

As the evening closed in, he fell asleep, and when his innocent and cheerful voice no longer beguiled the hours, they passed wearily indeed to poor Fanny. But still she worked on, till a neighbouring clock struck twelve, and one, and two—and then her wretched candle burned low in its iron socket, and both sight and strength failing her, she laid carefully aside the splendid dress which was to array a person far less lovely than her own, and which formed so strange a contrast, not only to her humble and plain attire, but to the mean and bare aspect of the room—and without undressing, threw herself on the low bed beside Hal, and in a few minutes sunk into the unrefreshing sleep of utter weariness and exhaustion.

The shrill clariion of a cock proclaiming the hour of dawn, from the top of a neighbouring shed, startled her from slumber, and, springing hastily up, she resumed her work, seating herself at the window, to take advantage of the rapidly increasing light. She felt ill and faint—she had tasted scarcely food enough on the preceding day to sustain nature, but she resolutely resisted her weakness, and toiled on with a diligence that promised speedily to bring her task to a close. It was exactly half-past seven when she placed the finishing stitch in the dress,—and she to whose vanity that rich robe was designed to minister, felt not, when first its graceful folds floated around her figure, and her mirror told her how its perfect fit, and tasteful adornments, enhanced her beauty, a throb of pleasure half so pure and buoyant, as that which swelled the breast of the young and wearied artiste, when she at last saw her elaborate task completed, and forgot the toil and anxiety of the long and lonely night, in the glad thought that the recompence it had earned for her, would give her the power to purchase a few more comforts for the little suffering boy, whose love made the blessing of her life.

He was just awaking as she closed the cover of the bandbox upon the dress, and his first words were of joy that she had finished it, though he little knew, that she had wasted the silent night in labour, for him, while he slept on undisturbed. He looked brighter, she thought, than he had done of late, and for this, her gentle heart swelled with another throb of grateful joy—she brought him his simple breakfast when she had washed him, and changed his night-dress for the loose robe which he wore by day, and then drank her own cup of milk as she stood beside him. But she could eat nothing, and when all needed cares were bestowed on him, she kissed him, and bidding him be a good boy and amuse himself as well as he could till she came back, she took up the bandbox, and set out for Madame Legrande's.

She found her just at breakfast, but being in uncommonly good humour she did not keep Fanny long waiting. She even condescended to praise her work, and to commend her for finishing it so promptly. It had cost the poor girl three days and one night of almost unceasing toil, and for this she received the small sum of one dollar, while her employer pocketed four, and won for herself the honor due to Fanny,—that of being a first rate *artiste*. Thankful, however, for constant employment, even on moderate terms, she was departing with another parcel of work, which was to yield her a similar profit, when madame called her back, to make some inquiries respecting the musk-rose.

Fanny had expected this, and her answer was gentle, but firm: "She could ill afford to keep it, dear as it was to her," she said, "when the sum offered for it would relieve so many of her pressing necessities—but she considered it as belonging to her brother, and while she had health to earn even a bare subsistence, she would endure any hardship, rather than deprive him of almost the only pleasure he was capable of enjoying." Madame Legrande tossed her head with a scornful air, and made some ill-natured remark on the folly of poor people having fine tastes and fancies, in which none but the rich had a right to indulge. But fearing by Fanny's silence, that she was defeating her own object, she changed her tone to one of more softness and persuasion, and said, "that Mrs. Harwood, the lady who, from having seen the broken branch, had taken such a fancy to the musk-rose, was very anxious to obtain it, for she could not find another like it in the country, and had commissioned her to say she would give six dollars for it—an enormous sum, which Fanny, in her circumstances, would be silly indeed to refuse—besides which, Mrs. Harwood would give her another rosebush of a more common kind, that would supply to her brother the place of the musk-rose, and with which she ventured to say he would be just as well pleased."

"Oh! Madame Legrande," said poor Fanny, the tears trembling in her eyes as she spoke, "for myself I care nothing; I have no right, as you say, to practice any self-indulgence, and I do not—I strive not to—but for poor Harry's sake I would keep this dear musk-rose. You cannot know how much we love it—nor wherefore. But it was my mother's—she planted the slip the day my brother was born, and she always called it lovingly, his twin sister. And now it is like an old friend to us, and brings back so freshly our parent's love, and the pleasant fields, and green hills of Bloomingdale, among which was our happy home."

"And what happened that you left it, Fanny?"