

LITTLE ANGEL'S MINISTRY.

(Concluded.)

Morning came, radiant, and calm, and beautiful. She waved her banners of light over a thousand hills, and broke with her glad laugh into countless homes. But to one she came not. No, there was no morning there; only a night of sorrow and remorse, dark and torturing.

Mr. West sat by the bedside of his child, gazing with strained eyes upon the fevered face of the unconscious little sufferer. He had seen his wife hang convulsively over the loved form, and heard her replies to the anxious inquiries of the physician; but to him it was all a meaningless jargon; for though he sometimes lifted his eyes vacantly upon them, his senses were alone open to the incoherent ravings of the delirious child.

"Father," she would murmur, faintly, "how cold it is! Come, it is warm at home! No, not far; only the next street. Come, father! Yes, we will all go together."

So ever and anon she wailed forth her feeble cries, then sank back exhausted on the pillow.

The days dragged wearily by. Still that same wasting form on the bed, still that same immovable figure at her side. At length she awoke from her delirium.

"Dear father."

A light kindled in the dull eyes of Mr. West, and he arose and leaned over the little face. Oh, how soft those eyes were! The man wept like a woman.

"Mary, dear wife!" he cried—"I did not kill her; I have not been her murderer. Do you see her, Mary? She will get well. Oh, Angel!—my little Angel!—you will not go away from us."

The child raised her weak arms, and tried to throw them around his neck.

"No, not yet, father," she said, earnestly.

Again that strange, haunting fear crossed his heart; again his ear caught a sound of singing afar off—"Of such is the kingdom of Heaven." Was it only fancy?

Gradually little Angel grew better.—She had said to her father one evening, as he came home early to tend her—

"Will you sign the pledge once more, father?"

It was all she said; but it was enough. The next day he did so, and at night told her all, lying in his arms—how he was

resolved to try more faithfully, and she might be his blessed means of salvation from intemperance. He had not drunk, he said, since *that* night; how could he thank his little Angel enough for coming to him. She must make haste to get well, and then they would all be so happy together; for who could help him so well as his little daughter?

She looked up, pleased; but there was a grave seriousness in her smile, as she turned away; and he saw that her thoughts were going beyond his words.

"What are you thinking of?" he said.

"I was thinking," she answered, reflectively, "of a verse I learned once."

"And what was it, dear?"

"*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, whence cometh my help.*"

She spoke with such a tone of calm assurance that he had no words to reply. How was it? Had this little one a fountain of help he knew not of?

We said little Angel grew better. At first, she had seemed likely to recover from the debility of fever; but with the March winds came a decided change, and now she hardly left her couch. Mr. West had been so hopeful, that he was completely stricken by grief. Yet as the child lingered, and daily talked, more than had been her wont, of the new home to which she knew she was going, he grew calmer, and allowed himself to be borne along on the tide of her serene happiness. And, as gradually she drew nearer to the Celestial City, the mantle of her decision, energy, and sublime faith, seemed to be falling upon him. We do not say that he never felt inclined to return to the cup. More than once he had almost yielded—almost seized the glittering

poison; but the memory of *that* night—that little hand outstretched—that pleading voice—"Come, father!" had thus far been sufficient to arrest him. People who had known him when young, said that he was beginning to live out the promise of his boy-hood; that the great overwhelming trial that alone would arouse him to a sense of his better self, had come; and that the little Angel of his life was sent to be the ministering angel of his salvation. He felt it so himself. How keenly he began to realize the degradation to which he had been sinking! How fervently could he now thank God for recalling him through his blessed child! Sweet angel!—what a ministry was thine!

His old associates had left off their endeavors to win him back to the clubhouse and saloon; because, from the natural refinement of his mind, he had never mingled much in their low jests and curses, he had never been quite a favorite among them. So now, wondering at, and half awed by his resolute resistance, they left him to better society.

The warm feet of April came over the meadows, and all over the desolate earth her fingers wrote tender epistles of love and promise. There was much of love in her soft breath as she entered the chamber of little Angel; but not of earthly promise. There might be that of Heaven; it was felt so by the attentive watchers at the bedside. Little Angel was dying.

They knew it; but there was no noisy grief; only a reverential silence pervaded the room, as the little feet drew nearer and nearer the dark river's side. Suddenly, she opened her eyes, in the old quick, impulsive way, and fixed them upon her father. Oh, how the light deepened and shone in them!

"Father," she said, tenderly, "you have not broken your pledge this time!"

"No, darling; God has helped me to keep it." The voice of Mr. West quivered with intense anguish.

A flash of triumphant joy irradiated the dying countenance.

"You have found the 'help,' father; you will come off more than conqueror."

Then she closed her eyes, and lay wearily and silent. Presently she unclosed them.

"Let me kiss you and mother," she said; "the night is coming; it is growing dark."

"There shall be no night there," she murmured, brokenly, a moment after—"but the glory of God doth lighten it." And her last faint breath went out with the words:

"This is not death." Mr. Howard had come in, and stood bending reverently over the still radiant face.

"No," said Mrs. West, "not death; it is *life—immortality!*"

Do you doubt, reader, that little Angel's ministry was effectual to the permanent reform of her father? Go to the churchyard of B——, a little village that rises on the banks of the Connecticut, the birth place of Mr. West, and observe