

afraid to preach the truth as it looked to him.

The blow fell heavily upon the broken-hearted wife, little ones, and his beloved people. The money was raised for the journey; a dear young brother in the church was chosen to go with his pastor down the Illinois River to St. Louis, there to put him on the Mississippi boat. The wife must keep the home and the children.

Never was there greater love between men and women than in the hearts of this man and his people. Tearful, prayerful, earnest good-byes followed him to the steamer; human love reached out to him all that human speech could utter or eyes express.

'Captain, this man I put in your special care; see that he has every comfort and luxury and attention that money can buy. Friends will meet him at the Baton Rouge landing. I trust him to your love and kindness.'

The young man laid his arms about the sick man, kissed him like a son, held him tightly, and wept:

'Oh, how can we let you go,' he said.

'Don't worry about me. See how beautiful everything is. It will be well either way, dear boy. Be faithful in the work; help my little family to bear this blow, and God go with you.'

The great, handsome steamer left the crowded dock, passed all smaller craft, and steamed out into the wide river. She was loaded with freight and crowded with passengers. Her decks were gay with color and alive with ringing, merry voices. Fashion, wealth, beauty and youth, thronged in those days the fine Mississippi boats. Rich planters with their families, people of ease and indolence, faultless dress, careless habits, extravagance and high living, went up and down the river in the early spring and autumn. 'Gentlemen' gambled and drank and made merry in the lower cabin and bar, and negroes and fine horses were bought and sold as pastime or business.

The captain wrapping his invalid passenger carefully, seated him in the most sheltered and retired corner. Mr. Weston sat with closed eyes as the city passed out of sight. Home was left behind, precious wife and children, beloved helpful comrades and people. All dearer than life. The angel of the Lord stood close beside him, a smile crept over his face, and he said softly:

'Lo, I am with thee alway. Fear not, I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee; the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.'

'Captain, can you tell me anything about the sick gentleman over there? Where did he get on?'

'Nothing particular, only he's put in my care, bound for Baton Rouge; got on at St. Louis, off Illinois river boat. Young man was all broke up to leave him, cried like a boy, and kissed him, as his own son. Consumption plain enough, but he's ready, if anybody ever was! A feller couldn't cuss or swear, with that face on deck.'

Beautiful women sat beside him, groups of children gathered about his chair, lovely, merry girls brought cushions and sat near him, and told him about their gay homes in New Orleans, their people and their customs.

In the clear, gray eyes, almost transparent face, and beautiful smile, they seemed to find a new something in life beyond them, but which possessed their hearts like a strong, full, sweet song, satisfying and wonderful; a courage and strength which was not of the frail body or of the world. He laughed and told them odd stories of western life and a new country, of their songs and colleges and schools. One evening as the

twilight fell he asked the beautiful singer of a famous opera troupe to sing 'Home, Sweet Home,' for him. The deck was crowded, and the sweet voice dropped its refrain like the music of a thousand precious homes. Mr. Weston's face was luminous. In the silence and the night he said, 'Can these dear young people sing for me, I wonder, "Jerusalem, the Golden?" You know that's our—other home.' Many knew it, and sang it as they had never sung it before.

They brought him flowers and books, fruits and luxuries, while in a low voice he told them about his church, his home and his little children.

'Can you, Mr. Weston, truly "rejoice," through this great trial, illness, and separation from all you most love, from your life plans?'

'I can and do "rejoice in the Lord alway," even though he slay me. It is not my plan; it was dark in the valley; but God was there; if I made a mistake and wasted my strength, it was ignorantly done, and Jesus knows it all. But,' he added to the handsome woman who was eager to learn the secret of his joy; 'but, see God's wonderful goodness to me now. What am I, to be so cared for? A poor, plain man, sick and alone, waited upon tenderly by the gay and wealthy, and beautiful and young? See, how the Lord journeys with me. Can I doubt his love? I may never see your faces again in this world, but I want to meet you over there. I bless you for your love to me, a stranger, and shall pray for you. Oh, consecrate your whole lives to the Master, and his great work to the poor and sorrowful and sinful.'

The greatness and the simplicity of the religion of Christ was told in few words and in great weakness, but to the listening throng was the strongest, sweetest story of love they had ever heard. This plain, modest, humble, loving servant of God was grand in his clear, broad vision of life.

'Look here, captain,' said Judge Bradley, 'I hear the sick man leaves to-night. Been quite a drawing card on this trip; holds a reception most of the time; Tom says he's been praying for us poor sinners downstairs, hey.'

'Well, judge, you ought to be saved then! The Lord knows he's one of the "elect" my old mother used to toll about; I'd like to carry him all the year up and down this river! There'd be a change, and the Mississippi River needs one.'

'Has he money? Cloth rather shiny; minister, did you say? Don't look severe enough for a preacher.'

'Yes, judge, a preacher, without money, clothes, home, family or church, for he's dying away off here, alone; but, judge, I'd give a thousand lives like yours and mine to be as happy and joyous as he is now. Going South to get well? Never. Going South—to die.'

It was the last day before the landing at Baton Rouge; Mr. Weston sat waiting the call. Everything had been made easy for him, and his simple luggage was ready.

Judge Bradley stood apart for some time watching the people say good-bye to the sick man. At last he stood by his chair and said earnestly:

'Mr. Weston, I've never given much money to churches or ministers; have never prayed or cared to; I want you to use this cheque for yourself and your family; try to get well; buy everything you need; and if I could pray, I'd ask God to spare you one hundred years to work for him! The world needs such; I am a better man for seeing you; good-by, sir.'

'The Lord loves you Judge Bradley. "I was sick and ye visited me," and for the least of his children he will reward you. Thank

you, Oh, thank you, my good friend. Serve the dear Lord, and let us meet again in heaven if not here.' Such was the response. The captain and Judge Bradley carried Mr. Weston to the waiting carriage; his gray eyes were wet with tears as he shook hands at parting. The great steamer puffed and whistled, and tugged at her ropes, and was gone on her way down the river toward the sea.

'I say captain, that's what I call religion—old time religion! I'm going to try for it, too! Dying away from home, alone, poor and lonely, giving up his life's work, and can smile like that. I call that religion.'

'Judge, they are calling you.'

'I don't care to go down just now.'

MARGARET SPENCER DELANO.

## The Father's Hand.

(By Isabella F. Mayo.)

I'm only an old wife now, sir, and I've time to sit on the strand,

A-watching the boats come in, sir, and the children at play on the sand.

Seventy years, sir—all my days—I have lived beside the sea,

And it has been meat and money and joy and sorrow to me.

Father and husband and boys, sir, there was not a man of them all

Could have lain still in the house, sir, when the winds and the waters call.

My father and husband sleep in the graves of our folks by the shore;

But both of the boys who left me, they never came back any more!

Of, I've been ready to sink, sir, but one thought would keep me afloat;

I learned it, sir, as a little lass, at play in my father's boat.

Do you know, sir, it's often struck me the lesson of life is writ

Plain out in the world around us, if we'd but give our minds to it?

My father hadn't a lad, sir, so he paid the more heed to me;

He would take me with him in summer far out on the open sea,

And he'd let me handle the oar, sir, and pull with my might and main;

But if I'd been left to myself, sir, I'd never have seen home again.

'Pull, little maid!' he would cheer me, but still kept his hand on the oar,

Though sometimes I'd try to turn us to some pretty nook on the shore;

Still straight went the boat to the harbor, and as I grew stronger each day,

I found that the only wisdom was in rowing my father's way.

And I think, sir, that God, our Father, keeps hold of the world just so;

We may strive and struggle our utmost, that we may stronger grow—

Stronger and wiser, and humbler—till at last we can understand

The beauty and peace of his keeping the oar through all life in his hand.

For our Father knows what we really want is labor and rest with him;

So he bears us straight through joy and loss, over discontent and whim;

Though oft it's not till we sit like me, a-watching life's sinking sun,

We feel that our best is our latest prayer, and that is 'Thy will be done!'

--'Sunday at Home.'