

THE LITTLE HELPER.

BY MRS. G. ANDERSON.

I may not die for Jesus, As many children died, When those, who found their Saviour, Lost everything beside; But I can live for Jesus, With holy deed and word, And as a true confessor, May glorify the Lord.

I cannot be an angel, To wait before the throne, And at God's word fly swiftly. His mandates to make known; But God has noble errands A child can do aright, And I may gladly serve Him, A messenger of light.

I may not bear the gospel Across the ocean blue; But as a little helper, May succor those who do, Full 'nny a drooping banner Light breezes have unfurled, And pennies blast by Jesus, Oft help to move the world.

QUINCE, AND HOW THE LORD LED HIM.

(By Miss L. Bates.)

CHAPTER IX.

A TEMPERANCE SOCIETY FORMED.

Possibly the strain upon Esther's feelings would have settled into the old apathy, and the interest she had momentarily shown in the temperance cause never again have bubbled to the surface, had it not been for a serious affray a few nights later, when knives were resorted to and a pistol in the hands of a drunken brawler made an innocent child a cripple for life. This time not alone Esther, but Mr. Petties also, was aroused.

"It is time something was done. When men are not able to check themselves, they must be checked. I had no idea there was such a state of things in the village," said the old man, pacing the floor with his hands clasped behind him, as was his habit when he was greatly stirred.

"'Calm yourself, father,' pleaded Esther. 'Depend upon it, the evil has culminated. The sight of poor little Grace crippled for life will call for speedy punishment upon the offenders.'

"I never dreamed of it—never dreamed of it! Ballard ought to have known; I blame Ballard," still walking up and down with his hands behind him.

Before the day was ended, Mr. Petties suggested a walk to the village:

"It wants some one to lead the movement, and Ballard is the one, in my estimation. I am anxious to see it started. Public opinion is a strong force, but it must have a start."

Esther was afraid of the excitement, but she offered no remonstrance, only remarking in a quiet way that she would go with him. All day she had been thinking of going into the village.

The result of this interview was the organization of a temperance society, thus at once drawing a line between the advocate of strong drink and the total abstainer. Not alone this, but new rules were formulated and questions of license or no license were discussed in many households.

Mr. Ashburton had never taken a decided stand with regard to the liquor traffic; he now came out boldly on the side of total abstinence. Gracie Harris was one of his pupils, and the sweet, appealing look in her face as he lifted her in his arms on the night of the affray touched his heart. Not another glass would he raise to his lips; neither would he tolerate the sale of it, save as it was dealt out with the label "Poison."

The several pastors joined hands in this compact, while the saloon-keepers cried out that injustice was being done them. They sold liquor; it was their business; they had a legal right to pursue it. Of course, if any one came in with money to pay for it, he was entitled to his glass. The buyer himself must be the judge of what was best for him.

Never was a greater revolution of popular feeling. The poor took courage, and the victim of appetite vibrated between the infatuation that left him helpless and the de-

sire he felt when sane to be saved from the terrible power that left him with no will to change masters.

"If only they could have done this before!" said Isabel as she walked from school one day with Quince. "There was a time when father could have been helped; and often he has cried out for this very help—something to prevent his getting the accursed beverage. Jones was aware that he could not get by the place; the sight of the bottles made him tremble. There was no escape."

Quince understood just how Isabel was feeling, and how crushed and broken-hearted she would go home and talk it all over with her mother. He wanted to say something to comfort her; but what comfort can be found for the child whose father is a victim to the thirst for strong drink?

"I would do anything to help father; I know he wants to be helped. Mother and I talk it over every night; but, turn as we will, we cannot see the way out."

Quince had it on his tongue's end to say that he knew the hopeless, withering feeling; but no: that would do her no good. In all his mother's troubles she went to God; should he suggest this help to Bel? Was her mother a praying woman?

"When my mother was troubled, she used to go into a little room by herself and ask God to help her; I think he did help her; I think God is the only one who really can help us when we need help," he made bold to say.

"I have thought of that," said Isabel. "But God is such a great way off; and, Quince, we need help now," raising her earnest eyes to his face.

"But he is near us, mother said. If we whisper to him, he hears it, and answers at once. Mother also said that his answer might not always be just as we expected, but that he would answer, and in a way that would in the end be the very best thing for us."

"And she told you this? Then I wouldn't think you would ever feel bad, with God to hear your whispers and to answer every little thing. My mother never speaks of such matters, but, now you've told me, I'll ask him, and I'll keep asking till he does it."

Isabel's face was full of animation. There was something for her to do, and faith in God gave her courage:

"No; I will never have it to think of that I didn't try every way to help father. He is good—you cannot know how good—when he don't drink."

The small house that sheltered her mother was in sight. Bel did not make another remark, but she turned back to look at Quince, and her face was so bright, so full of hope, that he was glad he had told her of his mother.

"That night Quince sat longer than usual gazing into the dying embers. He had sent Bel to God, but could she ask as his mother had asked? Had he done what was right in this thing? Was it not a delusive hope? Was not Bel one, with himself, upon whom the iniquity of sin was to fall?

A deep flush covered his face. He was ashamed of himself, and sorry that in his attempt to comfort her he should have mentioned his mother. Of course, his mother could do it, and the answer came; but with Bel it was different. The bare suggestion rendered her so bright and happy that she would ask—he knew she would ask; and then would she not reproach him?

Nothing was heard save the ticking of the high, old-fashioned clock; the glow from the fire was growing less; ghostly shadows were creeping over the wall; but still Quince sat with his hands clasped over his face. He would give so much to know! But how was he to know? Whom could he ask? Why not ask as he told Bel to God? Yes, he would. He would try God and see if he would answer his asking as he had answered his mother's.

Esther came out of her father's room and set her lamp on the side-table. "I am afraid father is not so well to-night," she said, coming over to the hearth and resting her elbow on the mantel. "He has had too much excitement, and it has worn upon him."

Quince stirred the fire, giving the room a warm, cheerful glow. Then he drew up an arm chair.

"I think I will sit here a little while," Esther said as she took the proffered seat. "It is late for you, Quince—later than usual," looking kindly into the lad's face

"Would it not be well for me to remain here for the night? You may want something."

"No, Quince. If I need anything, I will call you." Then she added, after a pause, "Ballard was here for an hour or two. I don't think he does father any good."

"Does he do good to anybody?" Quince questioned as he went up to his room—"a man who believes in nothing, trusts in nothing, hopes for nothing?"

A moment he lingered at the window. Stars were twinkling; the light from the same stars was shining down upon his mother's grave in Scarborough, and likewise climbing over the casement and trailing along the floor in his own room. He did not feel like sleep. A strange awe overpowered him. He crouched down in the line of the star-beams and lived it all over. It comforted him; peace and quietness filled his heart. Still, he did not feel inclined to sleep. He remembered how he had watched the night through by his mother's bedside. How plainly it came up before him! How she clung to him as she talked of God and of the world to which she was going!

"God will see you in all your ways, my boy. Promise me," she whispered.

And he had promised; he would keep his promise. He would honor his mother's God.

Lower fell his head upon the casement. The boy was dreaming of Grandmamma Evans and Rachel and Hugh Mercer.

A door was opened below, and a light step ascended the stairs.

"Are you asleep, Quince?" It was Esther.

"Not asleep—no." "Father is restless and a little wandering. Will you go for Dr. Falkner?"

"I will go;" and quickly Quince sped away upon his mission.

"Fortunate that I was at home," said the doctor as he came in a few minutes later.—"When did you observe the change?" turning to Esther.

"He was not so well yesterday, but he would not think of it as serious. 'A little tired.' That is all," he said.

Dr. Falkner remained during the night, and morning found his patient better. "He will live through this attack," he said to Esther. "But you must warn him against excitement; he has not strength to bear up under pressure."

As the days passed and the sick man vibrated between his chair by the parlor fire and the bed in his own room, there was a notable change in the house—fewer visitors and more quiet talks. Not infrequently now Quince saw that his Bible was not lying in the place where he had left it, but just within the door, as though placed there hastily. Was Esther reading it for herself, or did she read it to the invalid? Once she asked who marked the passages, and the next instant she added that one day in his room she had opened it and read several of the marked verses.

"It was my mother's Bible; she marked the passages that brought especial comfort to her heart," Quince answered.

"It must be beautiful; and what comfort such trust gives one who can feel it to be well founded! Your mother must have felt this. I wish I could have known your mother, Quince."

CHAPTER X.

DEATH OF MR. PETTIES.

The winter term of Mr. Ashburton's school was drawing near to its close, and Quince found his hands full. It was the custom to have a grand examination at the end of the term. Demonstrations on the blackboard, scientific studies, history, elocution and oratory,—all passed before the eyes of delighted parents; and woe to the teacher if his pupils did not show off to advantage! Natural ability was not to be taken into account; inherited tendencies had nothing to do in the estimate. If one excelled and another proved to be a lagger, it was often judged to be owing to the partiality of the instructor.

With a woman's tact, Esther slipped the burden of general work to other shoulders than Quince's.

"It is enough to break a man down," she said. "And father has so many calls upon him."

Ballard was in every day, and he brought books and papers; but Mr. Petties could not read them, or he had lost all interest in them—possibly the latter. Sometimes a frag-

ment of speech would float outward, Ballard saying on one occasion,

"When a tree falls, it lies there; life has gone out of it. Just so with a man; his breath goes out like the flickering of a candle, and he is gone, there is no reviving him again."

"It all hinges upon that one book. If it is true, then a man lives again. A tree does not, but a man has another principle of life," returned Mr. Petties.

"Come, come! you are not troubled?" said Ballard, lightly. "You do not mean that you are troubled?"

"When a man has lived in his house until he can see stars through the roof, he feels disposed to question, perhaps," came from the invalid.

"Why, man alive! you do not mean to say that sickness has weakened you?" exclaimed Ballard.

"Not that; and still the thought will come at night, you know: 'What if it is all true and we have made a mistake!'"

While Ballard continued to come in every day, the duration of his visits grew shorter. Sometimes he hardly stopped to sit down; at other times he merely dropped into a chair by the side of the invalid and ran over the news of the day. Evidently there was a change in his friend, and he did not care to know just what it was. Esther was always in the room now, and on several occasions he noticed that she must have been reading from a book that looked to him very much like a Bible.

To Esther it was a cold, cruel doctrine which Ballard held—that the dead rise not. Johnny had gone from her, but he was her boy still; dying she would go to him. Life would not be worth living without this hope. Farther than this Esther did not go; hence she was troubled.

When the examination came round, Quince went through with his duties in the same quiet manner, not outwardly disturbed, although keenly alive to praise and to censure. He had improved, and he felt that he had improved. As a teacher his classes were favorably spoken of in *The Barnston Weekly*, and his Latin exercise was pronounced to be something quite remarkable for so young a scholar.

Going home, Mr. Petties led him to talk of his studies and of his hopes for the future.

"Father is much better to-day," Esther said. "He has been talking of you, and I read to him from your book."

Esther did not say "the Bible," but Quince knew that the book she mentioned was no other. He wanted to ask how the change had been effected, but he wisely determined to wait for another opportunity.

"You have had a hard time this winter," Mr. Petties said. "I shall soon be up now, and then we'll study Latin together. As a lad I was fond of Latin, and I've studied it more or less since. A grand language, but not equal to the Greek. You'll be coming to that now. We'll study together. It shan't be all work when the spring opens."

With Quince sitting by the fire and talking of his school-life, the man was a boy again. It was in vain that Esther reminded him that he must be especially careful; he did not incline to keep silent, and at length Quince made his lessons for the next day an excuse for going to his room. Clapping hands with the invalid, he thanked him for his kindness, making that the base of any favorable mention that had been made of him.

With a tenderness he had never before shown, the white-haired man drew the brown boyish face down to his own, holding it there and saying tenderly,

"Good-night, Johnny. We will study together when the spring opens."

Esther was standing by the hearth. Was her father wandering, or did he find an expression in Quince's face that reminded him of Johnny, and thus purposely gave him the name that was so dear to both?

After Quince left the parlor, Mr. Petties persisted in sitting up.

"I feel so much stronger," he said to Esther. "It is pleasant to think of it—I have not thought of it in a long time—the old house with the yard and the well-sweep and the elms. They were old trees when you were a little girl. Eat old trees when you are coming, and we will go back together. I think your mother will be pleased, and Johnny—yes, Johnny. I can see the boy's eyes dance. And no wonder; Johnny's eyes were always dancing. Oh, Esther, you are crying," lifting his hand to wipe tears

from her face. Esther was not suffering; he had had sadly near.

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