

Caste.

A SUDRA boy by the wayside lay,
Moaning with hunger and pain,
The son of a Brahmin came that way,
Merry and haughty and vain.
He turned his eyes on the child who cried,
And quickly passed on the other side.

He'd scorn to bring, for a Sudra's sake,
A drink from the nearest spring;
And the Sudra would not dare to take
From his hand the smallest thing.
So the sick boy waited there to die:
Are not Sudras low, and Brahmins high?

O pride of false teaching! pride of caste!
Wild tares in the vineyard sown!
Will the Lord of the harvest find at last,
Ye were all in India grown?
Does a Christian's child, in heart a'er cry,
"My neighbour is low and I am high?"

Such was the story Miss Teachwell told
To the girls in her mission band enrolled,
As they sat with her one day to sew,
She called it "A Tale of Weeds that Grow
In a Precious Garden." When 'twas done
They pitied the Sudra, every one,
And blamed the Brahmin, and said that they
Could not have acted in such a way.
Susie and Caroline guessed at last
"Hearts are like gardens, and pride makes
caste.

In every country its weeds will start
To choke love's flowers from the human
heart."

But I think Katie a lesson caught
Deep in her mind from the story short;
For she looked no more, with scornful curl
Of her lips, at Amy, the stranger girl,
But gently told her, as they went home,
"I'll lend you patterns, when next you
come."

I was glad for this, and thought 'twas plain
That the heathen children o'er the main
Had a true friend in a child who tried
From her heart-garden to weed out pride.

—Josephine Tyler, in *Little Helpers*.

"A Button-hole Hand."

BY ANNIE E. HOLDSWORTH.

THE girl whose voice was making
the dismal house cheery was young,
and neatly dressed in spite of the evi-
dent poverty of her surroundings; and
her bright red cheeks and smooth coils
of golden hair seemed as much out of
place in the musty court as did the pot
of fresh daisies blooming on the win-
dow-sill. It was not much light that
the flowers got there, for the window
was in the attic, which was overhung
by the roof of the house opposite, and
the space between was so narrow that
you could almost reach across to the
window on the other side. The air,
too, that reached the daisies was heavy
with offensive smells from the court
below, and yet the flowers and their
owner thrived under these opposing
circumstances as goodness and purity
do thrive under all conditions, however
adverse. Meg did not rise from the
low stool on which she was sitting as
a tap was heard at the door, but she
paused in her singing to call out a
cheery "Come in" to her visitor, and
greeted Miss Maynard's entrance with
a smile, while her busy needle flew
backward and forward without stop-
ping.

"I heard you singing as I was on
the stair, and thought you would allow
me to come in and rest awhile," said
the lady.

"Yes, ma'am, to be sure," answered
Meg quietly; and then she looked up
brightly as Miss Maynard laid a half-
open rosebud on the table beside her.

"It's rare and pretty," she said wist-
fully; "but maybe you can't spare it."

"Oh yes," was the reply; "I see
you like flowers, and that one will last
some time if it is put into water."

"Thank you, kindly," said the girl;
"it will look bonny in Jim's button-

hole on Sunday; for he likes them
almost as much as me, Jim does."

"And who is Jim?" asked Miss
Maynard, though the half-blushing con-
sciousness of the girl made the question
almost unnecessary.

"Jim is my intended, ma'am," an-
swered Meg, with a look of proud
possession; we have been engaged more
than two years, and as soon as he gets
a shop we'll be married."

"So Jim is in business," said Miss
Maynard, pleasantly; "and where does
he live?"

"Well, ma'am, he drives the coster's
cart, but about a year ago he broke his
leg, and it is a cripple he has been ever
since."

"And can he work still?"

"Yes, ma'am; he drives the cart
around, and I go with him most days
to sell."

"But does it not hinder your own
work?"

"Yes ma'am, it did at the first but
I manage pretty well. You see, ma'am,
I am a button-hole hand, and I make
button-holes for most of them as takes
in sewin' in the court. When I get
my hand in I can make a' many more,
and faster, than if I did the sewin'
and gatherin' as well, so they give me
the shirts and I make the button holes."

"But does that pay you?" asked the
visitor.

"Well, ma'am, not so well now, for
I'm out most mornin's with Jim; he
does the cryin' and sits on the cart to
mind the donkey, while I sell the green
stuff, so I can't do quite so much; but
I get up an hour sooner, and can do a
deal o' work before it's time to go
round with the cart."

"But yours must be a very hard life.
Are you not tired at night?"

"Yes, ma'am, mostly, but I sleep all
the sounder. There's Jim, now, he
don't do much except wait in the shop,
and he can't sleep at night. He lies
awake whole nights with the pain
while I'm fast asleep. Then button-
holes is very cheerful work I always
think; I told Jim one day our lives
were like button-holes; they gets cut
but there is One that works them over
for us, and the knots that worry us
only go to make the cut places tidy to
look at, and useful beside; and Jim
said how he wished his poor leg might
get healed, and worked over soon."

And Meg gave a little laugh, while
Miss Maynard continued:—

"And do you work on Sundays?"

"No, ma'am," said Meg, "Sundays
is our best days; Jim and me we take
a little trip into the country as we call
it. It is only an old graveyard; but
we can see a nice bit of sky with clouds
on it sometimes; there, Jim says they
are like sheeps' wool, but I think they
must be like the angels I used to learn
about in the ragged-school. Once, be-
fore Jim's leg was broke, we went to
Victoria Park. Heaven can't be beau-
tifuler than that, can it, ma'am? There
was a sight o' flowers as I could hev
kissed, they was so pretty; but Jim
said as curlyflowers was the flowers he
liked most. That was only his fun,
ma'am," continued Meg, apologetically;
"he walked ever so far to fetch me
that pot of daisies; they was in a field
somewhere by the river. I sit and
think about them when I am alone;
and when Jim can walk we are going
where I can see 'em all a-growin' in
the grass for myself."

"And have you never gathered
flowers?" asked the lady gently.

"Oh yes, ma'am; it wasn't so long

ago as I went with Jim to where they
grow groundsel for the birds, and a rare
time I had gatherin' them, only it
seemed kind o' pitiful that birds should
eat them, they was so pretty. The
next day he went round sellin' them,
and I could hev cried to see the gentle-
folks buyin' them to be eat; but Jim
said it was all in the way o' business.
Jim has a pitiful heart, for all his jokes,
and he is so brave and patient with his
poor leg. Why, ma'am, when it was
broke he wanted me to give him up;
but I told him he would want a wife
now more than ever, and it were no use
his tryin' to run away from me, for he
couldn't go very fast;" and Meg
laughed her pleasant little laugh again.

"But suppose Jim never gets better?"
said Miss Maynard. The bright face
clouded over for a moment, and then a
sudden light flashed in the earnest eyes
as Meg answered bravely: "Ah, ma'am,
an' if he didn't I'd only hev to give up
my attic and go on the ground floor,
for Jim couldn't climb these stairs with
his crutches. Eh, but that would be
a pity; it's a deal better away from
the people below; they are a bad lot
downstairs."

"Well, I hope you and Jim will
soon be very happy," said the lady as
she rose to go. "May I come again to
see you?" she asked, as Meg rose to
open the door.

"If you please, ma'am," answered
the girl, and then the visitor descended
the steep stairs again, and was soon on
the road to her pleasant home. Soon
after a promised visit called her from
town, and months passed before Miss
Maynard visited the dim court. At
last in the early spring she found time
to call again on Meg.

Miss Maynard knocked gently at the
attic door; it was opened by Meg; a
little older and graver-looking, but
with the same strong, calm spirit, and
patient light in her earnest eyes. She
was still working at her button-holes,
and something like tears came into her
eyes as she took the bunch of primroses
her visitor had brought.

"It's fine an' glad Jim will be to
hev them, ma'am," she said. "I go to
see him every Sunday now, for he has
had to go to the hospital, an' it's beau-
tiful to see how every one there takes
to him."

"So Jim is no better?"

"No, ma'am, his leg is no better
than it ought to be; the doctors do say
as it must come off; but I tell Jim he
has no call to fret about it, my two are
strong and willing to work for him.
Besides that's what I hev been workin'
for this many a day. The button-
holes is comfortin' now I haven't Jim
to talk to, an' the daisies is dead.
They didn't live through the winter,
but there's no need to miss 'em when I
hev the button-holes for company."

After talking over Meg's prospects
a little longer, Miss Maynard left; but
she soon called again bringing with her
another bunch of flowers; and soon it
became a regular thing for her to climb
the steep stair, taking the flowers that
Meg treasured for Jim's sake.

So the summer wore on, and Miss
Maynard again left the hot city. On
her return one of the first visits was
paid to the court where Meg lived.
There was no need for her to ascend to
the attic this time, for she was met at
the entrance to the court by Meg, who
ushered her, with evident pride, into a
room on the ground floor. The furni-
ture was the same as that to which she
had been accustomed, but it had an air

of difference only accounted for by the
presence of another occupant of the
room.

On the floor, busily engaged in chop-
ping wood and tying it into sma-
fagots, was seated a grave, stolid-look-
ing, young man, about twenty-five, who
only stopped in his occupation to steal
a look at Meg, who had seated herself
and was busily stitching at her button
holes.

"You see, ma'am," she explained to
her visitor, "when Jim's leg was took
off, I told him as how it was no use
frottin' after him if he didn't give me
the right; so as soon as he left the
hospital we was married; and we hev
been as happy as two could be over
since."

"Jim, he earns man, a penny by
choppin' wood, an' 't' other day a
gentleman as comes to read to us told
us how a great poet—that's a man as
writes things you can sing to, you
know, ma'am,—once said something
about a Providence as was shapin' our
lives for us, no matter how cross-
grained we make 'em ourselves, just as
Jim, there, is cuttin' that wood; so,
what with my button-holes an' Jim's
wood-cuttin' we hev something nice to
think on all day long."

"Yes, ma'am, we're very happy;
an' when Jim gets his cork leg, he'll
walk without crutches, and won't feel
to want Meg no more."

The glance Jim gave in answer to
this spoke more eloquently than could
any contradiction have done, but he
appeared to be of a taciturn disposition,
and did not join in the conversation till
Miss Maynard rose to go; then he
pointed with a grave forefinger at Meg,
still busy over her button-holes, and,
saying solemnly, "She is a good 'un,
Meg is," relapsed into silence.

How Postage Stamps are Made.

IN printing, steel plates are used, on
which two hundred stamps are en-
graved. Two men are kept hard at
work covering them with coloured
inks and passing them to a man and a
girl who are equally busy printing
them with large rolling hand-presses.
Three of these little squads are employed
all the time. The gum used for this
purpose is a peculiar composition, made
of the powder of dried potatoes and
other vegetables, mixed with water.
After having been again dried, this
time on the little racks which are
fanned by steam power, for about an
hour, they are put in between sheets
of paste-board and pressed in hydraulic
presses capable of applying a weight of
two thousand tons. The next thing is
to cut the sheet in half; each sheet, of
course, when cut, contains a hundred
stamps. This is done by a girl, with a
large pair of shears, cutting by hand
being preferred to that of machinery,
which method would destroy too many
stamps. They are then passed to two
other squads, who perforate the paper
between the stamps. Next, they are
pressed once more, and then packed
and labelled and stowed away for
despatching to fulfil orders. If a
single stamp is torn or in any way
mutilated, the whole sheet of one
hundred stamps is burned. Five
hundred thousand are burned every
week from this cause. For the past
twenty years, not a single sheet has
been lost, such care has been taken in
counting them. During the process of
manufacturing, the sheets are counted
eleven times.