

If I could only believe in such a life hereafter as Susie Winthrop does, I would as soon die as not."

"No," said Mr. Ludolph firmly, "your only chance is to get well. There is no use of deceiving ourselves. I have secured the services of the most skilful of physicians, and will see that you have every attention. So try to be as calm as possible, and co-operate with every effort to baffle and banish disease. After all it may be nothing more than a severe cold."

So then in very truth this world was all. In bitterness and dread she realized how slight was her hold upon it. To her healthful body pain was a rare experience, but now her head and every bone ached, and the slightest movement caused increased suffering. But her mental trouble was by far the greatest. Often she murmured to herself—"O that I had been trained to the grossest superstitions, so that I might not look down into this black bottomless gulf that unbelief opens at my feet," and she tossed and moaned most piteously.

Mr. Ludolph returned to the store in an exceedingly worried and anxious state. As he entered he caught Dennis's eager questioning gaze, and a thought struck him:

"Perhaps this young fellow, through his mission school, may know of some good trustworthy woman who would act as nurse," and coming to Dennis he explained what is already known, and then asked if he knew of any one, or could find a suitable person.

Dennis listened eagerly, thought a moment, and then said with a flushed face and in a low tone,

"I think my mother would be willing to come. She has had the small-pox and would not be afraid."

"But would she be willing?"

"I think I could persuade her," said Dennis.

Mr. Ludolph thought a moment, then said:

"I think she would be the one of all others, for she must be very much of a lady, and I would not like to put my daughter in charge of a common, coarse woman. You may rest assured that I would reward her liberally."

"She would not come for money, sir."

"What then?"

Dennis flushed now more deeply than before. He had been speaking for his mother from his own standpoint, and now he hardly knew what to say, for he was not good at evasion. But he told the truth, if not all the truth. "We feel very grateful to you for the means of support, and a chance in life when

the world was very dark. You have since promoted me—"

"Nonsense!" said Ludolph, somewhat touched though, "you have earned every dollar you have received, and your coming has been of advantage to me also. But if your mother will meet this need, should it occur, neither of you will have cause to regret it," and he passed on to his office, but soon after left again and did not return that day.

To Dennis the hours dragged on like years, full of suspense and mental tumult. At times he would bow his head behind his counter, and pray in tearful fervor for the object of his constant thought. The day was rainy and the store empty of customers, for which he was most thankful, as he would have made the poorest of salesmen. At last the hour for closing arrived, and he was left to himself. In the solitude of his own room he once more looked the situation fairly in the face. With his head bowed in his hands he thought, "Last night I thought to tear this love from my heart, but to-night I find that this would be to tear out my heart itself. I cannot do it. It is my strongest conviction that I can no more stop loving her than I can stop living. Unconsciously this love has grown until now it is my master, and it is folly to make any more resolves only to be as weak as water when I least expect it. What shall I do?"

Motionless, unconscious of the lapse of time, he remained hour after hour absorbed in painful thought. Circumstances, reason, *the Bible*, all seemed to frown upon his love, but though it seemed hopeless, his whole nature revolted against the idea of its being wrong.

"It cannot be wrong to love, purely and unselfishly," he muttered; "such love as mine seems to carry its own conviction of right with it—an inner consciousness that seems so strong and certain, as to be beyond argument, beyond everything; and yet if God's Word is against it, I must be wrong, and my heart is misleading me."

Again in unbroken silence an hour passed away. Then the thought struck him—

"It is not contrary to God's action! He so loved the world—unbelievers and all—as to give His best and dearest! Can it be wrong to be God-like?"

"It is not wise, it is not safe," prudence whispered, "to give a worldly, unbelieving spirit the power to influence you that she will have who is first in your heart. What true congeniality can there be? What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, or what part hath he that believeth with an