

The Quoths' Department.

THE LITTLE PAUPER.

The day was gloomy and chilly. At the freshly opened grave stood a delicate little girl of five years, only mourner for the silent heart beneath. Friendless, hopeless, homeless, she had wept till she had no more tears to shed, and now she stood with her scanty clothes fluttering in the wind, pressing her little hands tightly over her heart as if to still its beating.

"It's no use fretting," said the rough man, as he stamped the last shovel full of earth over all the child had to love; "fretting won't bring dead folk to life; pity you hadn't got no ship's cousins somewhere to take you; it's a tough world, this 'ere, I tell ye; I don't see how ye're going to weather it. Guess I'll take ye round to Mrs. Fetherbee's, she's got a power of children and wants a hand to help her, so come along. If you cry enough to float the ark it won't do you no good." Allie obeyed him mechanically, turning her head every few minutes to take another, and yet another look where her mother lay buried.

The morning sun shone in upon an underground kitchen in the crowded city. Mrs. Fetherbee, attired in gay colored calico dress, with any quantity of tinsel jewellery, sat sewing some showy cotton lace on a cheap pocket handkerchief. A boy of five years was disputing with a little girl of three, about an apple; from big words they had come to hard blows; and peace was finally declared at the price of an orange apiece, and a stick of candy—each combatant "putting in" for the biggest.

Poor Allie, with pale cheek and swollen eyelids, was staggering up and down the floor under the weight of a mammoth baby, who was amusing himself, pulling out at intervals little handfuls of hair.

"Quiet that child! can't ye!" said Mrs. Fetherbee, in no very gentle tone. "I don't wonder the darling is cross to see such a solemn face. You must get a little life into you some how, or you won't earn the salt of your porridge here. There, I declare, you've half put his eyes out with those long curls dangling around; come here, and have 'em cut off, they don't look proper for a charity child;" (and she glanced at the short, stubby crops on the heads of the little Fetherbees.)

Allie's lip quivered, as she said, "Mother used to love to brush them smooth every morning; she said they were like little dead sisters; please don't," she said beseechingly.

"But I tell ye I do please to cut 'em, so there's an end of that," said she, as the several ringlets fell in a shining heap on the kitchen floor; "and do for creation's sake, stop talking about 'dead' folks, and now eat your breakfast if you want it; I forgot you hadn't had any—there's some the children's left; if you're hungry it will go down, and if you ain't you can go without."

"Poor Allie! The daintiest morsel wouldn't have 'gone down,'" her eyes filled with tears that wouldn't be forced back, and she sobbed out, "I must cry if you beat me for it—my heart pains me so bad."

"H-l-l-y—T-l-l-y! what's all this!" said a broad-faced, rosy milkman, as he set his shining can down on the kitchen table; "what's all this Miss Fetherbee? I'd as lief eat pins and needles as hear a child cry. Who is she, pointing to Allie, and what's the matter of her?"

"Why, the long and short of it is, she's a poor pauper that we've taken in out of charity, and she's crying at her good luck, that's all," said the lady, with a vexed toss of her head. "That's the way benevolence is always rewarded; nothing on earth to do here, but tend the baby, and amuse the children, and run to the door, and wash the dishes, and dust the furniture, and tidy the kitchen, and go of a few errands, ungrateful little baggage!"

Jemmy's heart was as big as his farm—and that covered considerable ground. Glancing pityfully at the little weeper, he said faithfully "That child's going to be sick, Mrs Fetherbee, and then what are you going to do with her? Besides, she's too young to be of much use to you. You'd better let me take her."

"Well, I should n't wonder if you was half right," said the frightened woman. "She's been trouble enough, already. I'll give her a quit claim."

"Will you go with me, little maid?" said Jemmy with a bright, good natured smile.

"If you please," said Allie, laying her little hand confidently in his rough palm.

"Sit up closer," said Jemmy, as he put one arm round her to steady her fragile figure, as they rattled over the stony pavements. "We shall soon be out of this smoky old city—concern it! I always feel as if I was poisoned, every time I come into town—and then we'll see what sweet hay-fields, and new milk, and clover blossoms, and kind hearts will do for you—you poor little plucked chicken! Where did you come from, when you came to live with that old Jezebel?"

"From my mother's grave," said Allie.

"Poor thing! poor thing!" said Jemmy, wiping away a tear with his coat sleeve. "We'll, never mind. I wish I hadn't asked you. I'm always running my head agin a beam. Do you like to feed chickens, hey? Did you ever milk a cow? or ride on top a hay-cart? or go a berrying. Do you love bouncing red apples, and peaches as big as you. fist? It shall go hard with you if you don't have 'em all. What's come of your hair, child? Have you had your head shaved?"

"Mrs Fetherbee cut it off," said Allie.

"The old serpent! I wish I'd come in a little quicker. Was it your curls them young 'uns were playing with? We'll, never mind," said he, looking at the sweet face before him, you don't need 'em; and they might get you to looking in the glass oftener than was good for you."

"We'll, here we are, I declare; and there stands my old woman in the doorway, shaling her eyes from the sun. I guess she wonders where I raised you!"

"Look here, Betsey! Do you see this child? The earth is fresh on her mother's grave. She has neither kith nor kin. I've brought her from that old skinflint of a Fetherbee, and here she is. If you like her, it's well and good; and if you don't, she'll stay here just the same; but I know you will," said he coaxingly, as he passed his brawny arm around her capacious waist. And now get her something that will bring the color to her cheeks; for mind you, I have no white staves on my farm!"

How sweetly Allie's little tired limbs rested in the fragrant lavender sheets! A tear lingered on her cheek, but its birth was not of sorrow, Jemmy pointed it out to his wife, as they stood looking at her before retiring to rest.

"Never forget it, Betsey," said he. "Harsh words aint for the motherless. May God forgive me, if she ever hears one from my lips."—*Oliver Branch.*

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