

their means, they having fastidious tastes, and having an eye to the adornments of art and the pleasures of music and literature. So they found themselves, in the middle of a severe winter, with about all their means gone, and business still protracted so that they could find nothing to do. It was especially hard to the poor wives, who had hitherto had all that heart could wish, and now found themselves cramped for even necessaries.

Adding to other misfortunes, Ned was taking sick about this time, and confined to his bed. His illness was a fever, brought on by anxiety and care. Several persons, whom Kate recollected but slightly, came to watch with him, and others called to make inquiries. She was grateful, and mistrusting that they were Masons, felt more kindly towards the Order, but regretted the money Ned had spent upon it, thinking, with empty flour-barrel and purse, how many nice things it could buy. She said as much, a little bitterly, one evening, to one of the watchers, who looked at her in a way she could not understand, and then made some remark about charitable societies not always practicing what they preached.

The next day, about noon, as Kate sat eating the last bit of bread in the house after having made the last meal into some gruel for her poor husband, who was still out of his head, the bell rang, and she admitted a stranger, one she had never seen before.

"Does Mr. Boynton live here?"

"He does."

"Mr. Edward Boynton, lately with Small, Pellet & Co.?"

"Yes, sir."

"He is sick, is he not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah! And a little money would not come amiss, to buy luxuries, and so forth?"

"To buy necessaries, rather. Oh, sir!— But who are you?"

"No matter. You would not know me. He has had dealings with our bank, and there is a balance standing to his credit."

"Money in a bank! He never told me of it."

"Possibly not."

"But how much? Oh! it is so fortunate!"

"I do not now recall the exact amount. But you can take what you think necessary to-day, and I will enter it on the books."

Two or three times the gentleman came, and each time left a sum of money. The fourth time he came, he said:

"Supposing I should tell you that our books are square now, and a more is due your husband? What should you do?"

"Oh, sir, do not say so! It is such a mystery, and I have been hoping it would continue."

The gentleman did not immediately reply; but, after a moment of silence, he said:

"That large painting in the parlor, opposite the door, is a beautiful thing, Mrs. Boynton. What do you call it?"

"Oh! that is 'The Poet's Paradise.' That is poor Ned's favorite."

"Oh!" he said abruptly, a moment later, arising to go; "I hope