

"Well," said Lizzie, "have you any news?"

"Yes," he replied, "the disease is unchecked, in spite of all their efforts."

"And how is he?"

"Still working on. The city is full of his name, and the poor people think him a god."

"He has atoned, has he not?"

Mr. Forbes was silent. Then he said—

"Yes, he is a noble fellow now. He has won his character by suffering, and I will not bear him malice. Besides, dear, his conduct gave me you."

"What of her?" asked Lizzie.

"Still the same—proud, unyielding, yet suffering. She has watched his career for years; has seen the change in him; knows that he is no longer the selfish Peter of old; yet cannot bring herself to reward him."

"Poor thing," said Lizzie, "I can understand her."

Before returning to the plague-stricken quarters of the city, it will be well to see what changes have taken place on Sherbrooke street during the past five years. One change is at once apparent. Alice is not to be seen there so much as formerly, though she does drop in once in a while when the cares of her own household are not weighing heavily upon her. Although she used to consider herself fated to be a maiden lady all her life, she has turned out even better fitted for the position of wife and mother, she now occupies. Peter unconsciously altered her life, as he did that of Edith, but in this case for good, not evil. He it was who had introduced Harry Small to the James', and Harry and Alice had been drawn to one another almost at once. When Charley broke with Peter he did not break with Harry, and the natural conclusion of the visits of the latter to see Alice, was to take her away altogether. Harry, it will be remembered, was the companion of Peter and Charley at Bow Lake. But Charley was also gone from the house, and it is currently reported that Mr. Hartley is as well off in the company of Mr. and Mrs. James, junior, as he was when Bertha was his sole companion in the modest house in which he lives.

Thus, of the young members of the James' family, she alone, whom all had thought would have been the first to go—she was so bright and attractive—was left.

Edith was not one of those to let her life sour through any disappointment. Sorrow had simply stirred up the fertile soil of her heart, and sympathy, devotion, and love flourished stronger than ever before. When the small-pox attacked the city it was all her parents could do to prevent her from devoting herself to nurse work. She was one of the leading spirits in the committees for relief, and in that connection heard much of her former lover that gave her joy.

The small-pox, brought from Chicago by a Pullman car porter, had found, in certain quarters of the city, rich soil upon which to thrive. Hearses rolled along the streets all day long, and the yellow signs put upon houses wherever was the disease, were in some localities as plentiful as house-to-let placards in April. Business suffered, the rich classes fled the place, and those whom, through duty or fearlessness, remained,

were vaccinated or revaccinated, and often carried little sachets of camphor or other supposed disinfectants, in case they should pass an infected person.

In one of the vilest quarters of the city, amid filthy tenement houses, facing upon lanes, filled with garbage that reeked in the sultry summer air, the small-pox had made sad havoc. Every day saw a victim carried away, and would have seen more, but for the sleepless efforts of a physician who had devoted his energies to the assistance of the poor at this crisis. He had his reward in every blessing poured upon his head by his patients or their anxious friends, and in his heart he had a greater reward—the reward that she who had despised him, and who despised him still, would know of his doings, and give him credit for his sacrifice.

Peter and Edith had never met since the time she granted him an interview and declined his love. The change in him, which had begun at the time of Bolton's injury, had continued. He never abandoned hope—few men need do so when the woman they love loves them—and had set himself persistently to atone for his previous life of selfishness. In the solitude that was constantly about his heart he made the atonement of suffering, and by his deeds, wherever practicable, he atoned also. At first he worked merily from the selfish desire to win Edith. But his constant contact with sorrow and pain slowly worked out this unworthy leaven, and he began to seek to fit himself for her, rather than merely to win her.

And thus it is we find him risking his life every day amid the plague.

It was early morning when he left the tenements to snatch a few hours' sleep. He was known now, and received respectful salutations wherever he went. As he was turning the corner, he had an encounter that made even him shudder. A loathsome creature, just risen from a bed of sickness, and still tottering from weakness, crossed his path and vanished down one of the side streets.

A few moments afterwards he heard a shriek, and, thinking at once something had happened the poor thing, he turned back and went quickly down the alley she had entered. There was a throng on the sidewalk that seemed more afraid than otherwise, and had drawn away from two women. Peter approached, and recognized in one of the women the sick person who had recently passed him. She was angry, and talking loudly to the other—

"What brings you here in your finery," she cried, "to spy on us? Do you want to gloat over such as I, with your pretty face? Look you, if I but kiss you I would put these marks upon you, and what would your fine lover say then?"

The other drew back a step before the infuriated wretch, and said—

"I came here to care for one who is sick. I cannot think that you could be so wicked as to harm me."

"Ho! ho!" laughed the hag. "Wicked! There is no wickedness on earth; it is in heaven! What had I done, my lady, more than you, to deserve this? Why are my children in the cemetery, and not yours? Come, I will give you a sweet kiss, whose mark you will carry on your lips for ever!"