

such blossoms growing in this one gay metropolis."

Sir Claude drew Beatrice tenderly towards him, and smiled as she said this: "Ah! I see you need not the caution," she added, rising, and waving her hand; she then repeated her promise to call for Beatrice on the morrow. In passing through the card rooms to the crowded staircase they encountered Lord Stepney, who cast on Beatrice a glance so full of commiseration that she could not forbear being struck by it. She deeply blushed, but dared not acknowledge him. "Sir Claude Brereton's carriage stops the way," was now vociferated by the numerous lackies in attendance; and in the next moment she was handed into it, and very gladly found herself driving rapidly with her husband through the thronged streets towards her own home.

Lady Harriet Lauriston proved true to her appointment on the day following—and after paying a visit to the children of Beatrice, and admiring them as much as their fond mother could wish, she proceeded with her on their errand of mercy, leaving far behind them the mansions of luxury and magnificence, to enter the garrets of the destitute and miserable, where Lady Harriet was no stranger. On arriving at the dwelling they sought, down a dark alley, they ascended a wretched and broken staircase, and knocked at the door of a room, which, when it was opened, did indeed present an appearance of the most abject distress. It was small and crowded to suffocation, with a numerous family of children, all clamorous for bread: their father lay stretched on a bed of rags apparently in the last stage of a consumption, while their mother harrassed and worn, was endeavouring to satisfy the demands of her young brood. The room had just been wetted, and on a line hung a few old clothes to dry, adding yet more to its confusion and discomfort. Beatrice started back, painfully struck by the scene before her, while Lady Harriet approaching the bed of the sufferer, asked him in kind accents how he felt: his pale emaciated countenance lighted up on beholding her.

"Oh, my dear lady," he feebly replied, "I had such sweet dreams last night that I feel quite happy."

"Happy," thought Beatrice, "can such a name be known here?"

The woman, who had stood silent and abashed on the entrance of strangers, now offered chairs, apologising for the confusion they saw, by saying that her husband needed her whole attention. "He cannot even turn himself in his bed," she said, "and is constantly craving for something which I too seldom have to give him."

"Has he been long ill?" enquired Beatrice, round whom the ragged children had flocked in wondering admiration, one venturing to lay his chubby hand on her bracelet.

"Nearly twelve months, my lady," replied the woman, at the same time rebuking her child for his freedom.

"Poor little fellow," said Beatrice, patting him on the head; "I love you for those deep blue eyes, so like my boys."

She gave him money as she spoke, and then turned towards Lady Harriet, who, taking up a small testament that lay on the bed, addressed the sick man thus:

"You have derived much comfort, I trust, from this precious book."

"Comfort, lady," repeated the man; "that is too poor a term. I have found life, eternal life, bestowed on me by the grace of God, through the atoning blood of Christ. I have found redemption for my sins, which are many, but which he has washed away forever. What matters it to me that my soul is pent up in this miserable and suffering body for a few short days: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that I shall see God.'"

"And are you quite assured of this, my friend?" inquired Lady Harriet, mildly, and with solemnity.

"I have fled to him for refuge, and his word tells me that neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. How then can I doubt?"

A violent paroxysm of his distressing cough now seized him, and he was unable to say more. His wife flew to his assistance, while Lady Harriet whispered to Beatrice:

"Is not this a beautiful instance of faith, which can thus overcome all the horrors of the dark valley through which he is passing?"

"It is indeed," replied Beatrice, deeply moved, "and may I never forget the lesson he has taught me of patience. God knows how I needed it."

A gleam of the sun now pierced through the half broken casement stuffed with rags. A lark suspended in a cage carolled a few notes at the cheering sight; but to Beatrice they sounded most melancholy.

"Nancy," said the sick man, endeavouring to raise himself, "listen to that poor thing singing in his prison. Why should we detain him when he might be soaring aloft in the skies and rejoicing in his freedom? Open his cage and give him liberty."

The woman hesitated, but her husband waved his hand, when she instantly obeyed him. The bird, for a few seconds, seemed to linger in the cage, where he had been long confined, hopping from perch to perch. He then approached the door, fluttering his wings. Suddenly he expanded them, and flew forth into the open air, with a note so joyous, so thrilling, that it seemed to vibrate on the hearts of all who heard him.