

good deal troubled," remarked Clarkson, when the sound of grief had somewhat subsided "but now let us leave the culprit, and tell me how is Sara."

"That's just the worst part of it, sir. Sally's down with something dreadfully bad; the doctor says it's consumption, but I don't believe in what doctors say."

"Tell me about it at once," said Clarkson, who was most genuinely pained.

"Well, sir," began Mrs. White—"well, you haven't been gone above a week when it seemed to me that she was getting a bit lazy and off her food; but I didn't think much of that, girls often are that way. Perhaps she may have eaten less than I noticed. Lord, when you're as worried as I am, you can't be counting how many mouthfuls of food a child takes to-day, and how many to-morrow; there's no fear of my boys not doing their share. We got some very cold weather just at the end of July; and one night, when she was playing at the Crown Theatre, it came down one of those nasty cold rains. She was much later than usual coming home that night; perhaps I wasn't in the best of tempers, for Young Rob had been more troublesome even than he is generally. It was just one when she walked in, the rain streaming down from her. 'I couldn't get a bus,' she says; 'that's makes me so late. It's so cold and wet mother, I thought you might have had a bit of fire.' 'Fires in July!' I said; 'we can afford that, can't we? Perhaps you expected a cold fowl and a bottle of port-wine? Eat your bread-and-cheese and drink your beer, do.' I says, 'and get to bed; that's the best place for you.' She took a little bread and beer, but I saw she couldn't stomach the cheese; then she began shivering and crying, and saying she was so cold. Well, I got her to bed, but she coughed through the night. In the morning she felt very hot, and didn't seem to know what she was saying, so I sent for the doctor,—not that I, in most cases, hold with doctors. He said that she had taken a bad feverish cold, and that it had gone to her lungs. However, she seemed to get over the worst of it; only she don't get her strength up, and sometimes she has bad fits of coughing. The doctor says he can't do anything more. I say it's a good thing we don't depend on doctors; it's Nature that will bring her round. You see she eats hardly anything—not even that nice fried fish, which I get from King's opposite, where you can always count on getting it sweet, and just done to a turn."

"We must see what can be done, Mrs. White; I suppose I may see her?"

"Yes; and it's my belief it will do her good. She has often wondered when you would come back. I'll just go and tell her that you're here." And away went Mrs. White.

As Clarkson sat there in the dreary room, littered with unwashed things, he thought very sadly of the sick girl up-stairs. He was in deep reflection when Mrs. White returned and showed him up to Sara's room. It was a very small room half way up the stairs; it had no fireplace; there was just space for the bed to stand between the door and the window. It looked a hard, uncomfortable bed on which the sick girl lay. One hand, which had grown painfully thin, rested on the threadbare coverlet. Her long golden hair brushed out looked like sunlight on the pillow.

"Well, Sara, my child," began Clarkson, "you haven't much room for receiving visitors here, have you? It isn't the room I should desire for an evening party."

"No," she answered, with a faint sweet smile; "and I wish the bed wouldn't shake so every time the street-door closes."

Here Mrs. White put in with, "Now don't you mind that. She's got a fancy into her head that when the bed shakes a little bit it does her harm; just as if it could!"

"I am so glad you have come," Sara went on, in a tone of voice that sounded hollow and already far away. "It has been so dull. I've been very ill; I can't eat anything now, and I'm not strong enough to get up; but I suppose I shall some time get stronger, and then I shall be all right."

"And hungrier than ever."

"O yes, hungrier than ever, because I sha'n't have eaten for so long, you know. Please tell me where you have been, and all about it. Have you been far?"

He sat down in a very rickety chair, and told her as amusingly as he could, though heavy at heart, all that he thought would interest her. When he had rattled away for half an hour she was quite in spirits. She must have Mrs. White produce the new dress and hat she had bought before her illness out of some extra money she had made. He admired hat and dress to the full.

"I must wear them the first Sunday you take me out again, mustn't I?" she said as simply as a child, and her eyes brightened. "I got something for them all;" then, rather shyly, "and I got you a cigar-case, if you don't mind." Here she produced her offering. He took it from her hand, admiring it, and thanking her. "I filled it with cigars. Bob got them. They cost threepence each; is that too little to pay? They were the best I could get here."

"Little! why, it's ever so much too much, you dear child. Why, you can get a cigar for a penny."

"Yes, but not such as you like to smoke." He laughed, and said that she oughtn't to spoil him. Then she made him try one, saying it would be like old times; adding very piteous-

ly, "If you don't smoke you will never like to come and see me again."

"Smoke or not smoke," he answered gaily, "I am coming every day till I see you really better; and to-morrow, as I don't think much of your present doctor, I shall send down a man in whom I have confidence. Now I must be off; I shall come round early to-morrow;" and kindly pressing her hand he was gone.

The next day Sara received all the comforts that an invalid could desire, and early there appeared upon the scene the noted and kindly Doctor Forman.

"Well," asked Clarkson, as the physician came down from the sick-room, "what do you say?"

"Say, my dear sir!—alas, I have nothing to say that you would like to hear! All we can do is to make the end as gentle as possible, and I don't think that it can be far off."

"Thank you," said Clarkson, "for coming so far;" and there were tears in his eyes.

He went to break the sad news to Mrs. White, who, poor woman, quite broke down, though, through her tears and sobs, she again and again protested her utter disbelief in all doctors. While she was trying to calm herself, Clarkson went to sit with Sara.

"What did the doctor say about me?" she asked.

"He said you were ill."

"Did he say I was going to die soon? I want the truth, please; let me have it."

There was something swelling in Clarkson's throat. He strove to speak, but vainly.

"Please tell me," she entreated; "I want to know at once which way it is."

Then Clarkson just managed to articulate, taking her hand in his,

"Dear, he does think that you are in great danger."

"Thank you; that means that I am going to die."

Then she was silent; but her eyes had in them a strange look, as if they were trying to picture the land whither she was going. At last she said, with a pressure of his hand,

"I don't mind much. I almost think it's better as it is. You have been always so good to me. I know you didn't mean me to care too much for you, and I myself didn't seem to know how it was going till you went away this summer; and then I knew—when I found everything so hateful just because there was no chance of seeing you—I knew then that I loved you too much."

"Sara," he said, much moved, "I never thought of that as possible; you will believe that, at least."

And, indeed, he spoke truly. No shade of anything warmer than friendship had ever stained the purity of this kind feeling for the poor, pretty child. With the passion of love he believed himself done for ever; and it never so much as crossed his mind that he could inspire it in another, least of all in such a one as Sara, so young, so out of the pale, of all the thoughts and associations of his life. That she could feel towards him other than as a sister towards an elder brother had never crossed his mind. Nor had even Mrs. White, a far-seeing woman in her way, foreseen the slightest possibility of danger to her daughter's peace of mind. She was only glad that Sara should have so kind a friend. "A true gentleman," she used to say, "and just as much to be trusted as a Bank of England note." "How blind he had been!" he thought, as he waited for Sara's answer.

"Yes," she said, after a little silence, "I do know that you never thought of it."

She spoke very gently and very sadly, and tears were darkening her eyes—the eyes that had once been like streams, the wind and sunlight surprised together.

He put his arm round her, and very tenderly kissed her lips, that even then, with death waiting so near at hand, thrilled under that first pressure of his.

"Heaven bless you, Sara! as my child I have loved you."

Then they sat for some time without speaking, and all the things incident to the daily life of a house like No. 19 Upper Poplar Row went on. The lodgers at Mrs. White's did not trouble themselves because poor, pretty, good little Sara lay there dying. They scrubbed out their rooms; they called messages to each other from floor to floor; the pot-boy from the King's Head tramped up the stairs to Mrs. Smith, who occupied the third front room, and announced his long desired presence by a great bang at the door, and by a shrill cry of "Cans!"

Presently Mrs. White came in and made, poor soul, a desperate attempt to seem gay!

"Have you told Mr. Clarkson about your grand visitor that came this morning?" she asked.

"No," answered Sara; "you tell."

Then Mrs. White unfolded how a fine lady, who busied herself a great deal with East-end folk, had heard of Sara, and came to see what she could do.

"She wished to send a doctor of her own, but was told how a kind friend had already sent us one. She stayed some time chatting, and said she should come again," continued Mrs. White. "She seemed to take to my young lady; but then most people do."

Again Mrs. White had to disappear to prepare something for the invalid. It was then about two o'clock of a bright, rather warm, October afternoon. A bell was heard; that noise, one of the very dimmest, poor school-board children know, for it summons them back to their lessons.

"Shall you care to keep your cigar-case?" asked poor Sara.

"I shall always keep it, and prize it dearly."

"Then don't tell your wife or she might make you put it away; some women are so very jealous. I want you to use it; it is nice enough to use, isn't it?"

"I shall use it always."

"I'm glad of that." After a pause she said, "Say good-bye to me now, while we are alone, then go as soon as mother comes back."

He understood. He kissed her, and laid her head upon his shoulder, and called her many a dear and tender name. "Good-bye, Sara," he said, as they heard Mrs. White making her slow way up.

"Good-bye," she answered, almost passionately. "You will never know how I love you; it is much better for me to go, much better."

Then once more, and for the last time, their lips met. Weak with that strain of love, she fell back quite exhausted, only able to whisper "Go,"—nothing after that.

He did as she wished, feeling almost sure that he should see her no more; and he was right. That very night the sweet pure spirit passed away, to make its unknown journey all alone. Poor child, young as she was, she had known one of life's greatest experiences—that of loving where there was no hope of love being returned.

When Clarkson the next morning saw the blinds down in Sara's room, he was not surprised. He had brought with him, on the chance that she might still be able to enjoy them, some beautiful flowers. The door of the house stood open, so he walked straight in and up to Sara's room. As he entered he saw that some one, who was kneeling by the bed, rose hastily; then he saw that it was Hilda Ford.

They took hands silently; he went over to the bed, and placed the flowers on the girl's bosom. Then, leaning down, he kissed, very reverently, the cold lips that this time did not thrill under his; he looked long and lovingly on her face, which wore a look of unearthly rest; then he rose and turned to the door.

"Do you know where Sara's mother is?" he asked.

"Seeing after her other children. They have to be seen to. I promised Mrs. White that I would do some errands for her in the neighborhood."

"Are you going now?"

"At once."

"May I walk with you?"

"I should only be too glad if you would."

"Thank you, then, I will."

So together they left the house of death, and walked out into the bright October morning. After they had walked on a little way in silence, his first question came,

"Was it you who called at the White's yesterday?"

"Yes; and even in the short time I saw her, I grew quite fond of Sara. Poor child! she is at rest now. I have heard a great deal about you from them. You seem to have been their good angel; nor are they all whom you have befriended about here. Before yesterday I heard of you from more than one household; you have been doing good work."

"Thank you," he said simply, hardly able to realize that he was with the one woman he had ever really loved. The minutes were passing. Soon she and he would part to meet no more. She was a little pale, paler than usual but lovelier than ever. He would have liked there and then to have gone down on his knees before her.

O bards, bards! ye who prate of the romance of lovers in gardens, lovers in woods, and where not beside, so long as it is a place where romantically-inclined persons would like to be, why not at once own the truth that there is often as much sentiment connected with places of the most unromantic kind!

Write, O poet novelist:

"The scent of lilies growing in a high-walled garden; the nightingale's passionate strain; all the charm and music of a summer night—will these not always bring to his mind, if he could ever for one moment forget it, that face of hers as he saw it in the full moonlight, and recall the low music of her voice?"

Write, O prose-teller of facts:

"The sound of jingling tram-bells; London Bridge with great ships visible therefrom; open stalls, with men calling out their wares; the smell issuing from overflowing gin-palaces—these, though he is perfectly familiar with them, will for all time be to Paul Clarkson associated with the woman he loved."

He was so silent, that at last she said to him,

"Why don't you talk to me?"

"Because I'm thinking of you so much. To see you again is like great light falling on eyes but just opened. I am dazzled by you."

She did not answer, but walked on in a very business-like manner.

Presently she said,

"Sara was very fond of you; do you think she was too fond of you?"

"I am afraid she was getting to care for me at the end. I never meant her to; but I suppose you won't believe that?"

"Yes, I will. I don't think you did flirt with Sara, poor child."

At length the commissions were all of them executed, and they returned to Upper Poplar Row. What a strange day it was for Paul and Hilda! Mrs. White was too much upset to see after anything; and as she was a woman who quarrelled with her neighbors right and left, there was no one to whom she could turn but the friends who were with her, poor dear!

She sat in her dirty kitchen and sobbed; while Hilda, with the sleeves of her dress rolled up, displaying her large, lovely arms, washed-up accumulated cups and plates. Paul looked after the fire, and kept Bob in order. At length Mrs. White grew quieter, and by evening they came to the conclusion that she might be left.

"Good-bye, and bless you both," she said. "No one had ever a word to say against my Sally; well, she's out of the bother of this bad world. I don't see what's the good of being in it, slave, slave, day and night, and then some day, like an engine driven hard, the boiler bursts; but what's the good of talk? I say, if there's any power looking after the world, it doesn't trouble itself much about us that's in it."

So they left her, and stood out in the cold clear night.

"Now?" said Paul.

And she answered "Yes."

"What are you going to do now?"

"The most natural thing I can do—take a hansom to our apartments in Westminster; and you?"

"I!" he answered, somewhat listlessly, "I! O, I feel in a mood of exploring London by night. I might come in for an adventure. Perhaps you will see in the morning papers, 'Murder in the East End.'"

"I think," she replied quietly, "you had best see me home."

"That of course I should like to do; but I feared my presence would only be an offence to you."

"No, you were mistaken."

So a hansom was called, in which they rattled away. How pretty the lamps on London Bridge looked, shining in the water, as our two passed over it! "How very fast he is driving!" she said; "we shall get there quite soon, at this rate, sha'n't we?"

"Yes," he answered absently; he was thinking of something he wanted to say to her, and wondering, as we have all wondered in similar positions, whether he should say it or not.

"What are you thinking of," she inquired, "that you say nothing?"

"I was thinking of the past."

"I want us to forget that. I want us to be friends."

"Hilda, that could never, never be."

"And why?" in her lowest and most subtly sweet tones.

"Because I love you too desperately to make it possible."

"Do you still love me, Paul?"

"Love you? My God, I should think I did! Have I not shaped my life as I thought you would have me? To see you once again has been my prayer, yet what will it do for me but make me more in love with you than ever? I had a dream of you some nights ago. I thought I lay dying, and you came in, and leaned down over me, and kissed me, and I put my arms round you. O, the heaven of that dream! Hilda, I am a changed man. Is your love utterly dead? would it ever be possible for you to trust me again?"

She drew quite close to him, put her hand in his, and rested her cheek upon it as she said,

"What do you think, dear?"

"Hi! there, cabby, down with the glasses!"

What cabby himself has shut down, shall we seek to raise?

A. T. STEWART'S CHARITY FAILURE.

Mr. Stewart was a very gifted shop-keeper, whose rare talent in a single line gave him both fame and wealth. But he knew as little of charity as he cared for it; and when he came, at the close of his life, to attempt something in that direction, he blundered with a facility and self-confidence which ought to be enduringly instructive. It had been urged upon him that he owed something to the working-girls who had done so much to build up his fortune; and so, tardily and ignorantly, he set about a scheme in their behalf. He built a huge structure, capable of housing a thousand people. Every feature of this structure, in view of the purpose for which it was designed, was a glaring incongruity,—and then, when he had completed it, he condescended to ask the counsel of experts as to carrying his scheme into practical execution. He was informed by those whose counsel he ought long before to have sought that the very character of his building prohibited it from being useful. He was shown that to assemble one thousand young women under one roof in a working-woman's house, was to necessitate one of two things: either a police so vigilant and so intrusive as to be to any decent girl intolerable; or else, a laxity so provocative of evil as almost to guarantee it. He was shown that he ought to have built a series of small houses, each with a matron or housekeeper of its own, and each to contain a dozen girls, at most, where the surveillance could have been constant without being obtrusive, and where something like domesticity would have made a home in name a home in fact. But Mr. Stewart believed supremely in Mr. Stewart. Successful men generally believe in themselves. He showed this in his architecture, which was hideous, where it might as easily have been graceful and pleasing. He showed it in his charitable plans to which he gave but little thought, and in which he chose to be sufficient to himself. And so his great wealth has resulted in no service to his fellow-townpeople and in scanty honor to his memory.

It is a story which may profitably be read by other rich men.—*Century*.