

bright; the sun shone all day long; but for many weeks there had been no rain, and the ground was quite parched up.

"No Willie, dear," Gabrielle said "you mustn't go out to-day. It is too cold for you yet, dear boy."

"But, indeed, it isn't cold, mother. Feel here, where the sun is falling, how warm it is; put your hand upon it. Oh, mother, let me go out," poor Willie said, imploringly. "I am so weary of the hours. I won't try to run about, only let me go and lie in the sunlight?"

"Not to-day, my darling, wait another day; perhaps the warm winds will come. Willie, dear child, it would make you ill, you must not go."

"You say so every day, mother," Willie said, sadly, "and my head is aching so with staying in the house."

And at last, he praying so much for it, one day they took him out. It was a very sunny day, with scarcely a cloud in the bright blue sky; and Bertha and Gabrielle made a couch for him in a warm sheltered corner, and laid him on it. Poor child, he was so glad to feel himself in the open air again. It made him so happy that he laughed and talked as he had not done for months before, lying with his mother's hand in his, supported in her arms, she kneeling so loving beside him, listening with a strange passionate mingling of joy and misery to the feeble but merry little voice that, scarcely ever ceasing, talked to her.

Poor Gabrielle, it seemed to her such a fearful mockery of the happiness that she knew could never be hers any more forever; but, forcing back her grief upon her own sad heart, she laughed and talked gayly with him, showing by no sign how sorrowful she was.

"Mother, mother!" he cried, suddenly clapping his little wasted hands, "I see a violet—a pure white violet, in the dark leaves there. Oh, fetch it to me! It's the first spring flower. The very first violet, of all. Oh, mother, dear, I love them—the little sweet-smelling flowers."

"Your eyes are quicker than mine, Willie; I shouldn't have seen it, it is such a little thing. There it is, dear boy. I wish there were more for you."

"Ah, they will soon come now. I am so glad I have seen the first. Mother, do you remember how I used to gather them at home, and bring them to papa when he was ill? He liked them, too—just as I do now."

"I remember it well, dear," Gabrielle answered softly.

"How long ago that time seems now," Willie said; then, after a moment's peace, he asked a little sadly, "Mother, what makes me so different now from what I used to be? I was so strong and well once and could run about the whole day long; mother, dear, when shall I run about again?"

"You are very weak, dear child, just now. We mustn't talk of running about for a little time to come."

"No, not for a little time; but when do you think, mother?" The little voice trembled suddenly; "I feel sometimes so weak—so weak, as if I never could get strong again."