

She had never heard the words, but they expressed something of her mood. Perhaps she dreamed of mighty cities and streets thronged with brilliant crowds, gay shop windows, and music-laden air. For she knew nothing of the world outside Joggins, and she had all a child's enchanting dreams.

"I'm so tired of everything!" she said to herself. "I wish I were a wave or—or a sea-gull, yonder."

She gazed upward as she spoke, and the cloudy sky seemed to lay a rebuking finger upon her lips—but it was a finger of lead.

The still active figure of an aged woman, clad in quaker-like grey, was mounting the slope behind her. The hands were toil-worn, but the face, with its snowy wreath of curls, had all the refinement that years bring to some natures. It was a face you felt better for meeting. For what is more cheerful than sunny, hopeful age?

"Thou art having a hard struggle, my girl," she said, laying a hand on the girl's shoulder. "I have watched thee; it goes hard with thee."

Aunt Margaret, in serious moments, often lapsed into the sweet Quaker language of her early childhood. "Thee loves him more than thee believes."

"Oh, Aunt Margaret, I do—I do love him, I know, but I can't stay here always, and be a miner's wife. It's so dreary, an' the black clothes an' faces an' all the grime! Oh, if he were not a miner. It's enough to be a miner's daughter, an' be raised here at the Joggins without to marry an' stay for ever."

"Thou 'rt looking at the wrong end of life, my child. Thou thinkest it a cheerier thing to be dressed up behind a city counter than to have a bit of a home of your own to look after. But what o' thy father an' brother, thy mother left to thee?"

The girl was silent as she thought of the time, five years ago, when her mother had died, and left her, a girl of sixteen, to keep house for her father and only brother.

"Don't leave Fred," she had said. "He'll never go wrong, so long as his sister is with him."

It had not seemed hard then, but now—to settle there for ever, to simply marry and go through the same routine of dish-washing, meal-getting, and gossip of old Joggins.

"And, after all, Jessie, it isn't a humble place if you fill it royally. You might make all the world better if you would, and still be unknown, Jessie."

The girl looked up in surprise at the enthusiasm in those wonderfully bright eyes.

"Aunt Margaret, I don't see how you can always be so happy in your place."

"Ah, I used to have my discontented times when I was young, as well as you, Jessie."

"But what made you grow so different, auntie?"

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want," she said, with her wonderful smile. "You've heard me speak of Jennie Carton—the one, you know, that fell on the ice and hurt her hip so she had to go on crutches the rest of her days. Well, I used to run in an' sit with her, an' talk a bit o' an afternoon. It went hard with her at first, poor soul. But, after awhile, we all noticed how satisfied she'd grown over her knittin' and sewin'. Then we began to see that everybody that went in an' talked with Jennie turned Christian before long. I saw, too, how happy she was, an' I counted up the people I knew she'd saved, while I'd done nothin' but sit an' dream o' things I'd do if I were somebody else; an' then I thought if I only had Jennie's power, I'd be content to be just myself where I was."

"Oh, aunt, but we can't all do the good you've done since then!"

"How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" an' if every child in South Joggins were brought to Jesus this winter! There is an aim worth living for, an' the children all love you, Jessie, an' who to carry it out for the dear Lord better than one of themselves—a miner's daughter, an' a miner's wife? My girl, thou'lt find few better men than Jack Payson. Dost thee remember what thy father said—that the men never swear in the gallery, where Jack works, an—"

"Oh, aunt, don't! Don't, please! It's all too late now. I told him so last night. It's all ended. I told him I could never marry him."

"Oh, Jessie, after being two years engaged!" The elder woman looked sad for a moment. "Well, there, lass, don't say another word about it. I'll just leave thee here while I run