

VIRTUE IN DISTRESS.

FARMER OWEN'S son had been found asleep when doing sentinel duty, and was sentenced to be shot. A telegram had been received by his father saying that the sentence would be carried out in twenty-four hours. Mr. Allan, the minister, called to comfort the sorrowing family. During his visit a letter arrived Blossom, the farmer's little daughter, opened the door and received it. "It is from him," was all she said, as she handed it to the minister, who opened it and read as follows:

"Dear Father,—When this reaches you I may be in eternity. I am going to write you all about it. You know I promised Jimmie Carr's mother I would look after her boy; and when he fell sick I did all I could for him. He was not strong when ordered back into the ranks, and the day before that night I carried all his luggage, besides my own, on our march. If I had not lent him an arm now and then, he would have dropped by the way. I was tired out when we went into camp, and then it was Jimmy's turn to be sentry, and I would take his place; but I was too tired, father. I could not have kept awake though a gun had been pointed at my head; but I did not know it until—well—until it was too late.

"They tell me to-day that I have a short reprieve, 'time to write to you,' our good colonel says. Forgive him, father, he only does his duty; he would gladly save me if he could. And do not lay my death up against Jimmie. The poor boy is broken-hearted, and does nothing but beg and entreat them to let him die in my stead.

"I can't bear to think of mother and Blossom. To-night I shall see the cows all coming home from pasture, and precious little Blossom standing waiting for me; but—I—shall never—never—come. God bless you all: Forgive your poor Bennie."

Late that night a little figure glided down the footpath toward the Railway Station. The guard, as he reached down to lift her into the carriage, wondered at the tear-stained face that was upturned toward the dim lantern he held in his hand.

A few questions and ready answers told him all, and no father could have cared more tenderly for his only child than he for little Blossom. She was on her way to Washington to ask President Lincoln for her brother's life, and had brought Bennie's letter with her. Next morning they reached New York, and the guard hurried her on to Washington. Every minute, now, might be the means of saving her brother's life.

The President had but just seated himself to his evening's task, when the door softly opened, and Blossom, with downcast eyes and folded hands, stood before him.

"Well, my child," he said, in his pleasant, cheerful tones, "what do you want?"

"Bennie's life, please, sir," filtered Blossom "Bennie! Who is Bennie?"

"My brother, sir. They are going to shoot him for sleeping at his post."

"Oh, yes; I remember. It was a fatal sleep. You see, child, it was a time of special danger. Thousands of lives might have been lost by his negligence."

"So my father said," replied Blossom gravely. "But poor Bennie was so tired, sir, and Jimmie so weak. He did the work of two, sir, and it was Jimmie's night, not his; but Jimmie was so tired, and Bennie never thought about himself, that he was tired too."

"What is this you say, child? Come here; I do not understand."

Blossom went to him. He put his hand on her shoulder, and turned up the pale, anxious face toward his. How tall he seemed! And he was President of the United States, too. A dim thought of this kind passed for a moment through Blossom's mind; but she told her simple, straightforward story, and handed Bennie's letter to Mr. Lincoln to read.

He read it carefully; then, taking up his pen, wrote a few hasty lines and rang his bell. Blossom heard this order given: "Send this despatch at once." The President then turned to the girl, and said: "Go home, my child, and tell your father, who can approve his country's sentence, even when it takes the life of a child like that, that Abraham Lincoln thinks that life far too precious to be lost. Go back, or—wait until to-morrow; Bennie will need a change after he has so bravely faced death; he shall go with you."

"God bless you, sir!" said Blossom.

Two days after this interview the young soldier came to the White House with his little sister. He was called into the President's private room, and a strap was fastened on his shoulder. Mr. Lincoln then said, "The soldier that could carry a sick comrade's baggage, and die for the act so uncomplainingly, deserves well of his country."

Then Bennie and Blossom took their way to their green mountain-home. A crowd gathered at the railway station to welcome them back; and as Farmer Owen's hand grasped that of his boy, tears flowed down his cheeks, and he was heard to say, fervently, "The Lord be praised."—*Evangelical Churchman.*