

SUE'S ANSWER.

BY KATE SUMNER GATES.

"O H, dear!" groaned Sue behind the pantry door, whither she had retreated in sore distress of mind. "I wonder if there's anything else to come."

There was the flour-barrel empty; she had put the last lump of sugar in to her mother's tea that night. Margie's shoes, that for some time had been only just holding together, had given out to-day as completely as the deacon's "one-hoss shay."

It was growing cold every day. It was the time of year for it to do so, to be sure, but all the same the coal-bin was empty. Sue hid the thermometer in the darkest corner of the closet, and tried to feel comfortably warm without a fire, but it was a lamentable failure.

Mother did not notice it so much, for she did not sit up long at a time, and was all bundled up then. The doctor had said that very afternoon that they must get nourishing food for her, else she would never get strong. And there on the table lay Sue's pocket-book—Sue was family treasurer—looking, she declared, as though Mount Washington had sat on it. Oh, if she could only get a letter to-night!

Presently, after carefully wiping away all traces of tears, Sue emerged from her hiding-place. "Guess I'll just run down to the office," she said carelessly. "My head aches some; the fresh air will do it good. You will not want anything but what the children can get for you,—will you, mother?"

"No, dear. Take a walk; it will do you good."

"All right. Good-bye!"

Up-stairs, in her own little room, Sue knelt down by the bedside. "O Father in heaven!" she prayed, "grant my prayer, and give the letter I desire." Over and over again she prayed it passionately.

There was a vacancy over in the Podunk school. She had heard of it somehow, and more than a week ago had written to the committee, applying for the school, but not a word had she heard yet. Surely the answer would come to-night! If only she knew she would have the school, she would ask Mr. Stone to trust them for groceries. She wrapped her shawl closely about her, and went down the street rapidly.

"Anything for me?" she asked almost confidently. She had prayed for it so earnestly; surely it must come. Her heart almost stood still as Miss Duncan looked.

"No, there's nothing for you. Growing colder,—isn't it?"

Sue shrugged her shoulders impatiently. What did she care about the weather! At any rate, she did not wish to be reminded that it was growing cold; for there was that empty coal-bin.

"Are you sure?" she asked. "I was expecting a letter to-night."

Miss Duncan looked again, more carefully. There was something in the girl's face that rather startled her. She wished she could find a letter addressed to "Miss Sue Denuison," but there was none such to be found.

"I'm sorry," she said, turning back

to her little window; "but I do not find any."

Sue made no answer; she only shut her lips very tightly together.

"I—don't believe God hears our prayers, or cares for us,—not for me, at any rate," she thought to herself as she went wearily home.

"Come and sit down by me," said her mother after the children were in bed, "and tell me all about it."

Sue came over and put her head down in the pillows.

"I thought God answered prayers," she said bitterly.

"He does, my child."

"But not always," interposed Sue; "for I have been praying all the week, and particularly to-day, that I might get a letter from Podunk, and I did not get it. Here it is Friday, school begins Monday, so, of course, there is no hope for me there now. I might just as well not have prayed."

"Sue," asked her mother, "do you remember, when you were getting well from scarlet fever, how you used to tease me to let you read?"

"Of course I do," replied Sue, wondering what was the connection between her childish doings and her letter.

"Did I let you do as you wished?"

"No, you kept putting me off, though I thought it was awful in you. But I found afterwards that you were afraid I was going to lose my eyes."

"My dear, perhaps the Lord is holding back your letter because he sees it is for your good in some way."

"But, mother, this is for our good; we need it so much," pleaded Sue.

"Yes, dear, so we think, but it is all right. Cannot you trust the Lord, my child?"

"I—don't know. If it was anything I wanted for myself,—but it seems so hard to refuse me such a little thing when I want it so much for your sakes," said Sue bitterly, as she rose and went about putting things to rights for the night.

"I suppose the Lord does answer prayer sometimes, but it didn't do any good for me to pray," was her last thought before she dropped asleep.

The chairman of the school committee in Podunk had a small hole in his overcoat pocket, and Mrs. Chairman kept forgetting to mend it. It was not so very large, just about right for a letter to slip through; and who would ever think of looking in a coat-lining for letters! Furthermore, that was the very pocket where Mr. Chairman usually carried his letters.

Somehow Miss Duncan could not get Sue's face out of her mind.

"It was no ordinary letter she wanted," she said to herself, as Sue trudged wearily home. "There's trouble of some sort there. I do believe they are poor as church mice. Well, I hope the letter will come to-morrow."

But the last mail for the day had come and been sorted, and still there was nothing for Sue.

"I really believe," sighed the cheery little post-mistress to herself,—"I really believe if she looks as disappointed to-night, I shall—. Why, Cousin James! where did you come from, and what do you want?"

"I'm hunting a needle in a haystack. Suppose I'll find it?" replied the new comer.

"Perhaps, if you know in what part to look."

"But I don't, you see. I don't even know for sure that there is any needle. You see our schools commence Monday, and at the very last minute we find ourselves minus a teacher, and I do not seem to have very good luck in finding any one to fill her place. You don't happen to know of any one, do you?"

Miss Duncan had a sudden vision of Sue's face as it had looked last night.

"She's a good scholar,—and I guess they are poor enough, without doubt—it won't do any harm any way; I'll send him there," was her rapid mental conclusion.

"It is all guesswork, James, but I have an intuition that I know just where you can find your needle."

"Much obliged," responded Cousin James, as he wrote Sue's address down. "Good-night."

"O mother!" almost sobbed Sue that night, "just think how much better this is than I asked. Why, the salary is two or three times as large as I should have had in Podunk! O mother, mother, to think I should be so wicked when God had this in store for me?"

And Mrs. Chairman never knew how these few neglected stitches of hers changed the whole future of the life of a perfect stranger to her.

SWEDISH MOTHER'S HYMN.

HERE sitteth a dove so white and fair,
All on a lily spray,
And she listeneth how to Jesus Christ
The little children pray.
Lightly she spreads her friendly wings,
And to heaven's gates hath sped,
And unto the Father in heaven she bears
The prayers which the children have said.

And back she comes from heaven's gates
And brings, that dove so mild—
From the Father in heaven that hears her
speak—
A blessing for every child.
Then children lift up a pious prayer,
It hears whatever you say—
That heavenly dove so white and fair
All on a lily spray.

BOYS WHO SUCCEED.

THE head of a large business firm in Boston, who was noted for his keenness in discerning character, was seated at his desk one day when a young Irish lad came up, took off his hat, and smiling, said:

"Don't you want a boy, sir?"

"I did not a minute ago. But I do now, and you are the boy," said Mr. J—.

He said afterwards that he was completely captured by the honest, frank, all-alive face before him. The boy entered his service, rose to be confidential clerk, and is now a successful merchant.

Thirty years ago Mr. H—, a nurseryman in New York State, left home for a day or two. It was rainy weather and not the season for sales; but a customer arrived from a distance, tied up his horse and went into the kitchen of the farm-house, where two lads were cracking nuts.

"Is Mr. H— at home?"

"No, sir," said the eldest, Joe, hammering at a nut.

"When will he be back?"

"Dunno, sir. Mebbe not for a week."

The other boy, Jim, jumped up and followed the man out.

"The men are not here, but I can show you the stock," he said, with

such a bright, courteous manner that the stranger, who was a little irritated, followed him through the nursery, examined the trees and left his order.

"You have sold the largest bill that I have had this season, Jem," said his father, greatly pleased on his return. "I'm sure;" said Joe, "I'm as willing to help as Jem, if I'd thought in time."

A few years afterwards these two boys were left by their father's failure with but \$200 and \$300 each. Joe bought an acre or two near home. He has worked hard, but is still a poor, discontented man. Jem bought an emigrant's ticket to Colorado, hired as a cattle driver for a couple of years, with his wages bought land at forty cents an acre, built himself a house, and married. His heads of cattle are numbered by the thousand, his land has been cut up into town lots, and he is ranked as one of the wealthiest men in the State.

"I might have done like Jem," his brother said lately, "if I'd thought in time. There's as good stuff in me as in him."

"There's as good stuff in that loaf of bread as in any I ever made," said his wife; "but nobody can eat it; there's not enough yeast in it."

The retort, though disagreeable, was true. The quick, wide-awake energy which works as leaven in a character; is partly natural. But it can be inculcated by parents, and acquired by a boy if he chooses to keep his eyes open, and to act promptly and boldly in every emergency.—*American Rural Home.*

THE FIDDLER.

SOMETIMES, if you listen—listen
When the sunlight fades to gray,
You will hear a strange musician
At the quiet close of day;
Hear a strange and quaint musician
On his shrill-voiced fiddle play.

He bears a curious fiddle
On his coat of shiny black,
And draws a bow across the string
In crevice and in crack;
Till the sun climbs up the mountain
And floods the earth with light,
You will hear this strange musician
Playing—playing all the night!

Sometimes underneath the hearth stone,
Sometimes underneath the floor,
He plays the same shrill music,—
Plays the same tune o'er and o'er;
And sometimes in the pasture,
Beneath a cold, gray stone,
He tightens up the sinevs,
And fiddles all alone.

It may be, in the autumn,
From the corner of your room
You will hear the shrill-voiced fiddle
Sounding out upon the gloom;
If you wish to see the player,
Softly follow up the sound,
And you'll find a dark-backed cricket
Fiddling out a merry round!

—*Youth's Companion.*

WHAT STRONG DRINK DOES.

A young man was recently found in the Mersey, drowned. On a paper found in his pocket was written: "A wasted life. Do not ask any thing about me; drink was the cause. Let me die; let me rot." Within a week the coroner of Liverpool received over two hundred letters from fathers and mothers, all over England, asking for a description of the young man. How suggestive is this fact! What a story it tells of houses desolated by strong drink!