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Содержание

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CHAPTER I

"Girls, there's a Band!"

"A what?"

"A Band – in the Sunday-School."

"I am sure there is a careless girl in the house," put in another speaker. "Go and wipe your feet, Maria; look at the snow you have brought in."

"But, mamma – "

"Go and get rid of that snow before you say another word. And you too, Matilda; see, child, what lumps of snow are sticking to your shoes. Was there no mat at the door?"

"There was a cold wind there," muttered Maria, as she went to obey orders. "What harm does a little snow do?"

But while she went to the door again, her sister, a pretty, delicate child of fewer years, stood still, and adroitly slipped her feet out of the snowy shoes she had brought in, which she put in the corner of the fireplace to thaw and dry off; the little stocking feet standing comfortably on the rug before the blaze. It was so neatly done, the mother and elder sisters looked on and could not chide. Neatness suited the place. The room was full of warm

comfort; the furniture in nice order; the work, several kinds of which were in as many hands, though lying about also on chairs and tables, had yet the look of order and method. You would have said at once that there was something good in the family. The child in front of the fire told more for it. Her delicate features, the refined look and manner with which she stood there in her uncovered feet, even a little sort of fastidious grace which one or two movements testified, drew the eyes of mother and sisters, and manifestly stopped their tongues; even called forth a smile or two.

"What is all this Maria is talking about, Matilda?"

"Why, we have been to the Sunday-School meeting, mamma."

"I know that; and it was not a night fit for you to go. What ever possessed you and Maria?" remarked one of the sisters.

"Why, Mr. Richmond wanted to see all the Sunday-School," said Matilda, thoughtfully. "He wanted you too, I suppose; and you were not there."

"There is no use in having a meeting such a night. Of course, a great many people could not be there. It ought to have been put off."

"Well, it was not put off," said Matilda.

"What did he want? What was Maria talking about?"

"She is the best one to ask," said the child.

At the same moment Maria came in from getting rid of the snow, and enquired if Tilly had told them everything? Finding all was right, she sat down contentedly before the fire and stretched

out her feet towards it.

"We've had a splendid time, I can tell you," she began.

"What was done in particular?" asked one of the older girls, who was making a bonnet. "More than usual?"

"A great many things in particular, and one in general. We've made a Band."

"I have made several since you have been away," the other sister remarked.

"You know we cannot understand that unless you explain," said the bonnet-maker.

"You must let Maria take her own manner," said their mother.

"Well, now, I'll tell you all about it," said Maria. "There weren't a great many people there, to begin with."

"Of course not! such a night."

"So there were plenty of empty benches, and it didn't look like a meeting at all, at first; and I wondered if it would come to anything; but then Mr. Richmond came in, and I saw *he* meant something."

"Mr. Richmond always does mean something," interrupted Matilda.

"You hush, Tilly! Well, there were prayers first, of course; and then Mr. Richmond stood up in the aisle, and said he wanted to know how many of us all there were willing to be really good."

"The servants of Christ, he said," Matilda explained.

"Yes, the servants of Christ, of course; and he said he didn't know any better way to get at it than that we should all stand up."

A burst of laughter from all Maria's audience a little confused her. Only Matilda looked gravely at her sister, as if she were making bad work of it. Maria coloured, stammered, and began again.

"You all know what I mean! You know what I mean, mamma? Mr. Richmond did not say that we should *all* stand up."

"Then why did you say it?"

"I thought you would understand. He said that all those should stand up, so that he might see who they were, who were willing to be real workers for Christ; those who were willing to give themselves to the Lord, and to do everything or anything he gave them to do for Him. So we stood up, and Mr. Richmond went round and took our names down."

"Everybody who was there?"

"Why, no! – those who were willing to do as Mr. Richmond said."

"Did *you* stand up?" asked one of her sisters.

"Yes; I did."

"Who else?"

After a pause —

"Oh, a great many people! All the members of the church, of course; and then a good many more that aren't. Esther Trembleton rose, and Ailie Swan, and Mattie Van Dyke, and Frances Barth, and Mrs. Rice. And little Mary Edwards, she was there, and she rose, and Willie Edwards; and Mr. Bates got up and said he was happy to see this day. I think he was ready to

cry, he was so glad."

"And is this the 'Band' you spoke of?"

"This is the Sunday-School Working Band; that is what Mr. Richmond called it."

"What work are you going to do?"

"I don't know! Mr. Richmond said he could not tell just yet; but we are to have meetings and all sorts of things. And then Mr. Richmond talked."

"What about?"

"Oh, I can't tell. You know how he talks."

"He said what the Band were to do," remarked Matilda.

"I told what that was."

"You did not tell what he said."

"Why, yes, I did; he said they were to do all the work for Christ that they could; and they were to pray a great deal, and pray for each other a great deal; and they were to live right."

"Uncompromising Christian lives, he said. Mamma, what does 'uncompromising' mean?"

"Why, you know!" put in her sister.

"Tell, then, Maria," said the mother.

"Matilda must know, mamma; for Mr. Richmond explained it enough."

"Then certainly you must."

"I can't talk like Mr. Richmond, though," said Maria. "Letty, you'll spoil that bonnet if you put red flowers in."

"That's as *you* think," said Letty. "Blue would be very dull."

"Mamma, what is uncompromising?" pursued Matilda, a pair of large, serious brown eyes fastening on her mother's face to await the answer.

"Did not Mr. Richmond tell you?"

"If he did, I did not understand, mamma."

"Then he ought to use words you *can* understand; that is all I have to say. I cannot undertake to be Mr. Richmond's dictionary. Uncompromising means different things at different times. It isn't a word for you, Tilly," the mother added, with a smile at the child.

"There is only one thing Tilly will ever be uncompromising about," her oldest sister remarked.

"What is that?" the little one asked quick.

"Girls, stop talking and go to bed," said their mother. "Letitia and Anne, put up work; I am tired. Maria, you and Tilly go at once and be out of the way."

"I can't see how I am in the way," remarked Maria. "Letty has not done her bonnet yet, and she will not go till she has."

"Letty, I am not going to wait for that bonnet."

"No, ma'am; there is no need."

"I am not going to leave you up, either. I know how that works. The bonnet can be finished to-morrow. And, Anne, roll up your ruffles. Come, girls!"

"What a lovely mantilla that is going to be; isn't it, mamma?" said Maria. "Won't Anne look nice when she gets it on? I wish you'd let me have one just like it, mamma."

"I do not care about your having one just like it," said Anne. "What would be the use of that?"

"The same use, I suppose – "

"Maria, go to bed!" said her mother "And Matilda. Look what o'clock it is."

"I can't go, mamma, unless somebody will bring me some shoes. Mine are wet."

"Maria, fetch Tilly a pair of shoes. And go, children."

The children went; but Maria grumbled.

"Why couldn't you come up-stairs in your stocking feet? *I* should."

"It isn't nice," said the little one.

"Nice! you're so terribly nice you can't do anything other people do. There is no use in our coming to bed now; Anne and Letty will sit up till eleven o'clock, I shouldn't wonder; and we might just as well as not. Mamma can't get them to bed. Letty and Anne ought to have been at the meeting to-night. I wonder if they would have risen? Why did not you rise, Matilda?"

"I had not thought about it."

"Can't you do anything without thinking about it first?"

"I do not understand it yet."

"Understand! why, nothing is easier than to understand. Of course, we are all to be as good as we can be, that's all."

"You don't think that is much," said the little one, as she began slowly to undress herself. The work of undressing and dressing was always slow with Tilly. Every article of clothing taken off

was to be delicately folded and nicely laid away at night; and taken out and put on with equal care and punctiliousness in the morning. Maria's stockings went one way and her shoes another; while Tilly's were put exactly ready for use under her chair. And Maria's clothes presently lay in a heap on the floor. But not till some time after Matilda's neat arrangements had been made and she herself was safe in bed. Maria had dallied while the other was undressing.

"I think you are very curious, Matilda!" she exclaimed, as she followed her sister into bed. "I shouldn't think it required much *thinking*, to know that one ought to be good."

"You haven't put out the candle, Maria."

Maria bounced from her bed, and bounced in again.

"O Maria!" said Matilda in a moment or two, plaintively; "you've *blown* it out! and the room is all filled with smoke."

"It doesn't make any difference," said Maria.

"It is very disagreeable."

"It will be gone in a minute."

"No, it won't, for I can see the red spark on the end of the candle now."

"You are so particular, Tilly!" said her sister. "If *you* ever take a notion to be good, you'll have to leave off some of your ways, I can tell you. You needn't mind a little smell of candle-smoke. Go to sleep, and forget it."

"Don't good people mind disagreeable things?" said Matilda.

"No, of course, they don't. How could they get along, you

know? Don't you remember what Mr. Richmond said?"

"I don't remember that he said *that*. But then, Maria, would you mind getting up to snuff out that candle? It's dreadful!"

"Nonsense! I shan't do it. I've just got warm."

Another minute or two gave tokens that Maria was past minding discomfort of any sort. She was fast asleep. Tilly waited, panted, looked at the glimmering red end of the candle snuff; finally got out of bed and crept to the dressing-table where it stood, and with some trouble managed to put a stop to smoke for that night.

CHAPTER II

The house in which these things happened was a brown house, standing on the great high-road of travel which ran through the country, and just where a considerable village had clustered round it. From the upper windows you caught a glimpse of a fine range of blue mountains, lying miles away, and with indeed a broad river flowing between; but the river was too far off to be seen, and hidden behind intervening ground. From the lower windows you looked out into the village street; clean and wide, with comfortable houses standing along the way, not crowded together; and with gardens between and behind them, and many trees shielding and overhanging. The trees were bare now; the gardens a spread of snow; the street a white way for sleigh-runners; nevertheless, the aspect of the whole was hopeful, comfortable, thriving, even a little ambitious. Within this particular house, if you went in, you would see comfort, but little pretension; a neat look of things, but such things as had been mended and saved, and would not be rashly replaced. It was very respectable, therefore, and had no look of poverty. So of the family gathered around the breakfast-table on the morning after the Sunday-School meeting. It was a fair group, healthy and bright; the four girls and their mother. They were nicely dressed; and good appetites spoke of good spirits; and the provision on the table was abundant though plain.

Maria asked if Letty had finished her bonnet last night. Letty said she had.

"And did you put those red flowers in?"

"Certainly."

"That will be gay."

"Not too gay. Just enough. The bonnet would be nothing if it had not flowers."

Maria's spoon paused half way to mouth. "I wonder," she said, gravely, "if Mr. Richmond likes red flowers?"

"He has nothing to do with *my* bonnet," said Letitia. "And no more have you. You need not raise the question. I shall wear what becomes me."

"What is the difference whether one wears red or blue, Maria?" said her mother. "Do you think one colour is more religious than another? – or more wicked? What do you mean?"

"Nothing, ma'am," Maria answered, a little abashed. "I was only thinking."

"I think Mr. Richmond likes flowers everywhere," said Matilda; "and all colours."

"People that are very religious do not wear flowers in their bonnets though, do they?" said Maria.

"Mr. Richmond did not say any such thing!" said Matilda, indignantly.

"What did he say? What was all this last night's talk about?" said Anne. "I did not understand half of it. Was it against red flowers, or red anything?"

"I did not understand any of it," said Mrs. Englefield.

"Why, mamma, I told you all, as plain as could be," said Maria. "I told you he made a Band – "

"He didn't," interrupted Matilda; "the Band made themselves."

But at this, the shout that went round the breakfast-table threatened to endanger the dishes.

"It's no use trying to talk," said Maria, sullenly, "if you laugh so. I told you there was a Band; ever so many of us rose up and agreed that we would belong to it."

"Matilda, are you in it too?" the mother asked.

"No, mamma."

"Why not? How comes that?"

"She wasn't ready," her sister said.

"Why not, Tilly?"

"Mamma, I want to understand," said the child.

"Quite right; so do I."

"Wouldn't you do what Mr. Richmond says, whether you understand or not?" inquired Maria, severely.

"I would rather know what it is, first," said Matilda, in her way, which was a compound of cool and demure, but quite natural.

"And when is the next meeting?" said Letitia. "I guess I'll go."

"It won't be for a week," said Matilda.

"And will you join the Band, Letty?" Maria asked somewhat eagerly.

"How, join it?"

"Why, rise up, when you are asked."

"What does 'rising up' mean, Maria? What do you rise for?"

"Why, it means just that you promise to be good, you know."

"But I have heard you promise that a number of times, it seems to me; without 'rising up,' as you call it. Will the promise not better, if you make it on your feet instead of sitting?"

"Now, mamma," said Maria, flushing, "isn't that just wicked in Letitia?"

"My dear, I do not understand one word at present of what this is all about," her mother answered.

Perhaps Matilda was in the same mood, for she was a thoughtful little child all the way to school that morning. And at the close of the school day, when the children were going home, she went slowly and demurely along the icy street, while her sister and companions made a merry time. There had been a little thaw in the middle of the day, and now it had turned cold again, and the sidewalks were a glare of ice. Matilda was afraid, and went cautiously; Maria and the others took the opportunity for a grand slide, and ran and slipped and slid and sailed away homewards, like mad things. One after another, they passed her and rushed along, till Matilda was left the last, slowly shuffling her little feet over the track the feet of the others had made doubly slippery; when quick steps came up behind her, and a pleasant voice spoke —

"Are you afraid you are going to tumble down?"

Matilda started, but lifted her eyes very contentedly then to

the face of the speaker. They had a good way to go, for he was a tall young man. But he was looking down towards her with a bright face, and two good, clear blue eyes, and a smile; and his hand presently clasped hers. Matilda had no objection.

"Where is everybody else? how come you to be all alone?"

"They have gone ahead, sliding on the ice."

"And you do not practise sliding?"

"I am always afraid I shall fall down."

"The best way is not to be afraid; and then you don't fall down. See; no! hold fast. I shall not let you slip!"

And the gentleman and Matilda slid along the street for half a block.

"How do you like that?"

"Very well, Mr. Richmond, with you holding me."

"It doesn't give you courage, eh? Well, we will walk on soberly together. I didn't see you stand when Maria did last night?"

"Mr. Richmond, I did not know just what it all meant; and so I sat still."

"You did not know just what it all meant?"

"No, sir."

"Then you were perfectly right to sit still. But that means that I did not speak so that you could understand me? Was it so?"

"I did not understand – " said Matilda.

"It comes to that, I suppose. It is my fault. Well, I shall remember and be very careful what I say the next time. I will speak so that you will understand. But in that case, I want you to

do one thing for me, Tilly; will you?"

"If I can, Mr. Richmond."

"Do you think I would ask something you could not do?"

Matilda looked up to the blue eyes again; they were fastened upon her gravely, and she hesitated.

"Mr. Richmond – I don't know. You might."

"I hope not," he said, smiling. "I will try not. You won't promise me?"

"If I can I will, Mr. Richmond."

"I am only going to ask you, when you hear what I have to say next time, if you understand it, will you do what you think you ought to do?"

There fell a silence upon that. Mr. Richmond's firm step on the icy ground and Matilda's light footfall passed by house after house, and still the little one's tongue seemed to be tied. They turned the corner, and went their way along Matilda's own street, where the light of afternoon was now fading, and the western sky was throwing a reflection of its own. Past the butcher's shop, and the post-office, and house after house; and still Matilda was silent, and her conductor did not speak, until they stopped before the little gate leading to the house, which was placed somewhat back from the road. At the gate Mr. Richmond stood still.

"What about my question, Matilda?" he said, without loosing his hold of the little hand which had rested so willingly in his all the way.

"Aren't you coming in, Mr. Richmond?"

"Not to-night. What about my question?"

"Mr. Richmond," said the child, slowly, – "I do not always do the things I ought to do."

"No; I know you do not. But will you do *that* thing, which you will think you ought to do, when you have heard me, and understood what I say, the next time the Band has a meeting?"

Matilda stood silent, her hand still in Mr. Richmond's.

"What's the matter?"

"Perhaps I shall not want to do it," she said, looking up frankly.

"I ask you to do it all the same."

Matilda did not move, and now her face showed great perplexity.

"Well?" said Mr. Richmond, smiling at last.

"Perhaps I *cannot* do it, Mr. Richmond?"

"Then, if you think you cannot do it, will you come and tell me?"

Matilda hesitated and pondered and hesitated.

"Do you wish it very much, Mr. Richmond?" she said, looking up appealingly into his face.

"I do wish it very much."

"Then I will!" said Matilda, with a sigh.

He nodded, shook her hand, and turned away with quick steps. Matilda went in and climbed the stairs to the room she and Maria shared together.

"What were you talking to Mr. Richmond so long about?" said Maria.

"I wasn't talking to Mr. Richmond. He was talking to me."

"What's the difference? But I wish he would talk to Ailie Swan; she wants it, I know. That girl is too much!"

"What has she done?"

"Oh, *you* don't know; she isn't in your set. *I* know. She's just disagreeable. I think people ought to be civil, if they are ever so good."

"I thought good people were civil always."

"Shows you don't know much."

"Isn't Ailie Swan civil?"

"I do not call it civility. What do you think, Tilly? I asked her if my South America wasn't good? and she said she thought it was not. Isn't that civility?"

"What did you ask her for?"

"Because! I knew my South America was good."

"Let me see it."

"Nonsense! You do not know the first thing about it." But she gave her little sister the sheet on which the map was drawn. Matilda took it to a table under the window, where the dying light from the western sky fell brightest; and putting both elbows on the table and her head in her hands, studied the map.

"Where is the atlas?"

"What do you want of the atlas?"

"I want to see if it is like."

"It is like, of course, child."

"I can't tell without seeing," Matilda persisted. And Maria

grumblingly brought the atlas, open at the map in question. Matilda took it and studied anew.

"It is getting dark," said she at length. "But your South America is crooked, Maria."

"It isn't!" said Maria, vehemently. "How should it be crooked, when we angle it on, just according to the rules?"

"Angle it on?" repeated Matilda, looking at her sister.

"Yes. Oh, you don't understand, child; how should you? I told you you didn't know anything about it. Of course, we have rules and things to go by; and my South America was put on just right."

"It is not straight, though," said Matilda.

"Why, no, it isn't straight; it is not meant to be straight; it is all crookly crawly, going in and out, all round."

"But it don't stand straight," said Matilda; "and it looks *thin*, too, Maria; it don't puff out as much as the real South America does."

"Puff out!" Maria repeated. "It's as good as Ailie's, anyhow; and a great deal better than Frances Barth's. Frances got a great blot on hers; she's so careless. George Van Dyke is making a nice one; and Ben Barth is doing a splendid map; but then Ben does everything – "

Here there was a great call to tea from below, and the girls went down. Down-stairs there was excitement. A letter had come from Mrs. Candy, Mrs. Englefield's sister, saying that she herself with her daughter Clarissa would be with them the beginning of the week.

"To stay, mamma? O mamma, is Aunt Candy coming to stay? Do tell me. Is she coming to stay?" Maria exclaimed and questioned.

"She will stay a night with us, Maria. Don't be so eager."

"Only a night, mamma? Won't she be here longer?"

"She is coming to stay till summer, Maria," said her eldest sister. "Do be reasonable."

"I think it is reasonable to want to know," said Maria. "*You* knew; so you didn't care about it."

"I care a great deal; what do you mean?" said Anne.

"I mean you didn't care about knowing. O mamma, can't I have my dress finished before they come?"

"What dress, Maria?" her sister went on; for Mrs. Englefield was busy with the letter.

"My new merino. It is almost done; it only wants finishing."

"There's all the braid to put on, isn't there?"

"Well, that isn't much. Mamma, cannot I have my red merino finished before they come? I have got nothing to wear."

"What can you mean, Maria? You have everything you want. That is only for your best dress."

"But, mamma, it is just when I should want it, when they come; you'll be having everybody to tea. Won't you have it done for me? please, mamma?"

"I think you can do it for yourself, Maria. I have no objection to your finishing it."

"I cannot put on that braid – in that quirlicue pattern, mamma;

I never did such work as that; and I haven't time, besides."

"Nor inclination," said Letitia, laughing. "Come, Maria, it is time you learned to do something for yourself. Matilda, now, might plead inexperience, and have some reason; but you are quite old enough."

The dispute would have gone on, but Mrs. Englefield desired silence, and the family drew round the tea-table. Other plans for the following weeks filled every tongue. Mrs. Candy was well off; a widow with one child, her daughter Clarissa; she had been in Europe for several years; coming back now to her own country, she was bending her steps first of all to her sister's house and family.

"We shall have the new fashions, straight from Paris," Anne remarked.

"Has Aunt Candy been in Paris? I thought she was in Scotland, mamma?"

"People may go to Paris, if they have been in Scotland, Maria. It is not so far as around the world."

"But has she been in Paris?"

"Lately."

"Mamma, what is Aunt Candy going to do with herself when summer comes? She says, 'till summer.'"

"When she tells us, I shall know, Letty. At present I am as ignorant as you."

"Do you think she will buy a house here, and make her home here?"

"That depends on how well she likes Shadywalk, I imagine."

"I hope she will!"

"I would like to see, first, what she is," said Maria. "We shall have time enough for that, if they stay with us till summer. How old, mamma, is Clarissa Candy?"

"Over your age, Maria, by a year or so."

"Will she go to school with us, do you suppose, mamma?"

"I really cannot tell, Maria. I think it very likely."

"Is Aunt Candy very rich?"

"You talk like a foolish girl. Why do you want to know?"

"I was thinking whether Clarissa would be dressed a great deal better than we are."

"And what if she is?"

"Nothing. I was thinking. That's all."

"I don't think it signifies," said Matilda.

"Oh! Matilda has found her tongue! I was waiting to see when she would speak," cried Anne. "What don't signify, little one?"

"It don't signify, I think, whether any one is dressed better than another; anybody – Clarissa or anybody else."

"Well, you are mistaken then," said Anne; "for it does signify. All the world knows it; and what is more, all the world feels it."

"I don't think I do," said Matilda.

"Your time has not come."

"*Your* time had come, though, before you were as old as she," said her mother; "and Maria's and Letty's."

"I know Matilda is a wonderful child," said Anne, "but her

time will come too, mamma; and *she* will find it makes a difference whether she is dressed one way or another."

"I think *that* now," observed Matilda.

"Anybody that has to fasten Tilly's dresses knows that," laughed Maria. "I don't make half so much fuss."

"I wish you did," said her mother. "You are not near careful enough in putting on your things. Now putting on is half the battle."

The argument lasted till Tilly and Maria went back to the consideration of South America, which was brought down-stairs to the lamp.

"You haven't got the Amazon right," said Matilda; "and Rio Janeiro is too far down; and it's all crooked – don't you see?"

"No!" said Maria; "and if it is, Ailie Swan needn't have said hers was better."

"You asked her."

"Well, if I did?"

"What could she say?"

"I don't care; it was awfully rude; and people ought to be polite, if they're ever so good."

"What is all that?" said Mrs. Englefield. "That is not Tilly's map?"

"Oh no, mamma; she can't draw maps; she is only setting up for a judge."

"She would do it as well as that, if she would try," said her mother. "I wish you would love your studies, Matilda. You could

do so well if you pleased."

"Clarissa Candy will make you both ashamed," said Anne. "She has learned everything, and is terribly smart; 'going on to learn everything else,' her mother says."

"Mamma," said Maria, "I have only my green silk and my blue delaine for nice dresses; and the silk is old-fashioned, you know, and the delaine is too short; and I want my merino finished."

"Finish it, then."

Maria pouted.

"I cannot afford every indulgence to you, as your aunt can to Clarissa; you must make it up by your own industry."

"But can I, mamma?"

"Can you what?"

"If I am very smart, can you give me things, if I make them up, that I can be as well dressed as Clarissa Candy?"

"Let us see the merino made first," said her mother.

CHAPTER III

There was great interest now at Shadywalk, at least in one house, to know when the Liverpool steamer, *City of Pride*, would be in. Conjectures proving unsatisfactory and uncertain, the whole family took to studying the marine lists in the daily papers; and when everybody else had looked them over, the last one of the family did it again with extra care; lest by some singular coincidence the letters forming the *City of Pride* might have escaped the eyes so keen set to find them. The paper grew better than a novel. It furnished a great deal of matter for conversation, besides; for all the steamers which had got in were talked over, with their dates of sailing, and number of days on the passage; with each of which the times, certain and probable, of the *City of Pride* were compared. Then there was the question, whether Aunt Candy might have changed her mind at the last minute, and waited for another steamer; and the reports of the weather lately experienced at sea were anxiously read and put alongside of the weather lately experienced at Shadywalk.

Preparations in the house went on diligently; whatever might help it to make a better impression, or afford greater comfort to the expected guests, was carefully done. Mrs. Englefield even talked of getting a new stair-carpet, but contented herself with having the old one taken up and put down again, the stairs washed, and the stair-rods brightened; the spare room, the large

corner chamber looking to the north and west, was scrupulously swept and dusted; furniture rubbed; little white knitted mats laid on the dressing-table; the chintz curtains taken down and put up again; a new nice chamber set of white china was bought, for the pitcher of the old set had an ugly nick in it and looked shabby; the towel rack was filled with white napery; the handsomest Marseilles quilt was spread on the bed; the stove was blackened and polished. It looked "very respectable," Anne said, when all was done.

What private preparations went on, besides, on the part of the girls, it would be hard to say. Maria worked hard at her braiding – that was open to anybody's observation; but there were less obvious flutings and ironings down in the kitchen, and adjusting of ribbons and flowers in secret consultations up-stairs. And one piece of care was made public by Maria, who announced that Letty had trimmed her old bonnet three times over before she would be suited.

"Very well," said Letty, contentedly. "I should like to know who would wear an old thing when he could have a new; and mine is like new now."

"Things can't be new always," said Matilda.

"What then?" her sisters asked, laughing.

"Then it must be respectable for them to be old, sometimes."

"Respectable! Not very pleasant, when they are to be set alongside of things as new and nice as they can be. I like to be as good as anybody, for my part."

"Mamma," said Matilda, "do you know there is a great hole in the door mat?"

"It is worn out a great deal too soon," said Mrs. Englefield; "I shall tell Mr. Hard that his goods do not last; to be sure, you children do kick it to pieces with the snow."

"But, mamma, I should think you might get another, and let that one go to the kitchen."

"And then, wouldn't you like me to buy a new hall cloth? there is very nearly a hole in that."

"Oh yes, mamma!"

"I cannot do it, children. I am not as rich as your Aunt Candy. You must be contented to let things be as they are."

The girls seemed to take it as a grave fact, to judge by their faces.

"And I think all this is very foolish talking and feeling. People are not any better for being rich."

"But they are a great deal happier," said Letitia.

"I don't know, I am sure. I never was tried. I think you had better put the thought out of your heads. I should be sorry if you were not as happy as your cousin, and with as much reason."

"Mamma's being sorry doesn't help the matter," said Letitia, softly. "I know I should be happier if I had what I want. It is just nonsense to say I should not. And mamma would herself."

That evening, the end of the week it was, the newspaper rewarded the first eyes that looked at its columns, with the intelligence that the *City of Pride* had been telegraphed. She

would be in that night. And the list of passengers duly showed the names of Mrs. Candy and daughter. The family could hardly wait over Sunday now. Monday morning's train, they settled it, would bring the travellers. Sunday was spent in a flutter. But, however, that Monday, as well as that Sunday, was a lost day. The washing was put off, and a special dinner cooked, in vain. The children stayed at home and did not go to school, and did nothing. Nobody did anything to speak of. To be sure, there was a great deal of running up and down stairs; setting and clearing tables; going to and from the post-office; but when night came, the house and everything in it was just where the morning had found them; only, all the humanity in it was tired with looking out of windows.

"That's the worst of expecting people!" Mrs. Englefield observed, as she wearily put herself in an arm-chair, and Letitia drew the window curtains. "You never know what to do, and the thing you do is sure to be the wrong thing. Here Judith might as well have done her washing as not; and now it's to do to-morrow, when we don't want it in the way, and it will be in the way."

"Don't you think they will come to-night, mamma?" said Matilda.

"I don't know, I am sure. I know no more than you do. How can I tell? Only don't ask me any more questions."

"Would you have tea yet, mamma?" said Letitia.

"There's a question, now! I tell you, don't ask me. Just when you like."

"There's no train due for a good while, mamma; they *couldn't* come for two or three hours. I think we had better have tea."

So she went off to prepare it, just as Matilda who had put her face outside of the window curtain, proclaimed that somebody was coming to the door.

"Only one person though, mamma. Mamma! it's Miss Redwood – Mr. Richmond's Miss Redwood."

"It wanted but that!" Mrs. Englefield exclaimed, with a sort of resigned despair. "Let her in, Matilda. I locked the door."

The person who followed Matilda to the sitting-room was a slim woman, in black costume, neither new nor fashionable. Indeed, it had no such pretensions; for the fashion at that time was for small bonnets, but Miss Redwood's shadowed her face with a reminiscence of the coal-scuttle shapes, once worn many years before. The face under the bonnet was thin and sharp-featured; yet a certain delicate softness of skin saved it from being harsh; there was even a little peachy bloom on the cheeks. The eyes were soft and keen at once; at least there was no want of benevolence in them, while their glance was swift and shrewd enough, and full of business activity.

"Miss Redwood, how do you do? I am glad to see you. Do sit down," was Mrs. Englefield's salutation, made without rising.

"How do you do, Mis' Englefield? Why – seems as if you was expectin' folks here?"

"Just what we are doing; and it is some of the hardest work one can do."

"Depends on who you expect, seems to me. And I guess 'tain't harder work than what I've been doing to-day. I've been makin' soap. Got it done, too. And 'tain't to do agin till this time next year comes round."

"Can you make enough at once for the whole year? I cannot."

"'Spects you use a passel, don't ye?"

"Of course – in so large a family. But you're a great hand for soap, Miss Redwood, if folks say true?"

"Cellar ain't never out of it," said Miss Redwood, shaking her head. "It's strong, mine is; that's where it is. You see I've my own leach sot up, and there's lots o' ashes; the minister, he likes to burn wood, and I like it, for it gives me my ley; and I don't have no trouble with it; the minister, he saws it and splits it and chops it, and then when all's done he brings it in, and he puts it on. All I have to do is to get my ashes. I did think, when I first come, and the minister he told me he calculated to burn wood in his room, I did think I should give up. 'Why sir,' says I, 'it'll take a load o' wood a day, to fill that ere chimney; and I hate to see a chimney standin' empty with two or three sticks a makin' believe have a fire in the bottom of it. Besides,' says I, 'stoves is a sight cleaner and nicer, Mr. Richmond, and they don't smoke nor nothin', and they're always ready.' 'I'll take care of the fire,' says he, 'if you'll take care of the ashes.' Well, it had to be; but I declare I thought I should have enough to do to take care of the ashes; a-flyin' over everything in the world as they would, and nobody but my two hands to dust with; but I do believe the minister's wood burns

quieter than other folks', and somehow it don't fly nor smoke nor nothin', and the room keeps decent."

"Your whole house is as neat as a pin. But you have no children there to put it out of order, Miss Redwood."

"Guess we do," said the minister's housekeeper quietly; "there ain't any sort o' thing in the village but the minister has it in there by turns. There ain't any sort o' shoes as walks, not to speak of boots, that don't go over my carpets and floors; little and big, and brushed and unbrushed. I tell you, Mis' Englefield, they're goin' in between them two doors all the week long."

"I don't know how you manage them, I'm sure."

"Well, *I* don't," said the housekeeper. "The back is fitted to the burden, they say; and I always *did* pray that if I had work to do, I might be able to do it; and I always was, somehow. And it's a first-rate place to go and warm your feet, when the minister is out," she added after a pause.

"What?" said Mrs. Englefield, laughing.

"The minister's fire, to be sure, that I was talkin' about. Of course, I have to go in to see it's safe, when he ain't there; and sometimes I think it's cheaper to sit down and watch it than to be always runnin'."

"Mr. Richmond was a lucky man when he got you for a housekeeper," said Mrs. Englefield.

"Well, I don't know," said Miss Redwood, contemplatively, with rather a sweet look on her old face. "I 'spose I might as well say I was a lucky woman when I got his house to keep. It come

all by chance, too, you may say – "

"Mamma, tea is ready," Maria here interrupted.

"Miss Redwood, will you come down and have tea with us?"

"No; but what I come to ask was somethin' different. I was so taken up with my soap-kettle all day, I just forgot somethin' more important, and didn't make no new risin'; and I hain't got none to-night for the minister's bread. I know you're one of the folks that likes sweet bread, Mis' Englefield, and has it; and I've come to beg a cup o' your risin'."

One of the girls was sent for the article, and Mrs. Englefield went on.

"The minister's an easy man to live with, I suppose; isn't he?"

"What sort do you mean by that, Mrs. Englefield?"

"Why! I mean he is easily suited, and don't give more trouble than can be helped, and don't take it hard when things go wrong.

"Things don't go wrong, fur's I know," said Miss Redwood. "Not with him, nor with me."

"Easily pleased, isn't he?"

"When folks do just what they'd ought to do, he *is*," said the housekeeper with some energy. "I have no sort of patience, for my part, with the folks that are pleased when they hadn't ought to be pleased."

"But isn't that what Mr. Richmond preaches to us all the time? that we ought to be pleased with everybody?"

"Why, no, mamma!" said Matilda.

"I thought he did."

"I take it t'other way," Miss Redwood observed. "It comes close, it does, some of the minister's talk; but I always think, if I had a right to be better pleased with myself, maybe other folks' onesidedness wouldn't worry me. I'll do as much for you, next time, Miss Letty," she said, rising to take what that young lady had brought her. And therewith away she went.

"Well, we have got off with our lives this time," said Mrs. Englefield. "Now, girls, let us have tea."

"Mamma, I believe here they are this minute," said Matilda. "The omnibus is stopping."

It was declared to be impossible; but nevertheless found true. The omnibus was certainly at the door, backing down upon the side walk; and two figures did get out of it and came through the little courtyard to the house. And then all doubts were resolved; Mrs. Candy was in the arms of her sister, and the cousins were looking at each other.

That is, as soon as people could get their wrappings off. Letty and Maria were assiduous in their endeavours to relieve Miss Clarissa of her hood and furs and the cloakings and mufflings which a night ride had rendered necessary; while Anne waited upon her aunt; and impressions were forming and opinions taking ground, under all the confused chatter about the journey, the train, the omnibus, and the *City of Pride;* opinions and impressions which were likely enough to get turned topsy-turvy in another day or two; but for the present nobody knew that.

"And here is somebody who says nothing!" Mrs. Candy

remarked, stooping down to touch Matilda's hair with a light finger.

"Tilly does the thinking for the family," said Mrs. Englefield. "Now do come down and have some tea."

"Down? Where are we going?" said Mrs. Candy. "Your house stands on the ground level, I noticed."

"Oh, we have a very nice basement; and just for eating, you know, it does not make much difference where you are – and it is so much more convenient, being near the kitchen."

"In Germany we used to take our meals in the open air a great deal," Mrs. Candy went on, as the party filed down the narrow stairs.

"In the open air! Not at this season?"

"Well, not with the thermometer at zero," said Mrs. Candy, laughing a little. "Nor at quite so high a temperature as you have here!"

The room down-stairs was bright enough, and looked cheerful, with its well-spread table and tea-urn; but it was low, and full of close stove heat. The travellers got as far from the source of this as the limits of the table would let them, and presently begged for an open door. But Mrs. Englefield's tea was good; and very soon the family talk began to move naturally. Mrs. Candy pleased her nieces. A fine-looking and also a kind-looking woman, with a good figure, well clothed in a handsome travelling dress; a gold watch and chain; and an easy, good-humoured, and at the same time, sensible air and way of talking. It was not difficult to get

acquainted with her; she met all advances more than half way; and her talk even that first evening was full of amusement and novelty for the young people. It was less easy to know what to think of Clarissa. Her cousins held a consultation about her that night before going to sleep.

"She looks as old as Letty."

"But she isn't. Oh, she don't, either."

"She's well looking; don't you think so?"

"I'll tell you what I think," said Matilda. "She's beau-ti-ful."

"I don't think *so*," said Letty; "but she's an uncommon looking girl."

"How old *is* she?"

"She is sixteen."

"Well! Maria's only half a year younger than that."

"She hasn't said three words yet; so I cannot tell what she is," Anne remarked.

"She didn't like going down into the basement," said Letty.

"How do you know?"

"I know she didn't!"

"I should like to know where she would go; there is no other place," said Maria.

"I suppose that is just what she didn't like," said Letitia.

"There might be, though," Matilda began again. "If mamma would open the back room behind the parlour, and move the table and things up there, – I think it would be a great deal pleasanter."

"That's like Matilda!" the other girls exclaimed in chorus.

"Well, I *don't* think that basement room is pleasant," said the girl. "I never did. I am always glad to get out of it."

"And now, I suppose, you will be taking all Clarissa's dainty ways, in addition to your own!" said Letitia. "I wonder what will become of the rest of us."

"What dainty ways has Clarissa?" Matilda inquired.

"You can see for yourself. She doesn't like the heat of a stove; and she must look at her watch to see what time it is, though the clock was right opposite to her."

"I am sure I would look at a watch, if I had it," Matilda added.

"And did you see what travelling gloves she wore?"

"Why not?" said Matilda.

"Why not, of course! you will have no eyes for any one shortly but Clarissa Candy; I can see it. But she is a member of the Church, isn't she?"

"What if she is?" said Matilda. "Mamma read that in one of Aunt Candy's letters, I remember."

"We'll see what Mr. Richmond will say to her. Maria reports that he does not like red flowers; I wonder what he will think of some other things."

"That is only Maria's nonsense," Matilda insisted. "I know Mr. Richmond likes red flowers; he has got a red lily in his room."

"In his room – oh yes! but not in people's bonnets, you know; nor in their heads; if they are Christians."

"I can't imagine what people's being Christians has to do with red flowers," said Matilda. "Besides, Clarissa hadn't any flowers

about her at all. I don't know what you are talking of."

"Didn't you see her gold chain, though, that hung round her neck?"

"Her watch was on that. Mayn't Christians wear gold chains? What nonsense you do talk, Letitia!"

"I shouldn't want to be a Christian if I thought I couldn't wear anything," Maria remarked.

"Nor would I," said Letitia. "So I advise you, my dears, to be a little careful how you join Bands and such things. You may find that Mr. Richmond is not just the sort of Christian you want to be."

The conclave broke up, having reached a termination of general dissatisfaction common to such conclaves. Maria went to bed grumbling. Matilda was as usual silent.

The next day, however, found all the family as bright as itself. It was a cold day in January; snow on the ground; a clear, sharp sunshine glittering from white roofs and fence tops and the banks of snow heaped against the fences, and shining on twigs and branches of the bare trees; coming into houses with its cheery and keen look at everything it found, as if bidding the dark sides of things, and the dusty corners, to change their characters and be light and fair. In the basement the family gathered for breakfast in happy mood, ready to be pleased with each other; so pleasure was the order of the day. Pleasure had a good deal to feed on, too; for after the long breakfast was over and the conversation had adjourned to the parlour, there came the bestowing of presents

which Clarissa had brought for her friends. And they were so many and so satisfactory, that the criticisms of the past night were certainly for the present forgotten; Letitia forgave her cousin her daintiness, and Maria overlooked the gold watch. Matilda as usual said little, beyond the civil, needful words, which that little girl always spoke gracefully.

"You are a character, my dear, I see," her aunt observed, drawing Matilda to her side caressingly.

"What is that, Aunt Candy?"

"Well, I don't know, my dear," her aunt answered, laughing; "you put me to define and prove my words, and you bring me into difficulty. I think, however, I shall be safe in saying, that a 'character' is a person who has his own thoughts."

"But doesn't everybody?"

"Have his own thoughts? No, my dear; the majority have the thoughts of other people."

"How can they, Aunt Candy?"

"Just by not thinking for themselves. It saves a great deal of trouble."

"But we all think for ourselves," said Matilda.

"Do we? Reflect a little. Don't *some* of you think like other people? about ways of doing, and acting, and dressing, for instance?"

"Oh yes. But, Aunt Candy, if people think for themselves, *must* they do unlike other people?"

"If they follow out their thoughts, they must, child."

"That suits Matilda then," said her sister Anne.

"Well, it is very nice for a family to have one character in it," said Mrs. Candy.

"But, Aunt Candy, isn't Clarissa a character too?"

"I don't know, Tilly; I really have not found it out, if she is. Up to this time she always thinks as I think. Now she has given you the tokens of remembrance she has brought home for you; what do you think *I* have got?"

"O aunt, nothing more!" exclaimed Anne.

"Clarissa and I are two people, if neither of us is a character, however," said Mrs. Candy. "Her gifts are not my gifts. But mine shall be different from hers. And if there is more than one character among us, I should like to find it out; and this will do it."

So saying, she fetched out her purse and presented to each of her sister's children a bank-note for twenty-five dollars.

Mrs. Englefield exclaimed and protested. But Mrs. Candy laid her hand on her sister's mouth, and declared she must please herself in her own way.

"What do you want us to do with this, Aunt Candy?" Matilda inquired in a sort of contemplative wonder.

"Just whatever will please you, will please each of you, best. Only that. That is my condition, girls, if I may call it so. You are not to spend that money for any claims of duty or conscience; but simply in that way which will afford you the highest pleasure."

Thanks were warm and gratification very high; and in the best

mood in the world the new relations sat down to talk to each other and study each other for the remainder of the day. Clarissa pleased her cousins. She was undoubtedly extremely pretty, with big, brown, honest eyes, that gave a good full look into the face she was speaking to; beautiful hair a little lighter in colour, and great sweetness of outline and feature. Yet she was reserved; very quiet; very self-possessed – to a degree that almost carried an air of superiority in the minds of her cousins. Those large brown eyes of hers would be lifted swiftly to the face of some one speaking, and then go down again, with no sign of agreeing or disagreeing – indeed, with no sign of her thought at all; but she *had* thoughts of course; why should she not show them, as her cousins did? It was almost supercilious, to the fancy of Anne and Letitia; Matilda and Maria were fascinated. Then her hands were more delicate than those of Mrs. Englefield's children; and there were one or two costly rings on them. Anne and Letty did not understand their value, but nevertheless even they could guess that they belonged to a superior description of jewellery from that which was displayed beneath the glass cases of Mr. Kurtz the watchmaker of Shadywalk. Then Clarissa's dress was of fine quality, and made beautifully, and her little gold watch with its chain "put a finish upon it," Anne said. A little hair necklace with a gold clasp was round her neck besides; and her comb was real tortoise-shell. Clarissa was dainty, there was no doubt; but her sweet mouth was grave and modest; her words were few; her manners were very kindly and proper; and her cousins on the

whole were obliged to approve her.

CHAPTER IV

"What is all this hurry about?" Clarissa inquired one evening, as they were going down-stairs in answer to the tea-bell; "why are we earlier than usual? Anne says we are."

"Oh, because it is prayer-meeting night – no, not prayer meeting, it isn't either, but our Band-meeting; and we have to be early for that, you know. Oh, you don't know anything about our Band; but you will, to-night. You'll join it, won't you, Clarissa?"

"I know something about Bands," said Clarissa; "but I never belonged to one. Is it the custom here for ladies to do such things?"

"What things? And do you know about bands? like ours?"

"I daresay I shall find I have something to learn," said Clarissa.

"There is a great deal to learn from Mr. Richmond, I can tell you," said Maria. "Oh, you don't know Mr. Richmond, you haven't seen him, because Sunday was so stormy. Well, you'll see him to-night."

"Aunt Englefield," said Clarissa, when they were seated at the tea-table, – "is your Mr. Richmond Band-master as well as clergyman?"

"Bands are a mystery to me, Clarissa," said Mrs. Englefield; "I do not understand Maria when she gets upon that subject. I hope you will be able to enlighten me some time. Are you going to-night? – well, then, I shall hope to be wiser when you return."

Tea was hurried through, cloaks and furs and hoods and all sorts of wrappings were put on; and the party set forth, Anne and Letitia this time going along. It was pleasanter out than in. White streets and clear starlight, and still, cold, fine air. About the corner a few men and boys were congregated as usual; after passing them and turning into the other street, few passengers were to be seen. Here and there one, or a group, making for the lecture-room; here and there somebody seeking a friend's house for pleasure; nobody was out on business at Shadywalk in the evening, and no waggons or sleighs got belated in the darkness. It would have been very dark, but for the snow and the stars. There were no shop-windows illuminated, and no lamps along the street and no gas anywhere. Past the shut-up houses and stores, in the dim, snowy street, the little cluster of girls went swiftly on.

"You are in a great hurry," said Clarissa.

"Oh, we want to get there before anything begins," Maria said. "And it's cold, besides!"

"What church is this we are passing?"

"Oh, this is our church. You haven't seen it. It is real nice inside."

"Not outside?" said Clarissa. "Well, I cannot see it in this light. And is that next place the one we are going to?"

"Yes, that's our lecture-room. That's *very* nice."

So it was. Pleasant light from withinside streamed warm through the hanging window-blinds of the long windows, and promised welcome before they got in. At the door, under the

projecting hood, a lamp shone bright upon the entrance steps. People were flocking in. The opening door let them into a cheerful room, not large, with long rows of seats on either hand of a wide, matted aisle; the view closed by a little desk at the farther end on a raised platform. Right and left of the desk, two small transepts did somewhat to enlarge the accommodations of the place, which had a cosy, home look, comfortable and bright.

"Where do those doors lead to?" Clarissa whispered; – "behind the desk?"

"Oh, those open to the infant class room. Isn't it nice?" Maria answered.

"It is small," said Clarissa.

"It is large enough, though. *We* shall not fill it to-night."

And they did not. There was only a little company gathered, of various ages. Some quite grown people; many who were younger. They had drawn towards the upper end of the room, and clustered near the platform.

"There is Mr. Richmond," Maria whispered presently; "do you see him? he is up there near the desk talking to Mr. Barker, – Mr. Barker is one of our teachers, but he has got nothing to do with the Band. That is Mrs. Trembleton, isn't she pretty? – sitting down there in front; she always sits just there, if she can, and I have seen her ever so put out if she couldn't when somebody else had got it, you know. And there" —

"But, Maria," whispered Clarissa, gravely, "do you think it is quite proper to whisper so in church?"

"This isn't church!" Maria replied, with great readiness.

"What then?"

"Why, it is only our Sunday-Schoolroom; and this is a Band meeting."

"It looks very like church to me," said Clarissa. "Hush! don't whisper any more."

For the minister now took his stand at the little desk before mentioned; and even Maria was quiet enough during the prayer with which he began the proceedings. But then Mr. Richmond came in front of the desk, and began to speak seriously indeed, but with an easy simplicity which Clarissa thought was "not like church."

"It may not be known to everybody present," Mr. Richmond began, "exactly what was done at our last meeting here Thursday night. I wish it to be very well understood, that every one may join with us in the action we took, intelligently; – or keep away from it, intelligently. I wish it to be thoroughly understood. We simply pledged ourselves, some of us who were here Thursday night, to live and work for Christ to the best and the utmost of our ability, as He would give us grace to do. We pledged ourselves to each other and to our Master; to the end that we might the better help each other, being so pledged; and that we might enter into some system and plan of work by which we might accomplish much more than we could hope to do without plan or system. I have a list in my hand of various kinds of work which it may be well for us to attempt; some kinds will suit some people, and other kinds

will suit other people; but before we go into a consideration of these, I will read something else to you. We must do this thing – we must enter into this pledge to God and each other, those of us who enter into it, – knowing exactly what we do, and if possible, why we do it. I have drawn up in a few words what we mean, or what we ought to mean, in giving this pledge; and now I am going to read it to you; and after I have read it I shall ask all of you who have heard it and agreed to it, to rise up, without any regard to the question whether you were among those who rose last Thursday or not. I wish no one to stand who does not fully and intelligently agree to every word of this covenant; – but I hope that will be the case with every one of you all. The children can understand it as well as the grown people. This is the covenant: —

"'We are the servants of Christ.

"'And as He died for all, that they which live should not live unto themselves but unto Him; so we do not count ourselves to belong to ourselves. We are the Lord's.

"'We want to do all we can do, that would please Him and honour Him, whether it be in our own hearts or in the world.

"'So we stand ready to do His will; in telling the good news to others; in showing how precious we hold it; in carrying help of every sort to our neighbour, upon every opportunity; walking as children of the Light; if by any means we may advance our Lord's kingdom and glory.

"'And all this we will try to do, by His help, – trusting in His grace and resting in His promises, whose word cannot fail.'

"Now," said Mr. Richmond, when he had read this, which he read very slowly and deliberately, as if he wished that every one should weigh every word, "I am going to ask you to rise and so declare your agreement with this covenant – all of you who have heard and understood it, and who are ready to pledge yourselves to its responsibilities. Every one whose own mind and wish this covenant expresses will please rise."

The little stir which this request occasioned through the room, left few of the assembly in their seats. Maria, as soon as she was upon her feet, looked to see how it was with her companions. To her great satisfaction, Clarissa was standing beside her; but Anne and Letitia were sitting in their places, and so was Matilda in hers beyond them. Maria frowned and nodded at her, but Mr. Richmond had desired the people to sit down again before these signs could take any effect.

"It is as I hoped," Mr. Richmond said in a satisfied voice. "I have no alteration to make in my lists, beyond the addition of one or two new names; and that sort of alteration I shall be glad to make whenever people will let me. I will receive new names at any time, of those who wish to join our Band – our Working Band. I do not know what we shall call ourselves; but one thing is certain, we mean to be a working people. Now, suppose we see what kinds of work we are prepared to undertake – each one of us in particular. Of course, we are *all* to do *all* we can, and of *all* kinds; but there are some kinds of work that each one can do better than he can do others; and to those particular lines of

effort each one will pledge himself to give special attention.

"The first thing on my list is —

"'*Bringing new scholars to the school*. Who will take this as his special work? Observe, it is not meant that you should ask any children to come to our school who are already members of some other school. We do not wish that. But who will undertake to look out and bring in some of the children that go nowhere? All who want to do this, raise your hands."

There was a show of hands.

"We must have a secretary," said Mr. Richmond. "Mr. Van Dyke, here is paper and ink; will you kindly come and write for us? We want to put down all the names that enlist in this department of work. This is Number One. Put down, opposite to Number One, Mattie Van Dyke, Willie Edwards, Mary Edwards, Maria Englefield."

Mr. Richmond went on giving the names until some eight or ten were registered. The children looked delighted. It was great doings.

The next thing on Mr. Richmond's list was the "*School-singing*." He explained that he wished the special attention of those who could give it to this matter; that they should always stand ready to help the singing in the Sunday-School, and make it just as good as it could be, and keep it good; that they should not wait for others, if there was no one to lead, but start the hymn themselves and carry it through with spirit.

There were not so many that pledged themselves to this work;

but, as before, Maria was one.

The third thing, was "*Welcoming strangers and new scholars*" in the church and in the school. Here a breeze sprung up. Mr. Richmond had remarked upon the great importance of this duty and the common neglect of it; nevertheless there seemed to be some prospect that the neglect would continue. Mrs. Trembleton asked, "How were such strangers to be welcomed?"

"What would you like yourself, Mrs. Trembleton? Suppose you were to go to a strange church, where you knew nobody. Would it be pleasant to have some one come up and take your hand and say you were welcome? and give you a greeting when you met in the street? – perhaps come to see you?"

"I think," said Mrs. Trembleton, after a pause, "it would depend a good deal on who it was did it!"

"Whether it would be pleasant?" said Mr. Richmond, smiling. "But you do not doubt that it would be pleasant to any stranger to have *you* come up and speak and shake hands, and do such offices of kindness?"

"It might be pleasant to them," said Mrs. Trembleton. "I don't think I should like to do it to everybody."

"What do you say, Miss Benyon?" Mr. Richmond asked.

"Oh, I couldn't, Mr. Richmond!" the young lady answered, shrinking.

"I'll do it," spoke out one of the boys.

"George Lockwood will welcome strangers, Mr. Van Dyke," said the minister. "And Willie Edwards holds up his hand, –

and Ben Barth. But shall we have none but the boys to do the welcoming? The new scholars will not be all boys. Ah! there is Miss Peach; Ellen Peach, Mr. Van Dyke; – and Maria Englefield, – and Sarah Bent."

"Won't it make confusion in the school?" Mr. Van Dyke suggested.

"Will not what make confusion?"

"Why, if half-a-dozen scholars are jumping up and leaving their classes, to receive somebody who is coming in?"

"I did not say that they should choose lesson time – or school time at all – for their kind civilities. After school is over – or when meeting in the street – or going into church. Opportunities will present themselves. It is rather the will that seems to be wanting than the way."

"It seems to me," spoke out another lady, "this welcoming of strangers is everybody's business."

"Proverbially nobody's business, Miss Fitch," Mr. Richmond answered with a smile. "You will leave it for me to do; and I shall conclude that Mrs. Trembleton will attend to it; Mrs. Trembleton does not like the charge; – and there we are. Esther, what do you say?"

"Oh, I should not like to do it, Mr. Richmond!"

Nobody seemed to like to do it. Some were shy; some were humble, or thought they were; some fancied themselves of too little consequence; some of too much! Mr. Richmond went on to the next thing, which was "*Temperance Work*." Here there was

no want of volunteers. Boys and girls and young ladies, and even men, were ready to pledge themselves to this cause. The names were many. It took some time to get them all down.

Then came what Mr. Richmond's list called "*Aid and Comfort;*" and which he explained to mean, the giving of all sorts of material and social aid that the cases of sick and poor and distressed might call for. Anybody who would visit such cases, and provide or procure what they needed, or anybody unable to visit who would furnish the necessary supplies if called upon, might be enrolled on this committee. Plenty of people were ready for this.

"*Visiting absent scholars*" found quite a number willing to engage in it. The cause of "*Missionary Collections*" and "*Sunday-School prayer-meetings*" found but few; evidently those were not popular objects. "*Promoting attendance upon church*" did not meet with much favour. The tenth department of work was "*Carrying the Message*". This Mr. Richmond explained to mean, the telling the good news of Christ to all who have not heard or who do not accept it; to everybody we can reach, at home and abroad, wherever we may. There were not a few who were ready to pledge themselves to this; as also to "*Bible Reading*" in houses where sickness or poverty or ignorance made such work desirable. But "*Tract Distributing*," which one would have thought a very kindred effort with the two last, was much more cautiously undertaken. Some boys were ready for it; a few girls; very few grown up people of either sex.

The young people of Mrs. Englefield's family walked home more silently than they had come. To be sure, there was a little throng of persons going their way; they could not speak in private. So under the still, bright stars, they went home without telling any of their thoughts to each other. But perhaps the air was chilly after coming out of the heated lecture-room; for they all poured into the parlour to get warm, before going up-stairs to take off their things.

"Well, you are late," Mrs. Englefield said.

"Yes; but we had, oh, such a nice meeting!" Maria answered.

"What was it all about? Now, I hope, we shall get at some light on the subject."

But the light was not in a hurry to come. Anne and Letitia loosened their bonnet strings, and sat down; Maria and Matilda threw off their cloaks and hoods and sought the fire; nobody volunteered to be spokesman for the party.

"What was done, Clarissa?" her mother asked.

"I can hardly tell, mamma. A sort of association formed, for doing parish work."

"I do not think much of associations," Mrs. Candy said. "People can work just as well in private, if they would only be content. Did *you* join this association?"

"What is *parish work*, Clarissa?" Matilda asked.

"Why, work in the parish, of course," Mrs. Englefield answered.

"I don't know what the parish is, mamma?"

"Don't you? Well, – all the people that Mr. Richmond has the care of, I suppose; isn't it, sister?"

"But who has he the care of?" Matilda persisted, looking up at her mother earnestly.

"Well, child," said Mrs. Englefield, half laughing, "in a sort, he has the care of all the people he preaches to."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.