

A Knot of White Ribbon more

By Mindah E. Merrifield.

(An incident in the life of Mrs. J. K. Barney, Superintendent of Prison, Gaol Police, and Almshouses work for the National W. C. T. U., U. S. A.)

THE rain fell in a heavy mist, and the wind soughed mournfully through the trees, sweeping the dead leaves in showers over the fast fading grass and wet pavement. The street lamps gave out a faint flickering light, and the pedestrians drew their wraps closer and shivered as they hurried along. For an hour or more the figure of a woman might have been seen wandering up and down the streets, and the face upon which the light shone was that of a young girl scarce twenty. The brown hair was pushed back from the white face, and a pair of dark hazel eyes looked with a frightened expression upon the passers-by, who did not seem to heed her presence in the least.

The girl leaned for a moment against a fence, and a great tearless sob broke from her lips; and at that moment a lady who had just passed with several others stepped back, and laid a gentle hand on the girl's arm. A voice sweeter than the sweetest music to a troubled heart, spoke, and a face made beautiful by its love of God and humanity, with the same love shining in the kindly blue eyes, bent over her, and asked:

"Let me help you; you are in trouble."

The girl looked up with a bewildered air; such words she was not used to, but in a moment she found voice to answer:

"No, you can't, unless you give me work; and my reference is, I have been one week out of gaol."

The lady gave a start, and the girl continued with a laugh:

"I knew you would turn away; no less than a hundred have done the same thing the past week."

"Surely," the sweet voice whispered, "you were not guilty?"

"Yes," she answered, "I will not lie to you, I was guilty."

The noble, loving heart gave a great throb of pity; this was her work; here was one of her chosen ones to whom she was devoting her life-work. A clear, cold voice, with a sound like a bell on an icy morning broke the momentary silence—

"My dear Mrs. Barney, don't you think you are wasting time? We will be late, and Dr. Ellis is so particular."

For a moment she hesitated; there was an audience waiting for her, who, with God's help, she must interest; and yet