

The Daughter's Grief.

Just six years to-night—and re-membered too well,
Since the blackest of shadows has been my path felt.
A life that was dear to my own me went out
In the terror of fear, in the anguish of doubt!

They brought father home from the gilded saloon,
And said he had suddenly fallen in a swoon.
We watched by his bedside, my mother and I,
And sorrowed and prayed, as the hours went by.

Dear mother, sweet mother!—not till then did I know
How many long nights she had watched by him so,
Not till then did I know the dark secret which lay
In the cup where the serpent is lurking away.

My father was kindly, and noble, and good,
And never before had my heart understood
How the club-room could draw him from mother and me,
When we were so happy together, we three.

What lightning-revealings there came that dread night!
They filled my whole being with anguish and fright—
Their memories still are burning deep in my brain.
O God, must I bear evermore their keen pain?

My father awoke, and his mournful brown eyes
Looked into my own with a tender surprise,
I covered with kisses his beautiful face,
He whispered—how fondly—"My dear little Grace!"

Then throwing his arms round my mother, he cried;
"Oh, faithful and true, still here at my side!"
What self-reproach then, and what penitent tears,
Confession of weakness, revealing of fears!

He sank on his pillow—a pitiful sight—
No hope in the future, or faint gleam of light;
No comfort or solace his soul found in prayer,
But deeper and deeper it sank in despair.

Then suddenly over his features there fell
The silent precursor, life's closing to tell.
"I'm dying," he whispered, "I'm dying I know,"
"And my soul! oh, my soul! tell me, where will it go?"

My mother assured him of welcome in heaven,
Said even the thief on the cross was forgiven,
That Christ never turned from a penitent's prayer—
He answered: "No drunkard can ever go there!"

He spoke nevermore, and his last uttered thought
In the overcharged brain of my poor mother wrought
A ruin most fearful! And I—how bereft!
But God and his promise were still to me left.

Where now is my mother? Ah me, dare I tell?
She spends these long years in a maniac's cell.
And this strain she weaves in her songs, inorn and even,
"No drunkard inherits the kingdom of heaven."

O fathers, I plead for your dear ones to-night;
Oh, shield their glad hearts from all risk of such blight.
By the grief I have borne, by my mother's dark life,
I plead for each daughter, I plead for each wife.

Sister Elsie's Song.

BY EDITH CORNFORTH.

SISTER LINTHORPE'S eyes were sparkling with happiness, though she spent her time in nursing the poor sufferers at the Ophthalmic Hospital. Only an hour ago she had been busy bathing blind eyes, or bandaging suffering ones, but now she was cosily shut up in her own room, arranging the trimmest of trim caps, the neatest of neat aprons, and tying such knowing little knots of heliotrope ribbon at her wrists, as were to work sad havoc in the heart of the house surgeon.

The wards were shaded for the night, and many of the inmates already half asleep. Downstairs, in the board-room, a company of men in evening dress, and ladies in rich attire, had assembled; while downstairs still lower, in the operation-room, the gas was blazing, and the musicians were putting out their music. It was the night of the annual concert given in honour of the sisters and nurses of the Ophthalmic Hospital, and a large company was expected.

Sister Elsie Linthorpe had been detained by a little patient named Tim. He was very, very ill,

was little Tim; and he had taken a special fancy to the lovely young Scotchwoman, whose light hand ministered so tenderly to his needs. A year before, fever had almost robbed him of his sight; and when he was first carried into her ward, and the doctors gathered round his bed, they had been unanimous in their opinion that little Tim would never see again in this world.

Sister Elsie had been so sorry. She loved the poor yellow-haired mite of a boy, and with gentlest hand and kindest tone had obeyed his frequent calls for help. Only to-night it was different, because this was her treat, and she was supposed to have a holiday. So she sat before her glass, arranging her wilful black hair, and thinking to herself that a conscientious and skilful hospital nurse could not possibly help it even if she had a lover. And then she thought of the grave house-surgeon with the calm gray eyes and the Byronic throat and she sighed softly to herself, and wished that the lady-superintendent had allowed her to wear a fashionable dress just for once, instead of the tiresome old black thing which showed her pretty high-heeled shoes so plainly.

Before going down stairs, where already the music had begun, she peeped into her own ward, and noticed with pain that little Tim was breathing very heavily. Softly she stepped up to his bed side, and, glancing down into the poor, childish face, was startled to see that it was the beginning of the end. Her experienced eye saw that he would not live till morning. The lonely child had set foot in the dark valley. Her favourite patient was dying.

Noiselessly she slipped from the ward, rapidly gained the music-room, and looked in on the inviting scene. She soon caught sight of the face she wished to see. The house-surgeon was seated beside another sister, with blue bows, and blue eyes. Very likely her own chance of happiness would escape her that night, unless she fulfilled her promise, and sang—in her rich, pure contralto—the song he wished her to sing. But what about poor little Tim, upstairs, in his solitary death pang? How would her sweet notes sound in the ears of the Lord Jesus, who would know of her selfishness? Better, far better, the eloquence of silence than song at the expense of the dying child.

So she only gave one tear-dimmed look into the powerful face of the young doctor, who had no idea that she was there outside in the cold, and then ran back in all her bravery to little Tim.

This time he heard her welcome step, and feebly moaned her name. It sounded very piteous from the thin, blue lips.

"Sister," he whispered, "shall I see the dear Lord Jesus when he touches my eyes, and I wake up in heaven? Oh, this darkness is terrible—it gets blacker and blacker."

Oh! yes, my darling; you will see quite clearly there. You will see what we all so long to see—the face of the Saviour, who died for us all."

"I am cold—cold—cold, so very cold; but I can hear as I never did before. Won't you sing the song that you sang on Sunday, dear Sister Elsie? And hold me tight, very tight in your arms, for I love you—and I feel afraid."

So she lifted him out of bed, and laid his beaded brow on her bosom, and bending caressingly over the dulling ear, she sang the song which somebody downstairs had hoped to listen to:—

"I hear thee speak of a better land,
Thou callest its children a happy band."

and on to the last verse, which is this:—

"Eye hath not seen it, my gentle boy!
Ear hath not heard its deep songs of joy!
Dreams cannot picture a world so fair—

Sorrow and death may not enter there;
Time doth breathe on its faceless bloom,
Far beyond the clouds, and beyond the tomb—
It is there, it is there, my child!"

Very softly the rich, full notes stole over the dimly-lit ward, where the swinging lamp revealed a nurse and her sick charge to the house surgeon, who had slipped away from the concert to see how Tim was getting on, for his case was evidently critical.

And standing there—in his turn unobserved—the doctor's shrewd eye and perceptive brain appreciated to the full Sister Linthorpe's sacrifice, and his love for her deepened as it might never have done if he had heard his favourite song in the full blaze of the gas, and amid the plaudits of a crowd.

Faintly the last tones died away, and little Tim gave no sign, but rested peacefully on the gentle, warmly throbbing bosom. How quiet he was! How faintly he breathed! A fuller breath—a deep, long sigh—a pause—and little Tim had escaped from the encircling arms of his nurse, and at last looked into the eyes of the Great Healer, who has given him sight, and opened to his enraptured gaze the glory of the better land, where

"Around the throne of God in Heaven
Thousands of children stand"

And one of that great band of happy children, we say good bye to little Tim, who will never, never suffer or be afraid again. . . . "Elsie," said the doctor gently, "the child is dead. Let me lay him on his bed."

"Elsie!"—not Sister, or Nurse,—"Elsie!"

And after that it was always "Elsie" when they were alone together.

The Ophthalmic Hospital still has its noble house-surgeon and its brave sisters and nurses, and, alas! its suffering patients; but the house-surgeon, and Sister Elsie Linthorpe, left it together some time ago, for a different sphere of service and healing. And after they left it, they were married; for even in this suffering and work-a-day world strange dreams of hope and happiness will come; and they, I am glad to say, declare that the reality of their happiness together far exceeds their fondest hopes. Only I warn you, that they both belong to the good and useful class; if you do not, you have no prospect of a like success.—S. S. Record.

Keep in the Middle.

CHILDREN, did you ever play that the street was poison and the sidewalk safe, and then try how long you could walk on the curbstone without stepping into the gutter; and did you ever see a boy or girl who did not step off at once in going home from school? Just when you feel sure of your footing and begin to run you lose your balance, and off goes one foot on the ground below.

If the street really were poison you would think it very silly to walk on the edge of the sidewalk instead of safely in the middle; but I have seen children, and grown people too, walking just as near to a line as they could without quite touching it. How long do you think they can do so before they lose their balance and step over the boundary, staining the white souls that God gave them? Why just about as long as the children could keep from slipping off the curbstone.

It is only a question of time. Take care; do not walk too near the edge.

HAPPY are they who in a crowd of business do not lose something of the spirituality of their minds, and of the composure and sweetness of their tempers.