

with a new fear, for the conviction that he was slowly starving had fastened itself upon her mind.

"Oh, God!" she cried, clasping her hands in agony, "hast Thou indeed forsaken me? or art Thou still the widow's support, and the friend of the fatherless? I pray Thee, stretch forth Thine hand and save my child."

Tenderly she laid her hand upon his curling locks, and as she did so, her eye fell upon the ring and the letter G, which years before she had placed upon her finger as the seal of her destiny. She gazed at it vacantly, as her mind busied itself with the past. Swiftly the various scenes of her checkered life passed in review before her; all finally terminating in the misery of the present. What was to be done? Willie would soon awake, and she had no bread to appease his hunger. The fire would soon die out, and then both must perish with cold. The ring must be of some value, and she could sell it and obtain enough to preserve them a day or two at the least. It was the last article she possessed that would procure bread. Her heart gave a great, painful throb; but she looked at her child, and her decision was taken.

Wrapping a faded shawl around her emaciated form, she stirred the expiring fire, and closing the door softly behind her, descended into the street, and walked rapidly in the direction of the shop, where, months before, she had disposed of her jewelry. Although the distance was short, she reached her destination benumbed and shivering, and paused for a moment before the glowing grate before making known her errand. An old gentleman enveloped in a great, warm cloak, entered, and advanced directly to the counter.

"I wish to purchase a bracelet, as a New Year's present for my daughter," he said, cheerily.

The shopman placed a case of jewels before him, and then turned to his poorer customer.

"How much will you give me for this ring?" she said, with emotion.

"Its actual value is but trifling," he replied; "it is very old. I will give you one dollar."

"Oh, sir! is it not worth more than that?" she said. "It is very dear to me for its associations, and nothing but the most pressing want would induce me to part with it. I pray you to give me all it is worth."

"I can give no more," he said, dropping it on the counter carelessly.

Mrs. Stanford grasped it, and pressed it to her lips; then she laid it down reverently and extended her hand for the money.

The old gentleman who had come to purchase a bracelet, had listened in silence to this little dialogue between the poor woman and the shopkeeper; but he now moved to her side and said, respectfully:

"You seem very unwilling to part with this ring, madam; will you allow me to examine it?"

"Certainly, sir," said Mrs. Stanford, passing it to him.

The man started as his eyes fell upon the letter G, and he asked, quickly:

"Where did you obtain this?"

"Oh, sir!" said Mary, "it was a gift from my husband, previous to our marriage. I prize it very highly, for he is dead, and it is the last memento I have. But his child is starving, and it must be sold."

"Do you know the meaning of this letter?" he said.

"No, sir, except that my husband told me it was a Masonic emblem, and if I was willing to become the wife of a Freemason, I was to wear it for his sake."

"Well, well," said the old man, "I presume you are in haste to return to your child. I have taken a fancy to this ring, and I will give you more for it than the shopkeeper can afford to give," and placing a ten dollar note in her hand, he deposited the ring in his vest pocket.

"Oh, sir, a thousand thanks, and may heaven bless and reward you," said Mrs. Stanford.

"How far is it to your house?" said the gentleman.

"Only two blocks distant," she replied.

"It is very cold, and I will accompany you, and lend you my cloak," he said, kindly.

Wrapping it carefully around her, he walked by her side in the direction of her poor lodgings.

"I must stop here, and purchase some bread for my child," said Mary.

"Very well; I will wait for you."

In a few moments she returned, and they proceeded.

A single glance at the wretched room served to show to the kind-hearted old man the full extent of Mrs. Stanford's poverty. Willie was awake, and sat shivering upon his miserable bed. His great, hungry eyes lighted as they fell upon the package his mother deposited upon the rickety table, and the only response to her caress was, "bread, mamma; bread!"

The old man, standing by the door, waited to hear no more; and when Mary turned to thank him for his kindness, he had gone, leaving his cloak behind him.

A few moments afterward, Mary opened her door in response to a loud rap, and found a large basket of coal upon the threshold. The person who brought it had already reached the foot of the stairway. But there could be no doubt for whom the coal was designed, and Mrs. Stanford's poor house was soon comfortably warmed.

A half hour later, a supply of provisions arrived in the same mysterious manner, and the loving mother wept and smiled by turns, as the greedy Willie, with hands trembling with excitement, lifted package after package of wholesome food from the basket to the table. At the bottom lay a note which read thus—"Place your trust in God, and He will supply and guard you."

On the following evening, Humanity Lodge, No.—, met in regular communication. The usual business of the evening having been transacted, an old man arose and said:

"My brethren, you all know a Freemason's duty toward the widow and orphan, especially the widow and orphan of a brother. At No. 6, E— street, lives a poor woman, who was forced to encounter the intense cold of yesterday morning, in the effort to procure food for herself and child, and fuel to keep them from freezing. I have placed them above present want by a small supply of provisions and coal; and her landlady, who describes the poor woman as one who is worthy, and has seen better days, will care for her until we can aid her further. I first discovered her in the shop of a Jew, endeavoring to procure money by the sale of a ring engraved with the letter G. The Jew would give her but a