

one hand, it seems to me He's always ready to give two with the other. 'Tis so with me: the light that streams from His face is better than the brightest sunshine, and it seems to come straight into my heart now. If I can't look upon you, Esther—and yours is the only dear face left to me—I can look upon Christ, and when I look I want nothing more."

After this the two walked on in silence for a while.

The sun had suddenly burst through the clouds which had been hiding him all day, and which, when the two had started on their walk, had made everything look cheerless and gloomy. But now all the landscape was flooded with a golden light, which shed a rich beauty over everything; whilst the sky in the west seemed to have kindled into one great blaze of glory. Esther's eye was caught by it, and as she gazed, the words came into her mind, "At evening time it shall be light." She found herself repeating them half unconsciously, over and over again, "At evening time it shall be light."

But now an abrupt turn in the road brought them within sight of the workhouse. Esther involuntarily slackened her pace. Her aunt noticed it, and immediately guessed the cause.

"You'll try and be happy, Esther, won't you, dear? I dare say you'll miss at first coming home at night, for home is home, and nothing makes up for it; but you'll be with kind people; for I'm sure Mr. and Mrs. Webbe will do everything that's right by you; and you'll get accustomed to it in time."

"But I don't want to get accustomed to being away from you, Aunt Jessie."

"And we'll hope to be together again some day," continued the other. "And now, dear, are we near the door?"

"Yes, Aunt Jessie. Are you tired?"

"Rather. And now kiss me, my darling, and promise to keep a good heart and not fret."

They turned and kissed each other, but neither could speak for a few minutes.

"God bless you, my child, my own Esther," came at length in faltering tones from the sightless woman, as she gently stroked the soft brown tresses of the young girl. "God bless you! I never can tell you all the comfort you've been to me! But I know I don't leave you alone, or I couldn't tell how to bear it."

They reached the door, and then Esther turned away to retrace her steps alone, with an aching pain at her heart, but inwardly repeating, as if some voice within her were saying the words rather than she herself, "At evening time it shall be light." At evening time! Not till then, perhaps—but assuredly then."

Meantime Mrs. Lang found herself left among strangers. She could not see the inquisitive glances turned upon her—her whole appearance being so different from that of most of the inmates of that place, that they appeared astonished at her presence there—she could not look into their faces, and thus find out what sort of people these, her new companions, might be: she could only judge of them by the tones of their voices and the words they spoke; and these seemed not overfull of either kindness or gentleness. She still seemed to feel Esther's arms clinging round her neck; whilst in thought she pictured her taking her solitary way back to the town. Her heart was full, not so much of her own troubles, as of tender solicitude for the child of her love. But she knew where to seek comfort, and she sought and found it.

CHAPTER V.

Whenever Esther could get time to come so far, she paid a visit to the workhouse.

And she seldom came empty-handed, for Mrs. Webbe generally managed to send a little packet of tea, or some other small gift, which she begged Mrs. Lang to accept, with her love.

Thus the months rolled on with nothing special to mark them, until one day Esther presented herself at the workhouse to see her aunt, not alone, but accompanied by a sun-burnt middle-aged man, whose countenance, which had once been and indeed still was good-looking, bore unmistakable marks of suffering, either mental or physical.

Esther seemed in a strange flutter of excitement, and the first words she spoke showed her aunt that she was not like her usual self. The stranger had sat down at once without uttering a sound, but he was gazing with a look of pain and tenderness upon the peaceful quiet face, so pale and calm, so full of love and gentleness. It had aged more than he had expected since he had last seen it. Had he anything to do with the lines which care had left there? However that might be, some deep emotion seemed to stir within him as he gazed, for once or twice he covered his eyes with his hand, whilst his lips seemed to quiver.

"Did I not hear some one come in with you, Esther dear?"

"Oh, aunt, how queer your ears are! Yes, some one did come in with me; some one who has come to see you. Guess who it is, Aunt Jessie. It is some one you would like to see—I mean to meet again."

"I can't tell who it is, for I've no one now besides you, Esther; all the others are gone. Your father was the last; and you know we never heard from him after he went away to Australia when you were a baby; and report came some time afterwards that he was dead. Oh, how often I've wept over him; for he was our only brother, and we had all set such hopes on him!"

"But what if the report shouldn't have been true, auntie?"

Esther had no need to say more. With a little low cry Mrs. Lang rose from her seat with outstretched arms, and the same instant found herself pressed against her brother's heart.

"I've come home, Jessie, to ask to be forgiven."

"Frank, dear Frank!" was all she could say.

"Can you forgive me? Can you and my child here, ever forgive me the wrong I have done you?"

There was no need to ask the question again; the loving faces which looked up into his—the warm kisses which were printed upon his cheek, answered it plainly enough.

Then sitting down beside his sister, with his arm round his daughter, who stood hanging over him, he told his tale, which, however, would be too long for us to relate here.

He wound up by saying, "At last I had a long illness, when I was brought down to death's door; and then it was conscience fastened upon me, and showed me what sort of a life mine had been. It all looked very black, Jessie—so black that I must have despaired if I hadn't at the same time come to see One who once shed His own blood that all my stains might be washed away, and I made pure and white. And now I've come back to tell you, as I've already told my Saviour, how it cuts me to the heart to think of all the past, and the suffering I've caused you and those who have gone away where they are beyond the reach of all the love I would have shown them now to prove my sorrow for the way I behaved to them."

His voice broke down at these words, and Jessie, who had seen one patient sister after another pass away to her rest, with only

words of love upon her lips for the brother who had caused her latter days to be spent in one long struggle with poverty, who had heard the young wife murmur, "Lord, forgive him, and grant us both to meet again." Jessie replied, "They all forgave you; and God himself has made it up to them. He has wiped away all tears from off their faces, and satisfied them with His love."

"God bless you, Jessie, for those words!" said her brother, in faltering tones, as he tried to master his emotion.

"But now," he went on, "I will spend the rest of my life in trying to make what amends I can to you, Jessie, and my own Esther. But how can I ever repay you, sister, for all the care and love you have bestowed upon her? how can I ever thank you for having made her what she is? I never can do it; but the God I've lately learnt to know, He will reward you!"

It was a happy trio that left the workhouse that afternoon; Jessie leaning upon the arm of her brother, whilst Esther clung to her father on the other side. Deep joy shone on all their faces; and as they walked they discussed future plans. For the present they would go to a lodging, until they could look about and meet with a permanent home. Frank Grey's suggestion was, that as he had come back possessed of sufficient capital to start a little business, he should seek for something in which Esther might help him; and so they would all three live together.

The idea met with no opposition from either of the others, who declared that it far exceeded their utmost dreams of happiness. Esther's eyes beamed with joy; whilst her aunt's glad smile and softly uttered words of thankfulness, showed how deep and full was her rejoicing.

And Esther thought of the burst of glory which had caught her eyes that sorrowful evening when she was bringing her aunt to the workhouse; and once more the words came into her mind, "At evening time it shall be light."

THE END.

GIRLS, HELP YOURSELVES.

There is real nobility in the power to help one's self. A genuine girl, in these days, ought to be above the accidents of changing circumstances. There may be foolish butterfly girls, who care supremely for dress and admiration, and who float on the sunlit current of to-day, as though no storm could ever come. To them a word of advice and warning may seem as an idle tale. To the girl whose bright eyes have at all occupied themselves in looking about her, and seeing the events which befall people every day, it will appear otherwise. You may be living now in elegance and luxury, the petted darling of your father's spacious house, without a visible thorn or brier of care to prick you, but it may not be long before you are called on to face misfortune. The problem of how to live may stare you in the face, as it has stared others. If you are rich and well to do, you have a great advantage over those whose limited means gives them no power of choice. The destruction of the poor is their poverty. A poor girl cannot look about her and say, "There is this work which invites me, which I would like, which is congenial. I will take time and prepare myself to enter upon it." She must do what first comes to hand, whether or not it be agreeable, and be content with her wages. On the other hand, the young woman who is comfortably and pleasantly established can take her time and arm herself against the day of necessity by the acquiring of some useful art, trade, or accomplishment.