

—she was not expecting help or comfort now, whatever fresh sorrow might come.

And yet it was help and comfort too, though Mrs. Radnor's faint heart had not prayed or waited for it.

"Mother, listen! listen, mother! I want to tell you something," a low child's voice whispered in her ear, and the touch of a child's hand rested upon her own.

It was Dick, and this time his mother did not shake him off, though neither did she answer him until he spoke again.

"Listen, mother!" Dick whispered, still more faintly in her ear, though the baby's wail had ceased, the elder boys were already past the entrance to Bullfinch Lane, and there was no other human voice in the quiet cottage to hear. Dick always whispered when his little heart was full; he whispered when he said his prayers to God at night beside his mother's knee; and he whispered in her ear now.

"Listen, mother, I'm going to look for the goat for you; don't cry, mother," he added, as his mother's silent tears gave way to a loud sob now, and almost frightened him.

But Mrs. Radnor's arms quickly closed round his neck and gathering him up into her bosom, as she had rarely done since the little sickly sister had come to take his old place there, she kissed him many times.

"God bless you, darling," she said, "God bless you; who'd ever have thought of you coming back, poor little lad, all that way; but where's the good of your going away after the goat; how can you bring her home, when it's dead may-be, she is by this time, or down in the gravel-pits, just as likely as not."

For a moment Dick looked troubled, but his sweet childish face soon brightened again.

"Never mind, mother, I'll go and look for her, and I'll bring her home, never fear but I will," and Dick almost withdrew himself from his mother's arms, so eager was he, in the strength of his childish faith, to start on his new errand at once.

"Then, God bless you again for a good boy," his mother said, as she put him down, and with her blessing in his ear, and a happy sense of right-doing in his heart, little Dick stepped out of the cottage again.

Mrs. Radnor wiped the last tears away from her eyes now; the baby was unexpectedly asleep, and she drew the cradle out of the sun, into a cooler corner of the house. There was other work to be done, and she felt the courage for it now. God's little messenger had done his work bravely and well, and although Mrs. Radnor had small hopes that he would succeed in bringing back the truant goat she was comforted.

PART II.

Poor little Dick! in those few minutes, from the time he left the cottage with his two brothers until he returned alone, a hard battle had been fought and won. Many thoughts had chased each other through the little pure heart that desired so earnestly to do right.

First—yes, first—the thought of the summer afternoon with Bruce and Stephen in Bullfinch Lane, the search, the excitement, the delight, the gold watch and chain with its diamond seal, the reward, the Belgian canary in a new green cage that Stephen had settled upon buying when the two pounds were his own, the bat and ball and wickets upon which Bruce's heart was set, the shawl for mother, and the red hood for baby, which he had thought of himself—all this passed swiftly through Dick's mind, and then the thought of his mother, and of his little sister's wailing cry, made him lag a few steps behind the other boys,

and kick up the dust with his feet; and then another thought came with great power into his heart, which brought him quite to a standstill, and lifted his eyes to the blue sky overhead—the thought of some words which he had heard from the rector in the school to-day, not about Miss Ethel's watch, or the diamond seal, but about the good brave life that a little boy had once lived long ago in a quiet village home, not pleasing himself, but a help to others, and obedient to his mother.

Dick knew that this little boy when He grew up had been called the Lord Christ, the Saviour of the world, and that afterwards He had died a cruel death for sinners, upon a "green hill far away" from His village home. And Dick knew that he could not be quite like Him, but he had determined in school to-day that he would try, and it was this last thought that had made him climb up the stile over which his brothers had disappeared as quickly as he could, and call after them that they were not to wait for him, because he wanted to speak to mother. It was this that had brought him back so lovingly to her side, and it was this thought, too, that made his heart so glad, as he went out amongst the tall ragworts and purple mallows in the paddock behind the house, to search for the straying goat.

But, of course, she was not there, only the deep hole in the centre of the field from which her tether had been dragged; and when Dick looked a little further, a few more loose stones, fallen from the old gap in the wall to the road beneath, showed by what means her escape had been made. Dick climbed through the gap too, and let himself cautiously down, raising a thick white cloud of dust about him as his feet touched the road. But as the dust cleared away, Dick saw, to his joy, that the heavy iron spike and long thick rope of the tether had left a straggling track for some distance, at least, along the white road ahead of him.

Dick went on, brave in the consciousness that he was doing right, and that God was with him. He knew that if Jenny were there she would prove a much more mischievous trespasser than he was, and so he did not care if he met old Farmer Ellis himself face to face; and he wanted to cut right across this angle of the field to widow Marsden's cottage, for from there Jenny had been bought some time ago, and Dick thought she might have made her way back there; if not, he must only try in the gravel-pits another mile away.

It was a good steep pull through the thick grass to the small white cottage at the other side of the field; but there was something in Dick's heart that made it seem short to-day, and as he knocked at Mrs. Marsden's door he felt almost a certainty of hearing good news from her.

A shrill "come in!" answered his knock, and upon his entering, he found the old woman alone and in bed, with an eager thirsty look in her eyes, and one long thin arm outstretched on the quilt.

"Come in, Dick Radnor, and welcome. And it will be the Lord that has sent you here."

"No," Dick answered, simply. "I came myself, to look for our goat that's been lost since morning, and I thought she might have come here."

"Then I haven't seen her; and it's I that's lost myself for want of a drink of water. Martha's that careless, she left it just out of my reach when she went out this morning, and she'll not cross the threshold again until evening." As she spoke, Mrs. Marsden stretched out her hand again towards a cracked cup in the window, but even the points of the long

thin fingers could not reach it and she sank back exhausted again.

Dick climbed up on the foot of the bed, forgetting his purpose for a moment in the sight of the old woman's distress; but the sun was glaring hotly in at the window, and even the outside of the cup was quite warm. That water could not do much towards cooling the poor parched lips.

"This is not fresh," he said, "the well's just here to the back, I will run out and fill it," and without waiting for a reply, Dick hastened round to the rear of the house, and leaning over the little dark well, which was so cool and clear he could almost see the smile on his own happy face reflected in it, he filled a brimming cup for the old woman, and soon placed it with his own hands to her lips.

"Thank God! and thank you, Dick Radnor, and God bless you!" Mrs. Marsden said, as she took a long drink from the cup, and lay back on the pillow again.

"And whilst you were away at the well I was thinking, that an hour or more ago I heard a knock at the door, that I thought might have been a neighbor, and I was real glad, for the sun was all a-blaze, and I wanted the drink badly; but though I sat up in the bed and roared as loud as I could at them, not one lifted the latch, and I'm thinking now 'twas old Jenny herself, for 'twas her knock, if I'd had the sense to remember it."

"And where do you think she's gone now?" Dick asked, eagerly, awaking to hope again at Mrs. Marsden's words, and pushing back the thick fair hair from his heated brow.

"It's 'mazing fond of the church was Jenny," the old woman answered, half to herself, as it seemed; "the rector's got a young plantation up there, and I'd no peace between him and her till I parted her. You'd best look after her there, Dick Radnor, I'm thinking; and God bless you for coming, my boy, whether he sent you or no!"

So saying, the old woman turned sleepily round on her side, and Dick left the cottage quietly, making straight across the fields for the rector's plantation, with fresh courage at heart, and a double blessing in his ear.

If it had been only for this—only for poor old widow Marsden in her loneliness—he was glad he had given up the expedition to Bullfinch Lane; he was glad, even if old Jenny could not be found, that he had come this way.

But "this way" was the hardest bit of it all, for the fields were full of prickly thistles, and Dick's stockings were short, not like the other boys, and he had to skirt all round three sides of the two large fields where the thistles did not grow, or at least, not so thickly, and very tired and almost disheartened he was before he reached the little brown brook across which there was a short cut by stepping-stones into the rector's plantation.

Once indeed, it must be told, our little hero sat down on the very edge of the thistles, with the sun and dust in his eyes, and prickles in his bare legs, and a great fear in his heart that he was going to give it up and take to crying instead; but only two large tears rolled out of his eyes, carrying away the dust and weariness with them; a kind black cloud passed over the sun, making the whole air in a moment pleasant and cool, and Dick took heart again, as a distant sound of plaintive bleating fell upon his ear.

He sprang up. It was Jenny! he knew it was, their own Jenny, though the sound of her voice was more sad and troubled than it was wont to be.

"Jenny, I'm coming to you; here I