

was standing by the south window in the kitchen, looking out upon the white-robed earth all glistening with diamond-like icicles, which hung pendant from the eaves of every house within the range of her vision.

"Yes, I was twelve yesterday, and entirely too old to play with Queen Bess any longer. I am really ashamed to be seen with her in my arms. But, oh dear, if it hadn't been for her, I wouldn't know so much about sewing. Mamma told Aunt Martha last week, that I am just fine with the needle, and that I learned to sew making clothes for Queen Bess."

Happening to glance across the alley, Gracie saw the six little fatherless children hovering over their smoky stove, and shivering in their scant apparel.

"Oh, I know what I'll do," and Gracie almost clapped her hands at the thought. "The garret is just full of clothing. I'll ask mamma to cut out the things, and I'll make up a lot of clothing for those poor children. Their tired mother can hardly earn enough for them to eat, taking in washing, and I know I can keep them from freezing this long, cold winter. I got to be twelve just at the right time."

Then the little girl who was too ancient to play with her doll, went to work with a will, and had a happy time the next two weeks, at the machine, and still happier, when she sent a bundle twice as large as herself across the way, and the happiest of all when she saw the six children snugly clothed out and out, even down to made-over stockings. Then there were hoods and wraps which she had outgrown, and caps which were contributed by Aunt Martha, whose girls had all been boys.

Arthur's Choice.

(By Jasper J. Frewing, in 'The Christian Age'.)

"Shall I make up the fire, mother?"

"Do, please. It's a bitterly cold night, and your father will want thawing when he comes in from the train."

Arthur Fletcher, a straight-limbed, bright-faced, warm-hearted lad of seventeen, took up the copper scuttle, and, after the manner of boys, flung fresh coals into the grate. This done, he leaned against the marble mantel-piece, and, gazing into the fire, dreamed dreams. Being thoughtful beyond his years, he was given to silent meditation. His mother, who sat in a cozy arm-chair knitting, understanding his mood, held her peace. Occasionally she glanced at him with pride and love.

"Mother."

"Yes, my son."

"I want to be a missionary."

It was a moment of supreme joy to the mother, the like of which is only tasted at rare intervals by a few choice souls, and never by the majority. The decision of her son meant the realization of her dearest ambition. Rising from her seat, she kissed him affectionately, saying, "God be praised for His goodness."

The hand of the mother was still upon the shoulder of the son, when in the passage there was the rush of hurrying feet, and the hum of happy voices. The door was thrown suddenly open, and two merry little maidens of nine darted across the room crying, "Artie, come and play with us before we go to bed. You said you would."

The twins seized their big brother by the coat and dragged him off in triumph. So the would-be missionary was compelled to descend from the 'mountain of dreams' to play 'Blind-man's-buff' in the nursery.

When Arthur left Merlin Grammar School he entered his father's office, where he had been working for nearly eighteen months, during which time he had proved that he had a 'head for business.' His life had been singularly sweet and pure. High-spirited, and brimful of fun, as he was, his conduct had never caused his parents a 'needless tear,' and in Christian work he was intelligent, enthusiastic, and sincere.

"My son," said Mr. Fletcher, when he knew of Arthur's decision, "in hope of this day I have toiled in business, that you might be thoroughly equipped for your service. I would rather see you a missionary than 'Chancellor of the Exchequer.'"

"And can I go to college, and may I have a medical training as well?"

"Certainly."

Everything was duly settled, and the hour of Arthur's departure to college had come. The twins clung to him pathetically. Both sobbed.

"Won't you never come back any more to play with us?" cried Madge.

"Oh, yes! lots of times. I will be home again soon, and then you shall have presents from London, and we'll have the very, very best of fun."

The little maids were quieted by the promise, giving the parents an opportunity of saying their last words. Flinging her arms round Arthur's neck, and kissing him passionately, Mrs. Fletcher said:—"Good-bye, my son. Your mother's God bless you, and make you a blessing."

As a student at Craven College, Arthur was fairly successful. A scholarship fell to his share, an honor well-deserved because well earned. Genial and sincere, he became a favorite with his fellows, and obtained of the Professors a 'good report.' His theological course was nearly finished, and arrangements were made for his medical training to commence, when shadows gathered thick and fast about his life. There came a 'mist and a blinding rain,' and his life was never the same again.

The old-established Cantamont Bank suddenly stopped payment, and Mr. Fletcher, like many another upright business man, was dismayed to find himself ruined. After paying his creditors five shillings in the pound, he was left practically penniless, and what was still worse, hopeless. The shock and strain were too much for his sensitive nature and indifferent health. An attack of brain-fever following, proved fatal.

"Arthur," he said, in a moment of consciousness, on the day he died, "clear away the shadow—the reproach—"

Strength failed him; he relapsed into unconsciousness, and never spoke again.

"Whatever He would have me do."

The words rang in the ears of the young man, determining his conduct. The message seemed to be both human and Divine. "Whatever he (father) would have me do," thought Arthur, "means in this case, 'Whatever He (the Christ) would have me do.' If I obey my parent, I shall please my Saviour."

The funeral was over. Aching hearts took up the duties of life again and made their plans, under the abiding consciousness that a light had from the household gone, and that for ever.

"Mother, I have decided to give up the idea of being a missionary."

"Oh, Arthur, don't say that. I will do anything, bear anything, than allow you to give up your dream and my fondest hope. Say you will go."

"I dare not—at least, not yet. Father asked me to clear away the shadow, the reproach from his name, and I must—I will. God's will, not mine, be done."

"It can't be God's will. He can't have altered His mind. We were so sure He said to you, 'Go.'"

"Maybe we mistook our wish for His will. For the present He has shut the door of opportunity against our desire. My duty is clear. I must provide a home for you and the twins, and I must obey dear father. I have prayerfully made up my mind, so please do not refer to the plans I have given up, lest I fail utterly."

So Arthur broke away from his college life, gave up his dream, and manfully faced his circumstances. How much he suffered in making the change, only God knew. Andrew Hunter, a sturdy Scotchman, had been his father's largest creditor, and to him Arthur went for advice.

"Mr. Hunter I think my father's business may be revived—do you?"

"Yes, if you have push, principle, and patience."

"Then give me the chance to try for success, and, by God's help, I will strive to pay my father's debts in full."

His earnestness was tragic; his frame quivered with emotion. The 'Canny Scot' looked searchingly at him for a moment, and then said:—"Try, and I will back you. Make out your plans, and then come to me for advice and help. Good-day."

Arthur 'thanked God, and took courage.' As he left the office, the Scotchman muttered to himself, 'Yon's a plucky lad—he'll do.'

Mr. Fletcher's business was re-started upon

a small scale, for Arthur was determined to make haste slowly, and to feel firm ground under his feet all the way. Early and late he toiled, and gradually won success. Ten years of struggle and self-denial, and then the last creditor was paid. Great was his joy. Rushing to his mother, he cried:—"It's done, thank God, it's done. The shadows are cleared away, and the reproach is wiped out."

"Praise God for this day, and such a son."

Then they sobbed in each other's arms for gladness. Both were satisfied as to God's will, but the whole of it was not yet known by them.

A month later Arthur received a special invitation to dine with Mr. Hunter and a few friends, who proved to be either Mr. Fletcher's creditors or their representatives. When dinner was finished, the host rose, and said in pure English:

Gentlemen, we are met to-night to recognize integrity, such as is the glory of our commerce. Our young friend, Mr. Fletcher, has magnanimously paid his father's debts to the uttermost farthing. We honor him for his sterling pluck and courage. As we all know, the late Mr. Fletcher was suddenly overwhelmed by disaster, for which he was in no way to blame, and we are proud to acknowledge that the son is worthy to bear the name of his God-fearing sire. I have great pleasure in asking him to accept this testimonial, and a cheque for fifty pounds, from his father's creditors, as a proof of the high opinion they have of his character and commercial dealings.

The presentation had taken Arthur completely by surprise. He could only stammer out modestly:—"I thank you, gentlemen, for this unexpected kindness. I—I have simply obeyed my father, and—and—done my duty. To Mr. Hunter I owe—"

"Tush, laddie, sit ye doon."

The Scotchman had pulled the speaker into his seat again.

There was great rejoicing when Arthur related to his mother and sisters what had occurred. Memories had been awakened, and past sorrows revived. Sorrow tempered their joy, and all longed 'for the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that was still.'

"Now God has enabled me to accomplish my purpose in clearing the shadow away from our dear one's name, I want to prosper more than ever, so that, as I cannot go into the Mission Field, I may send another servant. It is the least I can do to show my gratitude to our Heavenly Father."

"So do my son. I see now that we said 'Go,' while God said 'Send.' I wanted my own way, and dictated to God. I have learned always to say, 'If God will.'"

"Arthur—mother—will you send 'us'?"

Madge and her sister stood radiant before them. Until now they had never spoken of the desire they had cherished in their hearts for several years. It had been a sweet secret between the sisters. Tremblingly, yet firmly, their mother answered, "Yes."

And their brother said, "You 'go,' and we will 'send.' The fifty pounds given me by Mr. Hunter shall go towards your expenses, and I will do my utmost to support you. It was once in my heart to go, but not

Boys! Attention!

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