

The Good Samaritan.

A traveller fell among thieves ;
He was crushed like autumn leaves ;
He was beaten like the sheaves
Upon the threshing floor.

There, upon the public way,
In the shadowless heat of day,
Bleeding, stripped, and bound he lay,
And seemed to breathe no more.

Void of hope was he, when lo !
On his way to Jericho ;
Came a priest, serene and slow,
His journey just begun.

Many a silver bell and gem
Glittered on his harness hem ;
Behind him gleamed Jerusalem,
In the unclouded sun.

Broad were his phylacteries,
And his calm and holy eyes
Looked above earth's vanities,
And gazed upon the sky.

He the suffering one descried,
But with saintly looks of pride,
Passed by on the other side,
And left him there to die.

Then approached with reverend pace
One of the elected race,
The chosen ministers of grace,
Who bore the ark of God.

He, a Levite and a high
Exemplar of humanity,
Likewise passed the sufferer by,
Even as the dust he trod.

Then came a Samaritan,
A despised, rejected man,
Outlawed by the Jewish ban
As one in bonds to sin.

He beheld the poor man's need,
Bound his wounds and with all speed,
Set him on his own good steed,
And brought him to the inn.

When our Judge shall reappear
Thinkest thou this man will hear,
"Wherefore didst thou interfere
With what concerned not thee?"

No ! the words of Christ will run,
"Whatsoever thou hast done
To this poor and suffering one,
That hast thou done to me!"
—Author unknown.

THE STORY OF JESSICA.

CHAPTER IV.

PEEPS INTO FAIRYLAND.

It was not the last time that Jessica concealed herself behind the baize-covered door. She could not overcome the urgent desire to enjoy again and again the secret and perilous pleasure ; and Sunday after Sunday she watched in the dark streets for the moment when she could slip in unseen. She soon learned the exact time when Daniel would be occupied in lighting up, before the policeman would take up his station at the entrance, and, again, the very minute at which it would be wise and safe to take her departure. Sometimes the child laughed noiselessly to herself, until she shook with suppressed merriment, as she saw Daniel standing unconsciously in the lobby, with his solemn face and grave air, to receive the congregation, much as he faced his customers at the coffee-stall. She learned to know the minister by sight—the tall, thin, pale gentleman, who passed through a side door, with his head bent as if in deep thought, while two little girls, about her own age, followed him, with sedate yet pleasant faces. Jessica took a great interest in the minister's children. The younger one was fair, and the elder was about as tall as herself, and had eyes and hair as dark ; but oh, how cared for, how plainly waited on by tender hands ! Sometimes, when they were gone by, she would close her eyes, and wonder what they would do in one of the high black pews inside, where there was no place for a ragged, barefooted girl like her ; and now and then her wonderings almost

ended in a sob, which she was compelled to stifle.

It was an untold relief to Daniel that Jessica did not ply him with questions, as he feared, when she came for breakfast every Wednesday morning ; but she was too shrewd and cunning for that. She wished him to forget that she had ever been there, and by-and-bye her wish was accomplished, and Daniel was no longer uneasy, while he was lighting the lamps, with the dread of seeing the child's wild face starting up before him.

But the light evenings of summer-time were drawing near apace, and Jessica foresaw, with dismay, that her Sunday treasuries would soon be over. The risk of discovery increased every week, for the sun was later and later in setting, and there would be no chance of creeping in and out unseen in the broad daylight. Already it needed both watchfulness and alertness to dart in at the right moment in the gray twilight ; but still she could not give it up ; and if it had not been for the fear of offending Mr. Daniel, she would have resolved upon going until she was found out. They could not punish her very much for standing in the lobby of a chapel.

Jessica was found out, however, before the dusky evenings were quite gone. It happened one night that the minister's children, coming early to the chapel, saw a small tattered figure, bareheaded and barefooted, dart swiftly up the steps before them and disappear within the lobby. They paused and looked at one another, and then, hand in hand, their hearts beating quickly, and the colour coming and going on their faces, they followed this strange new member of their father's congregation. The pew-opener was nowhere to be seen, but their quick eyes detected the prints of the wet little feet which had trodden the clean pavement before them, and in an instant they discovered Jessica crouching behind the door.

"Let us call Daniel Standring," said Winny, the younger child, clinging to her sister ; but she had spoken aloud, and Jessica overheard her, and before they could stir a step she stood before them with an earnest and imploring face.

"Oh, don't have me drove away," she cried ; "I'm a very poor little girl, and it's all the pleasure I've got. I've seen you lots of times with that tall gentleman as stoops, and I didn't think you'd have me drove away. I don't do any harm behind the door, and if Mr. Daniel finds me out he won't give me any more coffee."

"Little girl," said the elder child, in a composed and demure voice, "we don't mean to be unkind to you ; but what do you come here for, and why do you hide yourself behind the door?"

"I like to hear the music," answered Jessica, "and I want to find out what prayer is, and the minister, and God. I know it's only for ladies and gentlemen, and fine children like you ; but I'd like to go inside just for once, and see what you do."

"You shall come with us into our pew," cried Winny, in an eager and impulsive tone ; but Jane laid her hand upon her outstretched arm, with a glance at Jessica's ragged clothes and matted hair. It was a question difficult enough to perplex them. The little outcast was plainly too dirty and neglected for them to invite her to sit side by side with them in their crimson-lined pew, and no poor people attended the chapel with whom she could have a seat. But Winny, with flushed cheeks and indignant eyes, looked reproachfully at her elder sister.

"Jane," she said, opening her Testament, and turning over the leaves hurriedly, "this was papa's text a little while ago : 'For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment ; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place ; and say to the poor, Stand thou here, or sit here under my footstool ; are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?' If we don't take this little girl into our pew, we 'ave the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.'"

"I don't know what to do," answered Jane, sighing ; "the Bible seems plain ; but I'm sure papa would not like it. Let us ask the chapel-keeper."

"Oh, no, no !" cried Jessica : "don't let

Mr. Daniel catch me here. I won't come again, indeed ; and I'll promise not to try and find out about God and the minister, if you'll only let me go."

"But, little girl," said Jane, in a sweet but grave manner, "we ought to teach you about God, if you don't know him. Our papa is the minister, and if you'll come with us we'll ask him what we must do."

"Will Mr. Daniel see me?" asked Jessica.

"Nobody but papa is in the vestry," answered Jane, "and he'll tell us all, you and us, what we ought to do. You'll not be afraid of him, will you?"

"No," said Jessica, cheerfully, following the minister's children as they led her along the side of the chapel towards the vestry.

"He is not such a terrible personage," said Winny, looking round encouragingly, as Jane tapped softly at the door, and they heard a voice saying, "Come in."

CHAPTER V.

A NEW WORLD OPENS.

The minister was sitting in an easy-chair before a comfortable fire, with a hymn-book in his hand, which he closed as the three children appeared in the open doorway. Jessica had seen his pale and thoughtful face many a time from her hiding-place, but she had never met the keen, earnest, searching gaze of his eyes, which seemed to pierce through all her wretchedness and misery, and to read at once the whole history of her desolate life. But before her eyelids could droop, or she could drop a reverential curtsey, the minister's face kindled with such a glow of pitying tenderness and compassion as fastened her eyes upon him, and gave her new heart and courage. His children ran to him, leaving Jessica upon the mat at the door, and with eager voices and gestures told him the difficulty they were in.

"Come here, little girl," he said ; and Jessica walked across the carpeted floor till she stood right before him, with folded hands, and eyes that looked frankly into his.

"What is your name, my child," he asked.

"Jessica," she answered.

"Jessica," he repeated, with a smile ; "that is a strange name."

"Mother used to play 'Jessica' at the theatre, sir," she said, "and I used to be a fairy in the pantomime, till I grew too tall and ugly. If I'm pretty when I grow up, mother says I shall play too ; but I've a long time to wait. Are you the minister, sir?"

"Yes," he answered, smiling again.

"What is a minister?" she inquired.

"A servant!" he replied, looking away thoughtfully into the red embers of the fire.

"Papa!" cried Jane and Winny, in tones of astonishment ; but Jessica gazed steadily at the minister, who was now looking back again into her bright eyes.

"Please, sir, whose servant are you?" she asked.

"The servant of God and of man," he answered solemnly. "Jessica, I am your servant."

The child shook her head, and laughed shrilly as she gazed round the room, and at the handsome clothing of the minister's daughters, while she drew her rags closer about her, and shivered a little, as if she felt a sting of the east wind, which was blowing keenly through the streets. The sound of her shrill, childish laugh made the minister's heart ache and the tears burn under his eyelids.

"Who is God?" asked the child. "When mother's in a good temper, sometimes she says, 'God bless me!' Do you know him, please, minister?"

But before there was time to answer, the door into the chapel was opened, and Daniel stood upon the threshold. At first he stared blandly forwards, but then his grave face grew ghastly pale, and he laid his hand upon the door to support himself until he could recover his speech and senses. Jessica also looked about her, scared and irresolute, as if anxious to run away or to hide herself. The minister was the first to speak.

"Jessica," he said, "there is a place close under my pulpit where you shall sit, and where I can see you all the time. Be a good girl and listen, and you will hear something about God. Standring,

put this little one in front of the pews by the pulpit steps."

But before she could believe it for very gladness, Jessica found herself inside the chapel, facing the glittering organ, from which a sweet strain of music was sounding. Not far from her Jane and Winny were peeping over the front of their pew, with friendly smiles and glances. It was evident that the minister's elder daughter was anxious about her behaviour, and she made energetic signs to her when to stand up and when to kneel ; but Winny was content with smiling at her whenever her head rose above the top of the pew. Jessica was happy, but not in the least abashed. The ladies and gentlemen were not at all unlike those whom she had often seen when she was a fairy at the theatre ; and very soon her attention was engrossed by the minister, whose eyes often fell upon her as she gazed eagerly, with uplifted face, upon him. She could scarcely understand a word of what he said, but she liked the tones of his voice, and the tender pity of his face as he looked down upon her. Daniel hovered about a good deal, with an air of uneasiness and displeasure, but she was unconscious of his presence. Jessica was intent upon finding out what a minister and God were.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST PRAYER.

When the service was ended, the minister descended the pulpit steps, just as Daniel was about to hurry Jessica away, and, taking her by the hand in the face of all the congregation, he led her into the vestry, whither Jane and Winny quickly followed them. He was fatigued with the services of the day, and his pale face was paler than ever as he placed Jessica before his chair, into which he threw himself with an air of exhaustion ; but, bowing his head upon his hands, he said in a low, but clear tone, "Lord, these are the lambs of thy flock. Help me to feed thy lambs!"

"Children," he said, with a smile upon his weary face, "it is no easy thing to know God. But this one thing we know, that he is our Father—my Father and your Father, Jessica. He loves you, and cares for you more than I do for my little girls here."

He smiled at them and they at him, with an expression which Jessica felt and understood, though it made her sad. She trembled a little, and the minister's ear caught the sound of a faint though bitter sob.

"I never had any father," she said, sorrowfully.

"God is your Father," he answered, very gently ; "He knows all about you, because he is present everywhere. We cannot see him, but we have only to speak, and he hears us, and we may ask him for whatever we want."

"Will he let me speak to him as well as these fine children that are clean and have got nice clothes?" asked Jessica, glancing anxiously at her muddy feet and her soiled and tattered frock.

"Yes," said the minister, smiling, yet sighing at the same time ; "you may ask him this moment for what you want."

Jessica gazed round the room with large, wide-open eyes, as if she were seeking to see God ; but then she shut her eyelids tightly, and bending her head upon her hands, as she had seen the minister do, she said, "O God ! I want to know about you. And please pay Mr. Daniel for all the warm coffee he's give me."

Jane and Winny listened with faces of unutterable amazement ; but the tears stood in the minister's eyes, and he added "Amen" to Jessica's first prayer.

(To be continued.)

The morning dew was sparkling when little Mary came downstairs on her first visit to the country. "Oh, mother, look ! The grass is all covered with perspiration. It must be hotter'n I thought it was."

"Bumply seems wonderfully well satisfied with himself." "Yes. There's nothing you can mention that he doesn't think he knows all about." "Well, I suppose you can't blame him. He has no children old enough to ask questions and take the conceit out of him."