

Wicked folks, promptly responded Polly. 'Why?'

'Cos they hates you; an' cusses you, an' beats yer in the face, an' swipes yer coats and things.'

Helen smiled in spite of herself. 'I'm glad one scholar has studied her lesson—and thought about it, too,' she added kindly.

'An' iss it to love them sort we're tol', Mees Heleen?'

The question came in sharp, surprised tones from the little Italian girl—the first she had ever asked since entering the school.

'Yes, Margaret.' Helen never called her 'Madge' now. It was Jesus himself who told us so. We must love, he said, those who hate us; bless them that curse us; pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us. Christ said any one could be nice and obliging to those who are the same to him; but when you can forgive and love and pray for them that hate you and would injure you, then you show that you are Christ's little one, and he is helping you, for it is the hardest thing in the whole world that he asks us to do!'

'But I no love 'e Signor,' exclaimed Madge, excitedly; 'I no love heem, Mees Heleen; no pray for heem; no do good to heem. He did'n' know 'e Signor, Mees Heleen, 'e Jesus Lord.'

Helen closed her Bible. Her eyes were full of tears as she turned to the perplexed child.

'Do you think, dear, that the Saviour knew nothing of wicked men? Listen!'

Then in the simplest words she could find she told the story of the cross. She told them of the agony in the garden, when his friends all left him to meet that bitter hour alone. Told them of the one who sold his lord; the thorny crown he wore; the mocking, taunting rabble; a little of the trial; more of the fainting, tottering form under the cruel cross. Long before she reached that final picture the children had drawn close to her in breathless interest, and the little Madge was sobbing as if her own heart would break in sympathy with the suffering Jesus.

Never before had the young teacher been so earnest. She seemed to feel the story with those questioning eyes looking into hers, as she never had felt it before. Enough to whisper of that dying prayer, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!' Enough, or more than enough, for those young hearts to carry away!

A small, grimy hand, plucked at her skirts as they rose for the last hymn.

'An' he say—'e Jesus Lord—at I mus' love 'im, 'e Signor?' whispered Madge, with quivering lips.

Helen felt her own eyes fill. 'Yes,' she whispered back again; 'but we'll both ask him, Margaret, and he will make it easier for you.' And then as the school sang—

'When he cometh; when he cometh
To make up his jewels'—

a happy thought came to her, and she told it to the child.

'You are really a jewel now, little Margaret—a priceless pearl—did you know? That is the meaning of your name!'

A wonderful look came into those sad eyes. And though, for once, she took no part in the singing, she lost no word of the song—

'Like the stars of the morning
His bright crown adorning,
They shall shine in their beauty
Like gems for his crown.'

And as the last words died away she slipped quietly through the crowd and was gone,

and the young teacher little dreamed where and under what circumstances she should next see poor little 'Macaroni Madge.'

'Daughter, can this be that little Italian?' They were at the breakfast table, and Mr. Cone was hastily scanning the morning paper.

Like a flash Helen was at the back of his chair, her quick eyes travelling far ahead of his up and down the columns.

'Oh, it is! It is!' she cried, after a moment. 'Mother, she's frightfully burned—perhaps dead by this time. The wretch! Oh, I couldn't eat, mother. Papa, do come! We may be able to do something!'

But Helen had time to compose herself before the hospital was reached, for it was quite at the other end of the city. Her father had told her all the details that the paper had given of the terrible fire in the old tenement house by the river. The drunken Italian fiddler was supposed to be the cause, and the firemen had succeeded in landing him safely in the street; had, indeed, supposed all were out of the tottering, seething mass, which was but a mere shell at best, when, to their horror, a child appeared at the window of the third story clasping to her breast a violin. Not a moment was lost in adjusting the ladders. A brave man was at the top as quickly as he could ascend, but by that time the scanty night garment of the girl was in flames. There was but an instant to drag her forth, smothering the fire as best he might in the tarpaulin he wrapped closely about the slight form, as they descended. She had fainted before tender hands received her from the brave rescuer, and in this condition was placed in the ambulance and driven to the hospital. 'She was seriously, perhaps fatally, burned; but more could not be learned at the hour of going to press.'

They found the little patient swathed in cotton and bandages. They had no trouble in gaining admittance. Mr. Cone was well known to them, and Helen was a frequent visitor, it often coming in the line of her mission work.

'I thought it must be you, Miss Helen, the poor child is constantly asking for,' said the nurse, coming to them. 'She has moaned "Mees Heleen" continuously since recovering consciousness. I should have sent had you not come, fearing fever if she were not gratified. Otherwise I would not have her disturbed.'

'Is her case hopeless?' inquired Mr. Cone. 'At first we thought not; but the burns upon her body and lower limbs are of such a nature as to make recovery very doubtful. She will never walk again should she live.'

'Oh!' cried Helen, burying her face in her handkerchief; 'poor, poor little Margaret!'

The nurse had left them for a moment, and now returned to say that they could go—or, rather, Helen could—to the child's cot, but to wipe away all traces of tears and be as calm and quiet as possible.

An instant's pause beside the little white bed before Helen could stop the quivering of her lips. The big, sad eyes were hidden behind those folds of oiled silk; so they could not see that. Then a soft touch upon the bandaged hands and Helen whispered: 'Dear little Margaret, it is Miss Helen; I am come to take care of you!'

A pale little smile flickered for a moment across the blackened lips, which seemed struggling to form a sentence.

Bending quite close, Helen caught the words: 'He—say—I—must'—

Thinking she referred to some command of the drunken fiddler, Helen said 'Yes?' questioningly, and then waited for more.

'Jesus—Lord—love—do—do good!'

'Ah!' The young teacher caught her breath

quickly, while her heart swelled to bursting. Her work! But for her and that lesson this little one would be safe and well. Then as quickly, No, it was the Master's work. She had but repeated his message, and, living or dying, this little child was his.

'I understand, Margaret,' she told her. 'You did this for Christ. He taught you how to do good to the Signor, did he not?'

The lips trembled, then smiled, and she tried to touch the face bending over her with the little maimed hand, but the effort was too much, and it dropped back as she moaned had not Helen caught it and softly carried it to her lips.

The sufferer dropped into her first sleep, and thus the nurse found them upon her return.

Four days Helen watched beside that little cot, each morning bringing fresh flowers to lay against the small drawn face, for thus she could touch them and inhale their sweet fragrance. She was always quieter when Helen sat there. Helen knew. Helen could understand. The parched lips would murmur 'Sing!' and her teacher knew the song she most loved.

'Little children, little children
Who love their Redeemer
Are the pure ones, are the dear ones,
Bright gems for his crown.'

would bring sweet tears from the smarting eyes, and she would whisper 'pearl, priceless pearl.'

Once Helen asked her: 'Are you sorry, dear? The old violin was not worth much—not as much as your sweet life!'

The head moved slowly on the pillow. No, she was not sorry. 'All—had—monee'—Yes, it was probably all the miserable wretch did have to earn money by. He had never been here to see the child, though he had been told of her dying condition. She had only once asked about him, and when told that he was uninjured, as well as the old instrument she had risked her life for, seemed perfectly satisfied. 'Do good!—en'my,' and Helen never had asked again.

On the morning of the fifth day Helen came as usual. One glance at the white cot and she knew all.

'Don't grieve,' said the nurse, tears in her own eyes. 'He carries the lambs in his bosom, you know, Miss Helen, and truly this child was his.'

'Tell me,' said Helen, brokenly.

'There was nothing painful. She lay in a stupor most of the night. I roused her once for her medicine. "When he cometh, when he cometh," she repeated over and over, not recognizing me at all. She soon fell asleep. God took her then. She never woke.'

'I am glad, precious little pearl! I am so glad she went that way!'

In the mission chapel the following Sabbath a white casket stood before the desk covered completely with marguerites. The service was very simple. Helen's own pastor from the great church uptown came and told them the story as Helen had told it to him. He wept in the telling. And every heart in the over-crowded building, no matter how hardened and calloused by misery and crime, went out in sympathy to the little body lying shrouded there, whose life was laid down for Christ's sake.

And then a strange thing was done. The children were bidden to look upon the little dead face, and as they came, softly and reverently, a flower from off the coffin was given to each, until not one was left. 'She hath no need of them,' said Helen gently. 'He has come, and to-day she shines in her beauty, "a gem in his crown."—Herald and Presbyter.'