

Discouraged.

BY REV. E. A. RAND.

SHE uttered this one word, and then with a sigh of relief left the quaint little gothic church-porch. It was Miss Amy Marvin, teacher of "Class Fifteen" in the Sunday-school of Bethesda Church. Amy had been listening to an enthusiastic address by the superintendent of the school, Mr. Whittier, upon "The Praiseworthy Teacher." "I will describe an actual case," he said, for he disclaimed all intention to set up any flawless model, after which would come a hopeless attempt in carving out a copy. He only claimed to block out and shape what any conscientious teacher might expect to be, as illustrated by a case he knew. Unconsciously, in the increasing warmth of a good purpose, he made his statue more elaborate than he intended. He held up what might have been termed "The Model Teacher." He sent Amy Marvin home in a discouraged mood.

"There!" she exclaimed, "I do try to do all he spoke about. 'Teachers' meetings?'—yes, I attend them. 'Preparation of the lesson?'—yes, I try to have it ready. 'Calling on scholars?'—yes, I try to call at their homes. 'Attention to sick scholars?'—yes, I took Johnny Dove a soft blanket for his nest in bed last evening. 'Prompt attendance?'—yes, Mr. Whittier, I try to be here in school, and sharp on the hour, as you say. And I have tried—yes, I tried, though it did not seem to amount to much, to say something spiritually helpful to my class. But, oh, dear! I am so lacking! I can't be like that teacher he described. There! when I get home I will ask Aunt Eliza about it." "Aunt Eliza" was one of those blessed old family treasures, circulating from household to household, dealing out counsel to the perplexed, comfort to the sick, and help in general to all needing it. For every dark corner she had a lamp, not an ornamental one on a parlor table, never filled and used, but one ever ready for illumination. She was now visiting at Amy's house. Amy confided to her the story of her discouragement.

"Do you want to know, Amy, what I would do?" asked Aunt Eliza, turning toward Amy a round, rosy face, irradiated with the spirit of wisdom and benevolence. "What would I do about it? I would just keep a-doing."

"Well, I will!" declared Amy, very resolutely. "I will do one thing right off. I will go down to Will Stover's and find out why he is absent. Why, the boy may be sick!"

No, Will Stover was not sick, at least physically. In his soul he felt weak and bruised, as if he were in the midst of a fight where hard blows were given on every side. Sitting on the doorstep of his home—only a back-alley retreat—he bowed his head and rested it on his hands, while the battle went forward, or in his case, backward. Suddenly a thin, querulous voice, inside the rough doorway, shrieked out, "Will! Will! I want you to split me some wood before you go."

"O dear!" he groaned, "I don't believe there is any wood. Wish we could burn air! That would be cheap; and then we should burn, for everything would be on fire, and I don't much care if it were."

"William! where's William?" thick, husky tones were asking. Their gaunt, emaciated owner then said, "I wonder if William brought me that medicine."

It was Will's sick father.

"There's another way." Will inwardly groaned. "It gets worse and worse, and I have a great mind to—"

He did not finish the sentence. It was a part of the hard battle that was going on, the fight where wrong was sorely trampling down the right. He went into the house, but soon returned, and sitting down again, pulled out his pocket-book. He was opening it when the sound of a step checked him. He looked up, blushed, and said: "Why—why—Miss Marvin! come in; though you will take us as you find us, I know."

"Oh, of course," said his teacher. "Let me go in where your father and mother are."

When she came out with him she said: "I have some medicine at home that will do nicely for your father, and if you don't mind it, I would like to give you some wood."

"Oh, thank you! I—I—" His eyes glowed, his voice hesitated. He straightened as if a hand smiting sore had been lifted, and his soul was off the battle-ground.

"You don't know what you have kept me from," he said.

"What?" she asked, not understanding what he meant. "If I have helped you any I am very glad of it."

He could not speak at first. He said finally: "Thank you! You will see me next Sunday."

She went away wondering at his emotion. He seized his cap, hurried out into the street, went to an express office and paid a bill, and then ran to the store where he worked. It was the quick step of a victorious, happy soul. He had been asked on his way back from an errand home to stop at an express office, and with a sum of money entrusted to him pay a bill for his employers. He fought down a temptation to delay his payment, and use a part of the money for as much needed at home, returning it as soon as possible. A man or boy fighting down such a temptation fights it on the slippery edge of a great risk.

"Oh, I didn't touch it, thank God!" he now said. "Teacher don't know" (she never knew exactly in what) "that her visit helped me to do right."

Two days later her superintendent accosted her:—

"Heard you spoken of pleasantly at the store yesterday," he said. "One of the boys in our store came to me and said: 'Sorry I broke something just now, sir, but I will replace it. Hope you will excuse it.' 'Well, I like you to be honest,' I said. 'Always be frank and honest, and tell me if anything has gone wrong.'"