

LITTLE FAITH.

BY MRS. WALTON, AUTHOR OF
"CHRISTIE'S OLD ORGAN."

(From Sunday at Home.)

CHAPTER VI.—(Continued.)

Time passed on, and still no one came.

What could they be doing? Where could her father have taken them?

The church clock struck five; it was getting dark now. Faith could only dimly see the form of Mrs. Gubbins stretched in the corner of the attic. She did not know what to do. Mrs. Fraser would be expecting her at home, and would wonder that she had stayed so long, and yet she could not bear the thought of not seeing her father after all. Was there no one who could tell her anything about him? No, she could not think of any one. The people downstairs were new-comers, and probably did not know anything whatever of the inhabitants of the attic. There was no one but Mrs. Gubbins. Should she awake her and ask her, or should she go away without hearing of her father?

Faith decided to go away; but when she was half way down the stairs she changed her mind; it would be terrible to wait till tomorrow to know what was the matter with her father. All night long she would be wondering where he was, and she would lie awake thinking of him, she was sure of that. For a very dreadful thought had crossed her mind. Was her father dead, and had Mrs. Gubbins sent the children to the workhouse? The more Faith thought of this, the more she felt afraid that this was what was the matter. She could not go home without knowing the truth. So she went back again, and knocked once more, very loudly, at the attic door. She hoped that Mrs. Gubbins would awake, and come to the door, and then she could speak to her there without going inside.

But no sound was to be heard within, though Faith repeated her knock three or four times. So she opened the door, and went into the attic again. Mrs. Gubbins was lying just as Faith had seen her before; she did not seem to have moved at all.

"I shall have to speak to her," said the child to herself; "she seems so very sound asleep."

She crossed the rotten floor, trembling at the noise she made, and went up to where Mrs. Gubbins was lying.

Then Faith stood still for a minute, and prayed. She took it to the Lord in prayer. She asked her Friend to stand by her, and help her, and not to let Mrs. Gubbins hurt her.

As she prayed she happened to look up at the skylight window, and there, looking down into the dark, dismal attic, was a bright

and beautiful star. Little Faith looked at the star, and it seemed to be smiling at her, she thought. It seemed like the loving eye of the Lord Jesus watching her, and she thought she heard Him asking her that question again, "Little Faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Oh, what strength it gave her! Faith felt that her prayer was heard. Jesus was by her side, and he would help her. She would be no longer afraid.

"Mrs. Gubbins!" said Faith in a whisper; "Mrs. Gubbins!"

But Mrs. Gubbins did not hear.

"Mrs. Gubbins! Mrs. Gubbins!" she repeated, much louder than before.

But no answer came.

"Mrs. Gubbins! Mrs. Gubbins!" She almost shouted the words this time, but still the old woman did not move. "How very sound asleep she must be," thought the child.

It was nearly dark now, so that Faith could only just see Mrs.



"WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S THE MATTER?"

Gubbins' face, but she fancied that her eyes were not quite closed. One hand was hanging out from under the blanket close to Faith, and the child took hold of it, thinking that she would be able in this way to arouse the old woman from her heavy sleep.

But she had no sooner taken Mrs. Gubbins' hand than she started back in terror. The hand was icy cold. Faith had never felt anything like it since Mother Mary died. She remembered how she had crept to Mother Mary's side the night after she died, not liking to go to sleep without giving her a kiss as usual, and then she remembered how startled she had been to find her so very, very cold, for she had never seen death before. And now Mrs. Gubbins' hand felt just like that, just as cold, just as motionless. Could Mrs. Gubbins be dead?

Faith ran to the door, and down the stairs as fast as she could.

"What is it? what's the matter?" said a woman who was coming out of her room on the next landing, and heard Faith's quick footstep, and saw by the light of her candle how pale and frightened the child looked.

"Oh, please," said little Faith, "I wish you'd come upstairs; I believe she's dead!"

"Dead! Who's dead!" said the woman. "What is it, child? tell me who's dead?"

"Mrs. Gubbins," said Faith, "the old woman as lives upstairs; haven't you never seen her passing by?"

"What! that old woman as is always going out for drink? Ay, I've seen her," said the woman.

Two or three more women came out of their rooms at this moment, and they all agreed to go upstairs with Faith.

The woman with the candle went first, and flashed its light on the old woman's face.

"Yes, she's gone," she said solemnly; "she's gone, poor thing!"

related when was the last time that he or she had seen Mrs. Gubbins, and when they had also all related, in turn, what had been the exact state of their feelings of horror and surprise when they had been summoned to the attic just now, and had been told that she was dead,—they came to the conclusion that Jem Payne, one of their number, should go at once to the parish officer, and report the case to him, and leave all further steps in the matter in his hands.

When all this was settled Faith turned to go; she was very glad to be able to leave the attic and to go homewards. She felt very awe-struck and solemn as she walked home, and she could hardly realize it yet. Mrs. Gubbins dead! alone in the attic dead! And her father gone, she knew not where! It all seemed too strange and too dreadful to be true.

Faith was very glad when she reached Mrs. Fraser's house and was able to tell all that had happened to the kind old lady.

"Oh, Faith," said Mrs. Fraser, when she had heard it all and they were talking it over together, "may God keep you, my dear child, from the love of drink. It is a terrible thing when a man drinks, but, oh, I think it is worse when a woman drinks."

"Mrs. Gubbins didn't always drink so bad," said Faith, "but she's got worse and worse lately."

"Yes," said Mrs. Fraser, "people always get worse and worse. Satan tempts them and then they yield, and then he tempts them again, and they yield again, and he gets a greater hold on them every time. Only God's grace, little Faith, can enable a drunkard to lose his love for drink; nothing else will do it. Pledges alone cannot do it, resolutions alone cannot do it, nothing but God's grace helping him can keep him from falling. Does your father drink, little Faith?"

"Oh, no," said Faith, "never—not a drop he doesn't. He always brought every penny he took home to Mother Mary, and then when she was dead to Mrs. Gubbins. Oh, poor father, I wonder where he is?"

"Do you remember that verse, Faith," said Mrs. Fraser: "'If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it?'"

The child thought she had heard it before, but she did not know it perfectly, so Mrs. Fraser found it for her in her Testament and let her learn it.

"Now, little Faith," she said, when the child had repeated the verse correctly, "God knows where your father is. He sees him at this moment, just as you see me. He sees what he is doing, and what the children are doing. He knows the name of the place they are in, and the name of the street, and the num-

After much talking, and after many exclamations of horror, and after each person had separately