

OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

AT THE GATE.

PART II.

"MAMMA," said Constance, rushing into the drawing-room, "don't be angry, for I'm in such trouble, I can't think what to do! I wish I had told you before! I've been so unhappy all day because I let the boy in. Was it very wrong?"

"What boy, my dear?" asked her mother, looking much puzzled.

"Bert! And, mamma, he has a little sister, Cissy, and the woman she's with is angry when she's not well enough to go out. Only think of that, and you're always so good to me when the least thing is the matter."

"Who are you talking about, Constance?"

"I don't like to tell you of the snowdrops, because I know that was so wrong; but it all came so suddenly I had not time to think what I ought to do." Then followed the story of how she had opened the gate for the little boy who was stealing snowdrops, to save him from old John's anger.

"I suppose you acted from a kind impulse, Constance, but I hope it will not encourage him in dishonesty."

"Oh, I'm sure it won't, mamma, for I told him how God saw him! and I can't think he'll do it again, especially when I give him some snowdrops to take home to Cissy."

"You were wrong not to tell me at once, my dear; by keeping the secret all day you have imprisoned the boy in the cold a needlessly long time, and made yourself unhappy. We must release him at once."

Accordingly, after a little more consultation, Constance threw open the door leading to the garden, and called loudly to Bert to come in.

The boy peeped cautiously from his place of concealment, and seeing Constance standing at the door alone, came timidly towards her.

"Don't be afraid, Bert," she said, "no one will harm you. I've told mamma everything. She will forgive you for stealing her flowers, and let you out at the front door, but remember, you have done very wrong, and I hope you will never do so again. I promised you snowdrops for Cissy, but it is too dark to gather them now. If you will tell me where she lives, mamma and I will go and see her to-morrow, and bring some."

Bert gave the required address, and ran joyfully off, glad to get so well out of a dangerous scrape, to tell his adventures to his little sister, and prepare her for the promised visit.

"Oh, Bert," she said, "you must never go there to take any more, when they were so good to you; and I'd like to see that nice young lady. I wonder if 'tis true what she told you, about God seeing everything; maybe it is; but I suppose he doesn't trouble himself to care for poor boys and girls like us?"

"I don't know; you can ask her all that to-morrow."

They did not tell old Marthy of the expected visitors; and the following morning she went out by herself, grumbling and scolding because Cissy was not able to accompany her.

"You may go off with your brother where you like," she said, "for you're not worth half your keep to me now."

Cissy cried bitterly for a long time, and wished she were strong enough to go about with Bert, and help him; but how could he provide for her too, when she was so useless, and he, poor boy, often enough hungry himself, and with no shelter at night except any place he could find to creep into.

"Ah!" thought she, "there's no room in the world for me. I wonder why I was born, for no one cares for me but Bert, and even he doesn't know what I feel when I'm lying here all alone, and it's worse when Marthy comes in. She's so cross, and says I'm only a burden because I can't earn pennies now. If God sees and knows everything, I'm sure He must be sorry for me; but He won't help me, because I have done many things to make Him angry."

While these reflections were passing through the mind of the lonely child a gentle knock was heard at the door, and presently a lady and little girl entered the room.

"Are you Cissy?" asked a pleasant voice, but there was no reply, for though the child had been longing for the arrival of her visitors, she had not a word to say now that they had really come, but felt inclined to hide her face in the old blanket which covered her. Constance drew near, however, and holding up a fresh bunch of snowdrops, said, "Bert told me you liked flowers, so I brought you a few."

Then Cissy burst out crying. "I'm so sorry," she said, between her sobs, "that he took them out of your garden; he told me how good you were to him, and how you forgave him."

"Don't cry, poor child," replied the lady. "We forgave your brother because God forgives us all so much, and loves us. He loves you, Cissy."

"Does He see me as I lie here, and is he sorry for me?"

"Yes, and He sent us with the flowers and these nice things."

As Constance spoke she opened her basket, and brought out some tempting food for the sick child, and a few juicy oranges, refreshing to parched feverish lips.

"You see, mamma, it was all true what Bert told us," said Constance, as soon as they had left the house; "and now how can we help Cissy?"

"I fear she is very ill, poor child, but it seems to me the best plan would be to try and gain admittance for her to a children's hospital, where she would receive proper care and nourishment."

Very soon this arrangement was proposed and carried out, for old Martha made no objection to parting with the child, now that she was of no further use. Little Cissy was a long while ill and suffering, but during this sad time Bert was allowed to see her occasionally; and she liked to tell him how pleasant and comfortable everything seemed here, and how she knew now that God had not only seen, but loved her, when she used to cry all day in the lonely room, thinking no friend was near. There were many pretty treasures also to display to her brother, for Constance, who was a frequent visitor, brought flowers, picture-books, and a doll which she had dressed expressly for the sick child.

At length, after careful nursing, Cissy was sufficiently recovered to be removed to the country, where health and strength gradually returned, and she is learning many ways of making herself useful in the future, when she looks forward to living with her brother, and helping him to get on. Years are passing, and her hopes seem likely to be realised.

Bert—no longer a poor ragged boy, trying to live as he can—has now obtained a good situation, in which he is respected by his employers, and remarkable amongst his companions for honesty and truthfulness.

"Cissy," he often says, "I have never forgotten Miss Constance's words about the All-seeing eye of God, on that day when she opened a new life before me, as I stood a poor frightened boy, trembling 'at the gate.'"

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WHAT IS IMPOSSIBLE.

"I BELIEVE everything I am told," said the Caterpillar, with as grave a face as if it were a fact.

"Then I'll tell you something else," cried the Lark: "you will one day be a butterfly."

"Wretched bird!" exclaimed the Caterpillar; "you jest with my inferiority. Go away! I will listen to you no more."

"I told you you would not believe me," said the Lark, nettled in his turn.

"I believe everything I am told; that is"—and she hesitated—"everything that is reasonable. But to tell me that butterflies' eggs are caterpillars, and that caterpillars leave off crawling, and get wings, and become butterflies!—Lark, you are too wise to believe such nonsense yourself, for you know it is impossible."

"I know no such thing," said the Lark warmly. "Whether I hover over the corn-fields of earth, or go up into the depths of the sky, I see so many wonderful things, I know no reason why there should not be more. O Caterpillar, it is because you crawl, because you never get beyond your cabbage-leaf, that you call anything impossible."

"Nonsense!" shouted the Caterpillar. "I know what's possible and what's not possible as well as you do. Look at my long green body and these endless legs, and then talk to me about having wings and a painted feathery coat! Fool—"

"And fool you!" cried the indignant Lark. "Fool, to attempt to reason about what you cannot understand! Do you not hear how my song swells with joy as I soar upward to the mysterious wonder-world beyond? O Caterpillar! what comes to you from there, receive, as I do, upon trust."

"How am I to learn that?" asked the Caterpillar.

At that moment she felt something at her side. She looked around—eight or ten little caterpillars were moving about. They had broken from the butterfly's eggs! Shame and amazement filled our green friend's heart, but joy soon followed; for as the first wonder was possible, the second might be so too. And the Caterpillar talked all the rest of her life to her relations about the time when she should be a butterfly.—MRS. GATTY: *Parables from Nature.*

"I WAS glad when they said unto me, let us go up to the house of the Lord."