

ing if she had not wished and suggested it, would you?"

'No, sir,' answered Abigail, quickly, wishing to clear herself from any charge of forwardness. Unfortunately she was too shy to add how happy she had been when Miss Ames had made the way seem so simple and so plain.

'Well,' said Deacon Spencer, 'it would be something unprecedented in the annals of this church to receive into membership a child of your age. We have never had an application from one so young; and it seems to me, my child, that you will do well to defer taking this most important step until such time as you are old enough to see it in all its bearings and come to it of your own volition.' The others nodded assent—all but Deacon Peterson. He opened his lips once to speak, but closed them again.

'Yes, sir,' said Abigail, understanding enough of Deacon Spencer's speech to see that they were not ready and willing to take her into 'fellowship.'

'By and by, my child,' and Deacon Spencer patted her brown head—'by and by. Be a good child, and grow in grace as you grow in stature, and one of these days we shall be only too glad to welcome you into our church-membership.'

'Good-bye, my child,' they all said; and Deacon Peterson gave a very kind pressure of her hand as Abigail went softly past him and out of the door.

It was a hot walk back from the church; it seemed hotter and longer now than ever. She turned in at the gate slowly. Aunt Martha was in the dining-room, giving the finishing touches to the rather meager table. 'Well?' she asked.

'I—Abigail began; 'they didn't take me. I wasn't—they thought I was too young—that I'd better wait a while.'

'Humph!' said Miss Martha; 'that's what I thought they'd say, Abigail. Well, it's too bad.' She took a keen look at the dispirited little face. 'Go hang up your hat, Abby, supper's most ready.'

It was rather a silent meal. Abigail's eyes were sad and abstracted, and Miss Martha watched her anxiously. 'Do try to eat, Abigail,' she said; 'I opened the peach-marmalade on purpose, thinking you'd like it; and you haven't touched it.'

'Oh,' said Abigail, taking up her spoon; 'thank you, I didn't think. Somehow I don't feel hungry; but it's very nice.'

Miss Martha reserved her questioning till Abigail's napkin was folded. 'So they thought you were too young, did they?' she said then. 'Well, Abigail, I reckon they're right—only seven years old and small for your age. I don't much wonder they felt that way. Who'd you see, Abigail; all the committee?'

'Yes'm; all the deacons. Dr. Kingsbury wasn't there. I felt kind of scared when I got in and didn't see him. Deacon Spencer said he's gone to Wyoming—his brother's real sick.'

'Humph! That's too bad! So all the deacons was there,' a queer little smile of mingled amusement and pity crossing her face, as a sense of the unequal contest overcame her. She could fancy the little slip of a girl sitting in a high-back chair with her small shoes dangling several inches from the floor, and a half-dozen gray-haired men sitting around to catechise. 'Asked you a lot of questions, didn't they?'

'Yes'm.'

'Could you answer 'em?'

'Not very well; not all of 'em.'

'Humph!' The little figure was so drooping that Aunt Martha longed to comfort her. 'You mustn't feel down-hearted about it, Abby. There's time enough you know—lots of time. Just remember how young you are.'

'Yes'm,' said Abigail again; 'and perhaps when I'm eight they'll take me—I'll be eight in seven months.'

The days slipped away. May finished her course and gave place to her hot-hearted sister. It was three weeks since Abigail made her visit to the church study.

The scarlet berries in Miss Martha's strawberry patch grew larger and sweeter every day. Where was Abigail that she did not come to try them? She had watched the white blossoms so eagerly till all the petals had fallen away and hard, green little knobs formed in their places. Had she forgotten them, now, when they were all ready to drop into her little fingers? Miss Martha came out, in a gingham sun-bonnet, a few times, to pick a saucerful; but she was quick and abrupt about it, never lingering, as Abigail was wont to do. They grew redder, and a darker red with vexation, and finally dropped away, quite soured by the disappointment.

The flowers in Abigail's little garden grew in sweetness. The sweet peas climbed up the trellis, winding their frail tendrils resolutely around the cords that her little fingers had arranged early in the season. They would reach up as near her window as they could. If she were sleeping all this time their sweetness might float in to her, and awake her, and she would come down to them with flying feet. The mignonette, constrained to keep nearer to the brown earth, mingled its delicate perfume with that of its aspiring sister, and the pansies looked velvet-eyed reproach for the absent little girl. Miss Martha visited the garden several times to gather a handful of flowers. She carried them to an upstairs room, where a child lay smiling to receive them. Her thin, small face was growing thinner day by day, and the cough racked her chest more and more; but she never failed to smile as her aunt came to her.

'No vitality,' the doctor had said to Miss Martha, when called two weeks before. 'Going just as her mother went. She has no constitution.'

'Oh!' gasped Miss Martha, 'she is so young—so young; only seven years old, and her mother lived to be twenty-two. Mayn't this be just the result of her cold—such a heavy cold?' And then she dropped her face in her hands, for there was no look in the doctor's eyes to reassure her.

It was several days later that Miss Martha ushered Dr. Kingsbury into the room. Abigail's face grew radiant. 'How is my little girl to-day?' he asked tenderly.

The child tried to raise herself, but she was too weak, and was fain to give it up and content herself with pressing Dr. Kingsbury's kind fingers.

'I just returned yesterday,' he said; 'I heard you were ill, and came to see you without delay.'

'Thank you.' Abigail's smile was bright with pleasure and affection.

'I saw Deacon Spencer yesterday, dear. He told me that you wished to give your little heart publicly to the Saviour at our last communion, but that he and the rest of the committee thought you too young. They felt very kindly toward you, dear; but it seemed to them then that you had better wait a while.'

'You don't think I must wait?' something in his tone made her say.

'No.' Dr. Kingsbury's voice was very low and tender. 'I think you need not wait. I talked with them this morning about you, for I was sure you understood the solemnity of the step you wished to take. I have felt for a long time that you were one of God's little children. Suppose you tell me now, Abigail, why you are so anxious to unite with the church? I believe I know, but I should like to have you tell me.'

'Because'—slowly—'because I love Jesus, and I want to say so to people. I can't say it so very easily; but Miss Ames said it would be telling people that I do love him if I joined the church. Could I—could I, do you think—be taken the next time?'

'At the next communion—in August?' Dr. Kingsbury was silent for a moment. 'Yes, Abigail, if you should come to us then, not one of us would refuse you. But I think, little Abigail, it is better not to wait. If you will rest now, and try to sleep, we will take the Lord's Supper together this afternoon, you and I and Aunt Martha.'

A happy smile came to the thin little face. 'Oh,' she said, 'thank you. I love you—I love you very much.'

'I will bring one of the deacons with me, dear, when I come.'

'Oh,' said Abigail, eagerly, 'could it be—Mr. Peterson?' and Dr. Kingsbury nodded assent.

When the shadows were beginning to lengthen, he returned. Mr. Peterson was with him. Abigail, in her bed by the window, could watch them as they made their way under the locust trees, freighted with clusters of fragrant, creamy blossoms. Miss Martha met them at the door. 'She—she understands,' she said. 'I was afraid to tell her; but she seems to know herself that—that—'

'That she is so soon to go home?'

'Yes, and she is not frightened. I was afraid she would be. She was always such a timid child—afraid to be alone in the dark!' and Miss Martha hid her face.

'And now,' said Dr. Kingsbury, gently, 'she is going where there is no more night.' They went up-stairs to Abigail's room. Dr. Kingsbury and Deacon Peterson each took one of the little thin hands, and pressed it.

'You look bright, Abigail,' said Deacon Peterson—'bright and happy.'

'Yes,' she answered, smiling up at him, 'I am happy.'

'Abigail,' said Dr. Kingsbury, tenderly, 'your aunt says you have not been baptized; so I am going now to put that seal upon your little head. You know what it means, don't you Abigail?'

'Yes,' she said, 'I know—and Aunt Martha has told me too.'

Everything had been made ready. A bowl of water was on the table near the bed. Dr. Kingsbury's finger were dipped into it.

'Since it is your desire thus to confess to your dear Saviour, as you trust and believe he will soon confess you, I do baptize thee, Abigail Lucy, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.'

The blue eyes shut. At the church they knelt when the water touched their foreheads. She could not kneel, but Jesus would understand. She lay very still indeed—so still that Miss Martha put out a startled hand to touch the little fingers. The