

The friend who loved her so well to help or hinder.

The next morning Isabel Glover sent a brief note to Mr. Moulton.

'I am sure that I shall disappoint you, for I have no heart for songs of rejoicing,' she wrote; 'but I will do the best I can if you cannot find any one else to take Miss Richardson's place.'

In the interval she practiced with the choir; but, as Easter approached, she shrunk more and more from the ordeal before her.

'O, how can I sing there—without Benton?' was the continual cry of her aching heart—Benton, whose clear, flute-like voice had done more than anything else to make the choir of the First Church famous in the town. More than once she wrote to Mr. Moulton that she could not sing, but each time some power stronger than herself kept her from sending the message. On Good Friday and Saturday her mind was in a tumult of miserable indecision. To withdraw at this late hour she felt would be wrong, yet it seemed to her that it would be an utter impossibility for her to stand up there among the lilies, as she had stood with her brother in other years, and lift her voice—missing his.

The dawn of Easter found her white and wretched after an almost sleepless night. Her lonely breakfast was a fast unbroken; and, when the music of the church bells woke the echoes in the quiet streets, she set off, assured in her own mind that she would not be able to sing. Mr. Moulton would see for himself that she could not do it.

She was early, and there were not many people in the streets; and the few that she met she passed unnoticed until suddenly she stopped short with a little gasping cry. Then she hurried on, an eager light in her eyes, a bright flush on her cheeks. She had caught sight of a figure, tall, slender, and young, such a figure as was ever present to her mental vision. O, how many, many times she had dreamed of seeing Benton so, of running after him and pleading with him to come back to her! There was a shabby, neglected look about this figure she was following that was not like Benton; but, then, who could tell how it might be with Benton now after these endless months since he went away? He might be shabby and travel-worn now. She was hurrying on breathlessly, for that one before her was walking rapidly.

They were almost at the church when she came near enough to see his side face. It was not Benton. The bitterness of her disappointment was so great that she could not suppress a little moaning cry. At the sound the young fellow turned and looked straight into her face.

'Are you sick? Can I—do anything?' he asked hesitatingly.

Involuntarily both paused, looking into each other's eyes. O no, this face was not like Benton's. God forbid, the girl cried in her heart, God forbid that Benton's face should ever bear the marks that were on this one; yet it was enough like Benton's to stir her heart to its depths.

It was not like Isabel Glover to act on impulse; but she yielded now to a sudden prompting, and answered quickly: 'Yes; you can come to church here this morning. Will you? I am to sing. I think I can sing better if I see you there.'

The look of incredulous amazement on his face reflected the feeling in her own mind. She could not understand what had moved her to speak so. She was divided between wanting him to walk away, and longing to have him enter the church. He,

too, seemed undecided. She did not wait for him to reach a decision. With a little bow, she passed on and through the chapel to the singers' seats.

Five minutes later, she saw him slip in and drop into the last pew at the back of the church. She drew a long breath of relief then; she had wanted him to come, after all. Somehow, poor and shabby and sin-scarred as he was, that shadowy resemblance to Benton was there, unmistakably there. O what would she not give to see her brother sitting there to-day as that poor boy was sitting? Then another thought flashed through her mind. He was not her brother, but perhaps somewhere in the world there was a sister watching and longing for him as she for Benton.

She no longer feared that she could not sing; she knew now that she could—she must—sing to that boy.

'To him and to Fred's mother,' she said to herself, her eyes filling suddenly as Mrs. Somers came feebly down the aisle. Frances Reed was with her, her shining eyes and golden hair in striking contrast to the pale, wasted face and white hair of the lonely mother in her sombre mourning garments.

People said afterwards that Isabel Glover had never sung as she did that morning. Nobody guessed that every note was a prayer for that lost boy in the back seat, a passionate prayer to him, urging him, pleading with him to go back to his home, to the loving hearts watching and waiting for him there. Nobody guessed it, unless possibly the boy himself, whose heart melted within him as he listened with bowed head. Only to him and to that sad-faced mother in her black dress the girl sung. She could not see up in the gallery another young fellow as motionless as the big pillar behind which he shrunk.

As the clear, rich voice rang through the silent church, pulsing, throbbing with the beautiful message it bore from the very soul of the singer, it was not only the shabby boy in the back seat whose heart was melted within him. Isabel Glover had given of her best to save the soul of a stranger that day, and the Master gave her back her Easter offering a hundred-fold; for Benton slept in his own room that Easter night.

Keep Trying.

If a boy should get discouraged

At lessons or at work,

And say, 'There's no use trying,'

And all hard tasks should shirk,

And keep on shirking, shirking,

Till the boy become a man,

I wonder what the world would do

To carry out its plan?

The coward in the conflict

Gives up at first defeat:

If once repulsed, his courage

Lies shattered at his feet.

The brave heart wins the battle

Because, through thick and thin,

He'll not give up as conquered—

He fights and fights to win.

So, boys, don't get disheartened

Because at first you fail;

If you but keep on trying,

At last you will prevail.

Be stubborn against failure,

Then try and try again;

The boys who keep on trying

Have made the world's best men.

—Selected.

No matter what appearances may be, there is no such thing as real prosperity to the wicked.—*Ram's Horn.*

Into the Heart of Easter.

(By Helen A. Hawley, in the 'Golden Rule.')

It was some time before Easter and a group of girls were talking gaily about the new suits which they hoped to wear on Easter Sunday, when they were interrupted by some one entering the room.

'Sh—hush!'

'Who is it? Miss Tappan?'

Miss Tappan was the teacher. No, it was not Miss Tappan that entered.

A girl rather tall and pale, with a sweet though somewhat sad face, and dressed in black. Not a thread of white in her attire.

'Some mystery?' she asked, as there was an awkward silence. 'Never mind, I'm just passing through the hall.' She said it quite pleasantly, without a trace of suspicion in her manner.

'No, no, Alice; don't go.' Gertrude, who had been the first speaker, wound her arm around the tall girl's waist. 'We were on the old subject of clothes; and we've worn it threadbare, same as our gowns.' She held up her elbow, which was perilously near to darning. At the same time she flashed a warning glance at the others.

'But I really must; for it's time to go home—and mamma—misses me.' Alice added the last words involuntarily, as if she would not have done so had she thought. There was a little quiver in her voice.

'Poor child,' Gertrude said as Alice passed out. 'I couldn't have her hear us talking over our Easter dresses. I expect it'll be a pretty hard day for her.'

'I don't believe she'll go to church at all, or to Sunday-school. I'm sure I couldn't.' This was Sallie's opinion.

This was a group of schoolgirls, not better nor worse than the average. They had their own serious thoughts if somewhat reticent about expressing them. Do not blame them because they had also a real liking for pretty things in the way of dress and adornment. The fault lay in thinking about Easter Sunday more as the opportunity to wear new attire than as a time for putting on a lovelier spirit. They went to the same school on week-days, and on Sundays they sat in the same class. They were firm friends, also. To not one of them had grief ever come closely, until four months ago, when Alice Wilmot's father died. That made a sort of break, not in the friendship, but in the feeling of fellowship. Alice seemed set apart as one that had peered into the unknown. She had had an experience that could not be told in girlish confidences.

'No, certainly we shall not see her on Easter Day. How dreary it will be for her!' This was the unanimous conclusion.

In that place Sunday-school was in the morning before church. There was an interval of fifteen minutes or so between it and the church service. In that interval the girls usually talked things over, sometimes in merry mood, sometimes in serious, if the lesson had been impressive.

So the Easter Sunday came, and the teacher might count on a full class. Decorous attention, too, however thoughts might wander.

The girls looked so pretty. Sallie in her tailor-made gown and broad gray hat trimmed with big rosettes of dark blue satin, Edith in her gayer garnishings, each with something bright and fresh.

Then Alice came, wearing the same black dress that she had worn so many Sundays, a single white carnation at her throat. The girls felt her to be something inharmonious. She did not feel them to be so.