

Such people naturally are nuisances, this is no world for them, and poor Desire's home at the poor-house became a permanent one. She laboured there with a good will, and once in a while she went out to nurse some poor body suffering under mortal illness, who could not pay for more able attendance and who was too ill to be a stumbling-block to Desire's practical Christianity and to incur her remark or rebuke; so that she fairly earned her living. But it was a great pleasure to her now to be brought into a new home where there were children; for children were the delight of her heart, and there were five of these delightful, troublesome, tormenting comforts in the Styles family, besides the baby.

Poor little Mrs. Styles was a minister's wife. In her girlhood she had imagined this to be an honour almost beyond ambition—a sort of half-way saintship, that should open the very doors of heaven to her while yet on earth; and when she reached this awful pinnacle and became the promised bride of the Rev. Samuel Styles, a tall, pale, solemn youth, with head in the clouds, her real, human love mingled with the superhuman aspect of the matter till she felt, as the old schoolmaster used to say, "exalted to heaven on the point of a privilege." But when she was fairly married to her adored Samuel and set in her place as official "minister's wife" over a small parish, where salary was just enough to starve on, and half paid at that, pretty little Nellie Styles found out that, as Uncle Israel said, "ministers are men," and heaven is no nearer their wives than it is to other people.

The Reverend Samuel had been resolved on entering the ministry from childhood; he had been educated by a widowed mother to that end; he had been shut up, like a half-fledged chicken in a coop, in that orthodox monastery, a theological seminary, for four years; crammed with good theology and poor food; plenty of Hebrew and no fresh air; Greek paradigms, but not a particle of exercise; a thorough and exhaustive knowledge of the lives of prophets, apostles and saints, but no acquaintance with or interest in the lives of every-day people about him; a straight faith in his own creed and a sincere disgust at every other; and withal learning from the atmosphere which surrounded him an unconscious lesson, agreeable extremely to the natural man—a lesson of his own importance and superiority to the rest of mankind.

Thanks to the vitality of the Christian religion, which will leaven the lump in due time and stand its own ground in defiance of all the stifling and cellarage it undergoes at the hands of trembling men, terrified lest air should overthrow it and light blast it, the ministerial training-schools of to-day are far superior to those of thirty years ago; and even in their first estate there were mighty men of valour, whose broad and healthy natures defied their cramping and withstood their mildew; but this man was by nature narrow and acid, the saving graces of his character being a deep though silent affectionateness and a rugged honesty. But in spite of these traits, which needed sunshine and strength