

"Oh, mother, I'm so ill," the poor lad whispered as best he could.

"Yes, I fear you are, my boy," she replied; "your father's gone for the doctor, and I expect him back every minute."

"Do you think I shall die, mother?" he asked.

"I don't know—how should I? And perhaps if you was, it wouldn't matter; there would be one less to keep," was the unfeeling reply.

The poor boy burst into tears, and then relapsed into a state of unconsciousness again, during which time the doctor arrived. After examination, he pronounced it to be a serious case, which would require great care, or death would result. Giving orders what to be done, and promising to send medicine without delay, he left the wretched place.

"I wish he may die," said the father, as soon as the doctor had gone. "He'll be one out of the way."

"That's what I told him just before you came in," replied the mother, "but it sent him right off into a swoon."

"Well, I don't see what's the use of being bothered with children," said the father; "indeed, I begin to feel that poor people shouldn't have children at all."

"Well, we've our share of trouble, and no mistake; and to have this boy ill as well, it's a great bother."

Such was a sample of the unfeeling conversation of these parents, out of whom everything human was nearly gone, in consequence of their mode of life. However, there was One who had said, "When my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up"; and again was the blessed truth to be proved in all its fullness, to the joy of one and the astonishment of others, and it occurred in the following manner: The teacher, observing that the boy had not been at school for two or three nights, made a visit to know the reason. To his surprise he found the lad in bed, alone; and, the door of the room being partly opened, and no one answering to his knock, he entered. The lad was moaning in his sleep, and very restless, muttering words which were quite unintelligible. The teacher, whose name was Andrew Worker, quietly withdrew, and lingered about the stairs, hoping to meet the mother. In this he was correct, as she soon put in an appearance.

"Excuse me," said Mr. Worker, "are you the mother of the lad who is ill up stairs?"

"Yes, I am," she replied.

"I hope he is not seriously ill, and that he will soon be well again," responded the teacher.

"How do you know him, and why are you so concerned about him?" she asked, looking at Mr. Worker with an inquisitive gaze.

"Oh, he comes to our school in the court, and I am his teacher," was the quick reply. "I missed him for a night or two, and wondered how it was, so came to see."

"Indeed! Well, you might have spared yourself the pains, for I fancy he won't be here long," was the mother's reply.

"I trust you will be mistaken, and that he is not so bad as you think. However, I will speak to one of our visitors, and see what we can do for him. I am sorry I cannot stay just now, but I will try and call again soon."

Leaving her, Mr. Worker went in search of one of his fellow-labourers, to whom he made known the boy's condition, and soon the poor little fellow was visited by Mrs. Baker, the Bible-woman, who had often witnessed such scenes of sorrow and want, and therefore was ready for every difficulty with which she might have to contend. And well was it that she went, for it required all her courage and tact to allay the feelings of anger with which her well-meant efforts were met. However, being a woman of earnest piety and strong faith, she persevered, and at length was allowed to bring little articles which were very needful to the sick boy. Days passed by, while the life of the lad seemed to hang upon a single thread, which at any moment might snap. Both the father and mother seemed to take little or no care of the issue, whether it was for life or death. At length the disease seemed to be arrested in its course, and the doctor ventured to express the hope that perhaps after all he might live, though of that he would not be sure. The news was received with a sullen silence by both of the parents, as if they were rather disappointed, but the doctor took no notice, feeling he had done his duty.

During the evening the mother sat watching the boy, and from time to time giving him his medicine and the little delicacies which the Bible-woman had left in her charge, when all at once she heard, in a kind of whisper:

"Mother! mother!"

"Yes," she reluctantly replied.

"Mother, how long have I been ill?"

"A good many days."

"Does the doctor say I shall get well, mother?"

"Perhaps you may, he said to-day, but he's not sure."

"I don't think I shall, I feel so very weak, mother."

"Well, we must wait and see," she replied; "lay quiet and go to sleep again."

For a few moments he lay as still as death, and again he said, "Mother!"

"Well, what now do you want?"

"I should so like just to see my teacher, mother, before I die, to thank him for what he has taught me. Will you send someone to the school and ask him to come?"

"What do you want to see him for, and what good can he do you?" asked the mother. "He's been to see you once."

"But I want to see him, mother, to thank him for telling me about Jesus, who came into the world to seek and save lost and wicked boys like me, and to tell him that ever since he told me about Jesus being able to give rest to all who go to Him in trouble, I've found it true."

"Nonsense, you don't know what you're talking about, boy."

"But I do, mother; and if you and father would only let my teacher tell you about Jesus, He would make you as happy as I am."

"It's all rubbish, I tell you. Your teacher's no better than other folks, I know."

"But he is, mother, if you only knew him."

"I do know him, for he's called nearly every day or night to ask after you ever since you've been ill."

"I thought so, mother; and doesn't that prove he must be good, or he wouldn't feel so kindly to a poor boy like me."

"Perhaps so," she replied, not knowing what else to say.

"I know it, for I always began to feel better directly I went near him."

"Here, that will do, you mustn't talk any more, and I'll go and see if he'll come in to look at you."

Away she went, wondering what kind of special virtue there was in any young man who preferred teaching ragged boys to spending his time in folly and sin. But she soon learned that it was the possession of the Master's spirit who went about doing good which constituted the charm, and had changed the current of her boy's life. Of course Mr. Worker was only too glad to come and see the sick boy, and give him a cheering word, which the mother afterwards said "did him more good than the doctor's physic." Whether it was so or not, the boy gradually recovered from that very night. Nor was this the only influence for good which Mr. Worker had upon the family, for his mother felt that if her boy could find rest from his little troubles, by trusting in Jesus, why could not she also. The result was that one evening when the little fellow was sitting up and feeling that he was getting strong, the stubbornness of his mother's heart gave way, and she burst into tears, saying:—

"Oh, my boy, would to God I knew how to get the peace and joy you and Mr. Worker have."

"Why, mother, it is as easy for you to have as for us, for Jesus says, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

"But I'm so wicked, He won't have me, will He?"

"Yes, for he says, 'I am come to seek and save the lost.'"

"Oh, pray for me, my boy, and I'll pray, and perhaps He will hear and save me."

Just at that moment a knock was heard, and who should it be but Mr. Worker. In a few minutes he heard all that had taken place, and taking out his Bible he read several portions calculated to make the way of salvation clear to the sorrowing mother, and then kneeling down, asked God to bless and guide her into all peace. To his joy, she found peace in believing ere he left that night. She then began to feel anxious about her husband, and next day asked him to listen to the boy's story about Mr. Worker. Frank soon began to see what a mistake he had made in trying to carry his own trouble instead of asking God to do it for him, and ultimately, after a few visits from Mr. Worker, he also decided to make the Word of God his guide, and to serve the Lord with full purpose of heart.

It was not long before he proved the truth of the saying, "A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked"; for he found that