THE CARPENTER'S DAUGHTER

Anna Bartlett Warner
and Susan Warner

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Nettie comforts her Mother.

THE

CARPENTER'S DAUGHTER.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

BY THE AUTHORS OF "THE WIDE, WIDE WORLD," ETC. ETC.

WITH COLOURED FRONTISPIECE.

LONDON:
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS,
THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE.

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THE LITTLE BLACK HEN.
THE ROSE IN THE DESERT.

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THE CARPENTER'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

SATURDAY EVENING'S WORK.

Down in a little hollow, with the sides grown full of wild thorn, alder bushes, and stunted cedars, ran the stream of a clear spring. It ran over a bed of pebbly stones, showing every one as if there had been no water there, so clear it was; and it ran with a sweet soft murmur or gurgle over the stones, as if singing to itself and the bushes as it ran.

On one side of the little stream a worn foot path took its course among the bushes; and down this path one summer's afternoon came a woman and a girl. They had pails to fill at the spring; the woman had a large wooden one, and the girl a light tin pail; and they drew the water with a little tin dipper, for it was not deep enough to let a pail be used for that. The pails were filled in silence, only the spring always was singing; and the woman and the girl turned and went up the path again. After getting up the bank, which was only a few feet, the path still went gently rising through a wild bit of ground, full of trees and low bushes; and not far off, through the trees, there came a gleam of bright light from the window of a house, on which the setting sun was shining. Half way to the house the girl and the woman stopped to rest; for water is heavy, and the tin pail which was so light before it was filled, had made the little girl's figure bend over to one side like a willow branch all the way from the spring. They stopped to rest, and even the woman had a very weary, jaded look.

"I feel as if I shall give up, some of these days," she exclaimed.

"O no, mother!" the little girl answered, cheerfully. She was panting, with her hand on her side, and her face had a quiet, very sober look; only at those words a little pleasant smile broke over it.

"I shall," said the woman. "One can't stand everything,—for ever."

The little girl had not got over panting yet, but standing there she struck up the sweet air and words, —

> ""There is rest for the weary,

There is rest for the weary,
There is rest for the weary,
There is rest for you.'"

"Yes, in the grave!" said the woman, bitterly. "There's no rest short of that,—for mind or body."

"O yes, mother dear. 'For we which have believed do enter into rest.' Jesus don't make us wait."

"I believe you eat the Bible and sleep on the Bible," said the woman, with a faint smile, taking at the same time a corner of her apron to wipe away a stray tear which had gathered in her eye. "I am glad it rests you, Nettie."

"And you, mother."

"Sometimes," Mrs. Mathieson answered, with a sigh. "But there's your father going to bring home a boarder, Nettie."

"A boarder, mother!—What for?"

"Heaven knows!—if it isn't to break my back, and my heart together. I thought I had enough to manage before, but here's this man coming, and I've got to get everything ready for him by to-morrow night."

"Who is it, mother?"

"It's one of your father's friends; so it's no good," said Mrs. Mathieson.

"But where can he sleep?" Nettie asked, after a moment of thinking. Her mother paused.

"There's no room but yours he can have. Barry wont be moved."

"Where shall I sleep, mother?"

"There's no place but up in the attic. I'll see what I can do to fit up a corner for you—if I ever can get time," said Mrs. Mathieson, taking up her pail. Nettie followed her example, and certainly did not smile again till they reached the house. They went round to the front door, because the back door belonged to another family. At the door, as they set down their pails again before mounting the stairs, Nettie smiled at her mother very placidly, and said—

"Don't you go to fit up the attic, mother; I'll see to it in time. I can do it just as well."

Mrs. Mathieson made no answer but groaned internally, and they went up the flight of stairs which led to their part of the house. The ground floor was occupied by somebody else. A little entry way at the top of the stairs received the wooden pail of water, and with the tin one Nettie went into the room used by the family. It was her father and mother's sleeping-room, their bed standing in one corner. It was the kitchen apparently, for a small cooking-stove was there, on which Nettie put the tea-kettle when she had filled it. And it was the common living-room also; for the next thing she did was to open a cupboard and take out cups and saucers and arrange them on a leaf table which stood toward one end of the room. The furniture was wooden and plain; the woodwork of the windows was unpainted; the cups and plates were of the commonest kind; and the floor had no covering but two strips of rag carpeting; nevertheless the whole was tidy and very clean, showing constant care. Mrs. Mathieson had sunk into a chair, as one who had no spirit to do anything; and watched her little daughter setting the table with eyes which seemed not to see her. They gazed inwardly at something she was thinking of.

"Mother, what is there for supper?"

"There is nothing. I must make some porridge." And Mrs. Mathieson got up from her chair.

"Sit you still, mother, and I'll make it. I can."

"If both our backs are to be broken," said Mrs. Mathieson, "I'd rather mine would break first." And she went on with her preparations.

"But you don't like porridge," said Nettie. "You didn't eat anything last night."

"That's nothing, child. I can bear an empty stomach, if only my brain wasn't quite so full."

Nettie drew near the stove and looked on, a little sorrowfully.

"I wish you had something you liked, mother! If only I was a little older, wouldn't it be nice? I could earn something then, and I would bring you home things that you liked out of my own money."

This was not said sorrowfully, but with a bright gleam as of some fancied and pleasant possibility. The gleam was so catching, Mrs. Mathieson turned from her porridge-pot which she was stirring, to give a very heartfelt kiss to Nettie's lips; then she stirred on, and the shadow came over her face again.

"Dear," she said, "just go in Barry's room and straighten it up a little before he comes in—will you? I haven't had a minute to do it, all day; and there wont be a bit of peace if he comes in and it isn't in order."

Nettie turned and opened another door, which let her into a small chamber used as somebody's

bedroom. It was all brown, like the other; a strip of the same carpet in the middle of the floor, and a small cheap chest of drawers, and a table. The bed had not been made up, and the tossed condition of the bedclothes spoke for the strength and energy of the person that used them, whoever he was. A pair of coarse shoes were in the middle of the whole; another pair, or rather a pair of half-boots, out at the toes, were in the middle of the floor; stockings, one under the bed and one under the table. On the table was a heap of confusion; and on the little bureau were to be seen pieces of wood, half cut and uncut, with shavings, and the knife and saw that had made them. Old newspapers, and school books, and a slate, and two kites, with no end of tail, were lying over every part of the room that happened to be convenient; also an ink bottle and pens; with chalk and resin and a medley of unimaginable things beside, that only boys can collect together and find delight in. If Nettie sighed as all this hurly-burly met her eye, it was only an internal sigh. She set about patiently bringing things to order. First made the bed, which it took all her strength to do: for the coverlets were of a very heavy and coarse manufacture of cotton and woollen mixed, blue and white; and then gradually found a way to bestow the various articles in Barry's apartment, so that things looked neat and comfortable. But perhaps it was a little bit of a sign of Nettie's feeling, that she began softly to sing to herself,

"'There is rest for the weary.'"

"Hollo!" burst in a rude boy of some fifteen years, opening the door from the entry,—"who's puttin' my room to rights?"

A very gentle voice said, "I've done it, Barry."

"What have you done with that pine log?"

"Here it is,—in the corner behind the bureau."

"Don't you touch it now, to take it for your fire,—mind, Nettie! Where's my kite?"

"You wont have time to fly it now, Barry; supper will be ready in two minutes."

"What you got?"

"The same kind we had last night."

"*I* don't care for supper." Barry was getting the tail of his kite together.

"But please, Barry, come now; because it will make mother so much more trouble if you don't. She has the things to clear away after you're done, you know!"

"Trouble! so much talk about trouble! *I* don't mind trouble. I don't want any supper, I tell you."

Nettie knew well enough he would want it by and by, but there was no use in saying anything more, and she said nothing. Barry got his kite together and went off. Then came a heavier step on the stairs, which she knew; and she hastily went into the other room to see that all was ready. The tea was made, and Mrs. Mathieson put the smoking dish of porridge on the table, just as the door opened and a man came in. A tall, burly, strong man, with a face that would have been a good face enough if its expression had been different, and if its hue had not been that of a purplish-red flush. He came to the table and silently sat down as he took a survey of what was on it.

"Give me a cup of tea! Have you got no bread, Sophia?"

"Nothing but what you see. I hoped you would bring home some money, Mr. Mathieson. I have neither milk nor bread; it's a mercy there's sugar. I don't know what you expect a lodger to live on."

"Live on his board,—that'll give you enough. But you want something to begin with. I'd go out and get one or two things—but I'm so confounded tired. I can't."

Mrs. Mathieson, without a word, put on a shawl and went to the closet for her bonnet.

"I'll go, mother! Let me go, please. I want to go," exclaimed Nettie, eagerly. "I can get it. What shall I get, father?"

Slowly and weariedly the mother laid off her things, as quickly the child put hers on.

"What shall I get, father?"

"Well, you can go down the street to Jackson's, and get what your mother wants: some milk and bread; and then you'd better fetch seven pounds of meal and a quart of treacle. And ask him to give you a nice piece of pork out of his barrel."

"She can't bring all that!" exclaimed the mother; "you'd better go yourself, Mr. Mathieson. That would be a great deal more than the child can carry, or I either."

"Then I'll go twice, mother; it isn't far; I'd like to go. I'll get it. Please give me the money, father."

He cursed and swore at her, for answer. "Go along, and do as you are bid, without all this chaffering! Go

to Jackson's and tell him you want the things, and I'll give him the money to-morrow. He knows me."

Nettie knew he did, and stood her ground. Her father was just enough in liquor to be a little thick-headed and foolish.

"You know I can't go without the money, father," she said, gently; "and to-morrow is Sunday."

He cursed Sunday and swore again, but finally put his hand in his pocket and threw some money across the table to her. He was just in a state not to be careful what he did, and he threw her crown-pieces where if he had been quite himself he would have given shillings. Nettie took them without any remark, and her basket, and went out.

It was just sundown. The village lay glittering in the light, that would be gone in a few minutes; and up on the hill the white church, standing high, showed all bright in the sunbeams from its sparkling vane at the top of the spire down to the lowest step at the door. Nettie's home was in a branch-road, a few steps from the main street of the village that led up to the church at one end of it. All along that street the sunlight lay, on the grass and the roadway and the sidewalks and the tops of a few elm-trees. The street was empty; it was most people's supper-time. Nettie turned the corner and went down the village. She went slowly; her little feet were already tired with the work they had done that day, and back and arms and head all seemed tired too. But Nettie never thought it hard that her mother did not go instead of letting her go; she knew her mother could not bear to be seen in the village in the old shabby gown and shawl she wore; for Mrs. Mathieson had seen better days. And besides that, she would be busy enough as

it was, and till a late hour, this Saturday night. Nettie's gown was shabby too; yes, very, compared with that almost every other child in the village wore; yet somehow Nettie was not ashamed. She did not think of it now, as her slow steps took her down the village street; she was thinking what she should do about the money. Her father had given her two or three times as much, she knew, as he meant her to spend; he was a good workman, and had just got in his week's wages. What should Nettie do? Might she keep and give to her mother what was over? it was, and would be, so much wanted! and from her father they could never get it again. He had his own ways of disposing of what he earned, and very little of it indeed went to the wants of his wife and daughter. What might Nettie do? She pondered, swinging her basket in her hand, till she reached a corner where the village street turned off again, and where the store of Mr. Jackson stood. There she found Barry bargaining for some things he at least had money for.

"O Barry, how good!" exclaimed Nettie; "you can help me carry my things home."

"I'll know the reason first, though," answered Barry. "What are you going to get?"

"Father wants a bag of corn meal and a piece of pork and some treacle; and you know I can't carry them all, Barry. I've got to get bread and milk besides."

"Hurra!" said Barry, "now we'll have fried cakes! I'll tell you what I'll do, Nettie—I'll take home the treacle, if you'll make me some to-night for supper."

"O I can't, Barry! I've got so much else to do, and it's Saturday night."

"Very good—get your things home yourself then."

Barry turned away, and Nettie made her bargains. He still stood by however and watched her. When the pork and the meal and the treacle were bestowed in the basket, it was so heavy she could not manage to carry it. How many journeys to and fro would it cost her?

"Barry," she said, "you take this home for me, and if mother says so, I'll make you the cakes."

"Be quick then," said her brother, shouldering the basket, "for I'm getting hungry."

Nettie went a few steps further on the main road of the village, which was little besides one long street and not very long either; and went in at the door of a very little dwelling, neat and tidy like all the rest. It admitted her to the tiniest morsel of a shop—at least there was a long table there which seemed to do duty as a counter; and before, not behind, it sat a spruce little woman sewing. She jumped up as Nettie entered. By the becoming smartness of her calico dress and white collar, the beautiful order of her hair, and a certain peculiarity of feature, you might know before she spoke that the little baker was a Frenchwoman. She spoke English quite well, though not so fast as she spoke her own tongue.

"I want two loaves of bread, Mrs. August; and a pint of milk, if you please."

"How will you carry them, my child? you cannot take them all at the time."

"O yes, I can," said Nettie, cheerfully. "I can manage. They are not heavy."

"No, I hope not," said the Frenchwoman; "it is not heavy, my bread! but two loaves are not one, no more. Is your mother well?"

She then set busily about wrapping the loaves in paper and measuring out the milk. Nettie answered her mother was well.

"And you?" said the little woman, looking at her sideways. "Somebody is tired this evening."

"Yes," said Nettie, brightly; "but I don't mind. One must be tired sometimes. Thank you, ma'am."

The woman had put the loaves and the milk carefully in her arms and in her hand, so that she could carry them, and looked after her as she went up the street.

"One must be tired sometimes!" said she to herself, with a turn of her capable little head. "I should like to hear her say 'One must be rested sometimes;' but I do not hear that."

So perhaps Nettie thought, as she went homeward. It would have been very natural. Now the sun was down, the bright gleam was off the village; the soft shades of evening were gathering and lights twinkled in windows. Nettie walked very slowly, her arms full of the bread. Perhaps she wished her Saturday's work was all done, like other people's. All I can tell you is, that as she went along through the quiet deserted street, all alone, she broke out softly singing to herself the words,

> "No need of the sun in that day
> Which never is followed by night."

And that when she got home she ran up stairs quite briskly, and came in with a very placid face; and told

her mother she had had a pleasant walk—which was perfectly true.

"I'm glad, dear," said her mother, with a sigh. "What made it pleasant?"

"Why, mother," said Nettie, "Jesus was with me all the way."

"God bless you, child!" said her mother; "you are the very rose of my heart!"

There was only time for this little dialogue, for which Mr. Mathieson's slumbers had given a chance. But then Barry entered, and noisily claimed Nettie's promise. And without a cloud crossing her sweet brow, she made the cakes, and baked them on the stove, and served Barry until he had enough; nor ever said how weary she was of being on her feet. There were some cakes left, and Mrs. Mathieson saw to it that Nettie sat down and ate them; and then sent her off to bed without suffering her to do anything more; though Nettie pleaded to be allowed to clear away the dishes. Mrs. Mathieson did that; and then sat down to make darns and patches on various articles of clothing, till the old clock of the church on the hill tolled out solemnly the hour of twelve all over the village.

CHAPTER II.

SUNDAY'S REST.

Nettie's room was the only room on that floor besides her mother's and Barry's. It was at the back of the house, with a pleasant look-out over the trees and bushes between it and the spring. Over these the view went to distant hills and fields, that always looked pretty in all sorts of lights, Nettie thought. Besides that, it was a clean, neat little room; bare to be sure, without even Barry's strip of rag carpet; but on a little black table lay Nettie's Bible and Sunday-school books; and each window had a chair; and a chest of drawers held all her little wardrobe and a great deal of room to spare besides; and the cot-bed in one corner was nicely made up. It was a very comfortable-looking room to Nettie.

"So this is the last night I shall sleep here!" she thought as she went in. "To-morrow I must go up to the attic. Well,—I can pray there just the same; and God will be with me there just the same."

It was a comfort; but it was the only one Nettie could think of in connexion with her removal. The attic was no room, but only a little garret used as a lumber place; not boarded up, nor plastered at all; nothing but the beams and the side-boarding for the walls, and nothing but the rafters and the shingles between it and the sky. Besides which, it was full of lumber of one sort and another. How Nettie was to move up there the next day, being Sunday, she could not imagine; but she was so tired that as soon as her head touched her pillow she fell fast asleep, and forgot to think about it.

The next thing was the bright morning light rousing her, and the joyful thought that it was Sunday

morning. A beautiful day it was. The eastern light was shining over upon Nettie's distant hills, with all sorts of fresh lovely colours and promise of what the coming hours would bring. Nettie looked at them lovingly, for she was very fond of them and had a great many thoughts about those hills. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people;"—that was one thing they made her think of. She thought of it now as she was dressing, and it gave her the feeling of being surrounded with a mighty and strong protection on every side. It made Nettie's heart curiously glad, and her tongue speak of joyful things; for when she knelt down to pray she was full of thanksgiving.

The next thing was, that taking her tin pail Nettie set off down to the spring to get water to boil the kettle. It was so sweet and pleasant—no other spring could supply nicer water. The dew brushed from the bushes and grass as she went by; and from every green thing there went up a fresh dewy smell that was reviving. The breath of the summer wind, moving gently, touched her cheek and fluttered her hair, and said God had given a beautiful day to the world; and Nettie thanked him in her heart and went on rejoicing. Sunday was Nettie's holiday, and Sunday-school and church were her delight. And though she went in all weathers, and nothing would keep her, yet sunshine is sunshine; and she felt so this morning. So she gaily filled her pail at the spring and trudged back with it to the house. The next thing was to tap at her mother's door.

Mrs. Mathieson opened it, in her nightgown; she was just up, and looked as if her night's sleep had been all too short for her.

"Why, Nettie!—is it late?" she said, as Nettie and the tin pail came in.

"No, mother; it's just good time. You get dressed, and I'll make the fire ready. It's beautiful out, mother."

Mrs. Mathieson made no answer, and Nettie went to work with the fire. It was an easy matter to put in some paper and kindle the light wood; and when the kettle was on, Nettie went round the room softly setting it to rights as well as she could. Then glanced at her father, still sleeping.

"I can't set the table yet, mother."

"No, child; go off, and I'll see to the rest. If I can get folks up, at least," said Mrs. Mathieson, somewhat despondingly. Sunday morning that was a doubtful business, she and Nettie knew. Nettie went to her own room to carry out a plan she had. If she could manage to get her things conveyed up to the attic without her mother knowing it, just so much labour and trouble would be spared her, and her mother might have a better chance of some rest that day. Little enough, with a lodger coming that evening! To get her things up there,—that was all Nettie would do to-day; but that must be done. The steep stairs to the attic went up from the entry way, just outside of Nettie's door. She went up the first time to see what place there was to bestow anything.

The little garret was strewn all over with things carelessly thrown in, merely to get them out of the way. There was a small shutter window in each gable. One was open, just revealing the utter confusion; but half-showing the dust that lay on everything. The other window, the back one, was fairly shut up by a great heap of boxes and barrels

piled against it. In no part was there a clear space, or a hopeful opening. Nettie stood aghast for some moments, not knowing what to do. "But if I don't, mother will have to," she thought. It nerved her little arm, and one thought of her invisible protection nerved her heart, which had sunk at first coming up. Softly she moved and began her operations, lest her mother down stairs should hear and find out what she was about before it was done. Sunday too! But there was no help for it.

Notwithstanding the pile of boxes, she resolved to begin at the end with the closed window; for near the other there were things she could not move: an old stove, a wheelbarrow, a box of heavy iron tools, and some bags of charcoal and other matters. By a little pushing and coaxing, Nettie made a place for the boxes, and then began her task of removing them. One by one, painfully, for some were unwieldy and some were weighty, they travelled across in Nettie's arms, or were shoved, or turned over and over across the floor, from the window to a snug position under the eaves where she stowed them. Barry would have been a good hand at this business, not to speak of his father: but Nettie knew there was no help to be had from either of them; and the very thought of them did not come into her head. Mr. Mathieson, provided he worked at his trade, thought the "women-folks" might look after the house; Barry considered that when he had got through the heavy labours of school, he had done his part of the world's work. So Nettie toiled on with her boxes and barrels. They scratched her arms; they covered her clean face with dust; they tried her strength; but every effort saved one to her mother, and Nettie never stopped except to gather breath and rest.

The last thing of all under the window was a great old chest. Nettie could not move it, and she concluded it might stay there very conveniently for a seat. All the rest of the pile she cleared away, and then opened the window. There was no sash; nothing but a wooden shutter fastened with a hook. Nettie threw it open. There, to her great joy, behold she had the very same view of her hills, all shining in the sun now. Only this window was higher than her old one, and lifted her up more above the tops of the trees, and gave a better and clearer and wider view of the distant open country she liked so much. Nettie was greatly delighted, and refreshed herself with a good look out and a breath of fresh air before she began her labours again. That gave the dust a little chance to settle, too.

There was a good deal to do yet before she could have a place clear for her bed, not to speak of anything more. However, it was done at last; the floor brushed up, all ready, and the top of the chest wiped clean; and next Nettie set about bringing all her things up the stairs and setting them here, where she could. Her clothes, her little bit of a looking-glass, her Bible and books and slate, even her little washstand, she managed to lug up to the attic; with many a journey and much pains. But it was about done, before her mother called her to breakfast. The two lagging members of the family had been roused at last, and were seated at the table.

"Why, what have you been doing, child? how you look!" said Mrs. Mathieson.

"How do I look?" said Nettie.

"Queer enough," said her father.

Nettie laughed, and hastened to another subject; she knew if they got upon this there would be some disagreeable words before it was over. She had made up her mind what to do, and now handed her father the money remaining from her purchases. "You gave me too much, father, last night," she said, simply; "here is the rest." Mr. Mathieson took it and looked at it.

"Did I give you all this?"

"Yes, father."

"Did you pay for what you got, besides?"

"Yes."

He muttered something which was very like an oath in his throat, and looked at his little daughter, who was quietly eating her breakfast. Something touched him unwontedly.

"You're an honest little girl!" he said. "There! you may have that for yourself;" and he tossed her a shilling.

You could see, by a little streak of pink colour down each of Nettie's cheeks, that some great thought of pleasure had started into her mind. "For myself, father?" she repeated.

"All for yourself," said Mr. Mathieson, buttoning up his money with a very satisfied air. Nettie said no more, only ate her breakfast a little quicker after that. It was time, too; for the late hours of some of the family always made her in a hurry about getting to Sunday-school; and the minute Nettie had done, she got her bonnet, her Sunday bonnet—the best she had to wear—and set off. Mrs. Mathieson never let

her wait for anything at home *that* morning.

This was Nettie's happy time. It never troubled her, that she had nothing but a sun-bonnet of white muslin, nicely starched and ironed, while almost all the other girls that came to the school had little straw bonnets trimmed with blue and pink and yellow and green ribbons; and some of them wore silk bonnets. Nettie did not even think of it; she loved her Sunday lesson, and her Bible, and her teacher, so much; and it was such a good time when she went to enjoy them all together. There was only a little way she had to go; for the road where Mrs. Mathieson lived, after running down a little further from the village, met another road which turned right up the hill to the church; or Nettie could take the other way, to the main village street, and straight up that. Generally she chose the forked way, because it was the emptiest.

Nettie's class in the Sunday-school was of ten little girls about her own age; and their teacher was a very pleasant and kind gentleman, named Mr. Folke. Nettie loved him dearly; she would do anything that Mr. Folke told her to do. Their teacher was very apt to give the children a question to answer from the Bible; for which they had to look out texts during the week. This week the question was, "Who are happy?" and Nettie was very eager to know what answers the other girls would bring. She was in good time, and sat resting and watching the boys and girls and teachers as they came in, before the school began. She was first there of all her class; and watching so eagerly to see those who were coming, that she did not know Mr. Folke was near till he spoke to her. Nettie started and turned.

"How do you do?" said her teacher, kindly. "Are you quite well, Nettie, this morning?" For he thought she looked pale and tired. But her face coloured with pleasure and a smile shone all over it, as she told him she was very well.

"Have you found out who are the happy people, Nettie?"

"Yes, Mr. Folke; I have found a verse. But I knew before."

"I thought you did. Who are they, Nettie?"

"Those that love Jesus, sir."

"Ay. In the Christian armour, you know, the feet are 'shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.' With the love of Jesus in our hearts, our feet can go over very rough ways and hardly feel that they are rough. Do you find it so?"

"O yes, sir!"

He said no more, for others of the class now came up; and Nettie wondered how he knew, or if he knew, that she had a rough way to go over. But his words were a help and comfort to her. So was the whole lesson that day. The verses about the happy people were beautiful. The seven girls who sat on one side of Nettie repeated the blessings told of in the fifth chapter of Matthew, about the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers. Then came Nettie's verse. It was this:

"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God."

The next girl gave the words of Jesus, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

The last gave, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

Then came Mr. Folke's verse, and Nettie thought it was the most beautiful of all. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Then Mr. Folke talked about that city; its streets of gold, and the gates of pearl, through which nothing that defileth can by any means enter. He told how Jesus will make his people happy there; how they will be with him, and all their tears wiped away. And Jesus will be their Shepherd; his sheep will not wander from him anymore; "and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads." Nettie could hardly keep from crying as Mr. Folke went on; she felt as if she was half in heaven already, and it seemed very odd to cry for gladness; but she could not help it. Then the school closed with singing the hymn,

"O how happy are they
Who the Saviour obey,
And have laid up their treasures above."

From school they went to church, of course. A strange minister preached that day, and Nettie could not understand him always; but the words of the hymn and Mr. Folke's words ran in her head then, and she was very happy all church time. And as she was walking home, still the tune and the words ran in her ears,

"Jesus all the day long
Is my joy and my song;
O that all his salvation might see!"

So, thinking busily, Nettie got home and ran up stairs. What a change! It looked like a place very, very far from those gates of pearl.

Her mother sat on one side of the stove, not dressed for church, and leaning her head on her hand. Mr. Mathieson was on the other side, talking and angry. Barry stood back, playing ball by himself by throwing it up and catching it again. The talk stopped at Nettie's entrance. She threw off her bonnet and began to set the table, hoping that would bring peace.

"Your father don't want any dinner," said Mrs. Mathieson.

"Yes I do!"—thundered her husband; "but I tell you I'll take anything now; so leave your cooking till supper—when Lumber will be here. Go on, child! and get your work done."

There were no preparations for dinner, and Nettie was at a loss; and did not like to say anything for fear of bringing on a storm. Her mother looked both weary and out of temper. The kettle was boiling,—the only thing about the room that had a pleasant seeming.

"Will you have a cup of tea, father?" said Nettie.

"Anything you like—yes, a cup of tea will do; and hark'ye, child, I want a good stout supper got this afternoon. Your mother don't choose to hear me. Mr. Lumber is coming, and I want a good supper to make him think he's got to the right place. Do you hear,

Nettie?"

"Yes, father."

Nettie went on to do the best she could. She warmed the remains of last night's porridge and gave it to Barry with treacle, to keep him quiet. Meanwhile she had made the tea, and toasted a slice of bread very nicely, though with great pains, for the fire wasn't good; and the toast and a cup of tea she gave to her father. He eat it with an eagerness which let Nettie know she must make another slice as fast as possible.

"Hollo! Nettie—I say, give us some of that, will you?" said Barry, finding his porridge poor in taste.

"Barry, there isn't bread enough—I can't," whispered Nettie. "We've got to keep a loaf for supper."

"Eat what you've got, or let it alone!" thundered Mr. Mathieson, in the way he had when he was out of patience, and which always tried Nettie exceedingly.

"She's got more," said Barry. "She's toasting two pieces this minute. I want one."

"I'll knock you over, if you say another word," said his father. Nettie was frightened, for she saw he meant to have the whole, and she had destined a bit for her mother. However, when she gave her father his second slice, she ventured, and took the other with a cup of tea to the forlorn figure on the other side of the stove. Mrs. Mathieson took only the tea. But Mr. Mathieson's ire was roused afresh. Perhaps toast and tea didn't agree with him.

"Have you got all ready for Mr. Lumber?" he said, in a tone of voice very unwilling to be pleased.

"No," said his wife,—"I have had no chance. I have

been cooking and clearing up all the morning. His room isn't ready."

"Well, you had better get it ready pretty quick. What's to do?"

"Everything's to do," said Mrs. Mathieson.

He swore at her. "Why can't you answer a plain question? I say, *what's* to do?"

"There's all Nettie's things in the room at present. They are all to move up stairs, and the red bedstead to bring down."

"No, mother," said Nettie, gently,—"all my things are up stairs already;—there's only the cot and the bed, that I couldn't move."

Mrs. Mathieson gave no outward sign of the mixed feeling of pain and pleasure that shot through her heart. Pleasure at her child's thoughtful love, pain that she should have to show it in such a way.

"When did you do it, Nettie?"

"This morning before breakfast, mother. It's all ready, father, if you or Barry would take up my cot and the bed, and bring down the other bedstead. It's too heavy for me."

"That's what I call doing business and having some spirit," said her father. "Not sitting and letting your work come to you. Here, Nettie—I'll do the rest for you."

Nettie ran with him to show him what was wanted; and Mr. Mathieson's strong arms had it all done very quickly. Nettie eagerly thanked him; and then seeing him in good-humour with her, she ventured

something more.

"Mother's very tired to-day, father," she whispered; "she'll feel better by and by if she has a little rest. Do you think you would mind helping me put up this bedstead?"

"Well, here goes!" said Mr. Mathieson. "Which piece belongs here, to begin with?"

Nettie did not know much better than he; but putting not only her whole mind but also her whole heart into it, she managed to find out and direct him successfully. Her part was hard work; she had to stand holding up the heavy end of the bedstead while her father fitted in the long pieces; and then she helped him to lace the cords, which had to be drawn very tight; and precious time was running away fast, and Nettie had had no dinner. But she stood patiently, with a thought in her heart which kept her in peace all the while. When it was done, Mr. Mathieson went out; and Nettie returned to her mother. She was sitting where she had left her. Barry was gone.

"Mother, wont you have something to eat?"

"I can't eat, child. Have you had anything yourself?"

Nettie had seized a remnant of her father's toast, and was munching it hastily.

"Mother, wont you put on your gown and come to church this afternoon? Do! It will rest you. Do, mother!"

"You forget I've got to get supper, child. Your father doesn't think it necessary that anybody should rest, or go to church, or do anything except work. What

he is thinking of, I am sure I don't know. There is no place to eat in but this room, and he is going to bring a stranger into it; and if I was dying I should have to get up for every meal that is wanted. I never thought I should come to live so! And I cannot dress myself, or prepare the victuals, or have a moment to myself, but I have the chance of Mr. Lumber and your father in here to look on! It is worse than a dog's life!"

It looked pretty bad, Nettie thought. She did not know what to say. She began clearing away the things on the table.

"And what sort of a man this Mr. Lumber is, I don't know. I dare say he is like his name—one of your father's cronies—a drinker and a swearer. And Mr. Mathieson will bring him here, to be on my hands! It will kill me before spring, if it lasts."

"Couldn't there be a bed made somewhere else for Barry, mother? and then we could eat in there."

"Where would you make it? I could curtain off a corner of this room, but Barry wouldn't have it, nor your father; and they'd all want to be close to the fire the minute the weather grows the least bit cool. No —there is nothing for me, but to live on till Death calls for me!"

"Mother—Jesus said, 'He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die.'"

"O yes!" said Mrs. Mathieson, with a kind of long-drawn groan, "I don't know how it will be about that! I get so put about, now in these times, that it seems to me I don't know my own soul!"

"Mother, come to church this afternoon."

"I can't, child. I've got to put up that man's bed and make it."

"That is all done, mother, and the floor brushed up. Do come!"

"Why, who put it up?"

"Father and I."

"Well! you do beat all, Nettie. But I can't, child; I haven't time."

"Yes, mother, plenty. There's all the hour of Sunday-school before church begins. Now do, mother!"

"Well—you go off to school; and if I can, maybe I will. You go right off, Nettie."

Nettie went, feeling weary and empty by dint of hard work and a dinner of a small bit of dry toast. But she thought little about that. She wanted to ask Mr. Folke a question.

The lesson that afternoon was upon the peacemakers; and Mr. Folke asked the children what ways they knew of being a peacemaker? The answer somehow was not very ready.

"Isn't it to stop people from quarrelling?" one child asked.

"How can you do that, Kizzy?"

Kizzy seemed doubtful. "I could ask them to stop," she said.

"Well, suppose you did. Would angry people mind your asking?"

"I don't know, sir. If they were very angry, I suppose

they wouldn't."

"Perhaps not. One thing is certain, Kizzy; you must have peace in your own heart, to give you the least chance."

"How, Mr. Folke?"

"If you want to put out a fire, you must not stick into it something that will catch?"

"That would make the fire worse," said one of the girls.

"Certainly. So if you want to touch quarrelsome spirits with the least hope of softening them, you must be so full of the love of Jesus yourself that nothing but love can come out of your own spirit. You see it means a good deal, to be a peacemaker."

"I always thought that must be one of the easiest things of the whole lot," said one of the class.

"You wont find it so, I think; or rather you will find they are all parts of the same character, and the blessing is one. But there are more ways of being a peacemaker. What do you do when the hinge of a door creaks?"

One said "she didn't know;" another said "Nothing." "I stop my ears," said a third. Mr. Folke laughed.

"*That* would not do for a peacemaker," he said. "Don't you know what makes machinery work smoothly?"

"Oil!" cried Kizzy.

"Oil to be sure. One little drop of oil will stop ever so much creaking and groaning and complaining, of hinges and wheels and all sorts of machines. Now,

peoples' tempers are like wheels and hinges—but what sort of oil shall we use?"

The girls looked at each other, and then one of them said, "Kindness."

"To be sure! A gentle word, a look of love, a little bit of kindness, will smooth down a roughened temper or a wry face, and soften a hard piece of work, and make all go easily. And so of reproving sinners. The Psalmist says, 'Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.' But you see the peacemaker must be righteous himself, or he hasn't the oil. Love is the oil; the love of Jesus."

"Mr. Folke," said Nettie, timidly, "wasn't Jesus a peacemaker?"

"The greatest that ever lived!" said Mr. Folke, his eyes lighting up with pleasure at her question. "He made all the peace there is in the world, for he bought it, when he died on the cross to reconcile man with God. All our drops of oil were bought with drops of blood."

"And," said Nettie, hesitatingly, "Mr. Folke, isn't that one way of being a peacemaker?"

"What?"

"I mean, to persuade people to be at peace with him?"

"That is the way above all others, my child; that is truly to be the 'children of God.' Jesus came and preached peace; and that is what his servants are doing, and will do, till he comes. And 'they shall be called the children of God.' 'Beloved, if God so loved

us, we ought also to love one another.'"

Mr. Folke paused, with a face so full of thought, of eagerness, and of love, that none of the children spoke and some of them wondered. And before Mr. Folke spoke again the superintendent's little bell rang; and they all stood up to sing. But Nettie Mathieson hardly could sing; it seemed to her so glorious a thing to be *that* sort of a peacemaker. Could she be one? But the Lord blessed the peacemakers; then it must be his will that all his children should be such; then he would enable her to be one! It was a great thought. Nettie's heart swelled, with hope and joy and prayer. She knew whose peace she longed for, first of all.

Her mother had now come to church; so Nettie enjoyed all the services with nothing to hinder. Then they walked home together, not speaking much to each other, but every step of the way pleasant in the Sunday afternoon light, till they got to their own door. Nettie knew what her mother's sigh meant, as they mounted the stairs. Happily, nobody was at home yet but themselves.

"Now, mother," said Nettie, when she had changed her dress and come to the common room,—"what's to be for supper? I'll get it. You sit still and read, if you want to, while it's quiet. What must we have?"

"There is not a great deal to do," said Mrs. Mathieson. "I boiled the pork this morning, and that was what set your father up so; that's ready; and he says there must be cakes. The potatoes are all ready to put down—I was going to boil 'em this morning, and he stopped me."

Nettie looked grave about the cakes. "However,

mother," she said, "I don't believe that little loaf of bread would last, even if you and I didn't touch it; it is not very big."

Mrs. Mathieson wearily sat down and took her Testament, as Nettie begged her; and Nettie put on the kettle and the pot of potatoes, and made the cakes ready to bake. The table was set, and the treacle and everything on it, except the hot things, when Barry burst in.

"Hollo, cakes!—hollo, treacle!" he shouted. "Pork and treacle—that's the right sort of thing. Now we're going to live something like."

"Hush, Barry, don't make such a noise," said his sister. "You know it's Sunday evening."

"Sunday! well, what about Sunday? What's Sunday good for, except to eat, I should like to know?"

"O Barry!"

"O Barry!" said he, mimicking her. "Come, shut up, and fry your cake. Father and Lumber will be here just now."

Nettie hushed, as she was bade; and as soon as her father's step was heard below, she went to frying cakes with all her might. She just turned her head to give one look at Mr. Lumber as he came in. He appeared to her very like her father, but without the recommendation which her affection gave to Mr. Mathieson. A big, strong, burly fellow, with the same tinges of red about his face, that the summer sun had never brought there. Nettie did not want to look again.

She had a good specimen this evening of what they

might expect in future. Mrs. Mathieson poured out the tea, and Nettie baked the cakes; and perhaps because she was almost faint for want of something to eat, she thought no three people ever ate so many griddle cakes before at one meal. In vain plateful after plateful went upon the board, and Nettie baked them as fast as she could; they were eaten just as fast; and when finally the chairs were pushed back, and the men went down stairs, Nettie and her mother looked at each other.

"There's only one left, mother," said Nettie.

"And he has eaten certainly half the piece of pork," said Mrs. Mathieson. "Come, child, take something yourself; you're ready to drop. I'll clear away."

But it is beyond the power of any disturbance to take away the gladness of a heart where Jesus is. Nettie's bread was sweet to her, even that evening. Before she had well finished her supper, her father and his lodger came back. They sat down on either side the fire and began to talk,—of politics, and of their work on which they were then engaged, with their employers and their fellow-workmen; of the state of business in the village, and profits and losses, and the success of particular men in making money. They talked loudly and eagerly; and Nettie had to go round and round them, to get to the fire for hot water and back to the table to wash up the cups and plates. Her mother was helping at the table, but to get round Mr. Lumber to the pot of hot water on the fire every now and then, fell to Nettie's share. It was not a very nice ending of her sweet Sabbath day, she thought. The dishes were done and put away, and still the talk went on as hard as ever. It was sometimes a pleasure to Nettie's father to hear her

sing hymns of a Sunday evening. Nettie watched for a chance, and the first time there was a lull of the voices of the two men, she asked, softly, "Shall I sing, father?" Mr. Mathieson hesitated, and then answered, "No, better not, Nettie; Mr. Lumber might not find it amusing;" and the talk began again. Nettie waited a little longer, feeling exceedingly tired; then she rose and lit a candle.

"What are you doing, Nettie?" her mother said.

"I am going to bed, mother."

"You can't take a candle up there, child! the attic's all full of things, and you'd certainly set us on fire."

"I'll take great care, mother."

"But you can't, child! The wind might blow the snuff of your candle right into something that would be all a flame by the time you're asleep. You must manage without a light somehow."

"But I can't see to find my way," said Nettie, who was secretly trembling with fear.

"I'll light you then, for once, and you'll soon learn the way. Give me the candle."

Nettie hushed the words that came crowding into her mouth, and clambered up the steep stairs to the attic. Mrs. Mathieson followed her with the candle till she got to the top, and there she held it till Nettie had found her way to the other end where her bed was. Then she said good-night and went down.

The little square shutter of the window was open, and a ray of moonlight streamed in upon the bed. It was nicely made up; Nettie saw that her mother had been there and had done that for her and wrought a

little more space and order among the things around the bed. But the moonlight did not get in far enough to show much more. Just a little of this thing and of that could be seen; a corner of a chest, or a gleam on the side of a meal bag; the half light showed nothing clearly except the confused fulness of the little attic. Nettie had given her head a blow against a piece of timber as she came through it; and she sat down upon her little bed, feeling rather miserable. Her fear was that the rats might visit her up there. She did not certainly know that there were rats in the attic, but she had been fearing to think of them and did not dare to ask; as well as unwilling to give trouble to her mother; for if they *did* come there, Nettie did not see how the matter could be mended. She sat down on her little bed, so much frightened that she forgot how tired she was. Her ears were as sharp as needles, listening to hear the scrape of a rat's tooth upon a timber or the patter of his feet over the floor.

For a few minutes Nettie almost thought she could not sleep up there alone, and must go down and implore her mother to let her spread her bed in a corner of her room. But what a bustle that would make. Her mother would be troubled, and her father would be angry, and the lodger would be disturbed, and there was no telling how much harm would come of it. No; the peacemaker of the family must not do that. And then the words floated into Nettie's mind again, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." Like a strain of the sweetest music it floated in; and if an angel had come and brought the words straight to Nettie, she could not have been more comforted. She felt the rats could not hurt her while she was within hearing of that music; and she got up and kneeled down upon the chest under the little window and looked

out.

It was like the day that had passed; not like the evening. So purely and softly the moonbeams lay on all the fields and trees and hills, there was no sign of anything but peace and purity to be seen. No noise of men's work or voices; no clangour of the iron foundry which on weekdays might be heard; no sight of anything unlovely; but the wide beauty which God had made, and the still peace and light which he had spread over it. Every little flapping leaf seemed to Nettie to tell of its Maker; and the music of those words seemed to be all through the still air—"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." Tears of gladness and hope slowly gathered in Nettie's eyes. The children of God will enter in, by and by, through those pearly gates, into that city of gold,—"where they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light." "So he can give me light here—or what's better than light," thought Nettie. "God isn't only out there, in all that beautiful moonlight world—he is here in my poor little attic too; and he will take just as good care of me as he does of the birds, and better, for I am his child, and they are only his beautiful little servants."

Nettie's fear was gone. She prayed her evening prayer; she trusted herself to the Lord Jesus to take care of her; and then she undressed herself and lay down and went to sleep, just as quietly as any sparrow of them all with its head under its wing.

CHAPTER III.

NETTIE'S GARRET.

Nettie's attic grew to be a good place to her. She never heard the least sound of rats; and it was so nicely out of the way. Barry never came up there, and there she could not even hear the voices of her father and Mr. Lumber. She had a tired time of it down stairs.

That first afternoon was a good specimen of the way things went on. Nettie's mornings were always spent at school; Mrs. Mathieson would have that, as she said, whether she could get along without Nettie or no. From the time Nettie got home till she went to bed, she was as busy as she could be. There was so much bread to make, and so much beef and pork to boil, and so much washing of pots and kettles; and at meal times there were very often cakes to fry, besides all the other preparations. Mr. Mathieson seemed to have made up his mind that his lodger's rent should all go to the table and be eaten up immediately; but the difficulty was to make as much as he expected of it in that line; for now he brought none of his own earnings home, and Mrs. Mathieson had more than a sad guess where they went. By degrees he came to be very little at home in the evenings, and he carried off Barry with him. Nettie saw her mother burdened with a great outward and inward care at once, and stood in the breach all she could. She worked to the extent of her strength, and beyond it, in the endless getting and clearing away of meals; and watching every chance, when the men were out of the way, she would coax her mother to

sit down and read a chapter in her Testament. "It will rest you so, mother," Nettie would say; "and I will make the bread just as soon as I get the dishes done. Do let me! I like to do it."

Sometimes Mrs. Mathieson could not be persuaded; sometimes she would yield, in a despondent kind of way, and sit down with her Testament and look at it as if neither there nor anywhere else in the universe could she find rest or comfort any more.

"It don't signify, child," she said, one afternoon when Nettie had been urging her to sit down and read. "I haven't the heart to do anything. We're all driving to rack and ruin just as fast as we can go."

"Oh no, mother!" said Nettie. "I don't think we are."

"I am sure of it. I see it coming every day. Every day it is a little worse; and Barry is going along with your father; and they are destroying me among them, body and soul too."

"No, mother," said Nettie, "I don't think that. I have prayed the Lord Jesus, and you know he has promised to hear prayer; and I know we are not going to ruin."

"*You* are not, child, I believe; but you are the only one of us that isn't. I wish I was dead, to be out of my misery!"

"Sit down, mother, and read a little bit; and don't talk so. Do, mother! It will be an hour and more yet to supper, and I'll get it ready. You sit down and read, and I'll make the shortcakes. Do, mother! and you'll feel better."

It was half despair and half persuasion that made her

do it; but Mrs. Mathieson did sit down by the open window and take her Testament; and Nettie flew quietly about, making her shortcakes and making up the fire and setting the table, and through it all casting many a loving glance over to the open book in her mother's hand and the weary, stony face that was bent over it. Nettie had not said how her own back was aching, and she forgot it almost in her business and her thoughts; though by the time her work was done her head was aching wearily too. But cakes and table and fire and everything else were in readiness; and Nettie stole up behind her mother and leaned over her shoulder; leaned a little heavily.

[1] "Don't that chapter comfort you, mother?" she whispered.

"No. It don't seem to me as I've got any feeling left," said Mrs. Mathieson. It was the fourth chapter of John at which they were both looking.

"Don't it comfort you to read of Jesus being wearied?" Nettie went on, her head lying on her mother's shoulder.

"Why should it, child?"

"I like to read it," said Nettie. "Then I know he knows how I feel sometimes."

"God knows everything, Nettie."

"Yes, mother; but then Jesus *felt* it. 'He took our infirmities.' And oh, mother, don't you love that tenth verse?—and the thirteenth and fourteenth?"

Mrs. Mathieson looked at it, silently; then she said, "I don't rightly understand it, Nettie. I suppose I ought to do so,—but I don't."

"Why, mother! I understand it. It means, that if Jesus makes you happy, you'll never be unhappy again. 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, *shall never thirst*,'—don't you see, mother? 'Shall never thirst,'—he will have enough, and be satisfied."

"How do you know it, Nettie?" her mother asked, in a puzzled kind of way.

"I know it, mother, because Jesus has given that living water to me."

"He never gave it to me," said Mrs. Mathieson, in the same tone.

"But he *will*, mother. Look up there—oh, how I love that tenth verse!—'If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.' See, mother,—he will give, if we ask."

"And do you feel so, Nettie?—that you have enough, and are satisfied with your life every day?"

"Yes, mother," Nettie said, quietly; "I am very happy. I am happy all the time; because I think that Jesus is with me everywhere; when I'm upstairs, and when I'm busy here, and when I'm at school, and when I go to the spring; and all times. And that makes me very happy."

"And don't you wish for anything you haven't got?" said her mother.

"Yes, one thing," said Nettie. "I just wish that you and father and Barry may be so happy too; and I believe that's coming; for I've prayed the Lord, and I believe he will give it to me. I want it for other people too. I

often think, when I am looking at somebody, of those words—'If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.'"

With that, Mrs. Mathieson cast down her book and burst into such a passion of weeping that Nettie was frightened. It was like the breaking up of an icy winter. She flung her apron over her head and sobbed aloud; till hearing the steps of the men upon the staircase she rushed off to Barry's room, and presently got quiet, for she came out to supper as if nothing had happened.

From that time there was a gentler mood upon her mother, Nettie saw; though she looked weary and careworn as ever, there was not now often the hard, dogged look which had been wont to be there for months past. Nettie had no difficulty to get her to read the Testament; and of all things, what she liked was to get a quiet hour of an evening alone with Nettie and hear her sing hymns. But both Nettie and she had a great deal, as Mrs. Mathieson said, "to put up with."

As weeks went on, the father of the family was more and more out at nights, and less and less agreeable when he was at home. He and his friend Lumber helped each other in mischief: they went together to Jackson's shop and spent time in lounging and gossiping and talking politics there; and what was worse, they made the time and the politics go down with draughts of liquor. Less and less money came to Mrs. Mathieson's hand; but her husband always required what he called a good meal to be ready for him and his lodger whenever he came home, and made no difference in his expectations whether he

had provided the means or not. The lodger's rent and board had been at first given for the household daily expenses; but then Mr. Mathieson began to pay over a smaller sum, saying that it was all that was due; and Mrs. Mathieson suspected that the rest had been paid away already for brandy. Then Mr. Mathieson told her to trade at Jackson's on account, and he would settle the bill. Mrs. Mathieson held off from this as long as it was possible. She and Nettie did their very best to make the little that was given them go a good way; they wasted not a crumb nor a penny, and did not spend on themselves what they really wanted; that they might not have the fearful storm of anger which was sure to come if the dinner was not plentiful and the supper did not please the taste of Mr. Mathieson and his lodger. By degrees it came to be very customary for Mrs. Mathieson and Nettie to make their meal of porridge and bread, after all the more savoury food had been devoured by the others; and many a weary patch and darn filled the night hours because they had not money to buy a cheap dress or two. Nettie bore it very patiently. Mrs. Mathieson was sometimes impatient.

"This wont last me through the week, to get the things you want," she said one Saturday to her husband, when he gave her what he said was Lumber's payment to him.

"You'll have to make it last," said he, gruffly.

"Will you tell me how I'm going to do that? Here isn't more than half what you gave me at first."

"Send to Jackson's for what you want!" he roared at her; "didn't I tell you so? and don't come bothering me with your noise."

"When will you pay Jackson?"

"I'll pay you first!" he said, with an oath, and very violently. It was a ruder word than he had ever said to her before, and Mrs. Mathieson was staggered for a moment by it; but there was another word she was determined to say.

"You may do what you like to me," she said, doggedly; "but I should think you would see for yourself that Nettie has too much to get along with. She is getting just as thin and pale as she can be."

"That's just your fool's nonsense!" said Mr. Mathieson; but he spoke it more quietly. Nettie just then entered the room.

"Here, Nettie, what ails you? Come here. Let's look at you. Aint you as strong as ever you was? Here's your mother says you're getting puny."

Nettie's smile and answer were so placid and untroubled, and the little colour that rose in her cheeks at her father's question made her look so fresh and well, that he was quieted. He drew her to his arms, for his gentle dutiful little daughter had a place in his respect and affection both, though he did not often show it very broadly; but now he kissed her.

"There!" said he; "don't you go to growing thin and weak without telling me, for I don't like such doings. You tell me when you want anything." But with that, Mr. Mathieson got up and went off, out of the house; and Nettie had small chance to tell him if she wanted anything. However, this little word and kiss were a great comfort and pleasure to her. It was the last she had from him in a good while.

Nettie, however, was not working for praise or kisses, and very little of either she got. Generally her father was rough, imperious, impatient, speaking fast enough if anything went wrong, but very sparing in expressions of pleasure. Sometimes a blessing did come upon her from the very depth of Mrs. Mathieson's heart, and went straight to Nettie's; but it was for another blessing she laboured, and prayed, and waited.

So weeks went by. So her patient little feet went up and down the stairs with pails of water from the spring; and her hands made bread and baked cakes, and set rooms in order; and it was Nettie always who went to Mr. Jackson's for meal and treacle, and to Mrs. Auguste's, the little Frenchwoman's, as she was called, for a loaf when they were now and then out of bread. And with her mornings spent at school, Nettie's days were very busy ones; and the feet that at night mounted the steps to her attic room were aching and tired enough. All the more that now Nettie and her mother lived half the the time on porridge; all the provision they dared make of other things being quite consumed by the three hearty appetites that were before them at the meal. And Nettie's appetite was not at all hearty, and sometimes she could hardly eat at all.

As the summer passed away it began to grow cold, too, up in her garret. Nettie had never thought of that. As long as the summer sun warmed the roof well in the day, and only the soft summer wind played in and out of her window at night, it was all very well; and Nettie thought her sleeping-chamber was the best in the whole house, for it was nearest the sky. But August departed with its sunny days, and September grew cool at evening; and October

brought still sunny days, it is true, but the nights had a clear sharp frost in them; and Nettie was obliged to cover herself up warm in bed and look at the moonlight and the stars as she could see them through the little square opening left by the shutter. The stars looked very lovely to Nettie, when they peeped at her so, in her bed, out of their high heaven; and she was very content.

Then came November; and the winds began to come into the garret, not only through the open window, but through every crack between two boards. The whole garret was filled with the winds, Nettie thought. It was hard managing then. Shutting the shutter would bar out the stars, but not the wind, she found; and to keep from being quite chilled through at her times of prayer morning and evening, Nettie used to take the blanket and coverlets from the bed and wrap herself in them. It was all she could do. Still, she forgot the inconveniences; and her little garret chamber seemed to Nettie very near heaven, as well as near the sky.

But all this way of life did not make her grow strong, nor rosy; and though Nettie never told her father that she wanted anything, her mother's heart measured the times when it ought to be told.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BROWN CLOAK IN NOVEMBER.

November days drew toward an end; December was near. One afternoon Mrs. Mathieson, wanting Nettie, went to the foot of the garret stairs to call her, and stopped, hearing Nettie's voice singing. It was a clear, bird-like voice, and Mrs. Mathieson listened; at first she could not distinguish the words, but then came a refrain which was plain enough.

"Glory, glory, glory, glory,
Glory be to God on high,
Glory, glory, glory, glory,
Sing his praises through the sky;
Glory, glory, glory, glory,
Glory to the Father give,
Glory, glory, glory, glory,
Sing his praises all that live."

Mrs. Mathieson's heart gave way. She sat down on the lowest step and cried, for very soreness of heart. But work must be done; and when the song had ceased, for it went on some time, Mrs. Mathieson wiped her tears with her apron and called, "Nettie!"

"Yes, mother. Coming."

"Fetch down your school-cloak, child."

She went back to her room, and presently Nettie came in with the cloak, looking placid as usual, but very pale.

"Are you singing up there to keep yourself warm, child?"

"Well, mother, I don't know but it does," Nettie answered, smiling. "My garret did seem to me full of

glory just now; and it often does, mother."

"The Lord save us!" exclaimed Mrs. Mathieson, bursting into tears again. "I believe you're in a way to be going above, before my face!"

"Now, mother, what sort of a way is that of talking?" said Nettie, looking troubled. "You know I can't die till Jesus bids me; and I don't think he is going to take me now. What did you want me to do?"

"Nothing. You aint fit. I must go and do it myself."

"Yes I am fit. I like to do it," said Nettie. "What is it, mother?"

"Somebody's got to go to Mr. Jackson's—but you aint fit, child; you eat next to none at noon. You can't live on porridge."

"I like it, mother; but I wasn't hungry. What's wanting from Jackson's?"

Nettie put on her cloak, and took her basket and went out. It was after sundown already, and a keen wind swept through the village street, and swept through Nettie's brown cloak too, tight as she wrapped it about her. But though she was cold and blue, and the wind seemed to go through *her* as well as the cloak, Nettie was thinking of something else. She knew that her mother had eaten a very scanty, poor sort of dinner, as well as herself, and that *she* often looked pale and wan; and Nettie was almost ready to wish she had not given the last penny of her shilling, on Sunday, to the missionary-box. When her father had given her the coin, she had meant then to keep it to buy something now and then for her mother; but it was not immediately needed, and one by one the pennies had gone to buy tracts, or as a

mite to the fund for sending Bibles or missionaries to those who did not know how to sing Nettie's song of "glory."

She wondered to herself now if she had done quite right; she could not help thinking that if she had one penny she could buy a smoked herring, which, with a bit of bread and tea, would make a comfortable supper for her mother, which she could relish. Had she done right? But one more thought of the children and grown people who have not the Bible,—who know nothing of the golden city with its gates of pearl, and are nowise fit to enter by those pure entrances where "nothing that defileth" can go in,—and Nettie wished no more for a penny back that she had given to bring them there. She hugged herself in her cloak, and as she went quick along the darkening ways, the light from that city seemed to shine in her heart and make warmth through the cold. She was almost sorry to go to Mr. Jackson's shop; it had grown rather a disagreeable place to her lately. It was half full of people, as usual at that hour.

"What do you want?" said Mr. Jackson, rather curtly, when Nettie's turn came and she had told her errand. "What!" he exclaimed, "seven pounds of meal and a pound of butter, and two pounds of sugar! Well, you tell your father that I should like to have my bill settled; it's all drawn up, you see, and I don't like to open a new account till it's all square."

He turned away immediately to another customer, and Nettie felt she had got her answer. She stood a moment, very disappointed, and a little mortified, and somewhat downhearted. What should they do for supper? and what a storm there would be when her father heard about all this and found nothing but

bread and tea on the table. Slowly Nettie turned away, and slowly made the few steps from the door to the corner. She felt very blue indeed; coming out of the warm store the chill wind made her shiver. Just at the corner somebody stopped her.

"Nettie!" said the voice of the little French baker, "what ails you? you look not well."

Nettie gave her a grateful smile, and said she was well.

"You look not like it," said Mme. Auguste; "you look as if the wind might carry you off before you get home. Come to my house—I want to see you in the light."

"I haven't time; I must go home to mother, Mrs. August."

"Yes, I know! You will go home all the faster for coming this way first. You have not been to see me in these three or four weeks."

She carried Nettie along with her; it was but a step, and Nettie did not feel capable of resisting anything. The little Frenchwoman put her into the shop before her, made her sit down, and lighted a candle. The shop was nice and warm and full of the savoury smell of fresh baking.

"We have made our own bread lately," said Nettie, in answer to the charge of not coming there.

"Do you make it good?" said Mme. Auguste.

"It isn't like yours, Mrs. August," said Nettie, smiling.

"If you will come and live with me next summer, I will teach you how to do some things; and you shall

not look so blue neither. Have you had your supper?"

"No, and I am just going home to get supper. I must go, Mrs. August."

"You come in here," said the Frenchwoman; "you are my prisoner. I am all alone, and I want somebody for company. You take off your cloak, Nettie, and I shall give you something to keep the wind out. You do what I bid you!"

Nettie felt too cold and weak to make any ado about complying, unless duty had forbade; and she thought there was time enough yet. She let her cloak drop, and took off her hood. The little back room to which Mme. Auguste had brought her was only a trifle bigger than the bit of a shop; but it was as cozy as it was little. A tiny stove warmed it, and kept warm, too, a tiny iron pot and tea-kettle which were steaming away. The bed was at one end, draped nicely with red curtains; there was a little looking-glass, and some prints in frames round the walls; there was Madame's little table covered with a purple cloth, and with her work and a small clock and various pretty things on it. Mme. Auguste had gone to a cupboard in the wall, and taken out a couple of plates and little bowls, which she set on a little round stand; and then lifting the cover of the pot on the stove, she ladled out a bowlful of what was in it, and gave it to Nettie with one of her own nice crisp rolls.

"Eat that!" she said. "I shan't let you go home till you have swallowed that to keep the cold out. It makes me all freeze to look at you."

So she filled her own bowl, and made good play with her spoon, while between spoonfuls she looked at

Nettie; and the good little woman smiled in her heart to see how easy it was for Nettie to obey her. The savoury, simple, comforting broth she had set before her was the best thing to the child's delicate stomach that she had tasted for many a day.

"Is it good?" said the Frenchwoman when Nettie's bowl was half empty.

"It's so good!" said Nettie. "I didn't know I was so hungry."

"Now you will not feel the cold so," said the Frenchwoman, "and you will go back quicker. Do you like my *riz-au-gras*?"

"*What* is it, ma'am?" said Nettie.

The Frenchwoman laughed, and made Nettie say it over till she could pronounce the words. "Now you like it," she said; "that is a French dish. Do you think Mrs. Mat'ieson would like it?"

"I am sure she would!" said Nettie. "But I don't know how to make it."

"You shall come here and I will teach it to you. And now you shall carry a little home to your mother and ask her if she will do the honour to a French dish to approve it. It do not cost anything. I cannot sell much bread the winters; I live on what cost me nothing."

While saying this, Mme. Auguste had filled a little pail with the *riz-au-gras*, and put a couple of her rolls along with it. "It must have the French bread," she said; and she gave it to Nettie, who looked quite cheered up, and very grateful.

"You are a good little girl!" she said. "How keep you

always your face looking so happy? There is always one little streak of sunshine here"—drawing her finger across above Nettie's eyebrows—"and another here,"—and her finger passed over the line of Nettie's lips.

"That's because I *am* happy, Mrs. August."

"*Always?*"

"Yes, always."

"What makes you so happy always? you was just the same in the cold winter out there, as when you was eating my *riz-au-gras*. Now me, I am cross in the cold, and not happy."

But the Frenchwoman saw a deeper light come into Nettie's eyes as she answered, "It is because I love the Lord Jesus, Mrs. August, and he makes me happy."

"*You?*" said Madame. "My child!—What do you say, Nettie? I think not I have heard you right."

"Yes, Mrs. August, I am happy because I love the Lord Jesus. I know he loves me, and he will take me to be with him."

"Not just yet," said the Frenchwoman, "I hope! Well, I wish I was so happy as you, Nettie. Good-bye!"

Nettie ran home, more comforted by her good supper, and more thankful to the goodness of God in giving it, and happy in the feeling of his goodness than can be told. And very, very glad she was of that little tin pail in her hand she knew her mother needed. Mrs. Mathieson had time to eat the rice broth before her husband came in.

"She said she would show me how to make it," said

Nettie, "and it don't cost anything."

"Why, it's just rice and—*what* is it? I don't see," said Mrs. Mathieson. "It isn't rice and milk."

Nettie laughed at her mother. "Mrs. August didn't tell. She called it reeso—— I forget what she called it!"

"It's the best thing I ever saw," said Mrs. Mathieson. "There—put the pail away. Your father's coming."

He was in a terrible humour, as they expected; and Nettie and her mother had a sad evening of it. And the same sort of thing lasted for several days. Mrs. Mathieson hoped that perhaps Mr. Lumber would take into his head to seek lodgings somewhere else; or at least that Mathieson would have been shamed into paying Jackson's bill; but neither thing happened. Mr. Lumber found his quarters too comfortable; and Mr. Mathieson spent too much of his earnings on drink to find the amount necessary to clear off the scores at the grocer's shop.

From that time, as they could run up no new account, the family were obliged to live on what they could immediately pay for. That was seldom a sufficient supply; and so, in dread of the storms that came whenever their wants touched Mr. Mathieson's own comfort, Nettie and her mother denied themselves constantly what they very much needed. The old can sometimes bear this better than the young. Nettie grew more delicate, more thin, and more feeble, every day. It troubled her mother sadly. Mr. Mathieson could not be made to see it. Indeed he was little at home except when he was eating.

CHAPTER V.

THE NEW BLANKET.

Nettie had been in Barry's room one evening, putting it to rights; through the busy day it had somehow been neglected. Mrs. Mathieson's heart was so heavy that her work dragged; and when Nettie came out and sat down to her Sunday-school lesson, her mother kept watching her for a long time with a dull, listless face, quite still and idle. The child's face was busy over her Bible, and Mrs. Mathieson did not disturb her, till Nettie lifted her head to glance at the clock. Then the bitterness of her mother's heart broke out.

"He's a ruined man!" she exclaimed, in her despair. "He's a ruined man! he's taking to drinking more and more. It's all over with him—and with us."

"No, mother," said Nettie, gently,—"I hope not. There's better times coming, mother. God *never* forsakes those that trust in him. He has promised to hear prayer; and I have prayed to him, and I feel sure he will save us."

Mrs. Mathieson was weeping bitterly.

"So don't you cry, mother. Trust! 'Only believe'—don't you remember Jesus said that? Just believe him, mother. I do."

And proving how true she spoke—how steadfast and firm was the faith she professed, with that, as Nettie got up to put away her books, her lips burst forth into song; and never more clear nor more sweet than

she sung then, sounded the wild sweet notes that belong to the words—favourites with her. There was no doubt in her voice at all.

"Great spoils I shall win, from death, hell,
and sin,
'Midst outward afflictions shall feel Christ
within;
And when I'm to die, Receive me, I'll cry;
For Jesus hath loved me, I cannot tell
why."

Mrs. Mathieson sobbed at first; but there came a great quietness over her; and as the clear beautiful strain came to an end, she rose up, threw her apron over her face, and knelt quietly down by the side of her bed; putting her face in her hands. Nettie stood and looked at her; then turned and went up the stair to her own praying-place; feeling in her heart as if instead of two weary feet she had had "wings as angels," to mount up literally. She knew that part of her prayer was getting its answer. She knew by the manner of her mother, that it was in no bitterness and despair but in the humbleness of a bowed heart that she had knelt down; and Nettie's slow little feet kept company with a most bounding spirit. She went to bed and covered herself up, not to sleep, but because it was too cold to be in the garret a moment uncovered; and lay there broad awake, "making melody in her heart to the Lord."

It was very cold up in Nettie's garret now; the winter had moved on into the latter part of December, and the frosts were very keen; and the winter winds seem to come in at one end of the attic and to just sweep through to the other, bringing all except the snow with them. Even the snow often drifted in through

the cracks of the rough wainscot board, or under the shutter, and lay in little white streaks or heaps on the floor, and never melted. To-night there was no wind, and Nettie had left her shutter open that she might see the stars as she lay in bed. It did not make much difference in the feeling of the place, for it was about as cold inside as out; and the stars were great friends of Nettie. To-night she lay and watched them, blinking down at her through her garret window with their quiet eyes; they were always silent witnesses to her of the beauty and purity of heaven, and reminders too of that eye that never sleeps and that hand that planted and upholds all. How bright they looked down to-night! It was very cold, and lying awake made Nettie colder; she shivered sometimes under all her coverings; still she lay looking at the stars in that square patch of sky that her shutter opening gave her to see, and thinking of the golden city. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." "There shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him."

"His servants shall serve him"—thought Nettie; "and mother will be there,—and father will be there, and Barry,—and I shall be there! and then I shall be happy. And I am happy now. 'Blessed be the Lord, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me!'"—And if that verse went through Nettie's head once, it did fifty times. So did this one, which the quiet stars seemed to repeat and whisper to her, "The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants, and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."

And though now and then a shiver passed over Nettie's shoulders, with the cold, she was ready to sing for very gladness and fulness of heart.

But lying awake and shivering did not do Nettie's little body any good; she looked so very white the next day, that it caught even Mr. Mathieson's attention. He reached out his arm and drew Nettie toward him, as she was passing between the cupboard and the table. Then he looked at her, but he did not say how she looked.

"Do you know day after to-morrow is Christmas day?" said he.

"Yes, I know. It's the day when Christ was born," said Nettie.

"Well, I don't know anything about that," said her father; "but what I mean is, that a week after is New Year. What would you like me to give you, Nettie,—hey?"

Nettie stood still for a moment, then her eyes lighted up.

"Will you give it to me, father, if I tell you?"

"I don't know. If it is not extravagant, perhaps I will."

"It will not cost much," said Nettie, earnestly. "Will you give me what I choose, father, if it does not cost too much?"

"I suppose I will. What is it?"

"Father, you wont be displeased?"

"Not I!" said Mr. Mathieson, drawing Nettie's little form tighter in his grasp; he thought he had never

felt it so slight and thin before.

"Father, I am going to ask you a great thing!—to go to church with me New Year's day."

"To church!" said her father, frowning; but he remembered his promise, and he felt Nettie in his arms yet. "What on earth good will that do you?"

"A great deal of good. It would please me so much, father."

"What do you want me to go to church for?" said Mr. Mathieson, not sure yet what humour he was going to be in.

"To thank God, father, that there was a Christmas; when Jesus came, that we might have a New Year."

"What? what?" said Mr. Mathieson. "What are you talking about?"

"Because, father," said Nettie, trembling, and seizing her chance, "since Jesus loved us and came and died for us, we all may have a New Year of glory. I shall, father; and I want you too. Oh do, father!" and Nettie burst into tears. Mr. Mathieson held her fast, and his face showed a succession of changes for a minute or so. But she presently raised her head from his shoulder, where it had sunk, and kissed him, and said—

"May I have what I want, father?"

"Yes—go along," said Mr. Mathieson. "I should like to know how to refuse you, though. But, Nettie, don't you want me to give you anything else?"

"Nothing else!" she told him, with her face all shining with joy. Mr. Mathieson looked at her and seemed

very thoughtful all supper time.

"Can't you strengthen that child up a bit?" he said to his wife afterwards. "She does too much."

"She does as little as I can help," said Mrs. Mathieson; "but she is always at something. I am afraid her room is too cold o' nights. She aint fit to bear it. It's bitter up there."

"Give her another blanket or quilt, then," said her husband. "I should think you would see to that. Does she say she is cold?"

"No,—never except sometimes when I see her looking blue, and ask her."

"And what does she say then?"

"She says sometimes she is a little cold."

"Well, do put something more over her, and have no more of it!" said her husband, violently. "Sit still and let the child be cold, when another covering would make it all right!" And he ended with swearing at her.

Mrs. Mathieson did not dare to tell him that Nettie's food was not of a sufficiently nourishing and relishing kind; she knew what the answer to that would be; and she feared that a word more about Nettie's sleeping-room would be thought an attack upon Mr. Lumber's being in the house. So she was silent.

But there came home something for Nettie in the course of the Christmas week, which comforted her a little, and perhaps quieted Mr. Mathieson too. He brought with him, on coming home to supper one evening, a great thick roll of a bundle, and put it in

Nettie's arms, telling her that was for her New Year.

"For me!" said Nettie, the colour starting a little into her cheeks.

"Yes, for you. Open it, and see."

So Nettie did, with some trouble, and there tumbled out upon the floor a great heavy warm blanket, new from the shop. Mr. Mathieson thought the pink in her cheeks was the prettiest thing he had seen in a long while.

"Is this for *me*, father?"

"I mean it to be so. See if it will go on that bed of yours and keep you warm."

Nettie gave her father some very hearty thanks, which he took in a silent, pleased way; and then she hastened off with her blanket upstairs. How thick and warm it was! and how nicely it would keep her comfortable when she knelt, all wrapped up in it, on that cold floor. For a little while it would; not even a warm blanket would keep her from the cold more than a little while at a time up there. But Nettie tried its powers the first thing she did.

Did Mr. Mathieson mean the blanket to take the place of his promise? Nettie thought of that, but like a wise child she said nothing at all till the Sunday morning came. Then, before she set off for Sunday-school, she came to her father's elbow.

"Father, I'll be home a quarter after ten; will you be ready then?"

"Ready for what?" said Mr. Mathieson.

"For my New Year's," said Nettie. "You know you

promised I should go to church with you."

"Did I? And aint you going to take the blanket for your New Year's, and let me off, Nettie?"

"No, father, to be sure not. I'll be home at a quarter past; please don't forget." And Nettie went off to school very thankful and happy, for her father's tone was not unkind. How glad she was New Year's day had come on Sunday.

Mr. Mathieson was as good as his word. He was ready at the time, and they walked to the church together. That was a great day to Nettie. Her father and mother going to church in company with her and with each other. But nobody that saw her sober sweet little face would have guessed how very full her heart was of prayer, even as they walked along the street among the rest of the people. And when they got to church, it seemed as if every word of the prayers and of the reading and of the hymns and of the sermon, struck on all Nettie's nerves of hearing and feeling. Would her father understand any of those sweet words? would he feel them? would they reach him? Nettie little thought that what he felt most, what *did* reach him, though he did not thoroughly understand it, was the look of her own face; though she never but once dared turn it toward him. There was a little colour in it more than usual; her eye was deep in its earnestness; and the grave set of her little mouth was broken up now and then in a way that Mr. Mathieson wanted to watch better than the straight sides of her sun-bonnet would let him. Once he thought he saw something more.

He walked home very soberly, and was a good deal on the silent order during the rest of the day. He did not go to church in the afternoon. But in the evening,

as her mother was busy in and out getting supper ready, and Mr. Lumber had not come in, Mr. Mathieson called Nettie to his side.

"What was you crying for in church this forenoon?" he said, low.

"Crying!" said Nettie, surprised. "Was I crying?"

"If it wasn't tears I saw dropping from under your hands on to the floor, it must have been some drops of rain that had got there, and I don't see how they could very well. There warn't no rain outside. What was it for, hey?"

There came a great flush all over Nettie's face, and she did not at once speak.

"Hey?—what was it for?"—repeated Mr. Mathieson.

The flush passed away. Nettie spoke very low and with lips all of a quiver. "I remember. I was thinking, father, how 'all things are ready'—and I couldn't help wishing that you were ready too."

"Ready for what?" said Mr. Mathieson, somewhat roughly. "All things ready for what?"

"Ready for you," said Nettie. "Jesus is ready to love you, and calls you—and the angels are ready to rejoice for you—and I——"

"Go on! What of you?"

Nettie lifted her eyes to him. "I am ready to rejoice too, father." But the time of rejoicing was not yet. Nettie burst into tears.

Mr. Mathieson was not angry, yet he flung away from her with a rude "Pshaw!" and that was all the

answer she got. But the truth was, that there was something in Nettie's look, of tenderness, and purity, and trembling hope, that her father's heart could not bear to meet; and what is more, that he was never able to forget.

Nettie went about her evening business helping her mother, and keeping back the tears which were very near again; and Mr. Mathieson began to talk with Mr. Lumber, and everything was to all appearance just as it had been hitherto. And so it went on after that.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOUSE-RAISING.[2]

It grew colder and colder in Nettie's garret—or else she grew thinner and felt it more. She certainly thought it was colder. The snow came, and piled a thick covering on the roof and stopped up some of the chinks in the clapboarding with its white caulking; and that made the place a little better; then the winds from off the snow-covered country were keen and bitter.

Nettie's whole day was so busy that she had little time to think, except when she went upstairs at night; covered up there under her blankets and

quilts, and looking up at the stars, she used to feel sadly that things were in a very bad way. Her father was out constantly o' nights, and they knew too surely where he spent them. He was not a confirmed drunkard yet; but how long would it take, at this rate? And that man Lumber leading him on, with a thicker head himself, and Barry following after! No seeming thought nor care for his wife and daughter and their comfort; it was with great difficulty they could get from him enough money for their daily needs; and to make that do, Nettie and her mother pinched and starved themselves. Often and often Nettie went to bed with an empty stomach, because she was not hearty enough to eat porridge or pork, and the men had not left enough of other viands for herself and her mother. And neither of them would pretend to want that little there was, for fear the other wanted it more.

Her mother was patient and quiet now; not despairing, as a few months ago; and that was such joy to Nettie that she felt often much more like giving thanks than complaining. Yet she saw her mother toiling and insufficiently cared for, and she went to bed feeling very poor and thin herself; then Nettie used to look at the stars and remember the Lord's promises and the golden city, till at last she would go to sleep upon her pillow feeling the very richest little child in all the country. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me"—was one word which was very often the last in her thoughts. Nettie had no comfort from her father in all the time between New Year and spring. Except one word.

One morning she went to Barry secretly in his room, and asked him to bring the pail of water from the spring for her. Barry had no mind to the job.

"Why can't mother do it?" he said, "if you can't?"

"Mother is busy and hasn't a minute. I always do it for her."

"Well, why can't you go on doing it? you're accustomed to it, you see, and I don't like going out so early," said Barry, stretching himself.

"I would, and I wouldn't ask you; only, Barry, somehow I don't think I'm quite strong lately and I can hardly bring the pail, it's so heavy to me. I have to stop and rest ever so many times before I can get to the house with it."

"Well, if you stop and rest, I suppose it wont hurt you," said Barry. "*I* should want to stop and rest, too, myself."

His little sister was turning away, giving it up; when she was met by her father who stepped in from the entry. He looked red with anger.

"You take the pail and go get the water!" said he to his son; "and you hear me! don't you let Nettie bring in another pailful when you're at home, or I'll turn you out of the house. You lazy scoundrel! You don't deserve the bread you eat. Would you let her work for you, when you are as strong as sixty?"

Barry's grumbled words in answer were so very unsatisfactory, that Mr. Mathieson in a rage advanced toward him with uplifted fist; but Nettie sprang in between and very nearly caught the blow that was meant for her brother.

"Please, father, don't!" she cried; "please, father, don't be angry. Barry didn't think—he didn't"—

"Why didn't he?" said Mr. Mathieson. "Great lazy

rascal! He wants to be flogged."

"Oh don't!" said Nettie,—"he didn't know why I asked him, or he wouldn't have refused me."

"Why did you, then?"

"Because it made my back ache so to bring it, I couldn't help asking him."

"Did you ever ask him before?"

"Never mind, please, father!" said Nettie, sweetly. "Just don't think about me, and don't be angry with Barry. It's no matter now."

"Who does think about you? Your mother don't, or she would have seen to this before."

"Mother didn't know my back ached. Father, you know she hasn't a minute, she is so busy getting breakfast in time; and she didn't know I wasn't strong enough. Father, don't tell her, please, I asked Barry. It would worry her so. Please don't, father."

"*You* think of folks, anyhow. You're a regular peacemaker!" exclaimed Mr. Mathieson as he turned away and left her. Nettie stood still, the flush paling on her cheek, her hand pressed to her side.

"Am I that?" she thought. "Shall I be that? Oh Lord, my Saviour, my dear Redeemer, send thy peace here!"—She was still in the same place and position when Barry came in again.

"It's wretched work!" he exclaimed, under his breath, for his father was in the next room. "It's as slippery as the plague, going down that path to the water—it's no use to have legs, for you can't hold up. I'm all froze stiff with the water I've spilled on me!"

"I know it's very slippery," said Nettie.

"And then you can't get at the water when you're there, without stepping into it—it's filled chuck full of snow and ice all over the edge. It's the most wretched work!"

"I know it, Barry," said Nettie. "I am sorry you have to do it."

"What did you make me do it for, then?" said he, angrily. "You got it your own way this time, but never mind,—I'll be up with you for it."

"Barry," said his sister, "please do it just a little while for me, till I get stronger, and don't mind; and as soon as ever I can I'll do it again. But you don't know how it made me ache all through, bringing the pail up that path."

"Stuff!" said Barry. And from that time, though he did not fail to bring the water in the morning, yet Nettie saw he owed her a grudge for it all the day afterward. He was almost always away with his father, and she had little chance to win him to better feeling.

So the winter slowly passed and the spring came. Spring months came, at least; and now and then to be sure a sweet spring day, when all nature softened; the sun shone mildly, the birds sang, the air smelled sweet with the opening buds. Those days were lovely, and Nettie enjoyed them no one can tell how much. On her walk to school, it was so pleasant to be able to step slowly and not hasten to be out of the cold; and Nettie's feet did not feel ready for quick work now-a-days. It was so pleasant to hear the sparrows and other small birds, and to see them,

with their cheery voices and sonsy little heads, busy and happy. And the soft air was very reviving too.

Then at home the work was easier, a great deal; and in Nettie's garret the change was wonderful. There came hours when she could sit on the great chest under her window and look out, or kneel there and pray, without danger of catching her death of cold; and instead of that, the balmy perfumed spring breeze coming into her window, and the trees budding, and the grass on the fields and hills beginning to look green, and the sunlight soft and vapoury. Such an hour—or quarter of an hour—to Nettie was worth a great deal. Her weary little frame seemed to rest in it, and her mind rested too. For those days were full not only of the goodness of God, but of the promise of his goodness. Nettie read it, and thanked him. Yet things in the household were no better.

One evening Nettie and her mother were sitting alone together. They were usually alone in the evenings, though not usually sitting down quietly with no work on hand. Nettie had her Sunday-school lesson, and was busy with that, on one side of the fire. Mrs. Mathieson on the other side sat and watched her. After a while Nettie looked up and saw her mother's gaze, no longer on her, fixed mournfully on the fire and looking through that at something else. Nettie read the look, and answered it after her own fashion. She closed her book and sang, to a very, very sweet, plaintive air,

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Come unto me and rest:
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon my breast.

I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad,
I found in him a resting-place,
And he has made me glad.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
I am this dark world's light;
Look unto me—thy morn shall rise,
And all thy day be bright.
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In him my star, my sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk
Till travelling days are done."

She sang two verses, clear, glad, and sweet, as Nettie always sang; then she paused and looked at her mother.

"Do you keep up hope yet, Nettie?" said Mrs. Mathieson, sadly.

"Yes, mother," Nettie said, quietly.

"Mine gets beat out sometimes," said Mrs. Mathieson, drooping her head for an instant on her hands. "Your father's out every night now; and you know where he goes; and he cares less and less about anything else in the world but Jackson's store, and what he gets there, and the company he finds there. And he don't want much of being a ruined man."

"Yes, mother. But the Bible says we must wait on the Lord."

"Wait! yes, and I've waited; and I see you growing as thin as a shadow and as weak as a mouse; and your father don't see it; and he's let you sleep in that cold place up there all winter just to accommodate that

Lumber!—I am sure he is well named."

"O mother, my garret is nice now,—on the warm days. You can't think how pretty it is out of my window—prettier than any window in the house."

"Outside, I dare say. It isn't a place fit for a cat to sleep on!"

"Mother, it's a good place to me. I don't want a better place. I don't think anybody else has a place that seems so good to me; for mother, Jesus is always there."

"I expect there'll be nothing else but heaven good enough for you after it!" said Mrs. Mathieson, with a sort of half sob. "I see you wasting away before my very eyes."

"Mother," said Nettie, cheerfully, "how can you talk so? I feel well—except now and then."

"If your father could only be made to see it!—but he can't see anything, nor hear anything. There's that house-raising to-morrow, Nettie—it's been on my mind this fortnight past, and it kills me."

"Why, mother?"

"I know how it will be," said Mrs. Mathieson; "they'll have a grand set-to after they get it up; and your father'll be in the first of it; and I somehow feel as if it would be the finishing of him. I wish almost he'd get sick—or anything, to keep him away. They make such a time after a house-raising."

"O mother, don't wish that," said Nettie; but she began to think how it would be possible to withdraw her father from the frolic with which the day's business would be ended. Mr. Mathieson was a

carpenter, and a fine workman; and always had plenty of work and was much looked up to among his fellows.

Nettie began to think whether *she* could make any effort to keep her father from the dangers into which he was so fond of plunging; hitherto she had done nothing but pray for him; could she do anything more, with any chance of good coming of it? She thought and thought; and resolved that she must try. It did not look hopeful; there was little she could urge to lure Mr. Mathieson from his drinking companions; nothing, except her own timid affection, and the one other thing it was possible to offer him, —a good supper. How to get that was not so easy; but she consulted with her mother.

Mrs. Mathieson said she used in her younger days to know how to make waffles,[3] and Mr. Mathieson used to think they were the best things that ever were made; now if Mrs. Moss, a neighbour, would lend her waffle-iron, and she could get a few eggs,—she believed she could manage it still. "But we haven't the eggs, child," she said; "and I don't believe any power under heaven can get him to come away from that raising frolic."

Nor did Nettie. It was to no power *under* heaven that she trusted. But she must use her means. She easily got the iron from Mrs. Moss. Then she borrowed the eggs from Mme. Auguste, who in Lent time always had them; then she watched with grave eyes and many a heart prayer the while, the mixing and making of the waffles.

"How do you manage the iron, mother?"

"Why it is made hot," said Mrs. Mathieson, "very hot,

and buttered; and then when the batter is light you pour it in, and clap it together, and put it in the stove."

"But how can you pour it in, mother? I don't see how you can fill the iron."

"Why, you can't, child; you fill one half, and shut it together: and when it bakes it rises up and fills the other half. You'll see."

The first thing Nettie asked when she came home from school in the afternoon was, if the waffles were light? She never saw any look better, Mrs. Mathieson said; "but I forgot, child, we ought to have cinnamon and white sugar to eat on them;—it was so that your father used to admire them; they wont be waffles without sugar and cinnamon, I'm afraid he'll think;—but I don't believe you'll get him home to think anything about them."

Mrs. Mathieson ended with a sigh. Nettie said nothing; she went round the room, putting it in particularly nice order; then set the table. When all that was right, she went up to her garret, and knelt down and prayed that God would take care of her and bless her errand. She put the whole matter in the Lord's hands; then she dressed herself in her hood and cloak and went down to her mother. Mr. Mathieson had not come home to dinner, being busy with the house-raising; so they had had no opportunity to invite him, and Nettie was now on her way to do it.

"It's turned a bad afternoon; I'm afraid it aint fit for you to go, Nettie."

"I don't mind," said Nettie. "May be I'll get some

sugar and cinnamon, mother, before I come back."

"Well, you know where the raising is? it's out on the Shallonway road, on beyond Mrs. August's, a good bit."

Nettie nodded, and went out; and as the door closed on her grave, sweet little face, Mrs. Mathieson felt a great strain on her heart. She would have been glad to relieve herself by tears, but it was a dry pain that would not be relieved so. She went to the window, and looked out at the weather.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WAFFLES.

The early part of the day had been brilliant and beautiful; then, March-like, it had changed about, gathered up a whole sky-full of clouds, and turned at last to snowing. The large feathery flakes were falling now, fast; melting as fast as they fell; making everything wet and chill, in the air and under the foot. Nettie had no overshoes; she was accustomed to get her feet wet very often, so that was nothing new. She hugged herself in her brown cloak, on which the beautiful snowflakes rested white a moment and then melted away, gradually wetting the covering of her arms and shoulders in a way that would reach

through by and by. Nettie thought little of it. What was she thinking of? She was comforting herself with the thought of that strong and blessed Friend who has promised to be always with his servants; and remembering his promise—"they shall not be ashamed that wait for me." What did the snow and the wet matter to Nettie? Yet she looked too much like a snow-flake herself when she reached Mr. Jackson's store and went in. The white frosting had lodged all round her old black silk hood and even edged the shoulders of her brown cloak; and the white little face within looked just as pure.

Mr. Jackson looked at her with more than usual attention; and when Nettie asked him if he would let her have a shilling's worth of fine white sugar and cinnamon, and trust her till the next week for the money, he made not the slightest difficulty; but measured or weighed it out for her directly, and even said he would trust her for more than that. So Nettie thanked him, and went on to the less easy part of her errand. Her heart began to beat a little bit now.

The feathery snowflakes fell thicker and made everything wetter than ever; it was very raw and chill, and few people were abroad. Nettie went on, past the little bakewoman's house, and past all the thickly built part of the village. Then came houses more scattered; large handsome houses with beautiful gardens and grounds and handsome garden palings along the roadside. Past one or two of these, and then there was a space of wild ground; and here Mr. Jackson was putting up a new house for himself, and meant to have a fine place. The wild bushes grew in a thick hedge along by the fence, but over the tops of them Nettie could see the new timbers of the frame that the carpenters had been raising that

day. She went on till she came to an opening in the hedge and fence as well, and then the new building was close before her. The men were at work yet, finishing their day's business; the sound of hammering rung sharp on all sides of the frame; some were up on ladders, some were below. Nettie walked slowly up and then round the place, searching for her father. At last she found him. He and Barry, who was learning his father's trade, were on the ground at one side of the frame, busy as bees. Talking was going on roundly too, as well as hammering, and Nettie drew near and stood a few minutes without any one noticing her. She was not in a hurry to interrupt the work nor to tell her errand; she waited.

Barry saw her first, but ungraciously would not speak to her nor for her. If she was there for anything, he said to himself, it was for some spoil-sport; and one pail of water a day was enough for him. Mr. Mathieson was looking the other way.

"I say, Mathieson," called one of the men from the inside of the frame, "I s'pose 'taint worth carrying any of this stuff—Jackson'll have enough without it?" The words were explained to Nettie's horror by a jug in the man's hands, which he lifted to his lips.

"Jackson will do something handsome in that way to-night," said Nettie's father; "or he'll not do as he's done by, such a confounded wet evening. But I've stood to my word, and I expect he'll stand to his'n."

"He gave his word there was to be oysters, warn't it?" called another man from the top of the ladder.

"Punch and oysters," said Mathieson, hammering away, "or I've raised the last frame I ever *will* raise,

for him. I expect he'll stand it."

"Oysters aint much count," said another speaker. "I'd rather have a slice of good sweet pork any day."

"Father," said Nettie. She had come close up to him, but she trembled. What possible chance could she have?

"Hollo!" said Mr. Mathieson, turning suddenly. "Nettie!—what's to pay, girl?"

He spoke roughly, and Nettie saw that his face was red. She trembled all over, but she spoke as bravely as she could.

"Father, I am come to invite you home to supper to-night. Mother and I have a particular reason to want to see you. Will you come?"

"Come where?" said Mr. Mathieson, but half understanding her.

"Come home to tea, father. I came to ask you. Mother has made something you like."

"I'm busy, child. Go home. I'm going to supper at Jackson's. Go home." He turned to his hammering again. But Nettie stood still in the snow and waited.

"Father—" she said, after a minute, coming yet closer and speaking more low.

"What? Aint you gone?" exclaimed Mr. Mathieson.

"Father," said Nettie, softly, "mother has made waffles for you,—and you used to like them so much, she says; and they are light and beautiful and just ready to bake. Wont you come and have them with us? Mother says they'll be very nice."

"Why didn't she make 'em another time," grumbled Barry,—"when we weren't going to punch and oysters? That's a better game!"

If Mathieson had not been drinking he might have been touched by the sight of Nettie; so very white and delicate her little face looked, trembling and eager, within that border of her black hood on which the snow crystals lay, a very doubtful and unwholesome embroidery. She looked as if she was going to melt and disappear like one of them; and perhaps Mr. Mathieson did feel the effect of her presence, but he felt it only to be vexed and irritated; and Barry's suggestion fell into ready ground.

"I tell you, go home!" he said, roughly. "What are you doing here? I tell you I'm *not* coming home—I'm engaged to supper to-night, and I'm not going to miss it for any fool's nonsense. Go home!"

Nettie's lip trembled, but that was all the outward show of the agitation within. She would not have delayed to obey, if her father had been quite himself; in his present condition she thought perhaps the next word might undo the last; she could not go without another trial. She waited an instant and again said softly and pleadingly, "Father, I've been and got cinnamon and sugar for you,—all ready."

"Cinnamon and sugar"—he cursed with a great oath; and turning gave Nettie a violent push from him, that was half a blow. "Go home!" he repeated—"go home! and mind your business; and don't take it upon you to mind mine."

Nettie reeled, staggered, and coming blindly against one or two timbers that lay on the ground, she fell heavily over them. Nobody saw her. Mr. Mathieson

had not looked after giving her the push, and Barry had gone over to help somebody who called him. Nettie felt dizzy and sick; but she picked herself up, and wet and downhearted took the road home again. She was sadly downhearted. Her little bit of a castle in the air had tumbled all to pieces; and what was more, it had broken down upon her. A hope, faint indeed, but a hope, had kept her up through all her exertions that day; she felt very feeble, now the hope was gone; and that her father should have laid a rough hand on her, hurt her sorely. It hurt her bitterly; he had never done so before; and the cause why he came to do it now, rather made it more sorrowful than less so to Nettie's mind.

She could not help a few salt tears from falling; and for a moment Nettie's faith trembled. Feeling weak, and broken, and miserable, the thought came coldly across her mind, *would* the Lord not hear her, after all? It was but a moment of faith-trembling, but it made her sick. There was more to do that; the push and fall over the timbers had jarred her more than she knew at the moment. Nettie walked slowly back upon her road till she neared the shop of Mme. Auguste; then she felt herself growing very ill, and just reached the Frenchwoman's door to faint away on her steps.

She did not remain there two seconds. Mme. Auguste had seen her go by an hour before, and now sat at her window looking out to amuse herself, but with a special intent to see and waylay that pale child on her repassing the house. She saw the little black hood reappear, and started to open the door, just in time to see Nettie fall down at her threshold. As instantly two willing arms were put under her, and lifted up the child and bore her into the house. Then

Madame took off her hood, touched her lips with brandy and her brow with cologne water, and chafed her hands. She had lain Nettie on the floor of the inner room and put a pillow under her head; the strength which had brought her so far having failed there, and proved unequal to lift her again and put her on the bed. Nettie presently came to, opened her eyes, and looked at her nurse.

"Why, my Nettie," said the little woman, "what is this, my child? what is the matter with you?"

"I don't know," said Nettie, scarce over her breath.

"Do you feel better now, *mon enfant*?"

Nettie did not, and did not speak. Mme. Auguste mixed a spoonful of brandy and water and made her take it. That revived her a little.

"I must get up and go home," were the first words she said.

"You will lie still there, till I get some person to lift you on the bed," said the Frenchwoman, decidedly. "I have not more strength than a fly. What ails you, Nettie?"

"I don't know."

"Take one spoonful more. What did you have for dinner to-day?"

"I don't know. But I must go home!" said Nettie, trying to raise herself. "Mother will want me—she'll want me."

"You will lie still, like a good child," said her friend, gently putting her back on her pillow;—"and I will find some person to carry you home—or some person

what will bring your mother here. I will go see if I can find some one now. You lie still, Nettie."

Nettie lay still, feeling weak after that exertion of trying to raise herself. She was quite restored now, and her first thoughts were of grief, that she had for a moment, and under any discouragement, failed to trust fully the Lord's promises. She trusted them now. Let her father do what he would, let things look as dark as they might, Nettie felt sure that "the rewarder of them that diligently seek him" had a blessing in store for her. Bible words, sweet and long loved and rested on, came to her mind, and Nettie rested on them with perfect rest. "For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, *he heard*." "Our heart shall rejoice in him, *because we have trusted in his holy name*." Prayer for forgiveness, and a thanksgiving of great peace, filled Nettie's heart all the while the Frenchwoman was gone.

Meanwhile Mme. Auguste had been looking into the street, and seeing nobody out in the wet snow, she rushed back to Nettie. Nettie was like herself now, only very pale.

"I must have cut my lip somehow," she said; "there's blood on my handkerchief. How did I come in here?"

"Blood!" said the Frenchwoman,—"where did you cut yourself, Nettie? Let me look!"

Which she did, with a face so anxious and eager that Nettie smiled at her. Her own brow was as quiet and placid as ever it was.

"How did I get in here, Mrs. August?"

The Frenchwoman, however, did not answer her. Instead of which she went to her cupboard and got a cup and spoon, and then from a little saucepan on the stove dipped out some riz-au-gras again.

"What did you have for dinner, Nettie? you did not tell me."

"Not much—I wasn't hungry," said Nettie. "O, I must get up and go home to mother."

"You shall eat something first," said her friend; and she raised Nettie's head upon another pillow, and began to feed her with the spoon. "It is good for you. You must take it. Where is your father? Don't talk, but tell me. I will do everything right."

"He is at work on Mr. Jackson's new house."

"Is he there to-day?"

"Yes."

Mme. Auguste gave her all the "broth" in the cup, then bade her keep still, and went to the shop window. It was time for the men to be quitting work, she knew; she watched for the carpenters to come. If they were not gone by already!—how should she know? Even as she thought this, a sound of rude steps and men's voices came from down the road; and the Frenchwoman went to her door and opened it. The men came along, a scattered group of four or five.

"Is Mr. Mat'ieson there?" she said. Mme. Auguste hardly knew him by sight. "Men, I say! is Mr. Mat'ieson there?"

"George, that's you; you're wanted," said one of the group, looking back; and a fine-looking, tall man

paused at Madame's threshold.

"Are you Mr. Mat'ieson?" said the Frenchwoman.

"Yes, ma'am. That's my name."

"Will you come in? I have something to speak to you. Your little daughter Nettie is very sick."

"Sick!" exclaimed the man. "Nettie!—Where is she?"

"She is here. Hush! you must not say nothing to her, but she is very sick. She is come fainting at my door, and I have got her in here; but she wants to go home, and I think you had better tell her she will not go home, but she will stay here with me to-night."

"Where is she?" said Mr. Mathieson; and he stepped in with so little ceremony that the mistress of the house gave way before him. He looked round the shop.

"She is not here—you shall see her—but you must not tell her she is sick," said the Frenchwoman, anxiously.

"Where is she?" repeated Mr. Mathieson, with a tone and look which made Mme. Auguste afraid he would burst the doors if she did not open them. She opened the inner door without further preparation, and Mr. Mathieson walked in. By the fading light he saw Nettie lying on the floor at his feet. He was thoroughly himself now; sobered in more ways than one. He stood still when he had got there, and spoke not a word.

"Father," said Nettie, softly.

He stooped down over her. "What do you want, Nettie?"

"Can't I go home?"

"She must better not go home to-night!" began Mme. Auguste, earnestly. "It is so wet and cold! She will stay here with me to-night, Mr. Mat'ieson. You will tell her that it is best."

But Nettie said, "*Please* let me go home! mother will be so troubled." She spoke little, for she felt weak; but her father saw her very eager in the request. He stooped and put his strong arms under her, and lifted her up.

"Have you got anything you can put over her?" he said, looking round the room. "I'll fetch it back."

Seeing that the matter was quite taken out of her hands, the kind little Frenchwoman was very quick in her arrangements. She put on Nettie's head a warm hood of her own; then round her and over her she wrapped a thick woollen counterpane, that to be sure would have let no snow through if the distance to be travelled had been twice as far. As she folded and arranged the thick stuff round Nettie's head, so as to shield even her face from the outer air, she said, half whispering—

"I would not tell nothing to mother about your lip; it is not much. I wish I could keep you. Now she is ready, Mr. Mat'ieson."

And Mr. Mathieson stalked out of the house, and strode along the road with firm, swift steps, till, past Jackson's, and past the turning, he came to his own door, and carried Nettie upstairs. He never said a word the whole way. Nettie was too muffled up, and too feeble to speak; so the first word was when he had come in and sat down in a chair, which he did

with Nettie still in his arms. Mrs. Mathieson, standing white and silent, waited to see what was the matter; she had no power to ask a question. Her husband unfolded the counterpane that was wrapped round Nettie's head; and there she was, looking very like her usual self, only exceedingly pale. As soon as she caught sight of her mother's face, Nettie would have risen and stood up, but her father's arms held her fast. "What do you want, Nettie?" he asked. It was the first word.

"Nothing, father," said Nettie, "only lay me on the bed, please; and then you and mother have supper."

Mr. Mathieson took her to the bed and laid her gently down, removing the snow-wet counterpane which was round her.

"What is the matter?" faltered Mrs. Mathieson.

"Nothing much, mother," said Nettie, quietly; "only I was a little sick. Wont you bake the waffles and have supper?"

"What will *you* have?" said her father.

"Nothing—I've had something. I feel nicely now," said Nettie. "Mother, wont you have supper, and let me see you?"

Mrs. Mathieson's strength had well-nigh deserted her; but Nettie's desire was urgent, and seeing that her husband had seated himself by the bedside, and seemed to have no idea of being anywhere but at home that evening, she at length gathered up her faculties to do what was the best thing to be done, and went about preparing the supper. Nettie's eyes watched her, and Mr. Mathieson when he thought himself safe watched *her*. He did not look like the

same man, so changed and sobered was the expression of his face. Mrs. Mathieson was devoured by fear, even in observing this; but Nettie was exceedingly happy. She did not feel anything but weakness: and she lay on her pillow watching the waffles baked and sugared, and then watching them eaten, wondering and rejoicing within herself at the way in which her father had been brought to eat his supper there at home after all. She was the only one that enjoyed anything, though her father and mother ate to please her. Mrs. Mathieson had asked an account of Nettie's illness, and got a very unsatisfactory one. She had been faint, her husband said; he had found her at Mrs. August's and brought her home; that was about all. After supper he came and sat by Nettie again; and said she was to sleep there, and he would go up and take Nettie's place in the attic. Nettie in vain said she was well enough to go upstairs; her father cut the question short, and bade Mrs. Mathieson go up and get anything Nettie wanted. When she had left the room, he stooped his head down to Nettie and said low—

"What was that about your lip?"

Nettie started; she thought he would fancy it had been done, if done at all, when he gave her the push at the frame-house. But she did not, dare not, answer. She said it was only that she had found a little blood on her handkerchief, and supposed she might have cut her lip when she fell on Mrs. August's threshold, when she had fainted.

"Show me your handkerchief," said her father. Nettie obeyed. He looked at it, and looked close at her lips, to find where they might have been wounded; and Nettie was sorry to see how much he felt, for he even

looked pale himself as he turned away from her. But he was as gentle and kind as he could be; Nettie had never seen him so; and when he went off up to bed and Nettie was drawn into her mother's arms to go to sleep, she was very, very happy. But she did not tell her hopes or her joys to her mother; she only told her thanks to the Lord; and that she did till she fell asleep.

The next morning Nettie was well enough to get up and dress herself. That was all she was suffered to do by father or mother. Mr. Mathieson sent Barry for water and wood, and himself looked after the fire while Mrs. Mathieson was busy; all the rest he did was to take Nettie in his arms and sit holding her till breakfast was ready. He did not talk, and he kept Barry quiet; he was like a different man. Nettie, feeling indeed very weak, could only sit with her head on her father's shoulder, and wonder, and think, and repeat quiet prayers in her heart. She was very pale yet, and it distressed Mr. Mathieson to see that she could not eat. So he laid her on the bed, when he was going to his work, and told her she was to stay there and be still, and he would bring her something good when he came home.

The day was strangely long and quiet to Nettie. Instead of going to school and flying about at home doing all sorts of things, she lay on the bed and followed her mother with her eyes as she moved about the room at her work. The eyes often met Mrs. Mathieson's eyes; and once Nettie called her mother to her bedside.

"Mother, what is the matter with you?"

Mrs. Mathieson stood still, and had some trouble to speak. At last she told Nettie she was sorry to see her

lying there and not able to be up and around.

"Mother," said Nettie, expressively,—"'There is rest for the weary.'"

"O Nettie," said her mother, beginning to cry,—"you are all I have got!—my blessed one!"

"Hush, mother," said Nettie; "*I* am not your blessed one,—you forget; and I am not all you have got. Where is Jesus, mother? O mother, 'rest in the Lord!'"

"I don't deserve to," said Mrs. Mathieson, trying to stop her tears.

"I feel very well," Nettie went on; "only weak, but I shall be well directly. And I am so happy, mother. Wont you go on and get dinner? and mother, just do that;—'rest in the Lord.'"

Nettie was not able to talk much, and Mrs. Mathieson checked herself and went on with her work, as she begged. When her father came home at night he was as good as his word, and brought home some fresh oysters, that he thought would tempt Nettie's appetite; but it was much more to her that he stayed quietly at home and never made a move toward going out. Eating was not in Nettie's line just now; the little kind Frenchwoman had been to see her in the course of the day and brought some delicious rolls and a jug of *riz-au-gras*, which was what seemed to suit Nettie's appetite best of all.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GOLDEN CITY.

Several days went on; she did not feel sick, and she was a little stronger; but appetite and colour were wanting. Her father would not let her do anything; he would not let her go up to her garret to sleep, though Nettie pleaded for it, fearing he must be uncomfortable. He said it was fitter for him than for her, though he made faces about it. He always came home and stayed at home now, and especially attended to Nettie; his wages came home too, and he brought every day something to try to tempt her to eat; and he was quiet and grave and kind—not the same person.

Mrs. Mathieson in the midst of all her distress about Nettie began to draw some free breaths. But her husband thought only of his child; unless, perhaps, of himself; and drew none. Regularly after supper he would draw Nettie to his arms and sit with her head on his shoulder; silent generally, only he would sometimes ask her what she would like. The first time he put this inquiry when Mr. Lumber was out of the way, Nettie answered by asking him to read to her. Mr. Mathieson hesitated a little, not unkindly, and then read; a chapter in the Bible, of course, for Nettie wished to hear nothing else. And after that he often read to her; for Mr. Lumber kept up his old habits and preferred livelier company, and so was always out in the evenings.

So several days passed; and when Saturday came, Mr. Mathieson lost half a day's work and took a long

walk to a farm where the people kept pigeons; and brought home one for Nettie's supper. However, she could fancy but very little of it.

"What shall I do for you?" said her father. "You go round like a shadow, and you don't eat much more. What shall I do that you would like?"

This time there was nobody in the room. Nettie lifted her head from his shoulder and met his eyes.

"If you would come to Jesus, father!"

"What?" said Mr. Mathieson.—"I don't know anything about that, Nettie. I aint fit."

"Jesus will take you anyhow, father, if you will come."

"We'll talk about that some other time," said Mr. Mathieson,—"when you get well."

"But suppose I don't get well, father?"

"Eh?——" said Mr. Mathieson, startled.

"Perhaps I shan't get well," said Nettie, her quiet, grave face not changing in the least; "then I shall go to the golden city; and father, I shall be looking for you till you come."

Mr. Mathieson did not know how to answer her; he only groaned.

"Father, will you come?" Nettie repeated, a little faint streak of colour in her cheeks showing the earnestness of the feeling at work. But her words had a mingled accent of tenderness and hope which was irresistible.

"Yes, Nettie—if you will show me how," her father

answered, in a lowered voice. And Nettie's eye gave one bright flash of joy. It was as if all her strength had gone out at that flash, and she was obliged to lean back on her father's shoulder and wait; joy seemed to have taken away her breath. He waited too, without knowing why she did.

"Father, the only thing to do is to come to Jesus."

"What does that mean, Nettie? You know I don't know."

"It means, father, that Jesus is holding out his hand with a promise to you. Now if you will take the promise,—that is all."

"What is the promise, Nettie?"

Nettie waited, gathered breath, for the talk made her heart beat; and then said, "'This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.'"

"How can a sinful man take such a promise?" said Mr. Mathieson, with suppressed feeling. "That is for people like you, Nettie, not me."

"Oh, Jesus has bought it!" cried Nettie; "it's free. It's without price. You may have it if you'll believe in him and love him, father. I can't talk."

She had talked too much, or the excitement had been too strong for her. Her words were broken off by coughing, and she remarked that her lip must have bled again. Her father laid her on the bed, and from that time for a number of days she was kept as quiet as possible; for her strength had failed anew and yet more than at first.

For two weeks she hardly moved from the bed. But except that she was so very pale, she did not look

very ill; her face wore just its own patient and happy expression. Her father would not now let her talk to him; but he did everything she asked. He read to her in the Bible; Nettie would turn over the leaves to the place she wanted, and then point it out to him with a look of life, and love, and pleasure, that were like a whole sermon; and her father read first that sermon and then the chapter. He went to church as she asked him; and without her asking him, after the first Sunday. Nettie stayed at home on the bed and sang psalms in her heart.

After those two weeks there was a change for the better. Nettie felt stronger, looked more as she used to look, and got up and even went about a little. The weather was changing too, now. April days were growing soft and green; trees budding and grass freshening up, and birds all alive in the branches; and above all the air and the light, the wonderful soft breath of spring and sunshine of spring, made people forget that winter had ever been harsh or severe.

Nettie went out and took little walks in the sun, which seemed to do her good; and she begged so hard to be allowed to go to her garret again, that her father took pity on her; sent Mr. Lumber away, and gave her her old nice little room on the same floor with the others. Her mother cleaned it and put it in order, and Nettie felt too happy when she found herself mistress of it again and possessed of a quiet place where she could read and pray alone. With windows open, how sweetly the spring walked in there, and made it warm, and bright, and fragrant too. But Nettie had a tenderness for her old garret as long as she lived.

"It had got to be full of the Bible, mother," she said one day. "You know it was too cold often to sit up there; so I used to go to bed and lie awake and think of things,—at night when the stars were shining,—and in the morning in the moonlight sometimes."

"But how was the garret full of the Bible, Nettie?"

"Oh, I had a way of looking at some part of the roof or the window when I was thinking; when I couldn't have the Bible in my hands."

"Well, how did that make it?"

"Why the words seemed to be all over, mother. There was one big nail I used often to be looking at when I was thinking over texts, and a knot-hole in one of the wainscot boards; my texts used to seem to go in and out of that knot-hole. And somehow, mother, I got so that I hardly ever opened the shutter without thinking of those words—'Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation that keepeth the truth may enter in.' I don't know why, but I used to think of it. And out of that window I used to see the stars, and look at the golden city."

"Look at it!" said Mrs. Mathieson.

"In my thoughts, you know, mother. Oh, mother, how happy we are, that are going to the city! It seems to me as if all that sunlight was a curtain let down, and the city is just on the other side."

It was a lovely spring day, the windows open, and the country flooded with a soft misty sunlight, through which the tender greens of the opening leaf began to appear. Nettie was lying on the bed in her room, her mother at work by her side. Mrs. Mathieson looked at her earnest eyes, and then

wistfully out of the window where they were gazing.

"What makes you think so much about it?" she said, at last.

"I don't know; I always do. I used to think about it last winter, looking out at the stars. Why, mother, you know Jesus is there; how can I help thinking about it?"

"He is here, too," murmured poor Mrs. Mathieson.

"Mother," said Nettie, tenderly, "aren't those good words,—'He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, *he heard*?' I have thought of those words, very often."

Nettie wished she could sing, for she had often seen singing comfort her mother; but she had not the power to-day. She gave her the best she could. Her words, however, constantly carried hurt and healing together to her mother's mind. But when Nettie went on to repeat softly the verse of a hymn that follows, she was soothed, notwithstanding the hinted meaning in the words. So sweet was the trust of the hymn, so unruffled the trust of the speaker. The words were from a little bit of a book of translations of German hymns which Mr. Folke, her Sunday-school teacher, had brought her, and which was never out of Nettie's hand.

"'As God leads me so my heart
In faith shall rest.
No grief nor fear my soul shall part
From Jesus' breast.
In sweet belief I know
What way my life doth go—
Since God permitteth so—
That must be best.'"

Slowly she said the words, with her usual sober, placid face; and Mrs. Mathieson was mute.

For some weeks, as the spring breathed warmer and warmer, Nettie revived; so much that her mother at times felt encouraged about her. Mr. Mathieson was never deceived. Whether his former neglect of his child had given him particular keenness of vision in all that concerned her now, or for whatever reason, *he* saw well enough and saw constantly that Nettie was going to leave him. There was never a wish of hers uncared for now; there was not a straw suffered to lie in her path, that he could take out of it. He went to church, and he read at home; he changed his behaviour to her mother as well as to herself, and he brought Barry to his bearings. What more did Nettie want?

One Sunday, late in May, Nettie had stayed at home alone while the rest of the family were gone to church, the neighbour down stairs having promised to look after her. She needed no looking after, though; she spent her time pleasantly with her Bible and her hymns, till feeling tired she went to her room to lie down. The windows were open; it was a very warm day; the trees were in leaf, and from her bed Nettie could only see the sunshine in the leaves,

and in one place through a gap in the trees, a bit of bright hill-side afar off. The birds sang merrily, and nothing else sounded at all; it was very Sabbath stillness. So Nettie lay till she heard the steps of the church-goers returning; and presently, after her mother had been there and gone, her father came into her room to see her. He kissed her, and said a few words, and then went to the window and stood there looking out. Both were silent some time, while the birds sang on.

"Father," said Nettie.

He turned instantly, and asked her what she wanted.

"Father," said Nettie, "the streets of the city are all of gold."

"Well," said he, meeting her grave eyes, "and what then, Nettie?"

"Only, I was thinking, if the *streets* are gold, how clean must the feet be that walk on them!"

He knew what her intent eyes meant, and he sat down by her bedside and laid his face in his hands. "I am a sinful man, Nettie!" he said.

"Father, 'this is a faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.'"

"I don't deserve he should save me, Nettie."

"Well, father, ask him to save you, *because* you don't deserve it."

"What sort of a prayer would that be?"

"The right one, father; for Jesus does deserve it, and for his sake is the only way. If you deserved it, you

wouldn't want Jesus; but now '*he* is our peace.' O father listen, listen, to what the Bible says." She had been turning the leaves of her Bible, and read low and earnestly—"'Now we are ambassadors for God, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.' Oh, father, aren't you willing to be reconciled to him?"

"God knows I am willing!" said Mr. Mathieson.

"*He* is willing, I am sure," said Nettie. "'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him.' He has made peace; he is the Prince of Peace; he will give it to you, father."

There was a long silence. Mr. Mathieson never stirred. Nor Nettie, hardly. The words were true of her,—"He that believeth shall not make haste." She waited, looking at him. Then he said, "What must I do, Nettie?"

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

"How, child?"

"Father, the best way is to ask him, and he will tell you how. If you are only willing to be his servant—if you are willing to give yourself to the Lord Jesus—are you willing, father?"

"I am willing, anything!—if he will have me," said Mr. Mathieson.

"Then go, father!" said Nettie, eagerly;—"go and ask him, and he will teach you how; he will, he has promised. Go, father, and ask the Lord—will you? Go now."

Her father remained still a moment—then he rose up

and went out of the room, and she heard his steps going up to the unused attic. Nettie crossed her hands upon her breast, and smiled. She was too much exhausted to pray, otherwise than with a thought.

Her mother soon came in, and startled by her flushed look, asked how she did. "Well," Nettie said. Mrs. Mathieson was uneasy, and brought her something to take, which Nettie couldn't eat; and insisted on her lying still and trying to go to sleep. Nettie thought she could not sleep; and she did not for some time; then slumber stole over her, and she slept sweetly and quietly while the hours of the summer afternoon rolled away. Her mother watched beside her for a long while before she awoke; and during that time read surely in Nettie's delicate cheek and too delicate colour, what was the sentence of separation. She read it, and smothered the cry of her heart, for Nettie's sake.

The sun was descending toward the western hilly country, and long level rays of light were playing in the tree-tops, when Nettie awoke.

"Are you there, mother?" she said—"and is the Sunday so near over! How I have slept."

"How do you feel, dear?"

"Why, I feel well," said Nettie. "It has been a good day. The gold is all in the air here—not in the streets." She had half raised herself and was sitting looking out of the window.

"Do you think of that city all the time?" inquired Mrs. Mathieson, half jealously.

"Mother," said Nettie, slowly, still looking out at the

sunlight, "would you be very sorry, and very much surprised, if I were to go there before long?"

"I should not be very much surprised, Nettie," answered her mother, in a tone that told all the rest. Her child's eye turned to her sorrowfully and understandingly.

"You'll not be very long before you'll be there too," she said. "Now kiss me, mother."

Could Mrs. Mathieson help it? She took Nettie in her arms, but instead of the required kiss there came a burst of passion that bowed her head in convulsive grief against her child's breast. The pent-up sorrow, the great burden of love and tenderness, the unspoken gratitude, the unspeakable longing of heart, all came in those tears and sobs that shook her as if she had forgotten on what a frail support she was half resting. Nay, nature must speak this one time; she had taken the matter into her own hands, and she was not to be struggled with, for a while. Nettie bore it—how did she bear it? With a little trembling of lip at first; then that passed, and with quiet sorrow she saw and felt the suffering which had broken forth so stormily. True to her office, the little peacemaker tried her healing art. Softly stroking her mother's face and head while she spoke, she said very softly and slowly,

"Mother, you know it is Jesus that said, 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' You have the mourning now, but he will find the comfort by and by."

Ashamed of her giving way, and of her having left it to the weak one to act the part of the strong, Mrs. Mathieson checked herself, held up her head and

dried her tears. Nettie lay down wearily.

"I will stay here, mother," she said, "till tea is ready; and then I will come." Mrs. Mathieson went to attend to it.

When Nettie went into the other room, her father was sitting there. She said nothing however, and even for some time did not look in his face to see what he might have to say to her. She took a cup of tea and a biscuit, and eat an egg that her mother had boiled for her. It was when supper was over, and they had moved from the table and Mrs. Mathieson was busy about, that Nettie turned her eyes once more upon her father, with their soft, full inquiry. He looked grave, subdued, tender; she had heard that in his voice already; not as she had ever seen him look before. He met her eyes, and answered them.

"I understand it now, Nettie," he said.

It was worth while to see Nettie's smile. She was not a child very given to expressing her feelings, and when pleasure reached that point with her, it was something to see such a breaking of light upon a face that generally dwelt in twilight sobriety. Her father drew her close, close within his arms; and without one word Nettie sat there, till, for very happiness and weariness, she fell asleep; and he carried her to her room.

There was a great calm fell upon the family for a little time thereafter. It was like one of those spring days that were passed—full of misty light, and peace, and hope, and promise. It was a breath of rest.

But they knew it would end—for a time; and one summer day the end came. It was a Sunday again,

and again Nettie was lying on her bed, enjoying in her weakness the loveliness of the air and beauty without. Her mother was with her, and knew that she had been failing very fast for some days. Nettie knew it too.

"How soon do you think father will be home?" she said.

"Not before another hour, I think," said Mrs. Mathieson. "Why, what of it, Nettie?"

"Nothing——" said Nettie, doubtfully. "I'd like him to come."

"It wont be long," said her mother.

"Mother, I am going to give you my little dear hymn book," said Nettie, presently; "and I want to read you this hymn now, and then you will think of me when you read it. May I?"

"Read," said Mrs. Mathieson; and she put up her hand to hide her face from Nettie. Nettie did not look, however; her eyes were on her hymn, and she read it, low and sweetly—very sweetly—through. There was no tremor in her voice, but now and then a little accent of joy or a shade of tenderness.

"'Meet again! yes, we shall meet again,
Though now we part in pain!
His people all
Together Christ shall call.
Hallelujah!

"'Soon the days of absence shall be o'er,
And thou shalt weep no more;
Our meeting day
Shall wipe all tears away.

Hallelujah!

"'Now I go with gladness to our home,
With gladness thou shalt come;
There I will wait
To meet thee at heaven's gate.
Hallelujah!

"'Dearest! what delight again to share
Our sweet communion there!
To walk among
The holy ransomed throng.
Hallelujah!

"'Here, in many a grief, our hearts were one,
But there in joys alone;
Joys fading never,
Increasing, deepening ever.
Hallelujah!

"'Not to mortal sight can it be given
To know the bliss of heaven;
But thou shalt be
Soon there, and sing with me,
Hallelujah!

"'Meet again! yes, we shall meet again,
Though now we part in vain!
His people all
Together Christ shall call.
Hallelujah!'"

Mrs. Mathieson's head bowed as the hymn went on, but she dared not give way to tears, and Nettie's manner half awed and half charmed her into quietness. It was not likely she would forget those

words ever. When the reading had ceased, and in a few minutes Mrs. Mathieson felt that she could look toward Nettie again, she saw that the book had fallen from her hand and that she was almost fainting. Alarmed instantly, she called for help, and got one of the inmates of the house to go after Mr. Mathieson. But Nettie sank so fast, they were afraid he would not come in time. The messenger came back without having been able to find him; for after the close of the services in the church Mr. Mathieson had gone out of his way on an errand of kindness. Nettie herself was too low to ask for him, if indeed she was conscious that he was not there. They could not tell; she lay without taking any notice.

But just as the last rays of the sun were bright in the leaves of the trees and on the hills in the distance, Mr. Mathieson's step was heard. One of the neighbours met him and told him what he must expect; and he came straight to Nettie's room. And when he bent down over her and spoke, Nettie knew his voice and opened her eyes, and once more smiled. It was like a smile from another country. Her eyes were fixed on him. Mr. Mathieson bent yet nearer and put his lips to hers; then he tried to speak.

"My little peacemaker, what shall I do without you?"

Nettie drew a long, long breath. "Peace—is—made," she slowly said.

And the peacemaker was gone.

THE END.

[1] See Frontispiece.

[2] A festival common in America on the completion of a house.

[3] *Waffles*, a species of sweet-cake used on such festivals in America.

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