

about, so painful were his limbs becoming, and dear little Johnnie sat huddled up in the chimney corner, his face livid from a difficulty he experienced in breathing; but of my own tortures both of mind and body it would be impossible to give you an idea.

"Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by?" I cried in my despair. "Is it nothing to you that helpless women and innocent children should sit thus in hopeless, wretched misery, because those who should love them—" Mrs. Bingham hesitated, her voice seeming to fail her. "Think of it, all ye who are saying, 'Am I my brother's keeper?'"

"Steadily the storm increased," Mrs. Bingham resumed; "towards evening it blew almost a hurricane, threatening to sweep away even our frail shelter; but high above the noise and roar of the elements, rose the shrill, sharp breathing of my suffering little lamb, every breath becoming more like a shriek.

"Toward midnight I knew her life was fast ebbing away. The boys were asleep, Arthur moaning with pain, and Johnnie breathing thick and heavy, and I kept my midnight vigils alone. Oh what a dread, despairing loneliness came over me—no help, no nourishment, no medicine, nothing at all that could be of any use.

"When I saw the end approaching, I took the little sufferer up in my arms. I heard nothing of the storm then, or felt nothing of the cold; a chill despair had settled down on my heart. She opened her large, expressive eyes,—uttered that dearest word, 'Mamma,' a slight convulsion passed over her feeble frame, a slight struggle, and her angel spirit took its flight.

"Anxiety had sustained me hitherto, but there was no need now, and I sank down on the bed exhausted, with the dead child in my arms.

"I knew no more till I saw the sun streaming in through the chinks of the wall; there were strange voices in the house, and I thought I was in a dream; strange hands were washing and dressing my sweet baby. 'Handle her tenderly,' I said, 'for she is sick.' The woman turned her eyes on me compassionately; then the terrible reality occurred.

"Your father sat near the fire, holding little Johnnie in his arms,—it seemed an age since I had seen him last, and there was a doctor sitting at the table mixing some medicine. 'Too late! too late!' I said, and I turned away on the pillow, and relapsed into unconsciousness, or rather delirium, for I was suffering, though I knew it not, from fever brought on by cold, over-exertion and anxiety.

"When I came to myself again, there was a strange but kind-looking old woman sitting by me, reading with spectacles on; the house was very quiet and very much improved. Wistfully and eagerly my eyes wandered round in search of the children; I wondered how it was they were so quiet, and not even a little shoe on the floor or coat on the wall to remind me of them. Ah they need not have put them all away so carefully! Soon I noticed the boys' little bed was gone from its corner; at once the truth flashed on me—they too were gone!"

Mrs. Bingham paused to wipe away her tears; Bennie's were streaming, unheeded, down his cheeks.

"Johnnie died a week after little Ellie was buried, they told me," she continued, "of inflammation of the lungs, and the next week Arthur followed him after suffering intense agony from inflammatory rheumatism.

"Oh, how my heart rose in rebellion against that God who, in tender mercy, had prevented me, while in a fit of temporary insanity, from imbruing my hands in my own children's blood.

"I never felt so wicked in all my life before. What right, I cried, had God to take away my treasures, all the comfort I had in this cold, cruel, wicked world? I never thought of looking to the end, or of trying to see the bright side of the cloud; there was a bright side to it, dear Bennie.

"So determinately despairing was I, that I would have put an end to my own life had I the means; but they seemed to divine my thoughts, and kept everything out of my way. There was a beam over the head of my bed; how eagerly I used to watch it—if I could only secure the end of the sheet to it and then fasten it around my neck, how soon it would cut short my miserable