

ruddy fire. An old-fashioned chintz-covered easy-chair on the hearthrug offered a comfortable resting-place, into which the minister dropped wearily, holding out his thin hands gratefully to the glowing heat. Although consumed with curiosity as to the sudden ending of the session meeting, Christina restrained herself until she should have doctored the study fire. She proceeded there with an armful of wood, and quickly a pleasant crackling from the other side of the hall indicated that the fire was set in motion.

When she came back, after carefully closing the door behind her, she stood still in the middle of the kitchen floor and regarded the minister with a comprehensive and anxious look. All at once she seemed to realize that the master she had served so faithfully and long was a feeble old man tottering on the brink of the grave. This thought sent a sudden stab to her heart, and gave a certain shrillness to her voice as she repeated the question about the meeting.

"It is not over yet, Christina," said the minister mildly. "Mr. Rattray told me it was the desire of the meeting that I should withdraw, which, of course, I did at once, understanding that I was the subject which they wished to discuss."

Christina stood silent with her arms folded. A certain hard look came upon her wide, pleasant mouth, and she felt disposed to utter some plain remarks about the Kirk session of Wildershaugh.

"I have known for some time, Christina," said the minister, in a slow, painful voice, "that my services are no longer acceptable as they were to my people. The reason for this, I suppose, is not far to seek. I am old and spent, and they desire a young man in my place."

"If ye are auld and spent, sir," said Christina, indignation and emotion struggling for the mastery in her voice, "in wha's service hae ye spent yoursel' I should like to ken? Eh! I would just like to let them hae my tongue for five minutes in the vestry I wad Kirk session them! A bonny Kirk session they are, with that upstart Rattray at their head!"

"Hush, Christina," said the minister mildly, trying to restrain the outpouring of his faithful servant's wrath. "I cannot listen to such words. It is a hard case, of course; but they have right on their side. I will save them the painful duty by sending in my resignation this very night."

"Deed, and ye'll do a heap less," said Christina indignantly. "What for should you resign? Ye have been minister o' Wildershaugh for forty years, and whatever they may say, there's no' a minister in the country-side can preach the Gospel like ye. It's that they dinna like, sir. They want a young man that has neither hope or Gospel in him, so that he may preach to snit them, Pharisees that they are!"

"Christina," said the minister tremblingly, "will you hold your peace? I know very well that your words are actuated by your devotion to me; but they are not becoming, and I pray that they may not be true. See if my fire has kindled, in order that I may go to my own room."

Thus rebuked, but not at all humbled or convinced, Christina bounced into the study and gave the unoffending fire a vigorous poke. The minister followed her there, and drawing in his worn leather chair to the fire, sat down, not giving Christina the slightest encouragement to remain or to utter another word.

About half an hour later a loud and imperative knock came to the front door, and Christina, with a very forbidding look on her face, made haste to open it. Her expression did not become pleasanter as she recognized the figure of Alexander Rattray, the chief merchant and leading resident in Wildershaugh, as well as ruling elder in the Kirk session.

"Good evening, Christina," he said affably; "is the minister in?"

"Fine ye ken he's in," she snapped. "I wonder ye dinna think black, burning shame o' yoursel', Sandy Rattray to stand there and ask if he is in, kennin' what your errand is!"

At this unexpected outburst the merchant's rubicund face reddened a little more.

"I do not wish to hear any of your impertinence, woman," he said angrily; "and it shows how very little control the minister has over his own household

when you would dare to speak in such a manner to me. I shall not fail to complain to him about it."

"Oh, ye can say what ye like about me, my man," said Christina in lofty scorn. "It'll neither mak' me up or down wi' the minister. Ye're a bonnie lot to haud a meetin' to send the minister away; and I hope he'll stand on his rights and snap his thoomb at ye. Fine ye ken he can bide if he likes."

These words goaded the merchant into such anger that he could not trust himself to speak further with the woman. He therefore brushed past her and, without knock or ceremony, himself opened the ministers' study door.

Mr. Gilruth, having heard the voices at the door, stood up expectantly when the elder entered. There was a silent dignity and pathos in the old man's attitude and look which made a certain impression on the sordid soul of the man who had striven so hard to serve his own ends.

"I have come, Mr. Gilruth," he said rather quickly, "to intimate to you the result of the meeting."

"I am waiting to hear it, sir," said the minister quietly.

Concluded next week.

THE HOME CIRCLE.

PRAYER.

We have no tears Thou wilt not dry;
We have no wounds Thou wilt not heal;
No sorrows pierce our human hearts
That Thou, dear Saviour, dost not feel!

Thy pity like the dew distills,
And Thy compassion, like the light,
Our every morning overfills,
And crowns with stars our every night.

Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do that day which must be done whether you like it or not. Being forced to work, and forced to do your best will breed in you temperance, self-control, diligence, strength of will, content, and a hundred virtues which the idle will never know.—*Chas. Kingsley.*

Beautiful water! There is no blood stain in its crystal depths, no madness and no murder in its foam! It never broke a mother's heart; it never ruined a reputation; it never sent a poor wretch shrieking to the gallows. No poison bubbles on its brink! Never did pale-faced wife, or starving child, or broken hearted mother weep into it a bitter tear; never did drunkard howl back from his deathbed a fearful curse upon it! There is no curse here. Sing songs of ruby wine if you will; hand round the goblet if you choose; but

"Give water to me, bright water to me;
It cooleth the brow, it cooleth the brain,
It maketh the weak man strong again."

J. B. Gough.

FAITHFULNESS IN HUMBLE PLACES.

That is a very tender story concerning faithfulness in humble places which Jean Ingelow has related for us:

It was in one of the Orkney Islands, far beyond the north of Scotland. On the coast of this island there stood out a rock, called the Lonely Rock, very dangerous to navigators.

One night, long ago, there sat in a fisherman's hut ashore a young girl, toiling at her spinning wheel, looking out upon the dark and driving clouds, and listening anxiously to the wind and sea.

At last the morning came, and one boat, which should have been riding on the waves, was missing. It was her father's boat, and half a mile from the cottage her father's body was found, washed up on the shore. He had been wrecked against this Lonely Rock.

That was more than fifty years ago. The girl watched her father's body, according to the custom of her people, till it was laid in the grave; then she lay down on her bed and slept. When the night came she arose and set a candle in her casement, as a beacon to the fishermen, and a guide. All night long she sat by the candle, trimmed it when it sickered down, and spun.

As many hanks of yarn as she had spun before for her daily bread, she spun still, and one hank over for her nightly candle. And from that time to the telling of this story—for fifty years, through youth, maturity, into old age—she has turned night into day. And in the snowstorms of winter, in the serene calms of summer, through driving mists, deceptive moonlight, and solemn