

## JENNY'S HONEYSUCKLE;

A STORY OF A FLOWER MISSION.

By REV. FREDERIC WAGSTAFF.

THERE are yet many untried ways by means of which access may be had to human hearts. He who spoke as never man spoke has left us a world of suggestiveness in His teachings. It is not only the matter of His discourses that we who labour in His vineyard have to study. There is an ever-flowing freshness of instruction to Christian workers in the manner of His teaching, which, if rightly considered, would lift our labours above the common tracks and ruts of sameness, and cause those to whom we speak to hear us gladly. Of late years, there have been many new methods of working—not all equally wise or equally successful—but all interesting as showing what may be done to impart a fresh interest to the oldest truths, and to invest even the tritest sayings with the air of novelty.

We don't know who invented "flower missions," but whoever first hit upon the happy thought must have been one who was quick to detect the inner meaning of our Lord's sermon on the Mount, and who knew that the lilies of the field were capable of teaching other lessons than those of contented trust in Providence. The flowerets have a thousand lessons for the open eye and heart as they bloom in field and garden; but to the denizen of some crowded city court they bring special messages of love and mercy, as many a poor sinful soul has discovered to his lasting joy. It is of such a case we have to tell in the present article.

In one of the close "yards" abutting upon a great thoroughfare in the east of London, are the head-quarters of an unpretending but very useful mission. It were possible to fill pages with the story of its humble work, as its band of self-denying labourers pursue their toil, unnoticed, indeed, of man, but not unseen of God. One is sometimes tempted to wonder how it is that such workers find encouragement to continue their hamunly-speaking unremunerated endeavours. There is, as everyone knows, a certain stimulus in public recognition and popular applause that enables the weary to persevere, and gives, at least, temporary strength to the weak. In the back lanes of our cities, and in the retirement of our country villages there are many weak and weary ones who never meet with the stimulus of that encouragement. And yet they persevere—more persistent, more unwavering, and more successful frequently than those whose lot seems cast in more congenial places. They have encouragement, though not of earthly kind. They *had* applause, though not from human lips. "For God is not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love." And so it comes about that the little band, whose sphere of usefulness lies round — yard, continue steadily plodding on their way, garnering but little harvest that can be seen on earth, but storing up in heaven a rich blessing to be made known at the last day.

Among other means of doing the Master's will, the managers of "— Yard Mission" have adopted the plan of distributing small bouquets of flowers among the crowded dwellings in the unsavoury courts and alleys round. From distant places in the country—north, south, east, and west—sympathising Christian friends send their supplies of flowers; and little bunches are neatly tied together, each having wrapped round it some appropriate text of Scripture, and thus fragrance as of heaven itself is conveyed to homes that need it much. Awhile ago a large quantity of honeysuckle thus found its way from some quiet country garden to the noisy city court. Divided into smaller portions, the fragrant flower was speedily transferred to some of the darksome houses near.

On the following Sunday evening the mission-room was open as usual for the purpose of making known the love of God. Its rough walls were made slightly by bright-coloured mottoes, testifying to the goodness of the Heavenly Father, and rough voices sang with hearty, if unmusical tones, some simple Gospel hymns. The director of the mission, with an eye quick to detect signs of special interest, was soon attracted to a poorly-clad girl in the remotest corner of the room, whose thin, pale face was but too true an index to the sorrow of the heart within. As tears slowly trickled down the young woman's cheek, the gentleman kindly spoke to her, desiring to guide her to the Saviour she so evidently needed. It was

with difficulty he could get any replies to his remarks; but he noticed that in the bosom of her dress she wore a little sprig of honeysuckle, and that, as her agitation increased, her trembling fingers played nervously about the leaves and blossoms of the poor, withered flower.

Rightly guessing that this flower was one of the many sent out from the mission-room a few days before the gentleman spoke to the girl about it. "Come," said he, in a friendly tone, "tell me all about it. It's that flower has brought you here. What does it make you think of?"

"Oh sir," she replied, taking the half-dead blossoms from her dress, and pressing them passionately to her trembling lips, while her tears fell like rain upon the withered leaves. "Oh, sir, it's this honeysuckle. My poor mother's cottage used to be covered with it; and I ran away from home and broke her heart."

And so it was. Two years before the wayward, sinful girl had turned her back upon her peaceful country home, leaving it at the time when the air was heavy with the rich fragrance of the honeysuckle that almost hid the windows from the traveller's sight. Jenny had gone off to London with another and older girl, little thinking, it may be, of the perils that would await her there, and all unconscious of the depths of sin, and sorrow, and suffering to which she was going. She went from bad to worse, lost to virtue and to shame, living a life of sin in that region of moral heathenism at once the pride and the disgrace of Englishmen—our country's metropolis. Thoughts of her childhood's home, and of her broken-hearted mother would, at times obtrude themselves, but they were put away and drowned by drink, until the heart was well nigh hardened against all remorse and against all hope of reclamation.

But God was working out a plan for her restoration. The flower mission was performing its quiet unostentatious task, and the sprigs of honeysuckle were distributed as we have said. One of them was left at the door of the house where Jenny lived. Returning from the streets, the outcast girl caught sight of it upon the table. The sight brought back the memory of her cottage days; the very air seemed fragrant with the scent of far away loveliness and beauty. The heart of the sinner was reached at last. Hearing that the flower came from the Mission Hall in — Yard, Jenny found her way there, as we have described. The story of a father's love melted her heart, and a resolution was formed to return at once to the home of an earthly parent and a heavenly one.

Inquiry at the house next day elicited the fact that the resolution had been carried out. Without money to pay a railway fare, the poor girl started off on foot at day-break on the Monday morning, and as the sun was setting on the Tuesday night her pilgrimage was ended, and the mother's cottage in a Hampshire village came in sight. Weary, hungry, and footsore the wanderer met a loving, forgiving welcome. Mother and daughter together lifted up their voices and wept, but the tears of the former were tears of joy. The dry, dead flowers that had been God's messengers of mercy to a sinful heart lay scentless upon the table, as the penitent told how she had been led to return; but the fragrant smell of the living ones borne upon the breeze through the open window was an emblem of that sweet smell which is ever precious before God, the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart.

## THE SNOWDROPS.

FROM THE GERMAN.

IN the parsonage of a little village lived an aged minister with his only daughter. The wife of his youth had long before been laid to rest under the green turf of the churchyard, and the sole support and comfort of his old age was his motherless child, Mary. He had educated her carefully, endeavouring by every means in his power to supply the loss, so early sustained, of her other parent; and it was the grand object of his life to lead her young heart to place its chief trust in Him who is our sole unfailing Friend. He endeavoured above all things to lead his child to a knowledge of her Saviour-God, and to induce her to become His disciple. It is true that in order to accomplish this end, the Spirit of our God must Himself take up His abode in the heart, but we are none the less to blame if we throw hindrances and obstacles in the way of that Spirit's work, and it is none the less our duty to endeavour, by every means in our power, to forward