

Saturday night came, and Edna asked Alice: "What think you Mr. Hatherton wanted with Hal to-day?"

"No trouble on foot, I hope. Hal is late to-night."

Hal was late. With the insight he had obtained into business done on a larger scale, suggestions of improvements in Mr. Litchfield's small department were constantly occurring to him; and in giving account of the week to the proprietor, that night, he was able in a modest way to impart as much information as a year of experience would have given that gentleman, to whom the business was still comparatively new. And time passed while they talked. Hal sped away at last from too many thanks, while the proprietor of the variety shop entered the little living-room with praises of "that most noble young man."

"Mr. Horace Hatherton has been here to inquire for you this afternoon," said Edna, as her brother entered.

"So he told me."

"Nothing wrong, is there, Hal?" asked Edna, looking up from a pile of compositions she was correcting.

"No and yes. They want me back there. I was surprised, I assure you. I like Mr. Horace, and am sorry I cannot do as he wishes. He says it was all a mistake, my leaving them. He was absent at the time. Says Fred can have a place if he wants, but is not ready by a year or two to take mine."

"Well!"

"He said something about seeing Mr. Wing; but they are not on very good terms just now, and I know he would not ask a favor there. My engagement was unconditional, and stands, of course, and I go to Mr. Wing on Monday morning just the same." And he snapped his finger at Beppo, who accepted the challenge delightedly.

When Hal had said good-night, and little Paul Julian had made a small yellow ball of himself, with his head tucked under his wing, and only flickering light played out from the embers, the sisters sat and took

counsel together, as they had many a time before.

"All things work together for good, do they not Eddy dear?" and Alice laid her cheek on the brown of Edna's hair. "The circles are too large for us to see around, or even to guess their curve, many times; but this one week of Hal's is an illustration in miniature."

"Yes," said Edna, "it is just as father used to say—'wherever we can be of most immediate use, wherever we are most needed, lies the true life path.' And it is in activity that blesses others, that a blessing for self is found. It was in Simon Litchfield's shop that the best situation in the city came and found Hal. It was in seeking another's that he found his own. It is a temporal illustration of a spiritual truth."

"And no more true in this instance of Hal's," rejoined Alice, "than where the circles are so large that, as in many lives, the rewards stretch on into eternity. If only," she added, after a little pause, "everybody should have faith, and do their duty, and just believe all will be right whatever happens." And with a peculiar childlikeness of expression, which was characteristic, she resumed, "For the good Lord does so surely take note of everything, does so surely love every one of his children. I wish they would all believe it in their hearts, Eddy, even if the circle does sometimes reach a great way round."

It was very still there in the home room; white ashes, pure as snowflakes, gathered over the living coals. Beppo moved without the door, where he lay stretched on guard. The measured tick of the clock in the distant corner asserted itself with new distinctness. It were difficult, when the last words had been spoken, to have told which were the loveliest—the divine creations of Raphael, which shone out from where Hal had placed them, star-like among the shadows, or the two living faces of the sisters, so different in feature, yet alike in the soft glow of rapt faith and love.

