

OLD CYNTHIA.



HE cheeriest, the kindest, the most genial woman in the great public institution for paupers, in which she lived, was old Cynthia.

There were very few happy women in this institution, and none so unflinching and beamingly happy as old Cynthia.

Most of the other inmates were heavy of heart and sad of face, because of the memory of happier and more prosperous days. Some were sullen and defiant, and brooded steadily over the fates that had brought them to pauperism in their old age. Some never smiled, and old Cynthia's laugh was the only one that rung out with genuine cheer and merriment.

"I don't see what you've got to laugh at here," the others said bitterly to old Cynthia.

"Oh! don't you?" she would reply, with never a suggestion of resentment in her voice. "Well, I allus was a great one to laugh. Seems as if I couldn't help it."

"I should think you'd feel more like crying than laughing, situated as you are," another one would say.

"Well I never was one to cry much," old Cynthia would reply. "What's the use? Cryin' won't better my condition, an' then they say that cryin' is dreadful bad for one's good looks."

This poor little joke of old Cynthia was sure to bring smiles to other faces, for poor old Cynthia could not well have been plainer of face than she was. Her shining eyes and unflinching smile did much, however, toward lessening her homeliness.

Some of the other poor old women were of the opinion that old Cynthia "wasn't right in her head" and when this rumor was carried to her by one of Cynthia's tell-tale companions, it provoked much mirth instead of wrath on the part of old Cynthia.

"So they think I ain't right in my head,

do they, the poor dears!" she said. "Well, you tell 'em that mebbe I am gettin' a little shaky in my poor old head, but that all my laughin' comes from heart, and long as it's all right I sha'n't worry none 'bout my head. I'm hopin' an' prayin' that my heart will keep good," for old Cynthia was—what many of the other inmates were not—a praying woman.

"And what good does all your praying do you?" some of the others would ask.

"So much good that I'd be dreadful unhappy if I didn't and couldn't pray," she would reply.

"Why don't you pray to be taken out of this place then, if you've so much faith in prayer?"

"Why, I'm going to be taken out some day, and it won't be so very long now, for I'm a good deal past seventy. All I've got to do now is to be a little patient and some day the Lord himself will send for me. He'll take me away in his own good time, and I'm willing to wait right here until that time comes."

She was a ministering angel to the feeble and the sick in the institution, and she listened patiently and sympathetically to the unending complaints of the peevish and fretful old creatures who had not her sweetness and serenity of soul because they had not her love and trust and faith.

"Haven't you ever had any troubles of your own to brood over?" asked a fretful old woman who brooded steadily over her trials.

"Plenty of trouble. I've had plenty of trouble," old Cynthia replied, "but none to brood over. I'd never know how good the Lord really is if I hadn't had trouble to show me just how gentle and tender he is in time of affliction. It takes trouble to show a body how wonderful our God is. But I've no troubles to brood over, for they've all been taken away."

And so in her poverty, in her old age, in her lack of all that makes old age endurable to many, old Cynthia was serenely patient and content.