Spun from Fact

Isabella Alden

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Aurora, Colorado

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1. It Just Happens

The slanting rays of the Sabbath afternoon sun shone full into the library windows, and lay in rich yellow waves across the floor. A beautiful room, lined with books in rare bindings, and adorned with works of art from many lands. It is a very difficult matter to describe a room. One may give the exact colors and figures of the carpet, the tint of the wall-paper, the number of pieces of furniture, and the various names by which they are known, and yet not produce the room. There may be a picture on the wall, ten inches square; a lovely old-fashioned rocker, half hidden in a recess; a tiny table, with a vase on it, holding a flower—all of which you have forgotten, but which helps to throw a nameless charm about the place that lingers in your memory after you have gone out from it. There is a mystery about the grouping of things, which only poets, who work in homes, understand. Let us suppose that you and I understand each other, and I will tell you in confidence that this was a lovely room.

Curled into the most luxurious corner of a wide, old-fashioned lounge, which exactly fitted into a space near the south window, was Jeanie, with a book on her lap, and her brown head bent over it, as she thoughtfully twisted and untwisted one brown curl while she read.

A little girl—too little for a book, you would have supposed, unless you had been skilled in faces, and discovered that hers belonged to the class who read early and much. That she was absorbed was evident; for, though the door opened noisily, and a whistling boy, with his hands in his pockets, came in, pushing a low chair out of his way with his foot as he advanced, the head bent over the book did not move.

“Hello!” he said, at last, stopping before her. “Gone to sleep over that book, like all the rest of them? Every person in this house, except me, is asleep. I say, Jeanie, do you think it is any wickeder to take a walk on Sundays than it is to sleep all the time?”

“They don’t sleep *all* the time,” Jeanie said, with a quiet emphasis on the word “all,” which marked her as thoughtful and accurate in the use of words.

“I don’t know about that. Pretty near all the time they are at home—sleep and eat. My mother has been asleep ever since dinner; she doesn’t do so on other days. I don’t understand why people are so much sleepier on Sundays than they are all the week. It makes a dreadful stupid house, I know that. What are you reading? Put it up, and let’s have a talk.”

The book closed with a little sigh, and Jeanie leaned back among the cushions, and rubbed her eyes.

“Oh, it was only a little story in the ‘Children’s Friend.’”

“Humph! You are always poring over the ‘Children’s Friend.’”

“Why, no I am not, Bert; I only read them through when they come.”

The boy laughed merrily.

“Read them through?” he repeated, emphasizing the last word. “Who ever heard of reading a paper right straight through?”

“I like it,” Jeanie said, simply. Then, after a moment’s hesitation, “Bert, do you suppose such people truly live as they tell about in books?”

“Some of them live, of course. George Washington did, and Napoleon, and lots of fellows.”

“Oh, but I don’t mean those; I mean children. There was a story about a little girl; I liked it *so* much. She had a great deal of trouble.”

“Is that why you liked it?” interrupted Bert.

“No; and yet, if she hadn’t had the trouble, it wouldn’t have been such a wonderful story. She was good, and whenever she wanted anything, she just asked the Lord Jesus about it. Ever so many times she got helped in a real wonderful way. She didn’t call it praying; or I mean it didn’t seem like saying your prayers: it was just like talking with somebody. I wish I knew whether such things were true.”

Bert fitted the toe of his boot to a flower in the carpet, and said nothing for a few minutes.

“*I* don’t know anything about such things. I know what I wish; and that is that it was Mon- day, and we could go fishing, you and I. There is a lovely place down by the mill.”

“I don’t know how to fish,” said Jeanie, reflectively.

“No, of course you don’t—girls never do; but you could sit and watch me, and take care of the fish after I caught them. I know how. If there are any fish to be caught, I am the fellow to do it.”

“Why can’t girls catch fish?”

“I don’t know. They can’t ever, almost. They keep wriggling around, I guess. A fisherman must sit still, and attend to business.”

“I can sit still,” said Jeanie, still in the reflective tone: not as though she cared much about the subject in hand, but rather as though the language used constantly suggested to her mind some other thought.

Bert eyed her suspiciously, trying to discover whether any personality was intended; but Jeanie was looking quietly at the sunshine on the carpet, almost as though she might have forgotten his presence.

“I know you can,” he said, at last. “Mother has told me, about thirteen and a half times, how still you sat in church this morning. That is all she said to me before she went off to sleep. I don’t think it is a sin to move your arm or wink your eye in church.”

“I was listening,” said Jeanie. “The sermon was like this story in the ‘Children’s Friend;’ I mean, a little piece of it was; that about the boy who believed just what the Bible said, you know.”

“I didn’t hear it,” said Bert, putting his hands in his pockets, and finishing the sentence with a whistle.

“Didn’t hear it? Why, Bert Halsted! It was a long story, and the boy was no larger than you, or at least he wasn’t any older. He was a remarkable boy. When he read a verse in the Bible, he thought it meant just that, and he went to work to do it.”

“I don’t see anything so very wonderful about that. I’m sure I believe every word there is in the Bible, just as all decent people do.”

Jeanie rearranged the sofa pillow, and looked thoughtful, and a trifle troubled.

“I don’t mean that kind of believing,” she said, at last. “I don’t know how to tell what I mean; it is just the difference between the boy in the sermon and the girl in the book, and you and me. We believe it, of course; but we don’t *do* it. *I* don’t know how it can be really believing. Don’t you know, Bert, where it says, ‘If ye ask

anything in My name, I will do it'? Do you suppose we really believe that? "

"He didn't say it to us," said Bert, with a skill in sophistry beyond his years.

The troubled look deepened on his cousin's face. "I know it," she said. "He was speaking to His disciples, but that doesn't help us any; because, you see, He says we ought to be His disciples, and follow Him everywhere. He says it is the only way to be happy. If we believed that, wouldn't we do it, Bert?"

"Look here," said Bert; "I think you are too young to trouble your head about such things; you don't understand them. Look at the sun; he is just ready to say good-bye. This day, which has been a hundred and twenty-five hours long, is very nearly done, and I know a boy who is glad. Tomorrow morning, as early as nine o'clock, I want you to be ready to go to the old mill with me. I don't know the way, but the boys in Sunday school said it was the best place for fish within five miles. We'll have a lovely time, and I will catch a big fish for your dinner. Now let us go and see if the sleepy people are awake enough to have supper. They'll be on hand: the supper-bell always wakens them."

It was in accordance with this plan that the old logs at the foot of the silent mill furnished Jeanie with a seat the next morning, while she watched with interested eyes the process of fishing; or, at least, the process of baiting, and skillfully throwing the line in the water and holding it there, for no fish came to partake of the tempting morsel at the end of Bert's hook. In vain he drew it out, now cautiously, now in great excitement, sure that he felt a bite. Nothing would appear but some floating weeds, or an old snag arrested in its trip down stream. In vain he examined his hook and re-baited with care, and sat as still as the motionless little girl near him—not a fish was caught.

"This is about as stupid work as I ever saw!" he said, at last. "I wonder if those boys were fooling me. I don't believe there are any fish here."

"Oh, there are!" Jeanie said. "Jonas caught a beautiful large one the morning before you came—large enough for our breakfast. After breakfast he took me down here and showed me just where he sat to catch it—not a foot away from the bank where you are sitting now."

“That doesn’t signify,” said Bert, whose ill success was making him feel cross. “You don’t suppose the fish all come up to one certain spot and wait to be caught, do you? That is just like a girl’s notion. I don’t believe this bait is good for anything. I’m going up there where those old rotten logs are, to get some fat worms. You sit still and hold the line, so it won’t get tangled while I am gone.”

The little girl obediently moved her seat, though doing so brought her into the glare of the sun, and took the pole in her small hands.

“Now hold it steady,” cautioned the boy. “If you let it go swinging around, it will get caught in some of the snags.”

Jeanie watched him away down the ravine, up the bank on the other side, until the mill hid him from sight, then turned her attention full upon the quiet line in the water. She had never held a fish-pole before. What if, while she was holding it, a fish would decide to be caught! Wouldn’t that be a delightful thing? A little tremor ran through her; a wild desire to catch a fish before Bert should return had her in possession. Still, nothing seemed less probable. Had not Bert, with all his skill, been trying in vain for an hour?

Just at that moment the story which had so absorbed her attention on the Sabbath afternoon seemed to photograph itself before her in vivid light. The little girl to whom prayer was just talking with one whom she knew and loved, who prayed about everything, and believed that the Lord Jesus heard and always answered—*she* would have prayed about a fish. If she had wanted to catch one, she would have asked Him to let her. What was the difference between her and Jeanie? Was the story true? Why not? She remembered a story in the Bible about some fishers who toiled all night and caught nothing until Jesus came to their help. That of course was true. Why were things so different now from what they were when Jesus was on earth? Was it because people did not believe in Him any more?

“I believe in Him,” said Jeanie to herself, “and I want to catch a fish. I don’t think I ever wanted anything so badly. I mean to shut my eyes and ask Him, just as that Nora did. I won’t say the ‘Lord’s Prayer,’ nor ‘Now I awake to see the light,’ nor any of those. I’ll just speak as though I were talking to mother or Aunt Mattie.”

Down dropped the brown head, and one hand shaded for a moment the earnest eyes. Then Jeanie sat up, her face bright, expectant, jubilant. *Something* had answered! She believed she would catch a fish.

Bert came bounding over the logs to her side.

"I've got some splendid bait now; we'll see what we shall see. Have you held the line steady?"

"Bert," she said, speaking low, but startling him with the shining in her eyes, "I have caught a fish; he is pulling at the line."

"Nonsense!" said Bert, sharply. "You have caught a snag, just as I have two or three times this morning."

He took hold of the pole, a trifle roughly it must be confessed, bade the little fisher stop trying to pull up the line, and, with some effort, did the same himself. A great, beautiful, speckled fish, his brilliant colors glowing in the sunlight! Jeanie gave a little scream of intense delight. Bert tried to swallow his astonishment and his ill humor together.

"He is a big fellow, sure enough," he said, at last; "the largest I ever saw in a mill stream. Well, we'll have some more just like him, now that I have bait worth using."

But whether it was bait, or whether it was what he called "luck," it served him an ill turn that morning. Another hour passed, spent in intense impatience on the boy's part. Not a fish noticed him; or, if it did, it was only to skillfully avoid him. At last he drew out the line, and wound it rapidly about the pole.

"I've had enough of this nonsense; I'm nearly baked. The sun is hotter than seven furnaces. Let's go home. It is a mean day for fish anyhow; they never bite in such bright sunshine."

"Bert," said Jeanie, a song in her heart of which he knew nothing, "wasn't it strange that I should catch that great, beautiful fish?"

If Bert had caught but one, I think he might have been generous. It was humiliating to have his boasted reputation as a fisherman brought to naught by a child who had never before held a line.

"Pooh!" he said, in superior scorn, "not strange at all; those things often happen. I've known an expert fisherman to sit for hours without any luck, and some youngster take the pole a

minute, and just then a silly fish would come along and get caught."

Jeanie looked sober. Was her prayer, which had not sounded like prayer, but like talking with a friend, then of no avail? She had meant to tell him the wonderful story, but she could not do it now. For aught she knew, he might say "Pooh!" to it, and that would break her heart.

"They do behave just like that sometimes," said old Jonas, whom they met on their homeward way. "It do beat all, but I've had just that kind of trial myself, and no knowing why. It just happens, Master Bert. Never mind, you'll have better luck next time, and Miss Jeanie can give you a bite of her fish; it is large enough, I'm sure."

Poor Jeanie! The light had faded from her eyes. She cared nothing about the fish now, nor who had bites of it. Jonas was old; his hair was gray, and everybody called him a good man. He, too, believed that it was nothing but "luck." She had been mistaken then; her prayer went for nothing, and all this had just "happened." She looked tired and heated. Her mother said she had stayed too long exposed to the sun, and must go at once to the cool, dark room upstairs and rest. And Aunt Mattie told her boy Bert that she had supposed he was old enough to take better care of his cousin. And Jeanie had not the heart to explain that it was not the sun, nor the walk, which had wearied her. She had a sore fear in her heart that all the listeners would either laugh or say "Pooh!" if she should tell her story. She went away to the cool, dark room, and laid her head among the pillows and cried.

Where have I heard, and who was it who said, "Woe unto him who shall offend one of these little ones"?

2. Six Years Will Make Changes

It is not often that passing years deal so gently with a home as they had with Jeanie Barrett's.

She was fourteen now, and her form had developed until it was taking on the hint of woman- hood; but her fair face was almost as childish in its outline as when she bent over the "Children's Friend" on that Sabbath afternoon six years away. As for the home, it was just the same—father and mother; the young brother; the baby sister; the air of quiet luxury filling all the rooms, and overflowing into the ample grounds, from the gravel pathway across the lawn out to the carriage- sweep, as the road wound around the stables.

Jeanie stood in the doorway awaiting the coming of the carriage, whither it had gone to meet the five-twenty train. Her face was the same and yet not the same. There was a touch of unrest in it, almost a frown at times on the forehead; a questioning, restless look in the eyes; a general air of impatience about the mouth, as of one who was in search of more in life than it had brought her, when it had apparently left her nothing to wish.

"I don't understand Jeanie," the patient mother would sometimes say, looking after her daughter with a troubled air. "She doesn't seem to be really happy, yet she has everything to make her so. I am glad Bert is coming; he may be able to brighten her up. They used to be very fond of each other."

There was in the home a dear old grandmother, on whose placid face the peace of God rested; and she, at such times, was wont to shake her head, and repeat in her heart the refrain:

"Poor Jeanie, poor bairn! She is trying to feed on husks, and they never satisfy!"

And Jeanie stood waiting for the carriage and the coming of Bert. She was curious about his coming, rather than eager, or very glad. It is true she used to be fond of him, but then she remembered somewhat sadly that she used to be fond of many things for which she did not now care. It was nearly six years since

she had seen Bert. Changes had come to him—his mother was gone; his father was traveling away off somewhere—neither Bert nor anybody else seemed to be quite sure where—and Bert was, to all purposes, alone in the world. His Aunt Eliza was his nearest relative on this side the water, and she was aunt but in name.

"We are only second cousins," Jeanie sometimes explained, when somebody wondered why she knew so little of her cousin. "He calls mamma Aunt Eliza because it has a pleasant sound to his ears, but she is really his cousin. He is always at school, and on vacations he has gone home with friends or relatives who lived nearer than we. Once he went out to his father in England. I was interested in that; I wanted some letters from Europe, and he promised to write me; but he never did. Boys hardly ever keep their promises."

So this was Jeanie's idea of her cousin Bert.

When he finally came, she had the advantage of him. He had always seemed large to her; and that he was large now, even much larger than she remembered him, did not greatly surprise her. She was prepared, too, for his military suit; for she had known that for three years he had been in a military school, and she had often watched the boys at drill on the common in front of the school at South Point, and said to herself that the military dress was becoming, and that Bert probably looked like these boys. But he, all ready to spring upon and take his little cousin in his arms and kiss her, stopped before her in dumb dismay for a minute, blushing, not like a soldier, but like a primary boy. This tall, shapely girl, with her pretty, childish curls all gone, and her brown hair hanging in heavy braids down her back, and a trim collar, such as the almost young ladies wore, and a most self-possessed and ladylike manner, holding out her hand and saying cordially, "How do you do, Cousin Bert?"

"I beg your pardon," he said, rallying hastily; "but I expected to see little Jeanie."

"She is lost," said Jeanie, smiling gravely. "Mamma looks for her a great deal, and sighs for her often; but, do what we may, we cannot find her. And this great school-girl, who has taken her place, does not seem to give satisfaction. I am sorry, but how can I help it? Six years will make changes."

“Changes! I should think so!” muttered Bert, unable to get away from his astonishment. “Who would have imagined that little Jeanie would grow so? Well, never mind. Come on, Rome, this is the ‘little cousin’ I told you of. Doesn’t fit the picture I showed you, does she? Jeanie, I had that bit of a one where you sit on an ottoman with your kitten in your arm. I was simpleton enough to tell Rome that it looked just exactly like you. Where is Aunt Eliza? Oh, auntie, here you are! *You* look all right, anyhow,” and the motherless boy was clasped in tender arms. Jeanie’s mother had a heart large enough to “mother” any number of homeless ones.

Jeanie looked on gravely.

“He is very much displeased with me, mother, for growing. He thinks I should have sat on an ottoman with the kitten in my arms, waiting for his return, not growing an inch all these years.”

Bert laughed.

“No, Aunt Eliza; but I had no idea she would grow into a young lady. Never mind, we will get acquainted over again. Auntie, I’ve exceeded my invitation, and brought my chum, Romaine Holland, with me. His mother is away, and it’s awfully lonesome at his house, and I knew you wouldn’t care.”

Indeed she cared, Mrs. Barrett said, heartily. She was very glad. Bert wouldn’t be so lonely now, and it would be pleasant for all concerned. And at last the two tall youths were shown to their room, and Jeanie sat down to think it over.

“Bert is disappointed to think I am not a little girl, isn’t he, mother?”

“Well, dear, not disappointed exactly, only surprised. Young people like him never realize the changes that years make in those from whom they are absent. They have a feeling that time stands still everywhere but in the spot which they occupy. You can return the compliment, I should think. Bert is greatly changed too.”

“I don’t know. He is taller, of course—larger in every way. There is just more of him. He seems like the same boy, only *more so*—more aggressive, I mean. He used always to manage me, and he still expects to, I think.”

She laughed a little as she said it; but her mother looked thoughtful, and possibly a trifle anxious.

Jeanie was not easy to manage. She had a decided will of her own, which grew into prominence apparently with every passing

day. It was not that she was passionate; at least, if she were, she had sufficient self-control to check its outbursts. But she was strong-willed, and unswerving in any direction where she took root, yet, for all that, easily influenced in the line of her affections—at least, to a certain degree. If her mother did not want this or that thing, and made her tender protest, Jeanie was cheerful and prompt in the yielding; but it was done in this wise:

"Never mind, mother. If you care, I will give it up."

"But, daughter, I want you to see for yourself that it would not be well to do it. I don't want you simply to yield for my sake."

"But I do, mother. You are 'sake' enough for me. As for 'seeing for myself,' I have, and I don't see the least bit of harm in it in the world; but to please you, mother, I'll act just as though I did, and say no more about it."

And the mother, reflecting, wondered who, in the later years which seemed coming so swiftly, would sway her daughter for *his* sake. Would she be tempted to say as readily, "I don't think that is quite right, but for your sake I will act just as though I did"?

Here were two boys—young men, almost. She had, like Bert, never stopped to realize the changes which six years would make in him. She had forgotten that he was nearly seventeen. What sort of influence would he and his handsome young friend have over her strong-willed, warm-hearted, keen-sighted Jeanie?

Bert's up-bringing had been none of the best, so far as home and its influences are concerned. Neither father nor mother were Christians; still, Bert might be. Those things occurred sometimes.

Here was her Jeanie, always a thoughtful child, wise beyond her years, interested in Bible stories, and in her little prayers and hymns from very babyhood, yet still unanchored; though the mother had hoped, years ago, that the inner life commenced in her soul. During these last years she had lost the hope, and could only wait and watch, and pray that some influence, other than that which she had been able to bring, might reach her child before the world grew too dangerous a place for her. Thinking it over again for the hundredth time, she sighed.

Jeanie came at once, and dropping in the pretty fashion which had been hers in childhood, on one knee at her mother's side, she wound her arms about her neck.

“Now, motherie, you are sighing because I am fourteen instead of four, and I won’t have it. I’ll be just as babyish with you when I am forty as I was at four. As for Bert, I’ll take the old cat and sit in a corner once in a while, if that is the only thing which will please him. I’ll only do it once in a long while for him; but I’ll always be little Jeanie to you, motherie.”

Mrs. Barrett kissed her fondly.

“It wasn’t the years, dear child, which made me sigh. Of course you must grow up. How sad it would be to have you always a child in body or mind! But a childlike faith, my daughter—I am jealous for that. If you believed your Heavenly Father’s word as firmly as you used when a child, I should have no cause for sighs.”

Further words were stopped by kisses.

“Now, mother,” Jeanie said, between the kisses, “we are not to talk about those things, you know. I can’t help my heart. I didn’t make it.”

She flitted away, and the mother could only look after her and sigh. Why was her Jeanie left out? This was the ever-recurring question which tried the mother’s faith. If I should, from my standpoint, undertake to answer it, I fear I should have to say, “Because there were so many Christians!”

Yes; that has an extraordinary sound, but it is the story, in brief, of many lives. Jeanie, being unusually thoughtful from early childhood, having read a great deal, and observed a great deal, and matured early, was coming, as she would have said, in spite of herself, to this conclusion:

“Religion has very little to do with most lives. Among the people who profess it, it is not much more than a name. There are the Stones, and the Carters, and the Wilsons, and hosts of others whom I can count without going out of our immediate circle, all members of the Church. How are they better than the people who are not members? Nannie Stone joined the Church two years ago: she does ever so many things that I wouldn’t do. Religion is a sort of fashion, like cloaks or dresses. It is respectable to belong to the Church, therefore we belong. I don’t believe in it. When the Bible was written, people did not live in this way. It meant more to Daniel—why, it meant the lion’s den to him—and to those old Hebrews, Shadrach and the rest of them, they went into a furnace of fire for their religion. Who would today? Imagine Dick Foster

choosing a fiery furnace rather than bow down to an image! He would rather bow than not, if it were the fashion. Paul wasn't his kind of a Christian. I don't know what makes the difference. Religion may have been intended for those times, and got worn out in them. Anyhow, I know there is nothing of that sort left. What we have now is only an imitation. I hate imitations. There is mother. Oh, yes, of course there is! But mother is sweet, and gentle, and unselfish by nature: she always was. *She* thinks religion has something to do with it; but I don't see why, because there is father—he has nothing to help him but his own strong nature; and see how good and noble he is! Where will one find a church-member who is more respected than he? No, I don't think I believe in this kind of religion at all. I would like to, to please mother; and I mean to go to church and to Sabbath school, and read in the Bible, and act in every way just as though I believed in it all, for her sake, as long as she lives. Only I can't join the Church, for that would be professing what I do not believe, and I can't honestly say that I think saying my prayers helps me any; but then, they don't hurt me, and I'm going to continue saying them for mother's sake."

This, as nearly as I can define it, was what passed from time to time through Jeanie's mind whenever she was forced to give thought to the matter of personal religion.

It is a strange thing, and a solemn thing, to realize how unwittingly the seed of unbelief may be sown in a young heart. Away back in her childhood, almost a lifetime ago, it seemed to Jeanie, that Sabbath afternoon when, curled in the sofa corner, she had read of the little Nora and her prayers, and longed to be like her, and determined, *almost*, to be like her—to begin a life of prayer, to take Christ at His word, and obey Him literally and fully—how well she remembered it, and the prayer of faith the next morning, and the answer! Yes, and she remembered just as vividly something else—the hint, or the suggestion, that it was all a mere chance occurrence, having nothing to do with her prayer. This seed, dropped all unawares from Christian lips, the enemy seized upon, and planted deeply, and watched and tended with untiring care; yet worked so craftily, that even the heart in which it was sown hardly recognized from what seed the harvest of unbelief had sprung.

It was the old story with Jeanie Barrett. She looked at professing Christians, and "measured them by themselves, and compared them among themselves," and did not know that she was "not wise." On the contrary, she prided herself on her superior discernment.

So now you know, better than her mother did, some of the things which had combined to keep Jeanie Barrett out of the fold. Yet you are to understand, also, that she was by no means at rest in this condition. She had been too well taught in the intellectual truths of religion not to be able to overturn her own logic, on occasion; and her hungry heart often and often cried out for that which she did not possess, and which, at times, she almost believed could be found in Christ.

Especially had this been the case since the dear old grandmother had come to visit them, and had placed her hand on Jeanie's head, and said, "The bairn needs the Lord Jesus. No one else is going to satisfy her."

Was it true? At times she curled her lip at it as a superstition. If there was truth in it, why did it not affect differently the lives of those who professed Him?

But the hours would come back to her when she questioned whether there were not, hidden behind all the forms, a truth which she did not understand—a Friend who would make all puzzles clear to her, and satisfy her soul.

Now, what are Bert Halsted and Romaine Holland to do for, or against, this young soul in peril?

3. “I Think Everything is Strange.”

The momentous question under discussion at the tea-table was, How should they spend the next day? It was Jeanie’s birthday, and, by common consent, something special was to be done by the young people to mark it. Various suggestions had been made, but each had thus far been over-ruled by objections. Suddenly Bert presented a new idea.

“I know what to do that will be unique. Let us all go out to the Hilton Grove camp-meeting. The moon is at its full now, and the ride home will be perfect. As for the meeting, I presume it will furnish a rich treat to novices. Will you all vote for it? Jeanie will, I know. It will come right in her line. I remember her as a devout little creature, who always sat still in meetings, and looked like a saint, to the infinite discomfiture of her fidgety cousin, who was sure to have her held up to him as a copy. You were a model of early piety, Jeanie.”

“Was I?” said Jeanie, coldly. “Then I must have changed even more sadly than you have given me credit for as yet. I don’t think I can be a model of anything in these days.”

“Is it so? Then you doubtless need the influences of a camp-meeting as badly, perhaps, as Rome and I. They used to have rousing ones at Hilton Grove. I’ve shouted over Ned Dixon’s account of the doings many a time. Aunt Eliza, will you vote for camp-meeting?”

“I would be quite willing to have you attend, my dear boy, if you went in the right spirit; but it doesn’t seem a proper place, to me, to go for *fun.*”

Mrs. Barrett’s voice was gentleness itself; but there was a certain dignity mingled with the gentleness which made the newcomer turn quickly and watch her face for a moment.

“My mother used to go to camp-meeting,” he said; “and she did not go for fun.”

“Fun?” repeated Bert, quickly. “Who has thought of such a thing? We will be as sober as three deacons. Jeanie looks just now as though she could do the proprieties for a score of such as we.”

Jeanie opened her lips to speak, then closed them again. She was going to disclaim any desire to celebrate her birthday by a camp-meeting service; but, at that moment, she caught a wistful, yearning look in her mother’s face. It said, as plainly as words could have done, “Oh, I hope she will want to go! Who can tell what may be the result?”

Jeanie reflected. It was not much to do to please her mother. If she really would like her to go, why not? To be sure, there was not the smallest hope that any result would follow which would comfort her mother; but, at least, she herself would have the comfort of thinking she had done her best to please. The truth is, this young girl had a strange idea that she was trying all the time to do her best for herself, and that somebody outside of herself was to blame because she was not in all respects what her mother would have her.

The subject of camp-meeting was still continued after they left the table and gathered on the piazza—that is, the young people; their elders went on to the library.

“You did not tell me, my quiet cousin, whether my plan for your birthday pleased you,” Bert said, taking a seat beside Jeanie on the low step, which was shaded from the road by heavy vines.

“I don’t dislike it,” Jeanie said; “that is, if you would both like to go. It is a pleasant ride, and I would as soon ride in that direction as in any other. I don’t care anything for the meeting, but I presume it will not injure me to sit a while and listen.”

“You’ll care for the meeting, if I’m not mistaken. It is great fun. I went once myself when I was visiting Rob Bennett, and I never had a jollier time in my life.”

“I don’t think I find my fun in the same places where you do, Cousin Bert. It would not occur to me to look for it in a religious meeting.”

“Oh, I didn’t look for it either! It came without that. Don’t look as solemn as owls, both of you. I don’t mean anything very dreadful. They have sort of quaint ways of speaking and acting, that’s all. Hello! There’s Rover. I haven’t seen him since I came. Where has he kept himself?”

“He has been away with Jonas,” Jeanie explained, as the boy leaped from the piazza, and went to greet the great black dog who bounded toward him.

Left to themselves, Jeanie and Romaine were quiet for a little, neither being sure enough of the tastes of the other to venture on conversation. It was two days since the boys’ arrival; but Jeanie had seen little of them, Bert being eagerly engaged in exploring the haunts of his childhood, and renewing acquaintance with everyone of whom he had ever heard. Jeanie was not sure whether she liked this quiet-faced Romaine who had come unexpectedly into their circle. She half resented her cousin’s coolness in bringing him uninvited.

Perhaps the first remark the boy had made which led her to think she might possibly like him a little, had been that one at the tea-table about his mother. She knew the mother was traveling in Europe for her health, and that this boy was her only son. She wondered if he missed her much. It was a new thought. Up to this time, she had had an idea that boys were not very strong in their affections, either for mothers or for people generally. If he had been a girl, she would have spoken sympathetically about his mother, and his separation from her; but such things could not be said to boys. However, she ventured a question.

“Bert says your mother is abroad. I suppose you get letters from her?”

He did not answer immediately, and she thought he had not heard her. He was looking away, out to the road through the vines. She did not mean to venture it again. If he did not choose to talk to her, he might look at the road for all she cared. But he turned toward her suddenly, and she saw that his eyes were full of tears.

“I get the nicest letters from her a boy ever had,” he said, his voice husky with feeling. “I will show you some of them, if you would like. Tomorrow, when I get my box, which is coming by express, I shall have dozens of them.”

“I should like it very much,” said Jeanie, cordially. “I suppose there is a great deal about the countries she visits. I have always wanted to hear real fresh letters from Europe, before they were stiffened into a shape to print. Bert promised he would write to me from London, but he never did.”

“My mother wrote beautiful letters from London: you shall read them all, if you want. I don’t think her letters could be stiffened. They are just as she talks, and she is a lovely talker—everybody says so; it isn’t a notion of mine, simply. Oh, my mother is a glorious woman! If I didn’t disappoint her all the time, I would be glad.”

“Disappoint her?” said Jeanie, with a wondering look. For the first time she took in the fact that he was a very handsome boy indeed, and she found it surprised her that there could be anything disappointing about him.

“Yes,” he said, his bright eyes filling again. “You see, my mother is good, and there is nothing she wants in this world so much as to have me good; that is what I mean.”

“And you are not good? “

“Oh, no; that is, not in the sense she means. Don’t you understand me? Mother is—well, she is the sort of woman who would go to this camp-meeting because she loved to hear about such things. The hymns and the prayers, and everything of that kind, are delightful to her. She is a member of the Church, and she reads her Bible a great deal, because she seems to like it. Why, she is like your mother, I suppose. Isn’t your mother such a woman?”

“I suppose she is,” Jeanie admitted, gravely.

“And are you that kind of girl?”

“I? Oh, no; not at all! Haven’t you discovered that? There is not the least trace of goodness about me.”

“Then you know what I mean about disappointing my mother; and it seems too bad, when I am her only one—now doesn’t it?”

He dashed the tears from his eyes as he spoke, and looked at her eagerly, awaiting her answer as though important results hung on it. She could not help smiling a little.

“If you feel so, I don’t understand why you disappoint her. Why don’t you settle the thing by being like her?”

“That’s just the point. I don’t understand why. It is a mystery to me why everybody doesn’t settle that question in the same way. I believe in the Bible, and I believe in Christians. I think they are the only people worth much in this world: and, of course, I believe in dying, and know I ought to be ready for it; and yet I dilly-dally around, and don’t take the stand which I know I ought. And I know dozens of people who are doing the same thing. I suppose

you are doing it, aren't you? Why don't you settle it? I'll tell you whom I believe in with all my heart, and that is Satan. I think he is at the bottom of this whole business, and keeps people from doing the sensible thing."

"Then he is stronger than Jesus Christ?"

"No, he isn't; but Jesus isn't going to force us. Would you like to be forced? What is love worth unless it is given freely?"

It was a very strange conversation. Jeanie took time to consider that she never heard a boy talk in any such way before, and to express in the form of question a wonder which grew out of it.

"I should think you were rather unlike my Cousin Bert. How do you happen to be friends?"

"It began because I knew his father was away in the same part of the world as my mother; then my mother met his father, and had a pleasant visit with him, and that made us feel acquainted. I don't know how we came to be such good friends. I guess I came home with him because I wanted to see a mother."

He laughed a little over this sentence, then went back to the topic which seemed to have a hold on him.

"Do you never wonder why people live along as they do about these things? Why boys and girls, for instance, who have brains enough to study, and to try to accomplish something in the world, and who have been brought up to believe the Bible, and do believe it, and who know they are going to die, and don't know just when, don't get ready for living and for dying, once for all?"

"I think everything is strange," said Jeanie, evasively. "The strangest to me is to watch how the people live who pretend to have settled all these questions. How many of them act as though they cared much about them, or were any more ready to die than the rest of us?"

"Oh, I know it! But, then, there is always your mother and mine."

It was the most unanswerable sentence Jeanie had ever heard. "Your mother and mine."

The logic was good. If two mothers were ready for life and for death, why could not two children be? And they had not to be judged for the lives of others—only for their own. Jeanie knew all this, but it had never come home to her in so startling a manner before.

“I know what is the matter with me,” Romaine began, impulsively, after a moment of silence. “I’m a fellow who needs pushing from the outside. I need friends who are in sympathy; and there isn’t a boy in school who gives the least thought to these matters, or who is willing to talk of them. One would suppose they had no mothers. Do you know, when Bert asked me here with him, I was glad to come for another reason. He told me some things about you. To be sure, he forgot that you were older than when he last saw you. He said you were a little girl nine or ten years old; that you were always poring over books, and had your Sabbath school lesson better than any of the others, and knew all the Bible stories by heart, and were fond of reading about impossibly good people who prayed all the time. Of course the description was nonsense; but I thought if I could know a little girl only ten years old, who had settled these questions, she would be sure to help me. I once had a little sister, and I remember I always felt more like doing right when I was with her.”

Jeanie’s cheeks flushed, and she looked vexed. “Bert has strange memories,” she said, coldly. “I don’t know what I might have been at eight or nine, but I know I am as far removed as possible from his description now. I don’t more than half believe in anything nowadays.”

She expected to shock him; and, if the truth must be told, she had no objection to shocking young people for whom she did not particularly care. To bring the shocked, pained look to her mother’s face was another matter. She tried not to do that. But Romaine answered promptly:

“Oh, I know all about that. Mother made it clear to me long ago. She says it is the inevitable consequence when an enlightened conscience lives contrary to its convictions. Everything begins to take a misty, unreal shape to such, and the Evil One can almost succeed in making them believe that they believe nothing. When I get in that way myself, I am always sure that I have been dallying with my conscience again, and told it to wait a while, when it assured me that I ought to move in a certain direction.”

Silenced again. Jeanie understood him; her conscience had been well trained.

“*I’m* not afraid to die,” she said, suddenly, almost defiantly.

“Oh, I’m not, either; but that is because it seems so unreal and improbable a thing. Don’t you honestly feel now as though it was almost absurd to mention death to young, healthy people like ourselves? We know that others, much younger than we, do die; but then, it does not seem as though we should. I expect to be a toothless old man with white hair. Don’t you expect to wear a cap like your grandmother’s?”

“I don’t know,” she said, smiling; “full borders may not be in style when my turn comes. But I understand you, and I begin to feel much like that. Once I didn’t. Last year, I think it was—it seems longer; it seems as though I was at least five years younger than I am now—I kept a diary—all children do, you know; and on nearly every other page came a sentence something like this, ‘I wonder what will happen to me by next year this time.’ I always seemed to myself to be on the verge of some great happening; but the days passed, and every one was like the last. I have always lived just this sort of life, never any change, and at last it came to me that there was no probability of any. Today I wrote a sentence like this, ‘A year ago I wondered where I would be in a year from that time. Little idiot! I might have known that I would be in this very room, in my red-cushioned chair, beside this red-covered table, writing in this leather-bound book. Nothing changes: nothing ever has.’ Then I closed my diary. I am not going to write in it any more.”

“Oh, do!” said Romaine, eagerly. “Begin again tomorrow. Let us enter into a compact, you and I. Let us make a great, wonderful change in our lives. Will you?”

4. “Will You?”

He leaned over the roses, and waited eagerly for her answer.

“What is it you want to do?” she asked, though her conscience told her plainly what it was.

“Let us go to that camp-meeting tomorrow, and settle this thing once for all.”

“It can be settled without going to camp-meeting.”

“Yes, of course it can; but that is as good a place as any. It helps to be where everyone is interested in the same thing. Will you?”

“I don’t know,” said Jeanie. “I can’t make so large a promise as that.”

He was ready to urge; but, at that moment, Bert came springing back, Rover at his heels, and all quiet was at an end. However, before they separated for the night it had been arranged that Jonas should drive them to Hilton Grove in the morning, and bring them back by moonlight.

Jeanie had much ado to sleep that night. Accustomed to dropping into healthy slumber almost as soon as her head touched the pillow, she was much tried by the wakeful, restless state in which she found herself. Turn her pillow and arrange a cool place and compose herself to quiet as much as she might, the earnest eyes of Romaine Holland seemed to be on her, and his eager voice was repeating, “Will you?”

She was ashamed of her answer. It fell so much below what the frank eyes had seemed to expect; yet how could she do otherwise? What a promise to make! Go to camp-meeting and settle a question of that kind for a lifetime! She was not ready to settle it. Why? She did not know. What held her back from the decision which her intelligent conscience told her she ought to make? Was Romaine right in his belief that Satan really had much to do with this state of mind?

Jeanie resented the idea. Her strong will rebelled at being controlled by anyone; certainly she did not mean to be a slave to

Satan. It was finally with her mind full of these troubled questionings, and with no settled conviction as to what she would do, that she fell asleep.

The hasty opening and shutting of doors, and a confused murmur of voices, awakened her. At first they seemed to mingle in her dreams, and when at last she became conscious they were real, she could not for the moment locate them. She sat up in bed and listened, then wrapped a shawl about her and opened her door. The hall below was lighted: so was her mother's room; well, so was the room at the head of the stairs. That door opened while she stood waiting, and her cousin Bert came out.

"Rome is sick," he said, in answer to her look.

"I don't know what is the matter. Your father has sent Jonas for the doctor. Aunt Eliza is in there; I called her the first thing. He tossed about and muttered so, he frightened me."

"Is he subject to sick turns like this?"

"Not that I know of. Why, no; he always prides himself on his splendid health. I remember now he said yesterday two or three times, when we were tramping over the fields, that his head ached, and I told him I never knew before that he had any aches. It is his head which seems to distress him now. I guess Aunt Eliza is afraid it is a sort of sunstroke, but we shall know when the doctor comes."

The rest of the night was confusion. Jeanie went back to her room, but could not settle to any attempt at rest. Instead, she dressed herself, and prepared to hear from the doctor when he came whether this was of any consequence.

The doctor seemed long in coming. The pretty little clock on Jeanie's mantel told the hour of two, and he had not yet arrived. She went into the hall again and listened. She could hear moans from the front room. She tapped at the door once, and said "Mother," but received no answer, and decided that she must not intrude.

Bert went back and forth obeying directions, but could give no definite information. "Aunt Eliza says she doesn't know what is the matter. He is out of his head—poor fellow!—and cannot tell her where the trouble is. He is suffering dreadfully, I should think. Your father says Jonas must have had to go on for some other

doctor, or he would have been back before this." Then he went into the room again and closed the door.

Jeanie went back to her room, and sat down in the window in the moonlight. Everything in the world was wrapped in solemn white, and was still. The night was warm; not a leaf stirred on the trees, yet Jeanie shivered and wrapped her light shawl closer about her. She had never been up before at two of the morning.

A sound of wheels on the gravel, and Jonas drove with skilled hands around the curve. Dr. Adams was with him. Jeanie listened for his steps on the stairs, for the opening and closing of the door, then gave a little sigh of relief. Now they should soon know, and it might not be anything very dreadful, after all. Nothing *very* dreadful could be the matter with him so soon. How bright his eyes were when he bent over those roses, and said eagerly, "Let us settle it once for all, will you?"

The door opened again. She sprang eagerly to her door. It was only Bert.

"I don't know, I am sure." he said. "The doctor does not say anything; he just works. He has ordered ice, and I don't know what all. He looks sober enough, but there is no chance to ask what he thinks. Jeanie, Aunt Eliza said I was to tell you to go to the baby; she is afraid she will waken and cry. Uncle James is up here now."

Jeanie went with haste and alacrity. It was a relief to be doing something—anything which would shut out the solemn moonlight and the questioning eyes, and the young, eager voice which said, "Will you?"

Baby was awake, and was crying with energy.

It took all Jeanie's skill to soothe her back into quiet, and it took time and patience to coax her to sleep again. Even when that was accomplished, the young nurse did not dare move, lest her work should be undone, and baby resent louder than before the astonishing absence of her mother.

The moonlight had faded, and the gray dawn of another day was creeping over the world, when the mother softly opened the door, and, without entering, beckoned Jeanie outside.

"My poor child, you have had your first night's vigil, haven't you? I heard the baby cry, but I could not come. Go back now, dear, and try to get a little rest before daylight."

“But, mother, how is Romaine? Wasn’t it a very sudden sickness? He looked perfectly well last night. Is he easy now?”

“Quite at rest, dear child. Yes, it was very sudden.” The tone was constrained, and the lips tremulous. Jeanie turned a wondering look on her.

“Are you so tired, mother? You do not feel alarmed about him now, do you? Isn’t he a great deal better?”

“Jeanie, dear, I did not mean to tell you until morning. We have done all we can for the poor boy. It is his mother we must think of now, and my heart bleeds for her.”

“Mother!” said Jeanie, seizing both the trembling hands, and speaking with an energy that was almost fierce. “He is not dead? You cannot mean that that boy is *dead!*”

A slow step sounded on the stairs, and Mr. Barrett came toward them.

“Yes, daughter,” he said; “the poor boy is gone. It was awfully sudden. I do not wonder that you cannot believe it possible. Go down, dear, and let your mother get a little rest: she has hung over him for three hours. It was congestion of the brain, the doctor says; caused, probably by being overheated yesterday. It seems he had headache all day; and, besides, there was some heart trouble. Come, daughter; you must rouse yourself, and help your mother.”

For Jeanie was leaning against the frail little mother, whose tears were dropping now on her daughter’s brown head. But Jeanie shed no tears: she shivered again, as she had done in her room at the moonlight. She felt stunned. Nevertheless, at her father’s word, she drew away from her mother, and let him lead her into her room. He came back in a moment.

“Your mother is worried about you, daughter. She thinks the shock will make you sick. But I tell her you are strong-hearted enough to think of others, and not of yourself. You will go and lie down now, and try to get rest, and be ready to help everybody in the morning, will you not?”

“Yes, sir,” said Jeanie, mechanically; and she put her hand out and felt for the baluster.

“That is my good, brave girl,” he said, and helped her down the long hall to the door of her own room, then kissed her and went away.

Daylight was coming swiftly now. The East was flushed with red, and all the stars had paled. She threw wide her blinds and looked out on the beautiful world. Below were the roses, bathed in morning dew, and looking just as they did when the fair-faced boy bent over them to ask her the momentous question, the settling of which was to change all their lives for them. Now his was changed.

Not yet twelve hours since he had said, “I expect to be an old man with white hair,” and now the whiteness of age could never touch him. Oh, the suddenness and the awful solemnity of it all! If he had only made the decision that evening without waiting for the meeting! If only she had said, “Let us settle it now, tonight!” She had had her opportunity—she, Jeanie Barrett, to help prepare a soul for standing before his Judge, and had not done it. She would have given worlds for the opportunity to say to him, “Yes, I will. We will do it now; we must not *wait.*” If she had only known what the waiting meant!

There was no use in trying to sleep, to rest. Her heart was weighed down with such a burden of sorrow and remorse as she had not dreamed it was possible to feel. She was sure she could have influenced the boy. His soulful eyes said he waited to be influenced, and was eager for the word which would help him. Why had she not spoken it? It was of no use to say now that Christians did not live according to her ideas of the Christian life. What was all that to Romaine Holland? Suddenly he had gone where it made not the slightest difference how anyone lived but himself. Was he ready? Was it possible that, in the silence of his room, between the hours of the good-night—the few brief hours—and the one in which the eternal morning broke upon him, he had settled the question? She would give worlds to be sure that such was the case.

She opened her door swiftly and went down the stairs. She heard Bert’s step in the hall below.

“This is awful!” he said to her, pausing in his restless walk, and holding out his hand. “How can we bear it? How can we ever write to his mother?”

“Bert, did he say anything last night, or do anything, to lead you to think he felt strangely?”

Bert shook his head.

“He was much as usual, except that he complained of headache, which, I told you, was unusual for him. We did not talk last night as we do sometimes. I kept quiet because of his head- ache. He read his chapter in the Bible—he always did that. He promised his mother, years ago, that he would.”

“Do you know what he read?”

“Why, yes,” speaking hesitatingly, as though dealing with subjects which he did not understand; “he read the last verse aloud, ‘Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.’ Then he said, what was rather strange for him, ‘When He comes, Bert, I want to be ready.’”

“Oh, poor fellow! What did you say?”

“Well, you know, I am not given to this sort of talk much; and I, in a merry way, said, ‘You want to be ready for the breakfast-bell when it rings, and you won’t be if you don’t come to bed.’ Of course, I had no idea he was sick, you know; but he must have felt badly then, for he moved about slowly for him. Then he said, ‘To be sure of being ready, one must *get* ready.’ ‘Of course,’ I began, pretending he referred to the breakfast bell; but I stopped, for he was kneeling down. That was another thing he promised his mother, and, of course, I respected it. We did not speak another word after that. I was unusually tired, and dropped off to sleep almost immediately. When I awoke he was making that strange, groaning noise, and did not know anything.”

“Oh!” said Jeanie, with a pitiful little moan which came from her heart, “I hope he got ready.”

“Well, as to that,” Bert said, clearing his throat, and trying to speak naturally, “there never was a nobler boy than Rome Holland. Nobody ever found any fault with him. He was noble and generous and true. I’d risk his chances against any fellow’s I ever saw.”

“But, Bert, he knew better than to trust to such readiness as that.”

“Perhaps he did. But, if I were such a fellow as Rome Holland, I shouldn’t be afraid to risk anything.”

Jeanie had no reply to make to this. She knew its folly; but who was *she* to argue on the other side of a matter which she had left unsettled?

The days which followed always stood out in her memory as special ones, and full of bitterness.

There was much to do that was sorrowful work. There was, among other things, the far-away mother to be written to by Jeanie herself, with conscientious care, as the last one who held a detailed conversation with the boy who was gone. As she studied over each sentence in her anxious desire to recall every word as it was spoken, and describe, if possible, the very inflections of the words used, the entire scene was brought so vividly before her as to oblige her to think of it whether she would or not.

Then, of course, she showed the letter, when completed, to her mother; and with what intense interest it was read she could imagine. No comment was made beyond the tearful one that the story would certainly comfort the mother's heart as nothing else could. But two days after the letter was gone, Mrs. Barrett said:

"Jeanie, dear, you did not tell me what reply you made to the question which was asked you."

No names were spoken, but Jeanie knew what the question was.

"I said I could not promise," she answered, in a low voice, then she burst into tears. It was the first time she had fully admitted, even to herself, the bitterness of her remorse over the answer. Had it been different, how different a story might have gone across the ocean to the mother.

It was in the evening of that day that she came to Bert with a suggestion.

"Bert, I have changed my mind. I want to go to Hilton Grove. Suppose we have Jonas drive us over there tomorrow."

"All right," said Bert, catching eagerly at any lifting of the shadows which had shut down thus suddenly over his vacation. "We'll do it. Going to meeting is a suitable thing to do under the circumstances. I mean, no one can see any impropriety in it; and it will make the time pass, anyhow."

5. An Outsider

The drive to Hilton Grove was through a very charming region of country, and Bert, at least, was in high spirits. The spell of sorrow, and almost of terror, which had been upon him for a few days, seemed, when he was out of sight of home and the surroundings which had kept them fresh, to change to the extreme of gaiety. He whistled and laughed, and sang snatches of song, and talked with Jonas, drawing out the old man's quaint ideas on various subjects, and laughing over them, until, at last, Jeanie said, somewhat reproachfully:

"To listen to you this morning, Bert, one would not suppose you had just lost your most intimate friend."

Bert sobered instantly.

"I don't know about that," he said, quickly. "Rome was the best friend a fellow ever had, and I liked him better than I ever shall another fellow, I know, and I miss him more than anybody knows anything about; but I can't see how it is going to help things to *mope* all the while, and sigh like a furnace, and make everything miserable for the friends I have left. I believe I ought to try to laugh and whistle, and be as merry as I can. I don't miss him any the less, but I get through the days better than I otherwise would. It isn't my nature to mope, now that's a fact. If a dozen years of it could bring Rome back for his mother, and for all of us, I'd be the first to set about it; but I don't see how it's going to do him or anybody else any good to look doleful all the time. Do you think it is wrong to laugh, Jonas, after you have had a friend die?"

Old Jonas turned on his driver's seat, so as to get a view of the speaker's face, surveyed him reflectively for a moment, then slowly shook his gray head.

"No, Master Bert, I cannot say as I do. Sometimes a good laugh is a means of grace. I well remember, when I was a lad, how I went out to an uncle's of mine who had just buried his only son. I didn't want to go, for the boy had been my best cousin, and my aunt loved him about as good mothers do; and I shrank from the

sight of her sorrow, as boys are apt to. So I hung back about going there until I began to be ashamed; for they noticed it, and inquired why I didn't come. So one morning—it was a bright day like this—I took up my cross and walked out to my uncle's. He was away in the fields, but my aunt was there, and she cried a little at seeing me, for I was about the age of the boy who was gone, and we had been said to favor each other. She was called to see to some business almost as soon as I came, and I was glad. I slipped out in the yard, and began to coax the old dog into a frolic. He got into a tremendous one at last, and bounded about me in such a ridiculous way that I laughed loud and long, and rolled on the grass in my glee. Just then I looked up on the piazza, and there stood my aunt! I bounded to my feet all in a glow of shame. But she was smiling as pleasantly as I had ever seen her, although at that minute there were tears in her eyes, and she said, 'Poor Bose will be grateful to you all day. He misses Frank very much. *He* used to frolic with him, you know. It is pleasant to hear a merry young voice again in the yard.' Well, sir, I was astonished, not only then, but all that day, at the cheerful words and ways of my aunt. She went about, attending to everything; and at night they sang at family worship just as usual, and my uncle told some bits of news he had heard in town, and they laughed a little over something queer that had happened, and were so much like themselves that I was puzzled. It wasn't that they were trying to forget the boy. They talked about him a great deal. It was, 'Frank used to like that book,' and 'Frank hung those pictures for me,' and 'Frank was going to have a flower-bed under that window this summer.' I suppose as many as twenty times that evening one or the other of them mentioned Frank. When we were going to separate for the night, my aunt called me and told me to kiss her. 'Frank always kissed his mother good-night,' she said, 'and you must kiss me for him now. We thought you were not coming to see us.' Then I couldn't help bringing out the thought that had bothered me all day. I didn't think you would want to see me,' I burst forth, bluntly enough—I never knew how to say things just right— 'because I might remind you of Frank.' She held me off a little then, and looked into my eyes. 'And did you think we would not like to be reminded of our dear boy?' she asked me, and her voice was as sweet as a morning in June. Then I was more abashed

than before, but I managed to stammer out that I was afraid it would make her feel bad, because he was dead. ‘No,’ she said; ‘we like to think of him, and talk of him, and see things to remind us of him all the time. You see, Joey, dear, it is like this: he has gone to our beautiful home a little ahead of us, that is all. If he were gone back to Scotland, and we meant to follow him in a little while, don’t you see, however much we might miss him, we should be sure to want to talk about him, and imagine what we could about the place where he was, and wonder how soon we could be ready to start. When you came to see us, we should be sure to talk of him with you. Well, it is like that, only a great deal better, of course. There is no danger of his being lost at sea, for his voyage is over. He is safe, and happy, and busy. All the days are full of eager delight, and he is watching for his father and me to come; and we are sure of going. No loss of money or worrying business, or any of the things which have kept us from going back to Scotland these many years, can possibly hinder this journey. We are sure to take it, and we may be able to go very soon. Then we shall have Frank again forever. Why should we not smile and be pleasant? You see, Joey, dear, it isn’t as though we had him to worry about. If he had gone without being ready, and we were afraid he hadn’t reached there safely, why, that would be dreadful! I don’t see how I could smile then; but Frank was as glad to start as a boy could be.’ Well, sir, she said a great deal more about it, and I got my first notion, that very night, of what it might be to live the kind of life my uncle and aunt did, and be always ready for living or dying, and be able to smile about it. Since then, I’ve watched people when sorrow came, to see if they knew how to bear it like my Aunt Sarah. And it makes a great difference with my opinion of their religion, how they get along then. Yes, I say, if our friends were ready to take the journey, we had better smile about it as soon as we can. Why, I know a boy who boasts to my boy every time he meets him about his father having gone a journey around the world. And when, last year, my little baby, Willie, died—Miss Jeanie remembers the time—our little Mary (she’s only six, you know), she says to this boy, next time she met him, says she, ‘I guess you needn’t tell about your father gone around the world any more. Our baby’s gone to heaven, and that’s fifty times better.’”

Bert laughed brightly over this story; but Jeanie had turned away her head, and was furtively wiping tears from her face. Old Jonas' story of the boy Frank had brought back all the haunting fear that the boy Romaine had not been quite ready for the sudden journey in the night-time—brought back vividly again the thought that he had asked her to join him in making ready, and that she had delayed him by the indifference of her answer. If Romaine Holland really went that night not ready, when she met him again, would he tell her it was her fault?

Hilton Grove was reached just as the people were gathering in the great tent for an afternoon service. Bert seized his cousin's arm as soon as they were fairly out of the carriage.

"Come on, Jeanie, Jonas will attend to the horses and arrange for us to take supper somewhere. Let's you and I wander off into these lovely woods and see what we can find."

"But I thought you wanted to attend the meeting," she said, hesitating.

"This afternoon? Oh, bless your heart, no! There will be no fun in an afternoon meeting—just an ordinary preaching affair. I want the woods, and the mosses, and all sorts of beauties. We shall have enough of the service this evening."

But Jeanie resolutely drew away her hand. That word "fun" grated on her sensitive nerves, do what she would. Romaine Holland had not been her intimate friend; but her life had touched his too recently, and his had drifted away from them too suddenly to make it possible for her to return at once to mere fun. She could appreciate, and, in a degree, admire, Jonas' story of the aunt who had taught him so vivid an object lesson in his early boyhood. To smile and talk of heaven was very different from whistling and searching for fun. The other might be beautiful, though Jeanie told herself that she could never bear sorrow in that way, she was perfectly certain. But Bert's way of bearing it was offensive.

"I am going to the meeting," she said, with a quiet positiveness, which, if he had understood it, might have saved Bert much coaxing.

To this resolution she steadily adhered, and took the boy, much against his will, into the great tent, where they were seated in a direct line with the speaker's stand.

It was a new and strange sight to Jeanie, this great company of worshippers gathered almost in the open air; for the tent curtains were fastened back, and the sunlight peeped in at them through waving branches of green, and the birds, peopling all the trees, vied with the human tongues in sending upward their songs of praise. The singing, someway, went to Jeanie's heart as no music had ever done before. There was such a volume of song, such apparent sympathy with the spirit of the words. As she looked about her, a strange feeling came over her that she alone was an outsider. All around her were those who were in fullest sympathy with the sentiment which rolled out from so many throats:

"Jesus, thou art the sinner's friend,
As such we turn to Thee."

She could not help a sort of longing to join in the melody, not merely with her lips, but with her heart—to sing and say and mean forevermore those emphatic words:

"As such I turn to Thee."

This was what Romaine Holland had asked her to do. This was what, with all her heart, she wished she had proposed to do at once, without waiting for the meeting. If Romaine were alive now, and stood near her out among the roses on the piazza, and should ask that question again, most certainly she would answer him eagerly, "Yes." In the light of her present knowledge, she would not dare to do otherwise.

Well, it is true, Romaine was gone. He could never ask the question again; but there might be others whom she was influencing, was hindering, even as she had hindered Romaine.

She glanced at Bert. His face had cleared from his frown. His mercurial temperament had already forgotten that there was anything to frown about, and he was gazing curiously around him, taking in the strangeness of the scene; criticizing the expressions of the singers; inclined to smile, she could see, at some quaintness of expression and originality of manner in an old man sitting near him. There was not the slightest trace of honest interest on his

face; not a hint that the sentiment of the hymn was even noticed; there was simply the idlest good-natured curiosity.

Apparently there was not the slightest danger of influencing him in the wrong direction by any hesitancy on her part; yet Jeanie, in realizing this, gave a little sigh. So curious are the workings of these hearts of ours, so much easier is it for some people to move in the right direction for the sake of others rather than for themselves, that she was conscious of a feeling of disappointment that Bert's mood was what it was.

They sat side by side during the service, hearing, or at least given equal opportunity to hear, the same things; yet I suppose no more marked illustration of the fact that the same influences operate differently on different natures could be found than in those two that day.

"I am sure I don't see what there is to attract you so wonderfully," Bert said, a little testily, when, after supper, Jeanie persisted in going to the early service, and refused his entreaties to take a little stroll first about the grounds. "There is not much to listen to. I thought you came to see the woods, and get mosses, and have a good time."

"I didn't," said Jeanie; "I came to see what a meeting of this kind was like, and. I intend to watch it."

So they took their seats in the great tent again. The many twinkling lamps inside, and the stars which were beginning to gather thickly in the blue without, added to the picturesqueness of the scene. They were singing again, this time a tender melody,

> "Thou dear Redeemer, dying Lamb,
> I cast myself on Thee."

It had the same effect on Jeanie that the afternoon music had produced. She did not understand it. She had heard much better music than this; she was not particularly influenced at any time by musical sounds, yet here she was, being pressed on every side by that same longing feeling to make the thought of the hymn her own.

Of the sermon which followed the song, I am not sure Jeanie heard three sentences. The text she heard, not a remarkable one, you will say, but there is this to remember: one can never be sure

which portion of His word the Holy Spirit will see fit to honor especially for the time being— “Open thou mine eye, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”

Had somebody offered that prayer for her? Had her mother asked it, she wondered? And had God answered? Was this why the hymns, and the prayers, and the very atmosphere seemed so wonderful to her, and filled her soul with such a longing to enter into it?

Jeanie Barrett will always remember that evening when she sat so still, and was apparently so attentive a listener, yet heard only the questioning of an unseen guest, who was knocking forcibly at her heart’s locked door. Bert watched her curiously; after a time, doubtfully. He knew her face well enough to be sure that some strong feeling was working on it, and taking shape probably for action. He drew her hand nervously through his arm as soon as the general service was over.

“Come on,” he said, “I shall be glad to get you out of this. I did not know but you meant to go forward with that crowd, who do not know what they are about, I dare say. I did not know you were so emotional. There’s Jonas at the west door. We will start at once, and the drive home in the moonlight will cool and rest you.”

Somebody at her other side touched her arm. It was the daughter of a neighbor, older by several years than she, but one whom she was accustomed to seeing in the Sabbath school at home. Her voice was low and persuasive.

“Jeanie, one of the little prayer-meetings is in mother’s tent. Won’t you come to it?”

6. All Excitement

“Thank you,” said Bert, tightening his hold on his cousin’s arm. “We must start for home at once. We have a long ride before us, and Jeanie is tired.”

There are some natures which seem to need just a touch of opposition to start them off in any given direction. It is doubtful if Jeanie’s answer would have been what it was had Bert kept silent. No sooner did she hear his assured decision than she felt an instant desire, nay, a determination, to stay for that prayer-meeting.

She withdrew her hand from his arm, speaking quietly, “It is not very late, Bert: just a little after nine. Mother does not expect us before eleven. I think I will go with Mary.”

“Oh, Jeanie, no! You have had quite enough of meetings for one day. I am sure your mother would not like it, and you are under my care. I insist.”

But Jeanie could insist, too, on occasion; and she did not like commands from one whom she considered had no right to issue them.

“I am going with Mary,” she said, quietly. “If you are very tired, you can take a walk through the grounds and refresh yourself. Jonas will wait outside for me.”

Bert turned from her in haughty silence, and she disappeared with Mary inside the brightly lighted tent, from whence already issued the sound of music. Even then she did not know for what she had come. Almost the strongest feeling which she realized possessed her was a blind determination to have her own way. But the gracious Spirit of God, who was leading her, almost against her will, knew where He led, and what would be the result.

Jeanie dropped on her knees with the others, and was immediately startled to hear herself prayed for. Not by name, it is true, but so pointedly that she could not doubt who was meant; and yet so tenderly that it was impossible to take offence.

The minister who was praying was white-haired, and when he called her “the wandering lamb,” and asked that she might see her

way, even then, into the fold, the poor, struggling lamb felt herself trembling with a sudden, overpowering longing to be numbered among these praying ones. It was a very brief experience, an indescribable experience, so I need not try to tell it. “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine,” holds good today; so if you, who read, are curious over this sudden, mysterious transition of the soul from the position of a condemned sinner to the triumph of a sinner justified, take the steps for yourself, and know of a surety that the change, however mysterious, is, nevertheless, as distinctly defined as any experience which your life can have.

Jeanie Barrett, when she knelt in that tented space, felt only a blind, homesick longing for an experience such as she believed some had, but which she was more than doubtful could be for her. When she arose, not ten minutes afterward, she knew, as well as she stood there, with the old minister touching her arm and speaking to her in low tones, that she had passed from the position which she had all her life occupied over to the other side, with the Lord Jesus Christ for her advocate.

She smiled on the old minister a bright, glad smile, and said, simply, “Thank you,” in answer to his wish for her. Then, after a moment: “Yes, sir; the question is settled.”

It astonished her to hear her voice speak the words. She thought she ought to be frightened over such assurance and emphasis. She wondered that all her miserable sense of self-abasement was gone. What had become of the Jeanie Barrett who came in there but a few minutes before? She did not know, did not understand. But this much was certain: try as she might, she could not feel like a condemned sinner again. A sinner she undoubtedly was. She began to suspect that she had not understood the meaning of that word before, and that it would be hard to find one so young as herself who had sinned against so much light. Nevertheless, there was a song in her heart:

“Jesus, thou art the sinner’s friend.”

She almost said the words aloud, so vivid were they to her. The *sinners* friend! How wonderful! Why had it never before seemed

so great a condescension? Then, *her* friend. Oh, how wonderful was that! No wonder that she smiled.

Now, mind, I do not say that your experience was, or will be, precisely that. The Master may lead you into the light through many winding halls, but into the light of a sinner justified it is certainly your privilege to come if you will. Is it not a marvel of marvels that so many will not?

Long afterward Jeanie thought, with a grateful tear, how wonderfully the old minister was led, when he said, as he took her hand at parting, "Child, I know your father. You must let your life be such as to convince him that you are in earnest. You may be the means of bringing him."

It was a very quiet ride home. Bert, contrary to his usual custom, had not yet recovered good humor; and Jeanie was too busy with her thoughts to try to make conversation.

Jonas, in the front seat, alternately whistled and sang softly snatches of hymns he had heard that day. Evidently Jonas was happy. Presently Jeanie roused to the fact that she certainly was not very companionable, and that Bert, in the moonlight, looked moody and sad. She felt kindly to all the world, and cast about her for something pleasant to say.

"Have you enjoyed the day?" she asked, a little timidly, conscious that she had done very little toward his enjoyment, and had, in fact, insisted on having her own way.

"Enjoyed it?" he said. "Humph! I enjoyed the ride, I suppose. The rest has been stupid enough. I had no idea you were so fond of church-going. I thought you wanted to get into the woods and rove about. Who would have supposed you would go over to Hilton Grove just for the sake of being mewed up inside a tent, listening to people sing psalms through their noses?"

Manifestly, Bert was in very ill-humor.

"I am sorry you were disappointed," Jeanie said, speaking gently. She could afford to be gentle now. "I did not suppose I should like the meeting so much. It was a beautiful meeting."

"Was it? I did not see a single beautiful thing about it. Then the idea of your insisting on a third session, after being at it for hours! That was pure obstinacy, my pretty cousin, you can't deny it. You just went to that prayer-meeting because you wanted your own way. You did not use to be so strong-willed. I remember you as a

meek little mouse, who would give up your way for anybody's pleasure."

"People change," said Jeanie, a little flash of obstinacy coming over her at that moment. "But, Bert, you are mistaken. I went for something besides obstinacy; or, at least, I think I did go partly because I wanted my way, but I cannot be sorry. I found there what I have been needing for a long time—something which will help me to be less self-willed in the future, I hope. Honestly, Bert, I am sorry you were disappointed. If we were to have the day over again, I think I should try to please you."

"You found something?" repeated Bert, curiously, his ill-humor giving way before the mystery of her tone and words. "What do you mean? "

How was she to tell him? If it had been Jonas, who was at that moment looking up at the stars and softly humming, "Jesus, thou art the sinner's friend," she felt that she could have explained it, could have simply hinted it, and Jonas would have understood; but Bert was different. Still, she ought to answer him, and answer in a way which he would understand.

"I found a Friend there," she said, thinking of the hymn which had so moved her; "such a friend as I need."

"A friend!" Bert had the most provoking way of taking up one's words and emphasizing them until they seemed almost ridiculous. "I did not know you were in a particularly unfriendly condition when you disappeared inside that stifling tent, where the lamps smoked, and the singing sounded as if it proceeded from cracked tin horns."

Evidently he was not in even his usual sympathy with such subjects, and Jeanie found it growing harder to explain herself.

"Don't you know I told you how I felt about Romaine, and his being ready to die?" she said, speaking low. "Well, I found help tonight. I would give almost anything in the world if I had found it before, so I could have answered Romaine differently from what I did. I feel almost as though I had kept him back from the getting ready, which he longed to do. I never want to feel that way about anyone again. Bert, I gave myself away tonight to the Lord: I mean to serve him as long as I live. That is what I mean by finding a friend."

“All excitement,” said Bert, wisely. “Poor child, you have been in bad air and psalm-singing so long that your head is turned. As for Romaine, I never had a moment’s anxiety about him, and I could have comforted your conscience, if you had let me. Romaine always was a good fellow—better than the most. For that matter, *you* have always been a good girl. It isn’t the worst trait a person can have to want her own way once in a while. I believe I admire it in you more than the mouse-like style you used to have. Don’t you go and be one of the psalm-singing kind, Jeanie Barrett: I don’t like it at all. I was afraid of that when I saw your eyes so big this afternoon. It was why I did not want you to go in there this evening. I did not care so much for the woods; but I saw you were getting excited, and I knew you had had more than was good for you. None of them are the sort of people that you belong to. In a little while you will be a young lady, and go out in society, and dance, and enjoy yourself. Because you are a little sad just now, you must not allow yourself to take up any notions that will be a nuisance to you all your life. With your father’s position, you can have all sorts of advantages, and be somebody in the world, unless you go and spoil it by joining that set.”

The quickening of Jeanie’s pulses and the rush of heat to her face told Jeanie that her hot nature was not yet entirely subdued. She could not help answering, with some dignity:

“Bert, do you forget that my mother belongs to ‘that set,’ as you seem fond of calling them?”

“Oh, Aunt Eliza! No, she doesn’t,” he said, with a light laugh. “She belongs to the folks who live up there,” with a little toss of his head toward the calm, moonlighted sky. “You needn’t imagine you will ever be such a woman as Aunt Eliza; you are not of that stamp. You take after your father—all fire and storm. Aunt Eliza is just the kind of woman to be gentle and quiet, and—well, religious, you know. I’m not saying anything against religion, you need not think. What I say is, that you are too young to meddle with such things.”

“Bert, I am not very much younger than Romaine was.”

But Bert turned on his seat impatiently.

“I don’t know,” he said, speaking in almost ill humor, “why you should always return to that. It stands to reason that you can’t miss him as I do; but I really do not see any religion or common

sense in making everybody miserable about it. It was a very unusual thing—you know it was—for a fellow, in apparently such splendid health, to die so suddenly. It doesn't happen once in fifty years. Besides, he had heart disease. Heart disease isn't a common thing. I say it is foolish in you to go and be low-spirited, and all that, because just one person, out of all the young folks you know, has died suddenly."

If it had not been too pitiful a thing, Jeanie could almost have laughed at such strange logic as this.

"I am not low-spirited," she said, gently. "I am happy; and Bert, it may seem strange to you, but I don't think I ever was *really* happy before in my life. I believe now I have always wanted this one thing which I have found tonight. Away back, oh, ever so far back, when I was a little bit of a girl, I can remember wishing I had what I read about in books; and now I have it."

"I remember," said Bert, "you were always reading sickly books about good little girls who died. That has made you gloomy and old before you ought to be. I thought you had outgrown it. It is nothing but sentiment, and I did not think you were a sentimental girl."

Then Jeanie sat back and looked at the moon. What was the use in trying to explain to Bert? It would seem as though he *could not* understand. It was blessed to think of her mother, and of the joy in store for her. How instantly mother would sympathize with this sweet, new life which thrilled through all her soul. She would not tell her tonight, she thought; it would be so late, and there would be so much to tell. Tomorrow, when she had her all to herself, she would sit at her feet and give her all the sweet story.

But Mrs. Barrett was up and alone. Father was not very well, she said, and had retired early. The gas burned dimly in the back parlor, and the moonlight flooded the room where the mother sat watching.

"Here she is," said Bert, affecting gaiety. "I have brought her back, meetinged to death. We would have been here earlier, Aunt Eliza, but she caught the fever, and insisted on going to more prayer-meetings, after having been in one for two mortal hours! If she can't raise her head from her pillow tomorrow, you may lay it to prayer-meetings and poison—every lamp smoked like a furnace."

Something in Jeanie's face told the watching mother a story.

"My darling!" she said, holding out her arms; and Jeanie was clasped in them, while she whispered:

"Oh, mother, mother, I have found a Friend! I love Him, and have given myself to Him forever."

7. “Mother, oh, Mother!”

Company and home cares absorbed both Jeanie and her mother for the next few days; at least, they precluded the possibility of the confidential talk which Jeanie longed for with her mother. But those days were full of new experiences to the young girl. She was happy with a happiness such as she not only had not known before, but such as she had doubted that anyone possessed. In the fullness of her delight, it astonished her that the world, in either its pleasures or its cares, could absorb anyone. Certain she was that she could never be submerged in either anymore; and she came near being a strange contradiction to her faith by growing impatient with the people who hindered her from telling her mother how patient and faithful, and exceptionally good, she was going to be hereafter.

Toward the close of a busy day, she watched, with ill-concealed satisfaction, the last carriage- load of friends drive away, and turned from the window with a long-drawn breath of comfort over the thought that she and her mother were alone. Even Bert was gone—his visit suddenly broken in upon by a summons from his father to join him in New York, where he had unexpectedly landed.

Grandma, too, had gone to her other daughter’s for the autumn visit; and, though Jeanie felt her departure rather a loss than otherwise, still it was a pleasure to think she could have her mother all to herself for a little while.

“At last,” she said, dropping into her favorite attitude—a fluffy little heap, just in front of her mother’s chair, with her hands clasped over her mother’s lap. “At last, motherie, I have you safe. Nobody will come to ask you to listen while they read this, or take a stitch in that, or tell them why the braid they are sewing doesn’t pucker the right way. I do think, mamma, you have been imposed upon. Everybody in this house has wanted you at once all the week; and I, who wanted you most of all, have had to do without you. I intend to make up for it now, and be as selfish as the rest.

Oh, mother, you don't know how many things I have to say to you!"

Mrs. Barrett regarded her bright-faced young daughter with a smile, which, nevertheless, to a close observer, had almost a sigh behind it, and said, gently:

"Poor little girlie! She has been very good all the week, and very much tried, I know. But we have our duties to others to think of, remember. Now what is the first, daughter?"

Jeanie laughed a little, and her bright face flushed.

"I don't know where to commence, mamma, there are so many things. How do people begin things? I don't mean *talk*, but work. Mother, I want to get to work. There are so many grand things to be done. I am *so* glad that we are rich, and that father is generous, and will give me money and time to work with. Mamma, if father is not a Christian, don't you think he is ever so much better than most men who are?"

A very gentle hand was laid over the pretty mouth then. The movement was caressing, but it had also reproval in it.

"Oh, mother! Yes, I know; and I am sure it will not be so long. Father *must* give himself to the Savior; he cannot help it, when he stops to think for a minute what a glorious Savior He is. I could not. I don't know how I came to wait so long. Mother, I want to teach a class in the Sabbath school. You do not think I am too young, do you? They want me. Miss Haines has spoken to me about it. They are little bits of girls, and very poor. I want to dress them up. Oh, not grandly, of course, mamma. I will be very sensible. You need not look sober over it, but they have not decent clothes. I want them to look as neat and pretty as any in the school. Then they are to have such nice, good times on Christmas. I think everybody ought to have good times then, mother. It would make them think of the Savior. These little girls never had any Christmas, I know. I want them here to dinner, and I want you to have all the lovely things you can think of for them. Oh, mother! I can see so *many* things which can be done with our money and our nice, pleasant home! I have been thinking about it all the week. I believe it made me feel just a little bit cross toward all the company. They have pleasant homes of their own. They did not need ours, and I wanted to begin to do things for those who haven't pleasant lives in any way. I have thought about this a great

deal. Religion isn't made beautiful enough. Do you think it is, mother? If it were connected with all the joy there is in some lives, wouldn't it bring them to love God?"

Mrs. Barrett's face was pale—paler than usual. If Jeanie had not been in such an eager flush of life herself she would have noticed it. She did note a curious little quiver of voice, and thought of it afterward.

"Oh, my daughter! I don't know. The human heart needs something more than mere outside brightness to draw it to Christ. Some have to be drawn closer to Him through disappointment and suffering."

Jeanie shook her positive young head. "I never could, mamma; I am not one of those. I have heard people say so, and I never understood it. I don't now. I think suffering and disappointment would repel me. I should think they would everybody."

"Does my daughter mean that she could not be happy in serving Christ if she were poor, and had to give up her pretty plans, and work for her daily bread?"

"Oh, mamma, don't! I don't know. I would try, of course. I mean, I hope I would if I had it to do; but I am so very glad I have not to be tried. I suppose Jesus knows that about us as well as all other things. He sees that I would not be improved by poverty, and being surrounded by ugly things, and by having to give up my school, and my music, and all my plans for His work. Why, mamma, I see ways in which my music can be used for Him, and I mean to consecrate it to His service. I have thought so much about all this. Not only just this week: I have thought it over a great many times. Oh, hundreds of nice little things, and some large ones. I have said to myself, 'If I were a Christian, I would do that, and that, and that;' and I can see how much they would accomplish for the cause. And then, mamma, I would almost always add a wicked little thought that they could not, any of them, love the cause very much, or they would try it. *I* never wanted to, because I said I had no motive. Wasn't it silly thinking? I'm ashamed of it. But now you see how much it all means to me, and how earnestly I must set to work to show myself that I meant it all. Mother, one night I thought of just that thing which you have asked me. It was when you sent me over to the Snyders' with that pitcher of milk. I said to myself, as I stood waiting for the pitcher,

that I could not be good in such a looking house as that. Not a book except a Bible, and two or three old library books; and a worn-out rag-carpet on the floor; and dingy chairs; and an old, calico-covered lounge. Oh, dear! It worried me ever so much, that perhaps I ought to feel as though I could be just as happy in a place like that as in my own beautiful home; and I knew I didn't feel any such thing. So one night I asked Mr. Haines about it. He didn't quite laugh at me; but his face wore a curious smile, and he said, 'Jeanie, has the Lord asked you to be happy in a place like that?' 'No, sir,' I said, meekly. 'And don't you think it would be well to wait until He does, before you try to reconcile yourself to it?' Mother, it helped me ever so much; and—I beg your pardon if it sounds rude—but don't you think your question, as to whether I could be happy if I were poor, is a little bit like that?"

Mrs. Barrett smiled, but she also sighed; and now Jeanie noticed that she was very pale and worn.

"A little like it, dear, but not quite; because people who are older sometimes see a few steps ahead. However, Mr. Haines is right. The Lord will not lead us through darker rooms than we can bear. I ought to be able to trust Him for my daughter, as well as for myself; but it is harder."

"Mother, oh, mother! Is anything the matter? Do you know you are as pale, almost, as your collar? Dear mamma, are you sick? And do you feel afraid that you may be going to die and leave me? Oh, I could not bear that!"

And now Mrs. Barrett's smile came freely. "That, at least, is trying to bear what the Lord has not asked of you. No, daughter, I am as well as usual; a little tired, perhaps, with unusual burdens, and very anxious, or, at least, sorrowful, about many things in the future; things which it is right that you should know, though I am sorry to have to tell you tonight on our first evening alone together. I would put it off until tomorrow if I could, and let us remember this evening as all bright; but I have already waited too long."

Jeanie moved from her childish position, her face now almost as pale as her mother's, but womanly, and with a reserve force of self-control suggested in the lines about the mouth. Her voice, too, was steady.

“Mother, please tell me right away, won’t you, what is the matter? Is it my father? Is he sick—worse, I mean? Or is Fannie going to die?”

“Thank the Lord, no! None of these things. Your father is not worse than he has been for months. We have all our treasures safe, so far as human eyes can see. You make me feel that it is nothing so very sad, after all. It is just this, daughter: the pretty home, which you admire so much, is not ours any longer. It has been heavily mortgaged for some time, and we have had to let it go; and, with it, the household goods of which we are so fond. In plain, hard language, dear, we are poor; but we are all together, as I said, and have very much to be thankful for. Do you think you can make a new home bright and happy, daughter?”

But Jeanie had no answer to make. She rose up slowly, and stood before her mother, her hands clasped in front, and her astonished, troubled eyes bent on the mother’s face. Poor! *They,* the Barrett’s! Why, that sounded very improbable. They had never been very rich, it is true; but they had always seemed rich to Jeanie. She had never to ask twice to have her simple tastes and desires gratified. They had seemed to her to have everything they could possibly need; and the lovely, luxurious home was theirs forever, of course.

The ample grounds, stretching away to the south, had been in the Barrett family for generations, or “forever,” as Jeanie had always proudly expressed it. Father had always been the leading merchant of the town, the leading businessman and public man in all directions. How absurd to suppose that he could drop down to the level of the Carsons or the Paysons, people who had no taxes to pay, and no vote in town affairs! Or even lower than they; on a level, perhaps, with the Snyders, to whom she often carried a pitcher of milk, and who had only rag-carpet in their best room.

The idea was so absurd that Jeanie almost smiled. It was not possible that her mother meant anything of that kind.

“How poor are we, mamma?” she asked, at last. “I do not understand. What has happened?”

“It has happened, dear, that your father has tried to do his duty, and help others in trouble. Some of them have struggled in vain, and some of them have been untrue to him, and the consequence is, he will have barely enough property to pay his debts. The house

must go—is gone, in fact; so must the furniture, whatever is of value."

"The furniture? Who would want our furniture?"

"It will have to be sold, dear, to help pay the debts."

"But, mother, I do not understand. What can we do without it? We shall just have to buy new if we sell this, will we not?"

How hard it was to explain to the child of wealth and ease that there would be no money with which to buy new.

"We must save out what we are obliged to have, Jeanie, and what would bring little or nothing on sale, and get along with that for a time; until we are able to earn more, you know."

"Why, mother, we have nothing that we could get along without. We use all our things every day, except those in the spare rooms; and, indeed, we do those, for we have company all the time. I do not see how we are going to spare anything to sell."

Nothing was clearer than that she did not understand in the least, womanly as she was, what failure and poverty meant.

Mrs. Barrett drew a heavy, weary sigh. This was her oldest child. If she could not lean on her, there was no human arm to rest on. The heavily burdened father must not be leaned on by those at home, but must be sustained and cheered if possible.

A sudden fear came into Jeanie's mind, which made her face flush for a moment.

"Mother, will they sell my piano?"

"My daughter, doesn't mother tell you that we must give up everything? All the luxuries, certainly."

"Luxuries? But, mamma, my piano is a necessity; and the books—oh, people will never buy those, will they?"

"We certainly hope so. It is very important for us that they should sell, and sell well. We can only hope that they will be of sufficient value to help us to be honest, at least."

Mrs. Barrett spoke almost coldly. She forgot, for the moment, that her sheltered daughter was not yet fifteen, and was having her first rude contact with a world which was not strewn with roses. It seemed to her that the child, even though she was but a child, might put a little bit of her young shoulder to the burden, and help.

But Jeanie, for the present, was stunned. The fact which had burst upon her was so great she could not grasp it. She could not understand how she was making her mother suffer. She looked

around the pretty room where they had been sitting so safely but a moment before. There was the piano in precisely the corner of all others for it, where the light struck the keyboard at just the right angle. How very strange that corner would look without the grand piano, which took up so much space! She gave expression to her thought, trivial though it was.

"What can we put in that space, mother, if we sell the piano? This room is so large, it will not look like home with the piano gone. And how strange the bookcase will look empty. Oh, will the case have to be sold too? You will not sell that, will you? Grandpa gave it to you, and he gave my piano to me."

The poor young lips were beginning to quiver now, and the mother's heart was softening.

"Dear child," she said, gently, "you are only a child. You think of pianos and bookcases, and they seem hard to you. Perhaps the hardest part of all this will not fall so heavily on this account. Jeanie, dear, the room will not be desolate to us. We shall have to use a smaller room, where there would be no place for piano or bookcase. We must move to the cottage, daughter."

"To the cottage? Oh, mother, you cannot mean it! Why, there are only five rooms!"

"I know it, dear; but they are ours, and we will try to make them happy ones. We shall be so close together that we shall not have a spot for loneliness, and so busy that there will be no time to indulge in regrets; and so brave and thankful, I trust, that we are all spared to each other, and that our Father in heaven is rich, that we shall have no cause for tears."

"But, mother; Oh, mother! In the cottage, with all our pretty things gone? Shall you sell carpets too? And the great easy-chairs? Oh, mamma, how can you part with the bookcase which grandpa gave you, and the easy-chair, which was his last present?"

She was wild with excitement, and she was young, or she would not have so cruelly stabbed her mother's heart. But Mrs. Barrett drew herself up proudly, and spoke steadily:

"My daughter forgets, or else she does not even yet understand. My father would rather have his children and his grandchildren honest than to have them cherish a farthing even which did not belong to them for the sake of fond memories. I am not in danger

of forgetting my father; and, as for all these things, they are not honestly ours any longer."

8. “Poor Jeanie!”

The May morning was fresh and fair, beautiful with the song of birds, and sweet with the breath of early flowers. Jeanie Barrett paused in her work a moment, and watched the flight of a swift-winged bird, a wistful look in her eyes, and a sigh cut short on its way, with a firm resolve to let no sighs escape. At sixteen she was not quite what at fourteen you would have imagined she would become. The experience which lay between had changed her.

She looked older than her years, not that she was world-worn or weary looking. There were no strongly marked lines about her fair face as yet, and the mouth had lost much of the setting which had given her in early girlhood an air of questioning unrest. There was an appearance of bearing responsibility, a hint of plans made and carried out, not alone for her own pleasure, which is unusual to find in one so young.

She was in the kitchen of the little cottage which she had heard with such dismay was to be her home. The room was neat, and in such order as a wash-day morning can command in a room which has to serve as cook-room, laundry, and general play-room for young children. There were very few articles of furniture, barely the necessities which belong to a moderately ordered kitchen. Had you looked beyond, you would have found the very rag-carpet of Jeanie’s dismayed dreams on the floor of the best room. Even the old lounge was there; not covered with calico, but with that which people of Jeanie’s fiber hate worse—a common, slippery hair-cloth. Piano there was not, nor bookcase. Neither were they missed, in a sense. At least, no one would have dreamed of trying to find space for either in that room of very moderate size, which served as sitting-room for all the family on the occasions when their invalid was able to see them, and as a bedroom for the husband and father, who was now often unable for days together to move from bed to lounge.

At first, he had occupied the little sleeping-room at the left; but it was close and stuffy—no chance for an easy-chair, no view from

the window to rest tired eyes. And, after half a night spent in thoughtful planning, Jeanie was the first, one morning, to propose that father's bed should be moved out to the parlor, so he might be with them when he felt like it, and yet have a comfortable resting-place. It had been almost her last concession to the poverty which now seemed to stare them fully in the face.

Up to that point she had struggled bravely for the room which, by courtesy, was called parlor. She had made her tired young feet many extra steps in a day by persistently bringing in all the dishes and appointments for the three meals, so that they might still eat without gathering among the pots and kettles of the kitchen for that purpose.

Up to that time she had carefully swept and brushed the rag-carpet, dusted the few chairs and the one table, spread its bright cloth on it, and arranged the books left from the wreck in a homelike way, and set the one easy-chair, which was only a wooden rocker nicely upholstered in gay, old-fashioned chintz, midway between the window and the stove in winter, and the window and the open door in summer, ready for any caller who might chance to come. Her reception chair, she called it. But it was rarely used, save by the weary mother, who dropped into it of an evening while waiting for tea to be served. Jeanie had been wont to frown over callers, except a select few; to feel that they took too much of her mother's time and strength, and served no purpose, only to weary people.

She had not to frown much now for such causes. The Barretts had quietly dropped out of the calling sphere. The minister came still, at rare intervals, for he had many calls to make, poor man! And a few old friends, who were also busy friends, dropped in as they had opportunity; but, for the most part, the parlor kept itself in state alone. It was a large town, and society had changed its face not a little in that short time. Some of those who used to live near them had moved into other streets. New people occupied their places, who said, occasionally, "Who are the Barretts?" In the very recent old times no one had had need to ask that question.

Of course, there were girls, plenty of them, who knew Jeanie Barrett well. But Jeanie Barrett, daughter of the leading merchant of the town, leader in her classes at school, leader in every sort of frolic which is dear to school-girls' hearts, as good as mistress in a

lovely home, where her companions were at all times royally welcome, and Jeanie Barrett who lived “on that back street, in that little bit of a cottage, you know,” and who had not time to come to school, and who took music lessons no more, and had ceased to practice with them for their choral entertainments, and who declined all their invitations so persistently that at last they forgot to invite her, and who was never seen anywhere nowadays, only at church, was a very different person indeed.

They did not mean to be unkind: it was the furthest from their thoughts that they were unkind. They hardly ever spoke of her that one or another of their number did not say, “Poor Jeanie!” She had simply dropped out of their lives, and they counted themselves not to blame, but sorrowful.

Nevertheless, on the morning when Jeanie helped to move her father’s bed into the parlor, and put away most of the books because the table would be wanted now for other things, and set the little bit of a fancy table, which had stood before the front window holding a rose, back into the farther corner behind the door because it tipped over so easily, and unpinned the tidy from the chair because her father did not like tidies on every-day chairs—after doing all these things, and making up her father’s bed, and kissing him when he called her a thoughtful daughter, she went away to the stuffy little room which she was to have for her own after this, so as to be ever within call, and cried bitter tears. Not because she had given the parlor to her father, not she! Never a girl was more glad to plan for father than was Jeanie Barrett. It was simply a good-by cry over her past lovely, luxurious life, to which the bare little unused parlor had been a sort of pathetic connecting link.

From that cry she had gone out bravely to the very work which occupied her this morning. It was not fancy painting, nor yet a difficult lesson in music or embroidery. She bent over a tub of foaming suds, and made her father’s flannels pure and soft.

On this May morning it was more than flannels which engrossed her. The family wash, in variously assorted piles, lay spread out before her. The first time she ventured it her mother stood dismayed, and she alone was resolute.

That frail mother with her forty years of sheltered life, and her weak back and her slight cough.

“No, indeed!” Jeanie said to herself, with the decision which had marked her character almost since her birth. “My mother shall not wash.”

Then who would? For there was no denying the startling fact that the family purse was nearly empty, with the means for replenishing it scanty, and daily growing more doubtful, and the clothes were needed promptly: there were none too many of them.

“I will!” said Jeanie, boldly, in answer to her own mental query; and she bared her arms and set about it; the mother, as I say, dismayed, more than doubtful of the wisdom, but dumb because she knew not what to do. Suppose *she* should attempt it and fail, as she was almost sure to do. No; she must not venture far in that direction. There was the husband, daily growing weaker, needing her care; and there was the baby. Mother must save her strength for graver hours than washing brings.

So Jeanie washed, and did it well, and was flushed and tired and triumphant. It had grown to be almost an old story now; and, despite the mother’s ever-thoughtful care, the washings grew heavier. One could not always think to make the hand-towel last for one more time, instead of tossing it into the soiled-clothes basket, and getting a fresh one; and the streets were muddy, and the children would tumble down, and skirts would get soiled in unaccountable ways; and the baby had no more consideration than others of her class: for she had reached that delightful age when babies apparently live for the sole purpose of soiling clothes and doing mischief.

So Jeanie had a wash that day which might have troubled a stouter heart than hers. She was troubled a little, not so much over the washing as over other things. But she rubbed away until a shadow fell between her and the light. She looked up to see what was coming.

A load of hay! The driver had turned in at the cottage. Good! Her father would be glad. The non-arrival of that load of hay had been one of his anxieties for several days. But who would take care of it? The little store just at the corner was managed by two friendly young men who often sought her father for the aid which his long experience and unusual success could give them. They were always ready to do a kindness in return.

Jeanie wiped the suds from her arms, rolled down her sleeves, and prepared to obey her father's direction that she should run to the store and ask help about the hay. Away she sped around the little grass-plat, as fleet of wing as the bird she startled. Neither of her friends was in the store. There was only Joe Austin holding up the door-post—the only work which he was fond of doing.

If there was one idle lounger more than another on whom Jeanie disliked to call for help it was Joe Austin. She stood irresolute in the doorway. Must she? He seemed to be the only one available. Why should she ask help of anyone? Girls pitched hay—she had read of it in books. She had seen Farmer Hale's daughters helping their father one night when she rode by in her father's carriage. What girls had done, girls could do. Suppose she was not a country girl, was that any reason why she should not help to put in her father's hay? The reasoning was conclusive, and she turned and sped back again so fast that Joe Austin, looking after her, remarked that "That Barrett girl didn't let the grass grow under her feet."

But she had much ado, nevertheless, to keep herself from being buried under the hay. The farmer's man looked amused at the "help" which had been secured, and pitched hard and fast, with the idea of soon showing that slip of a thing that farm-work was no joke. It was fun at first; but the blood rushed presently to the young face, and the lithe young back, unused to such exertion, began to feel the strain. Still she worked briskly on, until, with a heavy thud of hay coming suddenly, she gave a little quivering scream, and admitted that she was vanquished. The poor abused back had sternly resented its treatment, and Jeanie was willing to creep into the house and lie down on father's bed to rest.

Mrs. Barrett hovered over her with anxious heart and ministering hands; and the father, groaning in spirit because of his weakness, was almost stern in his reproval for such reckless waste of strength.

"Joe Austin could have done it," he said, "without hurting himself; and you could have saved your strength for things which he cannot do."

"Joe Austin!" said Jeanie, with curling lip. "I'll ask no favors from such as he. I don't like to be waited on, father, by anybody. I am young and strong, and I can take care of myself, and of you

and mother. Just you wait and see. Don't look so sober, papa. I won't pitch hay again, ever, if you don't want me to; but I'll do ever so many things that you think I can't."

"I'm afraid you will," he said, sighing over his sad picture of the future, and the possibilities which awaited his young daughter, yet faintly smiling, nevertheless, over the vigor which even pain could not put down entirely.

"I'm better now," said Jeanie, starting up. "I'm all well again; mother has cured me. I *must* go, mamma," in answer to her mother's detaining hand. "Everything is waiting for me out there."

"Dear child, you must not think of trying to wash. Leave the clothes in soak until tomorrow, and we will get someone. Indeed, it will not do for you to attempt it after giving your back such a strain. The consequences might be serious. You were very white when you came in. I thought you would certainly faint."

"I did think of it," said Jeanie, laughing; "but then I reflected that I did not know how to do it gracefully, and papa and you would be frightened: so I told it to be still. I was not going to faint, and that was the end of it. There is nothing like being decided in these matters."

Both parents laughed. How could they help it? Both repeated their injunction to be careful not to attempt the washing.

"The clothes might better never be washed," said her father, decidedly, "than to incur any risks which might bring life-long regrets."

How could the young thing, in all the freshness of her sixteen years, be expected to take in a thought about life-long regrets? She laughed over the folly of supposing that they could be connected in any way with that May morning's work. She did not say that she meant to continue the washing, neither did she promise to let it alone. She gaily and skillfully parried their questions, answered their fears with merry words, and finally escaped from them under cover of the laugh which her last reply had provoked. Yet the door was no sooner closed than the mother sighed.

"Dear child," she said, "I tremble for her. She is so resolute, so strong-willed. I often find myself wondering what the world will do for her before she calms down, willing to have her hand held."

"I don't know," the father said, the smile still lingering on his face as he thought of his daughter. "I like to see a girl strong-

willed, especially one who has her way to make in the world," and then he sighed. "She will not yield too readily to circumstances: she will be very hard to crush. And, as for her character, I think, if I needed any other proof than your life to show me that religion meant something, I have it in my girl. She seems to me to be thoroughly in earnest."

"Oh, she is in earnest," the gentle mother said. "I have never doubted it for a moment; and she is the Lord's own child. But I sometimes think she would a little rather manage for herself than to have even His hand plan the way."

Meantime, Jeanie, in the kitchen again, made rapid work among the tubs. She had not the remotest idea of relinquishing the work.

"Little mother!" she said, smiling. "As if she did not know that there were only ten dollars in the house, and father sick! Does she think I am going to give anybody a dollar for this silly washing just because I gave my back a twist? Not I." And she seized upon one of the tubs with a strong, young grasp.

Still, the day was full of weariness. Resolution is worth a great deal, but it will not always cover aching nerves. Jeanie struggled bravely and ignorantly, with no more realization of the possible results of her struggle than if she had been one of the birds in the apple-tree, whose whistle seemed at times almost to mock the weary young girl as her nerves grew sick with the strain upon them.

Meantime, in the other room, heart and hands were busy. Mr. Barrett had a caller on business, who succeeded in worrying him into such suffering that, for the rest of the morning, Mrs. Barrett was engaged in trying all the devices for soothing a suffering body and brain which her skilled wits could suggest. In her hurried passages to and fro she had barely time to say, "Jeanie, dear, don't try to do that;" or, "Oh, daughter! I am really afraid you will suffer for this."

But the day hurried on; and, despite the fact that the worn clothes-line broke once, and trailed many white garments in the dust, the hour came when Jeanie exclaimed, in triumph:

"There, Miss Jeanie Barrett, the last tub is about to be emptied, and if you are not glad, I am! My back feels as if it would never help lift another. But I don't mean to have it shirk in this way," and the tub was seized.

A slight, faint scream, a little stagger backward, a firm setting of the mouth for endurance, and then Jeanie’s face suddenly paled, and she knew nothing more.

9. Reuben Perrine Whately

Nothing more—at least, for days; and, in fact, the days settled into weeks, and the weeks were growing into months, before Jeanie Barrett took a firm enough hold on life again to even attempt the picking up of some of its scattered threads of responsibility.

When she did begin again to realize that she was still here, in a world where weakness and pain held her prisoner in spite of herself, nothing astonished her more than to discover that for nine weeks the world had gone on without her. And not only the world, but the Barrett family. She had lain at death's door for many a night, unconscious alike of her father's pain, or the baby's cries, or her mother's burden, and been watched and fanned and fed, and cared for as a baby, and had never once protested nor risen up and insisted on doing for herself. And yet the sun had gone his rounds and carried May away, and brought smiling, flower-strewn June, and even landed them in the midst of July heat and languor, before Jeanie realized much of it all; and they had eaten, and drank, and slept, and been clothed, and the work, even the washing, had gotten itself done somehow, without her.

It was strange! Had Jeanie Barrett been asked on that May morning to lay down her burden of care and come apart and rest a while, she would surely have replied that it would not be possible for her mother to get through the work and care of one day without her. She sat back wearily in the big wooden rocking-chair and thought about it. Was she not, after all, of as much importance as she had supposed? How had mother done it? Who took care of father when he had his poor turns? Who had slept with little Fannie? Who had planned the daily meals and prepared them? Where had the money come from, for all their needs?

"There must be a great burden of debt," she sighed to herself. "How is it ever to be paid? The doctor's bill must be enormous, and increasing every day. He ought to stop coming. I don't need a doctor now; I am well. I *must* be well right away," she added, with energy, "and go to work."

But even the effort of thinking about it connectedly set her pulses to throbbing, and brought the perspiration in drops to her white forehead.

"My strength is weakness," she said aloud, and leaned back wearily in the chintz-covered chair.

Its brightness was fading: it was even fraying in places. A new cover was needed—many new things were needed. How were they to be had? What had mother done with the summer sewing? And the garden—who was attending to that? And how did they manage about the cow? Oh, there were so many things to plan for!

"How long I have been sick!" She thought the words aloud rather than spoke to anybody, though an old and valued friend of her mother, who had come to them in their trouble, and had been Jeanie's faithful nurse, was in the room. "Just think, it is almost the last of July! More than two months in bed!"

The tone was so mournful that the nurse felt called upon to suggest something encouraging. "Hoot, child! Two months are not such a very great while. Wait till you try it for a whole year, then you may talk!"

"A whole year! It doesn't seem as though anybody *could* lie in bed so long a time as that."

"Well, then, that's just where you are mistaken. Many is the one who has to do it. I tried it myself once, and I know."

"Oh, auntie! Were you really sick so long?"

"Every day of it. I took to my bed on the 21st of January, and I never walked a step till the next January, the last day of the month, in the afternoon."

The story intended to comfort seemed to increase the burden. Jeanie's sigh would have gone to the heart of her mother.

"I never *could*," she said, mournfully. "It would not be possible for me to live so long and lie idle in bed. I should much rather die."

"For the matter of that," said the nurse, shrewdly, "folks isn't always given their choice which to do." Then she changed her tactics. "But if I were you, I wouldn't be borrowing trouble when you are getting along so well—out of bed and sitting in a chair, as large as anybody, barely one month from the day when we thought you were dying. That is getting on fast enough for anybody."

But that word “dying” set Jeanie off on another train of thought. It was not new to her that she had come very near the grave, but she had been too weak to realize the full import of the word. Now, however, it came to her with a sudden feeling of gratitude. She had been spared; and her father, instead of sinking under the added burden of anxiety, had rallied wonderfully, and seemed better than he had in months. There was very much to be thankful for, after all.

When this distressing weakness passed away, she would be able to plan ways and means for getting out of debt, for getting themselves comfortably settled for the winter, for carrying out many of her plans of work; for Jeanie still had plans of work. They had not died in the old house: they had not even burned out in this fever. She could feel them stirring in her heart—feebly, it is true, like all her sensations, but showing themselves alive. If she could but gain strength, she would take hold of them.

“Mamma,” she said the next afternoon, when she was settled in her chair again for resting, “you wrote to Reuben, of course?”

“Quite often, dear—as often as I could get the time; and he wrote oftener than I expected. Reuben was a very good boy.”

She finished the sentence with a fond smile; somewhat as one would speak in trying to indulge a child, when she did not, after all, quite approve of the indulgence.

Jeanie smiled, a very happy and somewhat superior smile, as one who knew the worth of the article in question, and would be able, some day, to triumphantly justify her choice before all the world.

And now it is evident that this same Reuben demands an introduction. Reuben Perrine Whately, names enough, and of stately historical character enough, if that will help him.

A school-teacher—rather, a college youth playing at teaching during vacations, and occasionally dropping out a term or so to replenish his purse in that way. A handsome fellow—bright black eyes, and much curly black hair, and a certain gay, graceful ease about him; an ability to converse readily on almost any topic, and appear to know something about it, though not professing profound wisdom in any direction. Young, even for his years, perhaps, and they had numbered only twenty-one within a few months.

He was not the sort of friend you would have selected for Jeanie Barrett. Can anyone tell why it is that young girls so often select for friendship those whom the ones who watch them most interestedly would never have chosen for them? Perhaps, in this case, it might be accounted for by saying that Reuben Perrine Whately, whatever might be his faults, was superior, apparently, to most of those with whom he was brought in contrast. I think friendships between young ladies and gentlemen may possibly be often accounted for in this way: "He is superior to these around me; therefore, superior to all the world." So reasons the young girl unconsciously, and adopts her logic and lives by it; when the fact is, she has seen but a very small portion of the world, and that by no means the better portion. Happy for her, sometimes, if she can so fully adopt her own logic as never to have opened eyes.

Reuben was an enthusiastic German scholar, and Jeanie Barrett had always wanted to learn German; had commenced the study in her palmy school-days, and was loath to drop it. Reuben came home for the winter holiday with a college friend, the son of a farmer whose family had always been on intimate terms with the Barretts, and did not drop them when they moved into the little cottage. He and Jeanie met by accident one evening, and by accident exchanged a sentence or two in German, and were charmed with each other's success; and so, little by little, the intimacy grew.

When he came to take charge of the school, only a mile from Jeanie's home, for the spring term, and offered to help Jeanie with her German in the evenings, not only Jeanie, but father and mother, rejoiced over the opportunity.

When he became very friendly with Jeanie, giving more evenings to her than to anyone else, the parents thought him a very remarkable young man to be willing to sacrifice his time to their little girl. They praised him and admired him, and made their quiet little cottage a home to him, and consulted his tastes, so far as they were able, and awoke one day to the astounding fact that their little girl was not so very *little* after all, and by no means so young as they had imagined.

She was actually playing at womanhood, and whispering, with blushing face and shining eyes, her sweet secret into her mother's ear—that Reuben and she knew they were intended for each other,

and would mother and father be willing? Of course, not yet; oh, not for a long, long time—years and years! Reuben had his college course to finish, and his profession to study. He was going to be a great lawyer; not one of the common, plodding sort—his genius would never be content with that. He meant to reach the top; and she—Oh, she had ever so much to do to make herself ready for, and worthy of, this genius! Would they give their consent to—well, not exactly an engagement, though they felt themselves pledged to each other, and nothing would ever change them; but they would not call themselves engaged, because she knew mamma did not approve of such early engagements. They just wanted to write to each other, and Reuben would continue her German. She was to do her exercises as usual, and send them to him, and she was also to go on with her algebra and rhetoric: he should have plenty of time to help her.

"Always time for that," he said. "Might they correspond?"

It was all bewildering. Mrs. Barrett had never received so blank a surprise in her life. Their little Jeanie! Why, the child still wore her hair in braids, and it was only a few weeks ago that she lengthened her dresses! Still, look at each other, and wonder and sigh over it as they would, the mischief was apparently done. Both Reuben and Jeanie were in dead earnest.

"She is not so very young," the father said. "The fact is, she is much older than her years. You know she was a woman when other children were playing with their dolls."

"I know," the mother said, smiling and sighing, "the child has always been a woman, and the woman will always be a child. She is one of the most puzzling contradictions I ever knew. So grown up in some things, so perfectly childish in others. But I never dreamed of this. I am astonished at Reuben. I thought he had more sense."

Evidently, it was to be regarded in the light of a trouble. They looked critically at Reuben now, those parents. He was by no means so attractive in their eyes as he had been. There was a good deal to criticize. Things which they had scarcely noticed before rose into prominence and importance. He was not the choice they would have made for their daughter. Why, for the matter of that, they would have made no choice for the child until she became a

woman. Would he ever be the sort of man whom they would want for a son- in-law?

"Jeanie," Mrs. Barrett said, a doubtful note in her voice, "is Reuben a Christian young man?"

And the daughter's face clouded: she had not been ready with her answer. When it came, it was not especially reassuring.

"Mamma, he respects religion, and attends church regularly; but he says his attention has never been called to such things much. His mother isn't a Christian, and his father, I think, does not even go to church. But Reuben admires Christian character very much, when he sees the genuine thing. He says he is glad I am a Christian, and has promised me to give some attention to the subject. Oh, I think he will soon decide, mamma! He could not admire a truly Christian character so much if he were not almost a Christian himself. You ought to hear what he says of you."

"I am very much obliged to him, I am sure, for his good opinion," Mrs. Barrett had answered; but she spoke coldly. In fact, there was a touch of what was more nearly sarcasm in the tone than Jeanie had ever heard from her before. She could not feel great faith in Reuben's religious intentions.

However, what was there to be said, so long as she had sat still and let the mischief work before her eyes, until Jeanie had given full confidence to this young man's words? It was in vain to sigh, and say, you are so young!

Jeanie admitted her youth, and claimed nothing. She was willing to wait years, *ages,* if they were necessary. She was willing to write only friendly letters, once in two weeks, to show them to mamma, and to show Reuben's replies, and to speak and think of herself as free.

"But all the same, mamma," she had said, with her assured air of decision, which the mother had both smiled and worried over ever since Jeanie was a baby, "we shall both know that is only play, and that we belong to each other, and to nobody else, forever."

So it was left. The mother took, with what patience she could, the daughter's divided heart; and Reuben went back to college, and fortnightly letters commenced and continued, regular as the sun—long, genial letters. He was a good correspondent. Mrs. Barrett could not help feeling that such letters were very pleasant

for a girl to receive, and that there was little hope of her being gradually weaned from him by any such process.

As the days passed, what hope the mother had fondly cherished in that direction grew fainter and fainter, and she gave herself to the study of the young man's character; also to the study of learning to like him as well as she wanted to like Jeanie's future husband. She picked out all the pleasant things about him, and they were many, and dwelt on them, and she resolutely shut her eyes to that which she would have had different; naming them to no one but Christ, and praying over them, and him, until she began, at last, to look on the matter at least with patience.

So now you understand the indulgent smile with which she said to Jeanie, "Reuben was a very good boy."

Jeanie smiled brightly on her mother for that word of commendation, and went off into a long daydream over the blessings of her lot. Weak and almost helpless though she was, the brightest blessing in the train was, of course, Reuben. How should it be otherwise? Had he not glorified life for her? Had he cared that her home was in that dingy cottage, and that her dress was not what it had once been? Had he not singled her out from all the girls, and lavished kindnesses on her? Had he not been willing to choose her as his life companion—she who had been so early cut off from advantages, and who, do what she might, must always be so infinitely inferior to him in the matter of education? And what pains he took with her, giving up all his leisure hours to her exercises and examples; commending her for exceeding brightness, when it was only because his explanations were so clear that anything short of a wooden-head must have understood.

Oh, Jeanie was not likely to forget all this. She gave him full measure of loyalty, and her interest in him grew with the passing days.

Meantime, the days passed none too rapidly. At first, Jeanie could hardly restrain her impatience. There was so much to do, and so little to do with. Why did she not gain strength faster? Why did the doctor keep coming and coming, increasing his bill, and doing nothing? She questioned him daily.

"Shall I be able to walk across the room tomorrow, do you think, doctor?"

“How soon shall I get out-doors again? Just think! August has fairly commenced, and I am lying here yet.”

“I didn’t sit up so long as usual, yesterday; what was the matter? Do you think I overtaxed my strength the day before?”

“Doctor, don’t you think it is because I make no effort, that my limbs feel so useless and weak? How can I grow strong if I do not exercise? “

The doctor was kind, and patient, and reserved. He parried all these questions as best he could, and came steadily, and taxed his skill to the utmost, and watched with sharp eyes for any changes; and yet the days wore their slow length along, and August was gone, and September was in a fair way to follow her, before he let Jeanie bear her weight upon her feet. After that, it was slower still; and still he came, and gave no very clear answer to her many questions.

“Was it usual for people after a fever to get up so slowly—people as young as she?”

“Was it usual to have one’s back so seriously affected by a common fever? She hoped he would forgive her restlessness, but really and truly there was great need for her making as much haste as possible. Didn’t he think she might venture a little walking by tomorrow?”

And at last, the doctor, smiling on her, yet with such a look of pitying gravity behind the smile as would have startled a less hopeful creature than Jeanie, said, “I’ll tell you what it is, Miss Jeanie. Put on your best wrapper tomorrow, and we will have you out on the porch in the shade, and you and I will talk it over.”

10. “Poor Child, It Is Hard!”

“In the shade.”

Jeanie thought of that part of the sentence afterward. It had only meant shielding her from the September sun at the time. Later, it meant, or stood for, a great deal.

Can you imagine what it would be to sit down beside a young girl who had been used to abounding health and vigor—who had been used to bearing burden for others, and proud of bearing them; who had plans reaching all through the years as to what she would do and be; who thought of herself as belonging to another for whom she must be all that a glad, strong woman could—and tell her that the pain in her back and the weakness in her limbs, which she had been enduring for so long, were henceforth to be her constant companions? That the weak, halting step which now would not carry her beyond the front-room porch would improve—indeed, oh, greatly, he hoped, so that she could walk quite well, and without much fatigue—but the unmistakable limp, and the slight, unnatural curve in the back would assuredly be there?

No; I don’t suppose you can imagine it, unless you have had some similar experience. The doctor was used to it. It fell to his lot often to have to make such revelations; yet he drew his hand across his eyes as he went down the steps, having helped Jeanie back to her couch, and said, under his breath, “Poor child, it is hard!”

Oh, it was hard! You have not thought much, it may be, of the strength in your own two feet; of the grace of your well-formed shoulders, and lithe, springing step. You have not whispered one single prayer of thanksgiving for these blessings, it may be. Let me tell you when you would be sure to think of them. When you were told that the spring and the grace and the quickness had forever gone from them.

Let me pass over in silence the story of the first hours during which this knowledge was borne.

It cost some tears, and much thinking and much praying. But Jeanie, even then, recognized her birthright, in that she wondered how she could have borne it, had there been no Father in heaven, with whom she was acquainted, to lean upon. It was a blessed thing that she knew Him well enough to lean hard. But a cripple for life! She said the words aloud after a while to see how they would sound, and shrank from the sound and shivered, quite alone as she was. How long would it take her to get used to it? How long would her friends watch her, and notice the limp, and pity her for it? When would the day come in which they would have grown so accustomed to the sight that they would pass it without attention? She longed for that day.

The mother, during those first hours, was the very perfection of what a mother can be. She did not try to condole with her daughter: she did not make light of the trial. She did not even resort to that familiar method of comforting—a reminder of how much worse it might have been, how much harder someone else's trial was. She knew the day would come when such thoughts would be helpful to Jeanie, but she had rare tact enough to know that it had not come yet.

She waited, and was tender and sympathetic, and, for the most part, silent. And Jeanie rallied from the first sorrow, and looked it steadily in the face, and grasped hold of it with firm thought, and brought herself, in the course of time, to the thought and the word:

"After all, mother, worse things than being lame have happened to people."

"Oh, yes, indeed! "the mother said, cheerily.

"Why, there is poor Mrs. Carter, who cannot walk at all, you know; has to be wheeled about in a chair. Suppose it were something of that kind!"

And then the mother knew that the bitterness of the struggle was over, and that the sorrow could be touched with words.

Jeanie gained strength after that. It seemed as though the effort to bear her trouble bravely had reacted in helping her to more bodily strength with which to bear it.

By October she could walk about her room quite comfortably; she even went alone to the porch several times in a day, and began to talk about trying her strength on the foot-path which led to the store around the corner. The mother, watching, wondered if the

time had come to ask a question which hung heavy on her heart; and one evening, when Jeanie had been unusually bright all day, she ventured it,-

"My daughter, have you told Reuben?"

"Told him what, mother?"

"About the lameness, dear."

"Why, no. It is an awkward thing to write; and he is coming so soon. I thought I might as well save it for words."

Silence for a few minutes, and then Jeanie questioned, "Why, mother, do you think I ought to have written?"

"Oh, I had not thought of the 'ought,' but it seemed to me it would be better for you; less hard, I mean. A young man taken by surprise in such a thing might not receive it quite in a way to comfort your heart just at first."

Jeanie smiled bravely.

"I have no fears for Reuben," she said, decidedly. "You have: I can see it in your eyes; but that is because you do not know him. I am sorry for him, but only because he will be so dreadfully sorry for me; for himself. It will not make a particle of difference—I mean in his feeling for me. Mother, did you for a moment imagine he was one to whom it would?"

"I do not know him very well," said Mrs. Barrett, evasively; "and, daughter, you must not underrate his part of the trial. Of course it will be hard for him."

"Of course," said Jeanie, her face flushing deeply, "I have thought of it all, and pictured myself limping beside him, he trying hard to make his steps match my halting gait. I am sorry for *him,* but it is as I told you. I am sorry because it will be a pain to him to see me maimed; for his own part, it will not matter. I don't believe I make my meaning very clear; but, mamma, you know there are some who might have a personal pride about it. Reuben never will."

And to this Mrs. Barrett answered nothing.

It was less than a week after this that Reuben came. The little house had been in a bustle of preparation all day. The windows of the front room had been washed, and the curtains freshly laundered. Every article of furniture had been arranged to the best advantage; and Jeanie, in a white wrapper, with a little crimson shawl about her shoulders, and a lovely flush on her heretofore

pale cheeks, and a wondrous brightness in her eyes, waited for his coming.

Mrs. Barrett, as often as she looked at her, tried to keep back in her heart a heavy sigh. It was not simply that she felt the hardness of having such a brightness in those young eyes for any besides her mother and father—though I think there must be a hidden pang in it at first for all true mothers—but it was the thought that Jeanie was very young; too young for such an experience, And also the feeling, impossible to throw off, of lack of perfect trust in the young man in question. If there was any one thing, more than another, for which Mrs. Barrett longed, it was for the chance of being disappointed in her prospective son-in-law.

She watched him when he came inside the little gate and up the walk, with a quick, springing step, and the air of one entirely satisfied with himself. A handsome young man, faultless in dress, even to the bright rose thrust jauntily into his button-hole; and the light gloves, one of which he wore, the other held carelessly in his left hand; even to the cane, too small for support, if support had been needed, used only to switch the bushes along the path, or to balance airily in his hand. There was a smile on his face, and a pleasant, satisfied light in his eyes.

What was there to sigh about? Yet Mrs. Barrett, looking at him from the shade of the full curtains, sighed. If only he were nothing to her but a young man in whom she had a general interest, as one of an interesting species, how gladly would she go forward to welcome him.

But Jeanie had no sighs for this hour. She did not rise from her seat, as her mother, opening the door, let Reuben pass, then quickly closed it, leaving them alone; but she turned in her chair, and held out one hand, while the light in her eyes was stronger and of a different type from his.

He was sitting close by her side, with her small, thin hand in his, when he cross-questioned her with rapid, astonished questions, an hour or two later.

“What! You don’t say it is going to be a permanent thing, this lameness?”

“Oh, but that is nonsense! Benton is mistaken. I never had a very high opinion of his skill. He is what you might call an old

fogy. What should there be about an ordinary fever to leave you a cripple?"

"Well, but, Jeanie, this sort of thing ought not to be allowed to run on. Goodness! You can't be limping around the world, you know. Why, your rapid, graceful movements were half your charm. Well, not that, exactly, of course," with a gay laugh; "but then, you know what I mean. Why, a thing of that kind is apt to increase as one grows older; that is, if the doctor is correct in his diagnosis, which, of course, he isn't. You might even have to walk with crutches. Imagine it!"

Did he think that she had not imagined it, and almost everything else that could possibly be connected with it? She was very quiet now. Her answers were low-toned, and apparently without heat of any sort. She was so impassive as almost to vex him.

"But, my dear Jeanie," he said, at last, "how can you be so indifferent to a thing of this kind? You ought to have advice of a first-class nature. It won't do, to putter along with a country doctor like Benton. He is well enough for a case of common fever; but this is out of the ordinary, or else he has managed it very badly. I dare say it is mismanagement, if there is anything in his theory. Dr. Douglass is an authority on all such cases: you ought to have seen him weeks ago. I wonder at you, Jeanie. It seems to me you neglected my interests in this matter. Didn't it occur to you that I ought to be thought of a little?"

Poor Jeanie! How was she to tell him that she had thought of little else, through all the trying weeks, but his sorrow and his sympathy, and his strength of soul to help her bear her burden? These thoughts could not be put into words. She spoke quietly enough; still impassioned, almost indifferent, so he thought. Perhaps he did not remember that Dr. Douglass was a hundred miles away, and that it took money to secure his opinion, and that she had been sick a long time, and been under heavy expense.

"Well, but," he said, "what an utterly wrong idea to mention money in connection with such a possibility as she hinted at. As though any amount of the paltry stuff could weigh for a moment against the fear of life-long lameness!"

Jeanie could almost have laughed, if her heart had not been so sore. This was such an un- worldly view to take of things, so like Reuben.

"But money has to be mentioned," she told him.

It did not grow on the lilac-bush in front of the window. If it had, she would have gathered some and sent for Dr. Douglass, though she did not believe it necessary. Dr. Benton was considered by all a skillful physician. He had been very kind, very attentive, and she felt it to be more than probable that he was correct.

"If I were rich," she told him, "I would go to Dr. Douglass for your sake; or, not being rich, if I had any money at all which could be used in that way, I would still do it; or," and here her cheeks took a deeper tinge, "I would even do more than that, Reuben: if you had money to offer me I would take it, hard as it might be to me, for *your* sake, and try what all sorts of medical skill might do. But I know all you would do if you could, and have thought it all over, and now I want to forestall your urgings, and remind you that we may save our breath by remembering that, for the present, the thing is impossible. Since this is so, why can we not comfort ourselves with the thought that it would probably be useless?"

But he would not listen to reason. He was fierce. He scolded at doctors' fees and at doctors. He characterized them all as mercenary villains, and Dr. Benton as not only a villain, but a dolt. He scolded at his own poverty, and declared that it was impossible to think of sitting still and doing nothing; that some way must and should be found to have her go to Dr. Douglass. He would go without bread before he would have her sacrificed in this way. And when Jeanie tried to be merry, and asked how many years he would have to live without bread, did he think, to pay for a few visits from Dr. Douglass, he actually accused her of being heartless over her own affliction.

What could be done with such an idiot? Not that she called him an idiot, bless her heart! She cried over his sorrow after he had bidden her good-night and gone to his old boarding-house. Poor Reuben! He had taken it so hard as to be utterly unreasonable in his excitement. Nothing had been as she had planned. She had meant to be brave, it is true; but she had looked forward to resting her weary head on his shoulder, and having a few tears soothed away, while he whispered to her not to mind, that he would be

strength for her in the days to come. She had calculated too rapidly, she told herself. She had taken him by surprise. Her mother was right: she ought to have written and given him a chance to get used to the sorrow before he came to her.

As it was, his excitement and his lack of power to do anything for her had magnified the trouble, until now it seemed something dreadful in his eyes. Poor, sensitive, highly organized, unselfish Reuben!

And then she fell to thinking tenderly how willing he was to sacrifice himself, to go without even the necessaries of life, if he could but help her. And she cried outright now for him; and for joy that the sacrifice which he planned was too great: it could not be made. And she told herself that tomorrow, when he was rested and strengthened, they would talk this matter over rationally.

She would tell him how thoroughly reconciled she was, even to the enduring his having a crippled wife, and that, of course, had been the hardest to her; but she was reconciled, because she knew he would rather have her *crippled,* than all the world beside, and *she* left out. After a little, when he came to himself and was ready to listen to wisdom, she would show him how much had been done for her, and how hopeless any attempt at bettering her condition must, in the nature of the case, be at present; and he would grow reconciled and patient when he saw her patience and cheerfulness, and all would be well. And so entirely did she judge of him by her own high nature, instead of by his weak one, that there did not suggest itself to her mind the possibility that he could be other than even more surely her very own because of this.

So settled was her faith in him, that, even if she had seen him pacing the floor of his room, puffing smoke from a twenty-five cent cigar, and pausing in his walk and removing it long enough to say aloud, “The idea! As though I could be tied for life to a cripple!” she would have thought him under the influence of such wild excitement that he did not know what he was saying.

Talk about woman’s intuition! Let me assure you there are some women, or it may be they are only girls, before time and bitter experience have taught them the hard wisdom of the world, whose faith in those whom they love is so absolute that nothing has power to shake it.

Jeanie Barrett awoke next morning with her heart all in a glow of thanksgiving for the mercies of her lot. She had slept sweetly during most of the night, after praying long for Reuben, that he might find the rest of soul which he needed to help him bear the burden that had fallen upon her; and which was, therefore, so much harder to bear than though it had fallen on him.

She awoke with a smile. Reuben was here, and the day was full of promise. She would be able to ride with him, and possibly to take a little, a *very* little, walk; and he would be able this morning to reason calmly, and to see how well she was growing, after all, and how much there was to be thankful for.

She would tell him, sometime during the day, how perfectly it had rested her from the very beginning of her trouble to think of him, and of how he would bear it with her. She would tell him, just for the sake of speaking the words, not because he needed it, that she had never for a single second doubted his willingness to bear it with her. She would make him glad before the day was done, for was she not getting well? What was a little halting in her gait, after all? If she could bear it, surely he could. And she limped about her room, and made what haste she could, that the day might be as long as possible.

Her mother tapped at the door and entered.

"I heard you moving about, daughter, and thought you might need some help. Why did you get up to breakfast this morning, dear? You were late last night, and I thought you would rest today. Since Reuben had to go so early, there was no occasion for your being in haste. Here is the letter he left at the door. I suppose his good-bye last night was not enough: he thought he must put it on paper. It is a disappointment to you to have him go so soon, dear. I am glad you can wear so quiet a face over it."

But Jeanie's face was not quiet now. It flamed.

"Mother," she said, dropping the brush from her hand, and turning so suddenly as to send a twinge of pain through the poor back. "Reuben gone! Gone where? What do you mean?"

"Why, my dear, I supposed you knew. He said he had discovered that he must go at once. I supposed he had received letters. I understood him that you knew it. I thought he told you good-bye last night, and that this letter was an after-thought. Dear child, I would not have been so abrupt if I had not supposed you

understood. But, of course, the letter will explain. I will leave you, dear, to read it."

But as she went out, Mrs. Barrett said to herself that she knew young men who would have come in person with their explanations.

11. An Explanation

But it is almost a stretch of courtesy to call the letter an explanation. Jeanie read it three times before she could seem to understand or credit its meaning.

No unexpected telegram had summoned Reuben to important business: he made no pretence of anything of the kind. He had simply been so taken by surprise, so shocked with the suddenness of the news which had burst upon him, that, after spending a sleepless night in thinking it all over, he had decided that he must get away to a quiet place and grow used to the thought by degrees; and it would be so much less exciting, both for her and for himself, to slip away without any good-bye scenes, that he had determined to do so.

She was hardly strong enough for good-byes just now; and neither, in his present excited state, was he. Of course she could imagine what an affliction this was to him, and how suddenly it had come upon him. It was not as though he had known it for weeks, and grown used to the thought, as she evidently had. It would take time to do that, and a great deal of earnest thinking. And so, in short, Reuben Perrine Whately had gone away to think.

Do you wonder that Jeanie had to give the letter a third reading before she could be sure of her own eyes?

To some of you it will not be surprising that the next thought which presented itself to her mind was, What should she tell her mother? How explain Reuben's sudden flight, when he had made all his preparations to spend five blissful days with her?

Her face, which had paled visibly during the reading, flushed anew as she tried to plan her words. She was not willing to admit, even to herself, that she was ashamed of the letter and its reasoning. She preferred to tell herself that her mother would not understand, and that it was a matter which was sacred to Reuben and her.

She finished her dressing, presently, with slower steps, and a curious realization of the limp in her walk, which she had not felt

before that morning, and came out to the breakfast-table, trying to appear quite as usual.

The wise mother resolved at first not to mention Reuben's departure, and then immediately resolved that she would, because not to do so would be to appear as though she thought there was something which must not be touched. So she tried to ask in her usual tone whether it was anything serious which had called Reuben away; and Jeanie, looking steadily out of the window at some gay flowers, which were already proclaiming loudly that summer was gone, answered, with a quiet voice, that there was nothing alarming, only a matter of business which required his immediate attention.

She struggled with her conscience a little over the answer. Was it strictly true? She decided that it was. If he were not making a matter of business of it, what could it be called? Looked at steadily, and thought about plainly, what was it which had called him away but a determination to get used to a weak spine and a limping gait? At first it was impossible for Jeanie to make this statement sound well, even to herself; but, as the days passed, she threw the mantle of unquestioning love over the hardness of it, and smoothed the folds with her pretty explanations—still to herself.

After all, it was not strange. She had been cruel—even her mother had thought so—in not telling Reuben all about her affliction before he came. He was justified in feeling almost hurt. It had doubtless seemed like want of confidence on her part, though nothing could have been further from her intentions. But, of course, it was hard for a young man in the full flush of health to come expecting to find her the same, or, at least, on the high road to assured strength and vigor, and to suddenly be told that she would never even walk straight again! What could she have expected but overwhelming sorrow? Did not she know only too well what it was to her at first? And he was so noble, so unselfish, so brave, that he would not stay to let her help him bear the sorrow and grow used to the disappointment, but went away by himself to fight the battle of submission, that she might not be troubled even by its shadow.

All this sounded much better than the letter had made it appear at first. Jeanie grew almost satisfied with it; nay, grew at last into thinking it a piece of sublime self-renunciation. *She* should have

wanted *him* in her sorrow. Her heart cried out for him at the very first to help her bear it, but he was not willing to add a shadow to her lot because of his grief.

So she waited patiently, hopefully, for Reuben's next letter. It was long in coming. Four weary days, after the hour when it might naturally have been expected, stretched their slow length along, and kept Jeanie from gathering strength, because she lived only for mail-time.

When the afternoon mail, at two o'clock, had come and been distributed, and brought her nothing, she cared no more for that day—wanted only that it should speed away and bring eight o'clock the next morning. She kept herself very quiet, making no outward sign; and her mother, watchful, anxious, foreboding, suspicious as regarded Reuben, and unwilling to indulge in those suspicions, lest she might thereby help herself in her prejudices against her daughter's future husband, was as uncomfortable as a thoroughly good woman, who is also a thorough mother, can allow herself to be.

At last the letter came. It was in no sense remarkable, save as its commonplaceness at such a time exalted it to that position. Reuben was visiting a college friend, and rides and walks and picnics and merry-making filled the hour. Whether this was conducive to careful thinking did not appear. No allusion to the affliction which had seemed to him so great appeared. Save for the fact that the letter commenced, "My dearest Jeanie," and closed with "Your Reuben," no reader would have supposed that she was particularly dear to him, or that he was "her" Reuben in any sense of the word. A merry, chatty letter, that was all which could be said of it.

Jeanie read it once, and again, and again, and hid it in her pocket, and then locked it in her drawer; and, finally, after the lapse of an entire day, gave it to her mother to read, without note or comment.

And the mother read between the lines slowly, thoughtfully, and folded it, with more than thoughtfulness on her face, and said, "She is very young; there is that in her favor. Too young. If I had *only* shielded her from such as this! But she is very true; and I am afraid—afraid."

But to Jeanie she said not a word. There was a much longer space than had been usual, and then another letter came. It was in answer to one which Jeanie had written.

It said that he, Reuben, had always thought of her as being better than any other earthly creature—too good for him by far. He could not tell her, he could not even try to tell her, how it had overwhelmed him to discover that she must live a life of invalidism. He had been obliged to go away and think, in order to realize even its possibility. And the more he had thought, the more the conviction had pressed upon him that their sweet dream of life, which had been so pleasant to him, ought to close. He was not so constituted that he could look upon life-long affliction unmoved, when it touched one so dear to him as Jeanie. It would unman him completely. He felt certain of it. His life would become a weak failure, just through his overwhelming sympathy and unavailing regret. He was sorry that his nature was what it was, so sensitively organized as to be almost a burden to himself; yet so it was. Another thing: if it was true that, instead of being full of life and vigor, as her youth had promised, she was to be frail, and something at least of an invalid, she ought to be surrounded by every luxury which wealth could command; and he, as she very well knew, had no wealth to offer her; not even the immediate prospect of a home in which to make her comfortable; and to burden her life with constant poverty, in addition to the heavy burden which the Lord had seen fit to lay upon her, was more than he could find it in his heart to do. He should despise himself if he so selfishly forgot her needs, and thought only of his own comfort. Therefore, in view of all these things, and with a breaking heart, he felt that he ought to say—and then followed what you can readily imagine, without my wasting the paper to describe more of it.

This letter Jeanie did not show to her mother. She locked it for a few days into the depths of her deepest drawer, and then, one evening, held it steadily in the flame of her lamp until her fingers were in danger of burning; then she laid the hot thing on the hearth, and watched it turn to ashes. That evening she said to her mother simply this:

“Mamma, it is all over between Reuben and me—over forever. Would you mind not asking me anything about it?”

And the mother, the wise, tender mother, who, in the first flash of her bitter indignation, could have seen Reuben Perrine Whately kicked and spit upon in scorn, yet held her speech, and said only, “Dear child, mother can trust you. Don’t tell me anything until you feel like it.”

So closed, and was covered over, that chapter in her life.

Young? Oh, yes! Too young altogether for the experience—forced into womanhood before she had done with happy girlhood. But some of these forced natures are developed at all their points. Jeanie was womanly in her suffering as well as in her experiences. She had lost the happy hours of girlhood, and she had also lost the happy trust. It would take years to give to her again the confidence in friendship which had once been hers. Deep burns leave scars, even though the wound heals steadily and well.

Mrs. Barrett looked with fear and trembling to see the physical strength give way. There was so little of it now to endure strains. But it did not. Jeanie ate and slept, and took her little walk as usual, making it a few steps longer every day. Still, the spring had gone out of her thoughts. She wanted to get well, and she meant to get well, because it was the right thing to do; but the glad joy in returning strength, which had been hers but a few days before, was gone now.

Those were weeks which Jeanie always remembered. Her heart felt desolate, and turned wearily within itself in search of comfort. What could she rest on which would be an unfailing source of strength? Human arms seemed to her, just then, very unstable. How could the very strongest of them be trusted? Then what was left?

Why, the Arm of everlasting strength—the rest that never yet failed a weary heart. Oh, yes! she believed in Him. With a rush of almost the first tears she had shed, Jeanie told herself that she did not know what she could do, now, if she did not rest in Him. But there was a way of resting which she had seen in others that she felt was not hers; an absolute laying down of burdens and responsibilities and anxieties, and walking simply by faith each day.

“Oh, for an overcoming faith!”

She heard it sung one night in the cottage prayer-meeting next door, and it echoed in her heart all the next day.

About this time, also, there came to her thoughts an added burden. The autumn was waning, and with it the dear father's strength. There was no use in trying to hide from her heart the fear which she could read plainly, not only on her mother's but on the doctor's face, that he was steadily slipping away from them. The little lull in his disease, the accession of strength which had come to him during the worst of her illness, seemed to be a special grant of love from the watching heavenly Father, fitting the back for its burden. But now he was even farther down the scale of invalidism than he had been before she was taken sick. What was to be the end? And how soon was it to come? And that other terrible question, Was he ready?

Jeanie almost forgot her own sorrow over this greater heartache, which she knew oppressed her mother as well as herself.

What could she do? Could she dare to talk with her father, and ask him to give his mind earnestly to this question? She had been reticent almost to timidity with him on this subject. Indeed, his own reserve was marked. She had every reason to believe he would repel her, not with harshness, but with a certain impenetrable dignity. Precious days passed, while this thought pressed upon her, and reached its climax one evening when they sat together, he, and the mother, and Jeanie. Mrs. Barrett had her sewing, and father was lying on the couch; while Jeanie sat, Bible in hand, reading the lesson which she hoped to be strong enough to teach once more on the coming Sabbath.

"Read out," her father said, suddenly, breaking the silence which had been among them for some time.

Jeanie looked up, startled. Was he speaking to her? What did he mean? Did he know what book she was reading?

"Read it out," he said again; and she answered, timidly:

"Papa, it is the Bible."

"So I see," he said, pleasantly. "There is nothing wrong about reading aloud from the Bible, is there? I want to hear you read."

And, without more ado, Jeanie read.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

On through those wonderful revelations of truth from the Master's own lips, until she reached that climax of human speech,

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have ever-lasting life.”

There she stopped. Her heart had grown so full of the longing that this precious father, whose earthly life was so rapidly gliding away, might seize hold on this wonderful, everlasting life before it was too late, that she could not trust her voice for more reading.

Alone in her little room, she forgot all about Reuben Perrine Whately for a little while; forgot to pray for him, even, and thought only of her father, and prayed her soul’s longings only for him. It was on her knees that the thought came, with a suddenness which made her feel almost as if the teacher of Nicodemus were speaking in the flesh to her, that after the reading should have come the prayer.

Family worship! Why did not this family offer incense together around their hearthstone? Jeanie had often longed for it. She never spent the night with Mary Haines without wishing that her father gathered his children about him and prayed, as Mr. Haines always did. But it had never, until this moment, occurred to her as possible for them to have a family altar. Now it seemed not only possible, but began to grow upon her as a duty which God required at their hands.

Her father did not pray, it is true; but her mother did. She prayed often with one and another of her children. Why did they not pray together? It seemed surprising to Jeanie that she had not thought of it before. What if her father was waiting for it, and wondering why they did not? How strange, and, in a sense, how humiliating, it was that he should have to ask for the Bible reading! Ask twice, indeed, before, in her astonishment, she took his meaning. Could he think that she, his Christian daughter, really cared greatly for his soul, if she kept silence much longer on these things?

It was the most heart-searching hour Jeanie had spent in a long while. She thought of it afterward, how far into the background Reuben slipped that night, while her soul took on its increased desire for father.

12. “Ought She? Could She?”

“Mother,” she said, the next day, at the first opportunity, “why have we never had family worship?”

Mrs. Barrett started visibly, and let the needle she was threading slip from her hand, as she turned toward her daughter an almost reproachfully questioning look.

“Why, Jeanie, dear, surely you know! Your father—”

“Oh! I know, mamma, of course; but I mean, why did not you have it with us children and with father? I am sure he would like it. Don’t you think it was a great deal for him to ask me to read in the Bible last night?”

Mrs. Barrett seemed to have no answer ready. She found her needle, threaded it, and worked away in nervous haste for a few moments, then said, “Jeanie, perhaps you do not suspect it, but there are some things in which your mother is a coward. I have thought about it a great deal of late, and I really do not think I can do it. I would give almost anything if I had commenced when we were young, before the children came, or even when you were little bits of creatures. Your father would never have objected. Indeed, I think it more than likely that he would have approved; and perhaps he might, before this, have been praying in his family himself. How can we tell? But I did not do it. I yielded weakly to the feeling of embarrassment. I told myself that it was not a woman’s place; that my husband would feel as though I were trying to usurp his position in our home; and, with such false arguments, I weakened my conscience, until now I am bound by twenty years of habit. It is not an easy thing, Jeanie, for a woman to lead a perfectly consistent Christian life alone. It is not easy to pray beside one’s husband, when you know he does not pray.”

Jeanie made no reply to this, unless her heightened color might be taken for a reply. She felt its truth. At that moment she had a swift vision of herself married to Reuben Perrine Whately, and kneeling with him, trying to set up for herself the family altar in

their home, and instinctively she echoed in her heart her mother's words, "I could not do it."

"But, mamma, now when you feel that he might like it, and when—oh, you know, mother, where there is such *need* of his thinking about these things! It might help him. Couldn't you do it now?"

The waiting for an answer was even longer than before. Then, suddenly, Mrs. Barrett dropped her sewing, and gave both earnest eyes to her daughter.

"Jeanie, dear, I believe you could, and I believe it would help your father. You have more courage than I ever had. You are not by nature timid, and I was, and am. Then you are young, and I feel that I am growing old. I have had a life of late to make me feel old. My health is shattered, and I must save my nervous strength for the hard days to come. They are coming swiftly. I know it only too well, dear child, though I cannot bring myself to talk about it yet. I pray by father's bedside every night. I pour out my soul to God for him, and he knows it; but he has never heard his daughter pray. Jeanie, what if you established a family altar with us and the children? I believe the Lord put the thought into your heart."

"Oh, mother!" said Jeanie. Then, after a breathless pause, she essayed to speak again, but got no further than that "Oh, mother!"

Nevertheless, the thought would not leave her, but clung persistently all through the day; and at evening, though she had decided nothing, life seemed to shape itself in a way to make her escape from duty, if it was her duty, as difficult as possible.

The rain fell heavily. Little fear of being disturbed by any chance caller on such an evening. The baby, as they still called her, though she was outgrowing her baby dresses, was sleeping sweetly for the night, and the children were quiet over their picture-book. Mr. Barrett lay on the lounge, looking quietly comfortable; and Mrs. Barrett had drawn her chair to his side, but sat with folded hands, as if waiting for something.

Jeanie, who had that day—more than on any since her sickness laid aside the character of an invalid, and taken part in the duties of the home—was resting in her own special chair, and thinking hard.

Ought she? Could she? Should she? Was it a temptation of the enemy? Would her father be annoyed, excited, and so, perhaps, have a sleepless night? Would it do more harm than good? Yet still

her mother sat with folded hands, and her father lay with quiet eyes fixed upon her.

"Shall I read aloud again, papa?" she said, and her voice was so tremulous she would hardly have known it as her own.

"If you like," he answered, as one might who was indifferent, through lack of physical strength, perhaps, as to what was done next.

So Jeanie read sweet old words, which have been the refuge of perplexed children ever since the Father had them written for his own,

"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you;" and in her longing that her dear father might claim one of those mansions as his own, her heart lost some of its earthly fears.

I cannot say that it was with a fixed resolve to take up the cross, which seemed to have been laid before her; rather it was with hardly a sense of what she should do next, or whether any words would come at all, that Jeanie, with the sentence, "If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it," dropped upon her knees, and lifted up her heart in an earnest cry to the great Promiser to give her strength for life and whatever it had for her to do, and, above all else, that He would write her father's name among His chosen ones, and comfort him with His everlasting presence.

Just what was said Jeanie knew not then, nor ever. She only knew that in her heart she prayed. Gradually she became aware that her mother had also taken the attitude of prayer; and even the little ones, after a moment of startled hush, had pushed away the picture-book, and folded their hands and closed their eyes. If they were not used to a family altar, the voice and the posture of prayer were familiar to them.

Mr. Barrett's face was not visible when they arose. He kept it carefully shaded with his hand; nor did he speak again, though Jeanie lingered a little. When she went to bid him good-night, his voice was gentle, as usual, and his kiss was tender; but he said not a word. He was not displeased. She had not feared that; but whether he thought her a foolish little fanatic or not, she did not know.

“God bless you, daughter!” the mother said, softly, and folded her in a very loving embrace.

What would this daughter have done without her mother?

From this little beginning, which she hardly knew was a beginning, the family, without any words together on the subject, took up the habit of reading and praying together every evening, or, rather, of listening while Jeanie read and prayed. The mother, she was sure, joined with full heart in the service. Whether her father did more than listen, if he even did that, Jeanie could not be sure.

She watched for it to grow less a cross to her, but could not feel that she gained in this respect. Each day she went through an elaborate argument as to whether it was wise for her, a young girl, to assert herself in this manner. Would her father think her pharisaical? Would he not feel as though she had a sort of “I-am-holier-than-thou” idea? And would not the influence of such a feeling be injurious to him? A few verses in the Bible she might well read aloud, for once he had asked for them; but was it her duty to venture further? And each night, after the reading, she dropped upon her knees, more because she did not dare to lose this opportunity which she had made for asking God to bless her father, than because she had any fixed resolve to do so, or found any comfort in the service.

While she was in this state of painful vacillation, there came a break in the quiet routine of their lives.

Bert appeared on the scene. They had not seen him since his sudden recall to join his father. Now his father had gone abroad again; and Bert, ordered to let books alone for a few days on account of his eyes, had suddenly remembered his old friends, and swooped down on them for a visit.

He had purposely remained away during previous vacations, because he could not endure to think of them as gone from the old home and all its familiar surroundings, and had made himself believe that a sight of him would unpleasantly recall old times, and he would do much better to keep away.

But when a young fellow like Bert Halsted, in the midst of a successful career, is suddenly reminded that he is mortal by having his eyes refuse to do duty, and when he has no home to rest in, and around him only gay friends, who can make nothing of a man

without eyes, it is perhaps natural for him to bethink himself of the spot which was the nearest home of anything which his life had known, and flee to it.

"I needed Aunt Eliza," he explained, with a mixture of fun and tenderness in his tones; "so I came in search of her."

She greeted him with all the motherliness of old, and made him as heartily welcome as though she could surround him with the home comforts and luxuries of days gone by. He, on his part, could not bear the changes so gracefully; could not keep away from a discussion of the painful subject.

"It is a shame for Aunt Eliza to have to do her own work and take care of Uncle James, and have nothing to do with," he said indignantly to Jeanie, as they sat together on the porch. It was the only place where they could sit uninterrupted and chat. The old house had had many a cozy nook, library and study and music-room, besides the family sitting-room and the great parlors.

"Jeanie, how in the world did it happen? I never distinctly understood it. In fact, I had no idea you were so—that so many of the old comforts were gone. Uncle James was a skillful manager of business. My father said he would risk his being kept under very long; that he knew how to take care of his own affairs as well as any business man living. What does it all mean?"

But Jeanie had no heart to go over the long story again.

"Why, you know," she said, wearily, "securities; and Mr. Bond ran away, and the weight all fell on father. Then his health gave away about that time."

"But how came he to involve himself without sufficient security? That is not like a business man. I should have thought duty to his family would—"

But here a very significant flash of Jeanie's eyes warned him to stop. He finished his sentence differently from what he had first planned.

"Business men sometimes get involved, I know, through no mismanagement of theirs; but there is a way out, when they have been swindled. Father thought, or, at least, he said, that Uncle James might—"

Bert found it very hard to finish his sentences. He stopped in evident confusion as Jeanie looked steadily at him, and waited. At last she answered it, all unfinished as it was.

“I know there was a way out, but there was one little difficulty with it: it did not offer any help to an honest man. That way out is only for swindlers, and such my father was not. Now, suppose we talk about something pleasant.”

“But, Jeanie, that is all very well if you can do it. Still, I should think you were old enough to look ahead a little. What are you going to do? How is Aunt Eliza going to support herself and you children? Jeanie, is it certain that you will always be crippled? Haven’t you given that matter up a little too easily? I had no idea it was to be a permanent thing.”

“They had not given it up easily at all,” she told him. “On the contrary, they had struggled with it, and refused to believe it until there was no alternative left. She might continue to be so well that it would not trouble her anymore than it did now for years to come, but any less, the doctor told her, was not to be hoped for.”

“Any more than now!” said Bert, in almost as strong excitement as Reuben Perrine Whately had shown. “Goodness! I should think that was enough!”

She looked at him curiously. There was a heavy pain at her heart, and an odd little smile on her face. She remembered wondering vaguely whether he, too, would have to go away surreptitiously in the morning, because he was too much overcome with sympathy to admit of his staying. However, he was too busy with his own thoughts to see, or rather to feel, the force of hers, and went on with his probing questions.

“But, Jeanie, upon my word you are incomprehensible. If I didn’t know better, I should think you were a girl without spirit. What has become of all your ambitious schemes in life? A tremendous education you were going to have. Fit yourself for a professorship, or something of that sort, wasn’t it? I remember you took to all the ologies in creation, instead of to music and painting, and such things. But you must have been shut off from study altogether of late, and, for the future,

I don’t see how it is going to be any better. Still, if you were educated you couldn’t do much with it now.”

How did Job ever endure *three* friends? Jeanie felt for a moment as though it would not be possible to live much longer with her one. Still, she answered gently, when she got her voice to the condition to answer at all.

“No, I have not been able to study—at least, not much; and for six months, of course, not at all. Still, I have hopes for the future. They may not be so extensive as when you saw me last. I am older, remember. I hope to do a good deal of studying in the years to come. I am very quiet evenings. There is no temptation to take long walks, you know; and I have few friends to interrupt. I mean to study hard. The teachers in the district school near us are generally well educated, and always friendly, and I hope for their assistance when I get where I cannot manage by myself; and I aspire some day to the position of head teacher for that very school. There is a nice, quiet class of scholars, who will not mind a limping teacher; in fact, I am bringing up the little bits of boys and girls in the neighborhood to look on me with lenient eyes. By the time they get old enough to be taught, and I am ready to teach them, they will be friendly to the project. Isn’t that a flight of ambition for you?”

At this point Bert gave the cigar he had been all the time holding an impatient fling into the road, and jerked out his words as the *boy* Bert had been wont to do when he was vexed.

“It passes my comprehension how anyone can jest on such a matter as that. Why, Jeanie Barrett, it is a perfect shame! I always looked upon you as one who would make a mark in the intellectual world. You were fitted to shine. *You* to talk about being the teacher of a country district school, and even jest about limping to the work! I must say I am amazed!”

A sudden mist floated before Jeanie’s eyes, and there was a suspicious quiver about her mouth. It was possible that she might, to her great regret, have lost self-control before this pattern of masculine sympathy and tenderness had not her father at that opportune moment spoken her name from his lounge in the front room.

“Jeanie, my daughter, come here a moment, will you?”

13. Bits of Logic

“Daughter,” he said, as she went in haste to answer his summons, “isn’t it time for the reading?”

Then Jeanie’s face became a study, there was such a curious display of surprise, delight, and embarrassment visible.

“Why, papa!” she began, then stopped. How was she to tell her father that it was not possible for her to read and pray before her cousin? And, yet, certainly she could not do it.

“It is time, papa,” she said, speaking slowly, and with evident embarrassment, “but …” And then her sentence waited. What would her father think if she told him she was afraid to pray before Bert?

“Mustn’t we do our duty, daughter, even though we have company?”

The voice was exceedingly gentle, and the hand which caressed the head she drooped toward him as she knelt before his couch was as tender in its touch as her mother’s. What a sudden thrill of joy it gave her! Would her father care for the reading and the prayer if they had not become precious to him in that peculiar sense which they only feel to whom prayer is a necessity? While she waited and trembled for her father, had her cries for him been answered? Quietly, gently, all unseen by human eyes, had the Heavenly Guest taken up His abode in her father’s breast, no more to leave him? If this were really so, Jeanie felt that she could pray before all the world. And, as she raised her eager, searching eyes, and fixed them on her father’s face, and felt his tender, grave smile, there came into her heart a sense of certainty that he was safe in the Everlasting Arms.

“Oh, papa!” she said, putting the new hope, rather, the new conviction, into her voice. And he smiled on her, and said, “Let us have our prayer together, daughter. Father could not sleep without it.”

And Jeanie summoned the little household, even to the wondering Bert, who had remembered no family worship as

connected with this home, and read her few verses in a voice as firm as usual; then offered her prayer—this time with a little ring of joy in it, at which the father, noticing, smiled, even while he reached up his thin hand and brushed away a tear.

This entire scene photographed itself on Jeanie's memory never to be forgotten. For the first time all sense of the cross slipped away from this hour; and, uplifted by the hope just born in her heart, she felt the opportunity to be a privilege. She forgot Bert's presence. In her earnestness for her father, and in the joy of the conviction that she might pray for him as one to whom the future was bright, no memory of the gay young cousin, and of the opinion he would doubtless have of the scene, crossed her mind. However, he was complacent enough. He even offered a word of commendation in the course of the evening.

"You were always a little saint, Jeanie. Did the camp-meeting experience really stay by you? I supposed that to be mere excitement. But you were never like other girls. I used to say you ought to have been born in earlier ages. You would have made an excellent Mother Superior or a martyr. I have sometimes thought you would do excellently well for martyrdom. You have a sort of positiveness about you which likes to hold its own firmly, and which the martyrs must needs have had to have gotten through. You did not give me credit for being interested in such matters, did you?"

"In what matters?" Jeanie asked, smiling gravely. "Mother Superiors, or martyrs? Oh, yes! I should expect you to have a historic interest in them, as vague and shadowy creations of the past—that is, if you heard nothing about the repulsive side. I think you would shrink from the repulsive, Bert, whether you found it in the life of a martyr, or of any other saint."

"I am a good deal interested in one saint, anyway," he said, with a look and an emphasis which was not to be mistaken. Then, after a pause, "No; but really, my fair cousin, you are not doing me justice. I am not the scapegrace I was when you saw me last. I have given some attention to these topics since; and, though I have not parted from my common sense, and have never been accused of being fanatical, at the same time I believe in a man giving religion its proper place. I have been a member of the Church for a year or more."

“I am very glad, said Jeanie, simply; yet it had been hard for her to say even so much. There was that in the manner of making his communication which embarrassed her; she could hardly have explained why. It seemed so business-like and cold, much as he might have explained to her that he had been studying mathematics for a year, or been doing any other thing very good in itself but not of first importance. It was certainly not that Jeanie objected to business methods in religion. On the contrary, it was one of her pet hobbies that all work connected with the Church and its aims should be conducted on strictly business principles. Yet, after all, one does not speak of the dearest interests of one’s heart in quite the same way that one speaks of a purchase or a sale.

Bert, however, seemed to see nothing amiss in her manner.

“Yes,” he continued, in a complacent tone; “I decided that it was the right thing to do—an eminently proper thing for a young man in my position. I have always been a believer in religion. I had no skeptical notions to overcome. I remember I thought of you at the time, and wondered whether you had held to your former fancies, and would be pleased. I intended writing you about it, but the time slipped away, and I didn’t. Oh, yes! I remember that camp-meeting experience well. How determined you were to go to church all day, and you did it. But I gave you credit for the proper spirit at the time. That wasn’t religion so much as it was a pretty little obstinacy. But you seem to have the genuine thing now. You expect me, Jeanie, to disapprove of the position you took tonight; I saw it in your eyes. But you are mistaken. I like a little spirit in these matters as well as anybody can, and I don’t object to a lady’s praying before her family friends. Some men do, but I am not one of the prejudiced sort myself.”

Evidently, Jeanie was expected to be grateful for this bit of masculine condescension, and to admire the superior mind which could rise above the prejudices of its class. She was a good deal astonished at the turn the conversation had taken, and at a loss how to answer him.

At last, she said, simply, “I should never have thought of such a thing as any Christian making objection to a girl for praying, whenever and wherever she felt like doing it.”

And immediately she changed the subject. There was an instinctive feeling that she and Bert would not agree now any

better than they did at the camp-meeting. But, despite her care, it was very difficult to get through the days of this visit without more or less disagreement. The topics on which they differed seemed endless. Sunday was the worst day. It was the last one of Bert's stay, he having by that time discovered too many changes in the old visiting-place to make it exactly congenial ground to him. Besides, even his young eyes could see that a heavy sorrow was steadily creeping over the home; and Bert Halsted the young man shrank from the house of mourning as persistently as Bert Halsted the boy had done. So he was going to visit a distant relative of his father, in the hope of finding some gay young cousins.

Despite his comparatively recent religious experiences, the day was long to him, and a bit wearying. He went off with Mrs. Barrett to church in the morning, more because Jeanie insisted that he must go than because he seemed to have any inclination in that direction. He went with Jeanie to the afternoon Sabbath school, after spending a vain fifteen minutes in urging her not to go that day, and feeling sure the walk was too much for her. Yet, with delicious inconsistency, he earnestly urged a walk, later in the day, when the sun was just at its setting.

"But I thought you believed I ought not to walk even so far as to church?" she said, with a gleam of mischief in her eyes.

"Well, so I did: but you insisted that you had walked much farther than that without injury; and, if such is the case, I should suppose you might take a short walk for my pleasure. It is delightful out now, and I don't want you to go far, only to the grove. I thought you might like it for the sake of old times, since it is our last day together for nobody knows how long. But, of course, if you do not wish to go, I ought not to urge."

Then Jeanie felt that an explanation was imperative. She made it as simply as possible, and with as delicate a regard for his different views of life as truth would admit; but he looked only astonishment.

"You don't mean to say you think it would be wicked to take a little walk with me down to the grove? Why, Jeanie Barrett! Has fanaticism gotten such a hold on you as that? I wanted to tell you something about which I thought you would be interested—something religious enough to suit anybody. What is there wicked

in walking toward the grove any more than toward the church together?"

She did not believe he was so ignorant as he pretended. Nevertheless, she answered, patiently, "Bert, I know you are in the habit of taking walks on Sunday, and I know a great many people are. It may be a good way for some to spend their time, but it never was for me. I am sure to get interested in all sorts of everyday things, and talk accordingly; but I am not thinking of that phase of the subject now. My boys have been in the habit of taking long walks to the grove, or to the cemetery, or to the river—anywhere for an excuse; and the exercise has been anything but helpful to them. They are inclined to join a class of walkers who have no regard for the Sabbath, or for good principles of any sort. I have been trying to coax them to give it all up, and some of them are trying hard. Think what an example I should set them by starting out myself in the very direction against which I have warned them!"

He did not see that it was a parallel case, Bert said—did not see it at all. Of course, if they could not behave themselves, or keep out of bad company, they would much better stay at home; but that she must be cooped up at home to set an example to a few silly boys was, in his opinion, straining at a gnat. It was in vain she quoted to him old unanswerable bits of logic: "If meat maketh my brother to offend," and "Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh," and "Shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died?"

There is nothing more difficult than to make out a parallel case for those who have not the slightest desire to see it.

However, he did as Bert of old used to do—put aside his momentary vexation pleasantly enough, after a little, and called Jeanie to the porch.

"Listen to this," he said, and read from the paper he had brought downstairs with him a merry little story of some Irish blunderer. It was witty and sharp, and Jeanie would have responded with quick appreciation at another time; but it especially jarred just now. Not only was the hush of the Sabbath twilight falling around them, but he had called her from her father's couch, where she had been softly singing to him a hymn which he loved, and which was only sung by her nowadays at the expense of great self-control.

“Softly fades the twilight ray
Of the holy Sabbath day.”

Those verses were sweet and tender, but she could never get away from the thought that the closing verse ran:

“Soon for us the light of day
Shall forever fade away.”

So soon it was to fade for the quiet form on the couch. How could Jeanie laugh at blunders? The sense of Bert’s want of tact may have given a little sharpness to her rebuke.

“It is very witty, Bert; but I don’t think it is any of it profitable reading for today.”

For Bert continued reading queer little paragraphs of fun and nonsense. He dropped the paper as she spoke, and looked at her with a good-natured smile.

“I beg pardon. I forgot that I had been skirmished back into the days of the Puritans. Who would suppose I was old enough to boast a cousin who must have come over in the Mayflower! Seriously, little Jeanie, you ought to get over this squeamishness before you go out in society much. You will get well laughed at if you do not.”

Part of the sentence made the blood flow in rich waves to Jeanie’s face. Had he forgotten the curve in her back and the limp in her walk? She tried to suppress a sigh as the picture of her probable future rose up before her; but she said, still speaking with a little touch of sharpness, “I am not likely to be burdened with duties to society, Bert; and, if I were, I should hope to be able to select the sort which could find some other cause for laughter than because a girl wanted to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.”

“Oh! That is all very well. You are as keen as a pretty little thistle, and can hold your own in an argument, no doubt; but, all the same, we live in the world, and have to be more or less of it, or endure the charge of being peculiar. There are wickeder things than a passing laugh.”

It was just one of those provoking sentences so hard to bear, and so foolish to attempt to answer with argument. As though she had said anything about a “passing laugh” being wicked! But Bert folded the paper, still in imperturbable good nature, and told it to retire to the depths of his deepest pocket and be properly abashed, for it had been very sinful indeed. And Jeanie kept silence until her pulses began to beat evenly again, then asked some commonplace, safe question, and hoped they should have smooth sailing for the little that was left of this long day.

However, there was one more opportunity for clashing. Bert announced it at the supper-table.

“After all, Aunt Eliza, I shall have to say good-bye to you tonight, as well as to Uncle James.”

“Oh! you can wait until morning for Jeanie and me,” Mrs. Barrett said. “The train does not leave until half-past seven, and Jeanie is an early riser again.”

“Yes; but I have decided, on the whole, that it will be best to take the eight o’clock train. It is only the matter of an hour or two, and then a good night’s sleep, instead of waking every half hour to see if it is time to rise. That is the feat I perform whenever I try to take an early train—a performance which isn’t good for weak eyes, I find.”

Paul’s thorn in the flesh may have been his weak eyes, but what Bert Halsted would have done without his is a question. They were certainly, on occasion, very great conveniences.

His listeners at this time were, however, so unsophisticated as to be genuinely puzzled. How could an eight o’clock train give him an earlier start than a half-past seven one?

“Why, of course, I mean tonight,” he said, a trifle irritably. For some reason, it embarrassed him to enter into careful explanation of the matter.

“Tonight!” echoed Jeanie, in such genuine astonishment as to somewhat increase his irritability.

14. Just This Once

"Why, yes, tonight! Now, in a trifle over an hour. Is there anything alarming about that?"

Jeanie looked at her mother; but, finding her not disposed to answer, said, at last, "There is something peculiar in it to us, Bert. We are not in the habit of starting on a journey on Sunday."

Bert laughed.

"Is that wicked too?" he asked, in a tone which was meant to be merry. "Upon my word, this is a dangerous country into which I have come! I seem to make nothing but slips. It must be dreadfully inconvenient to live in a strait-jacket; but really, Jeanie, to be serious, isn't that drawing the line a little too severely, even for you? Sunday is pretty well done with, or will be, before train-time. Why should it be any more wicked for me to take a quiet seat in the car, and read or think as I please, than to sit here and chat with you?"

"I didn't know Christian people thought Sunday trains were right."

Jeanie made the answer very quietly, as one who had little interest in the matter. In truth, it seemed only a waste of time to talk to Bert. They stood on such an entirely different plane, that it was impossible to see things in the same light.

"That is as it may be," he replied, in an oracular tone. "Probably some people do. There are arguments on both sides; but, because I ride on one, it does not follow that I advocate it. I don't oblige them to run the train for my sake. Probably, if there were none, I should wait until tomorrow morning without so much as a growl. Indeed, I am willing to concede that, in my opinion, it would be better not to run Sunday trains as a general rule." He spoke as though he deserved great praise for such a concession. "The fact remains that the trains are run, and that one leaves tonight at a convenient hour for me. Now, having enjoyed my Sabbath in the most orthodox way, and obliged no one to break it on my account, it would seem to me the veriest folly to lie around

here waiting for Monday morning, because of a conscientious scruple about sitting in a car, which will go anyway, whether I sit in it or not."

This was such utterly untenable ground in Jeanie's eyes that she felt again the uselessness of attempting to argue the point. If Bert did not know he was talking nonsense, how was she to make him see it? However, she ventured one quietly-put question.

"On which side of the argument do you imagine you will be quoted—for, or against, the running of Sunday trains, so long as you avail yourself of their convenience?"

"Oh, as to that," he said, loftily, "there is no argument on the subject, except in this little room, where we argue about the width of a pin point. The world, I fancy, has pretty well settled the question for us. It has determined to do as it pleases; and we, who cannot help ourselves, may as well take life as comfortably as we can."

Was there any use in trying to argue with him?

"Well," said Jeanie, growing caustic, despite her effort at self-control, "since you are going to put your influence on that side, I am sorry you offered prayer in our Sabbath school this afternoon, because I have a boy there who has employment on a Sunday train, and who is trying to give it up for conscience's sake; and I would rather he would think you were not a professing Christian, than to think you helped sustain the work which has been a snare to him ever since he became interested in these things."

Bert laughed.

"I'll pull my cap over my eyes when your boy comes through the car, so he won't recognize me, and be led astray," he said, in a patronizing tone, as one tolerant of her little follies. "At the same time, my dear young cousin, let me remind you, if the boy has his bread to earn, he must not be too squeamish about many things. People who live quiet, sheltered lives, shut in by duties or afflictions from outside cares, are apt to grow narrow in their views. You want to guard against that in your contact with boys, lest you disgust them with chimerical and untenable ideas."

He might have been seventy instead of less than twenty, there were such volumes of wisdom and caution wrapped up in his tones.

Jeanie had no reply to offer; felt there was occasion for none, or as though any which she would be likely to make would be better left unsaid. And Bert presently took himself away with a gay good-bye, and a hope that he might be able to run down again before long.

And Jeanie turned from the window with a sigh. She had kept a warm place in her heart for this friend of her childhood, and had cherished the fond hope that the transforming power of the truth, as it is in Jesus, would someday take hold of him, and make him a new creature. And now, if Bert really was a Christian, and was yet so little changed, what did it imply? It seemed to Jeanie impossible not to sigh over the result.

However, the swift-coming days, with their story, swept Bert and his ideas utterly into the background. Her father, whose disease had been of that deceitful form which today seems to drag its victim very low, and tomorrow has almost let go its hold, suddenly grew alarmingly worse, with no let-up to the danger, as there had always been before, until there came an hour when he smiled on them in his old way—said the suffering was all gone; said that even the anxiety about leaving his treasures so unprotected in a great, lonely world had, in some strange manner, slipped away from him; kissed the baby and the other little ones; laid his hand on Jeanie's bowed head, and said, in the old, tender tone, "Father's eldest daughter; she will be a help and a comfort to them all when father is gone. Above all, she will take care of her dear mother." Then gave the last look and smile and fond word to that dear mother, and closed his eyes to open them in the land where is only rest and peace.

So old a story, that it is hard to tell it; because, writing the words, one realizes that, to those who have not passed through the sorrow, they will seem only commonplace, and to those who know of the bitterness, they will recall some of their darkest hours.

The weeks and months which followed were sorrowful ones, indeed; but along with the sorrow came the imperative necessity for much careful planning and careful executing. There were so many precious mouths to feed, and so little to do it with, that there was no leisure to sit with folded hands and indulge their grief.

I do not know that the mourners who are heavily laden with the cares of this world, ever, at the time, realize the blessings which

follow in the train of cares; but I have occasionally heard a widow, looking back over her long past, say, with eyes in which there was dawning a wondering light from some point which she had thought was all darkness, “I believe I should have died at that time, if I had not been obliged to live, and think of, and care for others.”

Something of this sort Jeanie thought, long afterward, when she looked at her mother. At the time she was too young to realize that the mother’s sorrow was heavier than her own. What *could* be harder than to lose a father?

But the days passed rapidly. Contrary to the mother’s fears, after two or three drawbacks, and a short, sharp illness, Jeanie seemed to gain strength, and come back almost to the point which she had left months before.

“I don’t know but I am as well as ever I was,” the girl said gratefully, one evening, “except …” and she did not finish her sentence, unless the sigh which she tried quickly to suppress, but which the mother heard, finished it.

Oh, yes! The exception was still there, and always would be. The unmistakable limping gait, so marked that people unhesitatingly said of her now, “Why, that Barrett girl is a cripple, isn’t she?” But for that very reason it was becoming less a burden. People all knew it now: knew how it had come about; what means had been tried, and what could not be tried; had asked all their questions, offered all their well meant sympathy, and were letting the matter slip into the background. The time had come for which Jeanie had longed. They had grown so used to it that they forgot to pity her.

The winter passed rapidly. The summer came and went; and, in the autumn, there came to Jeanie a realization of one of her hopes which, at one time, she had put away as impossible. She became again a school-girl. Not at the celebrated boarding-school where, as a child, she had planned to complete her education—just the common village school, but under excellent management, with a teacher who was thoroughly interested in her and in her scheme of fitting herself for a teacher. Even in the old days, within the shelter of the rich old home, with no apparent necessity for work of any kind, it had been Jeanie’s dream that, some day, she would teach. A very remarkable teacher she meant to be, of course. At the rose-colored age, all the future is remarkable.

She had put the idea away when the crash of their fortunes came, and taken it out later, in a much modified form, and nursed it tenderly for a time, then resolutely put it aside again as utterly hopeless; but now it had blossomed into hope once more. A brilliant scholar she could not become, because there was neither time nor means for her preparation; but a good common-school teacher, who would fill with her might her little place—this was Jeanie's ambition now, and bravely she worked for it.

Worked too hard: not to the injury of her physical strength, perhaps, so much as that more easily injured—her spiritual life. As the days flew by, making their tiny resources smaller with every passing hour, making the necessity for haste on Jeanie's part more apparent, she redoubled her energies, worked late, rose early, gave herself no time for Bible study, for thought, hardly for prayer, save in its most hurried and least helpful forms.

The Sabbath was almost her only breathing space, and even that afforded her very little spiritual strength. The truth was, she broke the day all the week, and came to it utterly worn in body and mind, feeling little inclination for anything except the rest which the body demanded, in order to fit it for the rush of the coming week.

Occasionally, during this time, she thought of Bert, and wondered whether her way of drowsing over her Bible was, after all, a decided improvement on his Sunday walks and talk. But usually she was too tired even for such reminder of conscience.

Somewhat to her surprise, also, she found that the gay, beautiful world had by no means lost its entire hold on her. She was bright and sparkling, if she was a cripple; and, as they grew used to that, and used, also, to the fact that her dress, though always neat, was always, and of necessity, severely plain, there were circles glad to open to receive her. Perhaps the degree to which she entered them would not have been dissipation in one who had more leisure than she; but when it reached the point that Jeanie found herself choosing for a ride, instead of the regular prayer-meeting, on the plea that she needed the recreation, she reminded herself quite forcibly of Bert, and wondered whether the time had not come to "call a halt."

Still, the truth stared her in the face, that prayer-meetings were by no means such pleasant places as they had once been. In fact, she found herself, on many a Wednesday, inventing an excuse,

which would sound plausible to herself, for absenting herself from the prayer circle. All these things startled her.

"After the holidays," she told herself, looking forward to their near approach, and thinking of the number of sleigh-rides and merry-makings which were being planned for that time, "I mean to turn over a new leaf. No more going out evenings for me. I haven't time for it, and I shall go to prayer-meeting every single week, rain or shine. I wouldn't have imagined that I could be so careless about that; but really, our prayer-meetings are not nearly so interesting as they used to be. Just the same voices saying the same things over and over again; but I mean to go, for all that."

And the days hurried by, and the holiday season came. Very mild little dissipations they were in which Jeanie indulged. The society lady of today would smile at the thought of their being dissipations at all But they took her time, crowded her, *whirled* her, indeed, through the days, up to the very close of the year.

Jeanie sat with her mother in the quiet of the little cottage on New Year's Eve. The night was stormy; and a sleigh-ride, planned for that occasion, had to be given up.

"I am sorry," Jeanie said; and then added, with an apologetic little laugh, "because, you see, it was to be my last dissipation. I've decided to turn over a new leaf, mamma. I'm not going out anymore—riding, or walking, or anything. I haven't time. I'm going to study just as hard as a girl can this winter, and in the spring I think I can get a school. Mr. Morrison thinks so. Won't that be nice? Then you won't have to work so hard, you dear motherie. I'm going to take care of you, one of these days. Papa told me to, you know; and I mean to do it."

The last sentence given in a very tender tone. Jeanie had never, for an hour, forgotten the trust which her father left with her.

The next day, holiday though it was, was given up to home cares, Jeanie being ambitious that certain pieces of household work should be gotten out of the way with this last day of vacation. The "new leaf" was fairly turned. Tomorrow it would be school again.

"I must do house-work enough today to last till summer," she said, lightly; "for I don't expect to have much time for it until then."

So she went with almost superhuman strength from one task to another, unheeding, or gaily parrying, her mother's anxious urgings that she should spare herself.

"It is my last day, you know," she said, merrily. "I must get it done, or you will have it to do, and that would break my heart."

And at night, almost too weary to get to her rest, she yet found breath to congratulate herself and her mother that everything she had planned to do that day was accomplished.

"I wonder if I shall always carry out my plans of work so successfully?" she said, and she said it gaily, and the next minute was asleep.

They gathered about her at recess, the merry boys and girls who belonged to her particular clique, and begged her to try the coasting which was at its best. She shook her head.

"I am not going to coast anymore. I haven't time. I have resolved to study right through the recess."

They protested against this. They told her she would study the better for a little exercise in the fresh air, which thought she more than suspected was a fact. Still, she had determined to try her way. But they begged her to come out and treat her resolution then.

"Well," she said, tossing aside her book, "just this once: and I warn you, Charlie, you need not ask me again, for I shall not go; this is my last time."

It was a merry time, notwithstanding the fact that one and another of her friends, noticing a sudden movement of her hand to her head, questioned Jeanie.

"It is nothing," she said. "I overworked yesterday in honor of New Year, and my head is taking revenge."

And then the bell rang, and they sped merrily back towards the school-room. On the threshold Jeanie wavered.

"She caught her foot," said one, "and stumbled."

"No, she has fainted!" exclaimed a second.

And a third, stopping before her in sudden dismay, said, in awe-stricken tones, "She is dead!"

15. “If I Had Known”

No, she was not dead.

“She has only fainted,” they told the frightened mother, when at last they carried her home; but the word “only” crept in out of pity, for they said to one another that it was something more than an ordinary faint to last so long, and that certainly she looked like one dead; but then, her heart was still beating.

Yes, it was beating; and the doctor, who reached the house almost as soon as Jeanie did, was untiring in his efforts to restore consciousness, and, after what seemed to the mother almost a year of time, succeeded.

However, he did not say, “It is only a faint.” There was pity enough in his heart, but there was also knowledge. He looked beyond this immediate symptom; and what he saw made him draw a long sigh, as he walked slowly, thoughtfully, from the house, after having done all he could at the time.

“I will call again this evening,” he said to the mother, who followed him anxiously to the door. She wanted more, but it was all he had to say just then.

“And a good many more evenings,” he said to himself, with another sigh. “Poor things! They don’t know how dark the winter is before them. I wonder what all these things are for?”

“Yes,” he said to eager questioners who stopped him, “she has come back to consciousness, and to pain. I’m afraid, before she is through with it, she will be almost tempted to wish she had stayed unconscious. This is but the beginning of sorrow.”

And before night it was noised abroad through the town that Jeanie Barrett was very sick.

Yes; but even then they did not comprehend the extent of the calamity. None of them did—least of all the sufferer or her mother. What a blessing in disguise it is to have the future veiled from us!

“If I had known,” said Jeanie, speaking of it afterward, with a smile, “if I had known that January not only, but February, and

March, and April, and even May were to slip away before I would be up again, it seems to me I could not have borne it."

Poor, silly child! It was one lovely May morning, when she was supposed to be convalescing, that she made this remark to the faithful friend of their sorrow, who had come to them again as nurse. Jeanie was not able to sit up yet, but was so much better, that, by another month, she looked confidently forward to being wheeled out to the porch to watch the June birds and flowers.

"To think that the winter is gone," she said, "and I am still lying here! Why, I meant to do wonderful things before the trees blossomed again, and there is that apple-tree all bursting into bloom. I shall not be able to study before fall, I am afraid. Doctor, do you think I may get strong enough to go into school in September?"

"'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,'" quoted the doctor, with an attempt at playfulness.

He was passing through the room, on the way to the little one's bed in mother's room; for "the baby"—the frail, little new baby, who had opened her eyes on this sorrowful world only a few weeks after the father had left it for heaven—was sick this morning. The doctor made haste. He did not want to be questioned; but, directly Jeanie's door closed after him, he looked unutterably grave, and drew one of those heavy sighs which always went to Mrs. Barrett's heart.

"What is it, doctor?" she said. "Do you think the baby is so bad?"

"She is no worse, Mrs. Barrett. I was thinking of Jeanie just then."

"Oh! Jeanie feels almost like herself this morning—that is, comparatively. She is planning to sit up in bed by next week."

"She must, on no account, do any such thing," he said, imperatively. "It is too soon to think of it."

Then he looked at the mother's pale, worn face, and at the sick baby on the pillow, and resolutely closed his lips. This was no time for explanations, or warnings of future trial.

Yet it came on steadily. May moved into the past; June followed on swift flower-strewn feet; July and August heats almost wilted even the people in health, and still Jeanie Barrett lay in her bed. People began to wonder about her. Was she ever going

to get well? How long she lingered! Did she have the right sort of care, they wondered?

"She has the best that one of the best and wisest mothers I ever knew can give her," was the doctor's short, decisive answer, when he was interrogated.

And the months went by. September came, and school opened without Jeanie Barrett. The autumn glowed with beauty, until winter touched it with cold fingers, and it faded; and the hills and fields wrapped themselves in ice and snow, and still Jeanie Barrett lay on her bed.

"Doctor," she said to him, with wide-open, mournful eyes, one morning in March, when the south wind was blowing, and there was actually a hint of another spring, "am I *never* going to get well again? "

"Never is a long day, Miss Jeanie. You must not expect me to be able to foretell events with any degree of certainty, if you jump forward with such strides as that."

It was of no use to try to be merry. He could not control the gravity of his eyes, nor the little quiver of feeling in his voice. He stirred the mixture in the glass without speaking for some minutes; then set it down, and came over to the bedside.

"Poor child!" he said. "You have been patient for a long time. I think I can trust you to listen to very plain speaking. Honestly, then, I do not know how well you are going to get. Better, I believe; but the growth of the improvement is so slow, that I have to date it almost by months instead of days, as I hoped; and there are times when I am afraid that you are never going to get real well and strong again. At other times I am encouraged. This morning is one of the days when I feel hopeful that you will at least be much better than you are now; and I want to tell you one thing which will help you more than any medicine I can give. If you will keep a hopeful, cheerful heart, I shall be encouraged; but the truth is, my child, that you shed a good many tears when you are quite alone. You are brave before your mother; but, all by yourself, you break down and cry. Oh! I know it; you need not speak, and I know how hard it is to do otherwise; but if you only could, Jeanie, so rest your burden of care and sorrow, that its weight would not bear on you at all, why, I should be more hopeful."

But poor Jeanie was in no mood just then to try to throw off the burden; head and heart seemed fainting. The doctor's words, which were meant to be helpful, seemed to open a door before her as black as death. She broke into an uncontrollable passion of sobs, and hid her face in the pillows. The doctor turned away. She needed more than mortal comfort, and he did not know how to point her to it.

Dark days were those which followed; or, perhaps, I would better say, dark nights. During the days Jeanie struggled with her sorrows and her fears, and managed to keep a sort of outward composure—managed even to interest herself in her sewing. Lying in her bed, she had the bits of calicoes, with which she used to amuse her fingers in younger days, brought about her again, and busied herself with planning and sewing them. She even secured, through some of the girls who had not forgotten her, some bright-colored wool, and called for her long unused crochet-needle, and worked faithfully and skillfully on the little creations to which her strength was equal. Something for the baby, or for the younger sister; anything to help the leaden hours roll by.

My pen pauses over the rest of this story. If only it were a fiction of my brain, so that I could relieve the strain on which I have kept you about this poor girl!

If I could tell you that, with the next morning, or the next week, or the next month's dawn, there came a radical change for the better, and that life once more looked bright to Jeanie and her friends, I would be glad. But the simple, sad truth is, that the months moved on, and she lay in her bed. Not inactive; not in a state of passive resignation to what seemed inevitable. Brain and heart were never more vigorously at work in the use of what means lay within their reach. In the course of the year, the scheme which Reuben Perrine Whately had been so eager to see tried, and so heart-broken because it could not be tried that he never recovered, was actually carried into effect.

Jeanie went away from home—was carried away on her couch—to try the effect of change of climate and physician. She remained away for weeks, for months, under skillful treatment. She grew somewhat better, and exceeding hopeful. She grew able to take little walks once more, and rejoiced in the accomplishment as she had once never imagined it possible she could. She came

home again, and began to try to take up the burdens of her life where she had dropped them so long before. Weak, feeble, more halting in gait than ever, with many of her plans laid quite aside for her; poor in this world's goods to the very verge of necessity; sustained much of the time by the kindness of friends who were sorry for her; bills paid both at home and while away, often- times, by sympathizing strangers. Do you think all these things were easy for Jeanie Barrett?

She, who had planned all her life to help others, found it very hard to step permanently down from that plane, and consent, instead, to be helped.

Yet she struggled with her pride, and told herself that her sole duty was to be grateful that help came to her, instead of flushing over the thought of its necessity. It was a real struggle; all the harder because, when she thought pride was utterly vanquished, and would trouble her no more, behold! It would appear in some new and unexpected form, and the battle have to be fought again.

Always, though, there was this to sustain her: better days were coming. At last she was on her feet once more, if they were ever so halting. With the lapse of years, if she was very, very careful, she would doubtless grow stronger—strong enough to do some little work. Never the district school-teacher, as her scheme had been for so long. She must lay that aside. Sickness had so done its work on her young frame that it was not probable she would ever be strong enough for such a position. But a small private school, with gentle little scholars who would be safe and happy in her care all day, and through whom she could earn enough so that she need not be an actual burden on her poor, tired mother. This now was Jeanie's ambition, and bravely she tried to prepare herself to fill such a post.

Now, you think it is fully time that the fortunes of this story should change. You feel that we have had quite enough of sudden sickness, and creepings to death's door, and slow comings back to life. It is unnatural and unreasonable. In fiction I grant you it would not only be unnatural, but exceedingly unwise—perilous, indeed, to the fortunes of the heroine. Yet, in plain, unadorned fact, Jeanie Barrett, after appearing to come back to something like common invalidism, without other warning than a day of unusual languor gave, where all days were languid, and by no means free

from pain, fell suddenly into the depths of the most alarming illness she had yet known.

There was, from the first, this difference between it and her other attacks: no one this time seemed to have the faintest hope of her recovery. There was a sense in which it was not a shock to any that she was ill again. The neighbors, speaking of it, said only:

"Poor thing! She has reached the end at last. It is a comfort to think she will soon be at rest."

The mother could not be said to be startled. How can one be startled over a thing which one has been daily fearing for so long that each morning has begun with a thanksgiving that it has not come yet? Jeanie's partial return to health had deceived no one less than the mother. She saw that a great deal of it, at the best, was resolution and not vigor. She was constantly on the alert to save the daughter what fatigue she could, and constantly burdened with the feeling that Jeanie was bearing a great deal from which she was powerless to save.

When the blow fell once more, it was, therefore, not so much of a blow as the presence of an event for which she had watched. When the doctor came, instead of asking him, at the first opportunity, the old question, "Do you think she can live through it, doctor?" she asked, "How long do you think she will live?"

And the doctor, recognizing the difference, and the fact that explanations were unnecessary, answered gently, "It cannot last long, my friend. It must be almost over."

And the mother's long-drawn sigh had in it a note of relief. It seemed to her that she had seen her darling suffer all she could.

And so it came to pass that they gathered—family, and physician, and friends—one bright day, to see Jeanie die. She was very quiet. The violence of the pain was already past. Too weak to speak aloud, too far gone to move even her hands, there was yet such a light in her eyes, and such a shining of radiant joy on her face as seemed to fill the room. Certainly, one looking at her could have felt sure that there is light for the valley when some feet are treading it. There was no sound of weeping in the room. What sacrilege to bring tears, when the glory of heaven already shone on one face.

“She cannot live the day out,” whispered the physician, thinking Jeanie too far away for whispers. But she heard it, and turned her brilliant eyes on him, and smiled.

Someone said, with a sudden burst of tears, “Oh, darling, we must give you up! Do you feel all ready to go?”

But the answer was such a look of wonder as expressed, better than words could have done, what a strange thing it would have seemed to that waiting soul to choose earth instead of heaven.

“Poor child!” said a neighbor, as she went to answer a summons from the other room, and tarried to give her word of news. “Poor child! She is almost out of it. I don’t wonder she is so glad to go. What has the world been to her but a bed of pain for years? One can’t be astonished that she is glad over the thought of dying, young as she is. Oh, yes! She understands everything that is said, and her face is full of joy. She tries to talk, but that is hard work; she hasn’t strength enough. She has done her last talking in this world, poor thing!”

“Well,” said another, with a long-drawn sigh, “it is a good thing that she feels so about it. It will comfort her mother when she is gone. But it will be a dreadful loss. Sick as she has been, she has done more to help her mother than most girls do who are well and strong. I have heard Mrs. Barrett say, many a time, that she didn’t know how she *could* live at all if it were not for Jeanie.”

“There’s more than her mother will miss her,” was the sorrowful answer. “Her life hasn’t been idled away. Look how she has worked in the Sunday-school! Times when she was hardly able to drag herself there. Those children will never forget her teaching. Oh, she has done a great deal of work, as well as suffered a great deal of pain. But we ought to be glad, really, that the pain is done with; for, as true as I live, I never saw anybody suffer so, and I’ve taken care of a great many sick people.”

So they said their kind and sorrowful, sympathetic words, in the house and out of it. Many tears were shed. It appeared that Jeanie had many friends, and was by no means going empty- handed to the throne.

Within her room was a sanctuary, a very chamber of peace. The mother, who had watched and borne and upheld others for so many years, was not going to mar the peace of the passing soul with demonstrations of grief. She held herself in utmost quiet, and

watched each glance and smile as one who felt that the moments now were few.

Jeanie had not many last words to say to her mother. She knew that the mother had all her heart, and understood it. Her most earnest thought was given to the doctor, who, kind and attentive, and untiring in his ministrations, knew nothing of the refuge within which she was resting safely. She tried to whisper her few words of petition to him. He could hardly hear them. He laid his hand on her forehead gently.

"You ought not to talk," he said; "it takes your strength."

Then, as one will, who, in embarrassment or sorrow, hardly knows what he says, added, "Try to sleep, and see if you will not be better when you waken."

He was answered by a smile, the joy of which he never forgot; and the words, though whispered, had a thrill of triumph,

"Oh, doctor! I shall waken in the arms of Jesus. Yes, I will be better."

16. A Fanatic Still

I want you to pass over in memory a period of seven years, and go with me to a little bit of a home. A carpetless room, only the barest articles of necessity for furniture—and you are to remember that necessity is a relative term. You would by no means have thought that you had the necessities of life about you if they were represented by what that room contained. Yet there was one thing which you would probably not have liked for the furnishing of your parlor or sitting-room. This was a curiously constructed couch on wheels—plain, unadorned in any way, made for grave uses, and not for ornament or beauty; suggestive of suffering and confinement within narrow limits, and the need for unusual patience.

On the couch lay a woman, still young, no threads of silver in her brown hair, but with the traces of suffering so apparent on her calm face that you could not, probably, had you been a stranger, have guessed her age.

But you are not a stranger. You have seen her before; indeed, you knew her well seven years ago, and I venture to hope were interested in her. Look closely.

"It cannot be!"

"Yes, perhaps it is. Of whom does she make you think?"

"But surely it is not Jeanie Barrett!"

"Yes, my friend; you are right. It is Jeanie Barrett."

"But I do not understand. How is that possible? I thought …"

Oh, yes! I know you thought she went to heaven. You thought with her physician, and even with her mother, that that sleep into which she dropped like a tired child seven years ago was her last of earth, and that she opened her eyes where none ever say "I am sick."

No; you are wrong. She opened them again to earth, and weariness and pain, such as few are called to suffer. And now, after the lapse of years, you see her in the bare little room,

confined day and night and night and day to her couch, poverty and pain her constant companions.

How long has she been in this case? I hesitate to tell you, it sounds so like the exaggeration of diseased fiction, and is so utterly the simple, sad truth. My friend, she has never walked across her room since that time when she staggered across it and fell fainting. She has never even felt what it was to place her feet to the floor again!

And how has the time been passed? For the most part in such suffering as you will have to imagine if you know anything about it, for certainly I cannot describe. Fever, which held her in his grip for weeks; delirium, which was almost harder to endure than the sufferings of lucid hours; convulsions, such as tossed her about as if she had been a feather with which to play; exhaustion so terrible that, to lie there crushed and draw another breath, had seemed to the poor girl impossible. Yet the impossible had to be borne, and repeated again and again for weeks, for months, for years.

She lay quiet now, in comparative freedom from suffering. I want you to take note of that word “comparative,” for, without keeping it in constant remembrance, you will not understand the story I am telling you. There was at the moment, resting on the limb which had so long ago been crippled, a weight of marble equal to fifty pounds. For what? Why, because the convulsions which from time to time seized this frail body in its grasp, and tossed it whither they would, could only be held from doing so by a force of fifty pounds. It sounds impossible, almost, does it not? Who would be so wild or so cruel as to think of putting it into fiction?

But we are not going to say much about any of it. Jeanie did not. She passed it all over in such silence that transient visitors often supposed she was only temporarily an invalid; and others were deceived sometimes into the notion that she had lain there so long as to have grown used to it, and felt no wish to move.

Of course, all such belonged to the free world, where no sickness of any sort had interfered with their gay movement whither they would. It is for those to imagine people as growing used to that which has never brushed near enough for *them* to feel its breath.

On this particular August afternoon Jeanie lay on her couch with the calm of heaven on her face. Quiet everywhere, save as to brain and hands, and these two were never quiet when the eyes were open. She was busy with a bit of frame and some bright feathers, which she was gracefully weaving in and out—engaged in that occupation which fills so many hands—making fancy work. What a pathetic occupation it must become when the strength is so departed, and the position of the body is such that no other work is possible! More than that, when bodily pain is such that hardly one in a thousand so afflicted would deem *that* possible. But there is a more pathetic side to it than this: suppose it to be one's sole means of support; the slender thread between her and want, or between her and charity, which to some natures would be a harder way of putting it?

I have stated things just as they were with Jeanie; and yet, as I told you, there was calmness, even sunshine, on her face. She was not alone.

There was sitting near to her, watching her with a curiously baffled expression, one whom you have also seen before, though he has grown old faster in his way than Jeanie has in hers. It is Bert Halsted, the "cousin" of youthful memories. Not yet thirty, he looks much older; and his spectacled eyes tell a story of weakness there, and the dissatisfied lines about the forehead and mouth tell the story of weakness in bearing chastening, which has returned its own sure mark.

Jeanie was talking, her voice bright.

"Oh, yes! I have gone into business. I am a woman of resources, I assure you. I had no idea that thread frames were in such demand, or that feather trimming would play such an important part in the support of a family. You should see how eagerly my creations are sought after!"

"It is incomprehensible!" said Bert, and his voice had the same half-disgusted sound with which he had combated what he thought were some of the follies of her youth. "The idea of your being able to occupy your time and fill your mind with such flimsy trivialities as these! I used to think, when you were a child, you would develop into a philosopher of some sort. I expected the world would hear of you, and here you are, flat on your back, amusing yourself with feathers and wools."

Intense disgust was apparent on every line of his face. It was too absurd to hurt her. If it had been less extreme, she might have winced; as it was, she laughed. What would he have her do? Certainly, it was not in any sense by choice that she lay flat on her back; and she had no intention of owning to him that there were days when she loathed the very sight of the feathers and wools, simply because the weak and fluttery things were the only material light enough for her feeble hands to hold; neither was it necessary to speak of the days and weeks so full of intense pain that she could not touch them.

As for the philosophy, and Bert's ambitions for her, she had laid aside more important hopes than these. One who has braved a hurricane is not going to shrink before a strong east wind, however disagreeable it may be. So she laughed lightly; a laugh which jarred almost as much as similar frivolity had jarred the sensitive nerves of Reuben Perrine Whately, years before.

"Feathers and wools are very pretty things, Bert, and are intimate companions of mine. I will not have them maligned."

"What is being done for you? "

The question was abrupt, almost rough. It startled Jeanie a little.

"Done for me?" she repeated, questioningly.

"Yes. Has everybody decided that it isn't worth while to make an effort for your recovery? Just folded their hands, and concluded to let you lie there? I should never have imagined Aunt Eliza as one of that sort."

It was dangerous ground. Jeanie's *eyes* were still under her control. They looked full at him now, with a meaning which he did not comprehend; but her voice was low and quiet,

"My mother has done and borne all that any mortal mother could, Bert, for seven years. She is doing and bearing now as few, even *mothers*, could. It is a long story. You would weary with its details, if anyone could endure to give them to you. Everything has been tried, I think; and everybody, almost. I have been to doctors and *doctors*, until the very name frightens me. All varieties of treatment have been tried on me, and the result is as you see. But honestly, Bert, it will bear living better than it will talking about. I cannot go over it even for you. Won't you please to admire the colors on these lovely feathers, and let the other topic pass?"

“Jeanie, what do you putter with them for? Does it actually amuse you? Have you—has the disease weakened your mind to that extent? What *is* the disease, anyway?”

It was the same sort of sentence as before—too extreme to rouse other than a smile. She answered, if possible, more lightly than she had spoken yet.

“Why, certainly, it amuses me. What would you have me do—lie still and fold my hands? That is pleasant enough amusement for a few weeks, but one wearies of it, and is glad to resort to feathers. The disease? Oh, I can’t tell! It has every sort of name, with a spinal column at the base, to uphold them all. Do you know, Bert, I once thought you would develop into a learned physician, who would come on the wings of science, and discover the cause and the remedy? Why did you disappoint me?”

His face shadowed into gloom not only, but almost fierceness.

“Don’t talk to me about that, if you please. *I* have not forgotten how to feel, if you have. It is the bitter disappointment of my life.”

Her face softened instantly.

“Poor Bert!” she said, gently. “Did you have to give it up? I did not know; you have not let us hear from you in years, you know. Was it your eyes?”

“Yes; it was my eyes, or the want of them. It is a burning shame, Jeanie, that one who is willing to work hard, and make something of himself, and be of use to the world, as I certainly meant to be, should be thrust aside through no fault of his own, and in a way which does no one any good. I should like to know how you would reconcile that with the notions of special providence which you used to have. What sort of a providence do you call it to set me aside like a child, or like a worthless piece of rubbish, when I might have done good work for myself, and for the world? For the matter of that, you are another one thrust aside in what one would suppose would be a very distasteful manner, but you do not seem to mind it much.”

He was looking directly at Jeanie, and was puzzled with the changes on her face. Pain, both mental and physical, a flash of something very like indignation, a shadow, not of gloom, but of unutterable pity, and a lightning flash as of joy—all these he saw, and marveled.

She still spoke low and gently.

“I know you do not mean half you have said, Bert. You cannot have lived in this world so long without discovering that pain and disappointment of every sort are not *happenings*, but have their own wise and most important ends to fulfill, though we may be too childish to see the occasion, or understand the remedy. I think I know something of what disappointment is, and I can tell you frankly, that to die a hundred times over would be easier than this living, if I did not know that underneath my burden was my heavenly Father’s arms, and that he had his wise purposes to fulfill in me, and would make no mistakes. If you are bearing any sort of disappointment without Him, Bert, I don’t know how you do it.”

“A fanatic still, I see,” Bert said, speaking lightly himself now, apparently ashamed of his heat. But he seemed unable to put the subject from him. “You may be able to see wisdom in such things, but I confess that it takes stronger eyes than mine. However, we will not talk about it. I ought to be glad, I am sure, that you can be reconciled to a life of idleness and triviality, only it disappoints me a good deal. What has become of your ambitions, Jeanie? Do they never stir within you any more? “

What a softened light there was on her face at the word!

“I have an ambition, Bert—stronger, I think, than any which possessed my foolish youth. Every thought of my heart is set toward attaining it, and every hour of my life I long to make tell in its direction.”

His face kindled with a sort of surprised pleasure, mingled with incredulity.

“Do you really mean that you are hoping for success even now? What can you accomplish lying there? Or do you think you are going to get well again, after all? They told me you had given up all idea of that, but I wouldn’t. I *would* be well. Somebody should be found who could help you. It is a shame. But, then, you are no longer young, exactly. You have, like myself, lost a good deal of time. What can you accomplish at your age, Jeanie?”

Certainly Mr. Halsted the man was quite as fond of talking as ever Bert Halsted the boy had been. He poured out these contradictory sentences so rapidly there was no chance for Jeanie. She was glad that at last he paused with an interrogation on his lips. Then came her answer, unhesitating and sweet:

“Yes, I hope to accomplish it in a degree. We never reach the height of our ambitions here, I think. I want to show by my daily, hourly life, that the grace of God is sufficient for every hour; that His strength is made perfect in weakness; that His grace is riches in the midst of poverty; that His love is full, free, and satisfying. This is the height of my ambition. Isn’t it strong enough?”

He turned from her with a gesture almost of disgust. She was talking a language which he did not understand. He considered himself almost made the victim of a fanatical deception.

There was no opportunity for answer. A quick knock at the door, replied to immediately by Jeanie’s prompt voice, admitted a visitor of another type. A gentleman a trifle older than Bert, tall and finely formed, and with a face which bespoke him at the outset a good, true man.

Jeanie’s face lighted at sight of him.

“Mr. Sinclair, this is kind. I did not expect to see you so soon. My cousin, Mr. Halsted, Mr. Sinclair.”

The two exchanged bows. Mr. Sinclair made a movement to give his hand; but the other gentleman not seeming to think that amount of cordiality necessary, he abandoned the idea, and gave his attention to Jeanie.

“Why, the truth is, Miss Jeanie, I could not stay away any longer, I had such a bright idea. I have been shopping. All ladies like to hear about those excursions, I believe; and, if you will promise not to laugh at all, I will show you some of my purchases.”

It was pretty to see the eagerness which the pale face on the couch displayed. All alive with curiosity and pleasure it was; that is, I think it would have been pleasant to you. Mr. Halsted, in his present mood, could see nothing but evidences of weakened mind, and both frowned and sighed. However, preparations for opening the package went forward briskly; and, when it was finally displayed on the table, the contents were incongruous and curious in the extreme.

Jeanie looked at them, her bright eyes not only bright now, but wondering, turning from the package to the owner of it, then back again, curiosity struggling with fun on her face, until at last she laughed merrily.

Mr. Sinclair joined her, but Bert rose up in haste. He was in no mood for laughter; it was only pitiable to him that she could be.

"Oh, Bert! Are you going?" Jeanie asked, coming back to him and her duties as hostess. "Can't you stay until mother comes? She will not be long now. It must be after five, I think."

"Where is Aunt Eliza? I shouldn't think she would care to leave you alone in this helpless state. Is *she* gone shopping, or what?"

A little flush on Jeanie's face now, called there by something besides the curious package.

"No, Bert; and she doesn't leave me for her pleasure. Mother is ironing at Mrs. Wilmot's today."

Then Mr. Halsted went at once, the look on his face saying that he did not care to trust himself in speech.

17. “Won’t You Explain?”

Jeanie looked after her departing caller. Her brow shadowed for a moment; then suddenly it cleared, and she came back to the business in hand with the brightness spreading over her face.

“What is it all about, Mr. Sinclair? You surely did not buy all these things yourself! And for what, pray? I did not know you were of so practical a turn of mind, nor that you bought at wholesale in this fashion. What are you going to do with so many pins? And needles! Mr. Sinclair, you will never need such fine needles to sew shirt-buttons on. And if there isn’t a cake of glove soap, and a bottle of shoe polish!”

She broke down with that, and laughed again, so merry and clear a laugh that it sounded like the bubbling up of joy from a child-heart.

Mr. Sinclair watched her with infinite satisfaction. He had drawn a chair close to her cot, and was placing articles, one after another, near enough for her fingers to touch.

“What do you think of the collection?” he asked, at last. “I don’t understand shopping very well, but it strikes me I have remembered a great many essentials this time.”

“Essentials!” with another burst of laughter. “I should think you had! And pins! Mr. Sinclair, I think there must be every size of pin here! What *can* you do with so many? I might almost fancy you were going to scatter them in your rounds instead of tracts, or accompanying the tracts, perhaps. Won’t you explain? I tingle with curiosity.”

“It is part of the new idea I mentioned. It is the beginning of a fancy store, Miss Jeanie. What is to hinder there being a case set up here with all sorts of useful as well as pretty things? It occurred to me, as I was going away downtown this afternoon—for nothing more important than a bit of twine which I had occasion to use—that we had to take quite long journeys, not only for twine, but for pins, and needles, and thread, and a hundred little things, none of which cost much, but are very useful on occasion. And I wondered

why you and I had never thought of going into business, mixing in all these useful things along with your pretty feathers and wools? I was so elated with the thought that I bought just a sample of goods to show you how well I could do it, if my commission were large enough to make it an object, you know, and rushed right back here to lay the project before you."

Jeanie's face had changed by the time this long story was finished. The brightness had not faded; but there was an added light, a mixture of gratitude and reverence, and a sense of being moved almost to the verge of tears.

"Your idea is just like you," she said, at last. "I might have understood it from the very first, knowing you so well; but I did not. I was thoroughly puzzled. It is a very large thought this time, and I will try to do it justice; but, Mr. Sinclair, you know I long ago gave up trying to thank you."

"Of course you did. There is nothing in this case to call for thanks. It is the merest business transaction. I bring the goods to you on commission, and you sell them at a good profit; and my merchant, whose trade I thereby increase, is gratified, and increases his subscription for the sup- port of the minister, as likely as not, or does some other benevolent thing! Don't you see?"

"Oh, yes! I see. And, Mr. Sinclair, the Lord sees, and knows all about this, and a hundred other things which you do. That is my joy."

This was the beginning of the way in which the frail and suffering woman actually went into business in what she termed "an ambitious way." A case was procured—Mr. Sinclair could better have told how than anybody else—and duly stocked with all sorts of useful little things, the "samples" the gentleman had brought being found to cover a great deal of ground, and to suggest almost all the small articles which would be likely to find ready sale.

The more Jeanie studied them, the more was she impressed with the amount of careful thought which it must have taken to make up that first purchase. That it was a *purchase,* and not articles on commission, she suspected from the first; but she had poor success in trying to express her thanks.

"Of course," Mr. Sinclair said, "we must have a stock in trade for a beginning. Cannot depend on commission altogether. We

want the shelves duly filled once with personal property. After that, when we have shown our skill in selection and management, commission will serve our needs."

It was a source of almost endless interest to Jeanie to get that case arranged in exquisite order not only, but with careful attention to harmony of color and form. Her decisions in these respects were sources of amusement to her young sister and helper.

"What does it matter, Jeanie?" she would say, as she patiently rearranged the shelf under direction. "Who do you think will be more likely to buy blue worsted because it lies on a lovely brown mat, instead of down below on that pile of green?"

"I don't know," Jeanie said, laughing. "Perhaps they will buy it just as soon lying on the green, but I don't believe it. They wouldn't know how pretty it was. I don't like to see it beside the green. It makes me feel all creepy."

"You were intended for an artist, I believe," said the sister, looking at her with the wistful, yearning face which her family so often wore in thinking of her. The words were followed by a sigh. Each of them realized something of what Jeanie might have been.

She laughed. She had reached the point where she could nearly always laugh over any doleful reference to her state.

"I was intended for a shop-keeper," she said; "and I am going to make an excellent one. We shall make it look so pretty and convenient that they cannot help buying. Wasn't it delightful in Mr. Sinclair to think this out and set it up? I don't know how to be thankful enough for it. Just think of it, Fannie. What if we should make enough to pay the quarter's rent!"

"Bert says it is a mark of a very small mind to putter with pins and needles, and haggle about the price of a spool of thread. He says he doesn't see how Mr. Sinclair's people can have much respect for a man who spends so much thought over trifles."

"Bert's glasses are blue," said Jeanie, speaking lightly. "He cannot be expected to know gold color when he sees it. His eyes will get well some day, I hope and believe. Fannie, dear, don't you think that frame with an oval top would look better in the center, with the others on either side? It is too bad to lie here and make suggestions which oblige you to move things so much. If it were not so far to walk, I might come and help you."

Yes, she could speak the words in a jesting tone, as though walking were only a matter suspended with her for a few days of rest; and it was nearly eight years since she had rested her feet on the floor! Poor Fannie, who could never quite bring herself to the point where she was willing to have this cherished sister lie and suffer, struggled with her sense of grief, which occasionally seemed to well up and choke her.

"You have a head," she said, at last, "and a pair of eyes, and more brains and energy than most people have who are stalking around doing nothing. If it were not for your energy and good judgment, I should give up, I know that."

"Oh, Fannie, Fannie! What a little flatterer it is! Trying to spoil me, when I do nothing from morning to night but lie here and order her around!"

Fannie was moving just then toward the table for some trifles which were to occupy the second shelf. She stopped at the couch long enough to bend over her sister and touch her lips to the white forehead. She did not want to speak just then. She was rewarded with a full, bright smile, and a very tender kiss on her glowing cheek. The sisters understood each other.

"Mrs. Nelson had a fall last night," remarked Fannie, in her usual tone of voice. They were very watchful not to weary the invalid with any undue show of emotion. Always the mother and elder sister kept a constraint on themselves for Jeanie's sake.

"Mrs. Nelson!" Jeanie repeated, with quick interest. "How much of a fall? Was she hurt?"

"Quite badly, I am afraid. They came for mother this morning before you were awake. She fell down the cellar stairs, I think, or the wood-shed stairs. Broke both arms, the doctor said."

"Oh, poor thing! Poor thing! And here I can use my hands so well, both of them!"

"Jeanie!" It was an exclamation almost of incredulity. Often and often had Fannie heard similar expressions, but it was a lesson she had to learn over again almost daily. She found it impossible to believe that her sister, whose lot she thought harder than any other, could actually see occasion for thankfulness that she was not as some other afflicted one. What were broken arms? Mrs. Nelson would soon be as well as ever, moving about her beautiful home again; and there Jeanie must lie, who could tell for how long?

Yet the fact was unmistakable that Jeanie's face wore at that moment a look of thankfulness shining through the shadow of sympathy for Mrs. Nelson—gratitude for her happier lot; for could she not move both her hands and use them in helping to carry the family burden?

The new idea grew. A passing remark of a neighbor helped to develop it. Fannie sat and sewed at a work-apron, patiently mending rents here and there, wishing in her heart she were rich enough to bestow it on the rag-bag, and have a new one. The neighbor looked on approvingly.

"How fast you sew! Do you like it? I hate sewing. I wish aprons grew. I have to make some for my sister, and I do dislike it so much! Just plain common seams. If they kept ready-made aprons in stores, I think it would be a great deal nicer."

The two girls flitted almost immediately from the question of aprons to more congenial themes; but Jeanie, lying there looking at them, lingered over the suggestion.

"Ready-made aprons." Why wasn't it a good idea? She glanced at the lower shelf of the case. A nice pile of them could lie there in an unobtrusive way, far enough removed from the gay fancy articles to avoid offending them. Fannie was a neat worker, and a great many people hated to make plain kitchen aprons, and the material for them could be bought so cheaply. Why wouldn't it do?

And it did do. Before next Saturday night a goodly stock of those same large, plain, neat-looking aprons were occupying the lower shelf, ready for Monday morning duty. Still, it had been found hard to spare enough money from the general fund for the strong, dark calico, which was the only outlay. So low was the family purse in these days that they felt it. But their hopes were bright for good returns.

On that Saturday evening, Jeanie, watching the hard worked mother, was burdened with a new thought.

"If we only had a carpet for this floor, then poor mother would not have to get down on her tired knees and scrub it every Saturday! Just a plain ingrain carpet such as we used to have on our kitchen-floor in the dear old house at home. Or a good rag-carpet would do nicely; or even a few bright bits to lay before the

chairs, and spread under the table would give such a home look, and save much cleaning."

That last was an item of growing importance, for more reasons than one. She could *feel* the gloom on Fannie's face as she drew the thread nervously through the garment she was mending.

"If mother would let me do it," she said, watching the turn of Jeanie's eyes. "I fairly begged her to sit down, and give me a chance; but she wouldn't."

"Well, you know, dear child, you have been on your feet all day, and are not strong." This appeal was from the mother on her knees before the hearth. "This scrubbing isn't hard, children; don't you worry. I would rather do it than patch the garment Fannie has in her hand."

"Mother always was naughty," Jeanie said, trying to speak merrily. "She always would do things herself that I used to coax to do."

But this was a sore subject with the mother. She could never get away from the feeling that the back which had lost its strength had been over-burdened in youth.

"I wish I could have contrived so you couldn't have done half so much," she said, not with energy. The thought was an old one, and was voiced with a sigh, rather than with the weight of bitterness. It kept them all still, however; but Jeanie's thoughts were busy. The turn they had taken came to the surface when her mother kissed her for good-night.

"Mamma, why don't we pray for a carpet? We need it."

Mrs. Barrett could not restrain a smile. She had always been a literal Christian, but this daughter of hers half startled her at times with her ideas.

"Why, my dear child! We could, I suppose; only—well, dear, why don't you?"

"I mean to. Will you join me, mamma? Ask in real earnest, I mean; as though we expected an answer, and would look for it."

"But, dear, it hardly seems reasonable. If it were bread or clothing, of which we were in real need, I should pray in faith; but a carpet! I can't imagine where one would come from. No one is likely to suppose that we are actually in need of such a thing, and carpets are not given away very often."

“Well—but, mamma, do *we* need to know where it will come from? It doesn’t seem to me that one would require faith to pray for it, if we did. Mamma, He says, ‘In everything let your requests be made known.’ Why not a carpet, as well as bread? “

Her mother kissed her again, and laughed, with tears starting in her eyes.

“We will ask him, daughter. I know you are right, but the question of bread absorbs me so much of the time, I think I forget. If we ought to have a carpet, I believe He can provide one for us in some way. Yes, certainly, I will join you.”

After this, it cannot be said that Jeanie was surprised when the express one day left at their door a carefully wrapped bundle, which, being eagerly unpacked, disclosed yards enough of bright new carpeting to quite cover the little room. If I should tell you she had been eagerly looking for it, I should the better describe her state of mind. But Fannie was astonished.

“Where is it from?” she questioned, eagerly. “Oh, Jeanie! It is where you spent five months when you were being treated, isn’t it? Jeanie, how did they know we needed a carpet? Have you written to some of them?”

“Not a word,” answered Jeanie, gleefully. “They are almost the last people I should have selected if I had been going to make an appeal; not but that their hearts were warm enough, but they never occurred to me in that connection.”

“Well, who did know it? Have you spoken before anybody who could have told them? Jeanie Barrett, you *haven’t* asked anybody for *a carpet* surely?”

“Yes, I have,” said Jeanie, laughing at her sister’s dismayed face, and at the same time putting up her hand to brush away a tear. “I told all about it, and somehow He has let those dear people know; but I cannot imagine how. Mamma, He certainly heard us, and it was right to want a carpet, you see; for here it is. Fannie, there is no use worrying. We have a Friend who stands ready to do for us what we will, and who is sure to make no mistakes.”

Fannie understood now. She turned away, her face a little in shadow, and pretended to give close attention to the carpet; but she stealthily watched her sister’s face, lovely now with its eager, child-like happiness in the new possession. Over Fannie’s gaze there stole almost a look of awe. This sister of hers, who suffered

daily, nightly, and between the paroxysms was calm, and when there was a longer interval from pain than usual, even merry, and who was learning, not only to pray about everything, but to get the things for which she prayed, was a marvel to the youthful, heavily burdened Fannie.

What did this ever-increasing power mean? Was Jeanie, perhaps, going to slip away from them suddenly into the other world, where already half her life seemed to be? Over this thought Fannie always trembled and shivered. Hard as life was to them now, she could not see how they could bear more; and, aside from the unutterable pain of losing her, how were they to live at all without the calm, clear judgment, and patient far-sightedness of sister Jeanie?

18. “If Jeanie Can”

They were thoughtfully looking the subject over, mother and daughter; Jeanie on her couch, of course. You will remember that she was never anywhere else. Something so astonishing was before them for settlement that it is no wonder Mrs. Barrett left her work, and came and sat down directly in front of the couch, with her hands clasped on her lap, and a most perplexed look on her face.

“It does seem as though you were expected to do it, somehow,” she said; “and yet I haven’t the least idea how it can be done.”

The “it” was nothing less astonishing than a proposal that Jeanie should spend several weeks in attendance at an open-air meeting many miles away.

What! Jeanie Barrett—one who could never leave her curiously contrived couch; one who was liable to be taken suddenly with paroxysms of awful suffering, such as no human power seemed able to alleviate; one who needed, at times, the help of half a dozen strong pairs of arms to hold the body which writhed and twisted under its burden of pain; one who at all times had to wear on the diseased limb a weight of fifty pounds of marble to hold it in place! Even so; and yet she, in sane mind, and with quiet heart, was actually studying the possibilities, or, as they appeared at present to her, the impossibilities of the plan.

How did so wild an idea first get possession of her? Well, that is a long story. Jeanie herself has not a very clear idea of the “how,” unless, indeed, God sent the thought, meaning that she should bear this cross also for Him.

“Wouldn’t you like to preach?” a minister and faithful friend had asked her one afternoon with a smile, looking into the pale face, all lighted as it was, just then, with eager joy over some news of the triumphs of the gospel story, told by unusually feeble lips.

Her face had flushed over the question, and then paled. She had been so sure, in her early girlhood, that, if she had been a man, such would be her work. She had been so resolved, later in life, to

do, in a woman's way, the same kind of work—more quietly, more individually than many preachers do, or than some of them can, but the same sort of work after all. It was so long since she had been told to lay all those plans aside and lie still, that the question seemed to her like a probing of an old wound. But the mother smiled, and made prompt answer.

"Jeanie does preach, doctor, every day of her life. I never hear a stranger cross-questioning her in a puzzled way over her unusual experience of pain, that I do not feel she is preaching a wonderful sermon, the text of which is, 'My grace is sufficient.' "

"Aye," the minister said, "I think so; it is what I mean. I wish the world knew of it. I don't know that there could be a more effective sermon. I am constantly wondering how we can extend the influence which goes steadily out from this couch."

Perhaps that was the very beginning of it; and then it grew, as ideas will, which at first seemed utterly wild. It took long to grow, and the passing days brought their changes to the family, or, perhaps, I might better say, their fluctuations; days when the business of fancy articles, knitted purses, mittens, little socks, wristlets, what not, was brisk; days when several people needed aprons, and filled the hearts of the young schemers with delight; days together when nobody wanted anything; when Jeanie, alone in her room, while the mother toiled somewhere for her dollar a day, watched in vain for the sound of feet on the path outside, for a welcome knock, bringing a customer; days and weeks together, when the shades were drawn, and the case closed, and the crochet needle and bright wools banished, while the brave heart struggled with pain and fever, and the mother looked on helpless, well-nigh despairing.

It was precarious living. No extensive planning could be done about anything. "If Jeanie can," had come to be a sort of family watchword.

They would move next week into a house still smaller, where the rent would be less, if Jeanie could be moved. They would have a sale of pretty things, just before the holidays, if Jeanie was able to plan and largely execute. They would have a little prayer meeting—just a few tried friends, and the minister—tomorrow, if Jeanie could bear the strain. So the days passed.

They moved, at last, away from the old town and friends—*quite* away, for the sake of placing Jeanie under the care of a celebrated doctor, who became interested in the curious case, and offered his services, if the patient could come to him. Then, for a few weeks, hope ran high. He seemed to be helping her. The mother moved with quicker step about the house, and sung a low, sweet strain now and then, as a quivering hope began to dawn again, that help for her darling was at last at hand. Not cure; her heart had long since put away that hope. She hardly prayed for it, even, anymore. She could not feel that it was His will; but relief, freedom to lie quietly in a bed, broad and smooth, and made fresh every day by loving hands; freedom to have her position changed just a little, and so get rest which now could not be hers. These seemed little things, but how the mother longed and prayed for them! The brightness did not last. Dawning hopes were shattered by one of those sudden on-comings of suffering, more severe, more prolonged, more utterly hopeless in its effects than any which had preceded it.

In this way the days and months had passed. And now, a year later than when you first saw her on her couch, Jeanie was actually planning attendance at the open-air meeting. Hardly that, either; for she said, with one of her bright little laughs, that it was being planned around her, apparently, she having no volition in the matter.

Letters from those who had known her long and well, who, by their position, were entitled to speak, and to have their suggestions carefully weighed, came to her with every mail, each urging, unknown to the others, the same thing. Would not the change, and the sights and sounds, and sweet summer smells, be helpful to the sick one? Would not she be able to enjoy there the means of grace from which she had so long been greatly shut out? Would not she have opportunity for making her little sales, on which more and more depended as the wearying years went by? Above all, would she not have enlarged opportunities for speaking her quiet words for Christ which He had honored so many times in the past? This last suggestion held Jeanie quiet. To all the others she could shake her head, and make her earnest protest.

“Oh, mamma, no; I cannot. What if I should be very sick? How could you get me home? How could you manage for me among

strangers? Oh, let us work on here, quietly. I think sales will be better next week. I have planned a new stitch in crochet which will make a very pretty edge: I think it will sell well for trimming. Oh, mamma, we *cannot* go from home, you and I."

But the letters came—urgent appeals, closing always with that one over which Jeanie grew silent and thoughtful. Was it her opportunity? Did He require this at her hands? She, the shrinking, suffering one? She could not tell; but it seemed strange that so many, generally wise and prudent, should be moved in the same way.

"Mamma, we must pray about it," had been her refuge at last. No more argument, no more proving the impossibilities. Jeanie's faith was such as laid hold on the impossible, even if the voice which spoke was the Master's.

"If you had been the man who was called upon to stretch forth his hand, you would have done it instantly, and I would have said, 'Why, I *can't*, it is helpless,' and that is just the difference between us."

This was what her sister said one evening when they had been discussing a question over whose impossibilities Jeanie soared with her gentle "But, Fannie, dear, it *can't* be impossible, you know, because He commands it." It was much the way in which she began to look at this question, and the human impossibilities which seemed to hedge it in. "Mamma, if the Lord Jesus really wants me to go to that meeting, why, I want to go."

This was the point which she had reached on the evening in question.

"Yes, dear," spoken soothingly in answer to the shrinking note in Jeanie's voice. "But, my child, our way is still plain to stay at home. We haven't the money to get there, and you haven't a wrapper which is suitable to wear. He knows all about these things as well as the greater ones, and I think He shows himself God by being always able to be mindful of the trifles."

"Yes," Jeanie said, and she followed the word with a happy little laugh. "I know it. He will certainly provide the way, if we are to go; for we cannot. I have honestly tried for the last two weeks to earn the money—tried as conscientiously as though I wanted to go; but I have failed, and it is growing late. The question will be

settled for us in a little while. Oh, mamma, does it feel to you as though I *could* do it if the way were open?"

"Why do you shrink from it, daughter? Besides the weariness, I mean, and the discomfort of leaving home, is there anything else?"

"Oh, mamma, yes! And it troubles me. I am not willing for all the talk."

"Talk! Why, Jeanie, dear, who would talk other than tenderly about my poor lamb?"

"Dear mamma, don't you know? Cannot you think how it will be? The people who will say that I am fond of notoriety, and go to show myself, and make merchandise of my affliction. I ought to be stronger; but I shrink and shiver, and feel as though I must hide here in my home with you."

"Dear child, dear precious one! If you feel so about it, surely you ought not to go. I cannot think there would be one unkind word. The *world* even is not so cruel, but it does seem to me that He is willing you should have the poor little shelter home can give you."

"And yet, mamma, think: if He sees that I could by going be brought in contact with some soul who otherwise would be lost, and who, because of something I may say, or look, or endure, will sing in heaven forever, what would that be to me!"

There seemed no answer to make to this, and the conference ended as others had done, with two thoughts.

"Well, the way is hedged now, certainly. They urge us to come, but they do not know we have not the means." And, "Well, Jeanie, He knows: we must pray."

And the morning mail brought—what do you think? Another urgent letter from a source which had hitherto been quiet. A statement that certain parties, who were to have a comfortable tent on the ground, had made all arrangements to receive Jeanie and her mother; a check for sufficient to cover the traveling expenses of both, and a hint that to them it seemed as the Lord's own direction to press their suit.

Jeanie read the letter, saying nothing at all, and passed it to her mother's hands. The mother brushed back the tears as she read, but said no word; only, after a moment, in lowered tones, "Jeanie, there is a package from Mrs. Evans. It has a beautiful new wrapper in it, ready made."

Was there a place for more words after that? Yet I am not sure I have made you understand how like death it was to Jeanie to come out from her shelter into the great watching, questioning world. Like death? Oh, no! That is not a good simile. Why, death would have been home, freedom, feet, wings, while this—She could not help thinking of it, contrasting the two, and was, in her curiously excited state, almost amused to see what prominence that wheeled couch was taking in her mind. She could not help putting the thought into words.

"Mamma, if I were going to Heaven, I could leave this behind, you know."

She smiled when she said it: she realized the human weakness of it. But the mother cried.

Fairly started they were at last, waiting in the depot for the train, the great wheeled couch an object of interest and curiosity to the throngs who waited with them. Many kind words were spoken to the afflicted one, but in a depot crowd there are all sorts of people. Some stared with nothing more than the idlest curiosity expressed on their features; others expressed still more in looks not only, but in not very subdued language.

"Who in the world is that? "

"Why, it's that girl. Haven't you heard of her? Been sick for years and years. They say she never moves from that thing on which she lies. There is something the matter with her spine, and she has to have one limb strapped to the lounge, or whatever it is she lies on. Mrs. Burns was telling me about her yesterday; she has been to see her."

"But what is she doing here? She isn't going a journey, I should hope."

"Well, she is; that's the queerest part of it. Don't you believe she is going to some religious meeting or other! Going to live in a tent, and be wheeled to the meetings, and all that. And she has the most dreadful sick spells. Perfectly fearful, Mrs. Burns said. They always think she cannot possibly live through the attack, and she is liable to have them any time; yet she goes away in this fashion to attend a meeting! Isn't it the strangest thing you ever heard of?"

The listener, whose eyes had all the time been roving over Jeanie, taking in the details of her condition, now turned away

with a curious smile on her face; the sort of a smile which it was very hard for Fannie Barrett to see.

"Anything for notoriety," she said. (We will hope in the name of courtesy that she did not know how loud her voice was.) "Some people will go through a great deal for the sake of being seen and talked about. I must say, I should think if it was a case of genuine illness, the place for it would be at home; but it is more than likely that imagination has a great deal to do with the suffering."

"Imagination?"

"That or something worse, if there *is* anything worse than a diseased imagination. Why, my dear, you know there are impostors of all sorts. If they can be supported by feigning illness, or very unusual and startling conditions of body, it is sometimes the easiest way. I knew of a girl who was supposed not to have taken a step in several years, but it was found that, when night came, and there was no danger of callers, she would move about as briskly as anybody."

"What an idea! Well, but this girl is a genuine case; ever so many people know her. Mrs. Burns says she has a great many calls."

"I dare say. People of that stamp like nothing better. Witness their exhibiting themselves in a railroad depot. I shouldn't have much faith in it. Who ever heard of an illness that obliged one to have her limb strapped to a lounge? I don't believe a word of that, at least."

Poor Jeanie could not move away from this tongue which burned her so. Not only was one limb most effectually strapped to the couch, but the other might have been, for all the power of movement there was in it, save when the convulsions seized her. But, even under this fire, her face was calm. She had not been able to sleep much the night before; but she had been able to pray, and a shield had been built up between her and all weapons of warfare.

Not so Fannie. Her face was so black that Jeanie's hand sought hers with a loving pressure, and her low voice said, "Fannie, dear, remember they do not know us; and it does seem strange to them to think I am voluntarily going away from home. Darling, you need not mind it if I do not. Let me remember your face as gentle and sweet."

And Fannie struggled with the passion which surged through her, and tried to smile for Jeanie's sake. And then the train came, and passion was lost in a tumult of anxiety lest the brawny train men, who came now for their living freight, should injure their precious charge.

"That is refinement for you!" sneered one of the still watching women. "Imagine a woman being willing to be shoved into the freight-car like a parcel of goods!"

But her voice was mercifully lost in the din and confusion. The strong smoke-blackened faces of the train boys wore no sneers. They carried their burden with infinite care. There was no shoving. Jeanie was set down as gently as a mother could have done it; and, when she turned her bright eyes on them, and uttered her low "Thank you for being so careful," they lifted their sooty caps.

"My, but that's hard, Bill!" said one of them, as he walked away; and he brushed the back of his hand across his eyes.

19. In “Father’s House”

Midnight and silence. The moon looked down on the grounds dotted over with white tents all closed and hushed to rest. Within the great tented tabernacle a single light shone like a dim taper, revealing there, if any human eyes had been watching, a curious sight. Wheeled into the very center of the platform was Jeanie Barrett’s couch; her eyes not closed, but large and bright, and full of a strange joy.

She was spending the night in her Father’s house. Near her, on an improvised bed, slept the wearied mother; but Jeanie seemed unable to spare the time for sleep. It was such a strange and sweet experience, that she, who had for so many years been held away from the place of prayer, should be able to spend not only her days surrounded by its atmosphere, but that the very night itself should enwrap her in this place sacred to communion with the Lord.

Quite commonplace had been the outward circumstances which had contributed to bring about this state of things. A storm, just at nightfall, of unwonted violence had made the ground and the tents heavy with dampness. When the evening services were over, to the consternation of the watchful mother, it was still raining heavily.

What could be done with her precious charge?

Dampness and exposure, in her delicate state, were almost certain to work mischief. Nothing had looked fairer than the evening when the couch was wheeled across the lawn to the tabernacle. Who would have imagined such a storm?

Mrs. Barrett was not the only one who stood dismayed, consulting with the physician, who shook his head doubtfully, and did not like the idea of exposing the patient to the dampness.

“The fact is, she ought to be at home,” said the doctor, almost irritably. “She is ill enough at this moment to engross all our thoughts. If she were anybody else in the world than the one she is, she would let us know what she is suffering.”

Only Jeanie wore a quiet, untroubled face.

“I know what to do,” she said, as soon as they drew near enough to hear her soft voice. “I am at home,” smiling on the doctor, “in my Father’s house. I cannot think of a sweeter place in which to spend the night; and I have the advantage of every one of you, in that I always carry my bed with me. Let me stay just here, and then I shall be all ready for meeting in the morning, and there will be no question about its being too damp for me to go out. I see it in the doctor’s eyes that he wouldn’t let me come to meeting tomorrow, if I should go home tonight.”

There were dismayed exclamations as to the discomfort, loneliness, and inconvenience in many ways to Jeanie; but she prevailed, largely because there was really nothing else they dared do. The mother was made as comfortable as warm hearts and ministering hands could manage; and, at last, they were left alone in the darkness, save for that one dimly burning lamp, which served only to mark the shadows. Mrs. Barrett slept; but Jeanie waked, and watched and exulted. What an experience she was having during these days! Prayer and song, and the chance every hour, if she would, to speak a low, tender word to some poor soul who was not acquainted with her Father. How could she be thankful enough to the friends who had almost forced her to this meeting? How could she ever show her gratitude to the heavenly Father who had so plainly opened the way, and bade her walk therein, knowing just how rich would be her experience of His love and care, and the sweetness of work for Him?

That night was one for Jeanie to remember. The tabernacle seemed to her to be full of the sweep of angel wings. She listened at times, half expecting their song to burst forth anew, offering peace to the earth. And heaven seemed very near. It was in vain to try to sleep. There was enough bodily pain to keep her from that, if the novelty of her surroundings had not held her captive; but she rested, and, it seemed to her in the dawn of the summer morning, was refreshed as she had not been in years. Some sleeping she had done, and some praying; but for the most part she had lain like a tired child and rested, feeling as though she were in her Father’s arms, and they were strong; stronger than any human arms she had ever known.

Yet, with the morning’s sunshine, and the waking to activity of the sleeping world, she was made to feel that this was not heaven,

but earth; and that there were very human experiences to endure even yet. It was a little thing, and few, perhaps none beside her mother, understood how it tried her. Instead of moving her couch to the quiet and comparatively sheltered side aisle which it had occupied ever since she came, the gentlemen in charge elected that it was to stay on the platform. “We will wheel it to one side,” they said, “so that it will incommode no one. You need not be afraid of that, Miss Jeanie. We would all rather have you here than not; you will help us speak. But it is very damp down below for an invalid, and it will be impossible to shield you from draughts as effectually anywhere else. There is ample room, and the doctor agrees with us heartily that it is the best place—indeed, the only place where he is willing to have you.”

She had to submit, but how it ruffled the sweet calm of her spirits! Once more she wished herself at home, in the little room secure from all curious eyes; for the time she felt willing to forego all the privileges of the Sabbath day to which she had been looking forward, if she could but hide away. How many battles there were to be fought! If only all that congregation, which presently gathered, and looked at her fully as much as she had feared they would, could know how she shrank from staying there, how she had plead to be set down below! But they would think she had coveted prominence and notoriety.

“Well, what then?” said a soft voice in her heart at last. “Jeanie, *My* Jeanie, is it possible you cannot hold yourself willing to be misunderstood and spoken lightly about, even yet? Have you forgotten how *I* was said to cast out devils through the prince of devils?” It held her still, that whisper. She must not have her way, it seemed, even about so little a thing; and she surely might remember that the “servant was not greater than his Lord.”

She had gotten into utmost calm of face and heart long before the praise service began—a calm which I think would not have been moved by the remarks, which certainly were numerous, to the effect that they should think that sick girl would dreadfully hate to be so conspicuous, and that the place for such people was at home.

It was during this day’s services that she noticed, more than once, a gentleman wandering at intervals through the tabernacle with a listless, disinterested expression, as though he was by

accident *with* this company, but not *of* them. She called her mother's attention to him.

"Mamma, he has a face like Bert's—restless, you know. There is no repose in his eyes. I don't believe he is happy. I wish he would come and speak to me."

"Shall I tell him you would like to see him, daughter? You know they are all willing to speak to you."

Jeanie considered.

"No, mamma: I have a feeling that he might not like it. If he comes this way again I will give him one of my cards; then I can tell whether it will be best to say a word."

The cards were some which had been prepared at her wish. They had simply her name, Jeanie Barrett, and this sentence in plain text: "Are you saved by grace?"

Watching her opportunity, Jeanie presently had it when few were in the tabernacle, and none in her immediate vicinity. The gentleman passed quite near her couch, regarding her with a sort of respectful curiosity. She held forth her bit of pasteboard, and smiled. He took it, and read the sentence attentively.

"You are helpless, they tell me?" he said, at last. It could hardly be said to be an answer to her question, and he did not speak as though he expected any answer; so she waited. "If doing a trifle for a poor cripple makes a man a Christian," he said, lightly, "why, I am one; otherwise, not."

His hand was in his pocket as he spoke, and he drew out and laid on her couch a two-dollar bill, then walked away. The tears were very near the surface then. How utterly had he misunderstood her! There was much of that to bear. The curious crowd, who could conceive of no reason why she should be in this public place, but as a sort of professional beggar, making capital of her afflictions.

It took more grace than some of us have to be thankful for that two-dollar bill—to regard it with kind eyes, and put it away with a prayer for the giver. Yet the feeling of special interest in this one returned, and, during the day, Jeanie's prayer was often for him. He seemed to have disappeared from the grounds, for she saw nothing of him. Just at nightfall, however, in the interval between the afternoon and evening services, he came suddenly to her side,

with a basket of very choice peaches, which he said he had bought on purpose for her.

The smile with which she accepted them had no bitterness in it, and the little word which she had planned to say to him, if the chance offered, was spoken earnestly. He took it with utmost coolness.

"I appreciate your good intentions," he said; "but I will be frank with you, and save future trouble. I came to these grounds for rest and amusement—nothing else. They are pleasant and quiet enough for my purpose. I am a skeptic. All this religious fervor, which I see about me, does no harm, because I think the people, many of them, believe what they are saying; but, for myself, I believe in nothing."

There was no wish on Jeanie's part to argue with him. She had stronger weapons of warfare than that. She did not even express any dismay, only a quiet word of assurance for herself, such as it was evident nothing he might say could shake, and a wish for him. But the wish grew in power after he had left her; and her prayer during the evening of prayer which followed, was constantly that he might be called out of darkness.

It was a wonderful evening. There were many to pray for, who asked to be remembered; and there was manifestly One present who heard and answered prayer. With the early prayer-meeting of the next day came the stranger friend again. His good-morning was very kind. What could he do for her? he asked.

He was very gently thanked, and assured that kind friends were attending to all her wants. And then Jeanie said she wanted most of all this thing: that he would come into the light of the knowledge which was hers, and that she was constantly praying for this.

His face clouded, and his manner became ceremonious.

"Let me beg," he said, earnestly, "that you will not distress yourself for me. I assure you there is no occasion. I am here on pleasure, for nothing else. If I have peculiar ways of finding it, they are, nevertheless, satisfactory ways to me. I would like to serve you. In pursuit of my own pleasure simply, I do not see, just at present, how I could better further it than to be of service to you. If there is any way in which I can, will you increase my pleasure holiday by allowing it?"

His ambition to be of service took very tangible forms. He went away almost immediately, but appeared soon after with a tray, on which was set as dainty a breakfast as could be served on the grounds. Seating himself beside her, he ministered to her, making himself very agreeable, and anticipating her needs with the air of one long accustomed to such helpfulness.

"I know you are surprised at my skill," he said, at last, trying to speak lightly, but evidently hiding a strong feeling of some sort; then, suddenly throwing aside his attempt at playfulness, his face grew grave as he said, "I will tell you something. It may help you in letting me find my pleasure where I will. It is twelve years since I lost the dearest friend I had on earth. She lay for five years as you are lying now. You forcibly remind me of her, as well as of the promise which I made her, and have tried to keep—to be kind to the suffering. Will you let me be your friend for her sake?"

There were sympathetic tears in Jeanie's eyes before the sentence closed. Five years of lying still, such as she had done, and then heaven! And because of her ministry of suffering, this friend was passing through the world bestowing kindnesses on strangers. Oh, to be able to help him turn his sad eyes on the One who suffered a stranger in this world for his sake!

Certainly he had many ways of finding his own pleasure. During the few days which now remained of the meeting he did not for an hour forget the couch where Jeanie lay. Flowers, fruits, delicacies, kind and gentle words, thoughtful attentions offered at just the moment of need. What a care-taking friend he was! Jeanie thought often of that other couch where she had lain for whose sake he was ministering.

"I know him," one of her friends among the ministers had said to Jeanie, on the first day of her meeting him. "He is a fine man from Boston; very sad-hearted; in the darkness as thick as night. If you can help him to get a glimmer of the light, it will make your crown the brighter."

But she could not feel that she made any advance on that subject. Her new friend would listen to her with a sort of gentle patience, and draw her thoughts as soon as possible to another topic. She gave over trying to talk with him. He did not need such instruction as she could give—at least, he did not know his need,

and, therefore, could not take instruction; but she never gave over her constant prayer.

His interest and attention extended to anything which seemed to interest her. The children who always gathered about Jeanie became his special friends, on whom to lavish candies and creams, and all merry kindnesses. When the meeting finally closed, he lingered to see Jeanie fairly started on her homeward journey, giving skilled help, so that the journey was undertaken with much less pain than the other had been. At the last moment it was found that he could accompany her party a short distance, and still make connection for his own journey. This he did, in order to be ready to assist Jeanie from the train at the point where they were to spend the night.

But she spent more than the night. Despite all their care and thoughtfulness, before she was fairly settled in her room she was in the grasp of the convulsive pain which at such regular intervals had her in possession. Days and nights of agony followed, and among those who watched anxiously for the result was the stranger friend.

She rallied again, as she had so often done before, contrary to the fears of all about her; and he came, on the morning of her birthday, to say good-bye. He had learned, incidentally, that it was her birthday, and seized it as an occasion for lavishing upon her all sorts of delicate and thoughtful gifts.

“You have done so much for me!” she said, simply, holding his hand in good-bye with her thin and wasted one. “So much!”

There was a whole world of wistfulness in her earnest tone, but he would not answer it plainly. He averted his face, and his voice was husky.

“It is nothing compared with what you have done for me.”

How much did the sentence mean? She was obliged to be content with it, and to present it before her heavenly Father, and inquire of him if, indeed, it meant that this wandering soul was struggling into the light.

He went away almost immediately; but, as he gave her hand one more good-bye pressure, he left in it a paper, folded carefully.

“It is for you, to do with as you please,” he said, and gave her no chance for words.

It was a fifty-dollar bank-note.

“Mamma, oh, mamma!” said Jeanie, showing her gift, “the heavenly Father sent this to you. He knew just how that debt at home troubles you. Here is a chance to pay it. Mamma, do you think he has showed me some of this kindness because his heart is drawn a little toward my Savior? If I could only know that!”

But for that knowledge Jeanie had to wait and trust. Still, her heart was so hopeful over it, that often her prayer took the form of thankfulness that the heavenly Father had overcome her pride, and cast aside the obstacles in the way, and sent her to the meeting, where her soul feasted on His love, and she had a chance to “speak His beauty.”

20. The Hardest Part

“Don’t you think you may be tempted to spend too much money in those ways, my dear? I don’t want to hurt your feelings, and I know you need some amusement; but, then, people talk a great deal, and, in your circumstances, you know, one cannot be too careful.”

The speaker was a lady, attired according to the latest prescribed rules of fashion. Her rich black silk was exquisitely made and trimmed, the many rows of small buttons having a kind of fascination for Jeanie’s weary eyes, as she found herself vainly trying to count them. The heat of the small room had compelled the visitor to throw aside her rich furs, and reveal the many buttons not only, but the small, exquisitely set diamond, which gleamed and flashed with every bend of the shapely neck. Nothing was lacking to make up a beautiful picture. Elegant in its simplicity the lady’s toilet would have been called. Nothing about her was showy; nothing about her was imitation. From the frill of lace in her neck, clasped with the aforesaid tiny diamond, to the glove-kid of her shapely boot, everything was real. She was one of those who hated imitations, and would have none of them.

Jeanie, weary with the effort to keep her mind within range of the talk which had been poured out upon her, opened her eyes in some surprise now, and tried to take in the thought expressed. *She* extravagant! That was a new idea. If there was any shadow of excuse for suggesting it, certainly it must be looked into; for their circumstances were, indeed, as low apparently as they could get if any of them were to live.

The winter was a hard one; and, though the fancy articles in the little show-case were “real” enough, and represented many hours of toil and many prayers, it was a painful fact that few sales were made. Mrs. Marble, for instance, who was spending an hour with her this morning, because she was on her district, and she wanted to do her share in helping the afflicted, had never bought a penny’s worth of the wools or cottons.

“Mere rubbish, my dear!” she explained to a younger lady who once came with her, and who ventured to hint that they might “help the afflicted” by buying some of her work. “Not worth buying. What could we do with them but put them in the waste-bag? One is just encouraging a false sense of independence by buying such things. I would rather give money out and out.”

This was a new idea. The younger lady weighed it, wondering vaguely whether it would bear analyzing; whether there wasn’t a great deal of false logic about it, somehow; but she was timid—much under the influence of the formidable “they” represented to her by Mrs. Marble—so she dared not peep. It is true she came again, alone, one morning, when she had gotten somewhat above the thraldom by a breezy talk with her husband, and bought two kitchen aprons which did her second girl excellent service; but she had not gotten where she dared mention the circumstance to Mrs. Marble. They are very patient slaves, these little women!

Well, there were other Mrs. Marbles, or else they were merely thoughtless people, who came and went, and left their tracts, which Jeanie always liked, and exhorted her to be patient, which she always was, and exhorted her to try to help herself just a little, and see if it would not do her good. And on those she smiled patiently, and whispered a prayer for them after they were gone—not with the exact words, but with something of the spirit of Him who prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” She knew they were sincere, many of them, and hopelessly ignorant of her disease, or its ravages.

And the winter crowded and pressed this family. The flour was low, very low. The coal seemed to waste frightfully despite the most rigid economy. The boy brother worked daily beyond his strength, and looked forward to the time when he should be a man, and take care of Jeanie and mother. He always put it so, because the mother had brought them all up to put Jeanie first, even as she did. And Jeanie looked forward to that time, too, with happy hopefulness, believing in her heart that “Jimmie,” the good boy, would be sometime the good man who would take care of mother—not of her, for surely, long before that time the heavenly Father, who had taken such care of her these years and years, would call her to His presence. This was Jeanie’s stronghold of hope.

But now about the “spending too much money.”

Just what did Mrs. Marble mean? Her wondering eyes asked the question, and Mrs. Marble explained.

“I mean the letters, my dear; you say you write so many. Of course, it is a trifle; yet every trifle helps, when one is entirely dependent on others. And, really, postage counts up quite rapidly, to say nothing of paper and pens. Do you think it is just right, my dear, to use the money intended for your support in this way?”

There was a little pink flush on Jeanie’s face, which had been unusually pale for several weeks. She turned her eyes suddenly toward the kitchen door. Yes, it was closed. Fannie could not hear this. She was glad. But her voice was sweet.

“Dear Mrs. Marble, that is my little work which my heavenly Father lets me do. I write to the poor, and the sorrowful, and the tempted. Men who have no friends, poor fellows who have been kind to me on the train, or in the freight- house, or somewhere; boys who are trying to break the habit of intemperance, and who will receive a word from me sometimes, just because they know I am laid aside, and can do nothing.”

“Oh, yes!” Mrs. Marble said. “That is all very well occasionally, as a sort of amusement to you. Of course, you cannot think, my child, that your little simple letters can really reach these hardened persons! Why, great men, who are giving their thousands to try to reach them, are making failures of it. I think, myself, they are most of them beyond reach. But that is not to the purpose. The question is, whether you, to whom every penny should be precious, ought, even to help you pass away the time, to spend much, if any, in this way. I just throw out the thought for you to think of. I know you are conscientious. I suppose it may not have occurred to you. And now, my dear, would you like me to read a few verses to you before I go?”

“If you please,” said Jeanie, gently.

Always the verses were helpful, and her eyes were strangely tired during these days. There were hours together when she could not read at all.

So Mrs. Marble’s cultured voice gave out the music. She opened her Bible at random, being one of those who believe that, so it is the Bible, it is of little consequence which portion.

She asked for no preference of Jeanie's, and read, "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods." On, through the searching story to the words, "After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them; *then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, and I was afraid.*"

She read quite through the story with her even voice, and closed the book and went away. She did not offer to pray; she did not feel herself called upon to pray in public. She believed that one's devotions should be done in sacred seclusion.

She left Jeanie alone, but unquiet. The peace of the morning had been disturbed. Jeanie belonged to the class of Christians who carry always a "fallible front," as I have heard an eminent man of God express it. That is, unless her opinion was built on a clear "thus saith the Lord," she was ready to say, "It may be I am mistaken. I will look at this thing again, and ask my way."

Now, here was this letter writing upon which her heart had settled lovingly as an accepted channel through which her Father was glad to have her work. Many letters—that is, many compared with the strength and time at her disposal—went out from that lowly couch, and found their way to hearts about which Mrs. Marble will never know anything until they are shown her in the strong light of eternity. Direct and unmistakable fruit had come of this seed-sowing, in very many instances the bread sown having already been returned to her. Souls had been saved through this instrumentality. The evidence was abundant, and not of a sort to be doubted.

"And yet," said Jeanie, turning her head wearily on her pillow—it was the only part of her body which could change position— "it may be I do too much of it, spend too much, We are very poor; it is not my money. Perhaps I have no right; but the silver and the gold are His. I thought He gave me the right; I thought it was my one little talent. He is not a hard Master; I am not afraid we shall starve. But I want to do just right. I must ask Him. When I am rested, I must inquire my way. It may be I have wandered out of the path."

She pushed away the little tablet and the pencil which were the only implements her position would allow, and tried to rest, to get

strength to think. Her letter was half finished. An important letter she had thought it, but she would not finish now. The spring had gone out of her thoughts, some way. She must wait.

All day she thought and prayed at intervals over this question. Not a word to her mother: she would be too sympathetic with her darling's moods to be an unprejudiced adviser. Not a word to Fannie: *she* would have felt like devouring Mrs. Marble for hinting such a thing. Jeanie smiled a little over the thought of the tumult there would be in her intense young sister's heart if she had heard the morning visitor. It was such a good thing that that kitchen-door had been closed! Fannie had quite enough to bear.

So tired was she with her thoughts, and so flushed was her face, that the ever-watchful mother forbade all visitors for the rest of the day. Only at nightfall Fannie came with a petition.

"Mamma, Grandfather Gaines is at the door with that cunning little granddaughter, and Jeanie wants to see them. He says he will not stay but a minute. Little Kate has something for Jeanie."

So little Kate and her grandfather came in; they were wise callers. The grandfather had only a hand-clasp, and a hearty "God bless thee, my sister;" and little Kate, shy and sweet, had her own tiny purse, the contents of which she, with downcast eyes, emptied on the white spread which covered Jeanie's couch, and whispered low, "They are to make letters out of."

A little regiment of three-cent pieces!

"She means for postage," explained the grandfather. "She has heard that thee writes letters which help people to be good, and she wants to help."

Did the heavenly Father send her? Certainly it was on the question about which His child had just been asking guidance. Fannie captured the three-cent pieces with much laughter, after the little giver was gone, and counted them.

"You will have to write sixty-six letters to use all these," she said. "I suppose it would not do to borrow any. The sort I should write would not meet the conditions."

Her merriment was to cover a tender feeling which came over her whenever she thought of those little letters so carefully and prayerfully written.

Jeanie slept quietly that night. It seemed to her undoubted that her answer, for the time, at least, had come.

“Jeanie, are you out of paper?” was the question her mother asked next morning, when she had made her child fresh and dainty for the day.

“No,” said Jeanie, startled a little. She was thinking about it. Sixty-six letters with postage provided; but there were not sheets enough left for so many. “No, I have quite a little. Why, mamma?”

“Because the express brought a great package this morning—enough to last for months, I should think; and I wondered if the Lord had told someone you were ready for more.”

Jeanie’s face was beautiful to see just then.

“I am not out yet, mamma; but I think He had a reason for telling someone about it just now.”

Before the morning was done, she was ready to laugh over her anxiety of yesterday, and to joy in the multitude of answers; for the mail brought a letter from the absent brother, away at his work—a bright, hopeful letter, a post-office order enclosed for his mother, and then this sentence, “Mother, one dollar of this is special money: belongs to the work, you know. I want it given to Jeanie for paper or stamps, or whatever in that line she needs.”

“What is the matter, dear?” asked her mother, watching the laughing eyes. “Was there danger of a famine? “

“No, mamma; only a little bewilderment as to my right to the supply. But He has answered me.”

However, she kept her own counsel about Mrs. Marble.

“What is the very hardest part of it all, Jeanie?” This was Fannie’s question one evening after they had been going over together—the mother and Jeanie, Fannie listening, but occasionally adding her word—the story of the marked leadings which had been theirs for years—the straitened hours when they could not think where the next flour was to come from, or how the rent was to be paid, or how more coal could be managed, and the unfailing Hand which always supplied just in the hour of their extremity.

The mother and her invalid daughter had both reached the height of trust where they were willing and grateful over receiving these blessings at their Father’s hand from day to day; but Fannie, with her younger, undisciplined, passionate nature, longed for the time when they could be sufficient to themselves, when there

would be no more occasion for expressing gratitude to any but God.

She was looking at Jeanie curiously, thinking of these things; wondering if the girl who, even yet, showed such constant energy about helping herself, whose brain was untiring in its efforts to help eke out the family needs, had really gotten away above the human pride of having to accept where she wanted to earn? Very self-sufficient had Jeanie been; very self-reliant she was, even now, in her physical helplessness. Did she carry a secret pain about these things?

"The hardest part?" Jeanie repeated, gently.

"Yes; the hardest to endure. I don't mean the pain, of course. We can see for ourselves how fearful that is. But I mean other things, which haven't to do with actual suffering—at least, physical suffering—but are hard to bear."

Jeanie considered, her face thoughtful, a trifle sad; yet the answer, when it came, was preceded by the soft little laugh which was peculiar to her. "I am almost ashamed to answer you honestly, Fannie, because it seems very ungrateful in me; but I do sometimes feel almost like fretting because I have so little time for reading."

"Reading!" repeated Fannie, arresting her flying needle midway, and turning her eyes fully on her sister. They were alone, and could be confidential, Mrs. Barrett having gone to the kitchen to make some preparation for the night.

"Yes; reading in the Bible, you know. One will take time for prayer, of course; but a very little while spent on my Bible is all that I feel I can conscientiously give when my fingers can do anything toward meeting the expenses. There are so many days when I can do nothing—neither knit nor read—that I feel as though I ought to work hard when I can; and sometimes I am almost fretty, down in my heart, because I cannot, with a good conscience, take time to study out some subject in which I have become interested. But, as I tell you, I am ashamed of it. Generally, I feel too glad that I can work at all to have any trouble over it. This is only an occasional feeling; but I think it is the thing which troubles me most—of that which is purely selfish, I mean, of course."

Profound astonishment held Fannie quiet. This was the furthest possible from any answer which she had expected. There was connected with it a feeling other than that of astonishment. It struck this young girl as a strangely pitiful thing that one so utterly and hopelessly afflicted as her sister could not even conscientiously command her poor little bits of time, and do with them what she would! And yet it was true that Jeanie's swift-flying fingers had much to do with supplying the ever-recurring family needs. Poor Fannie watched her opportunity, and furtively brushed away the mist that was blinding her eyes. Certainly poverty was a bitter thing!

21. I Am Anchored

It was a day when the shades were drawn close in the little house, and when people who went and came used only the back-door, and stepped lightly and spoke in whispers. The neighbors, who had learned to know the signs, said, one to another, “Poor Jeanie is suffering again.”

Then they discussed the problem of her suffering.

“It really does seem,” one would say, “as though there might be something found to help her. She struggles so bravely with the disease herself, that I should think it would be half the battle. Talk about will-power! She has enough, I am sure, to perform miracles with, almost. If I were a doctor, I would study into the case until I found something to relieve her.”

“It can’t be said that plenty of them have not tried hard,” another would volunteer. “Our doctor says it is a case which excites general interest, that physicians come from long distances just to examine into it for their own sakes. And when she was away last year, they say there was hardly a day but some physician called and questioned her. The disease baffles them, that is evident.”

“It only goes to show what little progress the science of medicine has made, with all its boasting,” declared the first speaker. And she added, with energy, “I wish I were a doctor!”

They laughed at this. But they checked the laugh suddenly, and looked over at the little house, as though almost in fear that the noise had been heard there, and sighed.

They all knew Jeanie, and loved her. Yet few of them, with all their interest and sympathy, understood the fearful character of her sufferings. Only the sister, whose heart bled over every throb; only the mother, who controlled all outward expression of her grief, in order to be able to care for her darling; only the doctor, who looked on, powerless at times, could have told anything like a true story of the conflicts during those hours of agony. And they were

silent, because there are some things which can be felt and not described.

"Mamma," said Jeanie, speaking in a louder tone than she had been able to use for some time; a startled tone. "Put your hand on my limb."

Instantly the direction was obeyed, and the thrill of despair which went to the mother's heart cannot be described. Yet, to the uninitiated, there would have seemed cause for thanksgiving. The steady throbbing, almost like the pulsations of an engine at its work, which could at all times be distinctly felt in the diseased limb, had suddenly ceased.

Only Jeanie and her mother knew what this portended. They had been warned. Still, Mrs. Barrett controlled face and voice.

"Is the pain in the head very bad, my darling?"

"Oh, mamma, dreadful! I almost cannot help shrieking out. And in my eyes it feels like knives cutting every way at once. Oh, mamma! Pray that it may be death instead of the other." Yes, the mother could pray that prayer in all earnestness. Better death than such agony of pain. She had felt that many times before. But better a hundred times such a death as Jeanie's would be, rather than to have reason forever dethroned; and this, the doctors had said repeatedly, would be the alternative if ever the disease left the limb and touched the brain.

Oh, the misery of the days that followed! I am glad, really, that my pen is utterly unable to describe the scene. All that ever went before seemed to the lookers-on but as play in the presence of the tortures of the present.

Unnumbered times the cry went up from the mother's heart, "It is enough, Lord; give her rest. Let the tortured body die."

Yet she did not die. There came a day when she lay quiet, passive, breathing, conscious; for, whenever her mother moved from her, there was a feeble little motion of the fingers of the right hand, which continued until the mother touched them again; and then they rested. Deaf; for she made no answer, and attempted none, to the tender words which love murmured in her ear. Yet the lips always parted in a loving smile in answer to the touch of a caressing hand. Blind; for her eyes, though open at times, had a set, unnatural look, and did not even follow her mother's movements, and they had never failed of that before.

“Yes,” said Jeanie in speaking of it afterward, “I could hear a little; but the trouble was, you did not speak to the right ear; the other was entirely sealed. I did not know it for a while; but I discovered that when mamma bent toward the right side and spoke distinctly, I could hear her voice and understand some of the words.”

But this was days afterward.

“And were you conscious all the time?” I asked her.

“Not just at first. I was only half alive. I thought I was a little boat tossed about on the ocean, and the waves dashed high and filled me so I was all but sinking. But I kept saying to myself, ‘No, I shall not sink; for I am anchored. I am anchored to Jesus.’ But that dazed feeling passed, and then I began to realize the presence of my enemy. I have learned often during my sickness a lesson from Satan. He is the most persistent and daring of foes. Wouldn’t you have thought he would consider me too far gone to bother with? But he hovered about me, and kept murmuring in that one ear, ‘What will you do now? You are a wreck, sure enough! Helpless, utterly. Just a little fluttering of one hand is all the movement you can make. What about work now? One hand was not made to work alone. No more letters! Blind people cannot write. Why, you cannot even pray for anybody! You know you cannot keep your mind on a sentence connectedly, to save your poor, miserable, worthless life.’ How well I remember all the reasoning! And how it tormented me! But he could not drive me to despair. There was still the memory of that little boat, and of its being anchored. I clung to the thought, now that I realized I was a soul, and not a boat. ‘I am anchored,’ I said. ‘The body is nothing: it is only a shell. He can do with it as he will; my soul is anchored to Christ.’ And He gave me such a victory, lying there speechless, blind, deaf, helpless! I was enabled to say it so firmly that, had I been given voice, I think I would have shouted it, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan. If I can never do anything else, I will raise this finger, which I can move, and hold it up for Jesus.’”

Do you remember that verse, “Then the devil leaveth Him, and angels came and ministered unto Him”? I am always reminded of it when I think of the smile on Jeanie’s face when she told me this story. But all this was long afterward.

By degrees she crept back to what she called health again. Hearing in full acuteness returned to her. But for eight long months the bandaged eyes were kept carefully from every ray of light, and it was many months after that before she was able to use them again. Perhaps the hardest thing for Jeanie to bear, during those long, long days, was enforced idleness. The drawn fingers gradually recovered their ordinary suppleness, and fairly longed to be at work; for, meantime, the need for work did not grow less pressing. The most rigid economy was at all times practiced in the little household, but even skilled economists cannot live on nothing.

Jeanie had many friends, and they constantly remembered her, else, indeed, it would seem as though the family could not have lived at all. But to depend on the thoughtfulness of outside friends for daily supplies is certainly a precarious and painful way of living at the best. For people of refined and tender feelings it had its bitter side, unless, indeed, one is able to abide on the heights, where Christian fellowship means exactly what it was intended. To be able to take daily and gracefully as a gift what one would gladly supply with one's own right hand requires a great degree of faith in the Great Head which, perhaps, few persons possess.

At last a bright thought came to Jeanie. Those idle hands were a constant pain. It was painful to the lookers-on to see them feel about in the darkness for something to grasp, which would interest them a little. One day she begged for her wools and crochet-needle. She knew she could learn to use them. What were fingers worth if they must lie in idleness when they were the only things about her which had not forgotten how to move? So Fannie became the patient teacher, feeling occasionally a passing gladness that the sightless eyes could not know of the tears which filled her own over such pitiful attempts to serve.

But the learner was in earnest. If henceforth her light on this side was to be darkness, at least she would make the best of it. She struggled bravely, and conquered. In an incredibly short time the fingers were moving as rapidly as they used to, and the gleaming needle shot in and out among the intricate stitches without mistake, and little delicate fabrics grew under her hands.

“How do you see to do it?” questioned little Kate, in one of her visits, watching with eager, fascinated eyes the rapid passages of the crochet hook.

Jeanie’s laugh was silvery sweet.

“I have eyes in the ends of my fingers, darling, to take the place of those which my Father has closed.”

“Did He give them just to you, for special?” asked the wondering child, in a tone almost of awe.

“I think He did, my darling, though you have made me feel it as I did not before. It is my special gift, I think, to comfort me.”

And, really, it comforted her wonderfully! The hands were rarely idle now in her waking moments. For a time there was great incentive for industry. Sales became quite brisk, and the flying fingers had once more the joy of feeling that they contributed not a little to the family purse.

Neither was the brain by any means idle. Not much connected thinking could she do, but it was wonderful how they fell again into depending on her disconnected bits of thought. Not a family matter of any importance but was talked over before her. At first, only for her amusement, that she might have household life to rest her thoughts upon, but gradually for her clear, keen judgment. Rarely did it miss its aim, and very soon they fell again into the habit of waiting for her suggestions before making any important movement. “We will wait and see what Jeanie thinks” was the reply to every project which came up.

So once more Jeanie, on her couch, bore well and bravely her share of life’s burdens, the wise mother knowing that to attempt to hide them from her would only make the weight heavier.

As the world began to think of spring, a new interest sprang up in Jeanie’s world; rather, the quickening of an old interest. The movement of the Woman’s Crusade burst on the astonished country, and was hailed by no heart with more solemn joy than Jeanie’s. To put visibly before the world the power of the weapon which she knew to be so mighty, was what she had longed for many a year. If she could have risen up from her couch, and joined the procession which marched past their door, joined them only once, and, above all, knelt with them and prayed, she felt that she could have come back and lain down for years more.

“If I could only kneel down just once, mamma,” she said, wistfully, but the smile played almost instantly above the tears. “It is very foolish! As though I could not pray just as well lying here! Don’t look sorrowful, mamma: I will not say it again. I shall kneel before the visible throne one of these days, and see the King in His beauty, and that will be enough for me.”

But if she could not join the processions, she joined the company who tarried in the court-house to pray. Day after day was her couch wheeled to the place of prayer, and her sweet, pale face told its story of earnest sympathy in the work. What a chance it was to work for souls! So many of the sorely tempted dropped in there, and, fascinated by the light of the eyes to which sight was slowly returning, and won by the gentle sweetness of the voice, let themselves be led step by step to the Refuge wherein alone they were safe.

Oh, yes! Jeanie was a crusader, and only in heaven will it be known how much of the glorious work which was accomplished in the place where she lived can be traced directly to her instrumentality.

But there was something to bear, even yet, from tongues. By that mysterious process which no one seems to understand, there floated often to Jeanie remarks made by thoughtless or heartless tongues about the folly of her exposing herself to such unnecessary scrutiny as this; about the unfitness of a girl who had been sick all her life for such work; about the unwisdom of permitting all sorts of characters to come about her; about the boldness of it all, in supposing that there were not women enough on their feet to do what there was to do; about her pride in imagining that her presence and words could be of any use; about the impossibility of her being such a sufferer as some people said, when she would voluntarily expose herself to such scenes as were now going on; about what a queer mother she must have to permit such an unusual and unwarrantable proceeding.

This last always made Jeanie wince a little. It had grown almost easy to bear her own share of tongues; but that dear, long-suffering mother! She had constantly to remind herself of what Christ bore in the flesh from the piercings of tongues, and to tell herself that the servant, even though that servant was her blessed mother, was not above her Lord.

It was not the praying ones who talked. Oh, bless your heart, no! They met Jeanie daily with kisses, or tender, grateful words, or silent benedictions which meant even more than words. It was the surface people, the lookers-on, the curious, who were in a semi-condemnatory state about the entire movement, and were only withheld from giving it the sharpened arrows from their tongues because it was a movement led by some of their brightest society names, and because what "they" did was really not a legitimate subject for open criticism.

Among those who utterly disapproved of Jeanie during these days was her old friend and cousin, Bert Halsted. He had appeared on the scene but a few days before, the same discontented, disappointed man he was when she last saw him. His eyes had not materially improved. Without being quite useless, they still gave him a great deal of trouble; kept him from his favorite pursuits, and thwarted all his ambitions in life. Neither had affliction as yet improved him. When Jeanie referred to his trial, and suggested how fully she could sympathize with him now, he replied almost sullenly that he should think it need make very little difference to one who was laid aside in every other way whether she could see or not.

He came into the court-house one afternoon, intense disapproval, not to say disgust, speaking in every line of his face.

"I heard you were here," he began; "but I could not believe it possible. Jeanie, why in the world should you act so out of all reason? I don't know what Aunt Eliza can be thinking of!"

She turned on him pleasant eyes, and spoke gently.

"Why, Bert, it is very quiet here; and it is my little chance to help the work along."

"Help! What possible good do you suppose you can do by exposing yourself to ridicule in this way? It really looks, Jeanie, as though your mind was growing weak, which is what some people say."

She did not reply. In fact, there was not opportunity. At that moment, the door opened, and closed again with a bang; and a young fellow, almost a boy, indeed, but wearing a face which told that he was old in the ways of temptation, brushed past others who were also entering, his whole manner eager and excited.

“Where is she?” he asked. “Where’s that woman? They said she was here.” Then, as his eye caught sight of Jeanie, he rushed forward. “I didn’t drink it,” he said, “not a drop. I fought. They wanted me to. I said ‘No, not a drop,’ and I didn’t; but there are forty devils after me. Oh, what am I to do? Can you pray?” And he dropped on his knees beside the couch, his frame trembling with excitement.

The room hushed into utmost silence. Nothing could be heard save the low murmur of Jeanie’s voice, as she rested her hand on the shoulder of the kneeling man. She was praying for him, so much was apparent; as for the words, only he and God could hear. But that they were heard and answered became presently apparent, too, to the dullest eyes present. The trembling form quieted; the strong, almost convulsive sobs, which he had occasionally given ceased; and his face, hidden from view, bowed lower and lower, and remained in that position long after Jeanie’s voice had ceased. Presently he rose, his face quiet.

“Thank you,” he said, and he gave her such a smile as was good to remember. “He heard every word you said, you may be sure of that, and it is all right now. I don’t think I’ll ever want it again. I don’t feel as though I should. I don’t know, Miss Jeanie, but it *seems to me as though he said so*.”

He went away almost immediately, and Jeanie looked about for Bert with a smile. He might say what he would now, the power to sting her was gone. What mattered it if they thought her mind was *entirely* gone, so long as the Lord let her use it in leading a tempted soul into refuge!

22. My Little Simple Story

There was a good deal of subdued excitement in the Barrett home. The neat little rooms wore a sort of holiday attire; and interested neighbors were passing back and forth, busy with hospitable plans. The immediate attraction was, as usual, Jeanie's room.

Thither went Dr. Pierce, her pastor, immediately on his arrival, and certain other privileged ones followed him soon, while around the door were gathered still others, looking in with interested eyes.

The occasion was the reception of a new and improved couch, or chair, for Jeanie; or, as she phrased it, she was moving into a new house, to begin life afresh. A long story was connected with that chair, if only I had time to tell it. I know not how many sacrifices it represented, nor how many loving hearts had been engaged in making them. I doubt if even Jeanie herself knows. It used to be one of her sorrows at that time, that she could not know and remember all those who gave of their abundance, or, perhaps, of their little, for her comfort.

"It is such a satisfaction to me to remember that my heavenly Father knows each one by name, and will surely thank them for me," she used to say, her eyes shining; and she would add, with that peculiar intonation which helped you to feel how intensely she realized the truth of these things, "Just think! What if His memory were no better than our poor little weak ones! We cannot remember even the names of our friends!"

I wish I could describe that cot for you; or, better, I wish you could see it for yourselves—walk around it, and examine it in every part, as I have done, and think over the life lived on it. There was something peculiar about it; almost it seemed to me to have voice. What did it seem to Jeanie? It was very new, very unlike anything she had ever seen before.

It was the gift, as I told you, of many friends, and had been to her a complete surprise. On this particular evening she was established in it, and was having her first reception. The marble block, which had been her companion for so long, was gone. Your

face lights up at that, for you think the sufferer must be better, at last; but, if you could examine that cot, you would understand better than I can tell you. It was part of its curious mechanism that it had a box or chest, or coffin, if you please to call it so, which received the limb, and actually bolted and barred it down. It is possible you may never have heard of such a thing, certainly I had not, until I saw Jeanie's; but then, hers was the second one of the kind ever in use.

The inventor, on whose head so many blessings have been called, because of the thought, and its successful working out, had first his own manufactured for—Poor man! He had need to exercise his inventive powers for his own comfort—and then Jeanie's was the next.

You and I cannot understand how it could possibly be a rest and comfort to be taken prisoner with bolts and bars after this fashion; but Jeanie's first thankful sigh, "Oh, how I wish every sufferer in this way could have one!" was often and often repeated, as the days went by. Great had been the pain attendant upon her removal into her new home; but with the first relief came from the grateful heart a wish to thank her friends; therefore this gathering.

She motioned Dr. Pierce to her side, and spoke low. He listened, and nodded, and smiled, then stood up.

"Friends, Jeanie wants her new house dedicated; she wants to use it in the Master's service; she wants to have the words whispered from this couch reach souls, and spring up and bear fruit for heaven. She wants also to bid good-bye to the old chair; and, in doing so, you are asked to join me in prayer for everyone who ever gave to her even so much as a cup of cold water while she rested on it; and, above all, she wants you to remember with peculiar emphasis the .inventor of this new chair, that his suffering life may be always hidden with Christ in God."

So the gala hour ended with song and prayer, and the new home was set up.

By the way, many changes have intervened between this chapter and the last. It is necessary to hasten remorselessly over much that you ought to know, else my story would have no end. You are from this point to think of the Barretts as in a new home, miles away from the one which has sheltered them for the years past. Among strangers, I had almost said at first; but I remembered

that Jeanie Barrett was very rarely among strangers. The atmosphere about her seemed to create friends. It was hard to leave the old home, and the old neighbors; but they had been in the new one only a few weeks when the strangers became friends, and first the minister, then those few kindred souls always to be found in every church, rallied about her, and began to be thought of, and spoken of, as dear friends.

It was always wonderful to Jeanie how quickly they found her out, and gathered about her, and made her one with them. But it never seemed strange to me. Jeanie was so surely a daughter of the Royal House, and bore the stamp of her relationship so distinctly about her, that it was the most natural thing in the world for kindred to claim kinship.

It did not take her three days to become interested in the people about her, and to set to work among them for the Master. There are many experiences connected with this work which I would so like to tell you of. For instance, there was that stormy day when a man, belonging to the class known in common parlance as tramps, passed slowly by the little gate, looked back at it with a sort of longing air, retraced his steps, then passed again, and yet again, and finally presented himself at the kitchen-door, and meekly asked for a bit of bread.

"We are poor," said Mrs. Barrett, in answer to Fannie's questioning look; "but it seems there are others who are poorer. Let the man share with us. So long as we have a loaf we'll divide with the hungry."

And he was seated before the little table, and served neatly to bread that was sweet and good, and even to a bit of meat, "for strengthening," the mother said, with a half-troubled air, as she cut the generous slice. She hardly knew how to spare it, but neither did she know how to deny it.

"He is no common tramp," she said to Jeanie, who, as usual, was observant of, and interested in, everything which went on in the home.

"I noticed his face," Jeanie said, "as he passed the gate. Mamma, when he is through with his dinner, I want to see him just a minute."

The mother opened her mouth to protest, for Jeanie was weaker than usual that day, having passed a suffering night; but the look

on her face someway stopped the words, and Mrs. Barrett only smiled a grave, half-troubled smile, and went to summon the stranger.

He came in readily, and received with civil gratitude the little card and tract she offered him; but, at the first word of kindly sympathy, the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"You would not think it," he said, with a choked voice, "but I belong to the Lord. He has saved me, a poor wreck of a sinner, very near despair; and what there is left of my life is to be given to Him. He led me here this morning, I'm sure of it. I passed your gate three times, and kept corning back, feeling as though I must come into this house. Now I know the reason. The Lord had some food for my soul in here. Oh, yes! I was once a man of means, but I have been very low down. It is the old story. Rum did it. Rum is most always at the bottom of these things. Oh, yes! I'll tell you my bit of story. I am just come a few weeks ago from Cincinnati. I was hunting work, but I couldn't find any. I was almost in despair that afternoon. I went along the street, to a corner where a crowd was gathered, and, just as I was turning away, they began to sing. They sang an old hymn I had heard a good while before:

"'Pass me not, O gentle Savior,
Hear my humble cry;
While on others Thou art calling,
Do not pass *me* by.'

"I can't tell why it was that hymn took such a hold on me. I couldn't get away from it. I wandered on, down to the depot, and crawled into an empty box-car, and tried to go to sleep; but that hymn followed me. I couldn't sleep. It was a night I never shall forget. I was taught how to pray when I was young, and, almost before I knew it, I was praying. And, ma'am, the Lord came after me that night, and took hold of my poor, weak will, and just saved me, as nobody but He can. I don't suppose anybody was ever so happy as I was the next morning. If you'll believe it, ma'am, I, that was such a poor drunkard the night before as to be willing to give my soul for a drink, didn't want the liquor next morning, and haven't wanted it since! The awful thirst for it seems to be gone. I don't know where it went; but, you see, I am weak, and I suppose

He knew I couldn't stand before temptation, so He just took the temptation away."

Jeanie's happy tears were flowing freely before this story was concluded. She had sent for a wandering soul to try to speak a word to save him, and lo! He had already met One mighty to save; and his simple, earnest story gave her own faith a great uplifting.

But you need not think she dismissed him with a tract and a prayer and a bit of bread. Saved he was, but poor indeed; wandering still in search of work, being brought very low for some purpose.

"I've been down in the depths a long while," he said, with a quivering voice; "but I never begged for bread before in my life. The Lord has saved my soul, but I guess He means to show me what fool I have been."

"And now He means to have your brothers and sisters take hold and help you up," Jeanie said, smiling.

Already she knew people in this strange city who kept ever-ready hands and purses for such as these. She lay on her couch and watched the working out of this life-story with infinite delight. She knew the man would find employment, and he speedily did. She felt in her soul that he was one of the Lord's chosen ones, and would remain steadfast, and he did. What a joy it was to watch him pass the window, his head erect, his face aglow with earnest purpose! What a pleasure it was to receive his smile and bow! What a satisfaction it was to hear of him now and again as dropping an earnest word here, holding out his helping hand there, and in every way in his power making known to the world the power of Christ to save! This is only one of many stories which the silent worker on the couch helped to live during the months which followed.

Meantime, a new, and at first alarming, duty loomed up before the shrinking Jeanie, and was urged so persistently that she could not put it from her thoughts.

This was no less a task than to write the story of her experiences for the help and comfort of others.

At first, she treated the thought only with amazed incredulity. *She* write a book! Why, the idea was preposterous! In her early, wild flights of ambition she had never reached in imagination to this. Why should she think of it now, when her long course of

discipline in the school of pain had effectually cut her off from the study in which her heart had taken delight?

"But have you not had peculiar experiences of life?" urged some of her most judicious friends, among them her former pastors, on whose judgment she had been accustomed to lean.

"Have you not been led through strangely darkened rooms, so far as human eyes could discover? Have not your feet more than once touched the verge of the dark valley? And have you not always found a light which shone the brighter as earthly lights faded and paled? Have you not been tried again and yet again in the furnace of unusual and prolonged pain? And has not 'the form of the fourth' been with you each reheating of the furnace?"

"Oh, yes!" could Jeanie answer promptly and sweetly to all these. "It would not be possible for one to bear what I have borne without the sustaining presence and power of Christ."

"And have you not been brought many and many a time to the very edge of physical need? Yet did your Father ever leave you portionless?"

"No; oh, no!" The smile was free and full. "Surely I can testify that He has watched me hourly, and suited the supply to the hourly need."

"Then have you not a story to tell which His honor demands should be told? Are there not other suffering, shrinking ones? Are there not those to whom the furnace door is just opening, and who tremble and shiver, to whom your experience might bring faith and courage? Above all, are you willing to receive of His secret wonders and fail to say, 'Come, and see what the Lord hath done for me'?"

And to these searching questions, poured on her from many sources, Jeanie found herself more and more obliged to answer with silence, realizing as she did so what the silence said for her.

Yet she shrank from the conviction almost more than she had from anything yet. She talked it over often with her constant companion and confidante, her mother.

"It seems really, mamma, as though I *could not.* My little simple story, all the daily twistings and turnings, the suffering, the blasted hopes, the dreadful days and the more dreadful nights laid bare for unsympathetic eyes! If I could only whisper the little story into the ears of those who might be helped by it, I would so gladly

tell it to all; but the great, sneering world, mamma, who will know I have no talent; who will see that my story has no literary merit; who do not love my Lord enough to recognize His footsteps when He walks beside a couch so lowly as mine; who will attribute to me false motives, pride, ambition, money getting—how can I do it?"

But the mother had not much to say. In truth, she knew, as the sufferer did not, that the life lived out on that couch was wonderful. If only the world could be made to understand the story, or to get even a faint shadow of its meaning, surely it might speak for the presence of Christ in the furnace as human experiences in these days rarely had a chance to do.

"It all comes to just this, daughter," she said, at last. "The Lord has certainly let you be a very great sufferer. It wouldn't be a difficult task to prove that. People who know you, and have eyes, do not need any proof. And there are physicians enough interested in the case to prove how little human skill can do for your comfort. If, then, He has proved to your heart's content that His grace is sufficient for you, why, maybe He wants you to tell it to help others of His children. I don't know."

"You too!" said Jeanie, with a loving look and a faint little smile.

"No, daughter; not unless the Lord wants it. He will direct you: He always has."

I think Jeanie knew, even then, how it must end. Shrink from it as she might, she must put her quiet little words to paper, and tell her story, whether the unsympathetic world would heed or forbear. If she could only tell it well, so that the world would have to bow before her King, and own His sovereign power, how gladly would she lay bare her inmost experience for their view. But suppose she opened her quivering heart and told her tale, and then, because it was done so poorly, brought only reproach on the Name she loved? Nay, she must not think of that side. If He would have her witness in this way it was for her to do her best, and let Him use it or not as He would. So in weakness and trembling she began her task, shivering over it as few authors have ever done.

There were many to advise against it. It was too much for her weak frame. It would be a heavy burden of expense for nothing. Such books never sell. It would eat up the time which might be

used to better advantage. It would be impossible to secure a publisher for such a story.

Her cousin Bert wrote her his short, sharp criticism.

"There were too many books now; and it was folly for her, with her limited education, and her utter lack of material, to think of adding to the number. He would not be persuaded by a company of fanatical preachers into anything so wildly absurd, if he were she. People did not want to hear about sickness and poverty; they did not want the *truth* in any form. What they were after was startling fiction."

Jeanie read the letter, listened to the comments and smiled quietly, and went on, as weakness and pain permitted, with her work. It was a cross; how heavy a cross she was almost ashamed to admit even to herself; but she had settled it now that the Lord Jesus would have her bear it. That being the case, she had steadily shouldered it, and it was much too heavy to be shaken about by these little whiffs of criticism.

One little ray of comfort she allowed herself, producing it with a half laugh for her mother's gaze.

"As to finding a publisher, mamma, if the Lord Jesus means it to be published, one will be found; and, if He doesn't, then it will be right for you and me to be glad."

23. I Am to Go

Jeanie's friend and co-laborer sat on the edge of a chair in that uncertain attitude which denotes a bewildered state of mind, and, at the same time, a determination to move in some direction soon. Her face expressed perplexity. The room was book-strewn, as though many people might have been in and out in the course of the day, overturning them; and, in point of fact, this is what they had done—looked at different bindings, commented on the engraving which formed the frontispiece, assured one another that it was a very neat volume, and very cheap, and certainly ought to sell well, being a record of facts; and then, for the most part, had gone on their way, buying nothing.

Jeanie's face was serene, as usual, but thoughtful.

"Well," said her friend, at last, breaking the perplexed silence, "what about Ocean Grove?"

Then the curious little laugh, which was Jeanie's own, rippled out.

"It depends upon your faith. Can you venture on seventy-five cents? It is all I have."

"Well, but, Jeanie Barrett, do you believe we are to go?"

"Not if we have but seventy-five cents to go with. That is equivalent to a direction to stay quietly at home, until the means are provided to go honestly."

"And yet, if I ever saw a duty in my life, I thought it was for you to go to that place."

"So it may be. There are several hours to train-time. I believe if we are to go, the means will be forthcoming in time. There are two hundred books here. It would not require a very large sale to give us money enough to reach there."

"Didn't you write them you would be there on Saturday?"

"My dear Lizzie, I said, 'If it is the Lord's will,' and I certainly meant it."

Lizzie laughed a perplexed laugh, as one only half convinced; but she arose, and began to pile the books in decorous order, ready, so she said, “for other fussy fingers to disarrange.”

Meantime, I have need to go back with you over a thickly-strewn road, and let you take your bearings. The last chapter closed with Jeanie on her couch of suffering. This one opens with the same story; and, for all that appears, the one may have closed yesterday and the other opened today. But the sad fact is, that there intervenes a period of nearly three years!

A marvelous record have those years! I have studied long over the story, wondering how I could give it to you in the brief space which I may use, and I have finally turned the life-pages sorrowfully, knowing that I cannot do it. The utmost is a hint of how the time has passed. So far as daily experiences are concerned, two words might cover a great portion of the history: suffering and poverty.

Always on that couch; often blind from excessive pain; often unable to move even so much as her hand to her face, to brush away a fly; often unable to rest for a moment, day or night, because of pain; often unable to imagine from where the next bread could come, since she knew the last slice had been served for her; yet always remembering that she lay in the hands of Him who fed the five thousand with five loaves, and who said to the sick of the palsy, “I will; be thou whole.”

This, in brief, is her story; and yet how little it tells! How little can any mere *words* tell of that life-history! It seems a pity. If there were only some way for you to know it all!

But there is another, and a curious, part to the record. Do you remember that first journey on the cars to a religious meeting, taken with such fear and trembling, such shrinking from tongues and eyes as can be better imagined by the sensitive than described? It might be almost said that these three intervening years were repeatals of that experience.

Certainly few in health travel more miles, or accomplish more of what is usually called public work, than did Jeanie. The baggage-cars on many great railroad lines became familiar ground to her, and train men her tried and approved friends. Hundreds of miles, westward, southward, she journeyed; always with the same shrinking heart, the same struggle, known only to the mother and

the very few who were admitted to inner confidence; always with the same marked assurance, made plain even to the eyes of close observers around her, that, for some reason not understood by them, nor by her, the Master directed this strange path for her tired body; forced into notoriety of almost every sort, from which her soul shrank; made to feel that, although she was hourly in the furnace of suffering, it was not for even such an one to say, "I cannot," much less, "*I will* not."

Very few understood her. There were even Christians who listened to her clear, quiet, singularly impressive voice, as; the simple, earnest words flowed out to them from the cot placed on the platform of some great church, and went away saying, one to another, that what she said was good, and she seemed to be wonderfully in earnest; but how she could so expose herself to public gaze was beyond their comprehension. Still, people grew used to anything, they supposed: certainly she did not mind it in the least.

Yet the fact was, she never grew used to it; always quivered and trembled over the gazing eyes and the possible words, and shed her hot tears, and prayed her earnest prayer in secret to be shielded; and in public, as often as she felt the way plainly pointed out, bore her cross with quiet voice.

Railroad meetings, held at some depot, waiting sometimes for a midnight train, sometimes for a belated morning one, grew to be common occurrences to her; grew, indeed, to be less trying, in many respects, than the formal church meetings, because the train men were almost invariably sympathetic, grave, and thoughtful. Many of them had seen enough of her sufferings to understand something of the burden of her cross, and enough of her patient endurance to make them sure she had a strength upbearing her which was unknown to them, and which they fain coveted for their own responsible and dangerous lives.

And yet I would not have you think that it was all cross-bearing to Jeanie. Never did workers rejoice over the rewards strewn along their path more than she. And many were the fruits of her offering. Souls redeemed, consecrated, fully committed to the Master's service, were given to her, sometimes in scores, in return for her sacrifice.

Oh, there are two sides to the record, and I find it just as difficult to show you this side as the other. There is, however, a solemn light coming which will shine so strongly on this page of Time as to enable you to read it for yourself; then you will know and feel that the joy of harvest swept over and almost overshadowed the pain of service.

But, oh, the tongues! If there were some way of making you understand what that sick one bore from them, I am persuaded you would appreciate Jeremiah's symbol of "arrows" as never before; and, it may be, you would guard your thoughtless words with greater care, lest they might, perchance, wound unintentionally some of the Lord's little ones.

I asked Jeanie once the same question which I have told you her sister Fannie asked, What was, among the so-called *little things*, the hardest of all to endure?

I cannot forget the impressive silence for a moment, and then the slow spoken, gentle words, "The sneers and stings of my fellow-Christians, with whom I expect to live in heaven forever!"

Some of the words, which were purely thoughtless, without the suspicion of a sting, were yet hard to bear. Sometimes they were repeated to her in pure good nature, as something which would simply amuse her for a moment.

As, for instance, one evening, after a weary ride on the cars, when the couch and its burden were rolled at last into the sitting-room of a quiet home, a gentleman sat down beside her, laughing, as he said, "I heard of your arrival. Some people passing me on the street remarked that the sick preacher had come."

She smiled bravely, this poor, tired girl. She would not for a moment let the kind heart know that he had wounded her; but some nerves, being often bruised, are very sore. I can hardly explain to you how Jeanie, who reverenced the very title which belonged to God's chosen ambassadors, winced at this.

The outraged nerves throbbed so persistently that evening that Jeanie was forced to lie quietly at home, while the real preachers went to the service without her; but she sent her message.

"Won't you tell them I am not a preacher? I am only a simple little errand girl, too weak and tired tonight to do my errand."

And in connection with just such experiences as this was that cowardly Satan's opportunity. How busy he was about her, not

only that evening, but the next day; for the pain and excessive weakness continued.

"You are a pretty errand girl!" he murmured to her tired brain. "Come all this distance for nothing but to lie here and make trouble for other people. Cannot even show yourself to the crowds who are gathering, just out of curiosity, to see you. If you were at home with your mother you would not be suffering so much, and you might be able to do something for the good of somebody; but here you are just a hindrance to the people who are willing to work."

And, as is oftener the case with Satan than he seems to understand, he overreached his mark.

"Cannot even show yourself!"

Yes, she could. Suppose she were too weak to lift her voice so as to be heard, save by the two or three close to her, at least she could show how keen was her interest in the work which had called her there, by being present at the meetings.

"Yes, and then they will say you were so anxious to exhibit yourself that you could not even stay away when you were speechless!" whispered Satan; and this time Jeanie heeded the whisper not at all. Of course "they" would say all manner of things. She often had that battle to fight, but she had gotten beyond it now. If the Evil One was, indeed, determined to put obstacles in the way of her appearance at the church that night, he should at least have a hard fight for it. She would be wheeled over there, if the pain would quiet long enough to let her; and if she could not speak at all, why then she *could* not, and her part of the responsibility would cease. And the pain quieted, and she went; and I do not know that ever, in all her years of prayer, had Jeanie prayed as she did, aloud, in a distinct, calm voice that night.

She did not know the evening's story until afterward. Indeed, she never heard the whole of the story—she waits for that—but this piece was enough to explain to her Satan's anxiety about the meeting.

Ned Holmes was there, a hard man—hard even in his own estimation. He had chosen that evening and that meeting for the purpose of turning the whole thing into ridicule; and the Holy Spirit had chosen that as the evening, and Jeanie Barrett as the medium, through whom a last call should be made to Ned Holmes.

And poor Ned, steeped in sin, wrecked in body, with but a few weeks more on this side, actually, at that eleventh hour for him, heard and heeded. No fun-making that evening; serious business was at hand.

Only a few weeks thereafter Jeanie's couch was rolled down the street, across the road, to Ned's sick-room. He wanted to hear her pray. He wanted her carefully marked Bible for his own; at least, he regarded it with such wistful eyes that it was transferred to his keeping; and his good-bye words to her were, "Tell the people over there,"—meaning at the church— "if the Lord can save Ned Holmes, who has been a slave to sin all his life, He can save *anybody*."

And the Lord saved him. It was not long afterward that he passed through the valley, made so light to him by the presence of the Savior, that no one who looked on doubts where the sinner is today.

It is only one of many stories which it would give me much joy to tell you. Though Jeanie's youthful days were gone, her heart remained young and fresh. She was welcomed everywhere among that mysterious class of persons known as "the girls." Many were the trophies from their number, won by her gentle words and ways. A group of them were gathered about her one day eager in talk, and the conversation turned on the subject of coveting. Some of them merrily, and some of them earnestly, gave voice to some wish of their heart so intense that it might almost bear the name covet. At last one of them appealed to Jeanie.

"Now, Miss Jeanie, it is your turn. We know you don't really covet anything. We are only supposing a case, you know."

"I'm afraid I almost covet one thing," was Jeanie's answer; "and I want you to guess what it is."

Then there was a chorus of tongues. Oh, *they* knew what it was; she wanted to get well. No? Then she wanted her eyes to be well and strong. Not that? And one sweet-voiced girl said, speaking low, "I think she wants to go home to heaven."

But to these, and many other suggestions, Jeanie answered always with a negative. The girls grew puzzled and excited; and finally, almost in a clamor, begged to know at once what it could possibly be, for they had guessed everything.

“You haven’t *touched* the thought, girls. I really have caught myself coveting the time and strength you waste so lavishly.”

They laughed a little, and blushed a good deal, and kissed her, and caressed her, and went away, some of them thoughtful; and from this little talk there sprang fruit which blooms in heaven today.

Passing over, with this brief outline of the years, all the interesting details, let me bring you back to that book-strewn room, and the perplexities of the hour.

The books, as you have doubtless surmised, were Jeanie’s own. By dint of earnest persistence in a task which was by no means light, she had succeeded in putting on paper some of the more marked features of her strange story. It was not so well done as it would have been if the writer had been less humble and modest. She shrank, even on paper, from the public gaze. She passed over, in almost silence, days of suffering with which people might have sympathized if they had understood it better. Sometimes the story of a whole month of agony was compressed into some such sentence as this, “In March I was very sick again; they did not think I could live.”

One thing she carefully magnified throughout the volume; that was the guarding, protecting care of her heavenly Father. It was the strong reason which she could see for bringing her life before the public, that they might see how good it was to have a Father.

Now that her book was fairly before the world, the next thing was to sell it. There were so many willing to look the volumes over, so few ready to pay money for them! Yet, on the sale of these books depended the journey now under discussion. Apparently, so far as she could read her directions, Jeanie was to attend the Ocean Grove meeting; and yet the means with which to do so were not forthcoming.

“They will come,” Jeanie said, with a smile; and went away in her cot to an afternoon prayer- meeting. Serene she was, and at rest.

Since the Father had taken from her all power to rise up and help with swift feet in the work to be done around her, she could go with clear conscience and happy heart to the place of prayer. The cot was wheeled into its accustomed place; and, while its occupant waited for the services to begin, there came one of those

busy “mothers in Israel” who know how to work as well as pray, and, kneeling beside her, said eagerly, “I’ll tell you what it is, Jeanie; your books are not pushed as they ought to be. I have been thinking about it. Something ought to be done, and, if you’ll let me, I’ll do it.”

The smile on Jeanie’s face was pleasant to see; here was the Father’s answer. Aloud, she only said that this matter was in the hands of her friends; what they thought best to do, she would be grateful for. But she was not surprised, though some of the most enterprising workers were, when the results of the afternoon sales were counted, and there was found to be enough to speed the travelers oceanward.

“There is some great reason why I am to go,” said Jeanie, with smiling eyes. “I don’t know what it is, but I have felt sure all day that I was to go.”

Yet, could you have seen her bearing, with blanching face and set lips, the terrible pain which the jolting cars inflicted, you would not have thought it a matter of rejoicing that the way had opened. Indeed, during the night, when the pain was at its height, even Jeanie’s faith faltered.

“I can hardly bear it,” she said, with quivering lips; and then her closed eyes and clasped hands told the two faithful watchers at her side to what source she had fled for strength.

She smiled upon them presently.

“It seemed to me for a while,” she said, “as though I must have made a mistake. The suffering is so much greater than usual, that I thought my Father could not have meant me to come after all. But He says there is no mistake; I am to go, and I am to bear what pain He will. I can do it now. The everlasting arms are around me in a very peculiar manner.”

“I think that is cant,” said a Christian lady, reading this story from Jeanie’s own account; “nothing but cant.”

Yet she read in her Bible that evening, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” “When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee.” And she seemed to believe the words. Why, when one of His storm-tossed children fled to them and claimed the promise and received her answer, should this Christian woman consider it cant? I do not know how to answer the question, do you?

24. Harbor at Last

Along the broad, smooth avenue named Ocean Pathway rolled the cot, while the eager eyes looking out from it watched for their first glimpse of old ocean. There it was, revealed before her in all its grandeur, just at the coming in of the tide, the mighty breakers tumbling in torrents of foam against the impassable shore.

"The sea sings in the golden light," quoted Jeanie, and then suddenly hushed her voice. Words seemed, just then, very weak and feeble things—at least, human words; but there floated through her happy heart the memory of a strain of sufficient majesty to fit even here.

"He maketh the sea roar, and stilleth the waves thereof." Who could be found to hush those mighty waves into silence? Even He who made them; none other. And Jeanie, weak and feeble thing, lay in His hands!

Happy-hearted, though the cares of life might have pressed her heavily just then. In fact, during the weeks which followed, they did press about her and at times, well-nigh engulf her.

How to *live* was the problem. Hopes which had been held out of heavy sales of her book, if she would but come where the great throngs of people were to be found, seemed to have been vain hopes. The people were there. Fifty thousand of them, in the course of the season, passed up and down the ocean pathways; and the great majority of them looked at with curious eyes, and questioned about, Jeanie. But, for the most part, they contented themselves with questions; passing by her books, and forgetting her as soon as their curiosity was satisfied.

And the days rushed by, and the bills grew heavy, and Jeanie had to betake herself more and more to the refuge of prayer. Upon some of those days she looked back, long afterward, as a time that tried her faith to its utmost. Yet the Lord was true to His pledge, as heretofore, and sent her rest from care, even before He strengthened her faith with sight. Much of the time she spent at the beach, never weary of watching the restless sea; never being able

to express the thoughts of her heart in satisfying words, save when she fled to such as these, “The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters; yea, than the mighty waves of the sea”

One day, in the little tent where she made her home, there was an unusual commotion. Friends hurried to and fro, wearing faces of more or less anxiety. Yards and yards of bed-ticking were being torn and made into bandages. Somebody brought a heavy plank with a curiously constructed head and foot board; and the curious, stopping before the tent, saw presently that the crippled woman was bound firmly by means of the heavy bandages to the plank. The plank was resting on two chairs, bearing its living freight. Among the lookers-on was a little fellow, young enough to express his mind so that all could hear.

“Oh, mamma! That is the way they lay dead people.”

The anxious sister of the bound girl heard the words, and shivered as though a cold wave from the sea had suddenly struck her. But Jeanie only smiled. She had heard such similes before. The children who played about her home had called the box in which the diseased limb was bolted a coffin, and the weight of marble which was sometimes used a tombstone; and when the new couch came home, with its side-curtains of velvet, they were heard to exclaim, “Oh, look! that is the hearse for Miss Jeanie.”

The thought might be solemn, but the other world had long been too near a home to call from Jeanie a shiver over the paraphernalia connected with the closing scenes in this. She only turned pleasant eyes on the little boy, and smiled. She was the only calm one of the group. Yet it was an important hour to her. Unconsciously, almost, she had allowed strong hopes to cluster around this last experiment for her—a surf bath.

It had been the undertow which had drawn her persistently through all drawbacks to the ocean in the first place. It had been the goal to which she had reached forward with steady purpose ever since she came. She had the word of several physicians that it might, they could not say with certainty, but they hoped and believed that it *might possibly* be of great benefit to the almost paralyzed limbs to feel the shock of the waves beating about them.

At least the experiment was worth trying. And toward this attempt Jeanie had steadily pressed her way through what seemed at times almost insurmountable obstacles, until now she was ready,

and they lifted her, securely bound to the plank, placed her in a strong hammock, and then, borne by ten men, she went into the sea.

An experience to be remembered; to be looked back upon as something strange and exhilarating and wonderful, but not one that brought the mysterious strength for which she had longed and prayed. No miracle of healing did the waters work.

"It was beneficial, I think," she said, afterward; but she said it with an almost quivering lip.

Strong hopes had been shattered. Among those who had planned this effort, and assisted to carry it out, and watched with professional care all the movements, and watched the patient through the hours of exhaustion which followed, was a certain physician who had for years been interested in Jeanie.

Too skilled in his profession, and with too critical a knowledge of the nature of Jeanie's disease, to have any of her eager hope in regard to the experiment, he yet thought it would rest and refresh her worn body, and perhaps give the sluggish blood a fresh impetus. At least, it was worth the trial; and all that *he* had hoped for was accomplished by the effort.

Around the person of this doctor clustered some of the most earnest hopes of Jeanie's life. Years before he had met her in a Western town, and been interested in her, professionally, as physicians were sure to be; had expressed, at the time, the wish that she might come to the city where he lived, and the hope that, if he had opportunity, he might be of benefit to her. Jeanie had often heard this story; had often made trial of the skill of men of eminence, only to be crushed under another disappointment. Until of late years, she had learned to respond to the expressed wish with a smile of gratitude for the spirit which prompted the desire to help her, and to give it scarce a thought beside.

To this rule there was one exception. Always around the name of Dr. Morlyn had lingered for Jeanie a hope such as she could neither understand nor put away.

As often as she heard the name of the city which was his home, there would thrill in her heart the hope that some day she might go there and be under his professional care.

Among the happy experiences of Ocean Grove had been meeting again, and again interesting in her peculiar case, this same

Dr. Morlyn. The old hope grew stronger than ever before; and, after the ocean bath and its comparative failure, Jeanie turned her thoughts and her prayers toward securing an abiding place near this physician. Not an easy thing for a poor and obscure woman to do.

Yet, as I told you, wherever Jeanie went she made friends. They were here in large numbers, Christian friends, who, however hopeless they might be in regard to anything that human skill could do for her, yet were disposed to think that one so afflicted should have every wish of her heart gratified as far as possible.

In unexpected, and, it seemed to Jeanie, unexampled ways, the path opened for her; and, on a certain well-remembered October day, the city express delivered her cot at the front-door of a hospitable home, which had engaged to receive her and her friends. At least, it tried to open its doors wide enough for her to enter; but the cot, used to more room, obstinately refused to pass the door of parlor or sitting-room. Poor, weary, Jeanie! Trying to smile, and keep up a brave heart, though every nerve was throbbing with pain. This little experience stands out among those which were peculiarly hard to bear. It is not heavy trials always which unnerve us. Our Christian faith often rises superior to these when a pin-prick would move us to tears.

As the cumbersome cot was backed out again down the hall, not without some jars, which sent the pain tingling through her nerves, Jeanie felt that life certainly had some hard places for her. Now around to the side of the house; but the inhospitable gate was as obstinate as the door, and sturdily refused the guest admission. The distressed family and the anxious sister hovered about the couch, and exclaimed and suggested; but the occupant, who had gained a quiet face again, smiled brightly on them, and offered a merry word or two at her own expense.

Suddenly, someone thought of the board fence a little lower down; and strong hands, working steadily, removed the boards, made an entrance for the cot, and it rolled in triumph through the kitchen into the sitting-room. Harbor at last! Was ever weary body more grateful for it? You think now she had attained the summit of her hopes.

Indeed, not. Much hard waiting was yet before her. She was not asking for a very great thing; merely a corner in the hospital for

her cot, and the opportunity to seek relief from the torturing pain which haunted her day and night. But even these were not so easy to obtain as you might suppose.

It appeared that the rules of the hospital were to receive no incurables into its wards. The question was, Did not this effectually shut out Jeanie Barrett? There were trustee meetings, and faculty meetings, and long discussions.

Dr. Morlyn was willing to undertake the case, and test his professional skill to the utmost; but he was not prepared to say that, in his opinion, the patient could be cured. How was it possible for a hospital, which was bound in honor to save its room and its attendance for those for whom there was reasonable prospect of cure, to receive this one, whom a great army of physicians had pronounced incurable? Whose experience of suffering, despite all that medical skill had tried, reached over not days nor months only, but years and years, thereby increasing the improbability of decided help?

Jeanie appreciated the situation; admitted that there seemed insurmountable difficulties in the way; admitted that the hospital would be entirely justified in refusing her; yet waited and prayed, and in her secret heart believed that somehow the difficulties would be overcome.

Meantime, the weary days stretched their slow length along. Everybody was kind. Everybody tried to serve her, some, by urging her to give up the idea of the hospital, assuring her that it could not be right for one in her situation to incur such heavy expense, when, in all probability, it would be of no avail. Job's comforters were these, surely; but to be answered gently, even gratefully, because of their evident honest interest in the sufferer, yet whose counsel must be pushed aside, because Jeanie, living, as she was during these days, almost literally on prayer, still heard her heavenly Father's whisper to hold on her way in the dark.

Almost a month of waiting; and on Saturday, the 17th, Jeanie wrote in her journal, "My way is completely hedged. On Monday I must leave this dear home, as a longer stay would seriously interfere with the necessary plans of the family. Whither am I to go? I praise the dear Lord for His keeping power in this dark hour. With all the cares of this day, what rest and peace I have within my heart!"

Only a few hours after that entry, the darkness lifted. Word came from the president of the hospital that its doors would open to her. All arrangements had been perfected, and on Monday they should expect to see her, and her sister would be received as her special nurse.

"I did not need to go until Monday," Jeanie said, with her sweet bubble of laughter, speaking to me about it long afterward; "and from Saturday until Monday was ample time for me to make my little preparations. Why could I not have known that my heavenly Father would see that everything was right?" Then, after a moment's thoughtful pause, "Well, I *did* know. I felt sure He would do *something*, but I did not know what; and, of course, it was not necessary that I should. What a strange way of trusting it would be, if the child did not rest on his father unless he understood all the details of his plans!"

Oh, the gratitude of heart with which the dweller in that cot took her corner in the long ward of the hospital! Just a little niche for it, her sister's bed close at hand, a small stand between them; rows and rows of beds stretching down the length of the long hall on either side, all occupied with sufferers.

Dear friend, do you think you could have been happy, been grateful, felt that "the lines were fallen unto you in pleasant places"? I wish you could have had at that moment a glimpse of Jeanie's face. "My peace flowed as a river," she said, in speaking of it afterward.

But the sister had reached no such height of peace. She looked with doubtful eyes on the rows of beds. She thought of the quiet room at home, sacred to the privacy of mother and daughters—small, plain, bare, hardly what you would call the necessities of life in it; yet it was home, and. no other eyes than those belonging to home had a right there. Fannie coveted such privacy for her suffering sister.

"Is this little space all the home we have in this great city?"

It was a wail right from the poor child's heart; she could not help it. She was glad for Jeanie that effort could now be made to relieve her; but she longed for six feet square of room, shut in by walls, wherein the sister might be alone. Others besides Fannie saw the need for this. It was almost a necessity, physician and

matron said; but Jeanie had learned long ago to do without necessities, and expected in this instance to do without.

There was a certain sunny room on which Fannie's eyes looked longingly. She made eager inquiry as to the difference in expense if they should take it, and, though appalled at the reply, her heart did not give it up. All day she worked over the problem. Among the friends who had come to them with words and deeds of kindness were the publishers of Jeanie's book. They met with hearty interest one whom they had known so long by correspondence, and were unfailing in their efforts to assist her. To one of these noble men Fannie, on her way upstairs after a somewhat prolonged absence from the ward, spoke her mind.

"Can't you persuade Jeanie to take that room? I want her to be there so badly. It seems to me as though it must be done. Maybe I could get some sort of work in the hospital to help pay the extra expense. I would be willing to do anything to give Jeanie the comfort of a room alone."

The eyes of the good man twinkled, but he replied gravely enough, "It would be very nice, Fannie; but I must tell thee that two ladies have already taken that room, and will move into it tomorrow."

The disappointment was so great that to the young sister's eyes rose the tears which she in vain tried to control.

"Oh," she said, "I am *so* sorry! And there is no other vacant room which is suitable, they told me. I am *so sorry!*"

Then the kind heart, which was enjoying its bit of pleasantry, but which never enjoyed anything at the expense of another's tears, spoke out, in eager tones, "It is true that the room is taken, but thee may not know that Jeanie Barrett and her sister are the ladies who have taken it."

25. So Utterly Helpless

It is possible you may be quite unfamiliar with hospital life. Let me take you into Jeanie Barrett's room for a little visit. It is a large, sunny room, spotlessly neat and clean, carpeted and curtained, the walls hung with mottoes, each of which breathes a lesson of courage and faith. Between the windows hang and grow some lovely blooming plants in baskets. A bouquet of cut flowers is on the table near at hand. On the mantel ticks a cheery little clock; and at the farther end of the room, in a niche which seems to have been built for it, is an organ. Choice furnishing this for a public hospital.

I once heard a wise woman say, after gazing at a photograph of the room which I have just pictured, "Seems to me they are a little too lavish with their money for a public building. Plenty of people would like organs if they could get them; and I am sure I can't afford cut flowers in winter."

Bless her dear, small heart! If she had waited for a bit of information, she would have learned that not a cent of what she called "public money" was devoted to these luxuries. The neatness, the cleanliness, and the careful regard to ordinary comfort, belong to the hospital proper; but the pictures and books and other luxuries which jarred my friend's sense of justice were each and all the gifts of loving hearts drawn out in sympathy for the life shut into one room and one corner of it. The hanging baskets and the cut flowers—the latter made fresh each week—breathed out through the winter the perfume of love from one true woman's heart, who constantly brought them as her token. The little clock ticked the thoughtful kindness of another giver; and the organ, as it filled the room with melody, spoke loudly of still another.

Stranger friends they nearly all were—or they would have been strangers but for that bond of fellowship, stronger than any human tie, which linked them as children of one common Father, each journeying by different paths to the same home.

Perhaps this is as good a time as any to tell you that the friend who bethought himself to send the sweet-voiced organ to fill some lonely hours did not content himself with that, but all through the winter came once a week and touched its keys with skill, and sang his songs, which filled the heart of more than one sufferer with peace.

It was wonderful to Jeanie how many friends she found. You should hear her tell about it! How they came, one after another, to visit her in her chamber of peace. Honored names: Mrs. Bishop Simpson, of whom she quaintly said, “Her call was profitable, spiritually and temporally;” and Philip Phillips, the sweet singer in Israel, who sat down to that self-same organ and sang her some of his sweetest songs; and T. S. Arthur, the noted temperance author; and ministers almost numberless, as well as many other friends who came regularly with their words of cheer and their songs and their prayers.

Certainly the sweet life lived in that room shone for many during that eventful winter. There is a great company of witnesses who might be called upon to testify to the faith, and the calm, and the strength of heart to suffer all the Father’s will which they found in that upper chamber.

But you are waiting, if I mistake not, with some degree of anxiety to hear the story of her hopes in regard to relief from pain. Yes, I am coming to it.

There was a time when no singers came into the still room; no visitors were admitted. The skilled nurse and the attending physicians moved with cat-like tread, and the young sister’s face was like marble, and the weight of years seemed to rest upon her in her great and almost overwhelming anxiety. Dr. Morlyn had carried out the intention which had been in his heart from his first meeting with Jeanie years before, and an operation, requiring great skill, and almost infinite care, had been performed. The solemn question now was, Would the patient rally from the effects of it? For days not only, but for weeks, it seemed more than doubtful. By the slenderest possible thread hung that feeble life. So sure were those who had most knowledge on the subject that the life would go out, that they questioned the special physician or nurse from time to time, “Is she living yet?”

You may imagine what these passing days were to the young sister. She had been with Jeanie before, when she watched momently for the fluttering breath to cease; but always, at these times heretofore, she had had her human tower of strength, her mother, to lean upon. Now the mother and all the kindred were far away, save only this young girl; and on the cot lay one unconscious, almost lifeless, who, it was more than probable, would never speak again. And this was to be the end!

"How much better," moaned the stricken young heart, "to be at home with mother and the rest! We could help each other bear it. But now it is hard for them and hard for me. I am all alone!"

No, dear heart, not yet the end. There are other experiences than these for you and Jeanie. Neither are you alone. The heavenly Father watches and waits, and has perfect knowledge of it all. He will not forget.

Slowly, slowly, came the weary brain back to consciousness of life. The sluggish blood quickened ever so little in its channels, the almost quiet heart took up its steadier pace, and Jeanie opened her eyes to earth once more.

Ah, if you could but have seen her face in that first moment of consciousness!

"Where am I?" she asked; and for a moment the thought of her heart was, that earth was at last and forever over, and she was at home. Why? Oh! I would that I might describe to you the *why*, so that for a single moment it might seem to you what it did to her. Put into language, especially written on paper, it sounds very tame, almost commonplace. It was only this: the wheeled cot, with its iron-bound and bolted "coffin," which had held her limb captive for so many years, was not there at all; and Jeanie lay quiet, motionless, upon a bed, such a bed as other sufferers occupied; no marble weight, or bolts, or bars, free and still. A broad, smooth bed, covered with white, neatly made up, like other beds, which she had lain and looked at, and imagined how they would feel; lain and looked at, and imagined, and never tried for years.

Now her head rested back on one of those plump, white pillows at which she had looked with longing eyes. Too large for her cot, but fitting her so restfully now! Was it not worth all the expense and all the pain?

If you had longed as many years as Jeanie had for the freedom which even a common bed affords, you would be sure to answer that question in the affirmative.

And now the days passed on with even tread. To Jeanie and to the watchful physicians it seemed almost as though the Maker of the human frame had said to human skill, “Thus far shalt thou go, but no further.”

Apparently all that medical science could do for Jeanie had been done. It was a great deal. No heart ever beat in more grateful throbs than hers over it all; but there she lay on her back, helpless as to any movement of her own. One limb still, indeed; oh, what a blessing! No terrible convulsive throbbings, no being tossed about whither she would not; but, on the other hand, *terribly still!* As utterly so, as far as movement of hers was concerned, as it would be when the final coffin enclosed it. No strength returned to the nerveless back; and, as the days went by, the utter silence of the physicians whom she anxiously questioned gave her nothing to feed her hopes upon. Yet they lived, despite all her efforts to let them go and rest content in that quiet shelter, a bed.

She prayed much over it. She read, or had read to her, many books on “sweet submission to the divine will.” She longed exceedingly for this complete submission, and could not feel that she had it. She read other books, and listened eagerly to talk running in the line of the power of the human will over disease.

They encouraged her, these talks. She led the conversation into such channels as often as she could. It had always been plain to her that, whatever else she might have lacked, she was gifted with a very strong will; indeed, she had reason to be sure of this. It had given her much trouble to keep it in subjection. Plans arranged in every detail by her eager brain, and carried out often when lookers-on had said it was impossible, had been in brief the history of her life. Some of her bitterest hours had been because of certain schemes dear to her heart, which could not be carried out.

“It is so very hard to give up one’s own way,” she said to a friend once, with a look half-way between a smile and a tear. “I think one’s will is the last thing to yield; and it seems to me it *never* wholly yields, after all, but keeps rising up and asserting itself.”

She had occasion to remember this afterward.

Almost three months since the operation which had freed her from bolts and bars had been performed, and daily the careful treatment from the physicians had been given, and still no improvement; rather, she seemed to grow steadily worse. She began to realize that the treatment, which it had been hoped would do something for the lifeless nerves of her spine, was being continued more to keep her from sinking into utter despair than because they had any hope of results.

One evening, when the skillful manipulations belonging to the "movement cure" were in progress, a feeling of almost desperation seized poor Jeanie. They *should* succeed. If will-power could do anything, now was the time for the will to assert itself with power. The miserable, helpless limb *should* move. She *would* bear the touch of the operator on the shrinking, suffering back. *It must be borne, and it should be!*

With set teeth and white face, and hands that were clinched in pain, the struggle went on, until great drops of sweat stood out all over the body, and then a sudden blank. The alarmed physicians began eagerly to apply restoratives, to hurry the frightened nurses hither and thither at their bidding, and yet it seemed to them all that the end had been reached at last. Will-power had exerted itself to such a degree that every vestige of strength had been exhausted in the struggle.

"Don't ever be guilty of doing any such thing again," said the attending physician, when, after long hours, she rallied. His voice was almost stern; and the words which followed the command, though kind, were very firm and searching. "There was a time when the exertion of will-power became rebellion against the God of power; nay, when such exertion became suicide. And a Christian—one who trusted wholly in the goodness and lovingkindness of the Lord—was not the one to set up a human will in rebellion."

Poor Jeanie was meek, outwardly, and penitent; yet it was just at this time that she wrote in her journal, "I cannot think of the future but with agitation. Oh, the thought of never—after all I have suffered—of never walking a step! How can I bear it? Oh, I need the prayers of God's children! I do not want to be self-willed. No mortal knows what it is I experience. I am so helpless, so utterly helpless; and when at times it flashes over me that I must remain

so, and must be reconciled, oh, for grace to overcome! All these years I have been sustained by the belief that, if my Father did not take me home, He would set me on my feet again. Sometimes I scarce knew whether the hope that I was to walk in heaven or on earth was stronger. But it was always there. Oh, my Father, can I give it up?"

Do you know, dear sympathetic friends who read these lines, there is one thought which fills me, even now, with such great throbs of indignation that I can hardly write? And that is, of the people who looked on the surface of this life, even at this time of extremest human need, and went their ways and said, in defiance of all the words spoken by physicians of such acknowledged skill and eminence that it would seem as though they might be believed, "What a pity that poor Jeanie cannot exercise her will-power! I believe she could get better if she would only try!"

Poor idiots! I ought to feel sorry for them, I suppose; but, despite my efforts, indignation gets the upper hand. You see, I, in common with all those about this sufferer, knew so well all the history of her strong-willed life, and was so thoroughly acquainted with the struggle which at this time was going on, that it was hard to be patient with what seemed just willful ignorance.

But I trust you know enough of divine love to be sure that He did not leave this child of His tossing helplessly among the billows of despair which had suddenly rolled over her. That wailing cry, "Oh, for grace to overcome!" was assuredly heard at the throne, and, ere nightfall, He sent His angel to comfort her.

The very peace of heaven itself seemed to rest on Jeanie's face not long afterward, and her smile was as sweet and bright as ever. She had been reading a few lines from Spurgeon, and the dear Lord spoke to her through them. She pointed out the closing sentence with a significant hint that it held her fixed resolve: "As for His failing you, never dream of it! Banish the thought! The God who has been sufficient until now can surely be trusted to the end."

But with the "rest of faith" came no rest to the suffering body. In fact, if it were possible for her to suffer more severely than before, perhaps that evening in March stands out as the time when pain seemed to reach its height, and refuse to be subdued by any effort.

In vain did Dr. Morlyn make use of all the appliances which his skill could suggest. They seemed as nothing, and the throbbing head said to its victim that, unless relief came soon, surely her reason could not bear the strain. Oh, for a physician who could speak the word of power to this demon of pain! There *was* such a One. Why did they not fly to Him?

Jeanie turned suffering eyes on her doctor, and spoke with all the intensity which pain gave.

"Oh, doctor I how is your faith? Can't you—*can't* you—take hold with me, and ask the Lord to help me? Oh, don't you think it *must* be His will?"

The grave, sad face looked kindly down on hers, in which every nerve was drawn with suffering; and there was a quiver of feeling in the voice which replied, "Poor child! I believe in His power, even as you do; and, as I may be able, I will certainly join with you in claiming His promise, that 'where two or three are agreed as touching anything, it shall be given them.'" A moment more, and he added, solemnly, "Shall not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these many years, be loosed?"

Then immediately he dropped upon his knees, and began to pray.

Dear friend, do you believe in the power of prayer? Do you rest fully in the assurance that God is able to do all things, and that He has promised help to those who put their trust in Him? If so, why should you be astonished when I declare to you that suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, all pain ceased, and that tortured frame, which, but a moment before, had writhed and groaned under its hand, was entirely and sweetly at rest?

It is hard to believe; I know you find it so. If I were writing fiction, I should hesitate over this, and avoid it, as belonging to the things called improbable. Such faithless people are we who pray! But I am writing simple truth, and I ask you to consider it thoughtfully.

Do I mean that all pain may be cured by prayer? That there is no necessity for physical suffering, if people would pray for relief? No, I mean nothing of the kind. I do not say, nor does it logically follow from anything which has been said, that God always answers prayer in the affirmative. Because of His wisdom, He may know that freedom from pain is not the best thing for the asking

soul just then; and, if so, assuredly He· will not send it. There is nothing meant but the simple, and altogether reasonable, thought that God sometimes gives His children the faith to ask for immediate relief from suffering, believing that the affirmative answer will come. And when He grants this faith, be sure He will meet its requirements.

26. Waiting

It was a certain Monday evening toward the middle of April. The soft breath of spring was abroad in the earth, and in Jeanie's room an earnest of the coming flower season breathed fragrance.

Jeanie, resting quietly on her white bed, which was such a luxury to her; comparatively free from pain; at peace in regard to herself, was absorbed in the experience of another.

Near her bed sat a lady and gentleman in whom she was deeply interested. The lady had been a frequent visitor. Indeed, on the evening set apart each week for a little company of praying ones to gather in Jeanie's room, she had always been present. Constant and earnest had been the petitions offered up with her. She asked great things of the Lord; greater than Jeanie had thought of asking for herself, if people looked at these questions in the right light. Her husband had been, for years, a drunkard; and for years she had wrestled with the Lord for his salvation. What greater miracle than this: to reach a soul, bent on his own ruin, stretch out a helping hand to one who does not deeply feel his need for help, and lead him to the point where he realizes that help must come, or he will perish, and then make him willing to call at the right place for this help. What but infinite power could do it?

Tonight, after these long months of waiting, the husband came with his wife. Part of the miracle had been performed. This victim of the curse of rum had been made willing to seek for help. In fact, he had done what he could toward helping himself, even to signing the total abstinence pledge.

"I cannot say that I am a converted man," he said to Jeanie; "but I know that, in some respects, I am changed, and I know that I want to have a changed heart."

"Do you want to settle it now?"

What a singularly searching question! There was stillness in the room for a moment after Jeanie's sweet voice had asked it; then the man said, firmly, "Yes, I want to settle it now."

“Then let us wait on the Lord until it is settled. If you have honestly given yourself to Him, He will accept the gift; and I believe He will let you know that He has ratified the contract.”

I would like to have heard Jeanie’s prayer that followed. I did not, but I have often heard her pray. I can imagine the singularly childlike confidence with which she approached her heavenly Father for this great miracle of healing—this renewal, not of a poor, and, at best, perishable body, but the renewing of a never-dying soul.

Then the wife prayed. This was no new sound. Everyone present had heard again and again the cry of that soul for her husband’s conversion. But the momentary silence which followed was broken by a new voice. The old story so often repeated, so gloriously new to each one of whom it may be said, “Behold, he prayeth!”

Can you imagine sweeter music for the ears of the listening wife? Has any human tongue ever been able to describe that miracle of miracles, whereby, in a moment of time, a soul feels itself new born, all its desire; and aspirations changed? I do not know how to write of it. I always stand in awe before the manifestation, glad that I have a God of *power* to rest my faith upon.

But there are other manifestations of His power, less frequently exhibited, possibly, as of old, “because of unbelief,” yet not less certain, surely, to those who feel His hand. On the bed lay Jeanie, closed eyes, folded hands, every feature of her quiet face showing that her soul was joining in the prayer of thanksgiving which the saved soul was pouring out.

Suddenly over her face there came a startled change; a look of astonishment, of awe, melting rapidly into one of radiant delight. She opened her eyes and glanced quickly from one to another of the kneeling group, with a curious feeling that they must know of what had come to her; but they knew only that a soul had been newly born, and that all the golden harps in heaven were ringing out the chorus of the angels’ joy.

In utmost stillness, Jeanie waited for the prayer to be concluded, for the tender words of fellowship which followed; then spoke her message:

“I have something to tell you. The Healer came to me also. The same physician who can heal the sin-sick soul—bless the Lord!—has power over that lesser handiwork of His, the body. While our dear friend here prayed, suddenly there came to me a feeling as though a mighty hand were laid upon my back, and, as if it were an electric shock, I felt strength come to that weak spot from which we thought the nerve-power gone forever. Oh, dear friends, I know you will pray for me! I believe my heavenly Father means to manifest His power, even in me!”

They bowed again in prayer; and the wife, whose faith had received such an uplift in return for her long waiting, poured out her soul again, this time for bodily healing.

When the happy hour was over, and Jeanie was alone with her sister and the hospital nurse, Fannie came toward her with tender voice, “Poor little girl! She must be very tired. It was a longer meeting than usual. Let me take away the head-rest, and get you ready to sleep.”

There was no reply beyond a slight motion of the hand; then, after a moment, Jeanie said, “Oh, let me be, please, just a little! I am so at rest, and so happy!”

The radiant look was still on her face, and they waited, feeling as though to disturb her would be to interrupt communion with an unseen Presence. Fannie went softly from the room, intent upon preparations for the night. As she returned, glass of milk in hand, with which to refresh her patient, the nurse had lifted Jeanie’s head to remove the rest; but, instead of its falling to one side as usual, like the head of a few days old infant, Jeanie held it erect, and said, with a clear, happy voice, “Fannie, see me!”

But the young sister had never seen her able to exert that much power over her body before. Is it any wonder that she screamed in terror?

They calmed down at last, and everything was made quiet for the night. Never was a happier heart than throbbed on that bed in the corner. Jeanie slept, and wakened; and, like a child with a new and wonderfully treasured toy, which she is afraid will in some way escape her, tried again and yet again her new-found strength, and found it stayed with her, and laughed out in her glee and gratitude, and prayed her grateful word of prayer, and slept, and

wakened, only to apply over and over again the same test. So passed the happy night. The morning found her radiantly happy.

"What kind of a night had you?" Fannie asked, in a somewhat self-reproachful tone. "I think I must have slept much more soundly than usual. I hardly heard you at all."

"A good night, Fannie, dear. I slept some, and practiced a great deal."

" Practiced?"

"Yes," with that curious little laugh which seems always to bubble up from the heart of a child. "My new accomplishment, you know."

She had many calls that day, some of them of marked interest. Among others came a dear friend, who had often, during the winter, sat with her and knelt beside her in prayer.

"I have something to tell you," Jeanie said, turning happy eyes on her. "Something good."

"Is it so? Then I want to hear it; but first, I have something to tell you, or say to you. Jeanie, I have been thinking about you all day. I cannot help feeling that you are going to be made well. It seems to me it is your privilege to ask God to heal you."

"I will," said Jeanie, her eyes bright, though the tears were gathering. "Pray with me, dear friend. Ask as distinctly as you please, but first I will strengthen your faith. Let me tell you my news."

The next caller of note was one of the brothers from her publishing house, bringing with him friends from several States. Everybody who heard of Jeanie was interested in her. Her special friend had been trying to tell her story to the others, and turned to her for dates.

"Just how long is it, Jeanie, since thee could sit up, or help thyself in any way?"

"I was never able to help myself in the least for sixteen years until last night."

"What!" He turned toward her a startled gaze, and repeated his exclamation in the form of a question, "What did thee say?"

"Well, just steady my shoulders a little bit, and I will show you."

He obeyed her directions, and up came the long-helpless head, holding itself erect, the eyes very bright, and the ever-ready laugh

bubbling forth. But the one who had known her so well was moved almost beyond words for a moment; yet he struggled for, and found, appropriate speech. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases.” Then such a prayer as followed it is not often one’s privilege to hear.

Yet what a little thing it was! The power to hold her own head erect and steady, a power which is given to you and me each minute of the long days. How many prayers of thanksgiving have we offered for this blessing?

Sometimes, when I think of the overwhelming gratitude with which Jeanie received this gift of strength, to do that which is to me one of the most trivial and commonplace of all the movements of my body, I am filled with wonder, not at her gratitude, but at my indifference. It is so hard to remember that each movement of this “fearfully and wonderfully made” machine, the human body, is of the Lord, and that He thinks about and cares for it all the time, despite our thoughtlessness and ingratitude, and the numerous devices by which we contrive to thwart His love and care, and derange the organs which He has placed and manipulated with such infinite skill.

And now you shall spend one more evening with me in Jeanie’s room; a lovely spring evening; but the outside world, though fair enough, was not what held the attention of our friends at the hospital.

Jeanie’s room wore an unusually holiday air. It had been made as bright and fair as was possible for loving hands, and the breath of newly blossomed flowers filled the air.

It was Jeanie’s reception evening. Not the usual circle which was wont to gather in her room each Tuesday evening, but a company of invited guests. They had been summoned with utmost care after hours, and, indeed, I might say days, of prayerful consideration.

Had you been skilled in the study of the human face, you would have seen that on each of these faces rested an air of unusual interest; that a feeling which might almost be termed expectancy hovered about the room. They had been invited, not for merely social purposes, nor to help pass a pleasant hour, but to join with this long tried servant of God in asking her heavenly Father, not to

cure her body, but to reveal then and there His will concerning her; to give her a definite and settled answer to the long-questioning cry of her heart. All of the circle were settled believers in the power of prayer; all of them had tested its power for themselves, and received unmistakable assurances that God hears not only, but replies to the call of His servants. What better company than this could be gathered to ask, unitedly, according to His revealed plan, for that which they desired?

Three of the gentlemen present were clergymen, friends of long years' standing. One of them had been Jeanie's pastor in her far-away home years before, and knew every step of the weary way by which she had come to this hour.

The brothers from her publishing house, with their wives, were in this chosen circle as friends who knew how to pray. Her beloved physician, who delighted in giving testimony, as often as opportunity afforded, that what skill he had in relieving bodily suffering he believed was of the Lord, sat very near the reclining chair in which Jeanie rested.

Seated about the room were others who, for various reasons, were specially interested in Jeanie, and especially drawn to join in the prayer of this evening.

The week which had preceded this coming together had been one of peculiar interest to Jeanie. She felt more vividly, perhaps, than the others could, that the prayer circle was larger than appeared. She knew of groups of long-tried friends who would, in answer to her petition, gather tonight to remember her. She knew of some, mighty in prayer, who would go alone to meet "the angel of the covenant," and plead for her. And all the week she had been upborne by the memory of the One who said, "Where two of you shall agree as touching anything, it shall be done."

> "No word He hath spoken
> Was ever yet broken."

The little couplet, familiar to her childhood, floated through her brain, and was grasped hold of and rested upon. She believed it.

Looking back over her eventful life, perhaps no experience is more vivid to Jeanie than that week of waiting. The word "waiting" just expresses the conviction of her mind. God would, in

some way, she knew not how, reveal to her fully His gracious will concerning her future; whether she was to lie on her bed and suffer, and smile, and be patient for His sake, or whether He could and would use her in other ways.

"I have passed through the bitterness," she said to a friend. "He has taken it away. It is blessed in Him to be willing to give me definite knowledge, but it is a sweeter thing to give me this sense of rest. Even if I am to lie still all the years that are left, I feel it will be sweet to do it, if, in this way, I can most honor Him. But as to that, I do not know. He has not given me my answer yet. I am waiting."

27. “And If It Be Thy Will”

In utmost absence from anything like excitement the hour of prayer passed. At its close, one of the number, a minister, crossed the room to Jeanie’s side.

“I shall have to go,” he said. “I have an engagement at this hour which I am compelled to meet. But before I go, I feel constrained to say this word to you, dear, suffering sister. You are asking too much: I feel sure you are too anxious to get well. I believe the Lord can make better use of you on your cot than on your feet; and, if such is the case, surely you, His servant, ought to be willing to bear the cross for Him. Think of what He bore for you!”

The long-suffering sister Fannie felt the blood rush hotly into her face. What did this man know of their Jeanie’s life of unutterable suffering and absolute self-abnegation! Was it fitting to speak such words to such an one as she, whose every breath for twenty years had been that of pain, and whose thought had been always of others, not of self?

But Jeanie’s brow was calm, and her voice gentle and meek.

“Thank you, dear friend. I know how important it is to be honest with one’s self, but I can truthfully and joyfully tell you this: I am not too anxious to get well; that part of the conflict is passed. If the heat of the furnace is to be to me in the future sevenfold what it has been in the past, I am ready to say, ‘Thy will be done.’ I can feel that the opportunity to honor Him in bearing pain would be sweet; but what He has promised me now, if I have understood Him aright, is that He will graciously still the questioning of my heart, and reveal to me what is His will in regard to my future.”

The minister smiled on her, a half pitying smile, such as he might give to a silly child, who was demanding special attention from one altogether too busy to heed her childish wishes, but, at the same time, as one who thought she was very winning in her childishness, and he would be glad to help her if he could. Then he went away, apparently without the remembrance of Him who is

never so busy that even a sparrow falls without His knowledge, and who has signally particularized His care over His children by the minute description, “Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”

After the minister’s departure, the circle closed around Jeanie. Her quiet voice was speaking to them.

“Dear friends, is there a oneness of mind among us? If our Father keeps us waiting before Him until morning, can you tarry with me? I feel that He will have us ‘wait’ on Him in this matter.”

The first firm voice to answer was that of the Christian physician.

“I will stay until morning, if need be,” he said, “and count it a privilege to wait on my Lord in prayer so long as He will.”

Then the murmur of assent, and agreement as to the privilege of the hour, passed from lip to lip among the little company. And the next hour slipped quietly away.

It was after ten o’clock. A very quiet meeting. Earnest prayer, evincing by its very hush of tone its intensity. Frequently a sweet song of praise floated out on the night air. Many precious Bible verses were repeated, as they were suggested to one and another of the waiting company.

As for Jeanie, she lay back, quiet, in her chair, suffering much pain of body. It had been a day of unusual weakness and prostration. If present experience counted for anything, the Master had spoken to her all day through that long-suffering body: “Child, it is My will that you glorify Me still a little longer through pain and weakness.”

The prostration had not been so great for several days as it was on this well remembered one. Yet her face expressed only utmost calm. There were lines of pain about the closed eyes, the physical marks of what the body was enduring; but the mouth had triumphed over them, and rested without a quiver. Suddenly, in the hush which followed a softly sung verse of a hymn, her voice, still quiet, rose distinctly on the air.

“Father, I am constrained at this moment to give myself anew and unreservedly to Thee. I give this body anew, these eyes to see, these lips to talk, these ears to hear, and, if—” a pause, amid such a hush as could be felt in the heart throbs of those waiting, then the quiet voice went on, “if it be Thy will, these *feet* to walk for Jesus!

All that there is of me, all; *all*, is thine, my Father; only let Thy dear will be done."

Then the hush fell on them again; a strange hush, as if caused by some unearthly Presence brooding over them; Jeanie, still lying with closed eye, and the drawn, black lines underneath, which always told of physical pain.

Suddenly her eyes opened, a look swept over her face not unlike that which you have sometimes seen on the face of the dying, who lie in confident expectation of soon being at home. She laid hold of the arms of her chair, and raised herself to a sitting posture. The watching doctor, kneeling by her side, turned suddenly, and, with noiseless hands, let down the foot-board of the reclining-chair. Why? There had never before been need to change its position for those bound feet.

The two friends who were nearest her, moved by a common impulse, sprang forward with outstretched hands. But it was without help from them that the long quiet feet obeyed the mandate which had come to them, and bore their burden firmly.

Could you expect quiet after that? The poor young sister, who had never seen her darling Jeanie on her feet before, and who had been wrought up, during these last few minutes, to the highest pitch of anxious excitement, when she saw what was to her as strange a sight as though the dead had suddenly started into life, sprang to her own feet, and screamed in accents of utmost terror, "Oh, Jeanie! Jeanie!"

It was a different feeling, but a no less deep emotion, which prompted the old man who had sprung to her possible aid to lay his trembling hand on Jeanie's head, and repeat, with quivering voice, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow, Praise Him all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly host, Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

As for the happy girl, who stood erect, radiant, no greater transformation than that which had suddenly swept over her face, blotting out all traces of suffering, can be imagined. Just a moment she stood smiling, then said, "Let us pray," and, turning, dropped upon her knees with as much ease and grace as though the long-stiffened joints had done her bidding each day, instead of there having intervened a blank of seventeen years between her last kneeling and this hour.

Every knee was bowed, and a solemn hush of prayer swept over the company. Not a word was spoken; but there is no doubt in the mind of any of that privileged number as to the fact of prayer, nor do any of them doubt but that the Angel of the Covenant, who had come so near to them, lingered for this acknowledgement of his power and goodness.

Rising after a few moments, Jeanie, her face still radiant as a child's, moved easily across the room. No trembling in the limbs, no prickling sensation in the long unused feet, no hesitancy as to whether her next step would prove firm.

"I am made over anew," she said, with the joyous laugh bursting all bounds and bubbling forth. "My sick limb is gone. There is not an ache nor a pain about me."

What were they to say or do, that company? They were spellbound; too amazed at the result of their own asking to realize that they were in the body at all.

The doctor was the first to recover himself, and assert his professional authority. In a most peremptory manner he ordered his late patient back to bed. In vain she pleaded that she was not tired, had never felt less so in her life; that every nerve throbbed with energy and joy that, at last, *at last,* she was free from pain!

He was inexorable, and would not let her take another step but had her lifted like a child and carried back to prison. It was not possible for doctor and nurse to realize that their occupation as care-takers, was so utterly gone from them.

When before had a patient been known, even under the most favorable circumstances, to spring suddenly from a condition of long helplessness into buoyant health?

"If the doctors had cured her altogether," said the nurse, looking on with eyes which, in their astonishment, seemed almost to refuse to believe what they were gazing on, "if the doctors had done it, it would have taken months for her to learn how to walk; and here she trots off as though she had walked but yesterday."

"If human doctors had done it, you mean," said one, reverently. And then the thoughts of each went back to that other Physician, who, when He walked on earth, said to the one long sick, "Wilt thou be made whole?" And then immediately, "Take up thy bed and walk." Certainly the only physician on record who had ever

performed such cures! And He had promised to be *always with* those who put their faith in Him.

There were eager listeners to the few words Jeanie had to say concerning Him.

"Yes, I have been suffering all day, more than usual. I was in pain all the evening—physical pain—but very happy at heart. While I lay there, after I had prayed aloud, there came to me almost a vision of the man with the withered arm. I could seem to see him standing before the Healer, and hear that blessed voice say to him, 'Stretch forth thine hand.' But said I to my heart, 'He cannot, it is withered.' But said my heart to me, 'He did; he stretched it forth, and it was not withered; it was whole, like the other.' And then, like an electric thrill, there came to my soul the desire and the intention to claim the same healing. I felt, rather than heard, His voice bidding me rise up and walk. I felt definitely the strength come into my helpless limb. I *knew* it would walk, and it did."

The doctor interrupted the talking, ordered a glass of milk for his patient, and then immediate quiet for the night.

When the milk was brought her, Jeanie suddenly raised herself to a sitting posture, held out her hand for the glass; then, turning to the doctor, her eyes brimming with tears, said, "*Oh, doctor! Is it I?*" and broke into a ringing laugh.

Then almost immediately she said, "Oh, doctor! Let me pray." And the full heart found vent in a prayer which was like a triumphant song of thanksgiving.

She dropped asleep like a tired child in a few moments more, and the room was filled with the light of a spring morning when she awoke. With the first dawning consciousness she sat erect; and it was in this position that Fannie, rubbing open her sleepy eyes, found her patient. There was no sleepiness then.

"Oh, Jeanie!" she said, and the voice was almost as startled as on the night before. "Oh, can it be possible? Am I awake, or am I dreaming?"

"You are very much awake," said Jeanie, laughing; "at least, I am. Fannie, these are the words in my heart:

> "'To Thee, O Lord, with dawning light,
> My thankful voice I'll raise;

Thy mighty power to celebrate,
Thy holy name to praise.’

“Fannie, dear, get me some clothes, such as people wear who sit up and walk around. I am going to dress myself. Think of it!”

Suiting the action to the word, she arose with the dexterity of one quite accustomed to such accomplishments, and made all speed with her toilet, Fannie looking on, dazed, almost frightened, giving alarmed little squeals with every movement of the limbs so long quiet, and calling forth frequent bursts of laughter from the happy sister.

A knock at the door interrupted them; and the day attendant, putting her head in at the door, began, “Will you have the—” and stopped in utter bewilderment.

“Will I have the bed-rest?” laughed Jeanie. “Confess that that is what you were going to say. No, thank you. I am quite done with that good old friend. What shall I do to convince you all that I am not an invalid? I am well, darling, and strong. Don’t you know it?”

And then the two sisters mingled their happy tears together, and talked, between times, of the mother, and the wonderful news which would soon speed over the wires to her.

My pen pauses with this sentence while I try to decide what I will write, what I will omit, where I shall leave this web, spun so carefully from the facts at my disposal. It is easy enough to finish a work of fiction; but how to close a life-story, while it is being lived in all its strength, is the question.

I could fill a volume with the experiences of the next few months, of the wonder that it was to meet the brisk feet of the busy woman who went hither and thither as intent on her work as she was when locked in her couch, more than that could not be said; of the bewilderment of old friends, who met her on street corners, in the stores, in the omnibus, anywhere that busy people go; of the sensation which thrilled her the first time she did that common-place thing: sat down to a family table to partake with them of the morning meal. So strange it was to her to sit erect and serve and be served like others.

What an experience it was to her to go through the wards of the hospital, stopping at one and another suffering bedside, sympathizing with them as only she could!

What a day it was when she started on her homeward journey! How well she remembered her entry into the city; the discussion with Dr. Morlyn as to the best way of reaching the house where she was to stop, and the cheery smile with which he said, “Perhaps you will walk to the depot when you go away,” saying it as one says good-hearted, utterly idle words, to bring a passing smile and a moment of forgetfulness along the weary way.

Idle words, indeed! Did he not stand watching her as she tripped down the long walk to the ladies’ room, her step light and free, every movement betokening health and energy?

“What will the boys think?” Jeanie had said, with a merry laugh, just before she started for the train. This meant the train men, whose duty it had been to carry her cot, freighted with its heavy burden, to the baggage-car. What a delight it was to grasp their hearty hands, watch the astonished gaze of dawning recognition come into their faces, and tell them she remembered their kindness, but she thought she would not ride in the baggage-car this time, if they wouldn’t mind!

“It is all Fairyland,” she said brightly, one day. “At every turn there is some wonderful experience. I cannot stoop to button my shoe that it doesn’t fill me with astonishment to think that it is I, wearing shoes like other people, and putting them on and taking them off at will.”

Dear friends, I may as well close the story here as elsewhere. It is of no use for me to try to finish it; for, as I told you, it is being lived. It has been a joy to me to write this account, to add my mite to the long record of events which go to prove the statement that “truth is stranger than fiction.”

As I have told you repeatedly—as the title told you from the first—my story is “spun from fact.” If there is anything in it which sounds unreal, improbable—and I am aware that, as we have accustomed ourselves to understand life, there are many things—you are to remember that I am not responsible for them. If a life that is lived is unreal, if events that have actually occurred sound improbable, what are you going to do about it?

Yet let me be strictly truthful in this entire matter. In the minor details of this book, I have had of necessity to draw somewhat on my imagination; that is, where I have had bare outlines of facts as they occurred, I have had to imagine some of the probable

conversation with which the facts were doubtless woven; but every item of importance, every reference to prayer as a constant factor in this life, every account of answer to prayer, however improbable in its sound, is strict truth, for which I can not only vouch, but can bring a long train of witnesses to corroborate my testimony.

For the matter of that, if you are in the least anxious to know how closely I have adhered to strict truth in my story, I refer you to two books, "The Valley of Baca," and "From Baca to Beulah." These are plain, unelaborated records of facts, written by Jeanie herself, and obtainable at any first-class bookstore. You can study them with what care you please, and learn a hundred things about Jeanie and her friends, of which I have not had time to tell. And I give you leave, after a careful perusal of the volumes, to arraign me as a writer of improbable fiction, if you can.

More than this, if you care to know anything of the busy, happy life which is being lived by Jeanie today, which has been lived by her every day since that eventful April evening eight years ago, I call your attention to a little book, "Ramblings in Beulah Land," which at least hints at something of her work, and records some of the shadows as well as joys along her way.

Life has not been all brightness to her, largely because of her Christian brethren and sisters, who, not knowing her, and not, apparently, knowing her Great Physician well enough to attribute to Him the power necessary to make her story true, have indulged in some sneers; and some, to say the least, not brotherly or sisterly words.

But, on the whole, I think you will find that the sun shines clearly over the path where her busy feet have trodden, and that she treads the earth today in a manner which gives full proof to the sincerity of the prayer she offered, "And if it be Thy will, my feet to walk for Jesus."

The End

Would you like to read more about Jeanie's life and ministry? Her books, published under the author name of Jennie Smith, are available electronically at Google Books (http://books.google.com)

The Valley of Baca; A Record of Suffering and Triumph

From Baca to Beulah; A Sequel to Valley of Baca

Ramblings in Beulah Land; A Continuation of Experiences in the Life of Jennie Smith

Incidents and Experiences of a Railroad Evangelist

Jennie and her couch on wheels

Discussion Questions

1. Fourteen-year-old Jeanie says, “Religion is a sort of fashion, like cloaks or dresses. It is respectable to belong to the Church, therefore we belong. I don’t believe in it.” What do you think of Jeanie’s statement? Do you think it’s possible some people attend church because it’s fashionable to do so? Do you think people go to church because their friends do? Explain why you think so.

2. After Jeanie gives her life to Christ, she is anxious to work for Him. She wants to rescue other souls by using her family’s wealth to feed and clothe the poor and give them gifts. She believes that if religion were “made beautiful enough,” more people would be brought to love God. What do you think of Jeanie’s philosophy? Do you think people are more receptive to the message of salvation if it is delivered with fine food or gifts? Explain your answer.

3. Mrs. Barrett was concerned when Jeanie and Reuben developed feelings for each other because Reuben was not a Christian. If you were in Mrs. Barrett’s position, would you allow your teenaged daughter to date a young man who was not a Christian? If you decided to intervene, what actions would you take?

4. On the very day Jeanie became a Christian, her life began to change due to a series of hardships. How do you think Jeanie maintained her positive attitude in the face of such trials?

5. Were you surprised by Reuben Whately’s reaction upon learning of Jeanie’s prognosis? Why do you think he behaved as he did? What did his actions tell you about his character?

6. Mrs. Barrett spoke with Jeanie about the difficulty of being married to a man who wasn’t a Christian. “It is not easy to pray beside one’s husband, when you know he does not pray.” How

important do you think it is for a husband and wife to share the same religious convictions? Do you think a marriage can be successful if only one member of the union is a Christian? Explain why you think so.

7. Hoping to influence her father, Jeanie introduced the habit of family worship to their evenings; yet she struggled with doubts that she was the appropriate person to lead the nightly readings and prayers. Did Jeanie do the right thing? What qualifications do you think are necessary for someone to lead a family worship?

8. When Mrs. Marble visited Jeanie, she criticized Jeanie for spending the money she received for support on paper and pens and postage. What do you think Mrs. Marble's intentions were? Do you think she was right to think Jeanie misspent the money? Should a person who donates money to support someone who cannot work have a say in how the recipient spends the money? If you were in Jeanie's position, how would you have responded to Mrs. Marble?

9. What lessons do you think the author wanted to convey with this story? What specific lesson or theme resonated with you the most?

10. In the final pages, the author revealed the main character, Jeanie Barrett, was not fictional, but someone she actually knew. Did your opinion about Jeanie's faith and the adversities she suffered change after you learned Jeanie was a real person? Why?