

FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

A SOLITARY WAY.

Prov. xiv. 10—1 Cor. ii.—11.

There is a mystery in human hearts:
And tho' we be encircled by a host
Of those who love us well and are beloved,
To every one of us from time to time
There comes a sense of utter loneliness.
Our dearest friend is 'stranger' to our joy,
And cannot realize our bitterness.
"There is not one who really understands,
Not one to enter into all I feel":
Such is the cry of each of us in turn.
We wander in a 'solitary way';
No matter what or where our lot may be,
Each heart, mysterious even to itself,
Must live its inner life in solitude.

Job vii : 17—Matt. x. 37.

And would you know the reason why this is?
It is because the Lord desires our love;
In every heart he wishes to be first:
He therefore keeps the secret key Himself,
To open all its chambers and to bless,
With perfect sympathy and holy peace
Each solitary soul which comes to Him.
So when we feel this loneliness it is
The voice of Jesus saying "Come to me;"
And every time we are "not understood,"
It is a call to us to come again;
For Christ alone can satisfy the soul,
And those who work with Him from day to
day
Can never have a "solitary way."

Isa xlvi, 16 :—Ps xxxiv, 22.

And when beneath some heavy cross you faint,
And say "I cannot bear this load alone";
You say the truth. Christ made it purposely
So heavy that you must return to Him.
The bitter grief which "no one understands"
Conveys a secret message from the King,
Entreating you to come to Him again.
The Man of Sorrows understands it well;
In all points tempted He can feel with you.
You can not come too often or too near;
The Son of God is infinite in grace,
His presence satisfies the longing soul,
And those who walk with Him from day to
day
Can never have a "Solitary Way."

AN. CA.

A BOY TO BE TRUSTED.

'Take these letters to the postoffice.'
'Yes, sir.'
'Get a postal order to this address,' indicating
one of the letters, 'and inclose it in it.'
'Yes, sir.'
'Carry these papers over to Mr. Hill's office.'
'Yes, sir.'
'Stop at Mr. Grant's in the Jefferson block
and ask him to step around to see me.'
'Anything else?' as the lawyer paused in his
directions.
'Be lively about it.'
No need to tell Jim to be lively. He had
within a week been raised from his position as
a newsboy to the dignity of office boy to Mr.
Lane, the lawyer. A proud and happy boy
was Jim as he dressed himself in the new clothes
which Mr. Lane had given him as an advance
on his wages.
'Clean all over,' he said, surveying himself
with an air of great satisfaction. 'Clean from
top to toe. And I'm going to keep clean, too,
now that I have a chance. No more rushin'
'round the streets and settin' round on curb
stones. No more sleepin' in alley ways. No
more goin' barefoot and wearin' rags. Clean
all over. And,' Jim's face grew sober as he
stood reflecting. 'I'm going to keep clean in-
side as well as outside. He's given me a chance

and I'm going to show him I'm worth it. Yes
I am.'

With a jump and a whoop Jim sprang into
his new life full of new resolutions. Mr. Lane
had met him limping forlornly on the street,
overburdened with an armful of newspapers,
while still weak as the result of a long illness,
he having just been discharged from the hospi-
tal. The young lawyer was struck with pity
at the sight of the appealing eyes and sound of
the quavering voice, which seemed full of a
wordless craving for help which no hand seem-
ed ready to give.

'Seems to me you are not fit for such work,'
he said kindly, as he bought a paper.

'I'll be stronger soon, I guess,' said Jim, as
he gave the change.

'He doesn't look as if he had much chance of
that,' said the lawyer, looking after him as he
staggered wearily on. 'Here!—'

Jim turned at the sound of the voice which
had spoken kindly to him.

'Can't you find something easier to do than
this? No, of course he can't, poor little scala-
wag.' This in a lower tone as Jim approached.
'If you'll come around to my office I'll give you
some work,' he said, as Jim, from very weak-
ness, leaned heavily against a lamp post. 'Can't
you sweep out an office and set things in order,
and go errands—when you feel better?' he
asked.

'Yes, I know I could,' said Jim, in a flush of
hopefulness.

'Take this, then. Go out to the park and lie
around in the sunshine for a couple of days.
Then come to me and we'll fix it.'

'It's taking things on trust, I know,' said Mr.
Lane to himself. 'But what's the world good
for if it can't take a few things on trust? Better
to be fooled a few times than not do it.'

So to day Jim had been for more than a week
acting as Mr. Lane's office boy. He started off
at a brisk pace with his letters and papers,
proud of every chance which now came to him
of showing how lively and how faithful he
could be in the performance of his new duties.

'I ain't never going to turn one way nor
another till I get my stuff to where it's to go,'
said Jim as he tucked the papers securely under
his arm and took a firm grasp of the dozen of
letters. 'Important, I reckon,' he went on,
with a glance of great respect at the business-
like envelopes. 'Money in 'em, like as not. And
I've heard say there's stuff wrote in letters
sometimes as is more important'n even if you
was sending money in 'em. You wouldn't
think so, but that's what they says. And if
anybody's likely to write important things, it's
Mr. Lane.'

Straightening himself with the importance
of having to do with such importance, Jim
turned up a stairway and delivered his papers
to Mr. Hill. The message to Mr. Grant was
duly given, when the boy turned in the direc-
tion of the post office, which was some little
distance further on.

'What's all this crowd?—somebody run over,
or something?'

Jim stood for a moment after rounding a
corner and coming face to face with a scene of
confusion common enough on city streets. Men
and boys were running from different directions
towards a certain point, and in a very few
moments several hundred people had collected.

Jim paused for a moment. He could easily
keep along on the other side and accomplish his
errand without delay. A feeling in his heart
told him this was the thing to do, for a boy
who stops to ascertain the why and the where-
fore of every street commotion will have little
time for anything else. But he turned a little,
allowing himself to mingle in the crowd.

'It's only a couple of bootblacks,' he heard
some one say, 'got knocked down and run
over.'

It was close upon where a number of Jim's
comrades used to gather for work. What if it
should be any of them? More willingly he

moved with the crowd until he found himself
unable to choose which way he should move.

'Make way!' Some members of the police
force were clearing the way for the approach
of an ambulance. Jim was hustled rudely to
one side and the package of letters thrown from
his hand.

With a cry of dismay he stooped to gather
them, but the pressure grew heavier as he was
desperately snatching them from under the
crowding, trampling feet.

'Out of the way, you young simpleton! Do
you want to have the life trodden out of you?'

He was forcibly raised to his feet and pressed
far to one side. Counting his letters he found
that two of them were missing. But it was no
use trying to fight his way to where he had lost
them. He was obliged to wait until the crowd
dispersed, and when with a despairing heart he
made his way to the place no letters were
there.

Poor Jim mailed the recovered ones and then
began wondering if he should ever go back to
the office.

'What'll I say if he asks me? If I tell him
he'll think I'm a good for nought; and, like as
not, he'll turn me off. Course he will. If I tell
him I mailed them all, perhaps he'll never find
it out. Yes, I'll go back, if he does find it out,
he can't do no worse'n lick me, and that won't
make me feel half so bad as the losing 'em.'

Jim went back and gave his best attention to
the performance of his duties. But it was a
long and heavy day. Mr. Lane had a pleasant,
trustful way with people with whom he came
into contact, increased by a pity and liking for
Jim which led him to treat him with a kindness
entirely new to the little Arab. Jim could
easily have borne harsh usage, but this was too
much for him. Every pleasant word spoken to
him seemed to appeal directly to his sense of
right, so often in the cruel fight for existence
which had been ordered for him dulled and
smothered, but now awakened into new life.

As night came on Jim sat on a box in the
hall-way outside the office and did a little very
earnest thinking.

'I can't stand it no longer; no I can't,' he
said to himself with a forlorn look through the
open door at the pleasant rooms in which he
was already beginning to feel a proud sense of
part ownership. 'He thinking me a decent,
honest sort of a boy as isn't the kind to do
mean, underhand things—and me losing his
letters and never telling him. Perhaps them
letters was important. Yes, lawyers' letters
always is. I'd rather be turned off any day'n
be going around here and him looking at me as
he does.'

Jim gave himself no time to change his mind,
but the next moment was standing before Mr.
Lane, who chanced to be alone in the office.
The eyes which Jim lifted were very troubled
ones, but full of honest purpose to acknowledge
his fault, did not sink before the keen inquiring
ones which met them.

'Well, what is it?' asked Mr. Lee, as Jim
hesitated, scarcely knowing how to begin.

'Them letters,' he stammered, the color
growing deeper on his already flushed face.
'You thought I mailed 'em all, but I didn't. I
lost two of 'em. I'm sorry, and I'll go away
and I'll bring back the clothes you give me.'

Mr. Lane looked gravely at the small figure
standing in such utter self-abasement before
him. Everything about it, the thin face with
its appealing eyes, the stooping shoulders and
the air of general dejection seemed to unite in
telling the story of how hard life had been on
him, and how heroic was this truth telling
which might result in the casting away of the
only good fortune which had ever come to him.

The gravity melted into a smile.

'I like a boy I can trust,' said Mr. Lane.

'Yes,' said Jim, with a despairing sigh.

'You thought you could trust me to take care
of them letters—and now you know you
can't—'