

voluble then. Mabel took no part in the conversation beyond the mere civilities of recognition, but she felt that she was talked at; that while his words were given to the children, their purport was for her; and it embarrassed her so, that she resolved on altering the hour and the place of their walk, and the advancing spring permitted her to make it half an hour later, and extend her stroll.

Meanwhile, Mr. Septimus Veering had returned with the two boys, Hopwood and Alton Burnish; but, except at breakfast and prayers, Mabel never saw the reverend gentleman; a circumstance she did not regret, as she felt an unaccountable shrinking from him. To her mind he was too smooth and complying; yet everyone was full of his praises, and she often felt condemned for holding so different an opinion.

During the first week of Mabel's residence in the house, Mrs. Burnish's indolence, and way of employing her as an amanuensis, had unfolded many things to her. First, that Mr. Delamere Burnish was the son of a former marriage, and no great favorite of his step-mother. As far as her apathetic nature could feel dislike she felt it towards him, though it took no active form. By a strange but common perversion of mind, she seemed to look upon him, though the eldest born, as the usurper of her own sons' rights, and often expressed to Mabel her gratification in the fact that commercial people were unfettered by the restrictions that landed gentry were bound by, in the bequeathing of property. She abused the law of primogeniture with a sense of justice that might not have been so acute if her own son had not been the younger. For a woman who called herself a sincere Christian, she certainly felt a strange complacency at the defections and delinquencies of others. The indecision of Delamere as to religion, and the satirical tone and dogmatism, as she called it, of Shafton Keen, were favorite topics with her; and no replies of Mabel's were ever less welcome than those which expressed a belief that there might be difference of opinion without heresy, and the hope that desert hearts might in time be fertilized with the dews of heavenly influence. Such charity she evidently thought latitudinarian, and was fortified in that opinion by Mr. Septimus Veering, who, if he was strong on no other point, always gave pungency to any hints and doubts about the piety of others, which it was at once Mrs. Burnish's weakness and pleasure to start.

On Sundays the children and Mabel dined at an early hour with the family, and then Mr. Burnish used to unbend himself a little and enter into conversation, chiefly on the subject of the morning sermon. The family attended, as it was more convenient than the district church, a proprietary chapel in the vicinity, where once a day Mr. Septimus Veering either read the service or preached, and Mabel found that difficult doctrinal questions were the most favorite topics with both Mr. and Mrs. Burnish. Anything clear and plain as to Christian duty and practice, which could be easily understood, Mabel always heard condemned—as though Christianity was a recondite matter, having to do only with theories and metaphysical subtleties, rather than with the daily life and its requirements. But as she listened very attentively to Mr. Burnish's expositions, and manifestly tried to sift the grain of sound meaning from the chaff of words, and moreover very modestly referred to him on all topics relating to the Scriptural instruction of the children, she had a fair chance of becoming a favorite. For though he said she "had not clear views, yet she was in a state of hopeful inquiry," even more grateful to him perhaps than strongly expressed and decided opinions.

At table, one peculiarity was noticed—Mabel was a rigid water-drinker—took the pure element as her beverage—which, indeed, was not exactly peculiar to her at that table; but she went a step farther, and, when Mr. Burnish very condescendingly asked her to take wine with him, she gently, but firmly, declined, alleging that she "never took wine, or any kind of strong drink, at any time."

(To be Continued.)

LITTLE BELL.

BY M. L. DICKINSON.

She was a drunkard's child, and she suffered. It was not often in the cruel way that men, made brutal by drink, make suffering for their little ones, but it was that way once in a while. There was one time when her little white body bore for many days four purple spots, the marks of the heavy fingers of her father's hand. The child had forgotten the pain, and her mother at night-fall hurried the little night gown on that the blue eyes might not see the stains. Her mother talked to her, too, all the time she was preparing her for bed, and kept the child's eyes fixed upon her own. Whether the little one saw the pain in her mother's face and felt the reason of the tremor in her hurrying hands we cannot tell; but, one night, she suddenly threw both arms about her neck and sobbed, "O mamma, it don't hurt me any more, and it hurts you all the time." And that was true, but the mother hoped that the child was too small to find it out. And she was small, only a baby in years, but her little heart knew—knew her father's curse, knew her mother's pain, knew it was the dreadful drink that caused it all. God had made her so that she could not help knowing, and she had drunk in the sorrow as she lay a baby on her mother's heart. Her childish

eyes had learned to see, and her soul to feel every shadow on her mother's face, while no one could have dreamed she understood.

And now it was growing worse and worse, and the drink was doing one of those dreadful deeds from which the heart of the most brutal dram-seller in the land would have shrunk with horror, could he only have seen the work go on. It was slowly, surely, torturing a little child to death. She had found out too soon that it hurt her mother, and she was such a part of her mother's heart that she could not help thrilling with grief.

The same storm that sways the trees bends the violet at its foot, and the tree may be strong to stand upright again, and the violet be beaten to its death. It was not the bodily cruelty that was slaying her: it was simply that she could not bear the hardness and harshness and lack of love in her father and in her home. The liquor made him cross and morose, and it was this spirit of ugliness and hatred she could not become accustomed to and could not bear. She could not forget him when he was out of the house, though her mother tried to divert and amuse her, and often thought she succeeded. But she had begun to dread his coming when a baby, and would tremble and cry at his angry voice and look. And the nervous terror grew till she trembled when she heard his step, though after a while she tried not to let her mother see her fear. But her father saw it and was angry, and took a habit of frightening her with threats, and the more he drank the more he seemed to like to give her a shock and to feel his power over her while he despised her for her fears. When he found that she was inclined to get away when he came in, he demanded that he should be greeted with a kiss, which he generally returned with a curse or a blow. Poor child, it was not the weight of the hand. That rarely hurt her much, but it was the reaction of her whole sensitive nature from the strain of going against its shrinking and repulsion. He blamed her mother, and said she influenced the child against him, which did not make things easier for the child. And under it she was slowly, almost imperceptibly, moving toward the end.

Nothing was the matter with her physically, so the physicians said. She had only missed the heritage of childhood, and knew nothing of real mirthfulness and joy. Yet she was a real child, and all children's things, toys, flowers and plays, and the companionship of other children, were sweet to her, but in the midst of her merriment she would remember her father, and all her pleasures were changed to dread. He never came in but in one way, not too intoxicated to walk, but just enough to be ugly, ill-tempered and tyrannical. At six years old she went to school, but the thought of her father followed her even there. She was afraid of meeting him in the street, for whenever she did so he growled at her and cursed her before the other children with insupportable shame. It was useless for her mother to tell her she ought not to care. She did care, and, alas! so many children care whose caring no one heeds. If the book of the angel who writes the sorrows caused by drink could only be opened for us at the records of what LITTLE children have borne, the story would be enough; we could leave unreckoned the anguish of mothers and wives. In this case it may not have seemed great suffering to us with our hardened nerves and toughened fibre of soul, but it was more than enough for the tender heart of a child. Under it she moved nearer and nearer the land where God's angels were waiting to show her pitiful care, and by and by her mother took alarm. "Give it up, Henry," she pleaded with her husband, "give it up for just a few months or weeks even, for I assure you I am afraid the child will die. You know how she is made, Henry, and every night for years she has whispered to me after it was dark, 'Mamma, you said, some day papa would love me, and would not be cross. Mamma, when will it be?' Oh, Henry, you know what makes you so, give it up, I beg you, for the sake of our little girl." And the father turned with an oath that the child heard upstairs in her little bed, and struck a blow that hurt far less than the angry "Let her die," with which he strode away to the saloon. After that Little Bell never asked her mother at night again if her father would not be good. After that she never seemed to fear, or to mind when he came into the room and abuse her mother for indulging and humoring a lazy girl. But her clear eyes followed him with a pitiful, appealing look that often sent him growling out of the room. He had steeled his heart against her and would not believe she was really very ill.

But there came a day when a messenger found him at his work and told him to hasten, for his little girl was "going fast."

What! Bell! little tender, patient Bell, who wanted to love him, and whom he would not love, going away, and "going fast." He staggered into the room with a step that for once was not unsteady by drink, and throwing himself by the bedside begged for a look and a word and just one kiss. Sobbing aloud he seemed to disturb a rest into which she had already gone, for the brow contracted, the white lips quivered, and from the parted lips fluttered, "Yes, papa, I'll kiss you! You can strike, Bell isn't afraid," and she tried to lift her little head to take them together, the kiss and the blow. Then the gaze wandered, the sobs seemed to distress and disturb her. The falling sight caught her mother's tearful gaze. One more little effort and a smile.

"Don't cry, mamma, Bell isn't—'fraid of papa any—more—isn't—a bit—'fraid," and the smile and the word passed together, and poor little Bell was dead.—*American Reformer.*