

posed that the 'chucker-out' had found some work to do. There was more shouting and drunken singing when a neighboring church clock struck eleven, and then gradually peace and quiet came, and at length Nancy fell asleep.

The next morning her aunt told her that the dress maker was coming in to work, and would want to fit her that the skirt of her dress was almost finished, and she wanted to have the dress ready for her in the evening, as she would be serving. She was told to go into the bar early in the day to get used to it, and the girls there would tell her about the different liquors, the prices, and so forth.

Nancy was awkward and nervous for some time, but she determined to try her best to please her uncle, and to be as handy as the two young barmaids. They made a deal of fun out of her country speech and ways, and assured her that she was very green, but she would soon find her feet and hold her own. Their talk, when not busy, was principally about the young fellows who frequented the bar; what this one had said, and what the other one had given, and they spoke with the utmost flippancy and unconcern of this one and that who were going too fast to the dogs.

Nancy felt depressed and even more so in the evening, when she found herself in a very smart dress, which she thought good enough for a princess. The girls had tried in vain to make her frizz her head into a mop, and put a touch of color on her cheeks, for she was paler than when she arrived. Nancy's prettiness, however, wanted no helps, and with her naturally wavy hair and clear, honest face, she far outshone the two bedizened ones, and even attracted more attention from the customers than they. More than once she was on the point of fleeing at things that men said to her, but the girls whispered to her not to be a fool, nor take notice of what any of them said. 'It's only their little way when they're fuddled,' they assured her.

The women, too, said horrid things to her now and then, and for reply she only gazed at them with deep pity. 'Poor things,' they ought to be like mother,' she said to herself. And then she wondered how her mother would like to see her serving such debased creatures with drink and more drink.

Presently a handsome young working-man came to her to be served, and put down a half-crown for his whiskey. As she handed him the change he said:—

'Nothing o' the sort, my dear; you shall keep that for yourself. Yes, I mean it,' he said, with tipsy emphasis. 'You're a right down pretty lass, and you shall have that money to buy a ribbon to tie up your bonnie brown hair. So there!'

'Humph! a pretty one you be, John Maxwell,' said a woman standing beside him with a glass of gin. 'Fancy the likes of you throwing your money at the pretty girls when your wife's got to turn out to work to get bread for the children. A pretty one you be!'

He turned round on her with an oath, and was going to strike her, when a bystander interfered, and a battle of oaths and invective forthwith began between the two, which the sturdy barman had to bring to an end with threats.

'Why don't you take the money, silly?' said one of the girls, quietly.

'I wouldn't touch it for anything,' said Nancy, hotly, as she turned away to another customer. By the end of the evening she felt really ill with the sights and sounds that had been forced on her all the time.

She felt like one in a dreadful dream, and longed with an intense longing to be back with her mother in the cottage home. Even the thought of the pounds was losing its charm. They were being too dearly got. Tired and dazed she went to bed with a firm resolve that she would tell her uncle in the morning that she must give it up.

After breakfast next day she went to look for him, but was told he had gone out on business, and would not be back till two o'clock. So she went on with her distasteful work in the bar, buoyed up with the thought that it would be at an end.

As soon as her uncle returned she went and told him how miserable she was, and how she could not bear to think of another night in the bar. To her surprise he was very angry, and said she would have to keep to her engagement. She had begun very well, and she could do very well if she liked, and he couldn't be left short-handed now on Christmas Eve. No, she must do the work that he was going to pay her well for, and so on. Nancy's tears would not keep back, and he scolded her for this, and said she would spoil her pretty face for the evening. 'Go upstairs now and get used to things,' he added, more kindly.

Nancy did go upstairs, but it was to put on her cloak and hat. She put her things in her box, locked it, and left it there, and gathered into a small parcel her few small treasures. She watched her opportunity, and slipped out unobserved, and away to the railway station. She had enough money for the short journey, and the additional walk of three miles was nothing to her.

The darkness fell before she had done much of the walking, but she knew every step of the way, and stars and a young moon gave her light.

As she drew near to the village the Christmas chimes rang out, and she began to cry, though she could not have told what for. Thoughts of her peaceful home-life, with its sweet, sane simplicities; of their pleasant Sabbaths in the old church, and the Sunday-school, of their friendly intercourse with honest, right-living neighbors, swept over her in contrast with the orgies of her uncle's tavern, and she shuddered. 'How can he, how can he make money that way? And how can he let girls help him to make it?' she said to herself with sorrowful anger.

When at length she reached home and walked quietly in, her mother was startled out of her ordinary composure. 'What on earth's the matter, child?' she cried.

'You mustn't be cross with me, mother, for coming back,' said Nancy, with starting tears, 'but I'll tell you everything, and then you'll see as I couldn't stand it.'

When she had finished her tale of woe her mother said kindly, 'You did right not to stop, but you shouldn't have left that way. No, that wasn't right. But I'll go over to-morrow, and make it all right with Uncle Sam, and if I can I'll make him ashamed of himself for trying to get rich in such a way, and for getting any mother's gels to help him! I wonder if he'd let a daughter of his own earn money that way? Why, it seems to me as it's jest setting them on the way to destruction, that's what it is. Yes, I'll let him know what I think about having gels for sech work, and I hope it'll open his eyes for him! I'm thankful as I've got ye back safe and sound, Nancy, and when you starts out again to earn money, we'll see that it shan't be by helping to send poor fellow-creeturs to destruction.'

That 'Free Bed.'

(By Estelle Mendell Amory, in 'Standard'.)

'Isn't it too bad about Alice?'

'And her folks so poor.'

'Then to live only to be an invalid, the doctor says, and that for many years, perhaps.'

'Well, we must try to help her bear her misfortune,' was Ellen Dorr's practical remark, as a number of school girls stood on the corner commenting upon the accident of the morning.

'If her old father'd been 'tending to his business, 't wouldn't have happened,' observed one of a group of boys, as they passed the girls.

'Pity 'twan't him 'stead of Alice—he's no 'count.'

At the ladies' aid the matter was also being discussed.

'Mrs. Nolan's just heartbroke. She set great store by Alice's teaching this spring. She's almost washed her life away to keep her studying.'

'Well, I'd never let her carry such a big basket of clothes on such slippery walks as this morning. Why didn't old man Nolan take them—that's 'bout all he's ever been good for.'

'Oh you know he sometimes drinks so much he can't go,—and there he lays in a dead stupor on the bed and poor Alice in great pain on the lounge in that little house.'

'I don't see how they are going to stand it, poor things.'

'Well, as Christian women, we must see to it that they are made as comfortable as possible.'

'It is hard to believe that Mr. Nolan was once a sober man with a good home, but it's a fact, and I'm sorry to know that a doctor is largely to blame for his fall.'

'Yes,' Mrs. Taggart continued, as all looked up so surprised, 'the doctor found him a hard case to handle, he mended so slowly—he was gloomy, morbid and had no appetite—so he prescribed stimulants, little realizing the poor man's inherited craving for the same. From opiating doses, he soon grew to demand more and more until it's his complete master.'

'Sad, indeed.'

'Sad is no name for it. Think of all Mrs. Nolan, a naturally delicate, sensitive woman, has suffered; and the poor children.'

'And now the prospect of Alice's being a burden instead of a help, and suffering so.'

That morning Mrs. Nolan, being in great need for money to buy coal, had asked Alice to take Mrs. Long's washing home before school. Everything was covered with a glare of ice, and without the protection of even rubbers, she had slipped down some stone steps and had seriously—it was feared—injured her hip and spine.

Gloomy days followed this accident, and the only happiness Alice and her mother knew, was of that 'negative' order—'things might be worse.'

'No, I don't dare think how much worse things might have been,' said Alice one day, 'if the union and the young people of the church had not been so kind.'

'Yes, and they've been so regular and faithful; they mean we shall not want,' added the mother, as she thought of the many good and useful things so quietly flowing in.

On this Mrs. Nolan endeavored to centre her mind and that of Alice, rather than upon the hopeless prospect before them, with the father a confirmed drunkard, Alice a bed-ridden invalid, and Frank, Nellie, Hattie and Lee to be educated and cared for. 'These