

It was almost Easter. Good Friday had come and gone. On Saturday afternoon the young people were busy in decorating the church with potted plants, and wreaths of flowers and vines. The Sunday-school children came in with their hands full of lilies and hycinthus. Never had there been so lavish a profusion of flowers; nor had every one—from the oldest to the youngest—been so happily taken up with the gladness of the time. The choir had prepared an elaborate service. The Easter this year was to be signalized by special thank-offerings for the goodness of God in leading his Church to larger work, and in giving it a blessed season of revival.

The last rehearsal was to be held on Saturday evening. Ruth Mason, who for a few days had gone out-doors, trying to accustom herself to longer distances, with the aid of her ivory-tipped crutch, lingered till the finishing touches were given to the flowers, and was about to go home, when a voice at her elbow said:—

"Miss Mason, may I present myself? We are neighbours, I believe. I am Elsie Danforth. I have brought my only flower, but I fear there is no room for it. I could not get away sooner. Dear little Blanche has been ill all day. Her throat is sore, and she wouldn't let sister out of her sight."

Ruth responded heartily to Elsie's greeting, and exclaimed in admiration when she saw what Elsie had brought. It was a rare and superb orchid, in magnificent bloom—the blossoms, a mingling of pure white and delicate lilac and rose, looked like birds poised for flight. The whole lovely thing was ethereal, angelic, a very flower of paradise.

"There is only one place fit for this exquisite gem of a flower, Miss Danforth. Just here, on the desk, there is a fitting niche." And Ruth indicated the precise spot where she thought it might add beauty to the already beauty-crowded sanctuary.

"Are you going back?" inquired Ruth. "Because, if so, we might drive together. My friend, Mrs. Randolph, has sent word that her carriage will presently return for me."

"If Mr. Jameson will kindly let me try my solo now, and will excuse me from the rehearsal this evening, as we have had so much practice, I will be only too glad to avail myself of your kind offer," said Elsie. "I don't like leaving Blanche with only my father, and Mammy must come with me, of course, if I return this evening."

The chorister and organist both being present they acceded to Miss Danforth's request, and Ruth, ensconcing herself comfortably in a corner of the pastor's square pew, listened, and felt borne to heaven's very doors as the accents of the Easter-song fell upon her ear, and its cadences floated through the fretted aisles, and soared upward to the lofty ceiling:—

"Christ hath risen! Rise, my soul!
Look beyond the bounds of time!
Out of prison, fair and whole,
Thou shalt reach the happy clime
Where no sorrow dims the eyes;
Where no tears shall ever fall;
Where no morrow's dull surprise
Over love shall cast a pall.
Christ hath risen! Therefore rise,
Soul, and enter Paradise!"

The two girls drove home together, and exchanged a loving good-night. To both had come that sweet experience of being mutually attracted, which is often the pleasant precursor of womanly friendship. And who shall say that—their dear ones gone before—the mothers who in heaven had not forgotten to love the children they left behind here on the earth, did not look down and see with

pleasure this beginning of association on the part of Ruth and Elsie?

Ruth was ready betimes for church on Easter morning, and Mrs. Hartwell was tying her own bonnet strings, when there came a quick peal at the door-bell, and the wizened old Mammy, with a frightened face, handed in a hastily-scribbled note, and a roll of music.

"Please give it to the young lady," she said, and was gone "like a flash," said Irish Katy, who by no means approved of persons of Mammy's colour.

"Bad 'cess to her! Comin' to the house like a shadow on Easter mornin'," muttered Katy, as she gingerly carried the note to Miss Ruth's room.

It ran as follows:—

"MY DEAR MISS MASON,—We are in a world of perplexity. Blanche has scarlet fever. My father forbids my going to church, and so does the doctor. And what is to become of the Easter solo? and the chorus, too, with no leading soprano? I am in despair. Will you explain the situation to Mr. Jameson? And pray for us, we are in so much trouble.

ELSIE DANFORTH."

Now, to supply the place of a soprano at a moment's notice, when everyone is engaged, is among the impossibilities. Ruth's mind reviewed the difficulties, saw the consternation of the choir, the chagrin of the chorister, the disappointment of the congregation.

Only one course seemed open to her. She had heard Miss Danforth sing her solo so many times that she knew it by heart herself; but would she—ought she to dare to take her neighbour's place? Hurriedly consulting aunty, that lady said:—

"My darling, if you can. You know what dear mamma would have said. She would have bidden you, try."

The dismay visible on the faces in the organ-gallery was quite enough to have taken the heart—the courage—out of a self-conscious girl; but Ruth Mason was not very much hampered by self-consciousness at any time, and in this case she was buoyed up by a sense of trying to help another in an extremity.

Less critical than sympathetic, the great congregation, joined in the music that day, and those who noticed—as they could not help doing—that a novice had taken the leading part, felt somehow the glow of a new emotion, for Ruth Mason forgot herself, and was joining in the song that is forever going on above, of which our chants and anthems are only bits and broken snatches.

"Love divine, all love excelling," sang the choir, the girl's voice—that sorrow had so long hushed—leading the rest; and to many a comforted listener came the thought anew that in heaven the ransomed host—saved by love divine—were singing "Alleluia."

"The flowers are more beautiful this year than ever," said Nellie Randolph; "and that orchid on the pulpit! it looked as if it were alive, and wanted to spread its wings. What a lovely Easter we're having, and how Ruth Mason sang!"

"I'm glad she's getting over her mother's death," said Mrs. Kingman, a kind-hearted but matter-of-fact woman, who could not understand why people should grieve, as many do, when their friends are gone, and there's nothing more to be done.

"Ruth will never get over that, I think," said Aunt Hattie, to whom the remark had been addressed. "But it has made her stronger, and, by-and-by, it will make her happier as life goes on, that the best of it is in the other land, waiting till she is done with this one."

"She's not so lame, I see," pursued the literal friend.

"On, no! Ruth will recover from that trouble," answered Aunt Harriet, cheerfully.

When Easter was long past, little Blanche well again, and Elsie restored to the place in the choir which Ruth had kept for her through eight or nine Sundays, Mammy one day came in, bearing an orchid even more beautiful and bird-like than the one that had gone to church, as a gift from Elsie's father, who had a passion for orchids, and cultivated them with rare success. Never was there such a beauty. It fairly glorified the little room as it stood in the west window, where Ruth still loved to sit. But since Easter brought to her its blessing, and the joy of getting out of herself and into a heavenly atmosphere, she looks with other eyes at the white, glimmering stone in the distance on her mother's grave. She can say now, from a full heart:—

"I believe in the resurrection of the dead."

May such an Easter blessing be yours, wherever you are, if the year has brought you trouble or grief.

"Christ hath risen! Soul be strong!
Gird thee for the battle's brunt.
Christ hath risen! Lift the song;
Christ is marching in the front.
Christ hath risen! Angels raise
Shouts of victory above!
Christ hath risen! Endless days
We shall sing his matchless love.
Christ hath risen! Through the skies
We, with him, to life shall rise!"

Answer to Vision Lesson in Home and School of January 25th.

BY FANNIE I. KNOX.

St. JOHN was in Patmos, an isle far away,
He was in the spirit on God's holy day;
This Apostle was exiled for preaching God's word
And telling mankind of a crucified Lord.

In Divine revelation the story is found,
How he saw this great vision and fell to the ground;
Before that bright being, ah! who could but fall?
It was the Redeemer and Saviour of all.

Who once left his glory in heaven and trod
This earth, to redeem us and bring us to God:
Mid seven golden candlesticks he did stand,
And seven stars gazing held in his right hand.

Then he speaks and explains the vision given
"The candlesticks here are the churches seven,
And the stars in my hand are their angels bright,
Loving messages now to the churches write."

Then to every church a message he sends,
Reproves, encourages, and again commends;
"I know thy works" to every one he said,
From my all-seeing eye there is nothing hid.

"Be watchful, be prayerful, hold fast and be strong,
Till I come again," I will not tarry long;
"Then all who overcome them with me shall reign
Behold I come quickly, even so Lord, amen."

Harold, Oct.

Dr. KITTO and other eminent writers favour the opinion that Luke was an educated Greek slave, who had, perhaps, received his freedom in consideration of valuable services rendered his master. "The higher class of Romans were averse to the practice of medicine, which they left rather to their freedmen." After he had obtained his freedom he returned to Antioch, in Syria, and continued there the practice of his profession. Here he probably became acquainted with St. Paul, and was converted under his ministry. He probably became the travelling companion of the great apostle because of the latter's feeble health. His medical skill was useful in gaining an opening for the gospel, as we now find it the case in modern missions among the heathen.—Selected.