

Just at twilight, going to mother's room, I found her tying her bonnet.

"Where are you going, mother?"

"I am going for my baby," she said, almost fiercely.

"Why, mother!" I spoke with astonishment, for it was very unlike her to change her mind so suddenly.

"O Lizzie, I can't help it. Perhaps it is selfish and wicked; but I must have my baby. If God had taken him from me, I would try to submit. I know I should not mourn for him so much if he was dead. He has seemed dead, and worse than dead, to me all day. He is mine, and I will have him back."

I knew her too well to utter a word of remonstrance. She was like "a bear robbed of her whelps."

"I will go with you," I said, and in a few minutes we were on our way.

She walked so fast, that I found it impossible, young and strong as I was, to keep pace with her; but before we reached the house she waited for me to come up.

"There; listen," she said. "Don't you hear him crying? That sound has been in my ears all day. Poor baby! He wants me as much as I want him. O Willie! Willie!"

With the utmost attention I could not, at that distance, distinguish a sound; but as we came nearer I heard a child screaming, and very soon knew it to be Willie's voice. We followed the direction of the sound, going round to the side door. Mother knocked once, and, without waiting an instant, opened the door and entered. The carpet was strewn with playthings. A girl sat in a low rocking-chair, with Willie kicking and struggling in her arms, and Mrs. Clair, on her knees before him, vainly endeavoring to pacify the screaming child.

Without a word, mother took him from the arms of his astonished nurse. He stopped crying, looked at her, his blue eyes swimming in tears; then one arm crept round her neck, and the little weary head sank on her shoulder in perfect content. She held him close to her heart, lavishing upon him every tender epithet in a mother's language.

"What does this mean?" said Mrs. Clair, rising quickly to her feet. "You have given the child to me."

"O Mrs. Clair, I want my baby," said my mother. "Indeed I cannot give him up. God would have given him to you, if He had meant you should have him. He gave you your splendid house, and your carriage, and your fine clothes; but He gave me my children, and I cannot part with them till He takes them from me."

"Are you crazy?" said Mrs. Clair.

"I was crazy when I parted with my child," said my mother.

"O, very well," said the lady, bitterly; "take the boy back to your miserable home; and, if he lives to be a man, he will curse his

mother for her selfishness. And don't come to me for help. I have done with you. Go back, and all starve together."

"We shall not starve," said my mother, with great spirit. "I have a willing heart and a strong right arm. I can work for my children; I can die for them, if need be; but I will not part with them till God bids me. And, please God, I shall live to see this baby hand my staff and my stay. Come, Lizzie." She wrapped her shawl about the sleeping boy, and we left the house.

### CHAP. III.

#### THE DOCTOR AND HIS MEDICINE.

"A man in all the world's new fashion planted,  
That bath a mint of phrases in his brain;  
One whom the music of his own tongue  
Doth ravish like enchanting harmony."  
*Shakespeare.*

My mother's determined spirit was roused. She spoke truly when she told Mrs. Clair that she had a willing heart and a strong right arm. And she needed them both. There were years of toil and privation before her; for, with three little hungry mouths to feed, she was left very poor. But she looked at everything from a hopeful point of view.

"We shall have no rent to pay, Lizzie," she said. "The house, poor as it is, is my own; dear father looked out for that. Then we can live very snug. And you know how quick I am with my needle; and I can get plenty of work, and with what you can spare from your wages, we shall do nicely. It is a great comfort to me to think that you will have a pleasant, comfortable home."

"Mother," I said, "do you know much about the Barrys? Frank says they are very proud people."

"Quite likely, my dear. Mrs. Barry belongs to a wealthy, aristocratic family. I know it was thought she married beneath her, because Mr. Barry's father was a mechanic. But it was a love match. He was a fine-looking young man, and she was called the belle of Hartford County. She was very beautiful when she was a girl."

"Mother, she is a beautiful woman now. I don't believe she could ever have been more so. She has the loveliest face I ever saw."

I spoke with girlish enthusiasm; but, looking back through many years, I see no reason to change my opinion, or to doubt the justice of the meed of praise I so freely bestowed upon her. I can see her now as she looked that bright Monday morning when I commenced my pleasant duties under her husband's roof. She was full forty years old, but her complexion was as delicate and transparent as a child's; above the medium height, but so perfectly