

"Yes," said the child—for the stranger's kind manner had made her bold—"yes; for the great ball to-night; and these satin slippers must be spangled, and——"

The beautiful woman took the bundle from the child's hand, and unrolled it. You do not know why her face flushed, and then turned pale; but I, yes, I looked into the bundle, and on the inside of the slipper I saw a name—a lady's name—written; but I shall not tell it.

"And where does your mother live, little girl?"

So the child told her where, and then she told her that her father was dead, and that her little baby brother was sick, and that her mother bound shoes, that they might have bread; but that sometimes they were very hungry, and sometimes they were cold; and that her mother sometimes cried, because she had no money to buy milk for her little sick brother. And then I saw that the lady's eyes were full of tears; and she rolled up the bundle quickly, and gave it back to the little girl—but she gave her nothing else; no, not even one sixpence; and, turning away, went back into the store from which she had just come out.—As she went away, I saw the glitter of a diamond pin. Presently she came back, and, stepping into a handsome carriage, rolled off. The little girl looked after her for a moment, and then, with her little bare feet colder than they were before, ran quickly away. I went with the little girl, and I saw her go to a narrow, damp street, and into a small dark room; and I saw her mother—her sad, faded mother; but with a face so sweet, so patient, hushing and soothing a sick baby.—And the baby slept; and the mother laid it on her own lap, and the bundle was unrolled; and a dim candle helped her with her work, for though it was not night, yet her room was very dark.

Then, after a while, she kissed her little girl, and bade her warm her poor little frozen feet over the scanty fire in the grate, and gave her a *little* piece of bread, for she had no more. And then she heard her say her evening prayer, and folding her tenderly to her bosom, blessed her, and told her that the angels would take care of her.—And the little child slept, and dreamed—O, such pleasant dreams!—of warm stockings and new shoes; but the mother sewed on, alone. And as the bright spangles glittered on the satin slipper, came there no repining into her heart? When she thought of her little child's bare, cold feet, and of the scant morsel of *dry* bread, which had not satisfied her hunger, came there no visions of a bright room, and gorgeous clothing, and a table loaded with all that was good and nice, one little portion of which, spared to her, would send warmth and comfort to her humble dwelling? If such thoughts came, and others—of a pleasant cottage, and one who dearly loved her, and whose strong arm had kept want and trouble from her and her babes, but who could never come back—if these thoughts did come, repiningly, there came also another: and the widow's hands were clasped, and her head bowed low in deep contrition, as I heard her say, "Father, forgive me; for thou doest all things well, and I will yet trust thee."

Just then the door opened softly, and some one entered. Was it an angel? Her dress was of spotless white, and she moved with a noiseless step. She went to the bed where the sleeping child lay and covered it with soft, warm blankets. Then presently a fire sparkled and blazed there, such as the little old grate had never known before. Then a huge loaf was upon the table, and fresh milk for the sick babe. Then she passed gently before the mother, and drawing the unfinished slipper from her hand, placed there