

There were crosses—nothing more.
There were crosses old, and crosses new,
There were crosses large and small;
And in their midst there was ONE who stood
As the Master of them all.
Before His presence her eyes dropped low,
And her wild complaining died;
For she knew the cross that He had borne
Was greater than all beside.
And He bade her choose, and take away,
From among the many there,
Another cross, in exchange for hers,
That she found too great to bear.
She looked for those that were least in size,
And she quickly lifted one;
But oh, 'twas heavy, and pained her more
Than her own had ever done!
She laid it back with a trembling hand—
“And whose cross is that?” she cried;
“For heavier 'tis than ever mine!”
And a solemn voice replied:
“That cross belongs to a maiden young,
But of youth she little knows;
For the days to her are days of pain,
And the night brings scant repose.
A helpless, suffering, useless thing!
And her pain will never cease.
Till death in pity will come one day,
And her troubles end in peace.
She never has walked the pleasant fields,
Nor has sat beneath the trees;
The hospital wall that shuts her in
Is the only world she sees.
She has no mother, she has no home,
And in strangers' hands she lies;
With none to care for her while she lives,
Nor weep for her when she dies.”
“But why is the cross so small, my Lord,
And why does her heart not break?”
“She counts it little,” the answer came,
“For she bears it for My sake.”
The widow blushed with a sudden shame;
To her eyes the tears arose;
She dried them soon, and again she turned,
And another cross she chose.
It fell from her hand against the wall,
And she let it there remain;
“That cross shall never be mine,” she said,
“Though I take my own again!
And whose is this that I cannot hold
For it seems to burn my hand!
And never, I think, was heart so strong
That could such a weight withstand.”
“The cross it is of a gentle wife,
And she wears it all unseen;
With early sorrow her hair is white,
But she keeps a smile serene.
She gave her heart to an evil man,
And she thought him good and true;
And long she trusted and long believed,
But at last the truth she knew.
She knows that his soul is stained with crime,
But the worst she still conceals;
Abuse and terror her sole reward,
And the Lord knows what she feels.
She cannot leave him, for love dies hard,
And her children bear his name;
But she prays for grace, to keep and guard
Their innocent lives from shame.
She trembles oft when his step she hears
On a lonely winter night;
And she hides her frightened babes afar
From their cruel father's sight.
And she dares not even hope for death,
Though his hand might set her free.
'Twere well for her in the grave to rest;
But where would the children be?
The widow shuddered, her face grew pale,
And she no more turned to look;
She reached her hand to the wall near by,
And a cross by chance she took.
'Twas not so large as the first had been,
But it seemed a fearful weight!
“And whose am I holding now?” she asked,
“For it did not look so great.”
“A mother's cross is the one you bear,”
So the voice in answer said;
“And she once had children six, like you;
But her children all are dead.
She has all besides that earth can give;
She has friends and wealth to spare,
And house and land—but she counts them not,
For the children are not there.
Time passes slowly, and she grows old;
But she may not yet depart.
In lonely splendor she counts the years,
With an empty, hungry heart.
And she knows by Whom the cross was sent,
And she tries her head to bow;
But six green mounds by the churchyard wall
Are the most she cares for now.”
The widow thought of her own wild brood,
And she felt a creeping chill;
And, “Oh, give me back my cross!” she cried,
“I will keep and bear it still.
Forgive me, Lord” (and with that she knelt,
And for very shame she wept).
“I know my sin, that I could not bow,
Nor Thy law will accept.
Oh, give me patience, for life is hard;

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And the daily strength I need!
And by Thy grace I will try to bear
The burden for me decreed.
I'll change my ways with the children now,
Though they give me added cares.
Poor babes! I know, if they love me not,
That the blame is mine, not theirs!
She kept her word as the weeks went on,
And she fought with fate no more;
'Twas now with a patient, humble heart
That her daily cross she bore.
The children wondered to see her change
So greatly in look and speech!
She met them now with a smile so kind,
And a gentle word for each.
And soon they learned from her altered ways,
What her words had vainly taught;
Their love, that long she had claimed in vain,
Came back to her all unsought.
There were merry shouts and dancing feet,
When the mother came in sight;
There were little arms around her thrown,
There were eyes with joy alight.
With love for teacher, they learned to help,
There was work for fingers small;
Her heart grew soft like the earth in spring,
And she thanked the Lord for all.
Her girls so pretty, her boys so brave,
And so helpful all and kind!
She wondered often, and thought with shame
Of how she had once repined.
For in their presence she oft forgot
Her burden of want and care,
Forgot her trouble—forgot, almost,
That she had a cross to bear!

—FRANCESCA ALEXANDER.

Park Hill, Feb. 4, 1906.

Dear Hope,—“The Quiet Hour” is a favorite page in our home, and I thought I would like to tell Mrs. Hayward how much we enjoyed her letter and the two beautiful pieces of poetry she had contributed in last week's Advocate. I thought the latter one, “Jesus Knows and Understands,” would be read and appreciated by many of the wives and mothers in our farm homes. Ours is an ideal life when we once learn the secret of living the simple life, and I think so many are learning this lesson in our farm homes.

His ways are so wonderful, and we are so slow to learn His ways are best. Just last Easter, I came across a few verses in one of our weekly church papers, “His Hands and Mine,” and pinning them up beside me while I was busy with the sewing, I committed them to memory, and enclose them, hoping they may helpful be to someone:

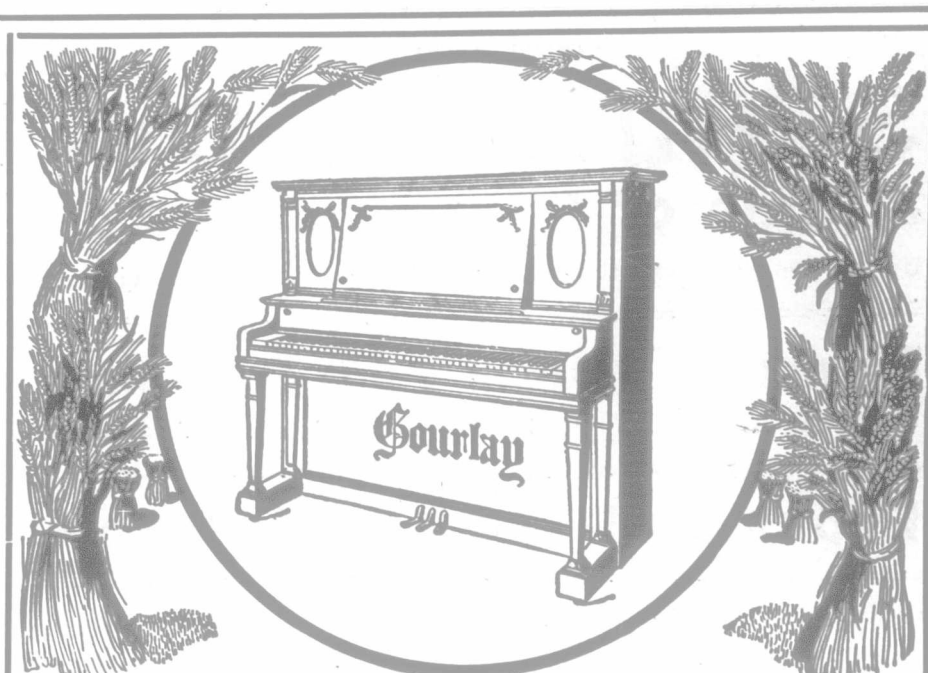
“My hands were filled with many things
That I did precious hold,
As any treasure of a king—
Silver, or gems, or gold.
The Master came and touched my hands
The scars were in His own;
And at His feet my treasures sweet,
Fell shattered one by one.
I must have empty hands, said He,
If I would work my works through thee.

“My hands were stained with marks of
toil,
Defiled with dust of earth;
And I my work did oft times soil
And render little worth.
The Master came and touched my hands
And crimson were his own.
And when amazed, on mine I gazed,
Lo, every stain was gone.
I must have cleansed hands, said He,
If I would work my works through thee.

“My hands were growing feverish,
Cumbered with much care,
Trembling with haste and eagerness,
Not folded oft in prayer.
The Master came and touched my hands
And might was in His own,
And calm and still to do His will
Were mine. The fever gone.
I must have quiet hands, said He,
If I would work my works through thee.

“My hands were strong in fancied
strength,
But not in power divine,
Bold to take up tasks at length
That were not His, but mine.
The Master came and touched my hands
And power was in His own,
And mine since then have helpless been,
Save as His are laid thereon,
And it is only thus, said He,
That I can work my works through thee.”

Shortly after learning these verses I was laid aside in the hospital, and what a blessing these verses were to me, as so often I thought of tasks I wanted to do that were not His, but mine; and so I learned the lesson of being content with doing the daily task, etc., and in leaving all to Him, knowing all is well. Wishing you, dear Hope, every success in your effort to help others to the better part, I am, A FARMER'S WIFE.



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