

the bed. And beside her knelt a boy who with frantic violence strove in vain to staunch the blood which flowed in a dark stream from her lips.

A moment's inspection showed me the state of the case, the poor invalid had been attacked by hemorrhage, and had fainted.

Hastening back I dispatched Marion whom the noise had awakened, and who was dressing when I came in, down for Mrs. MacKay.

With her assistance and such restoratives as I possessed, we succeeded after repeated efforts in stopping the flow of blood, but she still lay for hours in a death-like trance.

But when I saw she was reviving I sent her son from the room fearing his presence would excite her.

Suddenly she unclosed her eyes, saying.

"Poor Stuart do not be"—

But I placed my hand over her lips saying,

"Stuart is very well, a little frightened, but if you will be very quiet for a while I will call him, to speak to you."

I had told Marion to warn him against exciting her, for fear of renewing the hemorrhage.

As soon as with Marion's aid he had removed all signs of the blood stains, he came in, walking gently across the room and stooping over her pressed a tender kiss upon her brow, saying in a low tone.

"I am very glad you are better," and as she moved, "no, no you must not speak or I shall have to go away."

So her eyes had to look the love her lips were forbidden to speak, while he sat beside her, gently stroking her hand. And thus soothed she has fallen into a quiet slumber from which I trust much good may arise. The dawn has just peeped in at the window, and yet the faithful boy sits motionless, with her hand clasped in his own, fearing to move lest it should arouse her.

I stood but now and watched them, she is an old lady, sadly worn, by too much care, her soft grey locks lay above a white face, where the fears of to-day's actualities, and to-morrow's possibilities have carved deep lines, but the hands are fair and delicate, and look as though they were not always used to labor.

The boy is I should judge about sixteen, and although very poorly clad, has that indescribable look of nobility and

refinement, which makes one know he is above the common herd, and will always command respect. It is a very handsome face, indeed one of the handsomest boy faces I ever remember to have seen, only now wearing a look of anxiety and fatigue, which is pitiful to see. Poor boy, I fear his troubles are very near. God be with him and guard his bark securely over the billows of life, when he shall have to breast them alone.

CHAPTER VIII.

NOVEMBER 20.

It has been several weeks since I have been able to write anything. Since then I have passed through much, working almost unceasingly night and day, for I have work now, thank God. It seems to me a year since that night, when I in such sorrow learned to know my neighbor.

When Mrs. Aldrich awoke we found her, although very weak, much revived, and for a few days we hoped she was better, but this was a vain hope, she was never able to sit up but a few hours at a time. When she grew strong enough for this, I noticed often an anxious perplexed look upon her face. At last she asked:

"Have you provided yourself with work my child?" My tears started at her words and I answered:

"I can get nothing to do, I have tried so hard everywhere but in vain, God only knows what is to become of us," and the fear of what might, brought my head very low in my clasped hands.

"Do not despair my dear child," she replied laying her thin hand upon my head, "God always provides for those who trust him."

"I know, I know, but I cannot see my way clear now"—

"Let me help you. See how our want of faith has kept us anxious. Here have I been worried, because I have some work which I promised should be done long ago, and now you can do it in my place."

And she showed me a set of shirts partly made, but they frightened me. Time and again as I had sought work, was this kind offered me, but I dared not venture, although starvation lay in the refusal.

"I cannot do them," I said bitterly, "oh, why did I not learn to do such things long ago."

"But it is not too late yet, poor young thing, you must keep up a brave heart, and please God together we will accomplish wonders: only do not let us say cannot, but try."

And so we did, and we *have* done great things, for the whole work is done satisfactorily, and we have more to do.

And I have such a hopeful heart, for Marion and I, now we have learned how, can I trust always get work to do.

I know not how to be sufficiently grateful to this friend who was raised up to me in my greatest need, and who until God sent for her, never ceased giving me instruction in all necessary things, and I think her kind lessons are not lost to me.

What strange things poor folks have to do, how Mrs. Aldrich has enlightened me as to ways and means, and how economical I have grown.

Marion and I have to work unceasingly through the day, and a part of the night, to keep the wolf from the door.

I wonder if there was ever a child so unlike a child, so firm in her forgetfulness of self, so enduring, so full of everything which makes a patient, loving being, as my little daughter, my low voiced, dove-eyed Marion. Oh I thank God for her.

And softly, and gently, the sands of Mrs. Aldrich's life went out, I was not wrong in thinking her days were numbered; and when we were alone she spoke calmly, and gladly of the coming change. One day she called me to her side.

"Have I been of use to you dear?" she asked.

"Indeed, indeed you have," I said earnestly, "I know not how to thank you dear friend."

"Shall I tell you, how you may? By adding another care to this already care-worn face, poor little face," and she stroked my cheek, "I have been so sorry to watch it growing thinner, and thinner all these weeks, to see the shadow of an ever-present grief, growing deeper in your weary eyes.

And yet I am about to add another burden, for a little while, only a little while, after that an helper to you, and the little ones."

"Anything I can do I will do gladly," I said.

"Kneel down," and as I knelt before her, she took both my hands in hers, and said in a solemn voice:

"Promise by all you hold dear in this or the world to come, that in sickness or health, in poverty or wealth, until death divide you, you will be the guide and guardian of my poor boy. Promise me wherever your home may be, he shall share it with you."

"I do, I do, God knows I do, and God deal with me and mine, as I deal with him," and as I wound my arms about her and laid my head upon her bosom, I registered my vow on high.

"I believe you my child, I believe and thank you." And then she told all their sad history.

I was mistaken in thinking them mother and son. Mrs. Aldrich is Stuart's grandmother and their story is thus:

Years ago they were wealthy and prosperous, living in this city, Mrs. Aldrich, her son, his wife and three children making one happy home. One summer in the year 183-, Mrs. A. with Stuart, the youngest child, left home to spend a few weeks in a quiet village in the north. After a couple of weeks absence they received a letter from home, saying:

'Do not come back there is danger, and death all around us. The yellow fever has broken out in our midst, and hundreds have already fallen victims to it. I look round and count nearly forty of my own near relations, and intimate friends who are gone. It is fearful, our little girl is sick, but not, we hope with the fever, as soon as she is better we will fly from our home, as thousands of others are doing. Pray my mother for us in our hour of danger.'

And she did pray with an aching heart, waiting each day for more news, but it did not come, she never heard from or of them again. They were all swept away whom she loved, and none were left to tell the tale.

When after months of suffering she ventured back to the city, she found not one whom she once knew to bid her welcome, nay even the very house was gone. For it had with many others, been consigned to the flames to eradicate the

seeds of the fell pestilence. Nothing remained of all the friends and comforts she left a few months back save a smouldering heap.

Friendless and almost penniless, she was a stranger amidst the scenes where her life had been past. A new generation seemed to have sprung up, occupying the places which but a year before, were filled by those whom she had known from her childhood. The distant friends or relatives of those who had fallen victims to the pestilence, came from afar and claimed the inheritance which they had left.

Thus in her own native place she was a destitute stranger,

“ Even the very name *she* bore
A name to them unknown.”

By a world of trouble she realized a small sum from the sale of the ground, upon which had stood so proudly their home.

And with this pittance safely put away, for the time she feared might come, when she should be taken away, and her little grandson left destitute, she has plied her needle day and night for their support for six long years.

Love can endure much, and her weary labor has been for the dearest love—and he for whom she toiled was worthy. It has been the ambition of both, that he should be educated for the law—his father's profession—and with that end in view they have borne all things unshrinkingly.

By their one poor candle, while she sewed, he has studied, and now, though encompassed with difficulties, stands first in the classes of the public school which he attends. For the last two years too, he has been employed in the capacity of a kind of sub-bookkeeper, by one of the directors, a merchant, who was attracted by the boy's remarkable aptitude and indefatigable industry. The small salary he receives has been of great moment to them, especially during the increasing illness of Mrs. Aldrich.

And poor boy it was hard work for him, for after school hours until dark, he was engaged in writing letters, and posting ledgers, and then through the evening must study, until late in the night—getting ready the morning's lesson; yet he never complained, but was as light of heart, and came in with as bright a shining face, as if care or fatigue never came nigh him. And when we had learned to know

him, the children waited anxiously expectant of his merry whistle, or gay ringing song, which he ever sends before him as a token of his coming, and they thought it the gladdest hour of the day, when Stuart came at eventide.

And his poor old grandmother shaking off the langour which crept over her, welcomed him with a loving smile.

Thus it was for many days, but though we never strove to hide from him what was coming—he seemed not to dream of this shadow of death which lay a-cross his pathway, yea was even then over-shadowing, the dearest thing the earth held for him.

He was always saying in a glad certain tone:

“ I am sure she will be soon well, dear grandmother, she looks better than ever to-day.”

No sad looks, no sorrowful words, could dim his hope—even to the very last he was deceived.

One night we were alone waiting for Stuart to return when she called me to her:

“ Is not Stuart late to-night Bertha?” she asked:

“ No dear madam, it is hardly time for him to be from the counting house yet.”

“ Poor boy,” she sighed “ how he works, but doubtlessly it is best.”

We sat silently a little while, each busy with sad thoughts, then with a restless look she said:

“ I fear he will be too late, I fear he will:”—

“ Too late for what?” I asked, “ we will wait supper until he comes, even if it is ten o'clock, for it is so much pleasanter having his handsome face beaming upon us, it makes our frugal meal much more savory,” I said trying to be cheerful.

“ I did not mean that dear child,” she said with a sad smile, then after a pause, “ are you afraid of death Bertha?”

“ No, no I have seen too much of death lately to fear it.”

“ Because,” said she sweetly, “ to-night I will meet your husband in Paradise, I am dying dear child, do you fear to be with me in my hour of agony?”

“ Fear! fear! no,” said I with wild energy clasping my arms about her, “ I envy you, your joyful expectation. Oh why may you go and be at rest, whilst I must stay and toil. See Walter! my Walter! to-night, and I may not take him my kisses and tell him I—” of a sudden the wicked

thought which hung upon my lips was still as she laid her hand over them :

"And tell him you are ready to stay years if it is needful, to be with, and guard, and work, for his little ones, to wait until is is time, God's time," she said earnestly.

Her words subdued my rebellious heart, and I was willing it should be so, though I could not speak. After waiting a little she said :

"Is it not so ? will you not endure until the end, and win a crown at last ?"

And I gave her with my eyes the message my lips refused.

"I knew it would be so Bertha, and if in that unveiled future to which I go, it is permitted for mortals redeemed and glorified to hold converse, to talk of those whom they have left standing upon the shores of time, I will witness to your husband, of all I have seen and known of you in these few short weeks—of all your firm endurance, and fidelity to your charge. And remember Bertha, remember my boy, renew your promise to me now."

And I did with earnest truth and love. Love to the dying friend who in my poverty I had found, but more than all to the being who in so short a space, should behold face to face my lost one, in all his unveiled glory, that angelic majesty in which he is now forever clothed—and which because of this clay, I may not behold, not yet !

Suddenly in the midst of this communion we heard Stuart's springing step mounting the stairs, and his voice singing some gay roundelay. Then as he neared the door, Marion came softly out of our own room saying, gently :

"Please do not make a noise Stuart, and come in here :"

"What is the matter ? how pale you are Marion," said he quickly, "is grandmamma worse ? why may I not go to her ?"

"Come with me just a little while," said she, and they closed the door.

"Dear Marion her quick discernment has discovered to her the near approach of the last hour," said Mrs. Aldrich. "Go Bertha and prepare my poor boy as tenderly as you may, for the stroke which awaits him this very night, for by the morning light he will be alone on the earth without a kindred."

I went slowly out, Leanore at the request of her sister had

taken the children to bed, and I found only Marion and Stuart alone.

He was sitting with a white haggard face upon the settee, and Marion with her soft hand smoothing back his dark hair was talking in a low tone. As soon as Stuart saw me he buried his face with a groan in the folds of her dress, and a quick tremor ran over his frame.

"Mamma dear, may Stuart go in now ? he knows all, I have told him, he is quite prepared to be calm now."

Oh Marion my precious child, thy father's own spirit is over thee—thus does she gently and tenderly ever shield me, warding away with her little frail hands, but firm true heart, every blow or evil, unmindful of hardships if I am saved some grief.

This thought came over me as the tenderness of the action of my child came before me—her exceeding thoughtfulness, and for a moment I could not speak.

"Is she then already dead ?" said Stuart springing up terrified by my silence, "shall I never hear her voice again ?"

"No, no," I answered hastily, "as soon as you are quite calm you shall see her. Marion must go and keep watch over her until I can trust you dear Stuart," then seeing her hesitate, "what is it ? you do not fear my darling ?"

A sweet smile overspread her face as she laid her head down upon my arm saying.

"Oh no not afraid, I could not be you know, after that, other time," and then drawing my ear down to her, she said,

"I heard what you said just now, may I send just one kiss and one word of love to papa ?"

"My darling, my precious daughter, why do you ask me ?—you know you may."

"Please may I say," she asked in her simple earnest way, "may I say I have tried to be faithful to you and the rest, and will until I die give up all things for you all, as I promised him that night I would—may I mamma ?"

"What you will my daughter," was all I could say. After a little while as I sat with my arm about the suffering boy he raised his face from my shoulder, and said in a low constrained voice,

"I think you may trust me now, if you please let us go." His face was very pale and he gnawed his under lip

in deep agony, but his hand which held mine never trembled, and his voice was as firm as usual.

I went in and drew Marion from the close embrace in which she was encircled, saying as I bore her out.

"Stuart is here dear friend, I will leave you awhile."—Then half carrying her, I led my daughter from the room. How beautiful she looked, making the dim place bright.

For a little space she did not speak only clasped her arms closely about me. Suddenly springing up with outstretched arms.

"It almost too great a happiness—God has heard my vow. I know he has, I feel it here, here! in my heart!" And overcome with intense emotion, she sank at my feet murmuring, "Papa, papa, I will remember."

She had fainted, and in my affrighted state I was too weak to raise her light weight from the floor, and could only cry feebly,

"Leanore, Leanore, come oh come!"

She sprang in at the door and seeing what was the matter, lifted her sister up and laid her upon the settee, and then quickly brought some water. Her calm quick movements restored me almost immediately, I drank some of the water she brought, and tried to bring consciousness back to my fainting child.

"Better let me do it mamma dear, if you will only be quiet a while you will get better yourself," and taking the water she began to apply it to her sister, talking to her the while.

"Dear little sister—papa's little May, will you not speak to poor Nora? will you not open your blue eyes and look at me?"

After a time with a kind of sob Marion's eyes unclosed, winding her arm around her sister, she said:

"Lela darling, do not be frightened, if I tell you something will you?" and her voice was very earnest:

"No Marion, not if I can help being."

"You are not a child Lela any more than I, although we are both so young, so we must both strive to be good and firm, Mrs. Aldrich is dying, do not start so sweet sister, are you afraid of death?"

"Yes, oh yes," said the poor frightened child, "so afraid!"

"How can you be, I cannot think what makes you fear, it is not a thing to fear," and her tone was reproachful, after a moment she said:

"But I was not going to tell you that alone—just now Mrs. Aldrich held me in her arms, while I bid her good-bye and—and I did something which you could not understand—but while I knelt there, I saw, I saw papa, oh indeed I did, and he said 'remember your promise my daughter, you and Leanore take care of mamma,' and then—before I could say yes he faded away from my—forgive me oh mamma, I did not know you was here, poor suffering mamma," and she looked beseechingly into my face as I knelt beside her, and clasping my arms about them both, said:

"My good children, my kind little daughters, I have nothing to forgive, bear with me, and if in the coming days I am not always faithful, pardon me for papa's dear sake:" And as I ceased Stuart came in.

"Will you please come now, she wants you," and we went—she greeted me with a smile, saying:

"Call Mrs. MacKay, I want to bid her good-bye." And then when she was come and stood weeping near the door, Mrs. Aldrich said in a clear voice:

"Marion, dear, will you read the one hundred and third Psalm?" In a low soft voice she began the beautiful words, "Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name," and read it through never faltering, while all around her were in tears save the dying woman.

When the Psalm was done, Mrs. Aldrich turned towards the door and said:

"Mrs. MacKay you have been very kind to me, I thank you, be good to yourself hereafter, and remember the words: 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him,'" and then she added, "Marion read the thirty-fourth Psalm for me." At the words, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them," she laid her hand upon my head as I knelt beside her, saying softly: "Do you hear that my child?" And after the reading was through, she said: "Remember all of you, when I am gone, what Marion has just read, and let it comfort you: 'The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.' Will not some one sing? 'How firm a foundation,'" she asked. After a pause, Lela began it in a quivering tone, but as she went on her

beautiful voice gathered strength. At the words 'When through the deep waters I cause thee to go,' at Mrs. Aldrich's bidding we all joined in and sang the rest. As we ceased she raised both hands and with a bright smile said: "Now the God of peace which brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, forever and ever, Amen," and with the last words still lingering upon her lips she sunk into a sleep from which she awoke in that brightness beyond the river.

"We watch'd her breathing through the night
Her breathing soft and low,
As in her breast the wave of life
Kept ebbing to and fro."

All through that night Stuart sat silently upon the bed, but when the dawn looked with its gray light into the room, showing too plainly that she had another 'morn than ours;' his well assumed composure failed, and throwing himself beside the corpse he gave way to the wildest abandon of grief. I knew his feelings must have vent, and left him for a time alone with his sorrow.

The funeral, which was the next day, was as respectable as the small sum which she had left would allow, for we felt we might thus appropriate a part of this sum, which she had hoarded so long, in the hope that by and by they could add enough to it to send Stuart to college. Without it we could not have buried her even in the most ordinary manner, and Stuart would not hear of its being kept for his benefit. It was but \$200, and with the half of it we bought a small lot in the yard of the church where she used to attend, before she moved here.

The remaining sum we will keep for Stuart's use one way or another. After the funeral he was attacked by a fierce fever which was so terrible we feared his life would be the forfeit. In his ravings he would recount with painful distinctness, the taunts and jeers of his school-companions, and in piteous accents beg them:

"Not to treat him thus, but only to let him rest," and then he would add in a low voice: "If my coat is thread-

bare, and my shoes old and worn, I do not complain—only let me alone boys, let me alone, it is unkind thus to annoy me,"—then he would whisper—"How can they do it when I strive so? I desire nothing of them now, but bye and bye, if my clothes are mean and shabby now, and fit subjects for their jeers—they shall be proud to acknowledge they ever knew me,—I will live to triumph over those who scorn me—" and his eyes would sparkle, and his cheeks glow with enthusiasm. Then changing his tone, "But do not tell them, these cruel relentless boys that I feel thus—it is hard; it is unfeeling but they must not know it, ofttime when faint and hungry having had only a crust of bread and a glass of water for my morning's meal I walked from my distant home, only to be the butt of some idle jest, I have felt though I turned away with a smile as though it would be such a comfort, to lie my head upon my desk and weep before them all—but would not for very shame,—but this is a secret do not tell grandmother, it would grieve her so."

Thus he would ramble on talking ever to some imaginary person—never knowing any of us who watched beside him,—but after many days and nights of much anxiety, he sank into a quiet healthful sleep from which he is just now recovering sufficiently to be able as a great feat to sit for a few hours each day, propped up in his grandmother's easy chair.

We have given up Mrs. Aldrich's apartment, for even the luxury of a third room small though it be is not to be thought of, if we can do without it—and we can by turning one corner of our small sitting room into a sleeping-place for Stuart, and Howard, now the former is better. Oh the ways of poverty are wonderful!

The rest of us get along some-how in our little back room—we have made ourselves quite comfortable with Mrs. Aldrich's furniture which is so much better than our own. So please God for the time we are doing right well.

We have plenty of work, Marion and I at shirt making, and the two younger girls with our occasional aid at some common kind of sewing, which Mrs. MacKay has procured for them, and which she calls by the queer name of "slop-shop work."

So, though we grow sadly weary ofttimes—our feeble hands unused to toil giving out utterly—our tired eyes long-

ing for sleep and our weary bodies for rest—yet I do not wish to murmur, or repine, or indeed complain. I am thankful to have work to do, still as I sit sewing I often draw my needle sadly to the monotonous notes,

“Stich, stich, stich.
From weary chime to chime.
Work, work, work
As prisoners work for crime.”

While we sew Cora is our busy housewife, and a very Will-o-wisp she is. Still with our occasional aid she keeps our small menage in “apple-pie order” according to her own words, looking at her hands the while and shaking her head ruefully declaring,

“They will not be fit to be seen, after I have swept, scrubbed and washed the dishes a little while longer.”

But nevertheless, spite of her words she keeps up a brave little heart and is the only sunshiny thing in the establishment; for while the little ones pine for fresh air and more play-room, she is as blithe as a bird, scolding, petting, and taking care of every one in turn, although she gaily shakes her curls and declares “it is her firm belief indeed it is,

“That do my best I shall never get all the smoke and dust out of them.”

My poor babe, is a most churlishly used little one, although she has Cora’s best attention, and yet Marion says truly.

“We never have had a baby who was so rugged and healthy.” Howard rebelled a little at the first, at having such close quarters, but now Stuart is able to sit up he gives him regular lessons and he is quite contented.

We are not very rapid sewers and it takes longer than it ought to get through our work, so that we are obliged to labor very late at night, but we hope to improve in this respect. My health bears up wonderfully under this confinement, better than I dared to hope. And Marion and Lela, are the most enduring of assistants, although I do strive very hard to save them, especially from night work, my good little daughters.

CHAPTER IX.

DECEMBER 25.

“It was the birth-night. A thousand, almost two thousand years have the hearts of men clung to that day.—Who does not love it? Around it clusters the holiest associations of youth—the holiest memories of old times when pleasant stories and happy songs made the fire-side glad, songs and stories told by voices that are silent now.”—“OLD HOUSE BY THE RIVER.”

We have passed a quiet Christmas, we elder ones spoke not much of its approach, for fear of the change striking with a chill upon the hearts of our little ones. Oh the difference with the last time!

Last Christmas Walter gave a dinner in honor of Gov. B——, it was not his custom to have strangers in his house this day which he usually devoted to his children’s pleasure. But this time he was compelled to pay respect to one whom he loved and revered, and upon this day. There were twenty five distinguished gentlemen bidden to meet him, and give him farewell, ere he left the country as a minister to some foreign court.

Oh I remember, my husband was so pleased with the arrangements I made for their entertainment, and pronounced the appointments of the cusiné faultless, and the arrangements of the table *recherche*.

How proud I was of him, and of his praise that day!

In the evening the children were to have a party, and many of the gentlemen were pleased to remain. It was only an entertainment given to the village children, and of course my little ones had no rivals.

Leanore was permitted to display for the first time, in public, her wonderful vocal powers, and with papa’s accompaniment, sang some choice pieces very sweetly.

“She is a true Percy,” whispered Judge L—— to me as he watched her standing proudly and coldly in her childish grace, listening to the compliments lavished upon her.

And then she sang “Spirito Gentil,” and when she was done—

“My very, *very* best, dear papa, not because they like it, but to please you,” and her arms were clasped tightly round his neck.