Warner Susan

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CHAPTER I.
THE LETTER

"Mother, I wonder how people do, when they are going to write a book?"

"Do?" repeated her mother.

"Yes. I wonder how they begin."

"I suppose they have something to tell; and then they tell it," said simple Mrs. Carpenter.

"No, no, but I mean a story."

"What story have you got there?"

The mother was shelling peas; the daughter, a girl of twelve years old perhaps, was sitting on the floor at her feet, with an octavo volume in her lap. The floor was clean enough to sit upon; clean enough almost to eat off; it was the floor of the kitchen of a country farmhouse.

"This is the 'Talisman,'" the girl answered her mother's question. "O mother, when I am old enough, I should like to write stories!"

"Why?"

"I should think it would be so nice. Why, mother, one could imagine oneself anything."

"Could you?" said her mother. "I never imagined myself anything but what I was."

"Ah, but perhaps you and I are different."

Which was undoubtedly the fact, as any stander by might have seen with half an eye. Good types both of them, too. The mother fair, delicate featured, with sweet womanly eyes, must have been exceedingly pretty in her young days; she was pretty now; but the face shewed traces of care and was worn with life-work. While she talked and now and then looked at her daughter, her fingers were untiringly busy with the peas and peas pods and never paused for a minute. The girl on the floor did not look like her mother. She was dark eyed and dark haired; with a dark complexion too, which at present was not fine; and the eyes, large and handsome eyes, revealed a fire and intensity and mobility of nature which was very diverse from the woman's gentle strength. Mrs. Carpenter might be intense too, after her fashion; but it was the fashion of the proverbial still waters that run deep. And I do not mean that there was any shallowness about the girl's nature; though assuredly the placidity would be wanting.

"I wish your father would forbid you to read stories," Mrs. Carpenter went on.

"Why, mother?"

"I don't believe they are good for you."

"But what harm should they do me?"

"Life is not a story. I don't want you to think it is."

"Why shouldn't it be? Perhaps my life will be a story, mother. I think it will," said the girl slowly. "I shouldn't want my life to be always like this."

"Are you not happy?"

"O yes, mother! But then, by and by, I should like to be a princess, or to have adventures, and see things; like the people in stories."

"You will never be a princess, my child. You are a poor farmer's daughter. You had better make up your mind to it, and try to be the best thing you can in the circumstances."

"You mean, do my duty and shell peas?" asked the girl somewhat doubtfully, looking at her mother's fingers and the quick stripped pea pods passing through them. "Is father poor, mother?"

"Yes."

"He has a good farm, he says."

"Yes, but it is encumbered heavily." And Mrs. Carpenter sighed. Rotha had often heard her mother sigh so. It was a breath with a burden.

"I don't know what you mean by 'encumbered.'"

"It is not needful you should know, just yet."

"But I should like to know, mother. Won't you tell me?"

"It is heavily mortgaged. And *that* you do not understand. Never mind. He has a great deal of money to pay out for it every year the interest on the mortgages and that keeps us poor."

"Why must he pay it?"

"Because the farm is pledged for the debt; and if the interest, this yearly money, were not paid, the farm itself would go."

"Go? How?"

"Be sold. For the money due on it."

There was silence awhile, during which only the pea pods rustled and fell; then the girl asked, "What should we do then, mother, if the farm was sold?"

"I do not know." The words came faint.

"Does it trouble you, mother?"

"It need not trouble you, Rotha. It cannot happen unless the Lord will; and that is enough. Now you may carry these pea pods out and give them to the pigs."

"Mother," said Rotha as she slowly rose and laid away her book, "all you say makes me wish more than ever that I were a princess, or something."

"You may be *something*," said Mrs. Carpenter laughing slightly, but with a very sweet merriment. "Now take away this basket."

Rotha stooped for the basket, and then stood still, looking out of the window. Across the intervening piece of kitchen garden, rows of peas and tufts of asparagus greenery, her eye went to the road, where a buggy had just stopped.

"Maybe something is going to happen now," she said. "Who is that, mother? There is somebody getting out of a wagon and tying his horse; – now he is coming in. It is 'Siah Barker, mother."

Mrs. Carpenter paused to look out of the window, and then hastily throwing her peas into the pot of boiling water, went herself to the door. A young countryman met her there, with a whip in his hand.

"Mornin', Mis' Carpenter. Kin you help the distressed?"

"What's the matter, 'Siah?"

"Shot if I know; but he's took pretty bad."

"Who, pray?"

"Wall, I skurce can tell that. He's an Englisher – come to our place this mornin' and axed fur a horse and wagon to carry him to Rochester; and he's got so fur, – that's two miles o' the way, – and he can't go no furder, I guess. He's took powerful bad."

"Ill, is he?"

"Says so. And he looks it."

"Cannot go on to Rochester?

"It's fifteen mile, Mis' Carpenter. I wouldn't like to be the man to drive him. He can't go another foot, he says. He was took quite sudden."

"Cannot you turn about and carry him back to Medwayville?"

"Now, Mis' Carpenter, you're a Christian, and a soft-hearted one, we all know. Can't you let him come in and rest a bit? Mebbe you could give him sunthin' that would set him up. You understand doctorin', fust-rate."

Mrs. Carpenter looked grave, considered.

"Is this your idea, or the stranger's, 'Siah?"

"It's his'n, ef it's anybody's in partickler. He told me to set him

down some'eres, for he couldn't hold out to go on nohow; and then he seed this house, and he made me stop. He's a sick man, I tell you."

"What's the matter with him?"

"Wall, it's sunthin' in his insides, I guess. He don't say nothin', but he gits as white as a piece o' chalk, and then purple arter it."

Mrs. Carpenter made no more delay, but bade 'Siah fetch the sick man in; and herself hastily threw open the windows of the "spare room" and put sheets on the bed. She had time for all her preparations, for the bringing the stranger to the house was a work of some difficulty, and not accomplished without the help of one of the hired men about the farm. When he came, he was far too ill to give any account of himself; his dress proclaimed him a well-to-do man, and belonging to the better classes; that was all they knew.

As Mrs. Carpenter came out from seeing the stranger put to bed in the spare room, her husband came in from the field. An intellectual looking man, in spite of his farmer's dress, and handsome; but thin, worn, with an undue flush on his cheek, and a cough that sounded hollow. He was very like his little daughter, who instantly laid hold of him.

"Father, father! something has happened. Guess what. There's a sick man stopped here, and he is in the spare room, and we don't know the least bit who he is; only 'Siah Barker said he was English, or an 'Englisher,' he said. We don't know a bit who he is; and his clothes are very nice, like a gentleman, and his valise

is a beautiful, handsome leather one."

"You use rather more adjectives than necessary, Rotha."

"But, father, that is something to happen, isn't it?"

"You speak as if you were glad of it."

"I am not glad the man is sick. I am just glad to have something happen.

Things never do happen here."

"I am afraid your mother will hardly feel as much pleased as you do. Is the man very ill, Eunice?"

"I think so. He is too ill to tell how he feels."

"He may be on your hands then for a day or two."

"He may for more than that."

"How can you manage?" said Mr. Carpenter, looking anxiously at the sweet face which already bore such lines of care, and was so work-worn.

"I don't know. I shall find out," Mrs. Carpenter answered as she was dishing the dinner. "The Lord seems to have given me this to do; and he knows. I guess, what he gives me to do, I can do."

"I don't see how you can say that, mother," Rotha put in here.

"What?"

"This man was taken sick on the road, and happened to come in here. How can you say, the Lord gave him to you to take care of?"

"Nothing 'happens,' Rotha. Suppose his sickness had come on a little sooner, or a little later? why was it just here that he found

he could go no further?"

"Do you suppose there was any 'why' about it?"

Father and mother both smiled; the father answered.

"Do you suppose I would plough a field, without meaning to get any fruit from it."

"No, father."

"Neither does the Lord, my child."

Rotha pondered the subject, and had occasion to ponder it more as the days went on. She found she had some share in the consequences of this "happening"; more dishes to wash, and more sweeping and dusting, and churning, and setting of tables, and cleaning of vegetables; and she quite ceased to be glad that something had come to them out of the common run of affairs. For several days her mother was much engaged in the care of the sick man, and put all she could of the housework upon Rotha's hands; the nursing kept herself very busy. The sickness was at first severe; and then the mending was gradual; so that it was full two weeks before the stranger could leave his room. Mrs. Carpenter had no servant in the house; she did everything for him with her own hands; and with as much care and tenderness and exactness it was done as if the sick man had been a dear friend. By day and by night; nothing failed him; and so, in about two weeks, he was healed and had only his weakness to recover from. Mrs. Carpenter often looked tired and pale during those weeks, but cheerfulness and courage never gave out.

"I have learned something," she said one day at dinner, as the

two weeks were ended.

"What is that?" her husband asked.

"The name of our guest."

"Well who is he?"

"He is English; his name is Southwode. He came to America on business two months ago; to New York; then found it was needful for him to see some people in Rochester; and was on his way when he was taken ill at our door."

"That's all?"

"Pretty much all. He is not much of a talker. I never found out so much till to-day."

"It is quite enough. I suppose he will go on to Rochester now?"

"Not for two or three days yet, Liph; he is very weak; but I guess we will have him out to supper with us this evening. You may put a glass of roses on the table, Rotha, and make it look very nice. And set the table in the hall."

Unlike most of its kind, this farmhouse had a wide hall running through the middle of it. Probably it had been built originally for somewhat different occupation. At any rate, the hall served as a great comfort to Mrs. Carpenter in the summer season, enabling her to get out of the hot kitchen, without opening her best room, the "parlour."

It was a pretty enough view that greeted the stranger here, when he was called to supper and crept out of his sick room. Doors stood open at front and rear of the house, letting the breeze play through. It brought the odours of the new hay and

the shorn grass, mingled with the breath of roses. Roses were on the table too; a great glass full of them; not skilfully arranged, certainly, but heavy with sweetness and lovely in various hues of red and blush white. A special comfortable chair was placed for him, and a supper served with which an epicure could have found no fault. Mrs. Carpenter's bread was of the lightest and whitest; the butter was as if the cows had been eating roses; the cold ham was cured after an old receipt, and tender and juicy and savoury to suit any fastidious appetite; and there were big golden raspberries, and cream almost as golden. Out of doors, the eye saw green fields, with an elm standing here and there; and on one side, a bit of the kitchen garden. Mr. Southwode was a silent man, at least he was certainly silent here; but he was observant; and his looks went quietly from one thing to another, taking it all in. Perhaps the combination was strange to him and gave him matter for study. There was conversation too, as the meal went on, which occupied his ears, though he could hardly be said to take an active part in it. His host made kind efforts for his entertainment; and Rotha and her father had always something to discuss. Mr. Southwode listened. It was not the sort of talk he expected to hear in a farmhouse. The girl was full of intelligence, the father quite able to meet her, and evidently doing it with delight; the questions they talked about were worthy the trouble; and while on the one hand there was keen inquisitiveness and natural acumen, on the other there was knowledge and the habit of thought and ease of expression. Mr.

Southwode listened, and now and then let his eye go over to the fair, placid, matronly face at the head of the table. Mrs. Carpenter did not talk much; yet he saw that she understood. And more; he saw that in both father and mother there was culture and literary taste and literary knowledge. Yet she did her own work, and he came in to-day in his shirt sleeves from the mowing of his own fields. Mr. Southwode drew conclusions, partly false perhaps, but partly true. He thought these people had seen what are called better days; he was sure that they were going through more or less of a struggle now. Moreover, he saw that the farmer was not strong in body or sound in health, and he perceived that the farmer's wife knew it.

The supper ended, a new scene opened for his consideration. With quick and skilful hands the mother and daughter cleared the table, carrying the things into the kitchen. Rotha brought a Bible and laid it before her father; and mother and daughter resumed their seats. Mr. Carpenter read a chapter, like a man who both knew and loved it; and then, a book being given to the stranger, the other three set up a hymn. There was neither formality nor difficulty; as the one had read, so they all sang, as if they loved it. The voices were not remarkable; what was remarkable, to the guest, was the sweet intonations and the peculiar *appropriation* with which the song was sung. It was a very common hymn,

> "Jesus, I love thy charming name,
> 'Tis music to my ear;" —

And Mr. Southwode noticed a thing which greatly stirred

his curiosity. As the singing went on, the lines of those careworn faces relaxed; Mrs. Carpenter's brow lost its shadow, her husband's face wore an incipient smile; it was quite plain that both of them had laid down for the moment the burden which it was also quite plain they carried at other times. What had become of it? and what power had unloosed them from it? Not the abstract love of music, certainly; though the melody which they sang was sweet, and the notes floated out upon the evening air with a kind of grave joy. So as the summer breeze was wafted in. There was a harmony, somehow, between the outer world and this little inner world, for the time, which moved Mr. Southwode strangely, though he could not at all understand it. He made no remark when the service was over, either upon that or upon any other subject. Of course the service ended with a prayer. Not a long one; and as it was in the reading and singing, so in this; every word was simply said and meant. So evidently, that the stranger was singularly impressed with the reality of the whole thing, as contradistinguished from all formal or merely duty work, and as being a matter of enjoyment to those engaged in it.

He had several occasions for renewing his observations; for Mr. Southwode's condition of weakness detained him yet several days at the farm-house. He established for himself during this interval the character he had gained of a silent man; however, one afternoon he broke through his habit and spoke. It was the day before he intended to continue his journey. Rotha had gone to the field with her father, to have some fun in the hay; Mr. Southwode

and Mrs. Carpenter sat together in the wide farmhouse hall. The day being very warm, they had come to the coolest place they could find. Mrs. Carpenter was busy with mending clothes; her guest for some time sat idly watching her; admiring, as he had done often already, the calm, sweet strength of this woman's face. What a beauty she must have been once, he thought; all the lines were finely drawn and delicate; and the soul that looked forth of them was refined by nature and purified by patience. Mr. Southwode had something to say to her this afternoon, and did not know how to begin.

"Your husband seems to have a fine farm here," he remarked.

"It is, I believe," Mrs. Carpenter answered, without lifting her eyes from her darning.

"He took me over some of his ground this morning. He knows what to do with it, too. It is in good order."

"It would be in good order, if my husband had his full strength."

"Yes. I am sorry to see he has not."

"Did he say anything to you about it?" the wife enquired presently, with a smothered apprehensiveness which touched her companion. He answered however indifferently in the negative.

"I don't like his cough, though," he went on after a little interval.

"Have you had advice for him?"

There was a startled look of pain in the eyes which again met him, and the lips closed upon one another a little more firmly.

They always had a firm though soft set, and the corners of the mouth told of long and patient endurance. Now the face told of another stab of pain, met and borne.

"He would not call in anybody," she said faintly.

That was not what Mr. Southwode had meant to talk about, though closely connected with the subject of his thoughts. He would try again.

"I owe you a great debt of gratitude, Mrs. Carpenter," he said after a long enough pause had ensued, and beginning on another side. "I presume you have saved my life."

"I am very glad we have been able to do anything," she said quietly.

"There is no need of thanks."

"But I must speak them, or I should not deserve to live. It astonishes me, how you should be so kind to an entire stranger."

"That's why you needed it," she said with a pleasant smile.

"Yes, yes, my need is one thing; that was plain enough; but if everybody took care of other people's needs – Why, you have done everything for me, night and day, Mrs. Carpenter. You have not spared yourself in the least; and I have given a deal of trouble."

"I did not think it trouble," she said in the same way. "There is no need to say anything about it."

"Excuse me; I must say something, or earn my own contempt. But what made you do all that for a person who was nothing to you? I do not understand that sort of thing, in such a degree."

"Perhaps you do not put it the right way," she returned. "Anybody who is in trouble is something to me."

"What, pray?" said he quickly.

"My neighbour," – she said with that slight, pleasant smile again. "Don't you know the gospel rule is, to do to others what you would wish them to do to you?"

"I never saw anybody before who observed that rule."

"Didn't you? I am sorry for that. It is a pleasant rule to follow."

"Pleasant!" her guest echoed. "Excuse me; you cannot mean that?"

"I mean it, yes, certainly. And there is another thing, Mr. Southwode; I like to do whatever my Master gives me to do; and he gave you to me to take care of."

"Did he?"

"I think so."

"You did it," said the stranger slowly. "Mrs. Carpenter, I am under very great obligations to you."

"You are very welcome," she said simply.

"You have done more for me than you know. I never saw what religion can be – what religion is – until I saw it in your house."

She was silent now, and he was silent also, for some minutes; not knowing exactly how to go on. He felt instinctively that he must not offer money here. The people were poor unquestionably; at the same time they did not belong to the class that can take that sort of pay for service. He never thought of offering it. They were quite his equals.

"Mr. Carpenter was so good as to tell me something of his affairs as we walked this morning," he began again. "I am sorry to hear that his land is heavily encumbered."

"Yes!" Mrs. Carpenter said with a sigh, and a shadow crossing her face.

"That sort of thing cannot be helped sometimes, but it is a bother, and it leads to more bother. Well! I should like to be looked upon as a friend, by you and your husband; but I shall be a friend a good way off. Mrs. Carpenter, do not be offended at my plain speaking; – I would say, that if ever you find yourself in difficulties and need a friend's help, I would like you to remember me, and deliver that letter according to the address."

He handed her as he spoke a letter, sealed, and addressed to "Messrs. Bell & Buckingham, 46 Barclay St., New York." Mrs. Carpenter turned the letter over, in silent surprise; looked at the great red seal and read the direction.

"Keep it safe," Mr. Southwode went on, "and use it if ever you have' occasion. Do not open it; for I shall not be at the place where it is to be delivered, and an open letter would not carry the same credit. With the letter, if ever you have occasion to make use of it, enclose a card with your address; that my agent may know where to find you."

"You are very kind!" Mrs. Carpenter said in a little bewilderment; "but nothing of this kind is necessary."

"I hope it may not be needed; however, I shall feel better, if you will promise me to do as I have said, if ever you do need it."

Mrs. Carpenter gave the promise, and looked at the letter curiously as she put it away. Would the time ever come when she would be driven to use it? Such a time could not come, unless after the wreck of her home and her life happiness; never could come while her husband lived. If it came, what would matter then? But there was the letter; almost something uncanny; it looked like a messenger out of the unknown future.

CHAPTER II.
MOVING

Mr. Southwode went away, his letter was locked up in a drawer, and both were soon forgotten. The little family he left had enough else to think of.

As the warm weather turned to cold, it became more and more evident that the head of the family was not to be with it long. Mr. Carpenter was ill. Nevertheless, with failing strength, he continued to carry the burden that had been too much for him when well. He would not spare himself. The work must be done, he said, or the interest on the mortgages could not be paid. He wrought early and late, and saw to it that his hired people did their part; he wore himself out the quicker; but the interest on the mortgages was not paid, even so. Mrs. Carpenter saw just how things were going, saw it step by step, and was powerless to hinder.

"They will foreclose!" Mr. Carpenter said with a half groan. It was late in the winter; towards spring; his health had failed rapidly of late; and it was no secret either to him or his wile that his weeks were numbered. They were sitting together one evening before the fire; he in his easy chair, and she beside him; but not holding each other's hands, not touching, nor looking at one another. Their blood was of a genuine New England

course; and people of that kind, though they would die for one another, rarely exchange kisses. And besides, there are times when caresses cannot be borne; they mean too much. Perhaps this was such a time. Mrs. Carpenter sat staring into the fire, her brow drawn into fine wrinkles, which was with her a sign of uncommon perturbation. It was after a time of silence that her husband came out with that word about foreclosing.

"If I had been stronger," he went on, "I could have taken in that twenty acre lot and planted it with wheat; and that would have made some difference. Now I am behindhand – and I could not help it – and they will foreclose."

"They cannot do it till next fall," said Mrs. Carpenter; and her secret thought was, By that time, nothing will matter!

"No," said her husband, – "not until fall. But then they will. Eunice, what will you do?"

"I will find something to do."

"What? Tell me now, while I can counsel you."

"I don't know anything I could do, but take in sewing." She spoke calmly, all the while a tear started which she did not suffer to be seen.

"Sewing?" said Mr. Carpenter. "There are too many in the village already that do sewing – more than can live by it."

"If I cannot here," his wife said after a pause, overcoming herself, – "I might go to New York. Serena would help me to get some work."

"Would she?" asked her husband.

"I think she would."

"Your charity always goes ahead of mine, Eunice."

"You think she would not?"

"I wouldn't like to have you dependent on her. – This is what you get for marrying a poor man, Eunice!"

He smiled and stretched out his hand to take the hand of his wife.

"Hush!" she said. "I married a richer man than she did. And I have wanted for nothing. We have not been poor."

"No," he said. "Except in this world's goods – which are unimportant.

Until one is leaving one's wife and child alone!"

I suppose she could not speak, for she answered nothing. The fingers clasped fingers fast and hard; wrung them a little. Yet both faces were steady. Mrs. Carpenter's eyes looked somewhat rigidly into the fire, and her husband's brow wore a shadow.

"I wish your father had left you at least the old place at Tanfield. It would have been no more than justice. Serena might have had all the rest, but that would have given you and Rotha a home."

"Never mind," said Mrs. Carpenter gently. "I am content with my share."

"Meaning me!" And he sighed.

"The best share of this world's goods any woman could have, Liph."

"We have been happy," he said, "in spite of all. We have had

happy years; happier I could not wish for, but for this money trouble. And we shall have happy years again, Eunice; where the time is not counted by years, but flows on forever, and people are not poor, nor anxious, nor disappointed."

She struggled with tears again, and then answered, "I have not been disappointed. And you have no need to be anxious."

"No, I know," he said. "But at times it is hard for faith to get above sense. And I am not anxious; only I would like to know how you are going to do."

There was a silence then of some length.

"Things are pretty unequal in this world," Mr. Carpenter began again. "Look at Serena and you. One sister with more than she can use; the other talking of sewing for a livelihood! And all because you would marry a poor man. A poor reason!"

"Liph, I had my choice," his wife said, with a shadow of a smile. "She is the one to be pitied."

"Well, I think so," he said. "For if her heart were as roomy as her purse, she would have shewn it before now. My dear, do not expect anything from Serena. Till next fall you will have the shelter of this house; and that will give you time to look about you."

"Liph, you must not talk so!" his wife cried; and her voice broke. She threw herself upon her husband's breast, and they held each other in a very long, still, close embrace.

Mr. Carpenter was quite right in some at least of his expectations. His own life was not prolonged to the summer. In

one of the last days of a rough spring, the time came he had spoken of, when his wife and child were left alone.

She had till fall to look about her. But perhaps, in the bitterness of her loneliness, she had not heart to push her search after work with sufficient energy. Yet Mrs. Carpenter never lacked energy, and indulged herself selfishly no more in grief than she did in joy. More likely it is that in the simple region of country she inhabited there was not call enough for the work she could do. Work did not come, at any rate. The only real opening for her to earn her livelihood, was in the shape of a housekeeper's situation with an old bachelor farmer, who was well off and had nobody to take care of him. In her destitution, I do not know but Mrs. Carpenter might have put up with even this plan; but what was she to do with Rotha? So by degrees the thought forced itself upon her that she must take up her old notion and go to the great city, where there were always people enough to want everything. How to get there, and what to do on first arriving there, remained questions. Both were answered.

As Mr. Carpenter had foreseen, the mortgages came in the fall to foreclosure. The sale of the land, however, what he had not foreseen, brought in a trifle more than the mortgage amount. To this little sum the sale of household goods and furniture and stock, added another somewhat larger; so that altogether a few hundreds stood at Mrs. Carpenter's disposal. This precisely made her undertaking possible. It was a very doubtful undertaking; but what alternative was there? One relation she would find, at the

least; and another Mrs. Carpenter had not in the wide world. She made her preparations very quietly, as she did everything; her own child never knew how much heart-break was in them.

"Shall we go first to aunt Serena's, mother?" Rotha asked one day.

"No."

The "no" was short and dry. Rotha's instinct told her she must not ask why, but she was disappointed. From a word now and then she had got the impression that this relation of theirs was a very rich woman and lived accordingly; and fancy had been busy with possibilities.

"Where then, mother?"

"Mr. Forbes," he was the storekeeper at the village, "has told me of the boarding house he goes to when he goes to New York. We can put up there for a night or two, and look out a quiet lodging."

"What is New York like, mother?"

"I have never been there, Rotha, and do not know. O it is a city, my child; of course; it is not like anything here."

"How different?"

"In every possible way."

"*Every* way, mother? Aren't the houses like?"

"Not at all. And the houses there stand close together."

"There must be room to get about, I suppose?"

"Those are the streets."

"No green grass, or trees?"

"Little patches of grass in the yards."

"No trees?"

"No. In some of the fine streets I believe there are shade trees."

"No *gardens*, mother?"

"No."

"But what do people do for vegetables and things?"

"They are brought out of the country, and sold in the markets. Don't you know Mr. Jones sends his potatoes and his fruit to the city?"

"Then if you want a potato, you must go to the market and buy it?"

"Yes."

"Or an apple, mother?"

"Yes, or anything."

"Well I suppose that will do," said Rotha slowly, "if you have money enough. I shouldn't think it was pleasant. Do the houses stand *close*together?"

"So close, that you cannot lay a pin between them."

"I should want to have very good neighbours, then."

Rotha was innocently touching point after point of doubt and dread in her mother's mind. Presently she touched another.

"I don't think it sounds pleasant, mother. Suppose we should not like it after we get there?"

Mrs. Carpenter did not answer.

"What then, mother? Would you come back again, if we did

not like it there?"

"There would be no place to come to, here, any more, my child. I hope we shall find it comfortable where we are going."

"Then you don't know?" said Rotha. "And perhaps we shall not! But, mother, that would be dreadful, if we did not like it!"

"I hope you would help me to bear it."

"I!" said Rotha. "You don't want help to bear anything; do you, mother?"

An involuntary gush of tears came at this appeal; they were not suffered to overflow.

"I should not be able to bear much without help, Rotha. Want help? yes, I want it – and I have it. God sends nothing to his children but he sends help too; else," said Mrs. Carpenter, brushing her hand across her eyes, "they would not last long! But, Rotha, lie means that we should help each other too."

"I help you?"

"Yes, certainly. You can, a great deal."

"That seems very funny. Mother, what is wrong about aunt Serena?" said Rotha, following a very direct chain of ideas.

"I hope nothing is wrong about her."

And Mrs. Carpenter, in her gentle, unselfish charity, meant it honestly; her little daughter was less gentle and perhaps more logical.

"Why, mother, does she ever do anything to help you?"

"Her life is quite separate from mine," Mrs. Carpenter replied evasively.

"Well, it would be right in her to help you. And when people are not right, they are wrong."

"Let us take care of our own right and wrong, Rotha. We shall have enough to do with that."

"But, mother, what *is* the matter with aunt Serena? Why doesn't she help you? She can."

"Our lives went different ways, a long time ago, my child. We have never been near each other since."

"But now you are going to be where she is, mother?"

"Rotha, did you rip up your brown merino?"

"Not yet."

"Then go and do it now. I want it to make over for you."

"You'll never make much of that," said the girl discontentedly. But she obeyed. She saw a certain trait in the lines of her mother's lips; it might be reserve, it might be determination, or both; and she knew no more was to be got from her at that time.

The brown merino disappointed her expectation; for when cleaned and made over it proved to be a very respectable dress. Rotha was well satisfied with it. The rest of Mrs. Carpenter's preparations were soon accomplished; and one day in November she and her little daughter left what had been home, and set out upon their journey to seek another in the misty distance. The journey itself was full of wonder and delight to Rotha. It was a very remarkable thing, in the first place, to find the world so large; then another remarkable thing was the variety of the people in it. Rotha had known only one kind, speaking

broadly; the plain, quiet, respectable, and generally comfortable in habitants of the village and of the farms around the village. They were not elegant specimens, but they were solid, and kindly. She saw many people now that astonished her by their elegance; few that awakened any feeling of confidence. Rotha's eyes were very busy, her tongue very silent. She was taking her first sips at the bitter-sweet cup of life knowledge.

The third-class hotel at which they put up in New York received her unqualified disapprobation. None of its arrangements or accommodations suited her; with the single exception of gas burners.

Close, stuffy, confined, gloomy, and dirty, she declared it to be.

"Mother," she said half crying, "I hope our house will not be like this?"

"We shall not have a house, Rotha; only a few rooms."

"They'll be rooms in a house, I suppose," said the girl petulantly; "and I hope it will be very different from this."

"We will have our part of it clean, at any rate," answered her mother.

"And the rest too, won't you? You would not have rooms in a house that was not all clean, would you, mother?"

"Not if I could help it."

"Cannot you help it?"

"I hope so. But you must not expect that things here in a big city can ever be bright and sweet like the fields at home. That

can hardly be."

Rotha sighed. A vision of dandelions came up before her, and waving grass bent by summer wind. But there was hope that the morrow's search would unfold to her some less unpromising phases of city life, and she suspended judgment.

Next day, wonder and amusement for a time superseded everything else. The multitude of busy people coming and going, the laden carts and light passing carriages, the gay shops, and the shops that were not gay, filled Rotha's eye and mind. Even the vegetables exposed at a corner shop were a matter of lively interest.

"O mother," she cried, "is this a market?"

"No. It is a store for groceries."

"Well, they have got some other things here. Mother, the cabbages don't look nice." Then soon after coming to a small market store, Rotha must stand still to look.

"They are a little better here," she judged. "Mother, mother! they have got everything at this market. Do see! there are fish, and oysters, and clams; and eggs; and what are those queer things?"

"Lobsters."

"What are they good for?"

"To eat."

"They don't look as if they were good for anything. Mother, one could get a very good dinner here."

"With plenty of money."

"Does it take much? – to get one dinner?"

"Are you hungry?" said her mother, smiling faintly. "It takes a good deal of money to get anything in New York, Rotha."

"Then I am afraid we ought to have staid at Medwayville."

A conclusion which almost forced itself upon Mrs. Carpenter's mind. For the business of finding a lodging that would suit her and that she could pay for, soon turned out to be one of difficulty. She and Rotha grew weary of walking, and more weary of looking at rooms that would suit them which they could not pay for, and other rooms which they could pay for and that would not do. All the houses in New York seemed to come under one or the other category. From one house agency to another, and from these to countless places referred to, advertised for hire, the mother and daughter wandered; in vain. One or the other difficulty met them in every case.

"What will you do, mother, if you cannot find a place?" Rotha asked, the evening of the first day. "Go back to Medwayville?"

"We cannot go back."

"Then we must find a place," said Rotha.

And driven by this necessity, so they did. The third day, well tired in body and much more in mind, they did at last find what would do. It was a long walk from their hotel, and seemed endless. No doubt, in the country, with grass under their feet, or even the well beaten foot track beside the highway, neither mother nor daughter would have thought anything of the distance; but here the hard pavement wearied them, and the

way measured off by so many turns and crossings and beset with houses and human beings, seemed a forlorn pilgrimage into remote regions. Besides, it left the pleasanter part of the city and went, as Rotha remarked, among poor folks. Down Bleecker St. till it turned, then following the new stretch of straight pavement across Carmine St., and on and on into the parts then called Chelsea. On till they came to an irregular open space.

"This must be Abingdon Square," said the mother.

"It isn't square at all," Rotha objected.

"But this must be it. Then it's only one street more, Rotha. Look for Jane Street."

Beyond Abingdon Square Jane Street was found to be the next crossing.

They turned the corner and were at the place they sought.

The region was not one of miserable poverty and tenant houses. Better than that; and the buildings being low and small did not darken the streets, as Mrs. Carpenter had found in some parts of the city. A decent woman, a mantua-maker, had the house and offered Mrs. Carpenter the second floor; two little rooms and a closet off them. The rooms were furnished after a sort; but Mrs. Marble could give no board with them; only lodging. She was a bright, sharp little woman.

"Yes, I couldn't," she said. "It wouldn't pay. I couldn't mind my business. I take *my* meals in a corner; for I couldn't have grease and crumbs round; but where one person can stand, three can't sit. You'll have to manage that part yourself. It'll be cheaper for

you, too."

"Is anything cheap here?" Mrs. Carpenter asked wearily. She had sat down to rest and consider.

"That's how you manage it," said the other, shewing a full and rather arch smile. She was a little woman, quick and alert in all her ways and looks. "My rooms aint dear, to begin with; and you needn't ruin yourself eating; if you know how."

"I knew how in the country," said Mrs. Carpenter. "Here it is different."

"Aint it! I guess it is. Rents, you see; and folks must live, landlords and all. Some of 'em do a good deal more; but that aint my lookout. I'd eat bread and salt sooner than I'd be in debt; and I never do be that. Is it only you two?"

"That is all."

"Then you needn't to worry. I guess you'll get along."

For Mrs. Marble noticed the quiet respectability of her caller, and honestly thought what she said. Mrs. Carpenter reflected. The rooms were not high; she could save a good deal by the extra trouble of providing herself; she would be more private, and probably have things better to her liking. Besides, her very soul sickened at the thought of looking for any more rooms. She decided, and took these. Then she asked about the possibilities of getting work. Mrs. Marble's countenance grew more doubtful.

"Plain sewing?" she said. "Well, there's a good many folks doing that, you see."

"I thought, perhaps, you could put me in the way of some."

"Well, perhaps I can. I'll see what I can think of. But there's a many doing that sort o' thing. They're in every other house, almost. Now, when will you come?"

"To-morrow. I suppose I cannot tell what I want to get till I do come."

"I can tell you some things right off. You'd better do part of it to-day, or you'll want everything at once. First of all, you'd better order in some coal. You can get that just a block or two off; Jones & Sanford; they have a coal yard. It is very convenient."

"Where can it be put?"

"In the cellar. There's room enough. And if I was you, I wouldn't get less than half a ton. They make awful profits when they sell by the basket. You will want a little kindling too. Hadn't you better get a little bit of a stove? one with two places for cooking; or one place. It will save itself six times over in the course of the winter."

"Where can I get it?"

"I guess you're pretty much of a stranger here, aint you?"

"Entirely a stranger."

"I thought so. Folks get a look according to the place they live. You aint bad enough for New York," she added with a merry and acute smile.

"I hope there are some good people here," said Mrs. Carpenter.

"I hope so. I haven't passed 'em all through my sieve; got something else to do; and it aint my business neither. Well – only

don't you think there aint some bad ones in the lot, that's all. There's plenty of places where you can get your stove, if you want to. Elwall's in Abingdon Square, is a very good place. Some things goes with the stove. I guess you know what you want as well as I do," she said, breaking off and smiling again.

"I shall need bedding too," said Mrs. Carpenter, with a look at the empty bedstead.

"You can't do everything at once, if you're to come in to-morrow. I'll tell you – I've a bed you can have, that I aint using. It'll cost you less, and do just as well. I aint one of the bad ones," she said, again with a gleam of a smile. "I shan't cheat you."

The arrangement was made at last, and Mrs. Carpenter and Rotha set out on their way back. They stopped in Abingdon Square and bought a stove, a little tea-kettle, a saucepan and frying pan; half a dozen knives and forks, spoons, etc., a lamp, and sundry other little indispensable conveniences for people who would set up housekeeping. Rotha was glad to be quit of the hotel, and yet in a divided state of mind. Too tired to talk, however, that night; which was a happiness for her mother.

The next day was one of delightful bustle; all filled with efforts to get in order in the new quarters. And by evening a great deal was done. The bed was made; the washstand garnished; the little stove put up, fire made in it, and the kettle boiled; and at night mother and daughter sat down to supper together, taking breath for the first time that day. Mrs. Carpenter had been to a neighbouring grocery and bought a ham and bread; eggs were so

dear that they scared her; she had cooked a slice and made tea, and Rotha declared that it tasted good.

"But this is funny bread, mother."

"It is baker's bread."

"It is nice, a little, but it isn't sweet."

"Let us be thankful we have got it, Rotha."

"Yes; but, mother, I think I should be *more* thankful for better bread."

"I will try and make you some better," Mrs. Carpenter said laughing.

"This is not economical, I am sure."

"Mother," said Rotha, "do you suppose aunt Serena takes in sewing?"

"She? no. She gives it out."

"You would not like to do *her* sewing?"

"I shall not ask for it," said the mother calmly.

"Does she do her own cooking, as you do?"

"No, my child. She has no need."

"Do you think she is a better woman than you are, mother?"

"That's not a wise question, I should say," Mrs. Carpenter returned. But something about it flushed her cheek and even brought an odd moisture to her eyes.

"Because," said Rotha, wholly disregarding the animadversion, "*if she isn't*, I should say that things are queer."

"That's what Job thought, when his troubles came on him."

"And weren't they?" asked Rotha.

"No. He did not understand; that was all."

"I should like to understand, though, mother. Not understanding makes me uneasy."

"You may be uneasy then all your life, for there will be a great many things you cannot understand. The better way is to trust and be easy."

"Trust what?" Rotha asked quickly.

"Trust God. He knows."

"Trust him for what?" Rotha insisted.

"For everything. Trust him that he will take care of you, if you are his child; and let no harm come to you; and do all things right for you, and in the best way."

"Mother, that is trusting a good deal."

"The Lord likes to have us trust him."

"But you are his child, and he has let harm come to you?"

"You think so, because you know nothing about it. No harm can come to his children."

"I don't know what you call harm, then," said Rotha half sullenly.

"Harm is what would hurt me. You know very well that pain does not always do that."

"And can you trust him, mother, so as to be easy? Now?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Carpenter. "Most days."

Rotha knew from the external signs that this must be true.

"Are you going to see aunt Serena, mother?"

"Not now."

"When?"

"I do not know."

"Where does she live?"

"Rotha, you may wash up these dishes, while I put things a little to rights in the other room."

The next day Mrs. Carpenter set about finding some work. Alas, if there were many that had it to give, there seemed to be many more that wanted it. It was worse than looking for rooms. At last some tailoring was procured from a master tailor; and Mrs. Carpenter sat all day over her sewing, giving directions to Rotha about the affairs of the small housekeeping. Rotha swept and dusted and washed dishes and set the table, and prepared vegetables. Not much of that, for their meals were simple and small; however, with one thing and another the time was partly filled up. Mrs. Carpenter stitched. It was a new thing, and disagreeable to the one looker-on, to see her mother from morning to night bent over work which was not for herself. At home, though life was busy it was not slaving. There were intervals, and often, of rest and pleasure taking. She and Rotha used to go into the garden to gather vegetables and to pick fruit; and at other times to weed and dress the beds and sow flower seeds. And at evening the whole little family were wont to enjoy the air and the sunsets and the roses from the hall door; and to have sweet and various discourse together about a great variety of subjects. Those delights, it is true, ceased a good while ago; the talks especially. Mrs. Carpenter was not much of a talker

even then, though her words were good when they came. Now she said little indeed; and Rotha missed her father. An uneasy feeling of want and longing took possession of the child's mind. I suppose she felt mentally what people feel physically when they are slowly starving to death. It had not come to that yet with Rotha; but the initial fret and irritation began to be strong. Her mother seemed to be turned into a sewing machine; a thinking one, she had no doubt, nevertheless the thoughts that were never spoken did not practically exist for her. She was left to her own; and Rotha's thoughts began to seethe and boil. Another child would have found food enough and amusement enough in the varied sights and experiences of life in the great city. They made Rotha draw in to herself.

CHAPTER III.
JANE STREET

Mrs. Carpenter's patient face, as she sat by the window from morning till night, and her restless busy hands, by degrees became a burden to Rotha.

"Mother," she said one day, when her own work for the time was done up and she had leisure to make trouble, – "I do not like to see you doing other people's sewing."

"It is my sewing," Mrs. Carpenter said.

"It oughtn't to be."

"I am very thankful to have it."

"It takes very little to make you thankful, seems to me. It makes *me*feel angry."

"I am sorry for that."

"Well, if you would be angry, I wouldn't be; but you take it so quietly.

Mother, it's wrong!"

"What?"

"For you to be doing that work, which somebody else ought to do."

"If somebody else did it, somebody else would get the pay; and what would become of us then?"

"I don't see what's to become of us now. Mother, you said I

was to go to school."

"Yes," – and Mrs. Carpenter sighed here. "I have not had time yet to find the right school for you."

"When will you find time? Mother, I think it was a great deal better at Medwayville."

Mrs. Carpenter sighed again, her patient sigh, which aggravated Rotha.

"I don't like New York!" the latter went on, emphasizing every word.

"There is not one single thing here I do like."

"I am sorry, my child. It is not our choice that has brought us here."

"Couldn't our choice take us away again, mother?"

"I am afraid not."

Rotha looked on at the busy needle for a few minutes, and then burst out again.

"I think things are queer! That you should be working so, and other people have nothing to do."

"Hush, Rotha. Nobody in this world has nothing to do."

"Nothing they need do, then. You are better than they are."

"You speak foolishly. God gives everybody something to do, and his hands full; and the work that God gives we need to do, Rotha. He has given me this; and as long as he gives me his love with it, I think it is good. He has given you your work too; and complaining is not a part of it. I hope to send you to school, as soon as ever I can."

Before Rotha had got up her ammunition for another attack, there was a tap at the door, and Mrs. Marble came in. She always seemed to bring life with her.

"What do you get for that?" she asked, after she had chatted awhile, watching her lodger. Mrs. Carpenter was making buttonholes.

"A shilling a dozen."

Mrs. Marble inspected the work.

"And how many can you make in that style in a day? I should like to know."

"I cannot do this all day," said Mrs. Carpenter. "I get blind, and I get nervous. I can make about two dozen and a half in five hours."

"Twenty five cents' worth: I declare!" said the little woman. "I wonder if such folks will get to heaven?"

"What folks, Mrs. Marble?" enquired Rotha, to whom this saying sounded doubtful.

"The folks that want to get so much for so little. They wouldn't be satisfied with any heaven where they couldn't get a hundred per cent."

"The Lord gives more than that," said Mrs. Carpenter quietly. "A hundredfold in this present world; and in the world to come, eternal life."

"I never could get right hold of that doctrine," said Mrs. Marble. "Folks talk about it, – but I never could find out it was much more than talk."

"Try it," said Mrs. Carpenter. "Then you'll know."

"Maybe I shall, if you stay with me long enough. I wisht I was rich, and I'd do better for you than those buttonholes. I think I can do better anyhow," said the little woman, brimming over with good will. "Ha' you got no friends at all here?"

Mrs. Carpenter hesitated; and then said "no." "What schools are there in this neighbourhood?" she asked then immediately.

"Schools? There's the public school, not far off."

"The public school? That is where everybody goes?"

"Everybody that aint rich, and some that be. I don't think they had ought to. There's enough without 'em. Twelve hundred and fifty in this school."

"Twelve hundred and fifty children!"

"All that. Enough, aint it? But they say the teaching's first rate. You want to send Rotha? You can't get along without her at home, can you? Not unless you can get somethin' better than them buttonholes."

"Mother," said Rotha when Mrs. Marble had gone, "you wouldn't send me to that school, would you? That's where all the poor children go. I don't think anybody but poor people live all about here."

"Then it is a proper place for us. What are we but poor people, Rotha?"

"But mother, we were not poor people at Medwayville? And losing our farm and our home and all, don't make any difference."

"Don't it?"

"No, mother, not in us. We are not that sort of people. You wouldn't send me to such a school?"

"Take care, my child. 'The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich;' and one is not better than the other."

"One is better off than the other," said Rotha. "Mother, how comes aunt Serena to be rich and you to be poor?"

Mrs. Carpenter hesitated and seemed to choose her words.

"It was because of the way she married," she answered at last. "I married a poor man, and her marriage brought her into riches. I would not exchange with her for all the world, Rotha. I have had much the best of it. You see your judgment is not worth much."

Rotha was not satisfied by this statement, and as time wore on she thought she had less and less reason. Mrs. Marble did succeed in finding some different work with better pay for her lodger; that is, she got her the private sewing of a family that paid her at the rate of seventy five cents for a gentleman's shirt, with stitched linen bosom and cuffs. It was better than the buttonhole making; yet even so, Mrs. Carpenter found that very close and diligent application was necessary, if she would pay her rent and pay her way. She could hardly do without Rotha's assistance. If she tried, with natural motherly feeling, to spare her child, she made her fingers rough and unfit for delicate work. It would not do. Rotha's hands must go into the hot water, and handle the saucepan, and the broom, and the box-iron. Ironing made Mrs. Carpenter's hands tremble; and she must not be hindered in her work or made to do it slowly, if she and her child were to live.

And by degrees Rotha came thus to be very busy and her days well filled up. All errands were done by her; purchases at the market and the grocery shop and the thread and needle store. The care of the two little rooms was hers; the preparation of meals, the clearing of tables. It was better than to be idle, but Rotha sighed over it and Mrs. Carpenter sometimes did the same. If she had known just what a public school is, at all hazards she would not have kept her child at home; Rotha should have had so much education as she could get there. But Mrs. Carpenter had a vague horror of evil contact for her daughter, who had lived until now in so pure an atmosphere bodily and mentally. Better anything than such contact, she thought; and she had no time to examine or make inquiries.

So days slipped by, as days do where people are overwhelmingly busy; the hope and intention of making a change kept in the background and virtually nullified by the daily and instant pressure. Rotha became accustomed to the new part she was playing in life; and to her turn of mind, there was a certain satisfaction in the activity of it. Mrs. Carpenter sat by the window and sewed, from morning to night. Both of them began to grow pale over their confined life; but they were caught in the machinery of this great, restless, evil world, and must needs go on with it; no extrication was possible. One needleful of thread after another, one seam after another, one garment finished and another begun; that was the routine of Mrs. Carpenter's life, as of so many others; and Rotha found an incessant recurrence of

meal-times, and of the necessary arrangements before and after. The only break and change was on Sunday.

Mrs. Carpenter suddenly awoke to the conviction, that Rotha's going to any sort of school was not a thing at present within the range of vision. What was to be done? She thought a great deal about it.

On their way to and from church she had noticed a small bookstall, closed then of course, which from its general appearance and its situation promised a tariff of prices fitted for very shallow pockets. One afternoon she resolutely laid down her work and took time to go and inspect it. The stock was small enough, and poor; in the whole she found nothing that could serve her purpose, save two volumes of a broken set of Rollin's Ancient History. Being a broken set, the volumes were prized at a mere trifle, and Mrs. Carpenter bought them. Rotha had been with her, and as soon as they reached home subjected the purchase to a narrow and thorough inspection.

"Mother, these are only Vol. I. and Vol. V."

"Yes, I know it."

"And they are not very clean."

"I know that too. I will cover them."

"And then, what are you going to do with them? Read them? You have no time."

"I am going to make you read them."

"Well, I would like to read anything new," said Rotha; "but what shall we do for all that goes between No. I. and No. V.?"

"We will see. Perhaps we can pick them up too, some time."

The reading, Rotha found, she was to do aloud, while her mother sewed. It became a regular thing every afternoon, all the time there was to give to it; and Rotha was not aware what schooling her mother managed to get out of the reading. Mrs. Carpenter herself had been well educated; and so was able to do for Rotha what was possible in the circumstances. It is astonishing how much may be accomplished with small means, if there is sufficient power of will at work. Not a fact and not a name in their reading, but it was made the nucleus of a discussion, of which Rotha only knew that it was very interesting; Mrs. Carpenter knew that she was teaching her daughter history and chronology. Not the history merely of the people immediately in question, but the history of the world and of humanity. For without being a scholar or having dead languages at her command, Mrs. Carpenter had another knowledge, which gives the very best key to the solution of many human questions, leads to the most clear and comprehensive view of the whole human drama of life and gives the only one clue to guide one amidst the confusions of history and to its ultimate goal and termination. Namely, the knowledge of the Bible. It is marvellous, how that knowledge supplies and supplements other sorts. So Rotha and her mother, at every step they made in their reading, stopped to study the ground; looked back and forward, traced connections of things, and without any parade of learning got deep into the philosophy of them.

History was only one branch of the studies for which Rollin was made a text-book. Mrs. Carpenter had an atlas in her possession; and she and Rotha studied geography. Studied it thoroughly, too; traced and fixed the relations of ancient and modern; learned by heart and not by head, which is always the best way. And Mrs. Carpenter taxed her memory to enable her as far as practicable to indoctrinate Rotha in the mysteries and delights of physical geography, which the girl took as she would the details of a story. Culture and the arts and industries came in for a share of attention; but here Mrs. Carpenter's knowledge reached not far. Far enough to excite Rotha's curiosity very much, which of itself was one good thing. That indeed may be said to have been one general result and fruit of this peculiar method of instruction.

A grammar was not among Mrs. Carpenter's few possessions, nor found on the shelves of the book-stall above-mentioned. Here too she sought to make memory supply the place of printed words. Rollin served as a text- book again. Rotha learned the parts of speech, and their distinctions and inflexions; also, as far as her mother could recollect them, the rules of syntax. Against all this branch of study she revolted, as unintelligible. Writing compositions went better; but for the mechanical part of this exercise Mrs. Carpenter had no leisure. She did set Rotha a copy now and then; but writing and arithmetic for the most part got the go-by. What Mrs. Carpenter did she must do with her fingers plying the needle and her eyes on her work.

It helped them both, all this learning and teaching; reading and talking. It saved their life from being a dead monotony, and their minds from vegetating; and diverted them from sorrowful regrets and recollections. Life was quite active and stirring in the little rooms where they lived. Nevertheless, their physical nature did not thrive so well as the mental. Rotha was growing fast, and shooting up slender and pale, living too housed a life; and her mother began to lose freshness and to grow thin with too constant application. As the winter passed away, and warm weather opened the buds of the trees which in some places graced the city, these human plants seemed to wither more and more.

"O mother," said Rotha, standing at the window one day in the late spring, "I think the city is just horrid!"

"Never mind, my child. We have a comfortable home, and a great deal to be thankful for."

"If I could only see the butterflies in the fields again!" sighed Rotha.

Her mother echoed the sigh, but this time said nothing.

"And I would like a good big tumbler of real milk, and some strawberries, and some of your bread and butter, mother."

"Yes, my child."

"Mother, how comes it that aunt Serena is rich, and you and I are so poor?"

"You have asked me that before."

"But you didn't tell me."

"I told you, it was in consequence of the different marriages

we made."

"Yes, I know. But you were not poor before you married father, were you?"

"No."

"Then that is what I mean. What is become of it? Where is your part?"

"Nowhere, dear."

"What became of it then, mother?"

"I never had it, Rotha. You had better get your book and read. That would be wiser than asking useless questions."

"But why didn't you have it, mother? Did aunt Serena – did your sister – get it all?"

"Get your book, Rotha."

"Mother, please tell me. I shall know the answer if you do not tell me."

"Your aunt had it all," Mrs. Carpenter said very quietly.

"Why?"

"Your grandfather thought there were good reasons."

"*Were* there, mother?"

"I do not think so. But let it be, Rotha, and never mention this subject to me again. Different people have different ways of looking at the same thing; and people are often very honestly mistaken. You must not judge others by yourself."

"Mother, I think that was very unjust," said Rotha, in immediate disregard of this precept.

"You must not think it was meant so."

"But, mother, if a wrong thing is honestly meant, does that make it right?"

"There is but one rule of right and wrong; it is God's rule."

"Then what difference does it make, whether it was 'honestly meant' or no?"

"A good deal, I should say. Don't you think it does?"

"I do not believe aunt Serena means it honestly, though. If she was a good woman, she wouldn't keep what belongs to you. She must *know* it is wrong!"

"Rotha, you are paining me," said Mrs. Carpenter, the tears springing to her eyes. "This is very foolish talk, and very improper. Get your book."

"I don't wonder you don't want to go and see her!" said Rotha indignantly as she obeyed the order. "O mother! if I could just once roll in the grass again!"

At this moment came a cry from the street – "Straw – berr_ees!_"

"What's that?" exclaimed Rotha springing to the window. "Mother, it's a woman with a basket full of something red. Strawberries! it's strawberries!"

The accent of this word went to the mother's heart.

"It's early yet," she said. "They will be very dear. By and by they will be plenty and cheaper."

"Strawberries!" repeated Rotha, following the woman with her eyes. "Mother, I think I do hate New York. The sight of those strawberries makes me wild. I want Carlo, and the ducks, and my

old pussy cat, and the garden; and – Oh, I want father!"

The natural conclusion to this burst was a passion of weeping. Mrs. Carpenter was fain to lay down her work, and put her arms round the child, and shed some tears with her; though even as they fell she was trying to soothe Rotha into patience and self-command. Two virtues of which as yet the girl knew nothing, except that her mother was a very lovely and constant exemplification of them. Nobody ever expected either from Rotha; although this was the first violent expression of grief and longing that her mother had seen since their removal to New York, and it took her by surprise. Rotha had seemed to acquiesce with tolerable ease in the new conditions of things; and this was Mrs. Carpenter's first notification that under all the outside calm there lay a power of wish and pain. They wept together for a while, the mother and child, which was a sort of relief to both of them.

"Mother," said Rotha, as she dried her tears and struggled to prevent more coming, – "I could bear it, only that I don't see any end to it."

"Well, my child? what then?" said the mother tenderly.

"I don't feel as if I could bear this always."

"There might be much worse, Rotha."

"That don't make this one bit better, mother. It makes it harder."

"We must trust God."

"For what? I don't see."

"Trust him, that he will keep his promises. I do."

"What promises?"

"He has said, that none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."

"But 'not desolate'! That is not enough," said. Rotha. "I want more than that. I want to be happy; and I want to be comfortable."

"Are you not comfortable, my child?"

"No, mother," Rotha said with a sob.

"What do you want?" Mrs. Carpenter spoke with a gentle soft accent, which half soothed, half reproached Rotha, though she did not mean any reproach. Rotha, nevertheless went on.

"I want nearly everything, mother! everything that we haven't got."

"It would not make you happy, if you had it."

"Why not? Why wouldn't it?"

"Because nothing of that sort can. There is only one thing that makes people happy."

"I know; you mean religion. But I am not religious. And if I *was* happy, mother, I should want those other things too."

"If you were happy – you would be happy," Mrs. Carpenter said with a slight smile.

"That would not hinder my wanting other things. I should want, as I do now, nice dresses, and a nice house, and books, and not to have to cook and wash dishes, and to take a ride sometimes and a walk sometimes – not a walk to market – I want all that, mother."

"I would give it you if I could, Rotha. If I had it and did not give it to you, you would know that I had some very good reason."

"I might think you were mistaken," said Rotha.

"We cannot think that of the only wise God," Mrs. Carpenter said with that same faint, sweet smile again; "so we must fall back upon the other alternative."

Rotha was silenced.

"We know that he loves us, dear; and 'they that trust in the Lord shall not want any good thing.' As soon as it would be good for us, if that time ever comes, we shall have it. As for me, if you were only one of those that trust in him, I should hardly have a wish left."

Rotha dried her tears and went at her work. But the summer, as the days passed, was a trial to both of them. Accustomed to sweet country air and free motion about the farm, the closeness, the heat, the impurities, and the confinement of the city were extremely hard to bear. They made it also very difficult to work. Often it seemed to Mrs. Carpenter, unused to such a sedentary life and close bending over her needle, that she must stop and wait till it grew cooler, or till she herself felt a little refreshed. But the necessities of living drove her on, as they drive so many, pitilessly. She could not intermit her work. Rents were due just the same in summer as in winter, and meat and bread were no cheaper. She grew very thin and pale; and Rotha too, though in a far less degree, shewed the wilting and withering effect of the life they led. Rarely a walk could be had; the streets were hot

and disagreeable; and Mrs. Carpenter could but now and then dare to spend twenty cents for car hire to take her and Rotha to the Park and back again. The heats of July were very hard to bear; the heats of August were more oppressive still; and when September came with its enervating moist, muggy, warm days, Mrs. Carpenter could scarcely keep her place and her work at her window. All day she could not. She was obliged to stop and lie by. Appetite failed, meals were not enticing; and on the whole, Mrs. Marble was not at all satisfied with the condition of either of her lodgers.

The cooler weather and then the frosts wrought some amendment. Yet all the autumn did not put them back where the spring had found them; and late in November Mrs. Carpenter took a cold which she could not immediately get rid of. A bad cough set in; strength rather failed than grew; and the thin hands which were so unceasingly busy with their work, became more and more transparently thin. Mrs. Carpenter needed rest; she knew it; and the thought came to her that it might be duty, and even it might be necessity, to apply to her sister for help. Surely it could not be refused?

She was often busy with this thought.

One day she had undertaken a longer walk than usual, to carry home some articles of fine sewing that she had finished. She would not send Rotha so far alone, but she took her along for company and for the air and exercise. Her way led her into the finer built part of the city. Coming down Broadway, she was

stopped a minute by a little crowd on the sidewalk, just as a carriage drew up and a lady with a young girl stepped out of it and went into Tiffany's; crossing the path of Mrs. Carpenter and Rotha. The lady she recognized as her own sister.

"Mother," said Rotha, as they presently went on their way again, "isn't that a handsome carriage?"

"Very."

"What is the coachman dressed so for?"

"That is what they call a livery."

"Well, what *is* it? He has top boots and a gold band round his hat. What for? I see a great many coachmen and footmen dressed up so or some other way. What is the use of it?"

"No use, that I know."

"Then what is it for?"

"I suppose they think it looks well."

"So it does. But how rich people must be, mother, when their servants can dress handsomer than we ever could. And their own dresses! Did you see the train of that lady's dress?"

"Yes."

"Beautiful black silk, ever so much of it, sweeping over the sidewalk. She did not even lift it up, as if she cared whether it went into the dirt or not."

"I suppose she did not care," said Mrs. Carpenter mechanically, like a person who is not giving much thought to her answers.

"Then she must be *very* rich indeed. I suppose, mother, her

train would make you a whole nice dress."

"Hardly so much of it as that," said Mrs. Carpenter.

"No, no; I mean the cost of it. Mother, I wonder if it is *right*, for that woman to trail so much silk on the ground, and you not to be able to get yourself one good dress?"

"It makes no difference in my finances, whether she trails it or not."

"No, but it ought."

"How should it?"

Rotha worked awhile at this problem in silence.

"Mother, if nobody used what he didn't want, don't you think there would be enough for the people who do want? You know what I mean?"

"I know what you mean. But how should the surplus get to the people who want it?"

"Why! – that's very simple."

"Not so simple as you think."

"Mother, that is the way people did in the second chapter of Acts, that we were reading yesterday. Nobody said that anything he had was his own."

"That was when everybody was full of the love of Christ. I grant you, Rotha, that makes things easy. My child, let us take care we act on that principle."

"We have nothing to give," said Rotha. "Mother, how that girl was dressed too, that came out of that same carriage. Did you see her?"

"Hardly."

"She was about as old as I am, I guess. Mother, she had a feather in her hat and a beautiful little muff, and a silk frock too, though there was no train to it. Her silk was red – dark red," Rotha added with a sigh.

Mrs. Carpenter had been struck and moved, as well as her daughter, by the appearance of the figures in question, though, as she said, she had scarce seen more than one of them. But her thoughts were in a different channel.

When she got home, contrary to all her wont, Mrs. Carpenter sat down and put her head in her hands, instead of going to work. She said she was a little tired, which was very true; but the real reason was a depression and at the same time a perturbation of mind which would not let her work. She had been several times lately engaged with the thought, that it might be better, that it might be her duty, to make herself known to her sister. She felt that her strength lately had been decreasing; it had been with much difficulty that she accomplished her full tale of work; help, even a little, would be very grateful, and a friend for Rotha might be of the greatest importance. It was over with those thoughts. That one glimpse of her sister as she swept past, had shewn her the utter futility of such an appeal as she had thought of making. There was something in the whole air and style of the rich woman which convinced Mrs. Carpenter that she would not patiently hear of poor relations in her neighbourhood; and that help given, even if she gave it, would be so given that it would

be easier to do without it than to accept it. She was thrown back upon herself; and the check and the disappointment shewed how much, secretly she had been staying herself upon this hope which had failed her.

She said nothing to her daughter, and Rotha never knew what that encounter had been. But a few days later, finding herself still not gaining strength, and catching at any thread of hope or help, Mrs. Carpenter took another long walk and delivered at its place of address the letter which her English guest had left her. She hardly expected ever to hear anything from it again; and in fact it was long before she did hear either of the letter or of its writer.

The months of winter went somewhat painfully along. Mrs. Carpenter's health did not mend, and the constant sewing became more and more difficult to bear. Mrs. Carpenter now more frequently went out with her work herself; leaving Rotha to make up the lost time by doing some of the plainer seams, for which she was quite competent.

CHAPTER IV.
A VISITER

One cold afternoon in the latter part of January, a stranger came to Mrs. Marble's door and begged for a few minutes' interview. He did not make it longer; but after a very brief conversation on religious matters, and giving her a tract or two, inquired if there was anybody else in the house?

"Lodgers," said Mrs. Marble. "They've got the second floor. A woman and a girl."

"What sort of people?"

"Well, I should say they were an uncommon sort. Your sort, I guess. Religious. I mean the mother is. I reckon the little one haint anything o' that kind about her."

"Then they pay their rent, I suppose?"

"As regular as clockwork. 'Taint always easy, I know; but it comes up to the day. I don't believe much in the sort o' religion that don't pay debts."

"Nor I; but sometimes, you know, the paying is not only difficult but impossible. Why is it difficult in this case?"

"Don't ask *me!* Because another sort of religious folk, that go to church regular enough and say their prayers, won't pay honest wages for honest work. How is a woman to live, that can't get more than a third or a quarter the value o' what she does? So they

don't live; they die; and that's how it's goin' to be here."

A tear was glittering in Mrs. Marble's honest eyes, while at the same time she bit off her words as if they had been snap gingerbread.

"Is it so bad as that?" asked the visiter.

"Well, I don' know if you ought to call it, 'bad,'" said Mrs. Marble with a compound expression. "When livin' aint livin' no longer, then dyin' aint exactly dyin'. 'Taint the worst thing, anyhow; if it warnt for the folk left behind. If I was as ready as she is, I wouldn't mind goin', I guess. I s'pose she thinks of her child some."

"Would they receive a visit from me?"

"I don' know; but they don't have many. So long as they've been here, and that's more'n a year now, there aint a livin' soul as has called to ask after 'em. I guess they'd receive most anybody that come with a friend's face. Shall I ask 'em?"

"Not *that*, but if they will see me. I shall be much obliged."

Mrs. Marble laid down her work and tripped up stairs.

"Rotha," she said putting her head inside the door, "here's somebody to see you."

The girl started up and a colour came into her face, as she eagerly asked, "Who?"

"I don't know him from Adam. He's a sort of a missionary; they come round once in a while; and he wants to see you."

"Mother's gone out," said Rotha, her colour fading as quick as it had risen.

"May he come and see you? He's a nice lookin' feller."

"I don't care," said Rotha. "I don't want to see any missionary."

"O well! it won't hurt you to see this one, I guess."

A few minutes after came a tap at the door, and Rotha with a mingling of unwillingness and curiosity, opened it. What she saw was not exactly what she had expected; curiosity grew and unwillingness abated. She asked the stranger in with tolerable civility. He *was* nice looking, she confessed to herself, and very nicely dressed! not at all the rubbishy exterior which Rotha somehow associated with her idea of missionaries. He came in and sat down, quite like an ordinary man; which was soothing.

"Mother is out," Rotha announced shortly.

"It is so much the kinder of you to let me come in."

"I was not thinking of kindness," said Rotha.

"No? Of what then?

"Nothing in particular. You do not want kindness."

"I beg your pardon. Everybody wants it."

"Not kindness *from* everybody then."

"I do."

"But some people can do without it."

"Can they? What sort of people?"

"Why, a great many people. Those that have all they want already."

"I never saw any of that sort of people," said the stranger gravely.

"Pray, did you?"

"I thought I had."

"And you thought I was one of them?"

"I believe so."

"You were mistaken in me. Probably you were mistaken also in the other instances. Perhaps you were thinking of the people who have all that money can buy?"

"Perhaps," Rotha assented.

"Do you think money can buy all things?"

"No," said Rotha, beginning to recover her usual composure; "but the people who have all that money can buy, can do without the other things."

"What do you mean by the 'other things'?"

Rotha did not answer.

"I suppose kindness is one of them, as we started from that."

Rotha was still silent.

"Do you think you could afford to do without kindness?"

"If I had money enough," Rotha said bluntly.

"And what would you buy with money, that would be better?"

"O plenty!" said Rotha. "Yes, indeed! I would stop mother's working; and I would buy our old home, and we would go away from this place and never come back to it. I would have somebody to do the work that I do, too; and I would have a garden, and plenty of flowers, and plenty of everything."

"And live without friends?"

"We always did," said Rotha. "We never had friends. O friends! – everybody in the village and in the country was a

friend; but you know what I mean; nobody that we cared for."

"Then you have no friends here in New York?"

"No."

"I should think you would have stayed where, as you say, everybody was a friend."

"Yes, but we couldn't."

"You said, you would if you could stop your mother's working. Do you think she would like that?"

"O she's tired to death!" said Rotha; and her eyes reddened in a way that shewed there were at least two sides to her character. "She is not strong at all, and she wants rest. Of course she would like it. Not to have to do any more than she likes, I mean."

"Then perhaps she would not choose to take some work I was thinking to offer her. Or perhaps you would not take it?" he added smiling.

"We *must* take it," said Rotha, "if we can get it. What is it?"

"A set of shirts. A dozen."

"Mother gets seventy five cents a piece, if they are tucked and stitched."

"That is not my price, however. I like my work particularly done, and I give two dollars a piece."

"Two dollars for one shirt?" inquired Rotha.

"That is my meaning. Do you think your mother will take them?"

For all answer the girl clapped her two hands together.

"Then you are not a master tailor?" she asked.

"No."

"I thought maybe you were. I don't like them. What are you, please?"

"If I should propose myself as a friend, would you allow it?"

Is this a "kindness"? was the suspicion that instantly darted into Rotha's mind. The visiter saw it in her face, and could have smiled; took care to do no such thing.

"That is a question for mother to answer," she said coolly.

"When it is put to her. I put the question to you."

"Do you mean, that you are talking of being a friend to *me?*"

"Is that too bold a proposition?"

"No – but it cannot be true."

"Why not?"

"You cannot want me for a friend. You do not know me a bit."

"Pardon me. And my proposal was, that I should be a friend to *you*."

"I always thought there were two sides to a friendship."

"True; and in time, perhaps, when you come to know me as well as I know you, perhaps you will be my friend as well."

"How should you know me?" said Rotha quickly.

"People's thoughts and habits of feeling have a way of writing themselves somehow in their faces, and voices, and movements. Did you know that?"

"No – " Rotha said doubtfully.

"They do."

"But you don't know me."

"Will you put it to the proof? But do you like to hear the truth spoken about yourself?"

"I don't know. I never tried."

"Shall I try you? I think I see before me a person who likes to have her own way – and has it."

"You are wrong there," said Rotha. "If I had my own way, I should not be doing what I am doing; no indeed! I should be going to school."

"I did not mean that your will could get the better of all circumstances; only of the will of other people. How is that?"

"I suppose everybody likes to have his own way," said Rotha in defence.

"Probably; but not every one gets it. Then, when upon occasion your will is crossed, whether by persons or circumstances, you do not take it very patiently."

"Does anybody?"

"Some people. But on these occasions you are apt to shew your displeasure impatiently – sometimes violently."

"How do you know?" said Rotha wonderingly. "You cannot see that in my face *now?*"

And she began curiously to examine the face opposite to her, to see if it too had any disclosures to make. He smiled.

"Another thing, – " he went on. "You have never yet learned to care for others more than for yourself."

"Does anybody?" said Rotha.

"How is it with your mother?"

"Mother? – But then, mother and I are very different"

"Did I not intimate that?"

"But I mean I am naturally different from her. It is not only because she is a Christian."

"Why are you not a Christian too?"

Rotha hesitated. Her interlocutor was certainly a great stranger; and as certainly she had not found it possible to read his face; notwithstanding, two effects had resulted from the interview thus far; she believed in him, and he was somewhat imposing to her. Dress and manner might have a little to do with this; poor Rotha had rarely in her short life spoken to any one who had the polish of manner that belongs to good breeding and the habit of society; but that was not the whole. She felt the security and the grace with which every word was said, and she trusted his face. At the same time she rebelled against the slight awe he inspired, and was a little afraid of some lurking "kindness" under all this extraordinary interest and affability. Her answer was delayed and then came somewhat defiantly.

"I never wanted to be a Christian."

"That answer has the merit of truth," said her visiter calmly. "You have mentioned the precise reason that keeps people out of the kingdom of heaven. 'Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life,' the Lord said to some of them when he was upon earth. 'When they shall see him, there is no beauty that they should desire him.'"

"Well, I cannot help that," said Rotha.

"No, – " said her visiter slowly, "you cannot help that; but it does not excuse you."

"Why, how can I be a Christian, when I *dont want to?*"

"How can you do anything else that you do not want to do? Duty remains duty, does it not?"

"But religion is not outside work."

"No."

"Mother says, it is the love of God. How can I make myself love him?"

"Poor child!" said her visiter. "When you are in earnest about that question it will not be difficult to find the answer." He rose up. "Then I may send the shirts I spoke of?"

"Yes," said Rotha; "but I don't know about the price. Mother does not want anything but the proper pay; and she does all her work particularly."

"Are you afraid I shall give her too much?"

"She does not want too much."

"I will arrange that with her. Stay, – we have not been introduced to each other. You may call me Mr. Digby; what may I call you?"

"Rotha Carpenter."

"Good morning, Rotha," said the gentleman, offering his hand. Rotha shyly took it, and he went away.

Half an hour afterwards, Mrs. Carpenter came home. She came slowly up the short flight of stairs, and sat down by her fireside as if she was tired. She was pale, and she coughed now

and then.

"Mother," began Rotha, full of the new event, "somebody has been here since you have been away."

"A messenger from Mr. Farquharson? I shall have the things done to- morrow, I hope."

"No messenger at all, and no tailor, nor any such horrid person. Mother, what is a 'gentleman'?"

"What makes you ask?"

"Because Mrs. Marble said this man was a gentleman. He's a missionary. Do you know what a 'city missionary' means, mother?"

"Yes, in general."

"The same as a foreign missionary, only he does not go out of the country?"

"He does his work in the city."

"But there are no heathen in New York."

"There are worse."

"Worse? what can be worse?"

"It is worse to see the light and refuse it, than never to have had the choice."

"Then I should think it would be better not to send missionaries to the heathen."

"Rotha, take my bonnet and cloak, dear, and put them away; and make me some tea, will you?"

"Why mother, it is not tea-time yet."

"No matter; I am tired, and cold."

"But you didn't tell me what a gentleman is?" pursued Rotha, beginning now to bustle about and do as she was told.

"Wait till I have had some tea. How much tea is left, Rotha?"

"Well, I guess, enough to last almost a week," said the girl, peering into the box which did duty for a tea-caddy.

"I must manage to get some more," said the mother. "I could hardly get along without my cup of tea."

"Mother, here has been somebody who wants you to make shirts for him at two dollars a piece."

"Two dollars a piece!" Mrs. Carpenter echoed. "I could afford to get tea then. Who was that, Rotha? and what sort of shirts does he want made for such a price?"

"I don't know! he said he wanted them very particularly made, and I told him that was the way you did everything. Now mother dear, the kettle will boil in two minutes."

"Who is this person?"

"I told you, he is a city missionary. His name is Mr. Digby."

"Digby," – said Mrs. Carpenter. "I do not know him."

"Of course you don't. But you will be glad of the shirts, won't you?"

"Very glad, and thankful."

"But is two dollars a proper price?" inquired Rotha a little jealously.

"It is an uncommon price."

"What could make him offer an uncommon price?"

"I don't know. It is not the way of the world, so perhaps he is

not one of the world."

"He's a Christian, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Do Christians always do the right thing?"

"Real Christians do, when they know what the right thing is. I am too tired to talk, Rotha."

Rotha bestirred herself and set the little table. Not very much went on it, besides the cups and plates; but there was a loaf of bread, and Rotha made a slice of toast; and Mrs. Carpenter sipped her tea as if she found it refreshing.

"I wish I had a good tumbler of milk," sighed Rotha; "real milk, not like this. And I wish you had some Medwayville cream, mother. I think, if I ever get back into the country again, I shall go wild."

"I sometimes think you are a little of that here," said Mrs. Carpenter.

"Not wild with joy, mother."

Mrs. Carpenter sipped her tea, and stretched out her feet towards the small stove, and seemed to be taking some comfort. But her face was thin and worn, the hands were very thin; a person with more experience than her young daughter would have been ill content with her appearance.

"Mother, now can you tell me my question? What do you mean by a 'gentleman.'"

"Perhaps not just what Mrs. Marble means by it."

"Well, I'll tell you. This person was very well dressed, but

clothes do not make it, do they, mother?"

"Certainly not."

"He has got a nice face, and he seemed to know always just what to do and to say; I can't tell you what I mean exactly; but I should think, to look at him and hear him, that he knew everything and had seen all the world. Of course he hasn't and doesn't; but that is the sort of feeling I have when I look at him."

Mrs. Carpenter smiled.

"Did you never see anybody before of whom you thought so?"

"Never. I never did," said Rotha. "The people who come here on business, don't know the least bit how to behave; and the people at dear old Medwayville did not. O they were kind and good as they could be, some of them; but mother, they could not make a bow to save their lives, and they would stand and sit all sorts of ways; and they wouldn't know when they had done talking, nor how to do anything nicely."

"Perhaps this man was stiff," said Mrs. Carpenter amused.

"He was not stiff in the least; but mother, what is a gentleman?"

"I do not know how to tell you, Rotha. Your description sounds very much like one."

A day or two after, Mr. Digby came again, and had an interview with Mrs. Carpenter. This time he paid no attention to Rotha, and I think the little girl was somewhat disappointed. The next day he came again and brought with him the bundle of shirts. He inquired now very kindly into Mrs. Carpenter's state of

health, and offered to send his own physician to see her. But she refused; and the manner of her refusal persuaded Mr. Digby that she was aware of her own condition and believed no medicine would be of avail. He was much of the same opinion himself; and indeed was inclined to suspect that there was more need of good food than of drugs in this case. More difficult at the same time to administer.

A few days passed, and Mr. Digby again came.

He found Mrs. Carpenter steady at her work, but looking very worn and pale. Rotha was just putting on the small tea kettle. Mr. Digby sat down and made kind inquiries. The answers were with the sweet patient composure which he saw was habitual with Mrs. Carpenter.

"How is your appetite?" he asked.

"I suppose I am not enough in the open air and stirring about, to have it very good."

"Have you much strength for 'stirring about'?"

"Not much."

"People cannot have strength without eating. Rotha, what time do you give your mother her dinner?"

"Now," said Rotha. "I put the kettle on just as you came in."

"I saw you did. But what is the connection, may I ask, between dinner and the tea kettle?"

"Rotha makes me a cup of tea," said Mrs. Carpenter smiling. "I can hardly get along without that."

"Ah! – Mrs. Carpenter, I have had a busy morning and am

– which I am sorry you are not —*hungry*. May I take a cup of tea with you?"

"Certainly! – I should be very glad. Rotha, set a cup for Mr. Digby, dear. But tea is not much to a hungry man," she went on; "and I am afraid there is little in the house but bread and butter."

"That will do capitally. If you'll furnish the bread and butter, I will see what I can get for my part. If you'll excuse the liberty, Mrs. Carpenter?"

Mrs. Carpenter would excuse, I think, whatever he might take a fancy to do. She had seen him now several times, and he had quite won her heart.

"Mother," said Rotha, as soon as their visiter had gone out, "what is he going to do?"

"I do not know. Get something for dinner, he said."

"Do you like him to do that?"

"Do what?"

"Bring us dinner."

"Don't be foolish, Rotha."

"Mother, I think he is doing what he calls a 'kindness.'"

"Have you any objection?"

"Not to his doing it for other people; but for you and me – Mother, we have not come to receiving charity yet."

"Rotha!" exclaimed her mother. "My child, what are you thinking of?"

"Having kindnesses done to us, mother; and I don't like it. It is not Mr.

Digby's business, what we have for dinner!"

"I told him we had not much but bread."

"Why did you tell him?"

"He would have found it out, Rotha, when he came to sit down to the table."

"He had no business to ask to do that."

"I think you are ungrateful."

"Mother, I don't want to be grateful. Not to him."

"Why not to him, or to anybody, my child, that deserves it of you?"

"*He* don't!" – said Rotha, as she finished setting the table, rather in dudgeon. "What do you suppose he is going to bring?"

"Rotha, what will ever become of you in this world, with that spirit?"

"What spirit?"

"Pride, I should say."

"Isn't pride a good thing?"

"Not that ever I heard of, or you either," Mrs. Carpenter said with a sigh.

"Mother, I don't think you have enough pride."

"A little is too much. It makes people fall into the condemnation of the devil. And you are mistaken in thinking there is anything fine in it. Don't shew that feeling to Mr. Digby, I beg of you."

Rotha did not exactly pout, for that was not her way; but she looked dissatisfied. Presently she heard a sound below, and

opened the door.

"He's coming up stairs," she said softly, "and a boy with him bringing something. Mother! – "

She had no chance to say more. Mr. Digby came in, followed by a boy with a basket. The basket was set down and the boy disappeared.

"Mrs. Carpenter," said the gentleman, "I could not find anything in this neighbourhood better than oysters. Do you like them?"

"Oysters!" said Mrs. Carpenter. "It is very long since I have seen any.

Yes, I like them."

"Then the next question is, how do you like them? Saw? or roasted? We can roast them here, cannot we?"

"I have not seen a roast oyster since I was a girl," said Mrs. Carpenter. Her visiter could hear in the tone of her voice that the sight would be very welcome. As for Rotha, displeasure was lost in curiosity. The oysters were already nicely washed; that Mr. Digby had had done by the same boy that brought the basket; it only remained to put them on the fire and take them off; and both operations he was quite equal to. Rotha looked on in silent astonishment, seeing the oyster shells open, and the juice sputter on the hot iron, and perceiving the very acceptable fragrance that came from them. Mr. Digby admonished her presently to make the tea; and then they had a merry meal. Absolutely merry; for their visitor, he could hardly be called their guest, spiced

his ministrations with so pleasant a manner that nothing but cheerfulness could keep its ground before him. At the first taste of the oysters, it is true, some associations seemed to come over Mrs. Carpenter which threatened to make a sudden stop to her dinner. She sat back in her chair, and perhaps was swallowing old troubles and heartburnings over again, or perhaps recalling involuntarily a time before troubles began. The oysters seemed to choke her; and she said she wanted no more. But Mr. Digby guessed what was the matter; and was so tenderly kind and judiciously persuasive, that Mrs. Carpenter could not withstand him; and then, Rotha looked on in new amazement to see how the oysters went down and how manifestly they were enjoyed. She herself declined to touch them; they did not look attractive to her.

"Rotha," said Mr. Digby, as he opened a fine, fat oyster, "the only way to know things is, to submit to learn."

"I needn't learn to like oysters, I suppose, need I?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"It might be useful some day."

"I don't see how it should. We never had oysters before, and perhaps we never shall again."

"You might go a missionary to some South Sea island, and be obliged at times to live upon oysters."

"I am not going to be a missionary."

"That is more than you know."

"But I know what I like, and what I think."

"At present. Perhaps you do. You do not know whether you like oysters, however, for you have not tried."

"Your sphere of knowledge will be small, Rotha," said her mother, "if you refuse to enlarge it."

Stung a little, Rotha made up her mind to try an oyster, to which her objections were twofold. Nevertheless, she was obliged to confess, she liked it; and the meal, as I said, went merrily on; Rotha from that time doing her fall share. Mrs. Carpenter was plainly refreshed and comforted, by the social as well as the material food she received.

"How good he is!" she exclaimed when their friend was gone.

"So are the oysters," said Rotha; "but I don't like him to bring them. I do not think I like Mr. Digby much, anyhow."

"You surprise me. And it is not a little ungrateful."

"I don't want to be grateful to him. And mother, I *don't* like him to bring oysters here!"

"Why shouldn't he, if he likes? I am sorry to see such pride in you, Rotha. It is *very* foolish, my child."

"Mother, it looks as if he knew we were poor."

"He knows it, of course. Am I not making his shirts?"

Rotha was silent, clearing away the dishes and oyster shells with a good deal of decision and dissatisfaction revealed in her movements.

"Everybody knows it, my child."

"I do not mind everybody. I just mind him. He is different.

Why is he different, mother?"

"I suppose the difference you mean is, that he is a gentleman."

"And what are we?" said Rotha, suddenly standing still to put the question.

"We are respectable people," said her mother smiling.

"Not gentlemen, of course; but what do you call us?"

"If I could call you a Christian, Rotha, I should not care for anything else; at least I should not be concerned about it. Everything else would be right."

"Being a Christian would not make any difference in what I am talking about."

"I think it would; but I cannot talk to you about it, Ask Mr. Digby the next time he comes."

"Ask *him!*" cried Rotha. "I guess I will! What makes you think he is coming again, mother?"

"It would be like him."

CHAPTER V.
PRIVATE TUITION

More days passed however, than either of them expected, before Mr. Digby came again. They were days of stern cold winter weather, in which it was sometimes difficult to keep their little rooms comfortable without burning more coal than Mrs. Carpenter thought she could afford. Rotha ran along the streets to the corner shop where she bought tea and sugar, not quite so well wrapped up but that she found a quick pace useful to protect her from the cold; and Mrs. Carpenter wrought at her sewing sometimes with stiffened fingers.

"Mother," said Rotha, one day, "*I* think it would be better to do without tea and have a little more fire."

"I do not know how to get along without tea," Mrs. Carpenter said with a sigh.

"But you are getting along without almost everything else."

"We do very well yet," answered the mother patiently.

"Do we?" said Rotha. "If this is what you call very well – Mother, you cannot live upon tea."

"I feel as if I could not live without it."

"Has Mr. Digby given you any money yet?"

"The shirts are only just finished."

"And what are you going to do now? But he'll pay you a good

many dollars, won't he, mother? Twenty four, for twelve shirts. But there is eight to be paid for rent, I know, and that leaves only sixteen. And he can afford to pay the whole twenty four, just for a dozen shirts! Mother, I don't think some people have a *right* to be so rich, while others are so poor."

"'The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich,'" – Mrs. Carpenter answered.

"Why does he?"

"Sometimes, I think, he wishes to teach his children to depend on him."

"Couldn't they do it if they were rich?"

"There is great danger they would not."

"You would, mother."

"Perhaps not. But I have always enough, Rotha."

"Enough!" echoed Rotha. "Enough! when you haven't had a good dinner since – Mother, there he is again, I do believe!"

And she had hardly time to remove the empty tea cup and, alas! empty plates, which testified to their meagre fare, when the knock came and Mr. Digby shewed himself. He explained that he had been out of town; made careful inquiries as to Mrs. Carpenter's health; paid for the shirts; and finally turned to Rotha.

"How is my friend here doing?"

"We always go on just the same way," said Rotha. But he could see that the girl was thin, and pale; and that just at an age when she was growing fast and needing abundant food, she was not

getting it.

"Ask Mr. Digby your question, Rotha," her mother said.

"I do not want to ask him any questions," the girl answered defiantly.

But Mrs. Carpenter went on.

"Rotha wants to know what a gentleman is; and I was not able to discuss the point satisfactorily with her. I told her to ask you."

Rotha did not ask, however, and there was silence.

"Rotha is fond of asking questions," Mr. Digby observed.

"What makes you think so?" she retorted.

He smiled. "It is a very good habit – provided of course that the questions are properly put."

"I like to ask mother questions," Rotha said, drawing in a little.

"I have no doubt you would like to ask me questions, if you once got into the way of it. Habit is everything."

"Not quite everything, in this," said Rotha. "There must be something before the habit."

"Yes. There must be a beginning."

"I meant something else."

"Did you? May I ask, what did you mean?"

"I mean a good deal," said Rotha. "Before one could get a habit like that, one must know that the person could answer the questions; and besides, that he would like to have them asked."

"In my case I will pledge myself for the second qualification; about the first you must learn by experience. Suppose you try."

His manner was so pleasant and well bred, and Rotha felt that

she had gone so near the edge of politeness, she found it best for this time to comply.

"I asked mother one day what is the meaning of a 'gentleman'; and I suppose she was too tired to talk to me, for she said I had better ask you."

"O he did me honour."

"Well, what is it then, Mr. Digby."

"I should say, it is the counterpart to a 'lady.'"

"But isn't everybody that is grown up, a 'lady'? – every woman, I mean?"

"No more than every grown up man is a gentleman."

Rotha stood looking at him, and the young man on his part regarded her with more attention than usual. He was suddenly touched with compassion for the girl. She stood, half doubtful, half proud, dimly conscious of her enormous ignorance, and with an inward monition of a whole world of knowledge to be acquired, yet beyond her reach; at the same time her look shewed capacity enough both to understand and to feel. Rotha was now nearly fourteen, with mental powers just opening and personal gifts just beginning to dawn. The child's complexion told of poor feeding and want of air and exercise; it was sallow, and her features were sharp; but her hair was beautiful in its lustrous, dark abundance; the eyes shewed the fire of native passion and intelligence; the mouth was finely cut and expressed half a dozen things in as many minutes. "Poor child!" thought the visiter; "what is to become of her, with all this latent power

and possibility?"

"A gentleman, Rotha," he said aloud, "may be defined as a person who in all manner of little things keeps the golden rule – does to everybody as he would be done by; and knows how."

"In little things? Not in great things?"

"One may do it in great things, and not be a gentleman in manner; though certainly in heart."

"Then it is manner?"

"Very much."

"And a lady the same way?"

"Of course."

"What sort of little things?" said Rotha curiously.

"A lady in the first place will be always careful and delicate about her own person and dress; it does not depend upon what she wears, but how she wears it; a lady might wear patches, but never could be untidy. Then, in all her moving, speaking, and acting, she will be gentle, quiet, and polite. And in her behaviour to others, she will give everybody the respect that is due, and never put herself forward. 'In honour preferring one another,' is the Bible rule, and it is the law of good breeding. And the Bible says, 'Honour all men;' and, 'Be courteous.' – Have I spoken according to your mind, Mrs. Carpenter?"

"Beautifully," said the silent, pale seamstress, never stopping her needle. "Better than I could have done it. Now you know, Rotha."

Rotha stood considering, uneasy.

"What is the next question?" said Mr. Digby smiling.

"I was thinking – " said Rotha. "Mustn't one know a good deal, to do all that?"

"To do what, for instance?"

"To give everybody the respect that is due; it is not the same to everybody, is it?"

"No, certainly."

"How can one know?"

"There *is* a good deal to be learned in this world, before one can hold the balance scales to weigh out to each one exactly what belongs to him," Mr. Digby admitted.

"That is one of my troubles," said Mrs. Carpenter looking up. "I cannot give my child an education. I do a little at home; it is better than nothing; but I feel that my power grows less and less; and Rotha's needs are more and more."

"What do you know, Rotha?" said Mr. Digby.

"I don't know much of anything!" said the girl, an eloquent flush coming into her pale face. It touched him.

"A little of what, then?" said their visiter kindly.

"You would not say it was anything."

"She knows a little history," Mrs. Carpenter put in.

"Have you any acquaintance with Alexander of Macedon, Rotha?"

"The Great? asked Rotha.

"He is called so."

"Yes, I know about him."

"Think he deserved the title?"

"Yes, I suppose he did."

"What for?"

"He was such a clever man."

"Well, I have no doubt he was," Mr. Digby returned, keeping a perfectly grave face with some difficulty; "a clever man; but how did he shew it?"

Rotha paused, and a faint tinge, of excitement this time, rose again in her cheeks, and her eye waked up with the mental stir. "He had such grand plans," she answered.

"Ah? yes. Which do you mean?"

"For civilizing people; for bringing the different nations to know each other and be friends with each other; so that trade could be carried on, and knowledge and arts and civilization could spread to all; that his empire could be one great whole."

"On the whole you approve of Alexander. After all, what use was he to the world?"

"Why a good deal," said Rotha. "Don't you think so? His successors carried on his plans; at least some of them did; and the Greek language was spread through Asia, and the Jews encouraged to settle in Egyptian and Greek cities; and so the way was prepared for the spread of the gospel when it came."

"Mrs. Carpenter," said Mr. Digby, "your manner of teaching history is very satisfactory!"

"I have done what I could," said the mother, "but we had very few books to work with."

"We had none," said Rotha, "except Rollin's Ancient History, and Plutarch's Lives."

"One good book, well used, is worth a hundred under other circumstances.

Then you do not know much of modern history, Rotha?"

"Nothing at all; except what mother has told me."

"How about grammar?"

"I have taught her grammar," said Mrs. Carpenter; "and geography. She knows both pretty well. But I found, with my work, I could not teach her arithmetic; and I had not a good book for it. Rotha can do nothing with numbers."

Mr. Digby gave the girl a simple question in mental arithmetic; and then another, and another. Rotha's brow grew intent; the colour in her cheeks brightened; she was grappling, it was plain, with the difficulties suggested to her, wrestling with them, conquering them, with the sort of zeal which conquers all difficulties not insurmountable.

"May I give Rotha lessons in Latin?" Mr. Digby asked, turning quietly to Rotha's mother.

"Latin!" Mrs. Carpenter exclaimed, and her cheeks too flushed slightly.

"I should enjoy it. It is likely that important business will bring me frequently into this part of the city; so I could do it as well as not."

"But it would be so much trouble – unless you are fond of teaching – "

"I am fond of teaching – when I find somebody that can learn."

"You are very kind! – I should be very glad – Poor Rotha, I have been unable to do for her what I wished – "

"I think you have done admirably, from the slight specimen I have had.

How much time can she give to study?"

"O she has time enough. She is much more idle than I like to have her."

"Then that is arranged. I am going to send you a few raw oysters, Mrs. Carpenter; and I wish you would eat them at all times of day, whenever you feel like it. I knew a very slender lady once, who grew to very ample proportions by following such a regimen. Try what they will do for you."

A grateful, silent look thanked him, and he took his departure. Rotha, who had been standing silent and cloudy, now burst forth.

"Mother! – I do not want him to teach me!"

"Why not, my child? I think he is very kind.'

"Kind! I don't want to be taught out of kindness; and I *don't* want*him* to teach me, mother!"

"What's the matter?" for Rotha was flushed and fierce.

"I can learn without him. It is none of his business, whether I learn or not. And if I shouldn't say something just right, and he should find fault, I should be so angry I shouldn't know what to do!"

"You talk as if you were angry now."

"Well I am! Why did you say yes, mother?"

"Would you have had me say no?"

"Yes! I don't want to learn Latin anyhow. What's the use of my learning Latin? And of him, – O mother, mother!"

And Rotha burst into impatient and impotent tears.

"Why not of Mr. Digby?" said her mother soothingly.

"O he is so – I can't tell! – he's so uppish."

"He is not *uppish* at all. I am ashamed of you, Rotha."

"Well, nothing puts him out. He is just always the same; and he thinks everything must be as he says. I don't like him to come here teaching me."

"What folly is this? He is a gentleman, that's all. Do you dislike him for being a gentleman?"

"I'm not a lady" – sobbed Rotha.

"What has that to do with it?"

"Mother, I wish I could be a lady!"

"My child, Mr. Digby told you how."

"No, he didn't. He told me *what* it was; he didn't tell me how I could get all that."

"You can follow the Bible roles, at any rate, Rotha; and they go a good way."

"No, I can't, mother. I could if I were a Christian, I suppose; but I am not I can't 'honour all men'; I don't know how; and I can't prefer others before myself I prefer myself But if I could, that wouldn't make me a lady."

Mrs. Carpenter did not know what to do with this passion, the cause of which she was at a loss to understand. It was

very real; Rotha sobbed; and her mother was at a loss how to comfort her. What dim, far-off recognition was this, of powers and possibilities in life – or in herself – of which the girl had hitherto no experience and no knowledge? It was quite just Mrs. Carpenter, herself refined and essentially lady-like, knew very well that her little girl was not growing up to be a lady; she had laid that off, along with several other subjects of care, as beyond her reach to deal with; but Rotha's appeal smote a tender spot in her heart, and she was puzzled how to answer her. Perhaps it was just as well that she took refuge in her usual silence and did not try any further.

As Mr. Digby was going through the little passage way to the front door, another door opened and Mrs. Marble's head was put out.

"Good morning!" she said. "You're a friend of those folks up stairs, aint you?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, what do you think of her?" she said, lowering her voice.

"I think you are a happy woman, to have such lodgers, Mrs. Marble."

"I guess I know as much as that," said the mantua-maker, with her pleasant, arch smile. "I meant something else. *I* think, she's a sick woman."

Mr. Digby did not commit himself.

"I'm worried to death about her," Mrs. Marble went on. "Her cough's bad, and it's growin' worse; and she aint fit to be workin'

this minute. And what's goin' to become of her?"

"The Lord takes care of his children; and she is one."

"If there is such a thing!" said the mantua-maker, a quick tear dimming her eye. "But you see, I have my own work, and I can't leave it to do much for her; and she won't let me, neither; and I am thinkin' about it day and night. She aint fit to work, this minute. And there's the child; and they haven't a living soul to care for them, as I see, in all the world. They never have a letter, and they never get a visit, except your'n."

"Rent paid?" asked the gentleman low.

"Always! never miss. But I'm thinkin' – how do they live? That child's grown thin – she's like a piece o' wiggin'; she'll hold up when there's nothin' to her."

Mr. Digby could not help laughing.

"I thought, if you can't help, nobody can. What's to become of them if she gets worse? That child can't do for her."

"Thank you, Mrs. Marble; you are but touching what I have thought of myself. I will see what can be done."

"And don't be long about it," said the mantua-maker with a nod of her head as she closed the door.

Perhaps it was owing to Mrs. Marble's suggestions that Mr. Digby made his next visit the day but one next after; perhaps they were the cause that he did not come sooner! At any rate, in two days he came again; and brought with him not only a Latin grammar, but a paper of grapes for Mrs. Carpenter. At the grammar Rotha's soul rebelled; but what displeasure could stand

against those beautiful grapes and the sight of her mother eating them? They were not very good, Mr. Digby said; he would bring better next time; though to the sick woman they were ambrosia, and to Rotha an unknown, most exquisite dainty. Seeing her delighted, wondering eyes, Mr. Digby with a smile broke off part of a bunch and gave to her.

"It shall not rob your mother," he said observing that she hesitated. "I will bring her some more."

Rotha tasted.

"O mother!" she exclaimed in ecstasy, – "I should think these would make you well right off!"

Mr. Digby opened the Latin grammar. I think he wanted an excuse for veiling his eyes just then. And Rotha, mollified, when she had finished her grapes, submitted patiently to receive her first lesson and to be told what her teacher expected her to do before he came again.

"By the way," said he as he was about going, – "have you any more room than you need, Mrs. Carpenter?"

"Room? no. We have this floor – " said Mrs. Carpenter bewilderedly.

"You have not one room that you could let? I know a very respectable person, an elderly woman, who I think would be comfortable here, if you would allow her to come. She could pay well for the accommodation."

"What would be 'well'?" said Mrs. Carpenter, looking up.

"According to the arrangement, of course. For a room without

a fire, she would pay four dollars a month; with fire, I should say, twelve."

"That would be a great help to me," said Mrs. Carpenter, considering.

"I know the person, I have known her a great while. I think I can promise that she would not in any way annoy you."

"She brings her own furniture?"

"Of course."

After a little more turning the matter over in her mind, Mrs. Carpenter gave an unqualified assent to the proposal; and her visiter took his leave.

"Mother," said Rotha, "what room are you going to give her?"

"There is but one; our bed-room."

"Then where shall we sleep?"

"Here."

"Here! Where we do everything! – "

"It is not so pleasant; but it will pay our rent, Rotha. And I should like a little more warmth at night, now the weather is so severe."

"O mother, mother! We have got down to two rooms, and now we are come down to one!"

"Hush, my child. I am thankful."

"Thankful!"

"Yes, for the means to pay my rent."

"You might have had means to pay your rent, and kept your two rooms," said Rotha; thinking, like a great many other people,

that she could improve upon Providence.

"How do you like Latin?"

"If you mean, how I like *Sermo Sermonis*, I don't like it at all. And it is just ridiculous for Mr. Digby to be giving me lessons."

The new lodger moved in the very next week. She was a portly, comfortable-looking, kindly-natured woman, whom Mrs. Carpenter liked from the first. She established herself quietly in her quarters and almost as soon began to shew herself neighbourly and helpful. One day Mrs. Carpenter's cough was particularly troublesome. Mrs. Cord came in and suggested a palliative which she had known often to work comfortingly. She procured it and prepared it herself, and then administered it, and begged permission to cook Mrs. Carpenter's dinner; and shook up the pillow at her back, and set the rocking chair at an inclined angle which gave support and relief. When she had done all she could, she went away; but she came in again as soon as there was fresh occasion for her services, and rendered them with a hearty good will which made them doubly acceptable, and with a ready skill and power of resources which would have roused in any sophisticated mind the suspicion that Mrs. Cord was a trained nurse. Mrs. Carpenter suspected no such thing; she only felt the blessed benefit, and told Mr. Digby what a boon the new lodger had become to her.

So the winter, the latter part of it, passed in rather more comfort to the invalid. She did not work quite so steadily, and in good truth she would have been unable; she was free of anxieties

about debt, for the rent was sure; and of other things they bought only what they could pay for. The fare might so have been meagre sometimes; were it not that supplies seemed to come in, irregularly but opportunely, in such very pertinent and apt ways that all sorts of gaps in the housekeeping were filled up. Mr. Digby kept their larder stocked with oysters, for one thing. Then he would bring a bit of particularly nice salmon he had found; or fresh eggs that he got from an old woman down town near one of the ferries, whom he said he could trust. Or he brought some new tea for Mrs. Carpenter to try; sometimes a sweetbread, or a fresh lobster, from the market. Then it was remarkable how often Mr. Digby was tempted by the sight of game; and came with prairie chickens, quails, partridges and ducks, to tempt, as he said, Mrs. Carpenter's appetite. And at last he brought her wine. There had grown up between the two, by this time, a relation of great kindness and even affection. Ever since one day Mrs. Carpenter had been attacked by a terrible fit of coughing when he was there; and the young man had waited upon her and ministered to her in a way that Rotha had neither strength for nor skill, and also with a tenderness which she could not have surpassed. And Rotha could be tender where her mother was concerned. Ever since that day Mr. Digby had assumed, and been allowed, something like a son's place in the little family; and Mrs. Carpenter only smiled at him when he appeared with new tokens of his thoughtfulness and care.

Rotha did not accept him quite so easily. She was somewhat

jealous of his favour and of the authority he exercised; for without making the fact in any way obtrusive, a fact it was, that Mr. Digby did what he pleased. It pleased Mrs. Carpenter too; it did not quite please Rotha.

Yet in the matter of the lessons it was as much a fact as anywhere else. Mr. Digby had it quite his own way. To Mrs. Carpenter this 'way' seemed a marvel of kindness, and her gratitude was unbounded. A feeling which Rotha's heart did not at all share. She got her lessons, it is true; she did what was required of her; it soon amused Mrs. Carpenter to see with what punctilious care she did it; for in the abstract Rotha was not fond of application. She was one of those who love to walk in at the doors of knowledge, but do not at all enjoy forging the keys with which the locks must be opened. And forging keys was the work at which she was now kept busy. Rotha always knew her tasks, but she came to her recitations with a sort of reserved coldness, as if inwardly resenting or rebelling, which there is no doubt she did.

"Mr. Digby, what is the good of my knowing Latin?" she ventured to ask one day.

"You know a little about farming, do you not, Rotha?" was the counter question.

"More than a little bit, I guess."

"Do you? Then you know perhaps what is the use of ploughing the ground?"

"To make it soft. What ground are you ploughing with Latin,

Mr. Digby?"

"The ground of your mind; to get it into working order."

This intimation incensed Rotha. She was too vexed to speak. All this trouble just to get her mind into working order?

"Is that all Latin is good for?" she asked at length.

"By no means. But if it were – that is no small benefit. Not only to get the ground in working order, but to develope the good qualities of it; as for instance, the power of concentration, the power of attention, the power of discernment."

"I can concentrate my attention when I have a mind to," said Rotha.

"That is well. I am going to give you something else to do which will practise you in that."

"What, Mr. Digby?" With all her impatience Rotha was careful to observe the forms of politeness with her teacher. He silently handed her an arithmetic.

"Oh! – " said the girl, drawing out the word" – I have done sums, Mr.

Digby."

"How far?"

It turned out that Rotha's progress in that walk of learning had been limited to a very few steps. And even in those few steps, Mr. Digby's tests and questions gave her a half hour of sharp work; so sharp as to bar other thoughts for the time. Rotha shewed in this half hour uumistakeable capacity for the science of numbers; nevertheless, when her teacher went away leaving

her a good lesson in arithmetic to study along with her Latin grammar, Rotha spoke herself dissatisfied.

"Am I to learn just whatever Mr. Digby chooses to give me?" she asked.

"I thought you liked learning, Rotha?"

"Yes, mother; so I do. I like learning well enough; I don't like him to say what I shall learn."

"Why not? Mr. Digby is very kind, Rotha!"

"He may mean it for kindness. I don't know what he means it for."

"It is nothing but pure goodness," said the mother with a grateful sigh.

"Well, is he to give me everything to learn that he takes into his head?"

"Rotha, a teacher could not be kinder or more patient than Mr. Digby is with you."

"I don't try his patience, mother."

It was true enough; she did not. She had often tried her mother's; with Mr. Digby Rotha was punctual, thorough, prompt and docile. Whether it were pride or a mingling of something better, – and Rotha did love learning, – she never gave occasion for a point of blame. It was not certainly that Mr. Digby was harsh or stern, or used a manner calculated to make anybody fear him; unless indeed it were the perfectness of good breeding which he always shewed, here in the poor sempstress's room, and in his lessons to the sempstress's child. Rotha had never seen the like in

anybody before; and that more than ought else probably wrought in her such a practical awe of him. Mrs. Carpenter was even half amused to observe how Rotha unconsciously in his presence was adopting certain points of his manner; she was quiet; she moved with moderate steps; she spoke in low tones; she did not fly out in impatient or angular words or gestures, as was her way often enough at other times. Yet her mother knew, and wondered why, Rotha rebelled in secret against the whole thing. For herself, she was growing into a love for Mr. Digby which was almost like that of a mother for a son; as indeed his manner towards her was much like that of a son towards his mother. It was not the benefits conferred and received; it was a closer bond which drew them together, and a deeper relation. They looked into each other's faces, and saw there, each in the other, what each recognized as the signature of a handwriting that they loved; the stamp of a likeness that was to them both the fairest of all earthly things. Then came the good offices rendered and accepted; the frequent familiar intercourse; the purely human conditions of acquaintanceship and friendship; and it was no matter of surprise if by and by the care on the one part and the dependence on the other grew to be a thing most natural and most sweet.

So it came about, that by degrees the look of things changed in Mrs. Carpenter's small dwelling place. As the cold of the winter began to give way to the harshness of spring, and March winds blew high, the gaseous fumes from the little anthracite coal stove provoked Mrs. Carpenter's cough sadly. "She was coughing

all day," Mrs. Cord told their friend in private; "whenever the wind blew and the gas came into the room." Mr. Digby took his measures. The little cooking stove was removed; a little disused grate behind it was opened; and presently a gentle fire of Liverpool coal was burning there. The atmosphere of the room as well as the physiognomy of it was entirely changed; and Mrs. Carpenter hung over the fire and spread out her hands to it with an expression of delight on her wasted face which it was touching to see. Mr. Digby saw it, and perhaps to divert the feeling which rose in him, began to find fault with something else.

"That's a very uncomfortable chair you are sitting in!" he said with a strong expression of disapproval.

"O it does very well indeed," answered Mrs. Carpenter. "I want nothing, I think, having this delightful fire."

"How do you rest when you are tired?"

"I lean back. Or I lie down sometimes."

"Humph! Beds are very well at night. I do not think they are at all satisfactory by day."

"Why what would you have?" said Mrs. Carpenter, smiling at him.

"I'll see."

It was the next day only after this that Rotha, having finished her work for her teacher and nothing else at the moment calling for attention, was standing at the window looking out into the narrow street. The region was poor, but not squalid; nevertheless it greatly stirred Rotha's disgust. If New York is ever specially

disagreeable, it finds the occasion in a certain description of March weather; and this was such an occasion. It was very cold; the fire in the grate was well made up and burning beautifully and the room was pleasant enough; but outside there were gusts that were almost little whirlwinds coursing up and down every street, carrying with them columns and clouds of dust. The dust accordingly lay piled up on one side of the way, swept off from the rest of the street; not lying there peacefully, but caught up again from time to time, whirled through the air, shaken out upon everybody and everything in its way, and finally swept to one side and deposited again.

"It's the most horrid weather, mother, you can think of!" Rotha reported from her post of observation. "I shouldn't think anybody would be out; but I suppose they can't help it. A good many people are going about, anyhow. Some of them are so poorly dressed, mother! there was a woman went by just now, carrying a basket; I should say she had very little on indeed under her gown; the wind just took it and wrapped it round her, and she looked as slim as a post."

"Poor creature!" said Mrs. Carpenter.

"Mother, we never saw people like that in Medwayville."

"No."

"Why are they here, and not there?"

"You must ask Mr. Digby."

"I don't want to ask Mr. Digby! – There are two boys; ragged; – and barefooted. I don't know what they are out for; they have

nothing to do; they are just playing round an ash-barrel. I should think they'd be at home."

"Such people's home is often worse than the streets."

"But you don't know how it blows to-day. I should think, mother," said Rotha slowly, "New York must want a great many good people in it."

"There are a great many good people in it."

"What are they doing, then?"

"Looking out for Number One, mostly," Mrs. Cord answered, who happened to be in the room.

"But it wants people rich enough to look out for Number One, and for Number Two as well."

Mrs. Carpenter sighed. She knew there were more sides to the problem than the simple "one and two" which appeared to Rotha.

"There comes a coal cart, mother; that has to go, I suppose, for somebody wants it. I should hate to drive a coal cart! Mother, who wants it here? It is backing down upon our sidewalk."

"Mrs. Marble, I suppose."

"No, she don't; she has got her coal all in; and this isn't her coal at all; it is in big lumps some of it, like what came for the grate, and it isn't shiny like the stove coal. It must be for you, I guess."

Rotha ran down to see, and came back with the receipt for her mother to sign. Mrs. Carpenter signed with a trembling hand, and Rotha flew away again.

"It is a whole cart-load, mother," she said coming back.

"There is one good rich man in New York," said Mrs.

Carpenter tremulously.

"Do you think he is rich?"

"I fancy so."

"He hasn't spent so very much on us, has he?" asked Rotha consideringly.

"It seems much to me. More than our share, I am afraid."

"Our share of what?"

"His kindness."

"Who has the other shares?"

"I cannot tell. Other people he knows, that are in need of it."

"Mother, we are not in *need* of it, are we? We could get along without oysters, I suppose. But what I am thinking of is, if he gives other people as good a share of his time as he gives us, he cannot live at home much. Where *does* Mr. Digby live, Mrs. Cord?"

"I don't know as I can say, Rotha. It is a hotel somewheres, I believe."

"I should not think anybody would live in a hotel," said Rotha, remembering her own and her mother's experience of the "North River." "Now here comes another cart the carts have to go in all sorts of times; but O how the dust blows about! This cart is carrying something – I can't see what it's all wrapped up."

"My dear Rotha," said her mother, "I am not interested to know what the carts in the street are doing. Are you?"

"This one is stopping, mother. It is stopping *here!*"

"Well, my dear, what if it is. It is no business of ours."

"The other cart was our business, though; how do you know, mother? It has stopped here, and the man is taking the thing off."

Mrs. Cord came to the window to look, and then went down stairs. Rotha, seeing that the object of her interest, whatever it were, had disappeared within doors, presently followed her. In the little bit of a hall below stood a large something which completely filled it up; and on one side and on the other, Mrs. Marble and Mrs. Cord were taking off the wrappings in which it was enfolded.

"Well, I declare!" said the former, when they had done. "Aint that elegant!"

"Just like him," said Mrs. Cord. "I guessed this was coming, or something like it."

"What is it?" asked Rotha.

"How much does a thing like that cost, now?" Mrs. Marble went on. "Oh see the dust on it! There's a half bushel or less. Here – wait till I get my brush. – How is it ever to go up stairs? that's what I'm lookin' at."

Help had to be called in; and meantime Rotha rushed up stairs and informed her mother that a chair was come for her that was like nothing she had ever seen in her life; "soft all over," as Rotha expressed it; "back and sides and all soft as a pillow, and yet harder than a pillow; like as if it were on springs everywhere;" which was no doubt the truth of the case. "It's like getting into a nest, mother; I sat down in it; there's no hard place anywhere; there's no wood to it, that you can see."

When a little later the chair made its appearance, and Mrs. Carpenter sank down into its springy depths, it is a pity that Mr. Digby could not have heard the low long-drawn 'Oh! – ' of satisfaction and relief and wonder together, which came from her lips. Rotha stood and looked at her. Mrs. Carpenter was resting, in a very abandonment of rest; but in the abandonment of the moment shewing, as she did not use to shew it, the great enervation and prostration of her system. Her head, leaning back on the soft support it found, her hands laid exhaustedly on one side and on the other, the motionless pose of her whole person, struck Rotha with some strange new consciousness.

"Is it good?" she asked shortly.

"Very!" The word was almost a sigh.

"What makes you so weak to-day?"

"I am not weaker than usual."

"You don't always look like that."

"She's never had anything like that to rest in before," Mrs. Cord suggested. "A bed aint like one o' them chairs, for supportin' one everywhere alike. You let her rest, Rotha. Will you have an oyster, dear?"

Rotha sat down at the corner of the fireplace and stared at her mother; taking the oyster, and yet not relinquishing that air of helpless lassitude. She was not sewing either; and had not been sewing, Rotha remembered, except by snatches, for several days past. Rotha sat and gazed at her, an anxious shadow falling upon her features.

"You needn't look like that at her," said the good woman who was preparing Mrs. Carpenter's glass of wine; "she'll be rested now in a little, and feel nicely. She's been a wantin' this, or something o' this sort; but there aint nothing better than one o' them spring chairs, for resting your back and your head and every inch of you at once. Now she's got her oyster and somethin' else, and she'll pick up, you'll see."

"How good it is you came to live here," said the sick woman. "I do not know what we should do without you. You seem to understand just how everything ought to be done."

"Mother," said Rotha, "do you think I couldn't take care of you just as well? Didn't I, before Mrs. Cord came?"

"You haven't had quite so much experience, you see," put in the latter.

"Didn't I, mother?" the girl said passionately.

Mrs. Carpenter answered only by opening her arms; and Rotha coming into them, sat down lightly upon her mother's lap and hid her head on her bosom. A shadow of, she knew not what, had fallen across her, and she was very still. Mrs. Carpenter folded her arms close about her child; and so they sat for a good while. Mother and daughter, each had her own thoughts; but those of the one were dim and confused as ever thoughts could be. The other's were sharp and clear. Rotha had an uneasy sense that her mother's strength was not gaining but losing; an uneasy impatience of her lassitude and powerlessness, which yet she could not at all read. Mrs. Carpenter read it well.

She knew of a surety that her days were numbered; and not only so, but that the number of them was running out. Many cares she had not, in view of this fact; but one importunate, overwhelming, intolerable, were it not that the mother's faith was fixed where faith is never disappointed. Even so, she was human; and the question, what would be the fate of her little daughter when she herself was gone, pressed hard and pressed constantly, and found no solution. So the two were sitting, in each other's arms, mute and thoughtful, when Mr. Digby came in.

Rotha did not stir, and he came up to them, bent down by the side of the chair and took Mrs. Carpenter's hand. If he put the usual question, Mrs. Carpenter did not answer it; her eyes met his silently. There was a power of grateful love and also of grave foreboding in her quiet face; one of those looks which from an habitually self-contained spirit come with so much power on any one capable of understanding them. The young man's eyes fell from her to Rotha; the two faces were very near each other; and for the first time Rotha's defiance gave place to a little bit of liking. She had not seen her mother's look; but she had watched Mr. Digby's eyes as they answered it, in their ear nest, intent expression, and then as the eyes came to her she felt the warm ray of kindness and sympathy which beamed from them. A moment it was, but Rotha was Mr. Digby's opponent no more from that time.

"You seem to be having a pleasant rest," he remarked in his usual calm way. "I hope you have got all your work done for me?"

"I never do rest till my work is done," said the girl.

"That is a very good plan. Will you prove the fact on the present occasion?"

Rotha unwillingly left her place.

"Mr. Digby, what sort of a chair is this?"

"A spring chair."

"It is a very good thing."

"I am glad it meets your approbation."

"It meets mother's too. Do you see how she rests in it?"

"Does she rest?" asked the young man, rather of Mrs. Carpenter than of her daughter.

"All the body can," she answered with a faint smile.

"'Underneath are the everlasting arms' – " he said.

But that word caused a sudden gush of tears on the sick woman's part; she hid her face; and Mr. Digby called off Rotha at once to her recitations. He kept her very busy at them for some time; Latin and arithmetic and grammar came under review; and then he proceeded to put a pen in her hand and give her a dictation lesson; criticised her handwriting, set her a copy, and fully engrossed Rotha's eyes and mind.

CHAPTER VI.
A LEGACY

"Mother," said Rotha, when their visiter was again gone and her copy was done and she had returned to her mother's side, "I never knew before to- day that Mr. Digby has handsome eyes."

"How did you find it out to-day?"

"I had a good look at them, and they looked at me so."

"How?"

"I don't know – as if they meant a good deal, and good. Don't you think he has handsome eyes, mother?"

"I always knew that. He is a very fine-looking man altogether."

"Is he? I suppose he is. Only he likes to have his own way."

"I wonder if somebody else doesn't, that I know?"

"That's the very thing, mother. If I didn't, I suppose I shouldn't care. But when Mr. Digby says anything, he always looks as if he expected it to be just so, and everybody to mind him."

Mrs. Carpenter could not help laughing, albeit she was by no means in a laughing mood. Her laugh was followed by a sigh.

"What makes you draw a long breath, mother?"

"I wish you could govern that temper of yours, my child."

"Why, mother? Haven't I as good a right to my own way as Mr. Digby, or anybody?"

"Few people can have their own way in the world; and a

woman least of all."

"Why?"

"She generally has to mind the will of somebody else."

"But that isn't fair."

"It is the way things are."

"Mother, it may be the way with some people; but *I* have got nobody to mind?"

"Your mother? – "

"O yes; but that isn't it. You are a woman. There is no man I must mind."

"If you ever grow up and marry somebody, there will be."

"I would *never* marry anybody I had to mind!" said the girl energetically.

"You are the very person that would do it," said the mother; putting her hand fondly upon Rotha's cheek. "My little daughter! – If only I knew that you were willing to obey the Lord Jesus Christ, I could be easy about you."

"And aren't, you easy about me?"

"No," said the mother sadly.

"Would you be easy if I was a Christian?"

Mrs. Carpenter nodded. There was a pause.

"I would like to be a Christian, mother, if it would make you feel easy; but – somehow – I don't want to."

"I know that."

"How do you know that?"

"Because you hold off. If you were once willing, the thing

would be done."

There was silence again; till Rotha suddenly broke it by asking, "Mother, can I help my will?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why! If I don't want to be a Christian, can I make myself want to?"

"That seems to me a foolish question," said her mother. "Suppose you do not want to do something I tell you to do; need that hinder your obeying?"

"But this is different."

"I do not see how it is different."

"What is being a Christian, then?"

"You know, Rotha."

"But tell me, mother. I don't know if I know."

"You ought to know. A Christian is one who loves and serves the Lord Jesus."

"And then he can't do what he has a mind to," said Rotha.

"Yes, he can; unless it is something wrong."

"Well, he can't do *what he has a mind to;* he must always be asking."

"That is not hard, if one loves the Lord."

"But I don't love him, mother."

"No," said Mrs. Carpenter sadly.

"Can I make myself love him?"

"No; but that is foolish talk."

"I don't see why it is foolish, I am sure. I wish I did love him,

if it would make you feel better."

"I should not have a care left!" said Mrs. Carpenter, with a sort of breath of longing.

"Why not, mother?"

"Get the Bible and read the 121st psalm, – slowly."

Rotha obeyed.

"'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth'" —

"There! if you were one of the Lord's dear children, you would say that; that would be true of you. Now go on, and see what the Lord says to it; see what would follow."

Rotha went on.

"'He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.' —*Israel*, mother."

"The true Israel are the Lord's true children, of any nation."

"Are they? Well – 'The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand; the sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore. Praise ye the Lord.'"

"Would anybody be well kept that was kept so?" Mrs. Carpenter broke forth, with the tears running down her face. "O my little Rotha! my little daughter! if I knew you in that care,

how blessed I should be!"

The tears streamed, and Mrs. Carpenter in vain tried to wipe them dry.

Rotha looked on, troubled, and a little conscience-stricken.

"Mother," she began, "don't he take care of anybody except Christians?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Carpenter; "he takes care of the children of Christians; and so I have faith that he will take care of you; but it is not just so. If you will not come to him now, he may take painful ways to bring you; if you will not trust him now, he may cut away everything else you trust to, till you flee to him for help. But I wish you would take the easier way."

"But can I help my will?" said Rotha again, holding fast to that tough argument. "What can I do?"

"I cannot tell. You had better ask Mr. Digby. I am not able for any more questions just now."

"Mother. I'll bring you your milk," said Rotha, rather glad of a diversion. "Mother, do you think Mr. Digby can answer all sorts of questions?"

"Better than I can."

She brought her mother the glass of milk and the biscuit and sat watching her while she took them. She noticed the thin hands, the exhausted look, the weary attitude, the pale face. What state of things was this? Her mother eating biscuit and oysters got with another person's money; doing no work, or next to none; living in lodgings, but apparently without the prospect of earning the

means to pay her rent; too feeble to do much but rest in that spring chair.

"Mother," Rotha began, with a lurking, unrecognized feeling of anxiety —

"I wish you would make haste and get well!"

Mrs. Carpenter was eating biscuit, and made no reply.

"Don't you think you *are* a little better?"

"Not exactly to-day."

"What *would* do you good?"

"Nothing that you could give me, darling. I am very comfortable. I wonder to see myself so supplied with everything I can possibly want. Look at this chair! It is almost better than all the rest."

"That and the fire."

"Yes; the blessed fire! It is so good!"

"But I wish you'd get well, mother!" Rotha said with a half sigh.

Mrs. Carpenter made no answer.

"I don't see how we are going to do, if you don't get well soon," Rotha went on with a kind of impatient uneasiness. "What shall we do for money, mother? there's the rent and everything."

"You forget what you have just been reading, my child. Do you think the words mean nothing? – 'The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.'"

"But that don't pay rent," said Rotha.

"You think the Lord can do great things, and cannot do little things. I can trust him for all."

"Then why cannot you trust him for me?"

"I do."

"Then why are you troubled?"

"Because here your self-will comes in; and you may have to go through hard times before it is broken."

"Broken? My self-will broken?"

"Yes."

"I do not want to be a creature without a will. I do not like such creatures."

"You must talk to Mr. Digby, Rotha. I am too tired."

"I won't tire you any more, mother dear! But I don't see why I should talk to Mr. Digby."

And for a few moments Rotha was silent. Then she broke out again.

"Mother, don't you think if you could get back to Medwayville you would be well again?"

"I shall never go back to Medwayville," the sick woman said faintly.

"But if you could get into the country somewhere? out of this horrid dust and these mean little streets. O mother, think of the great fields of grass, and the trees, and the flowers!"

"Darling, I am very well here. Suppose you take the poker and punch that lump of coal, so that it may blaze up a little."

Rotha punched the lump of coal, and sat watching the brilliant

jets of flame that leapt from it, sending a gentle illumination all through the room; revolving in her mind whether it might be possible by and by to get her mother among the sights and sounds of the country again.

As the spring advanced however, though the desirableness of such a move might be more apparent, the difficulty of it as evidently increased. The close, stifling air of the city, when the warm days came, was hard to bear for the sick woman, and hard in two ways for Rotha. But Mrs. Carpenter's strength failed more and more. There was no question now of her sewing; she did not attempt it. She sat all day in her spring easy chair, by the window or before the fire as the day happened to be, now and then turning over the leaves of her Bible which always lay open before her. And now Mr. Digby when he came would often take the book and read to her; and even talks of some length would grow up out of the reading; talks that seemed delightful to both the parties concerned, though Rotha could not understand much of it. Little by little the room had entirely changed its character, and no longer seemed to be a part of Mrs. Marble's domain. A fluffy rug lay under Mrs. Carpenter's feet; a pretty lamp stood on the table; a screen of Japanese manufacture, endlessly interesting to Rotha, stood between the weary eyes and the fire, when there was a fire; and Mrs. Carpenter herself was enveloped in a warm, soft fleecy shawl. As the warm weather came on indeed, this had to give place to something lighter. Then Mr. Digby brought fruit; early fruit, and foreign fruit; then a little India tea caddy of very nice tea

stood on the table; tea such as in all her life Mrs. Carpenter had never drunk till now. She had long ceased to make any objection to whatever Mr. Digby pleased to do; taking it all as simply and as graciously as a child. Much more than her own child. However, Rotha was mollified towards their benefactor from that day above mentioned; and if she looked on wonderingly, and even a little jealously, at his unresisted assuming of the direction of their affairs, she no more openly rebelled.

Mr. Digby, it may be remarked, kept her so persistently busy, that she had small time to disturb herself with any sort of speculations. Lessons were lively. History was added to Latin and arithmetic; Rotha had a good deal to read, and troublesome sums to manage; and finally every remnant of spare leisure was filled up by a demand for writing. Mr. Digby did not frighten her by talking of compositions, but he desired her to prepare now an abstract of the history of the crusades, now of the Stuart dynasty, now of the American revolution; and now again of the rise of the art of printing, or the use and manufacture of gunpowder.

Studying out these subjects, pondering them, writing and writing over her sketches, Rotha was both very busy and very happy; and then the handing over her papers to Mr. Digby, and his reading them, and his strictures upon them, were a matter of intense interest and delight; for though Rotha trembled with excitement she was still more thrilled with pleasure. For she was just at the age when the mind begins to open to a rapturous consciousness of its powers, and at the same time of

the wonderful riches of the fields open to the exercise of them. In her happy ignorance, in her blessed inexperience, Rotha did not see what the days were doing with her mother; and if occasionally a flash of unwelcome perception would invade her mind, with the unbounded presumption of her young years she shut her eyes and refused to believe in it. But all the while Mrs. Carpenter was growing feebler and wasting to more of a shadow. Rotha still comforted herself that she had "a nice colour in her cheeks."

It came to be the latter end of June. Windows were open; what would have been delicious summer air came in laden with the mingled odours of street mud and street dust, garbage, the scents of butcher stalls and grocery shops, and far worse, the indefinable atmospheric tokens of poor living and uncleanness. Now and then a whiff of more energy brought a reminder not quite perverted of the places where flowers grow and cows pasture and birds sing. It only served to make the next breath more heavy and disappointing. Mrs. Carpenter sat by the window to get all the freshness she could; albeit with the air came also the sounds from without; the creak or the rattle of wheels on the pavement, the undistinguishable words of a rough voice here and there, the shrill cry of the strawberry seller, the confused, mixed, inarticulate din of the great city all around. A sultry heaviness seemed to rest upon everything, disheartening and depressing to anybody whose physical powers were not strong or his nerves not well strung for the work and struggle of life. There was a pump over the way; and from time to time the creak of its handle

was to be heard, and then the helpless drip and splash of the last runnings of the water falling into the gutter, after the applicant had gone away with his or her pail. It mocked Mrs. Carpenter's ear with the recollection of running brooks, and of a certain cool deep well into which the bucket used to go down from the end of a long pole and come up sparkling with drops of the clear water. —

"Well, how do you do?" said the alert voice of Mrs. Marble by her side.

"Sort o' close, aint it?"

"Rather."

"The city aint a place for Christians to live in, when it gets to this time; anyhow, not for Christians that aint good and strong. I'd like to put you out to pasture somewheres."

"She won't go," said Rotha longingly.

"I am, very comfortable here," said the invalid faintly.

"Comfortable! well, I feel as if you ought to be top of a mountain somewheres; out o' this. *I'd* like to; but I guess I'm a fixtur. Mr. Digby I'd find ways and means, I'll engage," she said, eyeing the sick woman with kindly interest and concern, who however only shook her head.

"Could you eat your strawberries?" she asked presently.

"A few of them. They were very nice."

"I never see such berries. They must have been raised somewhere in Gulliver's Brobdignay; and Gulliver don't send 'em round in these parts. I thought, maybe you'd pay 'em the

compliment to eat 'em; but when appetite's gone, it's no use to have big strawberries. That's what I thought a breath of hilly air somewheres would do for you."

And Mrs. Marble presently went away, shaking her head, just as Mr. Digby came in; exchanging a look with him as she passed. Mr. Digby came up to the window, and greeted Mrs. Carpenter with the gentle affectionate reverence he always shewed her.

"No stronger to-day?" said he.

"She won't go into the country, Mr. Digby," said Rotha.

"You may go and get a walk at least, my child," Mrs. Carpenter said. "Ask Mrs. Cord to be so kind as to take you. Now while Mr. Digby is here, I shall not be alone. Can you stay half an hour?" she asked him suddenly.

He gave ready assent; and Rotha, weary of her cooped-up life, eagerly sought Mrs. Cord and went off for her walk. Mrs. Carpenter and Mr. Digby were left alone.

"I am *not* stronger," the former began as the house door closed. "I am losing strength, I think, every day. I wanted to speak to you; and it had better be done at once."

She paused, and he waited. The trickle of the water from the pump came to her ear again, stirring memories oddly.

"You asked me the other day, whether I had no friends in the city. I told you I had not. I told you the truth, but not the whole truth. Before Rotha I could not say all I wished. I have a sister living in New York."

"A sister!" Mr. Digby echoed the word in great surprise. "She

knows of your being here?"

"She does not."

"Surely she ought to know."

"No, I think not. I told you the truth the other day. I have not a friend, here or elsewhere. Not what you call a friend. Only you."

"But your *sister?* How is that possible?"

Mrs. Carpenter sighed. "I had better tell you all about it, and then you will know how to understand me. Perhaps. I can hardly understand it myself."

There was a pause again. The sick woman was evidently looking back in thought over days and years and the visions of what had been in them. Her gentle, quiet eyes had grown intent, and over her brows there was a fold in her forehead that Mr. Digby had never seen there before. But there was no trembling of the mouth. That was steady and grave and firm.

"There were two of us," she said at last. "My father had but us two, how long it is ago! – "

She was silent again with her thoughts, and Mr. Digby again waited. It was a patient face he was looking at; a gentle face; not a face that spoke of any experience that could be called bitter, yet the patient lines told of something endured or something resigned; it might be both. The last two years of experience, with a sister in the same city, must needs furnish occasion. But Mrs. Carpenter's brow was quiet, except for that one fold in it. Yet she seemed to have forgotten what she had meant to say, and only after a while pulled herself up, as it were, and began again.

"It is not so long as it seems, I suppose, for I am not very old; but it seems long. We two were girls together at home, and my father was living; and I knew nothing about the world."

"Was that here? in New York?" Mr. Digby asked, by way of helping her on.

"O no. I knew nothing about New York. I had never been here. No; our home was not far from Tanfield; up in this state, near the Connecticut border. We lived a little out of the town, and had a nice place. My father was very well off indeed. I wanted for nothing in those days." She sighed.

"The world is a strange place, Mr. Digby! I cannot comprehend, even now, how things should have gone as they did. We lived as happy as anybody; until a gentleman, a young lawyer of New York, began to make visits at our house. He paid particular attention to me at first; but it was of no use; I had learned to know Mr. Carpenter, and nobody else could be anything to me. He was a thriving lawyer; a rising young man, people said; and my father would have had me marry him; but I could not. So then he courted my sister. O the splash of that water from the pump over there! it keeps me thinking to-day of the well behind our house – where it stood on a smooth green plat of grass – and of the trickle of the water from the buckets as they were drawn up. Just because the day is so warm, I think of those buckets of well water. The well was sixty feet deep, and the water was clear and cold and beautiful – I never saw such water anywhere else; and when the bucket came slowly up, with the

moss on its sides glittering with the wet, there was refreshment in the very look of it. Tanfield seems to me a hundred thousand miles away from Jane Street; and those times about a thousand years ago. I wonder, how will all our life seem when we look back upon it from the other side?"

"Very much as objects seen under a microscope, I fancy."

"Do you? Why?"

"In the clear understanding of details, and in the new perception of the relative bearing and importance of parts."

"Yes, I suppose so. Things are very mixed and confused as we see them here. Take what I am telling you, for instance; it is incredible, only that it is true."

"You have not told me much yet," said her friend gently.

"No. The gentleman I spoke of, the lawyer, he married my sister. And then, when I would have married Mr. Carpenter, my sister set herself against it, and she talked over my father into her views, and they both opposed it all they could."

"Did they give any reasons for their opposition?"

"O yes. Mr. Carpenter was only a farmer, they said; not my equal, and not very well off. I am sure in all real qualities he was much my superior; but just in the matter of society it was more or less true. He did not mix in society much, and did not care for it; but he had education and cultivation a great deal more than many that do; he had read and he had thought, and he could talk too, and well, to one or two alone. But they wanted me to marry a rich man. I think half the trouble in the world comes about money."

"'The love of money is the root of all evil,' the Bible says."

"I believe it. There was nothing else to be said against Mr. Carpenter, but that he had not money; if he had had it, nobody would have found out that he wanted cultivation, or anything else. But he was a poor man. And when I married him, my father cut me off from all share in the inheritance of his property."

"It all fell to your sister?"

"Yes. All. The place, the old place, and all. She had everything."

"And kept it."

"O yes. Of course. She is a rich woman. Her husband has prospered in his business; and they are *very* well off now. They have only one child, too."

Mrs. Carpenter was silent, and Mr. Digby paused a minute or two before he spoke again.

"Still, my dear friend, do you not think your sister would shew herself your sister, if she knew where you are and how you are? Do you not think it would be right and kind to let her know?"

Mrs. Carpenter shook her head. "No," she said, "it would be no comfort to me; and you are mistaken if you think it would be any satisfaction to her. She is a rich woman. She keeps her carriage, and she has her liveried servants, and she lives in style. She would not like to come here to see me."

"I cannot conceive it," said Mr. Digby. "I think you must unconsciously be doing her wrong."

"I tried her," said Mrs. Carpenter. "I will not try her again.

When my husband got into difficulties, and his health was giving way, and he was driven a little too hard, I wrote to my sister in New York to ask her to give us some help; knowing that she was abundantly able to do it, without hurting herself. She sent me for answer – " Mrs. Carpenter stopped; the words seemed to choke her; her lip quivered; and when she began to speak again her voice was a little hoarse.

"She wrote me, that if my husband *died*, she would have no objection to my going back to the old place, and getting along there as well as I could; Rotha and I."

One or two sore, sorrowful tears forced their way out of the speaker's eyes; but she said no more. And Mr. Digby did not know what further to counsel, and was also silent. The silence lasted some little time, while a strawberry seller was making the street ring with her cries of "Straw…berr_ees_," and the hot air wafted in the odours from near and far, and the water trickled from the pump nose again. At last Mrs. Carpenter began again, with some difficulty and effort; not bodily however, but mental.

"You have been so exceedingly kind to me, to us, Mr. Digby, I – "

"Hush," he said. "Do not speak of that. You have done far more for me than I ever can do for you?"

"I? No. I have done nothing."

"You saved my father's life."

"Your father's life? You are under some mistake. I never knew a Mr. Digby till I knew you I never even heard the name."

"You knew a Mr. Southwode," said he smiling.

"Southwode? Southwode! The English gentleman! But you are not his son?"

"I am his son. I am Digby-Southwode. I took my mother's name for certain business reasons."

"And you are his son! How wonderful! That strange gentleman's son! – But I did not do so much for your father, Mr. Southwode. You have done*everything* for me."

"I wish I could do more," said he shortly.

"I am ashamed to ask, – and yet, I was going to ask you to do something more – a last service – for me. It is too much to ask."

"I am sure it is not that," he said with great gentleness. "Let me know what you wish."

Mrs. Carpenter hesitated. "Rotha does not know," – she said then. "She has no idea – "

"Of what?"

"She has no idea that I am going to leave her."

"I am afraid that is true."

"And it will be soon Mr. Digby."

"Perhaps not; but what is it you wish of me?"

"Tell her – " whispered Mrs. Carpenter.

The young man might feel startled, or possibly an inevitable strong objection to the service demanded of him. He made no answer; and Mrs. Carpenter soon went on.

"It is wrong to ask it, and yet whom shall I ask? I would not have her learn it from any of the people in the house; though

they are kind, they are not discreet; and Rotha would in any case come straight to me; and I – cannot bear it. She is a passionate child; violent in her feelings and in the expression of them. I have been thinking about it day and night lately, and I *cannot* get my courage up to face the first storm of her distress. My poor child! she is not very fitted to go through the world alone."

"What are your plans for her?"

"I am unable to form any."

"But you must tell me what steps you wish me to take in her behalf – if there is no one whom you could better trust."

"There is no one whom I can trust at all. Except only my Father in heaven. I trust him, or I should die before my time. I thought my heart*would* break, a while ago; now I have got over that. Do you know He has said, 'Leave thy fatherless children to me'?"

Yet now the mother's tears were falling like rain.

"I will do the very best I can," said the young man at her side; "but I wish you would give me some hints, or directions, at least."

"How can I? There lie but two things before me; – that Mrs. Cord should bring her up and make a sempstress of her; or that Mrs. Marble should teach her to be a mantua-maker; and I am so foolish, I cannot bear the thought of either thing; even if they would do it, which I do not know."

"Make your mind easy. She shall be neither the one thing nor the other.

Rotha has far too good abilities for that. I will not give her to Mrs.

Cord's or Mrs. Marble's oversight. But what *would* you wish?"

"I do not know. I must leave you to judge. You can judge much better than I. I have no knowledge of the world, or of what is possible. Mrs. Marble tells me there are free schools here – "

"Of course she shall go to school. I will see that she does. And I will see that she is under some woman's care who can take proper care of her. Do not let yourself be troubled on that score. I promise you, you need not. I will take as good care of her as if she were a little sister of my own."

There was silence at first, the silence of a heart too full to find words. Mrs. Carpenter sat with her head a little bowed.

"You will lose nothing by it," she said huskily after a few minutes.

"There is a promise somewhere – "

But with that she broke down and cried.

"I don't know what you will do with her!" she said; "nor what anybody will do with her, except her mother. She is a wayward child; passionate; strong, and also weak, on the side of her affections. She has never learned yet to submit her will, though for love she is capable of great devotion. She has shewed it to me this past winter."

"Is there any other sort of devotion that is worth much?" asked the young man.

"Duty? – "

"Surely the devotion of love is better."

"Yes – . But duty ought to be recognized for what it is."

"Nay, I think it ought to be recognized for a pleasure. Here she comes. —

Well, Rotha, was the walk pleasant?"

"No."

"Indeed? Why not?"

"How could it be, Mr. Digby? Not a bit of good air, nor anything pleasant to see; just all hot and dirty."

"I thought you said there were some flowers in front of some of the shops?" her mother said.

"Yes, mother; but they looked melancholy."

"Did they?" said Mr. Digby smiling. "Suppose you go with me to-morrow, and I will take you to the Park."

"O! will you?" said Rotha with suddenly opening eyes. "Can you?"

"If Mrs. Carpenter permits."

CHAPTER VII.
MENTAL PHILOSOPHY

The next day being again warm, Mr. Digby did not come for Rotha till the afternoon was far advanced. They took then one of the street cars, which would bring them to the Park entrance. The way was long and the drive slow. It was also silent, of necessity; and both parties had leisure for thoughts, as well as material enough.

Rotha was at first divided between the pleasure of seeing things, and a somewhat uneasy reflection upon her own appearance. She was not in general a self-conscious child; very much the reverse; but to-day she was with Mr. Digby, and she had an exalted idea of the requirements of everything even remotely connected with him. She was going in his company; under his charge; how did she look? She was not satisfied on that point. Mr. Digby himself was always so nice and perfect in his dress, she said to herself; she ought to be very nice to go with him. Truly she had put on the best she had; a white cambrick frock; it was clean and white; but Rotha had none but her everyday brown straw hat, and she knew *that* was not "smart"; and her dress, she pondered it as she went along, she was sure it was very old-fashioned indeed. Certainly it was not made like the dresses of other girls of her own age, whom she saw in the car or on

the sidewalk. Theirs were ruffled; hers was plain; theirs generally stood out in an imposing manner; while her own clung in slim folds around her slim little person. She concluded that she could not be in any degree what Mrs. Marble called "stylish." The exact meaning of that word indeed Rotha could not define; undefinedly she felt it to be something vastly desirable. She decided in her own mind that Mr. Digby was stylish; which it is true proved that the young girl had a nice feeling for things; since the fact, which was undoubted, was entirely unaccompanied by anything in matter or manner of wearing which could take the vulgar eye. Would he dislike going in public, she wondered, with a little figure like herself? She hoped not, she thought not; but thought it with a curious independence, which I am afraid was really born of pride though it took the semblance of good sense.

Gradually the interest of other figures made Rotha forget her own. They came out from the poor part of the city where she dwelt; streets grew wide and shops lofty and imposing; equipages drove along, outstripping the slow-going car; and in them, what ladies, and what gentlemen, and what little girls now and then! This was the wonderful New York, at which she had now and then had a peep; this was something five hundred miles removed from Jane Street. What sort of human beings were these? and what sort of life did they live? and did money make all the difference, or was there some more intrinsic and essential distinction between them and their fellows in Abingdon Square? At any rate, how very, very much better off they were!

Mr. Digby's musings had much less to do with the surface of things. I doubt indeed if he saw ought that was before his eyes, all the way to the Park. Not even Rotha herself; and yet she was the main subject of his cogitations. He was feeling that his kindness to Mrs. Carpenter had brought him into difficulties. The very occasion for this journey to the Park was bad enough; so disagreeable in fact that he did not like to look at it, and hardly had looked at it until now; he was going as a man goes into battle; and a rain of bullets, he thought, would have been easier to face. How he should accomplish his task he had as yet no idea. But supposing it done; and supposing all the trouble past for which he had to prepare Rotha; what then? What was he to do with the charge he had assumed? He, a young man without a family, with no proper home in the country of his abode, what was he to do with the care of a girl like Rotha? how should he manage it? If she had been a little child it would have been a more simple affair; but fourteen years old is not at all far removed from seventeen, and eighteen. Where should *her* home be? and her future sphere of life? and where was the promised womanly protection under which he was to place her? He gave a glance at the girl. She was good material to work upon, that was one alleviation of his task; he had had some practical proof of it, and now, more carefully than ever before, he looked for the outward signs and tokens in feature and expression. And as Rotha had once declared that Mr. Digby's eyes were handsome, he now privately returned the compliment to hers. Yes, this child, who

had an awkward appearance as to her figure – he did not know then that the effect was due to her dress – she had undoubtedly fine eyes. Poor complexion, he said to himself after a second glance, but good eyes. And not merely in shape and hue; they were full of speculation, full of thought, full of the possibilities of passion and feeling. There was character in them; and so there was in the well formed, well closed mouth. *There* was refinement too; the lines were not those of an uncultured, low- conditioned nature; they were fine and beautiful. It had never occurred to Mr. Digby before to think how Rotha promised to be in the matter of looks; although he had many a time caught the gleam of intelligent fire in the course of her recitations and his lesson giving, and once or twice had seen that passion of one kind or another was at work. He read now very plainly that his charge, to go back to the old philosophy of human nature which reckoned man to be composed of the four elements, had a great deal of the fire and the air in her composition, with little of the heaviness of the earth, and as little as possible of the lymphatic quality. It made his task the more interesting, and in so far lightened it; but it made it at the same time vastly more difficult. Here was a sensitive, quick, passionate, independent nature to deal with; how ever should he deal with it? And how ever was he to execute his purpose to- day? the purpose with which he had brought her, poor child, to this walk in the Park. Was it not rather cruel, to begin a time of great pain with a taste of exquisite pleasure? Mr. Digby hardly knew what he would do, when he left the car with

his charge and entered the Park.

They went in at the great Fifth Avenue entrance; and for a few minutes he was engaged in piloting himself and her through the crowd of coming and going carriages; but when they reached quiet going and a secure footpath, he looked at her. It smote him. Such an expression of awakened delight was in her face; such keen curiosity, such simplicity and fulness of enjoyment. Rotha was at a self-conscious age, but she had forgotten herself; two years old is not more free from self-recollection. They walked along slowly, the girl reviewing everything in the lively show before her; lips parting sometimes for a smile, but with no leisure for a word. Her companion watched her. They walked on and on; turned now hither and now thither; Rotha remained in a maze, only mechanically following where she was led.

It was a fine afternoon, and all the world was out. Carriages, riders, foot travellers; everywhere crowds of people. Where was Mr. Digby going to make the communication he had come here to make? He doubted about it now, but if he spoke, where should it be? Not in this crowd, where any minute some acquaintance might see him and speak to him. With some trouble he sought out a resting place for Rotha from whence she could have a good view of one angle of a much travelled drive, and at the same time both of them were in a sort hid away from observation. Here they sat down; but if Rotha's feet might rest, her companion's mind was further and further from any such point of comfort. They had exchanged hardly any words since they set out; and now the

difficulty of beginning what he had to say seemed greater than ever. There was a long silence. Rotha broke it; she did not know that it had been long.

"Mr. Digby – there are a great many things I do not understand."

"My case too, Rotha."

"Yes, but you understand a great many things that I don't."

"What is troubling you now, with a sense of ignorance?"

"I see in a great many carriages two gentlemen dressed just alike, sitting together; they are on the back seat always, and they always have their arms folded, just alike; what are they?"

"Not gentlemen, Rotha; they are footmen, or grooms."

"What's the difference?"

"Between footmen and grooms?"

"No, no; between a gentleman and a man that isn't a gentleman?"

"You asked me that once before, didn't you?"

"Yes; but I don't make it out."

"Why do you try?"

"Why Mr. Digby, I like to understand things."

"Quite right, too, Rotha. Well – the difference is more in the feelings and manners than in anything else."

"Not in the dress?"

"Certainly not. Though it is not like a gentleman to be improperly dressed."

"What is 'improperly dressed.'"

"Not nice and neat."

"Nice and neat —*clean* and neat, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Then a gentleman may have poor clothes on?"

"Of course."

"Can anybody be *poor* and be a gentleman?"

"Not *anybody*, but a gentleman may be poor, certainly, without ceasing to be a gentleman."

"But if he was poor to begin with – could he be a gentleman then?"

"Yes, Rotha," said her friend smiling at her; "money has nothing to do with the matter. Except only, that without money it is difficult for a boy to be trained in the habits and education of a gentleman."

"Education?" said Rotha.

"Yes."

"You said, 'feeling and manners.'"

"Well, yes. But you can see for yourself, that without education it would be hardly possible that manners should be exactly what they ought to be. A gentleman should give to everybody just that sort of attention and respect which is due; just the right words and the right tone and the fitting manner; how can he, if he does not understand his own position in the world and that of other people? and why the one and the other are what they are."

"Then I don't see how poor people can be ladies and

gentlemen," said Rotha discontentedly.

"Being poor has nothing to do with it, except so far."

"But that's far enough, Mr. Digby."

He heard the disappointed ambition in the tone of the girl's words.

"Rotha," he said kindly, "whoever will follow the Bible rules of good manners, will be sure to be right, as far as that goes."

"Can one follow them without being a Christian?"

"Well no, hardly. You see, the very root of them is love to one's neighbour; and one cannot have that, truly and universally, without loving Christ first."

"Then are all gentlemen Christians?"

The young man laughed a little at her pertinacity.

"What are you so much concerned about it, Rotha?"

"I was just thinking." —

And apparently she had a good deal of thinking to do; for she was quite silent for some time. And Mr. Digby on his part went back to his problem, how was he to tell Rotha what he had promised to tell her? From their somewhat elevated and withdrawn position, the moving scene before them was most bright and gay. An endless procession of equipages – beautiful carriages, stately horses, pompous attendants, luxurious pleasure-takers; one after another, and twos and threes following each other, a continuous stream; carriages of all sorts, landaus, Victorias, clarences, phaetons, barouches, close coaches, dog carts, carryalls, gigs, buggies. Now and then a country affair, with

occupants to match; now a plain wagon with a family of children having a good time; now an old gentleman and his wife taking a sober airing; then a couple of ladies half lost in the depths of their cushions, and not having at all a good time, to judge by their looks; and then a young man with nobody but himself and a pair of fast trotting horses, which had, and needed, all his attention; and then a whirl of the general thing, fine carriages, fine ladies, fine gentlemen, fine servants and fine horses; in all varieties of combination. It was very pretty; it was very gay; the young foliage of early summer was not yet discouraged and dulled by the heat and the dust; the air was almost country sweet, and flowers were brilliant in one of the plantations within sight. How the world went by! —

Mr. Digby had half forgotten it and everything else, in his musings, when he was aroused, and well nigh startled, by a question from Rotha.

"Mr. Digby – can I help my will?"

He looked down at her. "What do you mean, Rotha?"

"I mean, can I help my will? I asked mother one day, and she said I had better ask you."

Rotha's eyes came up to his face with their query; and whatever it might import, he saw that she was in earnest. Grave and intent the girl's fine dark eyes were, and came up to his eyes with a kind of power of search.

"I do not think I understand you."

"Yes, you do. If I do not like something – do not want to be

something – can I help my will?"

"What do you not want to be?" said Mr. Digby, waiving this severe question in mental philosophy.

"Must I tell you?"

"Not if you don't like; but I think it might help me to get at your difficulty, and so to get at the answer you want."

"Mr. Digby, can a person want to do something, and yet not be willing?"

"Yes," said he, in growing surprise.

"Then, can he *help* not being willing?"

"What is the case in hand, Rotha? I am wholly in the dark. I do not know what you would be at."

To come nearer to the point was not Rotha's wish and had not been her purpose; she hesitated. However, the subject was one which exercised her, and the opportunity of discussing her difficulty with Mr. Digby was very tempting. She hesitated, but she could not let the chance go.

"Mother wishes I would be a Christian," she said low and slowly. "And I wish I could, to please her; but I do not want to. Can I help my will? and I am not willing."

There was a mixture of defiance and desire in this speech which instantly roused the somewhat careless attention of the young man beside her. Anything that touched the decision of any mortal in the great question of everlasting life, awoke his sympathies always to fullest exercise. It was not his way, however, to shew what he felt; and he answered her with the same

deliberate calm as hitherto. Nobody would have guessed the quickened pulses with which he spoke.

"Why do you not want to be a Christian, Rotha?"

"I do not know," she answered slowly. "I suppose, I want to be free."

"Go on a little bit, and tell me what you mean by being 'free.'"

"Why – I mean, I suppose, – I *know* I mean, that I want to do what I like."

"You are taking the wrong way for that."

"Why, I could not do what I liked if I was a Christian, Mr. Digby?"

"A Christian, on the contrary, is the only person in this world, so far as I know, who can do what he likes."

"Why, do you?" said Rotha, looking at him.

"Yes," said he smiling. "Always."

"But I thought – "

"You thought a Christian was a sort of a slave."

"Yes. Or a servant. A servant he is; and a servant is not free. He has laws to mind."

"And you think, by refusing the service you get rid of the laws? That's a mistake. The laws are over you and binding on you, just the same, whether you accept them or not; and you have got to meet the consequences of not obeying them. Did you never think of that?"

"But it is different if I *promised* to obey them," said Rotha.

"How different?"

"If I promised, I must do it."

"If you do not promise you must take the consequences of not doing it.

You cannot get from under the law."

"But how can you do whatever you like, Mr. Digby?"

"There comes in your other mistake," said he. "I can, because I am free.

It is you who are the slave."

"I? How, Mr. Digby?"

"You said just now, you wished you could be a Christian, but you could not. Are you free to do what you wish?"

"But can I help my will?"

The gentleman took out of his pocket a slim little New Testament which always went about with him, and put it into Rotha's hands open at a certain place, bidding her read.

"'Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'" Rotha stopped and looked up at her companion.

"Go on," he bade her; and she read further.

"'They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

"'Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.'"

Rotha looked at the words, after she had done reading.

"Mr. Digby," she said then again, "can I help my will?"

"No," said he, "for you are a poor bond-slave. But see what is written there. What you cannot do, Christ can."

"Why don't he do it, then?" she said defiantly.

"You have not asked him, or wished him to do it."

"But why shouldn't he do it without my asking, or wishing, if he can?"

"It is not his way. He says, 'Ask, and ye shall receive'; but he promises nothing to those who do not apply to him. And the application must be in good earnest too, Rotha; not the form of the thing, but the truth. 'Blessed are they that *hunger and thirst* after righteousness; for they shall be filled.'"

"Then, if I asked him, could he change my will?"

"He says, he can make you free. It was one thing he came to do; to deliver people from the bondage of sin and the power of Satan."

"The power of Satan!" said Rotha. "I am not under *his* power!"

"Certainly you are. There are only two parties in the world; two kingdoms; those who do not belong to the one, belong to the other."

"But Mr. Digby," said Rotha, now much exercised, "I hate the devil as much as you do."

"Don't help, Rotha. 'From the power of Satan to God,' is the turn people take when they become Christians."

"What makes you think I am under his power?"

"Because I see you are not under the rule of Christ. And because I see you are doing precisely what Satan would have you do."

"What?" said Rotha.

"Refusing the Lord Jesus Christ, or putting off accepting him."

Rotha was silent. Her breast was heaving, her breath coming thick and short. Mr. Digby's conclusions were very disagreeable to her; but what could she say?

"I can't help my will," she said doggedly.

"You see you are not honest with yourself. You have just learned that there is a remedy for that difficulty."

"But Mr. Digby," said Rotha, "how is it that you can do what you like?"

He smiled down at her, a pleasant, frank smile, which witnessed to the truth of his words and wrought more with Rotha than the words themselves; while the eyes that she admired rested on her with grave penetration.

"There is an old promise the Lord gave his people a great while ago; that in the new covenant which he would make with them in Christ, he would write all his laws in their hearts. He has done that for me."

"You mean – " said Rotha.

"Yes, go on, and say what you think I mean."

"You mean, – that what you like to do, is just what God likes you to do."

"And never anything else, Rotha," he said gravely.

"Well, Mr. Digby," said Rotha slowly, "after all, you have given up yourself."

"And very glad to be rid of that personage."

"But I don't want to give up myself."

"I see."

And there followed a long silence. Mr. Digby did not wish to add anything to his words, and Rotha could not to hers; and they both sat in meditation, until the girl's lighter humour got away from the troublesome subject altogether. Watching her, Mr. Digby saw the pleased play of feature which testified to her being again absorbed in the scene before her; her eye was alive, her lip moved with a coming and going smile.

"It amuses you, does it not?" he said.

"O yes!" Rotha exclaimed with a long breath. "I wish mother could see it."

"She can," said Mr. Digby. "We will have a carriage and take her out. I don't know why I never thought, of it before."

"A carriage? For mother? And bring her here?" said Rotha breathless.

"Yes, to-morrow, if the day is good. It will refresh her. And meanwhile, Rotha, I am afraid we must leave this scene of enchantment."

Rotha had changed colour with excitement and delight; now she rose up with another deep sigh.

"There are more people than ever," she remarked; "more

carriages. Mr.

Digby, I should think they would be perfectly happy?"

"What makes you think they are not?" said he amused.

"They don't look so."

"They are accustomed to it. They come every day or two."

"Does that make it less pleasant?"

"It takes off the novelty, you know. Most pleasures are less pleasant when the novelty is gone."

"Why?"

Mr. Digby smiled again. "You never found it so?" he said.

"No. I remember when we were at Medwayville, everything I liked to do, I liked it more the more I did it."

"You are of a happy temperament. What did you use to like to do there?"

"O a load of things!" said Rotha sighing. "I liked our old dog, and my kittens; and riding about; and I liked very much going to the hay field and getting into the cart with father and riding home. And then – "

But Rotha's words stopped suddenly, and her companion looking down at her saw that her eyes were brimming full of tears, and her face flushed with the emotion which almost mastered her. A little kind pressure of the hand he held was all the answer he made; and then they made their way through the crowd and got into the cars to go home.

He had not discharged his commission; how could he? Things had taken a turn which made it almost impossible. It must

be done another day. Poor child! The young man's mind was filled with sympathy and compassion, as he looked at Rotha sitting beside him and noted how her aspect had changed and brightened; just with this afternoon's pleasure and the new thoughts and mental stir and hope to which it had given rise. Poor child! what lay before her, that she dreamed not of, yet must face and meet inevitably. That in the near future; and beyond – what? No friend but himself in all the world; and how was he to take care of her? The young man felt a little pity for himself by the way. Truly, a girl of this sort, brimfull of mental capacity and emotional sensitiveness, was a troublesome legacy for a young man situated as he was. However, his own trouble got not much regard on the present occasion; for his heart was burdened with the sorrow and the tribulation coming upon these two, the mother and daughter. And these were but two, in a world full of the like and of far worse. He remembered how once, in the sight of the tears and sorrowing hearts around him and in view of the great flood of human miseries of which they were but instances and reminders, "Jesus wept;" and the heart of his servant melted in like compassion. But he shewed none of it, when he came with Rotha into her mother's presence again; he was calm and composed as always.

"Mrs. Carpenter," he said, as he found himself for a moment alone with her, Rotha having run off to change her dress, – "you did not tell me your sister's name. I think I ought to know it."

"Her name?" said Mrs. Carpenter starting and hesitating.

What did he want to know her sister's name for? But Mr. Digby did not look as if he cared about knowing it; he had asked the question indifferently, and his face of careless calm reassured her. She answered him at last.

"Her name is Busby."

It was characteristic of Mr. Digby that his features revealed no quickening of interest at this; for he was acquainted with a Mrs. Busby, who was also the wife of a lawyer in the city. But he shewed neither surprise nor curiosity; he merely said in the same unconcerned manner and tone, "There may be more Mrs. Busby's than one. What is her husband's name?"

"I forget – It begins with 'A.' I know; but I can't think of it. I can think of nothing but the name of that old New York baker they used to speak of – Arcularius."

"Will Archibald do?"

"That is it!"

Mr. Digby could hardly believe his ears. Mrs. Archibald Busby was very well known to him, and he was a welcome and tolerably frequent visiter at her house. Was it possible? he thought; was it possible? Could that woman be the sister of this? and such a sister? Nothing in her or in her house that he had seen, looked like it. He made neither remark nor suggestion however, but took quiet leave, after his wont, and went away; after arranging that a carriage should come the next day to take Mrs. Carpenter to the Park.

CHAPTER VIII.
STATEN ISLAND

Mr. Digby had a great many thoughts during the next few days; some of which almost went to make Mrs. Carpenter in the wrong. The Mrs. Busby he knew was so very unexceptionable a lady; how could she be the black sheep of the story he had heard? Mrs. Carpenter might labour under a mistake, might she not? Yet facts are said to be stubborn things, and some facts were hard for the truth of the story. Mr. Digby was puzzled. He would perhaps have gone promptly to Mrs. Busby's home, to make observations with a keenness he had never thought worth while when there; but Mrs. Busby and all her family were out of town, spending the hot months at a watering place, or at several watering places. Meanwhile Mr. Digby had his unfulfilled commission to attend to.

Mrs. Carpenter went driving to the Park now every pleasant day; to the great admiration of Mrs. Marble, the wonderful refreshment of the sick woman herself, and the extravagant delight and pride of Rotha. She said she was sure her mother would get well now. But her mother's eye, as she said it, went to Mr. Digby's, with a warning admonition that he must neither be deceived nor lose time. He understood.

"I am going down to Staten Island to-morrow," he remarked.

"Would you like to go with me, Rotha?"

"Staten Island?" she repeated.

"Yes. It is about an hour's sail from New York, or nearly; across the bay. You can become acquainted with the famous bay of New York."

"Is it famous?"

"For its beauty."

"Oh I should like to go very much, Mr. Digby, if it was as ugly as it could be!"

"Then when your mother comes from the Park in the morning, we will go."

Rotha was full of delight. But her mother, she thought, was very sober during that morning's drive; she tried in vain to brighten her up. Again and again Mrs. Carpenter's eyes rested on her with a lingering, tender sorrowfulness, which was not their wont.

"Mother, is anything the matter?" she asked at length.

"I am thinking of you, my child."

"Then don't think of me! What about me?"

"I am grieved that a shadow should ever come over your gay spirits. Yet I am foolish."

"What makes you think of shadows? I am going to be always as gay as I am to-day."

"That is impossible."

"Why?"

"It is not the way of this world."

"Does trouble come to everybody?"

"Yes. At some time."

"Well, mother dear, you can just wait till it comes. There is no shadow over me now, at any rate. If you were only well, I should be happy enough."

"I shall never be well, my child."

"O you say that just because a shadow has come over you. I wish I knew where it comes from; I would scare it away. Mother, mother, look, look! – see that little carriage with the little horses, and the children driving! Oh – !"

Rotha's expression of intense admiration is not to be given on paper.

"Shetland ponies, those are," said her mother.

"What are Shetland ponies?"

"Ponies that come from Shetland."

"And do they never grow any bigger?"

"No."

"How jolly!"

"Rotha, that is a boy's word, I think."

"If it is good for a boy, why isn't it good for me?"

"I do not know that it is good for a boy. But a lady is bound to be more particular in what she says and does."

"More than a gentleman?"

"In some ways, yes."

"I don't understand in what ways. Right is right, and wrong is wrong, whether one is a boy or a girl."

Mrs. Carpenter sighed. What would bring just notions, who would teach proper ways, to her inquisitive child when she should be left motherless? Rotha perceived the deep concern which gathered in her mother's eyes again; and anew endeavoured by lively talk to chase it away. In vain. Mrs. Carpenter came home tired and exhausted.

"I think she was worrying about something," Rotha said, when soon after she and her friend were on their way to Whitehall. "She does, now and then."

Mr. Digby made no answer; and Rotha's next keen question was, "You look as if you knew what she was worrying about, Mr. Digby?"

"I think I do."

"Couldn't I know what it was?"

"Perhaps. But you must wait."

It was easy to wait. Even the omnibus ride to Whitehall was charming to Rotha's inexperienced eyes; and when she was on board the ferry boat and away from the quays and the city, and the lively waters of the bay were rolling up all around her, the girl's enjoyment grew intense. She had never seen such an extent of water before, she had no idea of the real look of the waves; a hundred thousand questions came crowding and surging up in her mind, like the broken billows down below her. In her mind; they got no further; merely to have them rise was a delight; she would find the answer to them some day. For the present it was enough to watch the changing forms and varying colours of the

water, and to drink in the fresh breeze which brought life and strength with it from the sea. Yet now and then a question was too urgent and must be satisfied.

"Mr. Digby, nobody could paint water, could they?"

"Yes."

"How could they? It is all changing, every instant; it won't stand still to be drawn."

"Most things can be done, if one is only in earnest enough."

"But how can this?"

"Not without a great deal of study and pains. A man must watch the play of the waves and the shapes they take, and the colours of the different parts in any given sort of weather, until he has got them by heart; and then he can put the lines and the colours on the canvas. If he has the gift to do it, that is."

"What has the weather to do with it? Different colours?"

"Certainly. The lights and shadows vary with every change of the sky; and the colours vary."

"Then a person must be very much in earnest," said Rotha, "ever to get it all."

"There is no doing great things in any line without being very much in earnest. The start isn't the thing; it is the steady pull that tries."

"Can you draw, Mr. Digby?"

"Yes, a little."

Again Rotha was all absorbed in what lay before and around her; getting unconscious education through her eyes, as they

received for the first time the images of so many new things. To the people on board she gave scarcely any heed at all.

Arrived at Brighton, Mr. Digby's first care was to give his charge and himself some refreshment. He took Rotha to a hotel and ordered a simple dinner. Then he desired to have a little wagon harnessed up, and putting the delighted girl into it, he drove to the sea shore and let her feast her eyes on the incoming waves and breaking surf. He himself was full of one thought, waiting for the moment when he could say to her what he had to say; but he was forced to wait a good while. He had made a mistake, he found, in choosing this precise direction for their drive. Rotha's overwhelming pleasure and entranced absorption for some time could not be broken in upon. She was too utterly happy to notice how different was her friend's absorption from her own; unless with a vague, passing perception, which she could not dwell upon.

At last her friend asked her if she would like a run upon the sand, the tide being then out. He drove up to a straggling bit of fence, tied his horse, and lifted Rotha out; who immediately ran down to the narrow beach and as near to the water as she dared; there stood still and looked. There was but a gentle surf that day, with the ebb tide; but to Rotha it was a scene of unparalleled might and majesty. She was drinking in pleasure, as one can at fourteen, with all the young susceptibilities fully alive and strong. Mr. Digby could not interrupt her. He threw himself down 011 a dry piece of sand, and waited; watching her, and watching

with a sad sort of pleasure the everlasting rise and breaking of those curling billows. Things spiritual and material get very mixed up in such a mood; and anon the ocean became to Mr. Digby somehow identified with the sea of trouble the tides of which do overflow all this world. The breaking waves were but the constantly occurring and recurring bursts of misfortune and disaster which overtake everybody. Here it is, there it is, it is here again, it is always somewhere; ay, far as the eye can reach. Here is this child, now, —

"Mr. Digby, you are tired – you don't like it – you are just waiting for me," Rotha said suddenly, with delicate good feeling, coming to his side.

"I do like it, always. I am not tired, thank you, Rotha."

"But you are not taking pleasure in it now," she said gently.

"No. I was thinking, how full the world is of trouble."

"Why should you think that just now? You had better think, how full it is of pleasure. It's as full – it seems to me as full – as the very sea itself."

"Does your life have so much pleasure?"

"To-day – " said the girl, with a rapt look out to sea.

"And yet Rotha, it is for you I am troubled."

"For me!" she said with a surprised look at him.

"Yes. Suppose you sit down here for a few minutes, and let me talk to you."

"I don't want to talk about trouble just now," she said; sitting down however as he bade her.

"I am very sorry to talk about it now, or at any time; but I must. Can you bear trouble, Rotha?"

There was something tender and grave and sympathizing in his look and tone, which somehow made the girl's heart beat quicker. That there was real gravity of tidings beneath such a manner, she felt intuitively; though she strove not to believe it.

"I don't know, – " she said in answer to his question. "I *have* borne it."

"This is more than you have borne yet."

"I had a father, once, Mr. Digby, – " she said with a curious self- restraint that did not lack dignity.

How could he answer her? He did not find words. And instead, there came over him such a rush of tenderness in view of what was surely to fall upon the girl, in the present and in the future, that for a moment he was unmanned. To hide the corresponding rush of water to his eyes, Mr. Digby was fain to bow his face in the hand which rested on his knees. Neither the action nor the cause of it escaped Rotha's shrewdness and awakened sense of fear, but it silenced her at the same time; and it was not till a little interval had passed, though before Mr. Digby had lifted up his head, that the silence became intolerable to her. She heard the sea and saw the breakers no more, or only with a feeling of impatience.

"Well," she said at last, in a changed voice, hard, and dry, – "why don't you tell me what it is?" If she was impolite, she did not mean it, and her friend knew she did not mean it.

"I hardly can, Rotha," he answered sorrowfully.

"I know what you mean," she said, "but it isn't true. You think so, but it isn't true."

"What are you speaking of?"

"You know. I know what you mean; you are speaking of – mother!" The word came out with difficulty and only by stern determination. "It is not true, Mr. Digby."

"What is not true, Rotha?"

"You know. It is not true!" she repeated vehemently.

"But Rotha, my child, what if it were true?"

"You know it couldn't be true," she said, fixing on him a pair of eyes almost wild in their intensity. "It couldn't be true. What would become of me?"

"I will take care of you, always."

"You!" she retorted, with a scorn supreme and only matched by the pain with which she spoke. "What are you? It *couldn't* be, Mr. Digby."

"Listen to me, child. Rotha, I have come here to talk to you about it." He saw how full the girl's eyes were growing, of tears just swelling and ready to burst forth; and he stopped. But she impatiently dashed them right and left.

"I don't want to talk about it. It's no use, here or anywhere else. I would like to go home."

"Not yet. Before you go home I want you to be quite composed, and to have good command of yourself, so that you may not distress your mother. She cannot bear it. Therefore she

asked me to tell you, because she dreaded to see your suffering. Can you bear it and hide it, Rotha, bravely, for her sake?"

"*She* asked you to tell me?" cried the girl; and Mr. Digby never forgot the face of wild agony with which she looked at him. He answered quietly, "Yes;" though his heart was bleeding for her.

"She thinks – "

"She knows how it must be. It is nothing new, or strange, or sorrowful, to her, – except only for you. But in her love for you, she greatly dreads to see your sorrow. Do you think, Rotha, for her sake, you can bear up bravely, and be quiet, and not shew what you feel? For her sake?"

He doubted if the girl rightly heard him. She looked at him, indeed, while he spoke, as if listening; but her face was white, or rather livid, and her eyes seemed to be gazing into despair.

"I do not think it can be, Mr. Digby," she said. "She don't look like it.

And what would become of me?

"I will take faithful care of you, Rotha, as long as you live, and I live."

"You are nothing!" she said contemptuously. But then followed a cry which curdled Mr. Digby's blood. It was not a piercing shriek, yet it was a prolonged cry, pointed and sharpened with pain and heavy with despair. One such wail, and the girl dropped her face in her hands and sat motionless. Her companion would rather have seen sobs and tears; he did not know what to do with her. The soft beat and wash of the waves sounded drearily

in the silence. Mr. Digby waited. Nothing but time, he knew, can cover the roughness of life's rough places with its moss and lichen of patience and memory. Comfort was not to be spoken of, not here. He comprehended now why Mrs. Carpenter had shrank from telling the tidings herself. But the day was wearing away; they must go home; the burden, however heavy, must be lifted and carried. —

"Rotha – my child – " he said after a long interval.

No answer.

"Rotha, my child, cannot you look up and speak to me? Rotha – my poor little Rotha – it is very heavy for you! But won't you make it as light as you can for your mother?"

The child writhed away from under the hand he had gently laid on her shoulder; but uttered no sound.

"Rotha – we must go home presently. Do you know, your mother will be very anxious to see you. She is expecting us now, I dare say."

It came then, the burst of tears which he had dreaded and yet half longed for. The girl turned a little more from him and flung herself down on the sand, and there wept as he had never seen anybody weep before. With all the passion of an intense nature, and all the self abandonment of an ungoverned nature, sobbing such sobs as shook her whole frame, and with loud weeping which could not be restrained into silence. Better it should not be, Mr. Digby thought; better she should be allowed to exhaust herself so that very fatigue should induce quiet. But

to the sitter-by it was unspeakably painful; a scene never to be recalled without a profound prayer, like Noah's, I fancy, after the deluge, that the like might never come again.

And happily, nature did exhaust herself; and just because the passion of sobs and tears was so violent, it did yield after a time, as strength gave way. But it lasted fearfully long. However, at last Rotha grew quieter, and then still; and not till then Mr. Digby spoke again. He spoke as if all this had been an interlude not noticed by him.

"Rotha, my child, can you gather up your courage and be quiet and be brave now?"

She hesitated, and then in a smothered voice said, "I'm not brave."

"I think you can be."

"I wish – I could die," she said slowly.

"But what we have to do, is to live and act for others. Yes, it would often seem a great deal easier to die; but we have something to do in the world. You have something to do. Your mother's comfort, and even the prolonging of her stay with us, may depend on your quietness and self- command. For love of her, can you be strong and do it?"

"I am not strong – " said Rotha, as she had spoken before.

"Love makes people strong. And Jesus will help the weak, if they trust him, to do anything they have to do."

"You know I am not a Christian," Rotha answered in the same matter-of- fact way.

"Suppose you do not let that be true after to-day."

There was another silence.

"I am ready to go, Mr. Digby," Rotha said.

"And you will be a woman, and wise, and quiet?"

"I don't know!"

Mr. Digby thought it was not best to press matters further. He put Rotha into the wagon again and drove back to the hotel. Quiet she was, at any rate, now; he did not even see any more tears; but alas, of all the things in the world which she had been so glad to look at on the way down, she saw nothing on the way back. Driving or sailing, it was all the same; only when Mr. Digby put her into the omnibus at Whitehall he saw a flash of something like terror which crossed her face and left it blanched. But that was all.

He went into the invalid's room at Mrs. Marble's with trepidation. Rotha however was merely less effusive and more hasty than usual in her greetings to her mother, and after a kiss or two turned away "to get her things off," as she said. And when Mrs. Cord unluckily asked her in passing, if she had had a pleasant day? Rotha choked, but managed to get out that it had been "as good as it could be." What she went through in the little hall room which served for closet and wardrobe, no one knew; but Mr. Digby, who stayed purposely till she came back again, was reassured to see that she was perfectly quiet, and that she set about her wonted duties in a grave, collected way, more grave than usual, but quite as methodical. He went away sighing, at the

same time with a relieved heart. One of the hard things he had had to do in his life, was over.

Mr. Digby however, as he walked homeward to his hotel, saw the difficulties yet in store for him. How in the world was he to perform his promise of taking care of this wildfire girl? Her aunt surely, would be the fittest person to be intrusted with her. If he only knew what sort of person Mrs. Busby really was, and how much of Mrs. Carpenter's story might have two sides to it? The lady was not in the city, or he would have been tempted to go and see her at once, for the purpose of studying her and gathering information. Nothing of the kind was possible at present; and he could only hope that Mrs. Carpenter's frail life would be prolonged until her sister's return to New York would lift, or might lift, one difficulty out of his path.

CHAPTER IX.
FORT WASHINGTON

No such hope was to be realized. With all that care and kindness could do, the sick woman failed more and more. The great heats weakened her. The drives in the Park were refreshing, but alas, fatiguing, and sometimes had to be relinquished; and this happened again and again. Rotha behaved unexceptionably; was devoted to the service of her mother; untiring, and unselfish, and quiet; "another girl," Mrs. Cord said. Poor child! she was another girl in more ways than one; her fiery brightness of spirits was over, her cheeks grew thin, her eyes had dark rings round them, and their brown depths were heavy with a shadow darker yet. Energetic she was, as ever, but in a more staid and womanly way; the gladness of her doings was gone. Still, Mrs. Carpenter never saw her weep. In the evenings, or in the twilight, when there was nothing particular to be done, the child would nestle close to her mother, lay her head in her lap or rest it against her knee, and sit quiet. Still, at least, if not quiet; Mrs. Carpenter did sometimes fancy that she felt the drawing of a convulsive breath; but if she spoke then to Rotha, Rotha would answer with a specially calm and clear voice; and her mother did not get at her sorrow, if it were that which moved her. And Mrs. Carpenter was too weak now to try.

Mr. Digby came as usual, constantly. It was known to none beside himself, that he staid in town through the hot July and August days for this purpose solely. He saw that his sick friend grew weaker every day, yet he did not expect after all that the end would come so soon as it did. He had yet a lingering notion of bringing the sisters together, when Mrs. Busby should return. He was thinking of this one August afternoon as he approached the house. Mrs. Marble met him in the hall.

"Well, Mr. Digby, – it's all up now!"

The gentleman paused on his way to the stairs and looked his inquiry.

"She aint there. Warn't she a good woman, though!" And Mrs. Marble's face was all quivering, and some big tears fell from the full eyes.

"*Was?*" said Mr. Digby. "You do not mean – "

"She's gone. Yes, she's gone. And I guess she's gone to the good land; and I guess she aint sorry to be free; but —*I*'m sorry!"

For a few minutes the kind little woman hid her face in her apron, and sadly blotched with tears the apron was when she took it down.

"It's all over," she repeated. "At two o'clock last night, she just slipped off, with no trouble at all. And the house does feel as lonely as if fifty people had gone out of it. I never see the like o' the way I miss her. I'd got to depend on her living up there, and it was good to think of it; there warn't no *noise*, more'n if nobody had been up there; but if I aint good myself and I don't think I

be – I do love to have good folks round. She *was* good. I never see a better. It's been a blessin' to the house ever since she come into it; and I always said so. An' she's gone!"

"Where is Rotha?"

"Rotha! she's up there. I guess wild horses wouldn't get her away. I tried; I tried to get her to come down and have some breakfast with me; but la! she thinks she can live on air; or I suppose she don't think about it."

"How is she?"

"Queer. She is always a queer child. I can't make her out. And I wanted to consult you about her, sir; what's to be done with Rotha? who'll take care of her? She's just an age to want care. She'll be as wild as a hawk if she's let loose to manage herself."

"I thought she was very quiet."

"Maybe, up stairs. But just let anybody touch her down here, in a way she don't like, and you'd see the sparks fly! If you want to know how, just take and knock a firebrand against the chimney back."

"Who would touch her, here?" asked the gentleman.

"La! nobody, except with a question maybe, or a bit of advice. I shouldn't like to take hold of her any other way. I never did see a more masterful piece of human nature, of fourteen years old or any other age. She aint a bad child at all; I'm not meaning that; but her mother let her have her own way, and I guess she couldn't help it. It'll be worse for Rotha now, for the world aint like that spring chair you had fetched for her poor mother. You've been

an angel of mercy in that room, sure enough."

Mr. Digby passed the good woman and began to ascend the stairs.

"I wanted to ask you about Rotha," Mrs. Marble persisted, speaking up over the bannisters, "because, if that was the best, I would take her myself and bring her up to my business. I don't know who is to manage things now, or settle anything."

"I will," said Mr. Digby. "Thank you, Mrs. Marble; I will see you again."

"'Thank you, Mrs. Marble, I don't want you,' that means," said the little woman as she retreated to her own apartments. "There's somebody else a little bit masterful, I expect. Well, it's all right for the men, I s'pose, at least if they take a good turn; any way, we can't help it; but for a girl that aint fifteen yet, – it aint so agreeable. And poor child! who'll have patience with her now?"

Meanwhile Mr. Digby went up stairs and softly opened the door of the sitting room. For some time ago, since Mrs. Carpenter became more feeble, he had insisted on her having her old sleeping apartment again, other quarters being found or made for Mrs. Cord in the house. Mrs. Cord had naturally assumed the duties of her profession, which was that of a nurse; for the sake of which, knowing that they would be needed, Mr. Digby had first introduced her here.

At the window of the sitting room, looking out into the street, Rotha was sitting listlessly. No one else was in the room. She turned her head when she heard Mr. Digby's footsteps, and the

face he saw then smote his heart. It was such a changed face; wan and pale, with the rings round the eyes that come of excessive weeping, and a blank, dull expression in the eyes themselves which was worse yet. She did not move, nor give any gesture of greeting, but looked at the young man entering as if neither he nor anything else in the world concerned her.

Mr. Digby felt then, what everybody with a heart has felt at one time or another, that the office of comforter is the most difficult in the world. In one thing at least he imitated Job's friends; he was silent. He came close up to the girl and stood there, looking down at her. But she turned her wan face away from him and looked out of the window again. She looked, but he was sure she saw nothing. He did not venture to touch her; he saw that she was not open to the least token of tenderness; such a token would surely turn her apathetic calm into irritation. Perhaps even his standing there had some such effect; for after a little while, Rotha said, "Won't you sit down, Mr. Digby?"

He sat down, and waited. However, people do not live in these days to be several hundred years old; and proportionately, seven days of silence would be more of that sort of sympathy than can be shewn since Job's time. Yet what to say, Mr. Digby was profoundly doubtful. Finding nothing that would do, of his own, he took his little Testament from his pocket, and turning the leaves aimlessly came upon the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of John. He began at the beginning and read slowly and quietly on till he came to the words,

"'Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

"'Jesus said unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.' – "

"Please don't, Mr. Digby!" said Rotha, who after a few verses had buried her face in her hands.

"Don't what?"

"Don't read any more."

"Why not?"

"I know how it goes on. I know what he did. But he will not do that – here."

"Yes, he will. Not immediately, but by and by."

"I don't care for by and by."

"Yes you do, Rotha. By and by the Lord Jesus will come again; and when he comes he will send his angels to gather up and bring to him all his people who are then living, scattered about in the world, and at the same time all his people who once lived and have died shall be raised up. Then will come your dear mother, with the rest, in beauty and glory."

"But," said Rotha, bursting out into violent sobs, "I don't know where I shall be!" —

The paroxysm of tears and sobs that followed, startled Mr. Digby; it was so extreme in its passion beyond anything he had ever seen in his life; even beyond her passion on the sea shore. It seemed as if the girl must almost strangle in her convulsive oppression of breath. He tried soothing words, and he tried

authority; and both were as vain as the recoil of waves from a rock. The passion spent itself by degrees, and was succeeded by a more gentle, persistent rain of tears which fell quietly.

"Rotha," said Mr. Digby gravely, "that is not right."

"Very likely," she answered. "How are you going to help it?"

"I cannot; but you can."

"I *can't!*" she exclaimed, with almost a cry. "When it comes, I must."

"No, my child; you must learn self-command."

"How can I?" she said doggedly.

"By making it your rule, that you will always do what is *right*– not what you like."

"It never was my rule."

"Perhaps. But do you mean that it never shall be?"

There followed a long silence, during which Rotha's tears gradually stilled; but she said nothing, and Mr. Digby let her alone. After this time, she rose and came to him and laid one hand half timidly, half confidingly, upon his shoulder.

"Mr. Digby," she said softly, "because I am so wicked, will you get tired and forsake me?"

"Never!" he answered heartily, putting his arm round the forlorn child and drawing her a little nearer. And Rotha, in her forlornness and in the gentle mood that had come over her, laid her head down on his shoulder, or rather in his neck, nestling to him. It was an unconscious, mute appeal to his kindness and *for* his kindness; it was a very unconscious testimony of Rotha's

trust and dependence on him; it was very child-like, but coming from this girl who was so nearly not a child, it moved the young man strangely. He had no sisters; the feeling of Rotha's silky, thick locks against the side of his face and the clinging appeal of her hand and head on his shoulder, gave him an entirely new sensation. All that was manly in him stirred to meet the appeal, and at the same time Rotha took a suddenly different place in his thoughts and regards. He was glad Mrs. Cord was not there to see; but if she had been, I think he would have done just the same. He drew the girl close to him, and laid his other hand tenderly upon those waving, thick, dark locks of hair.

"I will never forsake you, Rotha. I will never be tired. You shall be like my own little sister; for your mother left you in my charge, and you belong to me now, and to nobody else in the world."

She accepted it quietly, making no response at all; her violent passion had been succeeded by a gentle, subdued mood. Favourable for saying several things and making sundry arrangements; only that just then was not the time that would do. Both of them remained still and silent, Mr. Digby thinking this among other things; poor Rotha was hardly thinking at all, any more than a shipwrecked man just flung ashore by the waves, and clinging to the rock that has saved him from sweeping out to sea again, lie blesses the rock, maybe, but it is no time for considering anything. The one idea is to hold fast; and Rotha mentally did it, with an intensity of trust and clinging that her

protector never guessed at.

"Then I must do what you say, now?" she remarked after a while.

"I suppose so," he answered, much struck by this tone of docility.

"I will try, Mr. Digby."

"Will you trust me too, Rotha?"

"For what?"

"I mean, will you trust me that what I do for you, or want you to do, is the best thing to be done?"

Rotha lifted her head from his shoulder and looked at him.

"What do you want me to do?" she asked.

"Nothing, to-day; by and by, perhaps many things. My question was general."

"Whether I will trust that what you say is the best?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Digby, mightn't you be mistaken?"

"Rotha, might not you? And would it not be more likely?"

Rotha began to reflect that in her past life she had not been wont to give such unbounded trust to anybody; not even to her father, and not certainly to her mother. She had sometimes thought them mistaken; how could she help that? and how could she help it in any other case, if circumstances warranted it? But with the thought of her mother, tears rose again, and she did not speak. Just then Mrs. Cord came in.

"O I am glad you are there, sir!" she began. "I wanted to speak

to you, if you please."

Mr. Digby unclosed his arm from about Rotha, and she withdrew quietly to her former station by the window. The other two went into the adjoining room, and there Mrs. Cord received instruction and information as to various points of the arrangements for the next few days.

"And what will I do with Rotha, sir?" she asked finally.

"Do with her? In what respect?"

"She won't eat, sir."

"She will, I fancy, the next time it is proposed to her."

"She's very hard to manage," said Mrs. Cord, shaking her head. "She will have her own way, always."

"Wel – let her have it."

"But other people won't, sir; and I think it's bad for her. She's had it, pretty much, all along; but now – she don't care for what I say, no more'n if I was a post! Nor Mrs. Marble, nor anybody. And is Mrs. Marble going to take her, sir?"

"Not at all. Her mother left her in my care."

"Oh! – " said the good woman, with a rather prolonged accent of mystification and disapprobation; wondering, no doubt, what disposal Mr. Digby could make of her, better than with Mrs. Marble; but not venturing to ask.

"Nothing can be done, till after the funeral," the young man went on.

"Take all the care of her you can until then. By the way, if you can give me something to eat, I will lunch here. If you have

nothing in the house, I can get something in a few minutes."

Mrs. Cord was very much surprised; however, she assured Mr. Digby that there was ample supply in the house, and went on, still with a mystified and dissatisfied feeling, to prepare and produce it. She knew how, and very nicely an impromptu meal was spread in a few minutes. Mr. Digby meanwhile went out and got some fruit; and then he and Rotha sat down together. Rotha was utterly gentle and docile; did what he bade her and took what he gave her; indeed it was plain the poor child was in sore need of food, which she had had thus far no heart to eat. Mr. Digby prolonged the meal as much as he could, that he might spend the more time with her; and when he went away, asked her to lie down and go to sleep.

Those must be heavy days, he knew, till the funeral was over. What then? It was a question. Mrs. Busby would not be in town perhaps before the end of September; and here it was the middle of August. Near two months of hot weather to intervene. What should he do? He would willingly be out of the city himself; and for Rotha, the spending all these weeks in her mother's old rooms, in August weather, and with Mrs. Cord and Mrs. Marble for companions, did not seem expedient. It would be good for neither body nor mind. But he could not take her to any place of public resort; that would not be expedient either. He pondered and pondered, and was very busy for the next two or three days.

The result of which activity was, that he took rooms in a pleasant house at Washington Heights, overlooking the river, and

removed Rotha there, with Mrs. Cord to look after her. But as he himself also took up his abode in the house, Mrs. Cord's supervision was confined to strictly secondary matters. He had his meals in company with Rotha, and was with her most of the time, and was the sole authority to which she was obliged to refer.

It was an infinite blessing to the child, whose heart was very sore, and who stood in need of very judicious handling. And somewhat to Mr. Digby's surprise, it was not a bore to himself. The pleasure of ministering is always a pleasure, especially when the need is very great; it is also a pleasure to excite and to receive affection; and he presently saw, with some astonishment, that he was doing this also. Certainly it was not a thing in the circumstances to be astonished at; and it moved Mr. Digby so, simply because he was so far from thinking of himself in his present plan of action. All the pleasanter perhaps it was, when he saw that the forlorn girl was hanging upon him all the dependence of a very trusting nature, and giving to him all the wealth of a passionate power of loving. This came by degrees.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.