

he had hastened to exchange it for one of more outward comfort.

The fire was out, and the grate fall of dusty ashes; the few articles of furniture lay tumbled about in all directions, for little Alice, when left alone, amused herself by playing with them, to the serious injury of the ricketty old things. The wind whistled drearily through the broken panes of glass, and the cold gusts swept shiveringly across the room, causing the solitary candle alternately to flare and flicker, and threaten every moment to leave the forlorn little party in total darkness. The doors of a cupboard swung upon their hinges, and displayed empty shelves.

It was this last discovery which had so exasperated Charles, and driven him to the more inviting back shop of the neighboring public-house.

Miss Gray said a few kind words to the agitated worn wife, and then sat herself resolutely to impart warmth and comfort to the dwelling. She sorted and gathered some pieces of coal from among the ashes, and arranging a few bits of stick underneath, lighted the pile. But a gust of wind blew across the grate, and extinguished the light. Miss Gray hastened to the window, and with Alie's rag doll to fill up one aperture, and a handful of paper for the other, succeeded in repelling the unruly element.

At last the fire burned brightly, and the kettle sang out its cheerful music. Miss Gray glanced at the empty cupboard, and Mary, who had watched her operations admiringly, exclaimed, 'you needna seek for nothin' there, Miss Gray, we finished every bit last night an' I had to leave so early this mornin' for Mrs. Pigot's big washing, that I had no time to get in naething but jist Alie's bit piece. I told Jim to see after things, but to a' appearance he has forgot.' Miss Gray, however, had help for this emergency too, for opening her well known bag, she took from it a small packet of tea, and another of sugar, which she told Mary, Miss Ellis, a lady interested in the

family, had sent her as a New Year's gift. Poor Mary's eyes sparkled with pleasure, and a ray of hope flitted across her very interesting face. Little Alie produced some remains of the bread which she had saved from dinner, and soon a comfortable meal was spread before the little party.

'I'm sae muckle obleeged to you, Miss Gray,' said Mary, 'you're aye jist a sunbeam in this dark weary place, an' Jim an' Johnnie will have a good cup o' tea when they come home. But oh, Miss Gray, its Charlie I'm sae grieved about. He never stops at home noo, an' the boys, too, are sair changed, an' fallen away.'

Miss Gray, who had delayed speaking to Mary until the jaded frame had been warmed and refreshed, and until little Alie had been laid to sleep, now seized her opportunity to press home upon Mary's mind the fact, that the continual absence of herself from home was the one baneful cause of the misery of that home. 'When I think of you, as I first knew you, a happy wife and mother in your pretty house, and contrast the past with your present circumstances, my heart is indeed pained, and I can track your downward course, step by step, from that evil hour when—'

'When what?' interrupted Mary eagerly.

'When you made your first engagement to leave the sphere which God intended you to occupy, and begin the system of going out to wash.'

For the sake of those of our readers who may wish to know something of the happy home of Mary Bell's early married life, we shall briefly lay before them one or two passages of her past history.

Previous to her marriage she lived in service, and by her cleanly habits, obliging disposition and thorough knowledge of laundry work, became a valuable and trustworthy member of various families in which she served. At the age of twenty-three, she was married from Colonel Bruce's house to Charles