

with a white face, dressed in the garb of a Sister, came out.

"Ah, Elizabeth, I am glad you have arrived," she said. "I have just left your mother; she has been crying for you, and—and—she is very ill indeed."

"Oh, I know that, Sister Mary; let me go upstairs now."

Bet pushed past the girl almost rudely, and ascended the dark rickety stairs with a light step. Her head was held very far back, and in her eyes there was a curious mixture of defiance, softness and despair. Two little boys, with the same reddish-brown hair as hers, were playing noisily on the fourth landing. They made a rush at Bet when they saw her, climbed up her like little cats, and half strangled her with their thin half-naked arms.

"Bet, Bet, I say, mother's awful bad. Bet, speak to Nat; he stole my marble, he did. Fie on you, Cap'n; you shouldn't have done it."

"I like that!" shouted the ragged boy addressed as "Cap'n." "You took it from me first, you know you did, Gen'ral."

"If mother's bad, you shouldn't make a noise," said Bet, flinging the two little boys away, with no particular gentleness. "There, of course I'll kiss you, Gen'ral—poor little lad. Go down now and play on the next landing, and keep quiet for the next ten minutes if it's in you."

"Bet," whispered the youngest boy, who was known as "Cap'n," "shall I tell yer what mother did this morning?"

"No, no; I don't want to hear—go downstairs and keep quiet, *do*."

"Oh, yer'll be in such a steaming rage! She burnt yer