over the whole house." Here were vicious women and good women, with

their children, crowded like chickens in a coop for market. And there were, as usual in such places, helpless, idiotic women with illegitimate children. Of course this room was the scene of perpetual quarreling and occasional fighting.

In the quarters devoted to the insane, people slightly demented and raving maniacs were in the same rooms, while there were also those utter wrecks which sat in heaps on the floor, mumbling and muttering unintelligible words, the whole current of their thoughts hopelessly muddled, turning around upon itself in eddies never ending.

"That air woman," said the weak-eyed girl, "used to holler a heap when she was brought in here. But Pap knows how to subjue 'em. He slapped her in the mouth every time she hollered. She don't make no furss now, but jist sets down that way all day, and keeps a-whisperin'."

Ralph understood it. When she came in she was the victim of mania; but she had been beaten into hopeless idiocy. Indeed this state of incurable imbecility seemed the end toward which all traveled. Shut in these bare rooms, with no treatment, no exercise, no variety, and meager food, cases of slight derangement soon grew into chronic lunacy.

One young woman, called Phil, a sweet-faced person, apparently a farmer's wife, came up to

Ralph and looked at him kindly, playing with the buttons on his coat in a childlike simplicity. Her blue-drilling dress was sewed all over with patches of white, representing ornamental buttons. The womanly instinct toward adornment had in her taken this childish turn.

"Don't you think they ought to let me go home?" she said with a sweetness and a wistful, longing, home-sick look, that touched Ralph to the heart. He looked at her, and then at the muttering crones, and he could see no hope of any better fate for her. She followed him round the barn-like rooms, returning every now and then to her question, "Don't you think I might go home now?"

The weak-eyed girl had been called away for a moment, and Ralph stood looking into a cell, where there was a man with a gay red plume in his hat and a strip of red flannel about his waist. He strutted up and down like a drill-sergeant.

"I am General Andrew Jackson," he began. "People don't believe it, but I am. I had my head shot off at Bueny Visty, and the new one that growed on isn't nigh so good as the old one; it's tater on one side.<sup>1</sup> That's why they take advantage

<sup>1</sup> Some time after this book appeared Dr. Brown-Séguard announced his theory of the dual brain. A writer in an English magazine called attention to the fact that the discovery had been anticipated by an

of me to shut me up. But I know some things. My head is tater on one side, but it's all right on t'other. And when I know a thing in the left side of my head, I know it. Lean down here. Let me tell you something out of the left side. Not out of the tater side, mind ye. I wouldn't a told you if he hadn't locked me up fer nothing. *Bill Jones is a thief!* He sells the bodies of the dead paupers, and then sells the empty coffins back to the county agin. But that a'n't all——"

Just then the weak-eyed girl came back, and, as Ralph moved away, General Jackson called out: "That a'n't all. I'll tell the rest another time. And that a'n't out of the tater side, you can depend on that. That's out of the left side. Sound as a nut on that side!"

But Ralph began to wonder where he should find Hannah's mother.

"Don't go in there," cried the weak-eyed girl, as Ralph was opening a door. "Ole Mowley's in there, and she'll cuss you."

"Oh! well, if that's all, her curses won't hurt,"

imaginative writer, and cited the passage in the text as proving that the author of "The Hoosier School-Master" had outrun Dr. Brown-Séguard in perceiving the duality of the brain. It is a matter for surprise that an author, even an "imaginative" one, should have made so great a discovery without suspecting its meaning until it was explained by some one else.

said Hartsook, pushing open the door. But the volley of blasphemy and vile language that he received made him stagger. The old hag paced the floor, abusing everybody that came in her way. And by the window, in the same room, feeling the light that struggled through the dusty glass upon her face, sat a sorrowful, intelligent Englishwoman. Ralph noticed at once that she was English, and in a few moments he discovered that her sight was defective. Could it be that Hannah's mother was the room-mate of this loathsome creature, whose profanity and obscenity did not intermit for a moment?

Happily the weak-eyed girl had not dared to brave the curses of Mowley. Ralph stepped forward to the woman by the window, and greeted her.

"Is this Mrs. Thomson?"

"That is my name, sir," she said, turning her face toward Ralph, who could not but remark the contrast between the thorough refinement of her manner and her coarse, scant, unshaped pauper-frock of blue drilling.

"I saw your daughter yesterday."

"Did you see my boy?"

There was a tremulousness in her voice and an agitation in her manner which disclosed the emo-

tion she strove in vain to conceal. For only the day before Bill Jones had informed her that Shocky would be bound out on Saturday, and that she would find that goin' agin him warn't a payin' business, so much as some others he mout mention.

Ralph told her about Shocky's safety. I shall not write down the conversation here. Critics would say that it was an overwrought scene. As if all the world were as cold as they! All I can tell is that this refined woman had all she could do to control herself in her eagerness to get out of her prison-house, away from the blasphemies of Mowley, away from the insults of Jones, away from the sights and sounds and smells of the place, and, above all, her eagerness to fly to the little shocky-head from whom she had been banished for two years. It seemed to her that she could gladly die now, if she could die with that flaxen head upon her bosom.

And so, in spite of the opposition of Bill Jones's son, who threatened her with every sort of evil if she left, Ralph wrapped Mrs. Thomson's blue drilling in Nancy Sawyer's shawl, and bore the feeble woman off to Lewisburg. And as they drove away, a sad, childlike voice cried from the gratings of the upper window, "Good-by! good-by!" Ralph turned and saw that it was Phil, poor Phil, for

whom there was no deliverance.<sup>1</sup> And all the way back Ralph pronounced mental maledictions on the Dorcas Society, not for sending garments to the Five Points or the South Sea Islands, whichever it was, but for being so blind to the sorrow and poverty within its reach. He did not know, for he had not read the reports of the Boards of State Charities, that nearly all alms-houses are very much like this, and that the State of New York is not better in this regard than Indiana. And he did not know that it is true in almost all other counties, as it was in his own, that "Christian" people do not think enough of Christ to look for him in these lazar-houses.

And while Ralph denounced the Dorcas Society, the eager, hungry heart of the mother ran, flew toward the little white-headed boy.

No, I can not do it; I can not tell you about that meeting. I am sure that Miss Nancy Sawyer's tea tasted exceedingly good to the pauper, who had known nothing but cold water for years, and that the bread and butter were delicious to a palate that

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<sup>1</sup> The reader may be interested to know that "Phil" was drawn from the life, as was old Mowley and in part "General Jackson" also. Between 1867 and 1870, I visited many jails and poor-houses with philanthropic purpose, publishing the results of my examination in some cases in *The Chicago Tribune*. Some of the abuses pointed out were reformed, others linger till this day, I believe.

had eaten poor-house soup for dinner, and coarse poor-house bread and vile molasses for supper, and that without change for three years. But I can not tell you how it seemed that evening to Miss Nancy Sawyer, as the poor English lady sat in speechless ecstasy, rocking in the old splint-bottomed rocking-chair in the fire-light, while she pressed to her bosom with all the might of her enfeebled arms, the form of the little Shocky, who half-sobbed and half-sang, over and over again, "God ha'n't forgot us, mother; God ha'n't forgot us."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

THE Methodist church to which Mrs. Matilda White and Miss Nancy Sawyer belonged was the leading one in Lewisburg, as it was in most county-seat villages in Indiana. If I may be permitted to express my candid and charitable opinion of the difference between the two women, I shall have to use the old Quaker locution, and say that Miss Sawyer was a Methodist and likewise a Christian; Mrs. White was a Methodist, but I fear she was not likewise.

As to the first part of this assertion, there was no room to doubt Miss Nancy's piety. She could get happy in class-meeting (for who had a better right?), and could witness a good experience in the quarterly love-feast. But it is not upon these grounds that I base my opinion of Miss Nancy. Do not even the Pharisees the same? She never dreamed that she had any right to speak of "Christian Perfection" (which, as Mrs. Partington said of total depravity, is an excellent doctrine if it is lived

up to); but when a woman's heart is full of devout affections and good purposes, when her head devises liberal and Christlike things, when her hands are always open to the poor and always busy with acts of love and self-denial, and when her feet are ever eager to run upon errands of mercy, why, if there be anything worthy of being called Christian Perfection in this world of imperfection, I do not know why such an one does not possess it. What need of analyzing her experiences *in vacuo* to find out the state of her soul?

How Miss Nancy managed to live on her slender income and be so generous was a perpetual source of perplexity to the gossips of Lewisburg. And now that she declared that Mrs. Thomson and Shocky should not return to the poor-house there was a general outcry from the whole Committee of Intermeddlers that she would bring herself to the poor-house before she died. But Nancy Sawyer was the richest woman in Lewisburg, though nobody knew it, and though she herself did not once suspect it.

How Miss Nancy and the preacher conspired together, and how they managed to bring Mrs. Thomson's case up at the time of the "Sacramental Service" in the afternoon of that Sunday in Lewisburg, and how the preacher made a touching statement

of it just before the regular "Collection for the Poor" was taken, and how the warm-hearted Methodists put in dollars instead of dimes while the Presiding Elder read those passages about Zaccheus and other liberal people, and how the congregation sang

"He dies, the Friend of sinners dies"

more lustily than ever, after having performed this Christian act—how all this happened I can not take up the reader's time to tell. But I can assure him that the nearly blind English woman did not room with blasphemous old Mowley any more, and that the blue-drilling pauper frock gave way to something better, and that grave little Shocky even danced with delight, and declared that God hadn't forgot, though he'd thought that He had. And Mrs. Matilda White remarked that it was a shame that the collection for the poor at a Methodist sacramental service should be given to a woman who was a member of the Church of England, and like as not never soundly converted!

And Shocky slept in his mother's arms and prayed God not to forget Hannah, while Shocky's mother knit stockings for the store day and night, and day and night she prayed and hoped.

## CHAPTER XXV.

BUD WOONG.

THE Sunday that Ralph spent in Lewisburg, the Sunday that Shocky spent in an earthly paradise, the Sunday that Mrs. Thomson spent with Shocky instead of old Mowley, the Sunday that Miss Nancy thought was "just like heaven," was also an eventful Sunday with Bud Means. He had long adored Miss Martha in his secret heart, but, like many other giants, while brave enough to face and fight dragons, he was a coward in the presence of the woman that he loved. Let us honor him for it. The man who loves a woman truly, reverences her profoundly and feels abashed in her presence. The man who is never abashed in the presence of womanhood, the man who tells his love without a tremor, is a shallow egotist. Bud's nature was not fine. But it was deep, true, and manly. To him Martha Hawkins was the chief of women. What was he that he should aspire to possess her? And yet on that Sunday, with his crippled arm carefully bound up, with his cleanest shirt, and with his heavy boots

freshly oiled with the fat of the raccoon, he started hopefully through fields white with snow to the house of Squire Hawkins. When he started his spirits were high, but they descended exactly in proportion to his proximity to the object of his love. He thought himself not dressed well enough. He wished his shoulders were not so square, and his arms not so stout. He wished that he had book-larnin' enough to court in nice, big words. And so, by recounting his own deficiencies, he succeeded in making himself feel weak, and awkward, and generally good-for-nothing, by the time he walked up between the rows of dead hollyhocks to the Squire's front door, to tap at which took all his remaining strength.

Miss Martha received her perspiring lover most graciously, but this only convinced Bud more than ever that she was a superior being. If she had slighted him a bit, so as to awaken his combativeness, his bashfulness might have disappeared.

It was in vain that Martha inquired about his arm and complimented his courage. Bud could only think of his big feet, his clumsy hands, and his slow tongue. He answered in monosyllables, using his red silk handkerchief diligently.

"Is your arm improving?" asked Miss Hawkins.

"Yes, I think it is," said Bud, hastily crossing his

right leg over his left, and trying to get his fists out of sight.

"Have you heard from Mr. Pearson?"

"No, I ha'n't," answered Bud, removing his right foot to the floor again, because it looked so big, and trying to push his left hand into his pocket.

"Beautiful sunshine, isn't it?" said Martha.

"Yes, 'tis," answered Bud, sticking his right foot up on the rung of the chair and putting his right hand behind him.

"This snow looks like the snow we have at the East," said Martha. "It snowed that way the time I was to Bosting."

"Did it?" said Bud, not thinking of the snow at all nor of Boston, but thinking how much better he would have appeared had he left his arms and legs at home.

"I suppose Mr. Hartsook rode your horse to Lewisburg?"

"Yes, he did;" and Bud hung both hands at his side.

"You were very kind."

This set Bud's heart a-going so that he could not say anything, but he looked eloquently at Miss Hawkins, drew both feet under the chair, and rammed his hands into his pockets. Then, suddenly remembering how awkward he must look, he



immediately pulled his hands out again, and crossed his legs. There was a silence of a few minutes, during which Bud made up his mind to do the most desperate thing he could think of—to declare his love and take the consequences.

“You see, Miss Hawkins,” he began, forgetting boots and fists in his agony, “I thought as how I’d come over here to-day, and”—but here his heart failed him utterly—“and—see—you.”

“I’m glad to see you, Mr. Means.”

“And I thought I’d tell you”—Martha was sure it was coming now, for Bud was in dead earnest—“and I thought I’d just like to tell you, ef I only know’d jest how to tell it right”—here Bud got frightened, and did not dare close the sentence as he had intended—“I thought as how you might like to know—or ruther I wanted to tell you—that—the—that I—that we—all of us—think—that—I—that we are going to have a spellin’-school a Chewsday night.”

“I’m real glad to hear it,” said the bland but disappointed Martha. “We used to have spelling-schools at the East.” But Miss Martha could not remember that they had them “to Bosting.”

Hard as it is for a bashful man to talk, it is still more difficult for him to close the conversation. Most men like to leave a favorable impression, and

a bashful man is always waiting with the forlorn hope that some favorable turn in the talk may let him out without absolute discomfiture. And so Bud stayed a long time, and how he ever did get away he never could tell.