

at Esther's hard words, because she felt that the spirit of them was the spirit of commonsense. And then she began to feel keenly the sense of that other loss,—the loss of a hope that Arthur Fitzgerald might have thought kindly of her. Ah, well! The love that poor Miles had held so lightly Esther would cherish; she, at least, was worthy that the precious box of ointment should be broken over her head.

The sisters did not speak again until they reached The Anchor. On the stairs they met a young priest hurrying down. Mary greeted him. He smiled gravely, turned back and went before them to the next landing. He was young, yet in any garb he chose to wear one would know him to be a priest.

"I know you are anxious about little Rose," he said, addressing Mary. "You have no need to be: I have just anointed her; she is going fast."

Tears sprang to Mary's eyes. A step sounded above, and Mr. Bastien joined them.

"Is it so bad as that, Father?" he asked, descending the steps. "The doctor gave us a little hope."

"I know the signs too well," the priest answered. "She will hardly live through the night."

"It is too bad, too bad!" said Bastien, with a touch of such deep feeling that Esther raised her eyes in sympathy; and, as they met his, she dropped them, knowing not why.

"It is not bad: it is good," replied the priest. "Who can tell, except the angels, what that little child has suffered? You all know what her home is: a drunken father, a selfish and scarcely less drunken mother, a brother depraved by the associations of this place—listen to that!"

A volley of oaths, followed by shrieks, expostulations, and more oaths, came from the room nearest them. The priest, slight and almost boyish as he seemed to be, had a dignity, a manner that surprised Bastien into a strangely reverential attitude. The oath and cries were succeeded by a heavy fall and the weeping of children.

The priest walked along the corridor to the door of the room from which the sounds came. He knocked twice, but those within did not hear him, owing to the confusion of sounds. He opened the door. The group without could not hear what he said, but when he ceased there was silence; even the children had suppressed their cries. His face was pale when he came back to the landing.

"And so," he said to Bastien, "you would keep little children in a place like this, and regret their taking off?"

Bastien did not answer.

"They are like lilies here, and many of them grow up pure as the lilies. Their perfume sweetens the life around them; but when God takes them early in their youth they are blessed. This little Rose," he continued, turning to Mary, "is the victim of—an accident. Her father stayed at home with her to-day; her mother came home late, and there was a quarrel. It seems that the woman threw a flat-iron at her husband; it missed him and struck Rose in the temple. There are two Sisters with the little girl; her brother is away, her sister Maggie is in service somewhere out of town, and the rest of the family scattered. It would be well, perhaps, if you would stay a while in the room. The poor child may regain consciousness, and she often spoke affectionately of you, Miss Galligan."

The priest went away with Bastien, who promised to come back, and Mary and Esther ascended to the O'Connors' rooms.

The lamp was lit, and the room was neater than in the morning. In the yellow light, which struggled with the twilight, two Sisters of Charity knelt at the foot of the lounge where little Rose lay. She was very still; a slight, sighing breath at times betokened life. One of the Sisters took the lamp, and, shading it with her hand, held it near the child. Mary and Esther saw the dark spot on the white temple, like a bruise on the petal of a lily. Mary was as quiet as the Sister, but a lump rose in Esther's throat; she could not keep back the tears. And surely it was a place for tears.

The father and mother of this dying child—her protectors and guardians—were in prison; justice had led them thither to await hearing. She was alone,—a feeble bird, her wings beating against the cage of life, which a stronger force than hers was soon to open. Where was the motherly care, the

duo of all little children? Where the father's love, which supports them and makes even their death a passing from one father's arms to those of another? Below was the sound of rattling dice, audible in the sudden hush of other sounds, broken by an occasional oath; outside was heard the sudden rush of the elevated railroad trains, and when they passed The Anchor shook. There in the dim light lay the slender figure, decently covered with white by the kind Sisters, deserted by those who should have cherished it,—a victim to their selfishness and to the un-Christianity of a world which calls itself Christian.

The only glimpses of a purer life that this little child had, had come to her before the lighted altar in the church. The only mother-face she had known had been the benignant face of the Mother of God softly smiling from her shrine; for she had seldom heard her own mother speak without harshness, or gazed at her without a scowl. The little red gown and white apron, the symbols of her daily work, lay on the chair beside the lounge: and her shoes, piteously worn and shaped to the small feet, were on the floor below the chair. It was the sight of these that made Esther burst into sobs.

"Oh, let me go—let me go!" she said. "I must go or my heart will break!"

There was a tear on the eyelashes of the Sister as she lowered the lamp. Esther opened the door and went out into the corridor, in which a light shone. She shook with sobs; she could not repress them. As Bastien came up the stairs again, she turned to him, forgetting all except the scene within.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "surely you, with all your power, can temper this wretchedness! Do it—save some of them—or my heart will break!"

He looked at her streaming eyes, like violets in the rain, and the sweetness and gentleness, the earnestness and the self-forgetfulness of her face, struck responsive chords in his heart.

"Esther," he said, "I can not do it; for money and power can do nothing without that love which made your Christ—as the priest has just said—come down and die for such as the little child within. I am blind; I am helpless; I am almost hopeless. Will you help me? Will you teach me?"

Sudden as his words were, Esther looked into his face—in which she, in a flash, recognized a face she had seen before—and understood him. And so at that moment, in the earthly halo of the suffering of a little child, their two hearts became as one. She, with her tears still falling, put her hand in his, without a question, without a doubt.

"But my Christ must be your Christ," she said.

He bowed his head, answering, "I will try."

They entered the room where Rose lay; and, while the Sisters and Mary and Esther said the prayers for the dying, Bastien murmured softly to himself:

"Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom;
Lead thou me on!"

And when, after he had gone out and come back again, the little child's soul was lifted in the arms of her Guardian Angel to the mercy seat of God, as the dawn struck the window, he heard Esther's clear voice say, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, sinners, now, and at the hour of our death." Bastien answered, "Amen!" and felt a new peace in his heart.

(To be continued.)

Mr. Gladstone's longevity gave occasion to a good story on the occasion of his last speech. There was a great rush to hear the grand old man, and among those present with admission cards was the young son of a well-known member. Appealing, writes a correspondent, to the Speaker's secretary for a good place for the boy, the father said: "I should like him to hear Mr. Gladstone before he dies." Mr. Ponsonby, naturally mistaking the drift of this remark, observed that Mr. Gladstone was in excellent health and strength—not likely to die for a long while yet. "Ah," said the father, "I was not thinking of his dying, that's out of the question. I was thinking of my boy."