

## FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

## INTO THE SHADOW.

BY F. BURGE GRISWOLD.

Out of the Christmas glory,  
And bright Epiphany,  
Into the Lenten shadow,  
With sadness, enter we.

All the long way before us,  
We see the deepening gloom,  
Stretching still on, and onward,  
Till lost in Jesus' tomb.

Behold the hallowed footprints  
Who tread'd this w-ay length,  
Must plant his feet within them,  
And go from strength to strength.

Not only will it lead him  
To Calvary's dark night,  
But he shall reach the blessings  
Of the glad Easter light.

—Living Church.

## TWO HELPLESS LITTLE HANDS.

A CHILD-STORY.

By the Author of "Doddlekins."

## I.

One of our greatest writers has said that a mother looks upon her child as "the centre and poise of the universe." Certainly to his widowed mother's heart the centre of the universe was the sunny-haired boy who walked the lanes of Laborde, tugging his nurse by the hand like a sturdy little man. The "foreign lady," as they called her, spoke often with the peasant folk; they knew well her fair face and her English accent; but she only smiled for the smile of her child.

"Oh! but he is beautiful," the brown-skinned woman said, "and no wonder he is well-beloved by Madame. He is white as milk, and pink as a wild rose; and I did not know there was such bright hair in the world."

The villagers admired Trot with awe when he went abroad in his cream-colored frock and his huge hat. "M'sieu Trotte" was saluted with broad smiles and *bonjours* from weather-beaten faces. The woman thought him a little angel, and praised the foreign lady for making his mourning garb be white. The men who were more practical, said, "He will be an English milord: they feed their young milords upon *bifteks*; see how he strikes from the shoulder when the *bonne* will not do as he tells her!"

The maid and the fractions little boy were on the grass near the honeysuckle hedge, at the side of the lane, when a rattle and a roar of voices sounded round the bend of the road, and the miller's new colt dashed into view among a cloud of white dust, with a crowd of men in pursuit, trying to seize upon the tailboard of the empty cart. The crowd alone was enough to frighten the most staid old horse into a gallop; and the young colt took a fresh run, and with his rattling cart swinging to one side and the other, rushed down the long, steep descent of the lane. The nurse and the child had run hither and thither, and at the last moment the child had escaped, and stood alone in the middle of the road with a bewildered scream. Then the horse and the cloud of dust came down upon him like a whirlwind; but one man had out-distanced the rest, flying to the rescue. He clung to the horse's head; the runaway and the vehicle at the last moment, with one sudden swerve, ran nearly against the hedge, and left the white living speck safe upon the road. When the crowd trooped near, and the dust was clearing and the horse was got out of sight, the rescuer, who had been nearly flung under the wheel, got up from the roadside, rubbed his knees, and disappeared among the rest. The great thing was to catch Gabriel Dubois' horse, and that rash young fellow had only sent him along by the hedge in a reckless manner that nearly cost his own life. So the rash young fellow in question went his own way without hearing any one say "Well done!"

The same day that is a feast of rejoicing for one is the climax of sorrow for some other heart. While the mother was clinging to her rescued child, another woman was grieving for her son.

It was a thatched cottage in a distant village—this home of desolation. One youth had come in from the fields without one word to say. The children were eating their brown bread in the sunset on the doorstep, with only whispers between them. The eldest son, the best helping hand, the most faithful heart, had drawn a bad number at the Mairie; he belonged to the country—he was lost to his home.

"It is well for the rich," the poor woman grumbled, while her tears rolled down her wrinkled face, as she busied herself about the cottage supper. "They can pay and buy their children back. There's nothing in the world that money cannot do—but my poor Jean—"

"Ah! mother, don't cry—see, it makes Babette cry too!" so the brawny second son said, leaning over his soup at the table. "Raoul from the Red Farm is gone instead of Monsieur le Vicomte's son at the Chateau. Perhaps Raoul and our Jean will be together—who knows?"

"They may," murmured the woman desperately, wiping her tears away with the hard back of her hand. "They may meet—they may both be killed."

Poor Babette, who was only six years old, cried on with patient littlesniffs in a smothered kind of way, while Marie, the elder girl, was putting her to bed in the back room—a mere cranny behind the kitchen, lighted only by two panes under the edge of the thatched roof, and full of an earthy smell of garden roots, and a store-room odor of soap, and coffee, and meal. The hens were noisy outside, and the sunset light came in through the chink high up, while the sunburnt peasant child was kneeling in white, with her black head bowed on her little brown hands. Marie had been explaining all about the privilege of buying a substitute to go away instead of Jean, if one was rich, and the small sister knew all about it, and prayed with that magnificent trust which little children have, and which makes their simple words so touching to the tenderness of Our Father.

The little thing kneeling up on the side of the bed, with her chubby face still down upon her folded hands, spoke in a whisper, without even opening her eyes.

"Say your night prayer too, Marie. I am asking the good God for money to buy a man."

"But it is hundreds and hundreds of francs!" exclaimed the worldly-wise sister. "Now, you've said your proper prayers. Lie down this minute, and go to sleep. We could never get so much."

Babette, with a fascinating obedience, disappeared into her nest, all except her head and hands; but the hands were locked together yet, though the eyes were fast shut. A tear or two, unseen in the dark, trickled out under the black fringes and down by the curve of the cheek. "Don't say He won't," she said in pathetic appeal. "I'd give the good God all the money in the world, if I had it, and He asked me!"

There was no getting over that tearful argument. Marie tried to explain that it might be best for Jean to go.

And this she endeavored to make clear to the little one, with her unskilled tongue. But Babette persisted: "I'd give Him anything I have; and mother says the good God is so very good—better than any one thinks."

So the elder girl at last gave up saying it could not be, which, after all, was a shabby view of the kindness of the Great Giver. "Well, I will put the money for the man in my night prayers too, Babette; and we can wait and see, and it's sure to happen the best way. And we might try to earn a few francs to-morrow, to begin with."

"We? Might I? Even little me!" Babette could not help sitting up to ask.

"Yes."

"Oh! How?"

"No, I can't tell you to-night. I must go to mother—she is crying, and she can't see to mend Marc's coat. Go to sleep!"

So Babette lay very still till the night was dark, and the moonbeams peeped in at the two panes under the thatch. She and Marie would earn money together to-morrow in some way or other; she did not know how, but she trusted in her sister. And, perhaps, that would be the way in which the good God would send them the hundred and hundreds of francs. She did not know how, again; but she trusted in Him just as simply as she trusted in her sister Marie. So the two little helpless hands were folded together, and Babette, with a soft sigh, fell asleep.

## II.

"I shall not go on grieving while my child is left to me," said the English lady at Laborde, caressing her golden-haired boy. "But I cannot find out who saved my darling three days ago. If I could but know!"

While the joy of the one heart lasted, the sorrow of the other went on. Jean would have to go away in a few days now.

On those hot days of May, in France, the sunburnt children were out from morning till night, little Babette, with uncovered head, and Marie, with her cotton peasant-cap, both getting browner than ever. Mrs. Aird, walking out with little "M'sieu Trotte," found them one day in an orchard at Laborde. The elder girl, with a business-like air, was shaking a cherry-tree; the little child was kneeling on the ground, allowing beetles to crawl up her pinafore. Trot stared aghast at the whole proceedings, and hid behind his mother's black gown, lest the beetles might see him.

"What are you doing, children?" the strange lady asked, with her "foreign" accent from England.

The small child clutched the insects, one in each hand, to make sure of them, and looked up. "They are the *hannetons*."

And so they were; the buzz, from which the French people name them, was well known to Mrs. Aird in her evening walks.

"And you, little thing, you are not afraid to catch the cockchafers?"

The big girl came to answer for her—

"No; Babette catches them very quickly. We get a sackful every day."

"A sackful! And what do you do with them?"

"We want to get enough to buy a man!" cried little Babette.

Mrs. Aird's eyes brightened, but she had known too great a sorrow to be able to smile easily yet.

"To buy a man, my little child! You mean a dancing toy to play with—is it not?"

"No!"—from Babette with contempt. "We are going to buy a man—a soldier."

"I think my little Trot must give you some of his tin soldiers—he has so many," said the lady in black, with her arm round her own child's neck, while he kept a sharp watch on the grass, in dread of cockchafers.

"No—not a tin soldier," said Babette, with the reiteration of a child's tongue—"to buy a man!"

"And were do they sell men for cockchafers?"

"We sell the cockchafers," said Marie shyly.

"We get three sous for a sackful at the Mairie. All the children gather them, when the cockchafers are so bad."

The cockchafers did seem "bad," as the girl said. There were crowds of them on the grass. She had shaken them down out of the tree, where they had meant to abide in the boughs until sunset. But for the children's harvest, the fields would be ruined by the grubs under the soil, and the orchards would be devastated by the insects.