

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## The Light in the Window.

Dan plodded on through sleet and snow, with step awkward and shuffling, yet with a certain resolution in it.

On through sleet and snow, till he came at last in front of a low cottage, standing in the midst of a square plot. A light streamed forth from its front window over the white pathway. It had shone there for him every winter nightfall for many a year; and he never saw that beacon-ray without blessing his 'little lamb' over and over again. How warm she had kept his heart! And yet among the hard things in his life, people who took the trouble to speak of him at all always reckoned 'that crippled child.' When his wife died, and left him

as the most delicate crystal. Round this wistful, loving, waiting face floated a mass of soft golden hair, like the halos you see sometimes in old pictures round the brows of saints. When she saw him the blue eyes kindled, then the face disappeared from the window, and when he opened the door there she was, in front of it, with her lips uplifted for his kiss. The neighbor stood by, her things on ready to go, and it struck Dan that there was a look of pity on her face.

'You'd better not get too near the child with those wet things on,' she said kindly. 'She's but a weak little thing, and she mustn't take cold.'

He started back remorsefully, and did not go up to the girl again until he had taken all his wet things off in his own room, and

man. So long as he leaves me you, I'll never doubt that God loves me.'

The girl sighed, and a look of white pain quivered a moment about her lips.

'Take me up, father,' she said, half an hour after, as they sat before the bright fire together. No mother's touch could have been more tender than that rough man's as he lifted the little twisted form into his arms, and laid the sunny head carefully against his bosom. She rested there for a while silently, looking fondly up into his face, and now and then touching his cheeks gently with her thin fingers. At last she said, with an air earnest yet slightly hesitating, 'You do believe God loves you, don't you, father?'

'Yes, lamb, yes; so long's he leaves me you.'

'But if he didn't leave me,' she persisted, 'wouldn't you believe that, too, was because he loved you?'

The girl stretched her arm up and drew it round his neck, and laid her face on his shoulder, to hide the tears she could not keep back. After a while he asked a sudden question, breathlessly, as if a suspicion had pierced him with a pang too sharp to be borne,—

'Has Dr. Peters been here to-day, Eunice?'

She trembled a little, but she answered quietly, 'Yes, father.'

'And he says you're goin,' does he, the way your mother went? Child, don't you believe him! You shan't go. My love will keep you alive. Hasn't it kept you, now, fourteen years? Why, the doctor said you wouldn't live the first time he laid you in my arms! But you have lived, and here you are, and here I'll hold you. Hasn't my love kept you so long?'

'Your love, and God's love, father. But what if he thinks now that it's time for me to go home?'

And then they sat on silently for a long, still hour; and the wood-fire burned brightly and now and then a brand dropped on the hearth, and that and the storm outside were the only sounds which broke the stillness, save when, once or twice, a great gasping sob tore up from Dan's deep chest. At last he bent over, and turned his girl's face toward him, and looked into it with eager, hungry eyes.

'It'll be a sorry world, lamb,' he said, 'when you're not in it—when there's nobody waitin' at the door, and no light burnin' in the winder.'

She looked up, her blue eyes full of tears.

'Father,' she said gently, 'don't you know you've told me sometimes how the thought that I was waitin' made it easy for you to get home, when the storms drove ever so hard, and kept you from wantin' to turn in to store or tavern?'

'Yes, lamb, yes; but what'll keep me on my way when you're gone?' he answered bitterly.

'I thought of the times you'd said that, father, after Dr. Peters went away to-day; and I wondered if it wasn't God's love that was going to take me to the heavenly home, so as to make it easier for you to come. I'll wait for you there, father; and I won't be lame any more, and I'll come to meet you, when you get on that threshold—as I never could here—strong and free, father, strong and free. Won't it make it easy for you to come on, in spite of storms, and not turn aside by the way, when you know I'm waitin' there, just as sure as ever I waited here?'

But the father said nothing; he only held her against his aching heart, with a grasp



WHEN HE OPENED THE DOOR.

her hour-old baby to bring up as best he could; they commiserated him, and wondered what he was to do. And when it was found that the child would never be able to walk, they thought his burden was heavier than he could well bear. But he knew—only he could not have told them or reasoned about it—what had been his sweet compensation.

Now, as he entered the yard, his step grew quicker. All that was shuffling and uncertain passed out of his manner, and he walked with the strong, firm tread of one sure of his welcome. Drawing near, he saw her face at the window, which the light illumined—a face of almost ideal beauty. Not the features so much; when you analyzed them they were far from regular, and bore a curious likeness to his own. But the great blue eyes were full of light, the color came and went on the cheeks in faint pink flushes, and the skin was transparent

made himself quite dry and tidy. By this time the neighbor was gone, and he and Eunice sat down together to the supper which waited. He had the keen, hungry appetite of a working-man, but it did not keep him from noticing presently that the food on his child's plate remained untouched. He laid down his knife and fork, and looked at her anxiously.

'Ain't you going to keep father company a little, dearie? You ain't never hearty, I know, but I want to see you eat something.'

She smiled faintly.

'You know you don't let me work any more, father; and I can't get hungry like you, that are busy all day, working for me.'

'Yes, lamb, for you,' he repeated, as if the words gave him pleasure. 'God knows it's for you, and he knows how thankful I am to have you to work for. Folks talk about my lot bein' hard, but that's all they know. I wouldn't change places with no