

I mean?' stammered Antonio, somewhat—he knew not why—ashamed of the question.

'Proved it! Yes, sir, every day. I trust God: He keeps me.'

'I meant scientific truth, logical truth,' said Antonio, forgetting to whom he was speaking.

'Sir, I am not learned,' said the poor man. 'I could not explain how I breathe; but I know I do breathe, because I live; and it is the same with my faith. I cannot speak of it, but it is in me, and makes me live and rejoice.'

'Yours is a grand faith, friend!' said Antonio, his eyes turning towards the scanty furniture, the ragged child, the poor surroundings.

'It must be; it is faith in a great God,' was the reply, and then the sick man lay back exhausted.

'I wish I had your religion.' The words were forced, as it were, from Antonio's lips. The dying man heard them, smiled, and opened his eyes. 'Read this,' he said, drawing an old Bible from under his pillow, 'and just ask God to give you faith, as I ask Him for daily bread and someone to look to Carlotta when I am gone.'

Antonio walked away mechanically with the book in his hand. Francis had given Lottasome money, but he had hardly noticed the child this time; he was so full of thought about this strange trust in God, which was soothing the dying bed of a beggarman.

'I need not, however, deprive the poor creature of his most valued possession,' he exclaimed when the friends reached the main street. 'Here is a bookseller's shop; I can buy a Bible and return this one presently. I tell you what, Francis, that scene in the garret has made more impression on my mind than a thousand arguments in favour of Christianity.'

'Very likely,' smiled Francis, 'because it was faith in action.' He said no more aloud, but to himself he cried, 'Thank God, He hath done this. He will not leave so loving a son without real faith in Him.'

Exactly a week from that day Antonio set out alone to return the Bible. He had read a good deal of the holy book. He now

wished to converse on the subject with his sick friend. He could not help feeling that, ignorant as he was of this world's learning, he had a wisdom far greater.

Two men were on the broken stairs carrying something heavy on their shoulders. A coffin!

'Aye, the old chap's gone,' they said, in answer to a question of the gentleman.

'And the child—the little girl—where is she? I am interested in her,' cried Antonio, much disturbed.

'She's dying, too,' was the reply.

Greatly shocked, Antonio hurried on after the poor coffin. On gaining the attic he passed by the still figure, stretched out on a few planks, to the corner where little Lotta was lying. She was pale but smiling; surely she was not so very ill.

'Cheer up, little singer,' said Antonio, taking her small hand; I am come to take care of you—you shall not die. Yes, I know poor father is gone, but he was old and in pain; you are young, and ought to live many years yet.'

'Thank you,' said the poor child. 'But I am quite content to die. The nurse, who came to poor father, says I must. It is consumption I have got. All the rain and cold of this winter have been too much for me. There will be no rain and cold in Paradise where father and mother are gone. I should like to go to them. I shall live for ever there.'

'How do you know that, child?'

'My father and my mother told me so, and God told them, in His Book, by His Church. Sir, you know all that better than I do.'

Little Lotta could not grasp the idea that this kind rich man was not a hearty believer. Still, as Antonio did not speak she went on. 'God always tells the truth, sir, and you know He promised us eternal life, because of His dear Son our Lord Jesus Christ.' The young head bowed at the Holy Name. He died for us, and He promised His disciples to go and prepare a place for them in heaven. Oh, you have father's Bible there, I can find you the place.' And the weak fingers fluttered over the leaves.