

## TO THE LITTLE PENITENT.

BY RUTH ARGYLE.

Dry thy tears, little one,  
Jesus is near thee,  
If thou wilt only call,  
He'll surely hear thee.

Art thou so grieved for sin?  
Jesus will pardon;  
Do not delay, my child,  
Lest thy heart harden.

Come to thy Saviour now,  
With humble spirit;  
Pleading no good in thee,  
Plead but his merit.

To him thy many sins  
Freely confessing,  
From his own hand receive  
Pardon and blessing.

Strive then to sin no more,  
On Christ depending  
For strength and comfort too,  
Till thy life's ending.

Then shalt thou surely know  
What peace he giveth  
Unto each little child  
Who for him liveth.

Now quickly dry thy tears,  
Since ever near thee  
Jesus, thy risen Lord,  
Waiteth to hear thee.

—Child's Paper.

## MRS. EVERTS' GUESTS.

BY ANNETTE L. NOBLE.

Miss Huldah Parsons sat bolt upright in a great red satin chair in her cousin's front parlor. She had just arrived and asserted herself, as it were. That is, the smart maid who opened the front-door, to find this sallow spinster in a clean gingham dress, lisle thread gloves, and a hand bag—the maid promptly informed her that “the lady of the house” was “engaged.”

“Very likely, but all the same she will see her own cousin, I imagine. You just run up stairs and tell her it is Huldah Parsons, and not the woman with a patent clothespin that you took me for,” and so saying, the newcomer had marched into the parlor to take down a pink fan that hung on the wall, and turn it from an ornamental to a useful purpose.

“I suppose how that girl thinks I am some poor relation come spicing. Nothing short of a gross-grain silk dress impresses such creatures.” “Well, Maria, how have you been this long spell?” she exclaimed aloud, rising to shake hands with an elegant little lady who glided in and greeted her warmly.

“I told our folks yesterday,” continued Huldah, “that I knew you'd get the ‘hypo’ if you were staying here alone this summer, and that I must come and stir you up a little.”

Mrs. Everts sank into a great chair, folded her white hands over her soft black satin dress, and sighed. “I always like to see you Huldah! You are like a breeze from the salt water.”

“Thank you. Well, what is the news with you? How fine your grounds look. I declare, this is a splendid old mansion, isn't it?”

“Yes, it is too big. I wander about the great silent rooms, and sit down and cry from loneliness,” returned the lady, with a plaintive sort of fretfulness, and adding, “I would go away, but I am so tired of every place I have ever seen, and I have not the ambition to try anything new, my health is so delicate.”

“Got a good housekeeper?”

“Yes, a tiresomely perfect one.”

“What seems to all you?”

Leaning languidly back in her chair, Mrs. Everts who was very pretty in a faded way, began her long tale of “nervous prostration,” of “lassitude,” of “palpitations,” of “little appetite.” It was all told so elegantly, with such attention to details, that the narration suggested frequent repetitions.

Huldah Parsons listened calmly, but her secret comment was, “You would be a hearty, happy woman, Maria, if you had something to do and not much to do it with; a shiftless husband, say, and eight or

ten cantankerous children, would cure your ‘lassitude.’ You eat rich food and do no work, take no exercise, and think of yourself from dawn until dark. Ever since your old miserly tyrant of a husband left you this great fortune you have been cultivating misery. You have not got brains enough to strike out and amuse yourself. You are too old to lead the fashion. You are warm-hearted enough to be lonely. You are an object of pity, and I don't envy you one bit. I get more happiness out of my six hundred a year than you out of your thousands. One thing I am glad of, you are pretty amiable, so I propose to take you in hand.”

This was what Huldah thought; what she said was this: “Cousin Maria, I only came to spend the day with you this time, but I am going to ask you a blunt question, and you must answer me sincerely. Do you want me to come and spend the summer with you, or to spend it here in this house? You can go away just the same and leave me.”

“I would like it ever so much, Huldah. Come this very week. I have often urged you to do it, you know,” said her cousin warmly. She enjoyed this energetic woman, who stirred ripples of pleasant excitement in any circle where she dropped.

“You say you have good servants?”

“Yes, too many of them; there is not work enough to go around.”

“Well,” said Huldah, with a peculiar smile, “I will come, and—well, the fact is I want to entertain a few friends this summer, all quiet sort of people. Could they come here, if they never annoyed you? It would only make a little difference to the servants.”

Mrs. Everts looked surprised, perhaps just a trifle chagrined, but Huldah did not or would not notice it, and lunch was just then announced.

The dainty repast seemed wonderfully enjoyable to Huldah; she lingered admiringly over the pretty china, the fresh fruit, the luxury and comfort everywhere abounding. So new seemed her interest in matters that after that Mrs. Everts took her through the house, showing her cool, spacious chambers, lingering in cosy nooks at the end of wide halls where doors opened on balconies with lovely outlooks, or where, in quiet recesses, were books, pictures, and cabinets of curiosities. Then they wandered down and out into the garden, old-fashioned enough in plan to be delightful, with summer-houses, rows of white lilies, strawberry-beds, and rustic seats. Mrs. Everts put a gentle question or two about these “guests” of Huldah's, but learned very little, only when the latter started for her home in the town forty miles away she said, “I shall come again in about a week.”

It was, however, two weeks before Mrs. Everts saw her cousin. One warm afternoon as the lady was peevishly reflecting that her horses ought to be driven, yet she did not want to ride, who should arrive but Cousin Huldah and such a quaint little old couple—French at that. The man had a pale, refined face, a tired droop to his shoulders when he was not talking with them after the manner of his race. Not a speck of dust adhered to his worn coat, and the air with which he led in his sweet, gray-haired little wife was worthy of a court presentation. This soft hair of hers was tucked under an ancient bonnet of well cleaned lace, her dress was very old and simple, but Mrs. Everts liked her manner, half timid, half excited.

When Huldah had them ensconced in one of the cool upper rooms to rest, she returned to her cousin, saying,

“He is really a learned man, and she is the gentlest little body you ever knew. He teaches everything that any pupil ever wants to learn, but it don't pay; so she keeps house on nothing. About all they eat is potato flavored with some sort of green mint, or an egg when they get hungry enough to be reckless. I suppose they have shrivelled their poor foreign stomachs up so they can stand it, but when they were telling me they had not seen the country since they left France seventeen years ago, I felt so sorry. They won't bore you. She sings and embroiders, and is happy as a bird if you give her a kind word. They are Christians—Huguenots.”

“Poor things, we will feast them,” said Mrs. Everts with ready sympathy, hurrying out in what was for her a remarkable way to assure herself that the supper would be abundant and very tempting. In the warm even-

ing they strolled about the perfumed garden and sat there until sunset, Mrs. Everts getting much interested in the Frenchman's stories of his former life and his wife's innocent comments. Next day the horses were well exercised in taking the little party around the beautiful country.

Huldah had invited the couple for a week, but two passed before Mrs. Everts had accomplished certain new purposes. First, she wanted delicately to transfer to the poorer lady a number of her garments, all good but laid aside; then she engaged her to do some silk embroidery at a price that seemed wonderfully large. Last of all, she drove out alone one day and secured ten new scholars for the teacher. Each would pay well for two French lessons a week.

“And you see, Huldah,” she explained, “his car fare here will not be much. I shall insist on his coming here to dinner, because I mean to go on with my own French. In this way I can often send his wife fruit and delicacies.”

Huldah clasped her hands in delight. She heard no more of Mrs. Everts' “nervous prostration” in these days. For a little while they were alone. Then there arrived one morning a lively boy about eight years old and a blind young man. The older was a pupil in the asylum, friendless and poor, who had been ill with pneumonia. Huldah said he needed a “change,” so she nursed and petted him like a mother. He was a musical genius and brought rare tunes out of the grand piano always before shut and silent. The smaller boy had been asked for a special purpose disclosed by Huldah after this fashion:

“Tom is a bright boy, my brother's youngest. There is plenty of good in him. I mean he shall remember almost every bit of this visit as delightful, but—I think likely I shall thrash him soundly before I get through with him.”

Seeing Mrs. Everts' surprise, she explained,

“There are children who positively suffer for one well-conducted whipping when warning, reproof, and exhortation are to them like water on a duck's back. Tom is affected in that way. Before he has been here a week he will richly deserve what he will receive.”

Very kind and very patient was Huldah with Master Tom, and that though she was so caper, until a certain day. Then he waxed so exceeding rebellious and impudent that even in amiable Mrs. Everts' opinion he needed Huldah's attentions. The result was entirely satisfactory. For the scuffling, red-faced, blatant chap, that had to be propped up stairs, kicking all the way with apparently as many legs as a centipede (if a centipede ever kicks), this boy came down polite and meek, so that the coachman told the cook he seemed to have been converted. Tom departed in time with his blind mate, of whom he took excellent care.

A fortnight later, a little English girl with silky white hair and soft blue eyes, appeared among them like some sweet flower that had blossomed over night, and she made no more trouble than a flower. Every day Huldah dressed her in a dainty frock, and Mrs. Everts fancied she was the pet of well-to-do parents. Before she had been in the house a week everybody was won by her pretty ways. She pattered after the servants, telling them funny bits of news about the dog or the cat. She picked roach-beds to dock Mrs. Everts' hair, and tickled her with soft kisses in her neck. Greatly surprised was the lady to learn that Mrs. Molly was motherless and homeless, cared for by charity until she should be old enough to “bind out.”

“She came off a good stock,” sighed Huldah; “I knew her family well—poor thing!”

“Well, you had better keep the child here as long as you stay yourself,” returned Huldah's cousin. “She costs no more than a canary bird.”

So Molly stayed, and filled the house with the silvery echo of her childish voice.

“I suppose, Cousin Maria, it is not very modest in me,” said the spinster a while after that conversation, “but there is a person I would like to invite here, only you will not approve of her, as you have approved of the others, perhaps.”

“Well, I must say, Huldah, that you have chosen all your guests, so far, more for the good they could get, than the pleasure they would give you, but I am satisfied if you are. Who is next?”

“A shop-girl from Grierson's Bazaar.

She may come dressed in the extreme of the fashion, as far as she can attain to it on five dollars a week after paying her board. She will wear ‘dollar-store’ jewellery and giggle a good deal, but I want a chance for long talks with her,” continued Huldah, her face glowing earnest. “She is a good girl, affectionate and sensible as young girls go, but I have been watching, and I fear she will get demoralized. She is only one of the great army of pretty-faced, pure-minded young things that get pushed out early to earn their own living. She stands all day in the foul air of that bazaar, has no healthy exercise, no proper food, learns nothing to make her better or more useful as a woman. There are other good girls there, doubtless, but there are more bad ones, unless their painted faces belie their character. So I am sure the moral atmosphere can not be pure. Jenny has been in my Sunday-school class and she likes me. If I had her in this quiet place I could make her see some things clearly, make her think for the future.”

“But when she went back how would she be bettered?”

“I want her never to go back. If she would overcome her vanity, throw away her cheap finery, buy stout calico dresses, and go into some nice farmer's family to do housework, she could have wholesome food, sweet, clean surroundings, helpful friends, and more real gain of wages in the long run.”

“Have her come to you by all means,” said the lady decidedly.

Jennie came, and appeared modest and attractive, in spite of her earrings, bangles and jet fringes. Huldah devoted herself to this guest persistently, and Mrs. Everts heard them often in earnest debate.

One evening all the cheap jewellery had disappeared; Jenny's eyes looked a little tearful, yet she was unusually tender towards Huldah. The latter when alone with her cousin said,

“It has been a hard struggle, for she had more force of character than I supposed, but she has promised never to go back to that kind of work. When she told me of her temptations and her companions in the shop, I wonder she is still the innocent girl she is. Now what can I do for her, I wonder?”

“I know, Huldah,” exclaimed Mrs. Everts. “I have a farm seven miles from here, on the river, a lovely, quiet place.”

“I know it, Maria,” said Huldah brightly. “Well, my tenant's wife, a good motherly soul, told me only last month that she would be glad to get an American girl to help her. Irish Catholics will not go so far from their church, and the farmers about there are all able to support their own daughters. She would teach Jenny everything good, and give her a real home.”

To say Huldah was happy would faintly express it, and she awoke in Jenny a new impulse towards sensible living. The calico dresses were bought and made, then Jenny entered on her career. As we must leave her now, let it only be added that she stayed on the farm five years, made a capable and comely woman, at the end of that time she married a young farmer and had a home of her own.

Huldah had one or two more guests before the season ended, a poor city missionary's wife and boy, who was working his way through college; then the summer was gone.

“Cousin Huldah,” laughed Mrs. Everts, “you are a manager! You have turned my house into a hotel, or a Home for the Friendless.”

“And I am not a bit ashamed, Maria, though I have done it all at your expense.”

“You are more than welcome. I have enjoyed every one of your queer guests. It has been the most cheerful summer I have had in years.”

“Well, now it is over, and little Molly and I will depart.”

“No! At least not little Molly. I don't say I adopt her, Huldah, but she can stay with me and grow. When she is older I will do well by her in some way. If she has any talent, I will have it cultivated. In the meantime she will be cared for, and the house will be more cheerful. I am better a good deal in health, for some reason, than I was in the spring.”

“I see you are,” said Huldah, well satisfied with the summer's work, in which she had intended to include Cousin Maria, although the latter never thought of that.—

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