

CRUELTY AND CHARITY.

In so large a family as that of Mr. T— there was a good deal of sewing to do, and out of charity the work was taken from a seamstress who had sewed for the family some time, and given to a poor widow woman with several small children. Ostensibly only was this charity. Really, it was to save a few more pennies. How could this be? some one will ask. Let me sketch a little scene; premising that this poor woman's husband was just dead, and she left, helpless and friendless, with no apparent means of support. Besides, she was in very feeble health. By accident, Mr. T— had heard of her distressed situation, and, the suggestion of the individual who named her case to him, told his wife that it would be charity to give her some sewing.

'I think it would, indeed,' says Mrs. T—. 'Our sewing costs us a great deal,' responds the careful husband, 'and in this thing we may benefit ourselves as well as do a deed of charity. No doubt this woman is rather an indifferent sewer, in comparison with Miss R—, and therefore her work will not of course be worth so much. And she will no doubt think one half the price Miss R— gets, a good one.'

'No doubt,' chimes in the frugal partner. Mrs. — was sent for. After she was seated the following conversation ensues.

'Can you do plain sewing?'
'Yes, ma'am, as well as most persons.'
'What is your price for fine shirts?'
'I haven't set any price yet, but I will work as low as any one.'

'But, you know that, to get work, you will have to do it a little lower than ordinary. People don't like to change.'

'Well, ma'am, I am in want, and I will work at any price for my children.'

'I suppose you will make fine shirts for a quarter (of a dollar)?'

'Yes, ma'am!'
'And calico dresses for the same?'

'Yes, ma'am!'
'Well, that's reasonable.'

'Boys, common shirts you will not charge over eleven-pence for?'

'No, ma'am.'

'That's reasonable, and I'll do all I can for you. It gives me pleasure to help the poor. Come down to-morrow, and I'll have some work ready for you.' The widow departed.

'Well, wife,' says Mr. T—, bustling in when he saw the woman depart; 'at what price will she work?'

'At just half what Miss R— charges.'

'Well, that's something like. It gives me pleasure to befriend any one who is willing to work at a reasonable price. Why this will save us almost a dollar a week the year round.'

'Yes, it will so; and if I keep her at it, or some one else, at the same price for a year, you'll let me have a fifty dollar shawl won't you?'

'Yes, if you want it.'

'Well, I'll do my best. It's shameful what some of those seamstresses do charge.'

It is often well to reverse a picture. Suppose we look at the other side of this.

Mrs. — had always been delicate. When a girl she could never sew long at a time without getting a pain in her side. She married a hard-working, industrious mechanic, whose trade was not very lucrative, yielding barely enough for support. Her health, after her marriage, was but little improved, and when, with several small children, she was left a widow, she yielded, in her first keen anguish of bereavement, to despair. But a mother can't of long sit in idleness when her dear babes were about her. She could think of no way of getting a living for them but by her needle, and, as she was a neat sewer, she hoped to get work, and earn food and scant clothing at least. But she could get no work. No person knew her who wanted sewing done. She applied to several and was still without the means of earning a dollar when the last one was spent. Just at this moment, the fact of her destitution becoming more known, Mrs. T— sent for her.

As she carried home her work the day after the interview, she was glad at heart with the thought that now there was a way of escape at least from starvation. But little more her yearning heart could promise her. Boys' shirts at twelve and a half cents were her first pieces of work. Two of these, by hard work, she managed to get done in a day. Had they been made plain, she could have finished them early, and had time to give many necessary attentions to her children. But the last words of Mrs. T— had robbed her of that chance. 'You can stitch the collars of these any how—you can afford it, I suppose, and they iron better when that is done.' The simple and touching 'Yes ma'am,' but in a sadder tone than usual, was the only response.

Next morning she was up early, though her head ached badly, and she was faint and weak, from having cat so steadily through the whole of the preceding day. Her children were all taken up, washed and dressed; her rooms cleaned, and a scanty meal of mush and milk prepared for the little ones, and a cup of tea for herself. Her own stomach refused the food which her own children partook with keen appetites, and she could only swallow a few mouthfuls of dry stale bread.

It was near ten o'clock when she got fairly down to her work, her head still aching and almost blinding her. Some how or other, she could not get on at all fast, and it was long past the usual dinner hour before she had finished the garment. The children were impatient for their dinner, and she had to make great haste in preparing it, as well for their satisfaction, as to gain time.

'Mother, we are getting tired of mush and milk,' said one of the little ones. 'You don't have all the good things now you used to. No pies, nor puddings, nor meat.'

'Never mind dear, we'll have some nice corn cakes for supper.'

'You'll have supper soon, won't you, mother?' said another little one coaxingly, her thoughts busy with the nice corn cakes.

'And shan't we have molasses on them?' said another, pushing away her bowl of mush and milk.

'No, dear, not to-night, but to-morrow we'll have some.'

'Why not to-night, mother; I want some to-night.'

'Mother ain't got money to buy it with to-night, but to-morrow she will have some,' said the mother soothingly.

'O we'll have 'lasses to-morrow for our cakes,' cried a little girl who could just speak, clapping her hands in great glee.

After dinner, Mrs. — worked hard, and in much bodily pain and misery, to finish the other shirt, in which the last stitch was taken at nine o'clock at night.

Soon after breakfast, next day, she took the four shirts home to Mrs. T—, her thoughts mostly occupied with the comfortable food she was to buy her children, with the half dollar she had earned. For it was a sad truth that she had laid out her last dollar for the meal with which she was making mush for her little ones.

After examining every seam, every hem, and every line of stitching, Mrs. T— expressed approbation of the work, and handed the poor woman a couple of fine shirts to make for Mr. T—, and a calico dress for herself. She did not offer to pay her for the work she had done: after lingering a few moments, Mrs. — ventured to hint that she would like to have a part she had earned:

'Oh dear! I never pay seamstresses until their bills amount to five dollars. It is so troublesome to keep account of small sums. When you have made five dollars I will pay you.'

Mrs. — retired, but with a heart that seemed like lead in her bosom. 'When shall I earn five dollars? not for a whole month at this rate,' were the words that formed themselves in her thoughts.

'We shall have the molasses now, mother, shan't we?' said two or three glad little voices, as she entered her home.

For a few moments she knew not what answer to make. Then gathering them all about her, she explained to them, as well as she could make them under-

stand, that the lady for whom she had done the work did not pay her, and she was afraid it would be good while before she would; and that, until she was paid, she could not get them any thing better than what they had.

The little things all stole silently and without murmur away, and the mother again sat down to work. A tear would often gather in her eyes, and she looked up from the bright needle, glistening in her fingers, and noted the sadness and disappointment pictured in their young faces. From this state of gloomy feeling she was roused by a knock at the door, and a pleasant looking young lady, somewhat gaily dressed, came in with a small bundle in her hand.

She introduced herself by saying that she had just seen some pretty shirts at Mr. T's, and that she was so well pleased with the work, that she had inquired for the maker. 'And now, having found you,' said she, 'I want you to make and fit this calico dress for me, if you do such work.'

'I shall be glad to do it for you,' said she, encouraged by the kind and feeling manner of the lady. 'And what will you charge?'

Mrs. — hesitated a moment, and then said— 'Mrs. T— gives me a quarter of a dollar.'

There was a bright spot for a moment on the cheek of the lady.

'Then I will give you three quarters,' said she, with warmth.

Mrs. — burst into tears, and she could not help it.

'Are you in need?' inquired the strange lady, sympathizingly, but with an air of feeling that could not be mistaken.

For a moment the widow paused, but the sight of her children conquered the rising emotions of pride.

'I have nothing but a little corn meal in the box and have no money.'

A tear glistened in the stranger's eye; her breast heaved with strong emotion. Then, again, all was still.

'I will pay you for this dress beforehand, and I want it done very nice, and I will pay you a dollar for making it. Can I have it the day after to-morrow?'

'Certainly, ma'am, to-morrow evening, if you want it.'

The dollar was paid down, and the angel of mercy departed. More than one heart was made glad that morning.—*Ch. of Eng. Mag.*

THE YOUNG CHRISTIAN'S LIBRARY.*

I. Let me first observe on the principles to be kept in view, upon entering on a course of religious reading or study—and here I would wish to impress two observations on the youthful mind—1st. Whatever is read should be read well, i. e., should be thoroughly understood, digested, and made the subject of thought and frequent meditation. Superficial reading is the bane of improvement; it begets a bit of mental carelessness and listlessness, the tendency of which must be to perpetuate incorrect defective knowledge. It is a fault encouraged, I think, by the multiplication of books. People get into the way of skimming over a great number of volumes and thus learn nothing in a solid and distinct manner. To correct this fatal tendency, I would recommend the plan of studying well and thoroughly a few books of a sound elementary character—making conquest of them, and having their method and of the subjects clearly imprinted on the memory. In this way far more sound progress will be made in knowledge, than by a superficial reading of ten times the number of volumes. After a clear system of religious knowledge has been fixed in the mind, such a study of good authors, there is the less danger of distraction of thought from reading in a desultory or miscellaneous manner: the mind will arrange the ideas presented to it, according to its method and previously adopted system. The observation I wished to make on this part of the

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