

The Story Page.

Too Pretty to be Lost.

BY KATHERINE PRESTIDGE.

The revival meeting was being held in the open air. A clearing had been made at the edge of the deep pine woods. A few slim young trees had been left to form the corners of a square. Upon these was stretched a roof woven of green boughs, and under this fragrant shelter were ranged rows of rough benches. On either hand great torches flared, made of resinous pine knots. There red light illuminated the green dusk. The deep blue dome above was radiant with a myriad of stars, and the summer moon, rising large and yellow behind the black tops of the pines, looked down like a great solemn eye upon what was going on below.

Strange sights and sounds were there, suddenly sprung up in this solitary spot. The benches under the "bower" were filled with a throng of eager listeners. It was but seldom they had the opportunity of hearing the Word of God spoken as it had been spoken to them to-night by the strange preacher from "across the bay." He had set their sins in order before them; he had pointed them to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. The wild, piercing refrain of the old revival hymn was still ringing out upon the throbbing air:

The Lamb—the bleeding Lamb!
The Lamb of Calvary!
The Lamb that was slain, but liveth again
To intercede for me!

A wave of intense feeling was surging through the throng; scarce a heart there but was thrilling. Tears were streaming down many a work-worn face; sobs and broken prayers made the very air palpitant with emotion.

One after another, stricken with a sense of sin, rose and made their way to the "mourner's bench." There the minister, and the more zealous among the brethren and sisters, were ready to kneel and pray with them. Others, eager for the saving of souls, were moving up and down the broad walk, pausing to plead with those who seemed willing to listen.

Upon one of the rear benches a group of young people had climbed up in their eagerness to see better what was going on near the pulpit. There gay dresses, and their general appearance showed that they did not belong to the homely country folk around them. They were evidently "summer people" from the hotel down by the beach, and had come thither simply out of curiosity and a desire to be amused. The thrill which had set those simple hearts a-quiver seemed to have awakened only surprise and merriment in their minds. They were standing on tiptoe to see over the heads of those in front of them. The young women were whispering and tittering, the young men making what they thought witty speeches at the expense of those who were wrestling with Satan for their souls.

Down upon them came suddenly a tall old woman, gaunt and gray-haired, dressed in calico, with a white sunbonnet in her hand. Her strong face was all on fire with righteous wrath.

"Ah!" she cried, stopping in front of the giggling group, and shaking her aged hand with a gesture of stern rebuke, "you may laugh now, since you dare to laugh in the presence of the Spirit moving here in the midst of you. But you will not laugh at the Judgment Day—oh, no, you will not laugh at the Judgment Day! Then will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. You will weep then; you will cry, you will pray. But it will be too late then, when the Judgment is set and the books are opened. The harvest will be past, the summer be ended, and you not saved!"

In the midst of the wild mingling of sounds all about them, snatches of prayer, bursts of hymns, deep tones of exhortation, this address was scarcely noticed except by those for whom it was meant. They listened to it with a start, and stared at the speaker and each other in astonishment and indignation, which presently gave way to amusement again.

"Take care, now, my good woman, that is enough said," interposed one of the men. "These ladies are not accustomed—"

But the "good woman" turned from him in disdain. "You, my dear," she said, addressing herself particularly to one of the group who was gazing at her, half in compunction, half in alarm, "what are you doing in the company of scoffers like these? You are not of their kind, I can see it in your face. And, oh, what a sweet young face it is! Too pretty to be lost! Too pretty to be lost! Come with me. Come to Jesus and be saved!"

She put out her hand, and would have taken the girl by the arm, but her friends closed round her and interposed.

"Come," they said to each other "we have had enough of this," and stepping hastily down to the ground, they made their way as quickly as might be to the carriages which were waiting for them.

"Well, Lily, we have rescued you!" they cried, laughing as the horses dashed off, eager to get to their stalls. "We half believe you would have gone with her if we hadn't, and fancy the bells of all the ball-rooms 'getting religion!' The old party knew how to appeal to your weak spot!"

But Lily made no reply to their raillery. That strange cry was still ringing in her ears. "Too pretty to be lost! Too pretty to be lost!"

She had never thought of her beauty in any such light as this before. She knew well enough that she was beautiful. Her mirror told her every time she stood before it that her eyes were like blue stars, her hair like spun gold, her cheeks and lips very roses of Damascus. Her friends echoed the flattering tale, and the ball-room was indeed the centre of the life she had lived hitherto. All winter she was to be seen, night after night, at the great assembly rooms; all summer at the hotel "hops." She was found of dancing, but she liked better still the festal array which she knew enhanced her beauty; she loved that beauty—she loved to be told of it. She had been told of it to-night, but, oh, in what strange language. "Too pretty to be lost!—To be lost!"

She thought of what that meant as she had never thought of such things before. "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." That was what the preacher said. What would become of her beauty there?

She was alone in her room now, for she had gone up at once in spite of her companions' raillery. Through the open wardrobe door a shimmer of silver gleamed out in the moonshine. It was the dress of white gauze which she had intended to put on to go down to the dancing-room that very night. She shut the door with a shudder and threw herself on her bed instead.

But she could not find rest. Those strange words would make themselves heard above the twanging of fiddles and moving of feet that sounded up from below. The dreadful picture which they called up flamed in the dark before her shrinking eyes.

But presently other words, other pictures made their way to her mind. She thought of what the preacher had said of Jesus, the good Shepherd who came to seek and to save that which was lost. She remembered the promise He had made. "In My Father's house are many mansions; behold I go to prepare a place for you."

She need not then be "lost"—for the Father Himself had sent the Son to find her! She need not go to dwell in misery among lost souls forever, for He had said, "Where I am, there shall ye be also."

Was ever known such goodness and such love?

He died that we might live.

And all she had to do in return—so the preacher said—was to love and serve Him, instead of setting up her beauty as an idol to be worshipped.

The Lamb that was slain, but liveth again
To intercede for me!

"O Christ, intercede for me!" she prayed out of her pierced heart. The arrow had been fitted to the bow, the only appeal perhaps, which would have reached this vain, self-worshipping soul, had been sent direct from God, and had gone straight to the mark.

All night, like Jacob, she wrestled in prayer, and like him in the morning, she had found the blessing.—*The Examiner*

Claude's Baptism.

BY MARY KNIGHT SHIPLEY.

Charlie had just died in the Orphans' Home. The funeral was over. The children had been greatly affected. The tiny little ones understood they had lost a friend, but knew not "why" nor "how." They went about with a pathetic longing in their small faces, which touched the hearts of those who had them in charge. The older ones were deeply impressed with the solemnity of death.

The night after Charlie was buried, as the matron went her rounds, she stooped to tuck the cover more closely around Claude Walker's bed.

Her heart throbbed tenderly when she thought came to her, as she looked at his pale, patient face, "Perhaps he will be my next boy to go."

She was hurrying away, for he must not see her tears, when a feeble little pull at her dress attracted her attention. Bending over him, "What is it, dear?" she asked. "Mrs. Morton," he whispered very softly, "I have been thinking ever since Charlie went to heaven I would like to be a Christian."

"Don't you think you are a Christian, Claude?"

"I hope so; but the Bible says 'If ye love me keep my commandments.' Does he not command us to be baptized?"

The kind woman looked with pity upon the crippled

orphan before her. Claude was fifteen years old, but he had the appearance of a boy of ten. He had not walked a step for a year. His body was becoming ossified, and he was a helpless cripple.

Gradually the disease would creep upward until his heart was attacked, and then—

He was always bright and sunny. Patient and kind to the children, beloved by every one. For a moment the fact of this poor orphan weakling putting to shame stronger men and women, who think lightly of ignoring God's commands, overcame her and she faltered perceptibly before she asked, "Claude, in what church would you be baptized, were you taken into one?"

His face grew radiant as he answered, "The one he goes to; if I could only be a Christian like Mr. Weller!"

"Very well, my child, you shall talk with Mr. Weller's pastor, and if he thinks it is best, you shall join the same church."

The motherly matron kissed the happy face of the cripple, and with a gentle "good night," went to her room, with many thoughts in her mind. But uppermost was the determination to look out for these little Christians who were impressed with their duty in her Home.

So this is the way it came about that, one Sunday morning, three boys from the Orphans' Home sat in the front pew at the old Walnut street church. After the service was done, two of the boys were led into the water, and we were told that they were brothers. The large congregation melted into tenderness as the pastor baptized these brothers.

When he had finished, the great tall pastor stood waist deep in the water and waited. The helpless little cripple sat before him, and gave a wistful, longing look toward Deacon Weller, who stood near him.

Then the strong man put his arms about the boy's slight form and, lifting him as he would a little child, carried him up the pulpit stairs, stood just a moment, and then laid him in the minister's arms. The little fellow lay perfectly still, but one thin hand clung to the folds of the preacher's robe. Suddenly an expression of implicit faith came over his face, and the audience knew he felt, as his eyes rested on the kindly pastor, that he could trust himself to his care. The small, wasted hand was lowered and folded over the other.

The child's face was illuminated by a light that seemed unearthly, as the minister began, "I baptize thee, my brother—"

Glancing down at the dependent burden in his arms, and meeting that sweetly resigned confident expression, he tried to continue, "In the name of the—"

The voice of the preacher broke, a simultaneous sob went up from the congregation, heads went down on the benches in front, and not one dry eye witnessed the baptism of Claude. When we looked again deacon Weller was taking him from the preacher's arms and a look of the "peace which passeth all understanding" lit up the cripple's face.—*Examiner.*

TO DOROTHY.

H. Hon. Wm. E. Gladstone, Inviting his Granddaughter to
his Golden Wedding.

I know where there is honey in a jar,
Meet for a certain little friend of mine;
And, Dorothy, I know where daisies are,
That only wait small hands to intertwine
A wreath for such a golden head as thine.

The thought that thou art coming makes all
glad,
The house is bright with blossoms high and
low,
And many a little lass and little lad
Expectantly are running to and fro;
The fires within our hearts are all aglow.

We want thee, child, to share in our delight
On this high day, the holiest and the best,
Because 'twas then, ere youth had taken flight,
Thy grandmamma, of women loveliest,
Made me of men most honored and most best.

That naughty boy who led thee to suppose
He was thy sweetheart, has, I grieve to tell,
Been seen to pluck the garden's choicest rose
And tiddle with it to another belle,
Who does not treat him altogether well.

But mind not that, or let it teach thee this:
To waste no love on any youthful rover
(All youths are rovers, I assure thee, Miss),
No; if thou wouldst true constancy discover,
Thy grandpapa is perfect as a lover.

So come, thou playmate of my closing day,
The latest treasure life can offer me,
And with thy baby laughter make me gay;
Thy fresh young voice shall sing, my
Dorothy,
Songs that shall bid the feet of sorrow flee.