

# FERN FANNY

ROSE CLARK

Fanny Fern

**Rose Clark**

«Public Domain»

**Fern F.**

Rose Clark / F. Fern — «Public Domain»,

# Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	10
CHAPTER III	11
CHAPTER IV	12
CHAPTER V	14
CHAPTER VI	16
CHAPTER VII	17
CHAPTER VIII	19
CHAPTER IX	20
CHAPTER X	24
CHAPTER XI	25
CHAPTER XII	27
CHAPTER XIII	29
CHAPTER XIV	31
CHAPTER XV	33
CHAPTER XVI	34
CHAPTER XVII	37
CHAPTER XVIII	40
CHAPTER XIX	41
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	43

# Fanny Fern Rose Clark

## CHAPTER I

"Here is number fifty-four, Timmins," said the matron of a charity-school to her factotum, as she led in a little girl about six years of age; "number fifty-four; you must put another cot in the long hall, and another plate in the eating-room. What is your name, child?"

"Rose," replied the little one, vailing her soft, dark eyes under their curtaining lashes, and twisting the corner of a cotton shawl.

"Rose!" repeated the matron, in a contemptuous aside, to Timmins; "I knew it would be sure to be something fanciful; beggars always go on stilts."

"I am not a beggar," said the child, "I am mother's little Rose."

"Mother's little Rose?" repeated the matron, again, in the same sneering tone; "well – who was mother?"

"Mother is dead," said the child, with a quivering lip.

"No loss, either," said Mrs. Markham to Timmins, "since she did not know better than to let the child run in the streets."

"Mother was sick, and I had to go of errands," said the child, defensively.

"Ah, yes – always an excuse; but do you know that I am the matron of this establishment? and that you must never answer me back, in that way? Do you know that you must do exactly as I and the committee say? Timmins, bring me the scissors and let us lop off this mop of a wig," and she lifted up the clustering curls, behind which Rose seemed trying to hide.

"There – now you look proper and more befitting your condition," said Mrs. Markham, as the sheared lamb rose from its kneeling posture and stood before her. "Timmins, Timmins!" Mrs. Markham whispered, "don't throw away those curls; the hairdresser always allows me something handsome for them. It is curious what thick hair beggar children always have."

"But I am not a beggar," said Rose again, standing up very straight before Mrs. Markham.

"Look at it," said Mrs. Markham, with a sneer; "look at it, Timmins, it is 'not a beggar.' Look at its ragged frock, and soiled shawl, and torn pinafore; it 'is not a beggar.' We shall have some work to do here, Timmins. Come here, Rose."

"Did you hear me, child?" she repeated, as Rose remained stationary.

The child moved slowly toward Mrs. Markham.

"Look me in the eye."

Rose cast a furtive glance at the stern, hard face before her.

"Do you know that naughty girls, in this house, stay in dark closets."

Rose shuddered, but made no reply.

"Ah, I thought so; you had better remember that. Now, go away with Timmins, and have the school uniform put on; 'not a beggar!' was there ever the like of that?" and Mrs. Markham settled herself in her rocking-chair, put her feet upon the sofa, and composed herself for her after-dinner nap.

As she reclines there, we will venture to take a look at her: not a phrenological glance, for she has a cap on her head; under its frilled borders peep some wiry artificial curls; her lips are thin and vixenish; her nose sharp and long, with a bridge which seems to defy the beholder to cross her will; her dress clings very tightly to her bean-pole figure; and on her long arm hangs a black velvet bag, containing her spectacles, snuff-box, and some checkerberry lozenges, which she has a pleasant way of chewing before the children in school hours. You may know that she expects a call to-day, because she has on her festal gilt breast-pin with a green stone in the center.

"Beg your pardon, ma'am; sorry to wake you," said Timmins, with a very flushed face; "but I can't do nothing with that young one, though I have tried my best. I went up stairs to wash her all over, according to rule, before I put on the school uniform; and when I began to strip her, she pulled her clothes all about her, and held them tight, and cried, and took on, saying that nobody ever saw her all undressed but her mother, and all that sort of thing."

"The affected little prude! and to break up my nap, too!" said Mrs. Markham. "I'll teach her – come along, Timmins."

True enough; there stood Rose in the corner, as Timmins had said; her dress half torn off in the scuffle, leaving exposed her beautifully-molded shoulders and back, while with her little hands she clutched the remaining rags closely about her person. With her dilated nostrils, flushed cheeks, and flashing eyes, she made a tableau worth looking at.

"Come here," hissed Mrs. Markham, in a tone that made Rose's flesh creep.

Rose moved slowly toward her.

"Take off those rags – every one of them."

"I can not," said Rose; "oh, don't make me; I can not."

"Take them off, I say. What! do you mean to resist me?" (as Rose held them more tenaciously about her;) and grasping her tightly by the wrist, she drew her through a long passage-way, down a steep pair of stairs, and pushing her into a dark closet, turned the key on her and strode away.

"Obstinate little minx," she said, as she passed Timmins, on her return to her rocking-chair and to her nap.

"Hark! Mrs. Markham! Mrs. Markham! – what's that groan? Hadn't I better open the door and peep in?"

"That is always the way with you, Timmins: no, of course not. She can affect groaning as well as she can affect delicacy; let her stay there till her spirit is well broke; when I get ready I will let her out myself;" and Mrs. Markham walked away.

But Timmins was superstitious, and that groan haunted her, and so she went back to the closet to listen. It was all very still; perhaps it was not Rose, after all; and Timmins breathed easier, and walked a few steps away; and then again, perhaps it was, and Timmins walked back again. It would do no harm to peep, at any rate; the key was in the lock, and Mrs. Markham never would know it. Timmins softly turned it; – she called,

"Rose!"

No answer. She threw open the blind in the entry, that the light might stream into the closet. There lay the child in strong convulsions. Timmins knew she risked nothing in calling Mrs. Markham now.

"Come quick – quick – she is dying!"

"Pshaw! only a trick," said Mrs. Markham, more nervous than she chose to acknowledge, as she consulted her watch and thought of the visitor she was expecting.

"Take her up, Timmins," said she, after satisfying herself the child was senseless, "take her into my room, and put her on the bed."

"Gracious! how can I?" asked Timmins, looking with dismay at the blood flowing profusely from a wound in the temple, occasioned by her fall; "she looks so dreadful, Mrs. Markham."

"Fool!" exclaimed that lady, as she snatched up the little sufferer in her arms, and walked rapidly through the entry. "That's the door bell, Timmins; that is Mr. Balch; tell him I will be there directly – mind – not a word about the child, as you value your place. I have not forgotten that brown soap business."

The cowed Timmins retired as she was bid; and Mrs. Markham, laying the insensible child on the bed, closed the door of her room and applied the proper restoratives; for her position involved some little knowledge of the healing art. After a while, Rose opened her eyes, but as suddenly closed them again, as they revealed the form of her persecutor.

"*You* can attend to her now," said Mrs. Markham to Timmins, about half an hour after, as she went down to receive Mr. Balch.

Timmins walked about the room uneasily, for Rose's ghastly face distressed her.

"If she would only speak, or open her eyes!" but the child did neither. Timmins coughed and hemmed, but Rose did not seem to notice it; at last, going up to the bed-side, she passed her hand over her forehead.

"Don't," whispered Rose, glancing round the room as if afraid of seeing Mrs. Markham; "don't try to make me well, I want to die."

"Oh, no, you don't," exclaimed Timmins, more frightened than ever; "that's awful – you won't go to Heaven, if you talk that way."

"Won't I?" asked the child; "won't I go to Heaven and be with my mother?"

"No," said Timmins, oracularly; "no – in course you won't; all of us has to wait till we are sent for; we can't, none of us, hurry the time, or put it off, nuther, when it comes."

"When will my time come?" asked Rose, sadly.

"Lor'! how you talk – don't go on that way; you've got a while to live yet; you are nothing but a baby."

"Shall I always live here?" asked Rose, looking round again, as if in fear of Mrs. Markham.

"You'll live here till you are bound out, I reckon."

"What's that?" asked Rose, innocently.

"Wall, I never!" exclaimed Timmins; "haven't you never heern about being bound out?"

"No," answered Rose, a little ashamed of her ignorance.

"Wall, the upshot of it is, that you are sent away to live with any body that Mrs. Markham and the committee say, and work for them just as long as they tell you, for your meat, and drink, and clothing."

"What is a committee?" asked Rose.

"Why, it's Mr. Balch, and Mr. Skinner, and Mr. Flint, and Mr. Stone, and Mr. Grant, and them."

"Can't you ever get away from the place where they send you?" asked Rose.

"What a thing you are to ask questions. Yes, I spose you kin, if you die or get married – it amounts to about the same thing," said Timmins, with a shrug of her divorced shoulders.

"To whom shall I be bound out?" asked the child.

"Land's sake, as if I could tell; perhaps to one person, perhaps to another."

This answer not being very satisfactory to Rose, she turned her face to the pillow and heaved a deep sigh.

"Haven't you got no folks?" asked Timmins.

"What?"

"No folks? no relations, like?"

"None but Aunt Dolly."

"Who is Aunt Dolly?"

"I don't know; I never saw her till she brought me here."

"Where did she bring you from?"

"My mother's grave."

"Yes – but what house did you live in when she took you?"

"I didn't live in any house; all day long I sat on my mother's grave, and, at night, I crept behind some boards, by the grave-yard, and slept."

"Land's sake, didn't you have nothing to eat?"

"Sometimes – I was not much hungry, my heart ached so bad; sometimes the children gave me pieces of bread and cake, as they went to school."

"What did you do all day at your mother's grave?"

"Talked to mamma."

"Land's sake, child, dead folks can't hear."

"Can't they?" asked Rose, with a quivering lip. "Didn't my mamma hear what I said to her?"

"In course not," answered Timmins. "Why, what a chick you are. If you weren't so bright, I should think you was an idiot."

"What are you crying for?"

Rose kept on sobbing.

"Come now, don't take on so," said the uneasy Timmins, "you are not the only person who has had a hard time of it. I was a little girl once."

"Were you?" asked Rose, wiping her eyes, and surveying Timmins's Meg Merrilees proportions.

"Yes, of course," said Timmins, laughing; "just as if you didn't know that every grown-up woman must have been a little girl once. Do you say those things a purpose, or do they come by accident, like?"

"Did *your* mother die?" asked Rose, not appearing to hear Timmins's last question.

"Yes – and father, and brother, and sister, and the hull on 'em."

"Did you cry?"

"I 'spose so; I know I was awful hungry."

"But did you cry because your mother was dead?"

"Partly, I suppose."

"When you went to bed, did you think you saw her face with a cloud all around it, and did you call 'Mother?' and did the eyes look sad at you, but stay still where they were? and when you went up toward the cloud and the face, did it all go away?"

"Lor', no; how you talk," said Timmins, as Rose's face grew still paler. "Don't – you make my flesh creep."

"You wouldn't be afraid of your own dear mamma, would you?" asked Rose.

"Lor', yes, if she came to me that way," answered Timmins. "It isn't natur', child; you saw a – a –," and Timmins hesitated to pronounce the word ghost.

"I know you wouldn't run away from it, if it looked so sweet and loving at you," said Rose; "but why did it not come nearer to me? and why did it all fade away when I put out my arms to clasp it? That made me think it couldn't be my mamma, after all; and yet it was mamma, too, but so pale and sad."

"Wall – I don't know," said the perplexed Timmins; "you are beyend me; I don't know nothing about sperrits, and I don't want to; but come here; you've been asking me all sorts of questions, now I should like to ask you one."

"Well," said Rose, abstractedly.

"What on airth made you carry on so like sixty about my washing you? Don't you like me?"

"Y – e – s," replied Rose, blushing deeply.

"Wall, then, what was the matter with you? any scars on your body, or any thing?"

"No," said Rose.

"What *did* ail you, then? for I'm curious to know; why didn't you want me to wash you?"

"It made me feel ashamed," said Rose; "nobody ever washed me but mamma; I didn't mind my mamma."

"Wall, I'm beat if I can understand that," said Timmins, looking meditatively down upon the carpet; "and one of your own sect, as they call it, too. It seems ridikilis; but let me tell you, you'd better make no fuss here; none of the other childern does."

"Other children?" asked Rose, "are there more children here? I did not hear any noise or playing."

"No, I reckon you didn't," said Timmins, laughing. ("I wish to the land Mrs. Markham had heard you say that;") and Timmins laughed again, as if it was too good a joke to be thrown away on one listener.

"Are *their* mothers dead, too, Timmins?"

"I dare say – I reckon some on 'em don't know much who their fathers and mothers was," said Timmins.

"They had some, didn't they?"

"In course," said Timmins; "why, you are enough to kill old folks; sometimes you are away beyend me, and sometimes not quite up to me, as one may say, but you'd better shut up now, for Mrs. Markham will be along presently."

"Do you think Mrs. Markham is a good woman?" asked Rose.

"About as good as you've seen," said the diplomatic Timmins, touching the cut on Rose's temple; "the quicker you mind her when she speaks, the better – that's all."

"Do *you* like her?" asked Rose.

"No – sh – yes – why, what a thing you are to make people say what they don't mean to. I like you, any how. But don't you never act as if I did, before folks, because my hands is tied, you see."

"I don't know what you mean," said Rose.

"Sh – sh – didn't I tell you to shut up? Somebody is as stealthy as a cat;" and Timmins looked uneasily at the key-hole of the door.

## CHAPTER II

Mr. Balch was a bachelor of forty-five, with a small fortune, and a large bump of credulity. Like all ancient and modern bachelors, he liked "to be made of," and Mrs. Markham's hawk eye discovered this little weakness, and turned it to her own advantage. A moneyed man's vote on a committee is of some importance, and Markham had an eye to the perpetuity of her salary; further than that, we have no right to probe the secrets of her unappropriated heart.

On the visit in question, she received Mr. Balch very graciously, inquired with great solicitude concerning his rheumatism, which she averred was quite prevalent that year among *young* people; gave him the most eligible seat on the sofa, and apologized for having kept him waiting so long.

"Not a word, my dear lady, not a word," said the pleased Balch. "We all know how onerous are your duties, and how indefatigably conscientious you are in the performance of them. It was spoken of at the last meeting of the Board; I wish you to know that your services are fully appreciated by us."

"Oh! thank you – thank you, Mr. Balch. You are too kind. None of us can say that we are insensible to appreciation, or independent of our fellow-creatures. It is particularly grateful to me in my lonely condition" (and here Markham heaved a sigh as long as her corsets would allow her,) "for these dear little orphans are all I have to love, and I think I may say I have won their little hearts."

"We know it, we all know it, my dear lady; but you must not allow your duties to press *too* heavily. I thought you looked over-weary this evening."

"Do I?" asked Markham, snapping her eyes to make them look brighter. "Ah, well – it is very likely – the poor little darling who came here to-day, was taken in a fit. I find she is subject to them, and I had just brought her safely out of it, when I came to you. One can't help feeling at such a time, you know, unless indeed, one is a stock, or a stone, and my sensibilities are almost too acute for my situation."

"Very true, my dear lady; but for *our* sakes, for *my* sake," and Mr. Balch lowered his tone, "do try to control them, though to me, a female without sensibility is a – a – monster, Mrs. Markham."

"I can't conceive of it," said that lady, in extreme disgust.

"No, of course you can not; how should you?" asked Balch. "I wish that I – we – I – dared say how much we think of you."

"Oh!" said Markham, with a little deprecatory waive of her hand, "I only do my duty, Mr. Balch."

"Yes, you do – a great deal more – much more than any one with less heart would think of doing; you are too modest, Mrs. Markham; you underrate yourself, Mrs. Markham; I shall move at the next meeting of the Board to have your salary raised," said Balch, with enthusiasm.

"Oh, I beg – I beg" – said Markham, covering her face with her hands – "pray don't, Mr. Balch – I am not at all mercenary."

"My *dear* lady," seizing her hands – "as if we – I – we – could think so – and of *you*? I shall certainly propose it at our next meeting, and if the Board haven't the means to do it, I know who has;" and Balch squeezed Markham's hand.

## CHAPTER III

In a large, uncarpeted, barren-looking room, round narrow strips of table, were seated Mrs. Markham's collected charge, at dinner. Each little head was as closely shaven as if the doctor had ordered it done for blistering purposes; and each little form was closely swathed in indigo-blue factory cotton, drawn bag-fashion round the neck; their lack-luster eyes, stooping forms, and pale faces, telling to the observant eye their own eloquent tale of suffering.

The stereotyped blessing was duly mumbled over by Mrs. Markham, and the bread and molasses distributed among the wooden plates. There was little havoc made, for appetizing fresh air and exercise had been sparingly dealt out by Mrs. Markham, who had her reward in being spoken of, in the Reports of the Committee, as "a most economical, trustworthy person, every way qualified for her important position." For all that, it was sad to see the hopeless, weary look on those subdued faces, and to listen to the languid, monotonous tone in which they replied to any question addressed them.

Rose sat over the untasted morsel, looking vainly from one face to another, for some glance of sympathy for the new comer.

*They* were once new comers – some long since, some more newly; their hearts, too, like Rose's, had yearned for sympathy; their ears ached, as did hers, for one kind tone; but that was all past. Many suns had risen and set on that hopeless search; risen and set, but never on their sports or plays.

The moon sometimes looked in upon them asleep in their little narrow cots. She saw the bitter waking from some mocking dream of home. She saw them spring suddenly from their couches, as they dreamed that the inexorable bell summoned them to rise. She saw them murmuring in their restless slumbers, the tasks which their overworked brains had failed to commit, and for which their much abused physiques were held responsible.

Morning came; no eye brightened at their waking; no little tongue bade a silver-toned 'good-morrow;' no little foot tripped deftly out of bed: for Markham stood at the door – Markham with her bell, and her bunch of keys, and her ferule – Markham, stern and immovable as if she never were a little child, or as if God had forgotten, when he made her, to give her a heart.

And so, as I said before, Rose sat looking round the table, over her untasted food, and wondering why it was the children looked so old, so different from any children she ever saw before; and then she thought that, perhaps, when they were all alone together (as if the hawk-eyed Markham would ever leave them alone together), some little child might come up, and put its arm around her neck, and pity and love her. But day after day went monotonously by; they all went speechless to dinner, speechless to the school-room, speechless to bed.

Twice a day they were walked in file round the paved yard, through which not a blade of grass dared struggle; walled in from the little children outside, whose merry laughs and shouts startled the little prisoners as if *those* tones were unnatural, and only *their* listless life real. As evening came on, they sat drowsily stooping over their tasks, or clicking the monotonous knitting-needle, till weary lids *would* droop, and tired fingers resumed their task only at the rap from Markham's ferule.

Rose saw it all now – she felt it – the torpor – gradually creeping over her, and numbing her senses; she ceased to talk about her mother. She did mechanically what she was bid; and, in the approving words of Markham, was

"Quite a subdued child."

At stated times, the committee came in to look at them, and remarked how inevitably children of the lower classes inherited poor constitutions from their depraved parents, and went away as satisfied as if, granting this to be the case, they were humanely endeavoring to remedy the inherited curse; as if they were not keeping those growing limbs in overstrained positions for hours, and depriving them of the blessed air and sunshine, which God intended childhood to revel in as freely as the birds and flowers.

## CHAPTER IV

"Well, what did you see in the city, Dolly?" asked a village gossip of the village milliner.

"What are the summer fashions? Any thing new? Flounces worn, I suppose? Always will be, for tall people, they are so becoming. Mantillas worn, or shawls? Do they trim bonnets with flowers or ribbons? Do they wear heels on the shoes or tread spat down on the pavement? What is there new for sleeves? I am going to have a ninepenny calico made up, and I want to know all about every thing."

"I hadn't as much time to look round as I wanted, not by half," answered Dolly, "for the stores are full of splendid goods. I had to put that child of Maria's into the orphan asylum. People began to talk because I didn't look after it. I am sure I can't support it, at least not till it is big enough to pay, by helping me in the shop here. People always die just at the wrong time. If Maria had only waited a year or two, now, till that young one had grown bigger; and if she had brought her up to be good for any thing (she is a little shy kind of a whimpering thing, no more life in her then a stick); but I don't intend her living shall come out of me. I have worked hard for what money I have, and I know how to keep it. She shall stay at that asylum till she is big enough to help me, as I said before, and then she must work enough here to pay for her bread and butter."

"That's it," said Miss Kip. "People who can't live to take care of children have no business to have them, that is my creed. Was your sister like you, Dolly?"

"No; I guess she wasn't. She was after every book she could find, before she could speak plain, and when she got hold of one, you might fire off a pistol in the room, and she wouldn't hear it. She crammed her head inside, and I crammed mine outside," said Dolly, laughing; "for I had a real milliner's knack before I left off pantalettes. Why, you never saw any thing like our Maria. She went and sold the only silk gown she had to buy a grammar and dictionary, to learn what she acknowledged was a dead language."

"What a fool!" exclaimed Miss Kip.

"Of course," said Dolly; "letting alone the gown, which was bran new, what was the use of her learning a language that was dead and out of fashion? Well, there was a Professor Clark, who used to come to see her, and you ought to have heard the heathenish noises they made with that 'dead language,' as they called it; it was perfectly ridikilis. He said Maria was an extraordinary girl! as if that was any news, when every body knew she never did any thing like other folks. Why, she'd pretend she saw bears, and dippers, and ple – pleasure-rides, I believe she called them, up among the stars."

"What a fool!" exclaimed Kip, again.

"Yes; and she said the earth was round and hollow, just as if any of us could live in safety, hanging on the outside of an egg-shell, and *it* turning round all the time, too – it was ridikilis!

"Well, Professor Clark married her, and their house was fixed up with books, and pictures, and every thing of that sort which Maria liked. I never went to see them, for they never talked about any thing that interested me. Maria didn't care a penny whether her bonnet was an old or a new one, so long as it was clean and whole. She had no eyes nor ears for any thing but her books and her husband, till that child was born, and then she acted just so about that. When it was five years old, its father died, and then nothing would do but Maria must go after him, as if there was nobody in the world worth looking at but Professor Clark. She might have got married again, and then I should not have had that child to look after. I know she will turn out just like her mother. She looks just like her, and has all her superfine, good-for-nothing lady ways already.

– "No, I did not have any time at all to look after the fashions in the city. The things there are enough to drive you distracted. Such beautiful big plaid and striped silks; such gay trimmings, and bright shawls. I declare every thing looks so homely here in this village, when I come back, that I am perfectly disgusted. Those old poke bonnets of the Cramm girls, trimmed with that pink ribbon they have worn two seasons, and Mrs. Munroe's rusty-looking black mantilla – it is perfectly disgusting."

"So it is," said the sympathizing Kip, "I am tired to death of them, myself. I really wonder, Dolly, you can make up your mind to stay here in this dull place. Why don't you move into the city?"

"Perhaps, I shall, one of these days," said Dolly, with a toss of her head. "I feel as though I was born to better things. It is dull work for a woman to live all her life alone."

"I know it," said Kip, disconsolately.

"There are men enough in the world, no doubt of that," said Dolly, "and when I go about with them, in the city, I quite enjoy it; but one sees nothing here, except frogs and crickets; it is perfectly disgusting."

"So it is," chimed Kip; "and such splendid moonlight-nights as we have, too, and such nice places to walk."

"Yes, but to walk with a *woman*!" said Dolly. "I like you very well, Kip; but when one *has* had gentlemen's society, it is like swallowing the parings, after having eaten the peach."

"So it is," said Kip (quite willing in such a cause to be tossed unceremoniously among the parings).

"Well, it is just here," said Dolly, "I will own it to *you*, Kip, I mean to get married!"

"You don't!" screamed Kip; "to whom?"

"Lord knows, I don't, but I feel sure I shall do it."

"How?" asked Kip, with great interest.

"Never you mind," said Dolly; "see if I don't live in the city before long. Such times as they have there! Theaters, concerts, shows, balls, and every body so pleased with every body; such a delightful noise and bustle and racket. And just look round this village! You might hear the town clock tick; it is perfectly disgusting. There is not a man in it, of any account, but Sprigg's the blacksmith, and he has but one foot; sometimes I want to scream."

"So do I," said Kip.

## CHAPTER V

Mrs. Markham sat in her private parlor, comfortably sipping her tea. Whatever might be said of the children's bill of fare, there was nothing meager about hers. No Chinaman's tongue was ever a safer tea detector than Markham's. No spurious mixture found a place in her tea-caddy; no water-pot was allowed to wash away its strength when made. The warm biscuit were as fragrant as the tea, and the butter might have won the prize at any agricultural fair. The room too, in which the tea-table was spread, had every appliance for the consolation of a single woman. Comfortably plump sofas and chairs, a looking-glass, selected for its peculiar faculty of adding breadth to an unnecessarily elongated face; a handsome, well-filled bottle of Cologne, another of Bay Water, and a work-box, with all sorts of industrial appendages, the gift of Mr. Balch. Then, for the look of the thing, a few books, newspapers, pamphlets, etc., for Mrs. Markham never read; partly because she had a surfeit in the book line in the school-room, but principally, because publishers and editors had a sad way of making their types so indistinct now-a-days; or in other words, Markham had a strong aversion to spectacles.

There were no pictures or flowers in the room, because the former "marked the walls," and the latter "kept dropping their leaves on the carpet;" but there were two smart, gilt candelabras on the mantle, and a small clock between them, and an hour glass, and a stuffed owl. There was also a light kid glove, which always lay there, because it served for a text for Mr. Balch's little complimentary speeches about hands and hearts, and pairs, etc. Mrs. Markham was always *going* to put it away, but somehow she never did so.

"Ah, Timmins, is that you? come in. Is Tibbs any better," asked Mrs. Markham, comfortably sipping her tea.

"No ma'm, she's awful; her wrists look as if they would snap in two; and her neck looks so slender; and her head so big. Oh, she's a sight, ma'am."

"Pooh, you are always sight-seeing, Timmins; the child always had a miserable constitution. As the committee say, it is not much use to try to rear these children; the seeds of disease are in them."

"Well, Tibbs is going fast enough, that's certain. She's mostly stupid-like, but now and then she smiles and reaches out her arms, for all the world as if she saw the angels, and wanted them to come and take her."

"What nonsense, Timmins. Hand me that toast. Just as if a pauper-child would have such notions."

"Well, ma'am, if you only would stay long enough by the child, you'd see it; it is awful to watch with her all alone."

"Afraid of a sick child," said Mrs. Markham, pouring out another cup of hyson.

"No, not the child exactly – Tibbs is a good little thing; but the sperrets, about the room. I do believe," said Timmins, solemnly, "that sperrets are all round these children. You don't see things as I do, Mrs. Markham."

"I hope I don't," answered that lady, laughing, as she pushed back her empty cup. "A pretty matron I should make, filled with such fanciful whims; and a great while the committee would keep me."

"Perhaps so," answered Timmins. "Sometimes I think –"

"What?" asked Markham.

"And then again I don't know," said the perplexed Timmins; "but I must run back to Tibbs – if you only *would* look in on her, Mrs. Markham," said Timmins beseechingly, as she closed the door.

While the above conversation was passing, the film gathered slowly over little Tibbs's eyes; the feet and hands grew colder – colder; drops of moisture gathered on the marble temples; the lips moved, but no sound came; a convulsive spasm shook the slight form, and little Tibbs was dead! None

stood by to hold the feeble hand, or wipe the gathering death-damp from the pale lips and brow. No warm breath was proof to the dimmed eye and dulled ear of Love's dear presence.

Tibbs died *alone*.

And yet not alone, for He who loveth little children, folded her to His bosom.

"It is quite time she took her drops," said Timmins, re-entering the room; and holding the phial up to the light, and placing a spoon under its mouth, she commenced counting, "One – two – three – four – here Tibbie.

"What!"

The horror-struck Timmins darted through the door, and back to Mrs. Markham.

"Oh, ma'am – oh, ma'am – she's gone – all alone, too – oh, Mrs. Markham – "

"Who's gone? what are you talking about, Timmons?"

"Tibbs, ma'am – Tibbs – while I was down here talking to you – and all alone, too – oh dear – oh dear – "

"Hold your tongue, Timmins; as if *your* being there would have done any good?"

"Don't you think so, ma'am?" asked the relieved Timmins.

"No, of course not; the child's time had come – it is all well enough; you couldn't have helped it. Call Watkins, and tell her to go lay her out. I will be up when I have taken my nap. You stay there till Watkins has done, and then lock the door and take the key. What o'clock is it?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Timmins. "Are you *sure* it was just as well for Tibbs to die alone? I hope *I* shan't die alone. Should *you* like to die alone, Mrs. Markham?"

"That has nothing to do with it," answered Mrs. Markham, angrily; "go along, Timmins, and don't make a fool of yourself."

"Poor thing! poor thing!" exclaimed Watkins, as she untied little Tibbs's night-dress to wash her thin limbs, "*her* sufferings are over. I tell you, Timmins, there'll be a long reckoning for this some day. I had rather be Tibbs here than Mrs. Markham. She isn't a sparrow's weight," said Watkins, lifting the child. "Was she sensible when she died, Timmins?"

"Don't ask me – don't ask me. Oh, Watkins, *could* I help it? I ran down to speak to Mrs. Markham, and – and – "

"She didn't die alone?" asked the horror-struck Watkins, laying the corpse back upon the pillow.

Timmins nodded her head, and sat rocking her figure to and fro.

"Now, don't say a word – don't say a word," said Timmins, "I know I shall be punished for it; but in deed I didn't mean no harm. I can't stay much longer in this house, Watkins."

Watkins made no reply, except by slow shakes of the head, as she drew on the little charity night-dress which was to answer for a shroud, smoothed the soft silken hair, and folded the small hands over the weary little heart.

"Do you know a prayer, Watkins?" asked Timmins, looking at the dead child.

"I know 'Our Father,'" replied Watkins, smoothing a fold in the shroud.

"Say it," said Timmins, reverently; "it won't do *her* no good, but it will *me*."

"Our Father – "

"Got all through?" asked Mrs. Markham, throwing open the door; "that's all right. Now spread the sheet over her face – open the window – lock the door, and give me the key."

"Won't you come in, ma'am, and look at the child?" asked Watkins, stepping one side.

"No, it don't signify; you washed her and all that, I suppose. Come out, Timmins; and you, Watkins, run for the undertaker – the sooner the child is taken away the better; it is not healthy to have a corpse in the house," and Mrs. Markham applied her smelling-salts to her nose.

Watkins tied on her bonnet, and went sorrowfully down street for the undertaker.

## CHAPTER VI

Mr. Pall prided himself on the reverent manner in which he performed his necessary funereal duties. He always dressed in black, and sat, handkerchief in hand, in the middle of his coffin ware-room, in a prepared state of mind to receive customers.

He had every variety of coffin – from plain pine-wood up to the most polished mahogany and rosewood. His latest invention was "the casket," daintily lined throughout with white satin, and the lid so constructed as to expose the whole person instead of the face only, as in more common coffins. This was what Mr. Pall called "a dress coffin," and was perfectly consistent with any variety of adornment in the shroud that the fancy of grief-stricken affection might suggest.

When Watkins entered, Mr. Pall sat complacently in his chair amid his piles of coffins, with his hands solemnly folded over his handkerchief. He would have scorned to disgrace his profession, like many others of the craft, by reading the newspapers in his sanctum, smoking a cigar, or in any other way conveying the idea that he had lost sight of his mournful calling. We are not bound, therefore, to believe, on the authority of a prying policeman's limited vision through the key-hole, that when the shop was closed, Mr. Pall nightly drew from an old-fashioned coffin a bottle of whisky and a box of cigars, wherewith to console himself for the day's solemn and self-inflicted penance.

"Good morning, m-a-a-m," drawled the dolorous Pall.

"Hark! from the tombs a doleful sound,  
Mine ears attend the cry.'

"Want my mournful services, ma'am? I shall take a melancholy pleasure in showing you my coffins. Age of the corpse, ma'am?" and Pall used his white handkerchief.

"Six years."

"Death strikes down all,  
Both great and small – '

"Place of residence, ma'am?"

"Orphan Asylum, eh?" repeated the disappointed Pall, as his vision of the costly casket pattern faded away; "pine coffin, of course – no satin lining or silver nails – no carriages – night burial, Potters' Field, etc.

"Lie in the dust,  
We all must.'

"Tell the afflicted matron of the Orphan Asylum that I will send up directly and take the deceased child's measure."

And Pall flourished his white handkerchief as long as was consistent with the demise of a charity orphan, and the small sum invested in the pine coffin.

## CHAPTER VII

It was the day for the committee to make their stated visit of examination at the Asylum. Timmins had swept the school-room floor very carefully, scoured off the black-board, dusted the benches, and placed a bunch of flowers on Mrs. Markham's desk, just as that lady entered on her tour of inspection.

"How on earth came that green trash on my desk?" asked the offended matron.

"I did it, ma'am, to make it look kind o' cheerful like;" said Timmins, a little abashed at exhibiting such a weakness in such an august presence. "It looks so dry and hard here, and children, poor things, is fond of flowers," and Timmins sighed as she thought of poor Tibbie.

"Are you in your dotage, Timmins, to bring such a frivolous thing as a bouquet into a school-room? who ever heard of such a folly?" and Mrs. Markham sent it spinning through the nearest window.

Timmins sighed again, and rubbed off one of the benches with a corner of her apron; then, looking up as if a bright thought had struck her, she said:

"They say, ma'am, that this world is nothing but a school for us, and yet God has strewn flowers all over it. He must have done it for something."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Mrs. Markham, in extreme disgust; "go, bring in the chairs for the committee, and then ring the bell for the children."

Clang – clang – clang went the bell, and in wound the mournful procession; all habited alike, all with the same listless air, flabby-looking limbs, and leaden complexions.

"Seems to me you look uncommonly stupid," remarked the matron, by way of encouragement to the children; "see if you can't throw a little animation into your faces."

The poor little victims stared open their eyes, and made an ineffectual attempt at a smile, more painful to witness than their former listlessness.

"Stand up straighter, can't you?"

The little crooked spines made a feeble and ineffectual attempt to remedy the irreparable injury Mrs. Markham had inflicted upon them.

"Now, let every toe touch that crack on the floor.

"Now, cross your arms behind, every one of you.

"There – don't you stir a hair till the committee come in; it is now eleven; they will be here at quarter before twelve; now mind what I tell you about throwing a little animation into your faces;" and Mrs. Markham having laid the ferule in sight, seated herself in an easy position in a very comfortable chair, put a checkerberry lozenge in her mouth, and prepared herself to punish the first child whose overstrained limbs relaxed from weariness.

Every one knows how much more easily one can walk a mile than stand perfectly still, in the same position, for fifteen minutes; and no one who has ever seen the martyrdom which restless childhood is compelled to undergo, in this respect (even in our best schools), sometimes in the scorching vicinity of a red-hot stove, sometimes in a shivering draught, for an hour or more, while the teacher, comfortably seated, leisurely experiments upon their intellects, can help wishing that he might have it in his power to subject thoughtless teachers, and as thoughtlessly criminal parents, to the same daily and intolerable torture; can help wishing that, having placed *them* in such positions, he could have liberty to punish them for the non-committal of tasks which their aching heads and limbs have rendered impossible.

Let every parent satisfy himself or herself, by *personal inspection*, with regard to these things; not on farce exhibition days, but by unexpected calls, at such times as he or she may see fit; and let any teacher who would debar a parent from such an inalienable right, be deposed from his station.

Many a grave now filled with moldering dust would have been tenantless, had parents, not trusting to show-circulars, satisfied themselves on these points, instead of merely paying the term-bills when due.

"Rose!"

The little drooping head righted itself; the child had fallen asleep; a thump on the head with the ever-ready ferule brought on a head-ache, which rendered a repetition of the offense improbable.

"Quarter before twelve."

Markham slides her little gold watch back under her basque. The committee have arrived. Now she smiles all over. Her hypocritical voice is pitched to the company key. She glides round the benches, and calls to "Rose, dear," and "Mabel, dear," and "Anna, dear," patting them on their shrinking shoulders with her serpent touch.

Now one of the committee makes a prayer, and thanks God that these dear children, rescued from sinks of pollution and crime, and from depraved parents, have here found a Christian home, under the guardianship of a mother in Israel; he prays that God will reward her abundantly for her self-sacrificing devotion to them, and that the children may feel unfeignedly grateful for all their blessings.

The committee then seat themselves, and Markham asks a list of questions, cut and dried beforehand, to which parrot tongues respond. The children then wail out a hymn, composed by a friend of Mrs. Markham's in which they are made to express to that lady their affectionate gratitude, as well as to the philanthropic and discriminating committee present, who blow their noses sympathetically, and wipe their spectacles. The children are then dismissed to their bread and molasses, and so the farce ends.

(Pity, that the munificent bequests of great and good men to such institutions as these, should, for want of a little investigation, sometimes be so sadly misappropriated.)

The next day the readers of *The Morning Budget* are informed, with a pretty show of statistics, of the flourishing condition of that humane institution the Charity Orphan Asylum, and of the spiritual and temporal well-to-do-a-tiveness of its inmates, under the judicious supervision of its energetic, self-denying, and Christian matron, Mrs. Clara Markham; who forthwith orders a dozen copies of *The Morning Budget*, which she distributes among her friends, reserving one for a fixture on her parlor table, to edify chance visitors.

Meanwhile little Tibbie sleeps peacefully in her pine coffin in the Potters Field, and Rose sits up in her little cot, while all around her sleep, and stretches out her imploring arms to the peaceful stars that shimmer through the window.

On the evening of examination-day, Mr. Balch, as usual, takes his leave with the rest of the committee, but after seeing them safely round the corner, returns as usual, to tea with Markham in the cosy little parlor; and Markham smiles on him as only an unappropriated elderly female knows how; and Mr. Balch, what with the smile and the Hyson, considers Webster and Worcester united too meager to express his feelings, and falls back upon Markham's hand, upon which he makes an unmistakable record of his bachelor emotions.

## CHAPTER VIII

"Mercy on us! you don't expect me to sleep in that room, do you?" asked Timmins of Mrs. Markham, as they stopped before the door of the room where little Tibbie died.

"I wouldn't do it for a purse of gold. I know I should see her ghost; oh, it would be awful;" and Timmins put her hands before her face, as if the ghost were looming up in the depths of the dimly-lighted entry.

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Markham; "how superstitious you are! I am going to sleep there with you."

"Are you? Well, that alters the case," and Mrs. Markham led the way, while Timmins followed her with distended eyes.

"I really can't help thinking she *will* come back," said Timmins, as Mrs. Markham extinguished the light and crept into bed. "I can't seem to get over it, about her dying all alone. How very thin she was. Did you ever think she was unhappy, Mrs. Markham?"

"I don't think any thing about it, Timmins. I go to bed for the purpose of sleeping;" and turning her back upon Timmins, she buried her frilled night-cap in the pillow.

"Don't cuddie up so close, Timmins," said Mrs. Markham, about ten minutes after; "you make me insufferably hot."

"Lor', ma'am, I can't help it; I can't see nothing, and you won't speak to me, and how am I going to know that you are there?"

"Guess at it," said Markham, giving another hitch away toward the wall, and soon her sonorous breathing announced her departure to the land of dreams.

"Goodness alive! if she ain't asleep," said Timmins; "what if Tibbie *should* come back? Oh dear! I am sure I am sorry enough I left her so. I'll put my head under the bed-clothes. No I won't – because if it *is* coming, Mrs. Markham must wake up, for I shan't be good for nothing; I never spoke to a ghost in my life."

"What's – that?" she whispered hoarsely, as, by the dim light of the street-lamp on the window-glass, she saw the door open slowly, and a little figure dressed in white, glide in. "Oh Lor' – oh Mrs. Markham – (gripping that lady by the arm) – it's come! Hist – there – there – oh – oh, it's coming *here*," whispered Timmins, as Mrs. Markham, now thoroughly roused, trembled as violently as Timmins, and both made a shuddering plunge under the bed-clothes.

"*You* look out, Timmins?"

"No —*you*, Mrs. Markham!" and both night-caps were thrust carefully from under the sides of the raised sheets.

There was the little figure – it was no illusion – flitting, gliding about the room; now here, now more distant, and now, with its pale, wan face and outstretched arms, it approaches the bed. Timmins and Markham both jump shrieking from it through the door, and fall senseless upon the entry floor.

The wicked flee when none pursueth.

Poor innocent little Rose! Waked suddenly from her somnambulistic sleep, she stands gazing about her, the unconscious avenger of little Tibbie's sufferings, and her own.

## CHAPTER IX

Years pass on. Some of the children have been bound out, others Death has more mercifully indentured into his own service. Rose has grown tall. Her step is slow and feeble, and her form has lost its roundness; but her eyes are beautiful from the light within, and her wee mouth has a grieved look which makes the beholder long to clasp her to his heart. Even the ugly charity-school bonnet which Markham has just tied under her chin, can not make her look ugly.

Dolly stands waiting to take her to Difftown; she has no bundle to pack up, she has no regrets at leaving the Asylum, she has no hope for the future, for she has looked into Dolly's face with her clear calm eyes, and read her doom.

"Rose, come and kiss me, darling, before you go," said Markham. "I always feel *so* melancholy," she added, in an aside, to Dolly, "at parting with these dear children. It is quite impossible not to feel a motherly interest and solicitude after being with them so long. Good-by, dear Rose – don't *quite* forget me."

Rose thought there was little fear of that, as she followed Dolly out of the house.

"A very nice woman, that Mrs. Markham," said Dolly, as they walked to the stable where she had left her horse and chaise, "a very nice woman."

Rose made no reply.

"I dare say though, you don't like her at all, do you?"

"No," said Rose.

"Why not, I should like to know?" asked Dolly, tartly.

"I had rather not tell, if you please," answered Rose.

The civil manner in which the refusal was couched irritated Dolly.

"You are as like your mother as two peas," said she, angrily; "you look just like her, and speak just like her."

"Do you think so?" asked the child, her whole face brightening.

"I don't know why you should look so pleased about it. Maria was a thriftless creature. No learning but book learning."

"Please don't speak so of my mamma," and the tears stood in Rose's eyes.

"I shall speak just as I please of her," said Dolly; "she was my sister before she was your mother, by a long spell, and I don't know why I am bound to love her for that reason, when there was nothing to love in her."

"But there was," said Rose. "She was sweet, and gentle, and loving, and oh, Aunt Dolly, she was every thing to *me*," and the hot tears trickled through Rose's slender fingers.

"Fiddle-faddle! Now ain't you ashamed, you great baby, to be bawling here in the street, as if I was some terrible dragon making off with you? That's all the thanks I get for taking you out of the church-yard and putting you in that nice Orphan Asylum."

"If you had only left me in the church-yard," sobbed Rose.

Dolly was quite too angry to reply. The very bows on her bonnet trembled with rage.

After a pause, she turned round, and laying her hands on Rose's trembling shoulders, said,

"Now, look here, Rose Clark, now just take a fair and square look at me. I don't look much like your *gentle* mother, as you call her, do I?"

"No, no," sobbed Rose, with a fresh burst of tears.

"Well, I ain't like her in any thing. I ain't a-going to pet you, nor make of you, nor spoil you, as she did. You are bound out to me, and you have got your bread and butter to earn. I have no taste for cry-babies nor idlers, and if you don't work and mind too, the committee of the Orphan Asylum shall know the reason why; you may find worse quarters than my milliner's shop," and Dolly stopped, not that the subject, but her breath, was exhausted.

The morning was calm and serene, and the road through which Dolly's old horse plodded, very lovely. There had been heavy rains for days before, and now, as they left the city behind them, the sun shone out, and bright drops hung glistening on the trees, shrubs, and grass blades, and the spicy pines and way-side flowers sent forth their sweetest odors. The little birds, too, came out, pluming their wings for a sunny flight far – far into the clear blue ether, whither Rose longed to follow them.

*Such* a burst of song as they went!

It thrilled through every fibre of the child's frame.

Rose glanced at the frowning face beside her. There was no appreciation there. No, Dolly was thinking how much work she could get out of the feeble child by her side, the helpless orphan in whose veins her own blood flowed.

On they went – the old horse, and Dolly, and Rose.

Wreaths of mist rolled up from the valleys, crept along the hill-sides, and were eagerly drunk up by the sun's warm breath, leaving the earth fresh and fair as when it first came from the forming hand of God.

Cottages they passed, nestled among the trees, on whose happy thresholds children clambered on a mother's knee.

Churches too, whose glistening spires pointed to that Heaven where Rose longed to be at rest; and far, far away, the silver lake gleamed in the bright sunlight; oh, how gladly, on its peaceful bosom, would the child have floated away!

"For mercy's sake, what are you thinking about," asked Dolly, "with that curious look in your eyes, and the color coming and going in your face that way?"

"I was thinking," said the child, her eyes still fixed on the silver lake, "how beautiful God made the earth, and how sad it was there should be –"

"*What* now?" asked Dolly tartly.

"Any sorrow in it," said Rose.

"The earth is well enough, I s'pose," said Dolly. "I never looked at it much, and as to the rest of your remark, I hope you will remember it when you get home, and not plague my life out, when I want you to work. Let's see; you will have the shop to sweep out, the window shutters to take down and put up, night and morning, errands to run, sewing, washing, ironing, and scrubbing to do, dishes to wash, beside a few other little things.

"Of course you will have your own clothes to make and to mend, the sheets and towels to hem, and be learning meanwhile to wait on customers in the shop; I shan't trust you with the money-drawer till I know whether you are honest."

Rose's face became crimson, and she involuntarily moved further away from Dolly.

"None of that now," said that lady, "such airs won't go down with me. It is a pity if I can't speak to my own sister's child."

Rose thought this was the only light in which she was likely to view the relationship, but she was too wise to reply.

"There's no knowing," said Dolly, "what you may have learned among those children at the Asylum."

"You put me there, Aunt Dolly," said Rose.

"Of course I put you there, but did I tell you to learn all the bad things you saw?"

"You didn't tell me not; but I never would take what belonged to another."

"Shut up now – you are just like your mother ex – actly;" and Dolly stopped here, considering that she could go no further in the way of invective.

And now they were nearing the village. Rose thought it looked much prettier at a distance than near.

There was an ugly, dirty tavern in the main street, on whose gaudy sign-board was painted "The Rising Sun;" and on whose piazza were congregated knots of men, smoking, chewing, swearing, and bargaining, by turns; for it was cattle-fair Monday, and the whole population was astir.

Herds of cattle; sheep, cows, calves, oxen, and pigs, divided off into little crowded pens, stood bleating and lowing in the blazing sun, half dead with thirst, while their owners were chaffering about prices.

On the opposite side of the street were temporary booths, whose owners were making the most of the day by opening oysters, and uncorking bottles for the ravenous farmers; little boys stood by, greedily devouring the dregs of the glasses whenever they could dodge a boxed ear. A few sickly trees were planted here and there, at the sides of the road, which seemed to have dwindled away in disgust at their location. On a small patch of green, dignified by the name of the Park, an ill-assorted, heterogeneous company were drilling for 'lection, presenting arms, etc., in a manner that would have struck Napoleon dumb.

Dolly's house was on the further side of "the Park," a two story wooden tenement, of a bright red color, planted on a sand bank close to the road side, unornamented with a single green thing, if we may except some gawky boys who were eyeing the tin soldiers and peppermint candy in the milliner's window, and who had been attentively listening to the swearing cattle-dealers and picking up stray lobster-claws which good fortune had thrown in their way.

"That *her*?" whispered Daffodil (Dolly's factotum), pointing to Rose, as she assisted Dolly to alight. Dolly nodded.

"Why – she'd be a real beauty if she was only a little fatter, and didn't stoop, and her eyes weren't so big, and she wasn't so pale."

"I don't see any beauty," mumbled Dolly, "she looks exactly like her mother."

"O no – of course she isn't a beauty," said Daffy, retracting her involuntary mistake, "she don't favor you in the least Dolly; I said she would be pretty if –"

"Never mind your ifs now, I'm as hungry as a catamount, give me something to eat, and then I'll talk; some of that cold ham, and warm over some tea; goodness, how faint I am, that young one has tired me all out argufying – she's just like her mother – exactly."

"Shall I set a plate for her too?" asked Daffy.

"Of course not, till I get through; children always cram all before them, there wouldn't be a mortal thing left for me – let her wait till I have done. Rose – here! take off your bonnet, sit down and unpack those boxes, don't break the strings now, untie the knots carefully, the strings may do to use again, and don't litter up the shop floor, and don't – Lord-a-mercy, Daffy, if she ain't undone the wrong boxes, I knew she would."

"T-h-o-s-e," she thundered in Rose's ear, pulling her along to the right pile, and bending her over till her nose touched the boxes; "now see if you can see them, and don't make another mistake *short* of ten minutes," and Dolly threw off her bonnet and sat down to her tea.

Rose stooped down as she was bid, and commenced her task, but the excitement she had undergone, so different from the monotonous life she had led, the heat of the day, and her insufficient breakfast before starting, brought on a sudden vertigo, and as she stooped to execute her task, she fell forward upon the floor.

"Sick now, the very first day," exclaimed Dolly, turning to Daffy, "now ain't that enough to provoke any body? Her mother used to be just so, always fainting away at every thing; she's got to get cured of that trick; get up Rose!" and Dolly shook her roughly by the arm.

"I really think she can't," said Daffy, looking at her white lips and relaxed limbs.

Dolly seized a pitcher of water near, and dashed it with rather more force than was necessary in the child's face.

"That's warm water," said Daffy.

"How did I know that?" muttered Dolly, "bring some cold then;" and Dolly repeated the application, at a different temperature.

Rose shivered slightly, but did not open her eyes.

"She intends taking her own time to come to," said Dolly, "and I have something else to do, beside stand by to wait for it."

"But it won't do for her to lie here," said Daffy. "Suppose Mrs. John Meigs should come in after that new bonnet of hern? It don't look well."

Dolly appreciated that argument, and Daffy had permission to carry her out of sight, into a back sitting-room, on the same floor.

"She *does it* remarkable, if she *is* making believe," soliloquized Daffy, as she laid Rose on the bed; "and she *is* pretty, too, I can say it now Dolly isn't round, pretty as a waxen doll, and not much heavier; she is not fit for hard work anyhow, with those bit-fingers. I shouldn't wonder if Dolly is too hard on the child, but I daren't say so. What can that little scar be on her left temple?" and Daffy lifted the curls to look at that indelible proof of Mrs. Markham's affection on Rose's initiation day.

"Well, she's a pretty cretur!" said Daffodil again, as she took one more glance at her from the half open door. "I couldn't find it in my heart to speak cross to the poor motherless thing; but it won't do for me to stay up here."

"Shall I make a cup of tea for Rose, agin she wakes up?" asked Daffy.

"Sick folks ought not to eat and drink," said Dolly, sarcastically; "no, of course not; clear away the table, and put things to rights here. Our Maria was always acting just so; if she didn't have her breakfast ready to put in her mouth the minute she got out of bed, she'd up and faint away; she'd faint if it was hot, and she'd faint if it was cold. She'd faint if she was glad, and faint if she was sorry. She was always a-fainting; I never fainted in my life."

"Sisters are different, you know;" said Daffy, polishing a tea-cup with a towel.

"I believe you," said Dolly. "It is lucky they are; I am glad I ain't such a miserable stick; but Rose has got to get out of that," added she.

"You don't really believe she, nor Maria, as you call her, could help it, do you?" asked Daffy.

"Help a fiddlestick," said Dolly, jerking down her pea-green paper window-curtain; "ridikilis!" Daffy knew that word was Dolly's ultimatum, and pursued the subject no further.

## CHAPTER X

"Aunt Dolly," said Rose, timidly, about a month after the events above related, "Aunt Dolly" – and here Rose stopped short.

"Out with it," said Dolly, "if you've got any thing to say. You make me as nervous as an eel, twisting that apron-string, and Aunt Dolly-ing such an eternity; if you have got any thing to say, out with it."

"May I go to the evening school?" asked Rose, "it is a free school."

"Well – you are not free to go, if it is; you know how to read and write, and I have taught you how to make change pretty well, that is all you need for *my* purposes."

"But I should like to learn other things, Aunt Dolly."

"What other things, I'd like to know? that's your mother all over. She never was content without a book at the end of her nose. She couldn't have earned her living to have saved her life, if she hadn't got married."

"It was partly to earn my living I wanted to learn, Aunt Dolly; perhaps I could be a teacher."

"Too grand to trim caps and bonnets like your Aunt Dolly, I suppose," added she, sneeringly; "it is quite beneath a charity orphan, I suppose."

"No," said Rose; "but I should like to teach, better."

"Well, you won't do it; never – no time. So there's all there is to that: now take that ribbon and make the bows to old Mrs. Griffin's cap – the idea of wanting to be a school-teacher when you have it at your fingers' ends to twist up a ribbon so easy – it is ridicilous. Did Miss Snow come here last night, after I went out, for her bonnet?"

"Yes," answered Rose.

"Did you tell her that it was all finished but the cap frill?" asked Dolly.

"No; because I knew that it was not yet begun, and I could not tell a – a –"

"Lie! I suppose," screamed Dolly, putting her face very close to Rose's, as if to defy her to say the obnoxious word; "is that it."

"Yes," said Rose, courageously.

"Good girl – good girl" said Dolly; "shall have a medal, so it shall;" and cutting a large oval out of a bit of pasteboard, and passing a twine string through it, she hung it round her neck – "Good little Rosy-Posy – just like its conscientious mamma."

"I wish I were half as good as my mamma," said Rose, with a trembling voice.

"I suppose you think that Aunt Dolly is a great sinner!" said that lady.

"We are all great sinners, are we not?" answered Rose.

"All but little Rosy Posy;" sneered Dolly, "*she* is perfect, only needs a pair of wings to take her straight up to heaven."

"Many a true word is spoken in jest," muttered Daffy, as she waxed the end of a bit of sewing silk, behind the counter.

## CHAPTER XI

Mr. Clifton, the minister of Difftown village was one of those few clergymen who possessed of decided talent was yet content to labor in an humble sphere. Many of his brother clergymen had left their country parishes to become stars in cities. Some, unspoiled by the breath of applause, had laid their honors meekly at the Saviour's feet; others, inflated with pride and self-conceit, preached soft things to those who built them palaces of ease, and healed the hurt of the daughter of God's people slightly.

Mr. Clifton feared the test. Appreciation is as dear to the sanctified as the unsanctified heart. It *were* pleasant to see the heart's dear ones, fitted by nature to enjoy the refinements of life, in full possession of them; it were pleasant to have daily intercourse with the large circle of the gifted who congregate in cities – but what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Mr. Clifton felt that with his ardent social and impulsive temperament, his quiet village parish, with its home endearments, was most favorable to his growth in grace; and so, turning a deaf ear to the Syren voices which would have called him away, he cheerfully broke the bread of life, year after year, to his humble flock.

It was Sabbath evening – Mr. Clifton lay upon the sofa, suffering under one of those torturing head-aches which excessive mental excitement was sure to bring on. He loved his calling – it was not mere lip service for him to expound the word of God, and teach its sacred truths – the humblest among his people knew this; the tremor in his voice, the moisture in his eye, told their own eloquent tale. There must have been something to enchain those whose active limbs, never still during the other days of the week from dawn till dark, could sit on those narrow seats and never droop with uneasiness or sleep.

But the physical reaction was too apt to come to the delicately strung frame; and with closed eyelids, Mr. Clifton lay upon the sofa in the parlor of the little parsonage, while his wife bent over him, bathing his aching temples.

The parsonage parlor! how difficult to furnish it to suit every carping eye, for there were those, even in Mr. Clifton's parish, as in all others, whom his blameless life and welling sympathies could neither appease nor conciliate.

The parsonage parlor! The father of Mary Clifton would gladly have filled it with luxuries for his only daughter; but Mary shook her little head, and planted her little foot firmly on the plain Kidderminster carpet, and sat down contentedly in the bamboo rocking-chair, and hung the pretty pictures her girlhood had cherished in a spare room up-stairs, and looked round upon the bare walls of the parlor without a murmur of dissatisfaction.

Flowers she still clung to. The parsonage parlor was never without them. They were on the breakfast and tea-table – sometimes but a single blossom, for Mary had little time to cull them – sometimes only a green branch or sprig, whose wondrously beautiful leaves, shaded with the nicest skill, had given her a thrill of pleasure – sometimes a bunch of simple clover – sometimes a tuft of moss, or a waving corn tassel, mixed with spears of oats and grass-blades.

Mr. Clifton loved Mary all the better that she loved these things; and when she came to him with her blue eye beaming, and her cheek flushed with pleasure, and held up to him some tiny floral treasure, whose beauty no eye less spiritual than her's could have discerned, and pointed out its delicate tinting, he thanked God her heart could be made happy by such pure, innocent, and simple pleasures.

But it was at such times as I have alluded to, when Mr. Clifton sank under his pastoral duties, that Mary's love shone forth the brightest. On the Sabbath eve of which we speak, his eyes were closed, but he heard the rustle of her dress and her light foot-fall on the carpet. He felt her fragrant breath upon his cheek, and the touch of her soft fingers charming the fever from his temples. Gradually it

crept away, yielding to her magnetic touch, and the smile came back to her husband's lip, and the beam to his languid eye. And now the healing cup of tea was prepared, and the little stand with its tray set before him, and Mary herself sweetened it, more with the smile on her lip and the love-beam in her eye than with the big lump of sugar she dropped into it; and as her husband drained the cup and laid his head back again upon the cushions, he thanked God, as many a convalescent has done, for the untold wealth of love which sickness may draw forth.

"Did you see that sweet child, George, in Dolly Smith's pew to-day?" asked Mary. "Her little face quite fascinated me. It was as sad as it was sweet. I fancied the child must have known sorrow; perhaps be motherless," and Mary kissed her own little blue-eyed baby. "You know, George, things sometimes come to me like a revelation. I am sure that child's heart is sore. When you read the hymn I saw the tears standing in her eyes, but then your voice is so musical, George, it might have been from excess of pleasure."

"Foolish little wife," said her husband; "as if every body saw me through your eyes, and heard me with your partial ears."

"Well, be that as it may," said Mary, "I want you to call at Dolly's and see that child; get her into my Sabbath-school class if you can, and if she has a sorrow, we will try to lighten it."

## CHAPTER XII

Not the least difficult part of a clergyman's duty is his round of parochial calls. They must be rightly timed with regard to the domestic arrangements of each family. This he is supposed to know by a sort of intuition. They must not be too infrequent. He must remember the number of the inmates, and be sure to inquire after the new baby. He must stay no longer at Mrs. Wheeler's than he did at Mrs. Brown's. He must swallow, at any physical cost, whatever is set before him in the way of eating or drinking.

Mr. Clifton was fully aware of all these parochial shoals, and, as far as mortal man could do it, steered clear of shipwreck; but "offenses will come," and Dolly was at the wash-tub, up to her elbows in soapsuds, when "the minister" was announced by the breathless Daffy, who was unaware that Monday is generally the day when all clergymen turn their backs upon the study and recruit their exhausted energies by locomotion.

"Why, in the name of common sense, couldn't he have called Saturday?" asked Dolly, hastily, wiping the suds from her parboiled fingers; "then I had on my green silk, and should as lief have seen him as not; but ministers never have any consideration. Daffy – Daffy, here – where's my scalloped petticoat and under-sleeves? I dare say now that the sitting-room center-table is all awry. Daffy, is the Bible on the light stand? and the hymn-book too? Hand me my silk apron trimmed with the pink bows, and get my breast-pin quick, for goodness' sake; men prink forever themselves, but they never can wait a minute for a woman to dress; how do I look, Daffy? I do wish people had sense enough to stay away of a Monday morning. Don't let these calicos lay soaking in the tub, now, till I come back; give 'em a wring and hang 'em out."

"Good morning, Mr. Clifton," said Dolly, dropping a bobbing courtesy; "it is quite a pleasure to see you."

"Thank you, Miss Dolly," replied the minister, with a gravity truly commendable, when the fact is taken into consideration that he had heard every syllable of the foregoing conversation, through the thin partition; "thank you, Miss Dolly."

"Yes, I was just saying to Daffy," resumed Dolly, "how long it was since you called here, and how welcome you were at any time, when you felt *inclined* to come. I don't think it at all strange that you should prefer calling oftener at Lawyer Briggs's and Squire Beadle's, than at my poor place. I know it is hardly fit to ask a clergyman into."

"Lawyer Briggs and Squire Beadle are my wife's relatives, you know, Miss Dolly."

"Oh, I wasn't complaining, at all," said Dolly; "they are eddicated people, it isn't at all strange; how's your folks?"

"Very well, I thank you; the baby is getting through his teeth bravely."

"I saw Mrs. Clifton go into Mrs. Messenger's the other day," said Dolly. "I see she has her *favorites* in the parish."

"Mrs. Messenger's little boy was taken in a fit," said Mr. Clifton, "and they sent over in great haste for my wife."

"Ah," said Dolly, "well, I didn't blame her, of course not; I wouldn't have you think so. Mrs. Messenger is considered very genteel here in the village; Mrs. Messenger and I are two very different persons."

"I see you brought me a new parishioner last Sunday," said Mr. Clifton, glad to change the conversation.

"Yes; she is a poor child whom I took out of pity to bring up; her mother is dead, and so I offered her a home."

"That's right," said Mr. Clifton, who had his own views about Dolly's motives. "I hope she will attend the Sabbath-school; Mrs. Clifton, I know, would like her to be in her class."

Dolly's countenance fell. "Well, I don't know about that, though I'm obleeged to Mrs. Clifton. I don't think Rose would be willing to go."

"She might be shy at first," said the minister, "but my wife has quite a gift at drawing out children's hearts. I think little Rose would soon love her."

"I don't think she will be able to go," said Dolly, coldly; "but I'll think of it."

"Do," replied Mr. Clifton, "and perhaps you would allow her sometimes to run over and see the baby and the garden. Children are sociable little creatures, you know. Is she fond of flowers?"

"I guess not," said Dolly. "I am sure I never could see any use in them, except to make artificial ones by, to trim bonnets."

Mr. Clifton smiled, in spite of himself, at this professional view of the subject. "Well, the baby then," he added; "it is just beginning to be interesting. I think she would like the baby."

"She don't seem to have much inclination to go about," answered Dolly, "and it is not best to put her up to it; home is the best place for children."

Ay, *home*, thought Mr. Clifton, as Rose's sweet sad eyes and pale face passed before him.

"Well, good morning, Miss Dolly; perhaps, after all, you will change your mind about the little girl."

"Good morning, Mr. Clifton," and Dolly bobbed a succession of little courtesys, and avoided answering his last remark. "Good morning, Mr. Clifton; thank you even for a *short* visit, but I don't complain. It is a poor place, after all, to invite a clergyman into."

"I think I see Rose going to Sabbath-school," said Dolly, as she folded up her finery, put it away, rolled up her sleeves and went back to the wash-tub; "I think I see *her* going off to Sunday-school and me doing up the work; visiting at the minister's house too; 'baby and flowers,' and all that: she'd be so set up in a fortnight that there would be no getting along with her: all sorts of notions put in her head, instead of thinking herself well off here as she is, with her head under shelter, ten to one she would imagine she was terribly abused. No – Rose don't make any acquaintances if I can help it, and as to Sunday-school, there's the Bible, she might as well study it in one place as another; there's something behind all this; I verily believe that child is going to bewitch folks, just as her mother did before her; the amount of it is, they took a fancy to her, Sunday, in meetin'; Rose is just like her mother exactly; *she* always looked just so innocent, as if she didn't know that she was – (Dolly couldn't say *pretty* even to herself, so she added – artful). No, that child shan't go any where, nor see any body, nor do any thing, but work for me;" and Dolly gave the towel she was wringing out, as vigorous a twist as if it had been Rose's neck.

The kind-hearted clergyman and his wife made many after attempts to show Rose some little kindness, but Dolly was always sure to out-general them, and fearing at last that the situation of the child might be made still more irksome by their persistence, they reluctantly confined themselves to sympathetic glances, and nods, when they met her; and this was much to poor Rose, for Dolly's voice grew each day harsher and colder, and Rose's future, hour by hour, looked more dark and rayless.

## CHAPTER XIII

And now the minister and his gentle wife had their own sorrow to bear.

*The baby was dead.*

There are those to whom that phrase conveys but little meaning; there are others whose every heart-string thrills to it. "The baby" may not be pretty to any, save those who gave it being. Its first smile, its first word, its first tottering step, are trifles all to the busy world without; but ah, not in the little home circle: not to *him* who contending all day long with the jostling world of trade, sickened and disgusted with its trickeries and overreaching, selfishness, and duplicity, weary with the clamorous din of traffic, crosses at length his own peaceful threshold, and sitting down by that little cradle, bends a brow seamed with care, over the little sleeper, with heaven's own smile upon its lip, heaven's own purity on its baby brow.

Not to *her*; to whom its faintest smile were reward enough for mortal pangs and throes; its faintest wail of pain loud enough to drown the united call of hunger, thirst, and weariness.

Not to *those* who, folding it to their *united* hearts, say —*Our baby*.

Is *their* love the less when disease lays its withering finger on the roses of its cheek and lip? Can they spare "the baby" even though other children cluster round the hearth? And when death's shadow falls, can they forget the night-watch nestling of that little velvet cheek? the imploring look of that fading, upturned eye? Can such chords be rudely snapped without a jarring discord? No, *let* them weep; Jesus wept.

Inexpressibly dreadful is the touch of careless fingers upon the loved dead; the careless robing and unrobing of limbs in life so dearly cherished, so delicately draped.

Inexpressibly beautiful are the services weeping love jealously renders to the departed; bearing on its own shoulders to its last resting-place the coffin and the pall, lowering it carefully, reverently, as if the pulseless heart within would be pained by a stranger touch.

It was Mary Clifton's own fingers which shrouded the baby; it was the father's own hands which placed it in the coffin, it was in their own arms by the light of the quiet stars, it was borne to its garden grave.

"Ridikilis!" exclaimed Dolly, "as if nobody was good enough to touch that child; minister's folks, too, having sich stuck-up notions; as if the child knew who carried it, as if the sexton didn't understand his business, as if the whole village oughtn't to have seen 'em bury it, if they wanted to. Polly Smith was up in a tree, and saw the whole of it. She said she was determined to. She said they cried like every thing; now that just shows how much they believe what they preach about 'heaven's being the best place;' if that is so, they'd naterally be glad the young one had gone there; pooh, it is all stuff – they don't believe it no more nor I do; any how, I shall make the most of this world, and then, if there's nothing better in t' other, I shall have at least gained something.

"It was perfectly ridikilis, there not being a funeral time; I should have sold yards and yards of black ribbon, for the parish to wear; but minister's folks never think of any body but themselves. I've found that out."

Mary Clifton sits at her nursery-window; the empty cradle is by her side, with its snowy pillow and coverlid, the baby's rattle lies on the mantle, and its little cloak and silken hood hang just in sight within the closet.

That window was her favorite seat; there she used to toss the baby up and down, to catch the woodbine branches that clambered over the open window; *they* still stirred with life – but oh, where was the little dimpled hand, so late outstretched in glee to reach them?

Just one short week ago that day (before "the baby" was taken sick), oh, how well she remembered it, how bright it looked that morning, with its snowy frock and blue ribbons, she stood just in that spot with it; a pane of glass had lately been broken, and the cement in the new one was

yet fresh; the baby pressed its tiny little finger on it, and left its impress. No wonder Mary sits there passing her own finger slowly over the indentation, while the tears chase each other down her face; oh, to how many maternal hearts have such memories been at once a sorrow and a solace?

## CHAPTER XIV

"Oh, Aunt Dolly!" said Rose, coming in with her face all a-glow, "will you please tell me is this my mother's thimble? I found it in the drawer, and *may* I have it?" she asked, pressing it to her lips.

"It don't take me long to answer questions," said Dolly; "it *is* your mother's, and you may *not* have it. You had no business to go ferreting round among my things."

"You told me to go to the drawer, and get the thread," answered Rose, "and it lay right there, and I could not help seeing it. Won't you please let me have it? I shall be *so* happy if you will."

Poor child! This was the worst argument she could have used.

"I will do any thing, Aunt Dolly, if you will," said she, poisoning the coveted treasure on her tiny finger. "I'll – I'll – "

"Won't you ever say another word to me again about going to school, as long as you live?"

Rose hesitated, and looked at the thimble. "I don't like to promise that, Aunt Dolly."

"Then I don't like to give you the thimble," answered Dolly, snatching it from Rose's finger, and stuffing it into her own pocket. "Now go back to your work, miss."

"I would have given it to her, had I been you," said the good-natured Daffy (adding the only argument which she knew would tell on Dolly); "I really believe the child would do twice the work with that thimble on her finger."

"I didn't think of that," replied Dolly, "perhaps she would – Rose?"

Rose came back with traces of tears upon her face.

"Will you be a very, very good girl, and do every thing I tell you, always?"

Rose could not answer for sobbing.

"Give it to her," whispered the tortured Daffy, "you'll see how it will work."

"Well, there's the thimble," said Dolly, throwing it at her.

"Oh, Aunt Dolly," said Rose, "I thank you. I'll try; indeed I'll try."

"Well, go along, and see that you keep your word. I haven't much faith in it, though."

"I declare," said Dolly, leaning back in her chair, "our Maria was the beater for one thing; every body who ever saw her used to carry on about her just like that child; even the cats and dogs liked a kick from her, better than a petting from any body else, and as to her husband, he thought the model was broke (as that image man said) after his wife was made. I don't suppose fire could burn out the love of that young one for her mother, for all she was so little when Maria died. I am sure I have done my best, but the fact was, Maria had a way with her."

Ah, selfish Dolly! Thy sister had a heart. It shone in her eyes, lingered in her smile, sweetened her voice. *Love* was the open sesame by which she unlocked all hearts, and without which thy grasping fingers shall try in vain.

"Aunt Dolly," said Rose, returning, "there is a boy in the shop who wants to know if you can make three mourning bonnets right away. Mrs. Sharp died this morning."

"Oh! that's very nice. To be sure I can. Go tell him I will begin them this minute. Those hats, Daffy, must not cost less than eight dollars a-piece. It don't do for people in affliction to chaffer about prices and make bargains beforehand, that's one comfort; they must be made of the most expensive English crape, Daffy."

"I thought the Sharps were not very well off," suggested Daffy.

"That's nothing. They ought to pay a proper respect to the dead, if they ain't; beside, they have rich relations. I shall be sure to get it out of some of 'em, never fear. Hand the black crape, Daffy. I wonder what ailed Mrs. Sharp? She was out to meetin' last Sunday. I hope her husband will call to settle the bill. Daffy, don't it make you laugh to see what a fuss widowers make *trying* to grieve for their wives? It is ridikilis! Mr. Sharp isn't a bad man to look at. How many children has he, Daffy?"

"Ten," said Daffy.

"Couldn't stand it," said Dolly. "Rose is enough of a pill for me. I shall certainly refuse him."

## CHAPTER XV

"Good afternoon, Dolly," said one of her neighbors, coming into the back room, and tossing off her shawl, which served the double purpose of cloak and bonnet. "Who *is* that pretty girl you have there in the shop?"

"Who can she mean?" asked Dolly of Daffy, in affected surprise.

"Why," said Miss Tufts, anticipating Daffy, "that pretty creature with the curly hair and large eyes, who is rolling up your ribbons; she is a real beauty."

"She can't mean Rose?" asked Dolly of Daffy, looking innocent again.

(Simple Daffy, puzzled to know how Dolly wished her to answer, contented herself with a little doubtful shake of the head.)

"Call *her* pretty?" said Dolly, returning from a tour of observation into the shop, as if she had not the slightest idea who was there; "call Rose pretty. Well, I'm beat now."

"Why – don't you?" asked Miss Tufts. "I don't see how you can help it; her hair curls so beautiful, and she has such a way with her, it took right hold of me; her voice sounds as if a little bird was singing in her mouth."

"Ridikilis!" said Dolly; "how you talk. Has your pa got over his pleurisy? That's right. How do you like this ribbon? It is new style, you see; one side is green, and the other red."

The visitor's eyes being fixed on the ribbon which she had taken to the window to examine, Dolly took the opportunity to whisper to Daffy, "Go tell Rose to go out of the shop into the back part of the house."

"It is a first-rate ribbon," said Miss Tufts, refolding it; "but look, there's Mrs. Clifton going down street. She hasn't held her head up since her baby died. How she does take it to heart, Dolly."

"Yes," said Dolly, snipping off the end of her thread, "that's the way with those people who are always talking about 'another and a better world.' I don't see but they hold on to this one with just as tight a grip as other folks."

"It isn't nature not to feel bad, when a friend dies," remarked Miss Tufts.

"Well, there's no need of making such a blubbering about it," said Dolly. "I didn't, when our Maria died, I restrained my feelings; it is perfectly disgusting."

"Here Daffy," said Dolly, as Miss Tufts tossed her shawl over her head, and bade them good-by, "here's the trimmings Nancy Dawes brought for her bonnet; it is not much matter how you put them on, she has no taste you know; it will be all one to her, if you only tell her it is the fashion; that is the right kind of customer for me, your knowing people are a sight of bother, with their fussing. Daffy, mind you save me enough of Nancy Dawes's ribbon for a bow for my neck, three quarters will make a very decent one, but I had rather have a yard; and Daffy, when Lawyer Grant's wife comes in to ask how much ribbon it will take to trim her bonnet, mind that you tell her a yard extra. She has all her ribbons from the city, and they are just the thing for neck-ribbons. She never will know but it is all put on her bonnet, when the bows are cut up and twisted together; she never asks no questions, there's nothing mean about Lawyer Grant's wife; she don't mind milliners and mantua-makers taking their little perquisites."

"Sometimes I think it isn't right," said Daffy.

"You do? that's a good one, I'd like to see your year's profits on any other system. Why, Mrs. Bond gets all hers and her children's aprons out of the silk, and de-laine, and thibet-cloth that ladies bring her for dresses; it is all right enough. We must take it out some way, when ladies beat us down to the lowest possible price for work; talk to me about its not being right – 'self-preservation is the first law of natur,' as the Bible says."

Daffy did not dispute the questionable authority of the quotation, but rolling the responsibility of the anticipated sin she had assumed, off on Dolly's broad shoulders, proceeded to do her bidding.

## CHAPTER XVI

Mrs. Clifton *was* going down street, as Miss Tufts had said; going to "the baby's" grave, for she could bear the deserted nursery and empty cradle no longer. It was something to be near the little form, though the spirit which shone through the sweet eyes had winged its way to Him who gave it; and so she passes the little wicket-gate, and winds her way among other graves, over which other mothers, like her, have wept. Some of them, carefully kept, others overrun with briars and nettles; seas perhaps, rolling between some babe and her under whose heart it once stirred with embryo life; or, far away, perhaps, the mother too, may be sleeping, waiting, as does her solitary babe, for that day when the dead who are in their graves, shall hear *His* voice, and come forth!

Mrs. Clifton nears her baby's grave. A little form is bending over it, a slender, delicate child, whose clustering curls, as she stoops, quite hide her sweet face. Somebody else loves "the baby," for the little grave is dotted over with flowers, simple enough, indeed, but love's own offering. The mother draws nearer, smiling through her tears the while – the child looks up; it is Rose.

"Bless you! bless you, my darling," Mrs. Clifton murmurs, and draws her to her bosom.

"Why did you strew flowers on my baby, dear?" asked Mrs. Clifton, wiping her eyes.

"Because I was so sorry for you," said Rose, timidly, "I thought perhaps it would make you happy, when you came here, to see them."

"Did any one ever die whom you loved?" asked Mary.

Rose's lip quivered, the tears gathered slowly in her eyes, and hung trembling on her lashes, as she nodded her little head.

"Who, my darling?" asked Mary, drawing the child nearer to her.

"My mother, my own dear mother!" said the weeping child, drawn to her kind questioner by the mutual sympathy of sorrow.

"Rose – Rose – Rose!" screamed the shrill voice of Dolly from over the wall.

"Oh, I must go! indeed I must; please don't tell, please don't say any thing," and Rose, hastily wiping away her tears, ran breathlessly toward the little wicket-gate.

"Now I'd just like to know, miss, where you have been without leave?" asked Dolly.

"Daffy told me you wanted me to go out of sight till after the company was gone," said Rose, "and I thought I would just step over into the church-yard, and put some daisies on the baby's grave."

"Ridikilis!" exclaimed Dolly; "just as if that baby knew what was top of it; it is perfectly disgusting – you are just like your mother exactly. Now go along into the house."

Rose entered the back parlor and sat down at the little window to her work.

"Rose," said Dolly, about half an hour after, "don't your hair trouble you when you are sewing?"

Rose looked up in astonishment at this demonstration of interest on the part of her tormentor.

"I don't know," she answered; "I never thought any thing about it."

("Now don't go to cutting it," whispered Daffy; "it looks so pretty.")

"I think it is spoiling her eyes," said Dolly; "bring me the scissors, Rose," and Dolly notched her locks in and out, in as jagged a manner as she knew how. As for the offending eyes which Miss Tufts had complimented, they were too useful to be extinguished, and as there was no helping the "bird in her mouth," or the "pretty way she had with her," Dolly resolved to keep Rose out of sight as much as possible, with her sewing in the attic, which she designated as Rose's bed-room; and, in pursuance of this determination, she was ordered up there.

Every body knows what a country attic is, with its hot, sloping, pitch-oozing roof, with its indescribable paraphernalia of dried mullen, elder-blow, thorough-wort, and tansy; with its refuse garden-tools, boxes, baskets, and chests of odds and ends; its spider-webs and its rat-holes.

A salamander could scarcely have endured Dolly's attic that hot August noon. Rose sat down on the rickety old bed, under the heated eaves, to ply her needle. There was an opening in the roof,

but the breeze seemed to blow over it, not into it. Rose made little progress with her sewing, for her temples began to throb painfully, and her fingers almost refused their office. Now she rubs her forehead and eyes, for a mist seems to be gathering over them; now she pulls her needle slowly out again, and now dizziness overpowers her, and she falls forward upon the floor.

"Now just hear that noise," exclaimed Dolly; "hear that young one capering round that attic instead of doing her work. I'll soon settle that: " and taking her little riding-whip from behind the old-fashioned claw-footed clock in the corner, she mounted up stairs into the attic.

Phew! how hot it was – the perspiration started at every step, and this fact did not tend to the diminution of Dolly's rage.

"You needn't play asleep now, because it won't do," said she, laying the whip vigorously round the prostrate child. "I shall whip you till you get up and ask my pardon, d'ye hear?"

There is not much satisfaction in whipping a person who does not appear to feel it, and Dolly turned Rose over to see what was the cause of her obtuseness; the face was so ghastly white that even she was for a moment daunted.

But it is *only* for a moment. Going to the head of the stairs, she calls, "Daffy?"

"Look here, now," said Dolly, "see what comes of that young one's going into grave-yards, where all those horrid dead people lie moldering; take her up, Daffy, and carry her down into your bed-room; there's a whole day's work lost now for that nonsense; she won't be able to do another stitch to-day."

Days, weeks, and months passed on, no lightening of the heavy load; but now the active spirit which seemed always devising fresh means of torture for the child, was itself prostrated by sickness. A fever had settled upon Dolly's strong frame and iron nerves, and reduced her to almost childish helplessness. Ah – who glides so gently, so tirelessly up stairs and down, bearing burdens under which her feeble frame totters? Who runs to the doctor's, and the apothecary's, who spreads the napkin over the little light-stand, that no rattle of spoons, glasses, and phials, may disturb the chance naps or jar the nerves of the invalid? And who, when she has done her best to please, bears the querulous fretfulness of disease and ill temper, with lamb-like patience?

Who but Rose?

"Why are you crying?" asked Daffy, as Rose stood by the kitchen table upon which she had just set down some glasses. "What is the matter with you?"

"I am so sorry that I can not please Aunt Dolly; she says I have not done a single thing right for her since she was sick; and indeed, Daffy, I have tried *very* hard," and Rose sobbed again: "I thought perhaps – that – Aunt – Dolly – might love me a little when she got well."

"Never you mind, Rose," said the distressed Daffy, twitching at her thread, "never you mind, she's a – a – there's a six-pence for you Rose."

"No, I thank you," said Rose, returning it, "I don't want money – I want – I want – somebody to love me," said the poor tired child, hiding her face in her apron.

"Never you mind," said Daffy, again, rubbing her sleeve into her own eyes, "you shall – you shall —

"Lor', I don't know what to say to you – Dolly's a – a – well she's sick and childish," said Daffy, ending her sentence in a very different manner from what she had intended.

"Perhaps it *is* that," said the good little creature, brightening up, "I did not think of that. How cruel it was for me to think her unkind, when she was only sick; I am glad you said that, Daffy," and Rose wiped her eyes and went back into the sick chamber.

"It's awful to hold in when a body's so rampageous mad," said Daffy, jumping up and oversetting her basket of spools, cotton, needles, pins, etc. "I shouldn't wonder if I burst right out some day, to think of that poor, patient little creature being snubbed so, after being on her tired little legs these six weeks, traveling up and down, here and there, and lying on the floor side of Dolly's bed, night after night, and all after the way she has been treated too (for I have eyes if I don't say

nothing), and as long as nobody hears me, I'll just out with it; Dolly has no more heart than that pine table," and Daffy gave it a vindictive thump.

"There – now I feel better – I wish I dared tell her so to her face – but it isn't in me; she makes me shrivel all up, when she puts on one of her horrid looks, and I can't be looking out for a new place with this rheumatism fastening on me every time the wind blows; I don't know what is to become of the poor child, bless her sweet face."

## CHAPTER XVII

It is a long lane that has no turning, and Dolly now began to get about once more.

"Dear me" – she exclaimed one morning, as she crawled round the shop, enveloped in a woollen shawl – "how every thing *has* gone to rack and ruin since I have been sick; one month more sickness and I should have had to fail. See that yellow ribbon, all faded out, a lying in that window; when I was about, I moved it from the show-case to the window, and from the window to the show-case, according to the sun; three shillings a yard too, bought of Bixby & Co., the last time I went to the city; and there's the dress-caps put into the bonnet-boxes, and the bonnets put into the dress-cap boxes. Whose work is that I'd like to know? And as I live, if there isn't a hole in the cushion of my rocking chair, and the tassel torn off the window shade. O – d-e-a-r – m-e!" and Dolly sank into a chair, and looked pins and needles at the helpless Daffy.

"You forget how much we have had to do, don't you, Dolly? I have hardly sat down half an hour at a time. What with waiting on customers, and looking after housekeeping matters, I am as tired as an old horse. I tried to do the best I could, Dolly."

"That's what people always say when they have left every thing at sixes and sevens; but that don't put the color back into Bixby & Co.'s yellow ribbon, nor mend the shade tassel, nor the hole in my chair cushion. For mercy's sake, didn't you have Rose to help you? You make such a fuss about being tired."

"It took about all Rose's time to wait on you," answered Daffy.

"That's a good one!" exclaimed Dolly; "all on earth I wanted was to be kept quiet, take my medicines, and have a little gruel now and then. You can't make me believe that."

"It takes a great many steps to do even that," said Daffy, meekly; "but you are weak yet, Dolly, and a little thing troubles you."

"Do you mean to tell me that sickness has injured my mind?" said the incensed milliner; "that's a pretty story to get about among my customers. I could trim twenty bonnets if I chose. I am not so far gone as you think for; perhaps you was looking forward to the time when Dolly Smith would be taken off the sign-board, and Daffodil put up instead; perhaps Rose was to be your head apprentice; perhaps so."

"Oh, Dolly," said Daffy, shrinking away from her cutting tone, "how can you?"

"Well, I'm good for a *little* while longer," said Dolly, "any how; now see that child," said she, pointing to Rose, who had just entered the door, "I bought those shoes just before I was sick, and now her toes are all out of 'em. See there, now. Do you suppose I can afford to find you in shoes at that rate?" and she seized Rose by the shoulders, pressing her thumb into her arm-pit, in a way to make her wince.

"I'm very sorry, Aunt Dolly, but I had so much running to do. Had I thought of it, I would have taken off my shoes."

"And worn your stockings all out," said Dolly, "that would have been a great saving, indeed."

"I would have taken them off, too, had I thought you would have liked it, Aunt Dolly."

"And gone barefoot here, in my house, so that the neighbors might say I didn't half clothe you. You never will pay for what you cost," said Dolly, pushing her roughly away. "You are just like your mother – ex-actly. Now begin to cry – that's mother, too, all over."

"If I were only with her," thought Rose, as she seated herself at her work.

Daffy stooped near to Rose, ostensibly to pick up a spool of thread, but in fact to whisper, "Never you mind, Rose; it is always the darkest just before day."

A few weeks of returning health and successful bonnet-making made the amiable Dolly a little more endurable to every body but our heroine; for she had settled it in her mind that scant fare and harsh treatment were the only means to keep Maria's child where she should be.

It was Saturday morning, or, in other words, Dolly's baking-day. You might have known it by the way the tables and chairs spun round, the window-sashes flew up and down, and by the pop-gun curtness of Dolly's questions and answers. Every body gave Dolly a wide berth on Saturday; even the cat kept out of doors till the last smoking loaf was taken from the oven, and Dolly had reseated herself at her usual post behind the counter. Poor Daffy dodged round in the most diplomatic manner, and never ventured a disclaimer for any sin, how heinous soever, with which Dolly might wrongfully charge her. With Rose it was *always* 'Saturday,' and so she experienced no unusual flutter when Dolly bade her follow her into the kitchen, "as it was high time she learned to do the baking."

"Here, now," said Dolly, "down with you in that chair, and see if you can stone those raisins decently. Mind that you whistle all the while you are doing it, I don't want them all eat up; raisins cost something, they are very much like you in that respect."

Rose took the wooden bowl in her lap, and commenced her task, though she could not exactly understand how she was to learn to bake with her eyes fixed on the raisins.

"What is that?" asked Rose, as Dolly measured out some lard, and put it on the table.

"What do you suppose it is, for mercy's sake? I dare say you thought it was cheese. It would be just like you; it's lard, of course."

"How much did you put in, Aunt Dolly?"

"The usual quantity; how do you suppose my pies would taste, if I made them helter-skelter?"

"That's why I asked you," answered Rose, meekly.

"Well, how much did I put in? Why, there's that bowl full," said Dolly, "haven't you got eyes?"

"But if that bowl should get broke, Aunt Dolly, I couldn't tell, unless I had another exactly that size, how much to take."

"I suppose it must needs be a yellow bowl, too," sneered Dolly, "just like this, with a black rim round the edge; how ridikilis!"

"Isn't there any rule?" asked Rose, despondingly; "how shall I know when I get it right?"

"Why, go by your common sense, of course; how ridikilis; there, now, just see how you have cut those apples, all sorts of ways; wasted half of 'em in the parings."

"I am sorry," said Rose, "I was trying to learn how you made that crust – how much butter is there there, Aunt Dolly?"

"Why, those two pieces, don't you see? what silly questions you ask."

"I am afraid I shall never learn," said the bewildered Rose, "I don't believe I could do it."

"I dare say you couldn't; you are just as stupid about that as you are about every thing else. You are just like your mother, ex-actly."

"What did you do that for?" asked Rose, as Dolly, having made her paste, put a small dab of dough in the mouth of the oven.

"'Cause I felt like it," said Dolly, "it don't look like a pudding, does it, and it isn't a pie; I dare say you'd stare at it till the millennium, without ever guessing what it was for; come, stone your raisins; you won't get done till next Christmas; of course, if you had any sense, you'd know that it was a piece of dough put there to try the heat of the oven – you are the tiresomest little young one I ever saw; you always talk at me, till I'm all gone at the stomach."

"Why did you stand some of the pies up on bricks in the oven, and set others on the oven floor?" asked Rose, a short time after.

"Well," exclaimed Dolly, "that goes ahead of any thing you have said yet; if it wasn't for letting my oven cool, I could hold my sides and laugh an hour; a smart cook you'd make; don't you see that there's either too many pies or too small an oven, and that by standing bricks endways between the plates, and putting pies on top of 'em, I can get lots more room, you born fool! Did you ever see such a stupid thing?" asked Dolly, turning to Daffy.

"But it's all new to her, you know," said Daffy, apologetically.

"Well, new or old, that child never will be good for any thing, with all my trying; she's just like her mother, ex-actly."

"There, now," said Dolly, "I am going into the bed-room to lie down; now see if you have sense enough to clear up here; get the dough off that pan and rolling-pin, put away the dredging-box, and salt, and lard, and butter, and things; throw away those apple chunks and raisin stuns, wash off the table, scrub up the floor, rinse out the dish-towels, and don't be all day about it."

As Dolly slammed the door to behind her, Rose sat down on one of the kitchen chairs, leaned her head on the table, and wept; she was growing older, and more capable of judging of the gross injustice done her.

Bitter, despairing thoughts came into her gentle heart, for it seemed as if the more patiently she bore her cross, the heavier it grew. She wondered if she could be worse off if she ran away, with the earth for her pillow, the skies for her shelter? Surely, strangers would not be more unfeeling than Dolly.

Oh, how could Dolly be sister to the gentle mother, whom she had seen drooping away day by day, and whose sweet, tender eyes had never yet faded from her sight. Rose remembered the murmured prayer with which she drew her little head upon her bosom the day she died, and now – she looked hopelessly about her. Hark – she thought she heard her name murmured in those same sweet, loving, maternal accents.

*"Rose!"*

Was it fancy? No! A bunch of flowers glanced through the open window and fell at her feet; a paper was twisted round the stem, and on it was written,

### **"FOR THE BABY'S FRIEND, LITTLE ROSE**

"When thy father and thy mother forsake thee, then the Lord will take thee up."

A bright smile came to Rose's lip, and with a hurried glance around the kitchen, she hid the bouquet in her bosom, and stepped lightly to her tasks.

The baby's mother loved her; the flowers were rightly named – Heart's-ease.

## CHAPTER XVIII

"Don't you think you are a l-i-t-t-le hard on Rose?" asked Daffy, as Dolly reseated herself behind the counter, after her nap.

"Hard on her? to feed her, and clothe her, and keep her out of the alms-house," said Dolly. "Dreadful hard, that is."

"But you know you speak pretty sharp to her, and she does try to do right, Dolly."

"So she ought," said Dolly, tartly.

"Yes – but you know some children would get clean discouraged, if they were never praised."

"Let her get discouraged, then, I don't care, so long as she does what I tell her."

"I am afraid it will spoil her temper, by and by, and make it hard for you to get along with her."

"No fear of that," answered Dolly, glancing up at her small riding-whip.

"I have finished in the kitchen, Aunt Dolly," said Rose. "Shall I go take my sewing?"

"Of course," said Dolly. "You might know that, without asking."

"Looking pale, is she?" said Dolly, turning to Daffy, "did you see what a bright color she had when she came in, and how her eyes sparkled?"

"I never saw her look so before," replied Daffy; "I wonder what has come over her."

"Nothing has come over her, except that it has done her good to work;" said Dolly, "talk about my being 'hard on her,' indeed."

"Good morning, Dolly! A paper of No. nine needles, sharps, if you please – have you heard the news?"

"No," exclaimed Dolly and Daffy in a breath.

"Well – Miss Pettingill was down to Miss Gill's to tea last night, and Miss Gill was to work the day before at Deacon Grant's; and she said Deacon Grant and Deacon Tufts were closeted in the back parlor all the afternoon, and Miss Gill listened at the key-hole, and she heard them say, that the minister ought to go off on a little journey with his wife, because they were so low sperrited about the baby, and they are going to raise the funds to send him to the springs or somewhere, I don't know where. Miss Gill couldn't hear the whole of it, because she was afraid of being caught listening."

"I can tell them they won't raise any funds out of me," said Dolly – "Do I ever go to the springs? Do I ever get low-spirited? When minister's folks want to go on a frolic they always get up some such nonsense, and the parish has to pay the fiddler. It won't do," said Dolly. "I shan't give the first red cent toward it. His wife is going too, I 'spose."

"Yes – both on 'em – they are both all down at the heel. I'm sorry for 'em."

"Well, I ain't," said Dolly – "babies is as plenty as blackberries, for the matter of that; they may have a dozen more yet, and if they don't, why then they will have more time to call on the parish, and make sermons and things – it is ridikilis!"

Years rolled slowly away. Difftown, doomed to stereotyped dullness, remained in *statu quo*. It had still its "trainings" on the green, its cattle-fair Mondays, and its preceding Sabbaths in which herds of cattle, driven into the village on that day to 'save time' (as if time was ever saved or gained by breaking the fourth commandment), ran bleating round the little church, and with the whoas of their drivers, drowned the feeble Mr. Clifton's voice; feeble, though he still labored on, for consumption lent its unnatural brightness to his eye, and burned upon his hollow cheek; – the parsonage was doubly drear now, for the gentle form which flitted around it, had lain down long since with "the baby," and the broken band was destined soon to be complete.

## CHAPTER XIX

"Most there, driver?" thundered out a red-faced man, as he thrust his frowsy head out of the stage-coach window.

"Most there? Sahara is nothing to this sand-hill; phew! touch up yer hosses, can't you? I'm perspiring like an eel in a frying-pan."

"So are my horses," answered the driver, sulkily, "I can't run them up hill, this weather, to please you."

It *was* hot. The dust-begrimed leaves by the roadside hung limp and motionless: the cattle lay with protruding tongues under the broad tree shadows; not a single friendly cloud obscured the fierce brightness of the sun-rays, while the locust shrilly piped his simoom song in triumph.

"In-fern-al!" growled the fat man on the back seat, as he wiped his rubicund face with a soiled cotton handkerchief.

"Swearing will not make thee any cooler, friend," quietly remarked a drab bonnet by his side.

"Did thee ever try it, ma'am?" asked the irritated Falstaff, mimicking her tone, "'cause if thee hasn't, thee is not qualified to judge on that point."

"Did thee ever roll down that precipice?" asked the drab bonnet, "yet thee knows if thee should it would certainly harm thee."

"Keen," muttered the fat man to a young lady who sat near him, as a suppressed titter ran round the coach. "These women always trip up a man in an argument, not by any fair play either, but by some such metaphorical twist as that now. Well – nature gives strength to us, cunning to them; I suppose she knows what she is about. Women are necessary evils; if we can not get along with them, we certainly can not without them; I suppose it is all right;" and he looked for a reply in the face of the young lady whom he had addressed.

She seemed not to have heard any thing which had passed; her large, dark eyes were bent upon an infant who lay asleep on her lap, a very cupid for grace and beauty. The child could scarcely have been her own, for she could not have numbered more than sixteen summers; and yet there was the same full red lip, the same straight nose, and the same long curved lashes. The intense heat which had coarsened the features of her companions served only to have heightened the beauty of the young girl; deepening the rose on her lip and cheek, and moistening her tresses till they curled round her open brow like vine tendrils.

"This is the house miss," said the driver, throwing open the door, and looking in. "This is old Ma'am Bond's, miss."

The young girl colored slightly, and roused the little sleeper on her lap, who opened his large brown eyes, and yawned just enough to show off two little snowy teeth, and a very bewitching dimple, and then cuddled his little head into the girl's neck as the driver held out his arms to take him.

The driver deposited his charge and their scanty baggage, on the front stoop of the old wooden house, and remounting his box, gave his horses' ears a professional touch with his long whiplash. Turning to give his ex-passengers a parting glance, he said:

"Wonder if that girl *is* the child's mother? Can't be, though," said he, still gazing at her slight figure; "she's nothing but a child herself. That boy is a beauty, any how, shouldn't mind owning him myself. I'm beat if any parson could call *him* totally depraved. That girl can't be his mother, though – she's too young."

Yes, young in years; but what is the dial's finger to those who live years in a lightning moment, or to whom an hour may be the tortoise creep of a century?

Yes, young in years; the face may be smooth and fair, while the heart is wrinkled; the eye may be bright, though the fire which feeds it is drying up the life-blood.

Yes, young in years; but old in sorrow – a child, and yet a woman! – a mother, but the world said, not a wife.

Rat – tat – the dilapidated brass knocker is as old as its mistress. The young girl draws a glove from her small hand, and applies her knuckles to the sun-blistered door. Old Mrs. Bond toddles to the threshold. With what a stony look the stranger meets her curious gaze! With what a firm step she crosses the threshold; as if, child-mother as she was, she had rights that must not be trampled on. But see, her eye moistens, and her lip quivers. Harshness she was prepared for – kindness she knows not how to bear.

"You must be very weary," said good Mrs. Bond to Rose, as she held out her matronly arms for little Charley. "Poor little fellow!" and she held a glass of cold spring water to his parched lips; "how pleasant he is; and the weather so warm too."

"Charley is a good boy," said the young mother, pushing back the moist curls from his temples, with a sad pride.

"It is a very pleasant country through which you passed to-day," said Mrs. Bond, "though mayhap you were too weary to look at it."

"Is it?" answered Rose, languidly.

"Perhaps you would like to lie down," suggested the old lady, kindly; "and your little room is quite ready. Your aunt, Mrs. Howe, sent us word you would be here to-day."

The old stony look came back to Rose's face, and she stepped like a young queen, as she tossed the boy carelessly over her shoulder, and followed the old lady up the narrow stairs to her own room.

"Mrs. Howe was here yesterday in her carriage," said Mrs. Bond. "She left this letter for you," handing it to Rose as she spoke. "Here are water and towels, if you would like to bathe the little fellow. We have no closets, but I have driven up some nails for your clothes. I hope you will be comfortable. Shall I close the blinds for you?"

"No, thank you," said Rose; "I am obliged to you; it is very comfor – " but the word died upon her lips, and she stooped over Charley to conceal the rebellious tears, as Mrs. Bond left the room.

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.