

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## 'Joyful News.'

Lina Preston was only a humble little worker in her Master's vineyard, thinking very little about herself, and very much about her great trust for God. She had a history dreary enough, if not actually sad; yet she received her sort of nickname, 'Joyful News,' the name by which she became well known in almost the saddest and loneliest part of her life.

Left an orphan, without brothers or sisters, at the age of ten, she had been brought up by an elderly relative, sour of temper and

other folks, most likely you have your troubles. How is it?

'I suppose my life is charmed,' she would say, smilingly, 'or rather, I forget it, having another. What does anything matter when one's best life is held 'hid,' so that nothing can touch it?'

'Well, you are a saint,' would probably be the reply. 'Anyhow, your secret seems to answer, whatever it is.'

Lina could hardly remember the time when her heart had not belonged to God; but she always said the greatest crisis in her life took place on the death of her cousin Ursula.

'Yes; but I shall make no claim on them if I can help it. I believe God is ever ready to help those who try to help themselves. I leave the rest to him. And,' she continued with a merry laugh, 'if all my applications fail, I can but be a charwoman. An honest, clean, strong woman can generally manage to get a day's work somewhere.'

'You are joking,' said her friend.

But she was not, and went to church that evening to join in the praises and thanksgivings, singing as sweetly and heartily as ever, quite ready in her heart to accept a charwoman's life, if such were God's will.

As she came out of church she met a small boy crying bitterly.

'What's the matter, my little man?' she asked.

'Baby's dyin,'" he gasped, 'and mother's done up. I have come for Mrs. Piley to go to her, and she's out, and they say she won't be home till Monday. I don't know who else will come and see to us. Mother will die too, I know, for father's away all the week, and there's nobody but me to help her.'

For a moment Lina's eyes twinkled. Considering 'me' looked barely five years old, his help would not be of a very substantial nature. Then she said, 'I'll come and see your mother if you like. Perhaps I can help her. Don't cry so, but take me to your home.'

So he took her hand and led her through the dirty, crowded streets, on into a poor but respectable neighborhood. Here in a little cottage they found the mother, as the boy had said, fairly worn out, and broken down with sorrow and dreary nights of watching.

'I'm not Mrs. Piley, but I've come to help you if I can,' said Lina, in answer to the woman's look of wonder.

'You're very good, miss, I'm sure. I suppose you are a 'sister' or something, are you?'

'No, I'm only just a poor woman like you; but I met your boy crying because of this trouble, and because Mrs. Piley couldn't come. I thought I'd just look in and see what you wanted. My house is locked; the key is in my pocket. No one will be waiting for me.'

The woman looked at her in dumb gratitude, and thence to the poor suffering child, who was lying in her arms, motionless and deadly pale, but still breathing.

'I don't think she's in any pain,' she said, 'leastways the doctor said not. That's one comfort; but oh, it does grieve me to part with her! We allays so wanted a girl, and they've allays died. We can't keep 'em. This'll be the third girl we've buried.' And her sobs broke out afresh.

Lina only said, 'Now you go to bed. I'll watch baby to-night.'

The mother might have hesitated to leave her darling with such an utter stranger, but a sweet light in Lina's face forbade any mistrust of her. 'You look good,' she said, 'and I'm so dead beat I hardly know what I'm doing.'

'I'll call you, should there be any change,' said Lina.

So mother and son went to bed, and Lina sat and watched by the dying baby. All through the long dreary hours of the night she sat there watching and thinking. There was no sound, no movement in the little cradle. From time to time she bent down her head to make sure the little one was breathing, or to feel whether its heart was still beating.

She felt strangely awed. Here she was face to face with death once more, all alone with the baby-soul soon to enter its ever-



This old woman, to whom Lina had so willingly devoted the best thirty years of her life, left her absolutely penniless; and at forty she found herself stranded on the world, without any prospect of livelihood.

She was allowed to remain in the house two months, in order to 'turn round,' as the trustees said, and she had just a very little money in the bank, though her so-called allowance had scarcely been sufficient to clothe her. When the two months were over, and her money had all gone—what?

Here was indeed a hard case, and a great test of faith. A woman no longer young, with no especial talent (for such had been the old cousin's selfishness that she never could bear to see Lina doing anything that did not immediately concern her), how was she to make a living in this great bustling world, and face that great struggle for existence which, alas! is no stranger to so many? But she never for one moment lost her courage and her wonted cheerfulness, so firm and restful was her trust in God.

'I have indeed much to be thankful for,' she said to a friend almost as poor as herself. 'Look what a sturdy little thing I am. As long as I have health and strength to do work, I am sure God will give it me.'

'But how will it come?' said the friend, who was a great deal less confident. 'You have only one week more here, remember.'

'Well, I have done all I can in answering advertisements, in keeping my eyes and ears open, and letting people know I am willing to do anything, however humble or 'menial' it may be.'

'You have many friends too, haven't you?'

bitter of tongue, who never ceased to remind Lina of her deep indebtedness to her, and demanding all the service and devotion of which the girl was capable.

Lina tried to do her duty, and succeeded nobly. In spite of all Cousin Ursula's unlovableness, Lina tended her with ungrudging cheerfulness. Sometimes, indeed, she unconsciously found herself wishing for more congenial surroundings, but the depression soon passed away, as a rule, and all through the troublous years of poverty, grumbings, and fault-findings she kept sunshiny and bright as a summer's day.

People, knowing the sort of life she led, used to wonder. 'You must bear a charmed life,' they said to her sometimes. 'You never seem in the 'blues,' and yet, like