

pared with the ones in the library, and the library contains only a few of what there are in the world. Suppose I learn all the books there are in the house, how little I shall know after all.'

I was surprised to find she had considered the subject at all. 'But think, Tessy,' I cried, enthusiastically, 'of the pleasure of learning ever a little more, and—and—think of the great men and women, who have gladly spent their lives in the pursuit of knowledge, and you call it selfish!'

'But don't you see, dear Miss Fitzgerald,' she said, her dark eyes looking at me with unchildlike earnestness, 'when you die all your knowledge is wasted. It won't make it a bit easier for any other poor little girl to learn because you knew so much. It seems a dreadful waste to me. I would rather spend my life in cutting out shirts to keep little children warm than in being clever. But then I'm so stupid that I am sure to be wrong,' she added, wistfully, as if afraid she might have hurt my feelings. I did not reply. The child's words, mistaken as of course I knew them to be, had struck a chord somewhere within me that vibrated uncomfortably. Was my devotion to books only a form of selfishness? Did I neglect my duty towards the world? Almost mechanically I had strolled back into the library, and, leaving these unpleasant questions unanswered, I was soon again deeply engrossed in the sorrows of the 'much-tried man.'

A week later I sat in the schoolroom waiting for the hour of nine, and the appearance of my pupil. As the clock struck, Anne, the nurse, entered.

'Miss Tessy is not well this morning,' she began. 'I tell her she's none fit for lessons. I've bin to missis, but she says I'm not to bother her.'

The woman's tone was not particularly respectful, and she sniffed contemptuously as she mentioned her mistress, but I knew she was devoted to Tessy, so I simply said I would see her charge myself. The child was still in bed, and looked ill and feverish. She seemed very anxious lest I should be angry at her non-appearance in the schoolroom. For an only child and an heiress poor Tessy was singularly unassuming.

'Certainly, my dear, you must stay in bed,' I said with a cheerfulness born, to be strictly candid, of a burning desire for leisure, to write an essay, the subject of which had been engrossing my thoughts for some time. Therefore, I hurried away as soon as I decently could after making a few suggestions for the patient's treatment received by Anne with the scorn they no doubt well merited.

It was later in the afternoon than I had intended when I again visited Tessy, and was quite flattered by the evident pleasure with which she received me.

'Will you forgive me, Miss Fitzgerald, if I ask you to do me a big favor?' she said after a little while and with some hesitation.

Certainly, dear. I shall be pleased to do anything for you that I can,' I replied promptly, suddenly realizing how very fond I had become of this quaint child with the dark, far-away eyes.

'Well, on Thursday I always go in to Silvington to see Janie Hewitt. She's just a little girl like me, but she is always ill, and must lie flat on her back, and she is so very dull and lonely, and I do wish you would go, and see her for me.'

'But, Tessy, I don't know a bit what to say to those kind of people,' I stammered, actually blushing.

'Janie will be so disappointed if no one goes. I have a picture-book to send her,

and I generally read to her. Please don't laugh, Miss Fitzgerald. I know I have to skip all the big words, but Janie doesn't mind, and she likes it slowly.'

I never felt less inclined to laugh. It was quite a revelation to me how the child had spent those long afternoons which I had been too selfishly absorbed in my books to even inquire about. I felt humiliated. With all my boasted intellect this child had higher aspirations than I had ever entertained.

It was a balmy spring day as I set out for Upper Silvington, and it seemed to me that the unwonted emotions stirring in my breast were responsive to the same Almighty and which was quickening all Nature around me into a new and lovelier life. Generally I stalked along, my mind busied with some abstruse problem, quite unconscious of the weather, were it fair or foul, but to-day I was in a tenderer, more feminine, nay, more human mood. The singing of the birds around me seemed my own unconscious prayer, that henceforward my life might be purer, better, and less selfish. But my lesson was not yet learned. Knowledge comes through suffering, not in the sunshine nor the song of birds.

Upper Silvington is a mere hamlet, an off-shoot from the larger village. Despite my new-born resolutions, I shuddered at the thought of entering one of those dirty-looking cottages, in the doorways of which stood slatternly women, arms akimbo, regarding me with stupid curiosity. I accosted one, and was directed by her to the Hewitts' abode, perhaps the most tumble-down-looking hovel of all. I knocked on the open door. The scene within was one of indescribable confusion, and the smell that met my fastidious nostrils was most unpleasant. The woman who answered my summons was ragged and unkempt. My good resolutions, so recently formed, had already vanished. I felt that I could not and would not enter this evil-smelling abode. How Theresa could do so weekly was beyond my comprehension.

'You are Mrs. Hewitt?' I interrogated.

'Yes, I be.'

'I have brought this little book from Miss Millard for your invalid daughter,' I said. The woman's stolid face brightened.

'Miss Tessy, she do be very kind. But is she not coming to-day? Janie will be that disappointed like.' I explained that Miss Millard was indisposed, and the woman showed genuine concern.

'Poor little dear, she do be a hangel to my lass! She looks forrad to Thursdays like they was Sundays, and Miss Tessy allus leaves her better and cheerfuller. But you'll come in, miss? Janie'll be fine and pleased to see you.'

'I am very sorry but I haven't time,' I said, silencing some inward qualms of conscience. 'It is further to Silvington than I expected.' I was turning away when the woman spoke hesitatingly.

'You'll excuse me, ma'am, but it's nothing serious-like with little miss?'

'Oh, no!' I assured her. 'Merely some childish ailment.'

'That be well then, for,' advancing confidently a little nearer, 'last week she went to see the Jackson's baby, and it does turn out now as their bairns 'as got the scarlet-tinner.'

'Scarletina!' I echoed.

'Yes, Miss. Down yonder 'ouse with the door shut.' I was more startled than I cared to confess, and bidding her a hurried good-day I started off at a quick pace. The sunshine and the flowers had lost their charm for me now and I did not linger by the way. I went straight to Tessy's room. To my awakened eye she looked more flushed and feverish, but Anne, faithfully watch-

ing by her side, assured me she was better, having slept a little. Making some excuse I called her from the room and told her what I had learned from the woman. Anne was as much startled as I had been.

'You must see Mrs. Millard at once about sending for the doctor,' I said.

'Oh, she,' cried Anne, contemptuously, 'she's gone off to a 'ouse party at Colonel Lorrimer's without so much as a look nigh the precious child. But I'll send off John right away for Dr. Moore, but, oh, Miss, I do trow it isn't so. Miss Tessy has never been strong like.'

When the doctor arrived it proved that our fears were correct, though he assured us the attack was merely a slight one. I at once despatched this intelligence to Mrs. Millard and received a note in reply saying, that as she was not cut out for the role of sick nurse, and was enjoying herself immensely, it would be folly for her to return and run the risk of contagion. We soon settled into the routine of nursing, which was not arduous, for Tessy was the least exacting of invalids. A hundred times a day she unconsciously reproached me by her deep gratitude for every trifling kindness and attention shown towards her.

A week after the time she had first been taken ill I was sitting in charge while Anne took a turn in the grounds for fresh air. Tessy had been very quiet for some time, though her dark eyes followed me unceasingly.

'Wouldn't it be funny, Miss Fitzgerald,' she said, suddenly, 'if, after all the trouble poor dear mamma has had for fear I would not get enough learning into my head, wouldn't it be funny if I never grew up to need it?'

'Child, don't talk like that!' I said, sharply.

'I do not think I shall get better,' she went on, unmoved. 'I've been thinking of a lot of things as I lay here, and I was thinking if God didn't mean me to grow up He would know I did not need any learning. Perhaps God just makes the people clever who have to fight their way in the world, and the dunces don't need to. I used to worry because I could not learn, but now I don't mind; only I must have been an awful bother to you, Miss Fitzgerald, because you are so clever.'

'Clever, Tessy darling,' I said, choking down a sob. She took my hand in her small, feverish one, and began to talk of little Janie Hewitt, for whose sufferings she had a profound sympathy.

'I should like her to have all my books and toys if I don't want them any more.' So she rambled on, her eyes growing unnaturally bright, and I feared she was exciting herself unduly. To my great distress I thought her mind was wandering a little, and it was an immense relief when Anne appeared and the doctor with her. I slipped away and ran out into the garden. Later I met Anne looking very pale. Theresa was much worse. A telegram was to be despatched at once for a trained nurse, and another for Mrs. Millard. The latter returned at once, looking very scared, all the mother latent in her frivolous nature crying out for her child.

With the advent of the nurse my services were no longer required, and day by day I wandered about the house and grounds way-laying every one in hopes of a gleam of comfort from the sick room. Once I walked over to Silvington, and, conquering my repugnance to the dirt and squalor, the crippled child and I went together over Tessy's danger. In tears and sorrow I was learning my lesson. I had not opened a book for weeks. But the cup was not yet full.

In the third week Tessy left us. They buried all that was left of the child, whose brief life, spent for others, had brightened many a dingy home, and I left Mrs. Millard to her tears and her becoming mourning. But what am I to judge her—I, who had also undervalued the angel unawares till the soft white wings had been spread and Tessy's soul had gone home?

I have now many letters of distinction attached to my name, and I still prize learning as a great good, but I pray always that never may the pride of intellect crowd from my heart the seeds of human kindness planted there by the childish hands of one of God's dunces.