



IN SOLEMN CONSULTATION.

Philippa's Castle in the Air.

(Silver Link.)

'Oh! I shall never get over the disappointment, never, Mr. Trimmer,' said Philippa, wearily. 'I don't believe God thinks I am worthy to serve him. Yet I long to unspeakably.'

Philippa Marston was a very young and very enthusiastic Christian. She had just completed the high-school course, and now ardently desired to enter the foreign mission field and go out with a missionary friend to her station in Africa. She was a frail girl, however, and her physician positively forbade her to think of such a thing. The opposition to her cherished purpose had fretted her into a nervous illness, from which she was just recovering.

Her pastor, Mr. Trimmer, was a faithful servant of his Master, and longed to be as Christ himself would be to each of his people. He studied his young people in the church carefully, and noted earnestly the progress of each in the Christ life.

'My dear child,' he began, 'surely there is no form of service so important as perfect submission to God's will, and there's always plenty for us all to do at home.'

Philippa put one delicate hand up to her throat as if something were choking her.

'It does seem hard,' she went on, not heeding Mr. Trimmer. 'There's Cousin Lucy—I board with her—she's a great, strong, robust woman, and she doesn't even seem to care to go to church on Sunday, while I—I long so to work for Christ.'

'Your cousin has a family of little children and doesn't feel free to leave them, being a widow,' the pastor protested mildly. Suddenly he turned the conversation. 'Do you like children, Philippa?' he asked, thoughtfully

'? Oh! yes; I am very fond of them'

'By-and-by the pastor took his leave.

'That girl,' he said to himself, 'must be directed to practical work soon or she will be a moral wreck. She must find her place among Christ's workers, or she will sink into hopeless apathy, and then selfish worldliness.'

Slowly, in spite of Philippa's repining, she regained her health, and one Sunday Mr. Trimmer caught a glimpse of her sorry, discontented blue eyes turned up to him as he preached. They set him musing about Philippa again.

'It's time to put this little King's Daughter into the Castle Beautiful, or the dragon will have her in his clutches soon,' he thought, quaintly, while the congregation sang the hymn he selected for Philippa's sake:

'Quiet, Lord, my froward heart,  
Make me teachable and mild,  
Upright, simple, undefiled,  
Make me as a little child'

During each of Mr. Trimmer's pastoral calls that week, he said: 'I'm thinking of fitting up the belfry chamber in our steeple. Do you think you have in your attic anything that might be used in furnishing it?'

The result was encouraging. One lady gave an art square for the floor; another, an old cottage piano long superseded by her drawing-room grand, but still sweet; another gave a table, and still another some chairs and a chintz-covered lounge. Then several pretty pictures for the walls and a number of potted plants for the windows were given.

When questioned as to the use of the sky parlor, Mr. Trimmer always smiled as he replied: 'Well, it's a castle in the air I've been dreaming about a good while; and

the immediate inference had always been that as the parsonage was small, and the little Trimmers numerous and noisy, the pastor wanted a quiet chamber apart where he might study and write in peace.

When the room was ready, Mr. Trimmer took Philippa Marston to see it.

'Why!' exclaimed Philippa, 'I thought this was to be your study!'

With some of the missionary funds in his hands, Mr. Trimmer had added to the furnishing given for the belfry chamber a semi-circle of baby armchairs, flanked on each side by a cradle. He smiled at the girl's bewilderment.

'Philippa,' he said, gently, 'once you told me how you longed to tell the sweet story of Jesus to those who had not listened to it over and over. The Lord does not will that you should go to Africa, and I cannot bring the heathen blacks here for you to teach. But I have wanted to be as Christ would be to you in your unhappy life, were He on earth, and I have wanted to lead you to helpful work for Him. So I am going to trust you with the most beautiful things in the world—the innocent souls of very little children.

'I have many young mothers in my congregation who would dearly love to attend service Sunday mornings, but cannot; like your cousin Lucy, because they may not leave their children. There are none of us able to hire nurses here, you know. I have arranged with such mothers to bring their little ones here every pleasant Sunday, and leave them with you, while they themselves join in worship below. Philippa, this is your castle in the air. Will you take it and work for Jesus here?'

The grateful tears sprang to Philippa's blue eyes.

'Oh! I will do my best so gladly,' she cried.

And what a delightful place it was, this castle in the air! High up, swung between earth and sky, its walls were almost all of glass, so that plenty of sunshine and sweet air bathed the babies in the steeple. Then there were flowers everywhere; cut flowers and flowers in pots; and what lessons of God's tenderness and wisdom Philippa taught her little ones from seed and opening flower! Indeed, in this ideal castle in the air—

'There were softest winds to bring to you  
Sweet thoughts from everywhere,  
And birds God made to sing to you—  
The angels of the air!'

For one could look out from the wonderful windows right into the tops of the trees, and make acquaintance with numerous dear little bird families.

Mr. Trimmer appointed belfry ushers, stalwart young men who took the little ones from their mothers at the door, and carried them up the many stairs in the steeple to the castle in the air.

One Sunday Mr. Trimmer looked in after church.

'Philippa,' he said, smilingly, 'I wish I might come to the babies' service; I know I could learn a great deal.'

Philippa's face glowed.

'Oh, Mr. Trimmer! I am so happy in my work—and I learn so much myself every Sunday. You see, there is so much to teach about, and it all leads to God.'

'Yes,' answered the pastor, 'it all leads to God, whether we teach on the burning sands of Africa, or in the gentle sunshine of a belfry castle in the air.'—Mary A. Winston.

The New York 'Journal' states that any young man attempting to secure employment at its office would find his chances lessened thirty percent if he smoked cigarettes, and that his chances of keeping his job would decline by another thirty percent if he continued to smoke them after he got it,