

"Yes, you can ; and it'll be so splendid. There, I'm stronger, now. Him as knows has given me the strength. Why, you're me over again, Bet, but you're twice as grand as me. You're me without my frets, and my contrariness. Fancy, Bet, what you'd be in this 'ere place ef you made that promise. Why, strong?—strong 'ud be no word for it ! You, with never your temper let out like a raging lion ! There'd be no one as could stand agen you, Bet. Your father,—why your father 'd give up the bad ways and the drink. And the little boys,—the little boys,—oh, Bet, Bet, ef you'd only make the promise it 'ud save them a'll from hell-fire."

"I'll do what I can, mother. See, you're wasting all your poor breath. I'll do what I can. You say it all out, and don't tremble so, poor mother."

"Hold my hands, then, child ; look me in the face, say the words after me—oh, my poor breath, my poor breath—God give me strength just to say the words. Bet, you hear. Bet, say them after me—' From this moment out I promise to take up with religion, so help me, Lord God Almighty ! '"

The woman said the words eagerly, with sudden and intense fire and passion ; her whole soul was in them—her dying hands hurt the girl with the firmness of their grip.

"Bet, Bet—you hain't spoke—you hain't spoke !"

"No, no, mother—I can't—not them words—no, mother."

Bet sat down again by the side of the bed ; her face was buried in the crimson counterpane ; a dry moan or two escaped her lips.

"I'd do anything for mother—anything now as she's