

"Yes, sure."

She went into the house, and was out again in a few minutes with a basket; I set about gathering the coals, thinking with a grateful heart of the good fire we would have for several days with all these coals. The girl, who before would not sweep them up, helped me cheerfully to fill the basket; as we were employed thus an old grey-haired gentleman came up to the door and asked the girl what we were about.

"The coal man spilled these, sir, and this young woman says she has a sick baby and they have no fire, so I gave them to her."

"Poor woman, you are very young to have a baby, what is your husband?"

I was choking, I dared not trust myself to speak loud enough for the old gentleman to hear, but I spoke so as the girl could and she repeated to him "a clerk."

"A clerk! and you obliged to gather coals on the street, poor thing, God help you, 'marry in haste and repent at leisure;' they are a worthless set, the one half of these clerks."

He motioned the girl to the top of the steps where he now stood, and gave her a crown for me; my first impulse was to refuse it, I could not take money, could not bear the thought of being looked upon as a common beggar, taking the coals was a different thing, they were to have been thrown away, and I put her hand containing the crown aside without speaking, as she offered it to me, but she pressed it on me saying:

"Take it, he's very rich, he'll never miss it," and seeing that I still hesitated, added, "when better times come, you can bring it back, it will buy something nice for your sick baby to eat."

The last argument was conclusive, I saw before me the look