The play is done, the curtain drops,
Slow falling to the prompter's bell;
A moment yet the actor stops,
And looks around to say farewell.
It is an irksome word and task;
And when he's laughed and said his say,
He shows, as he removes the mask,
A face that's anything but gay.

One word ere yet the evening ends,—
Let's close it with a parting rhyme;
And pledge a hand to all young friends,
As fits the merry Christmas time;
On life's wide scene you, too, have parts
That fate ere long shall bid you play;
Good night!—with honest, gentle hearts
A kindly greeting go alway.

Good night!—I'd say the griefs, the joys,
Just hinted in this mimic page—
The triumphs and defeat of boys
Are but repeated in our age;
I'd say your woes were not less keen,
Your hopes more vain than those of men;
Your pangs or pleasures of fifteen
At forty-five played o'er again.

I'd say we suffer and we strive
Not less nor more as men than boys;
With grizzled beards at forty-five,
As erst at twelve in corduroys;
And if, in time of sacred youth,
We learned at home to love and pray,
Pray Heaven that early love and truth
May never wholly pass away.

And in the world, as in the school,
I'd say how fate may change and shift—
The prize be sometimes with the fool,
The race not always to the swift;
The strong may yield, the good may fall,
The great man be a vulgar clown,
The knave be lifted over all,
The kind cast pitilessly down.

Who knows the inscrutable design?
Blessed be He who took and gave!
Why should your mother, Charles, not mine,
Be weeping at her darling's grave?
We bow to Heaven that willed it so,
That darkly rules the fate of all,
That sends the respite or the blow,
That's free to give or to recall.

This crowns his feast with wine and wit.
Who brought him to that mirth and state?
His betters, see, below him sit,
Or hunger hopeless at the gate.
Who bade the mud from Dives' wheel
To spurn the rags of Lazarus?
Come, brother, in that dust we'll kneel,
Confessing Heaven, that ruled it thus.

So each shall mourn; in life's advance,
Dear hopes, dear friends, untimely killed;
Shall grieve for many a forfeit chance
And longing passion unfulfilled.
Amen!—whatever fate be sent,
Pray God the heart may kindly glow,
Although the head with cares be bent
And whitened with the winter snow.

Come wealth or want, come good or ill,
Let old and young accept their part,
And bow before the awful will,
And bear it with an honest heart.
Who misses, or who wins the prize,
Go, lose or conquer, as you can;
But if you fail, or if you rise,
Be each, pray God, a gentleman.

A gentleman, or old or young!
(Bear kindly with my humble lays)
The sacred chorus first was sung
Upon the first of Christmas days;
The shepherds heard it overhead,
The joyful angels raised it then;
Glory to Heaven on high, it said,
And peace on earth to gentle men.

My song, save this, is little worth;
I lay the weary pen aside,
And wish you health, and love and mirth,
As fits the solemn Christmastide,—
As fits the holy Christmas-birth.
Be this, good friends, our carol still—
Be peace on earth, be peace on earth,
To men of gentle will.

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY.

It is Christmas time;
And up and down 'twixt heaven and earth,
In the glorious grief and solemn mirth,
The shining angels climb.

D. M. MULOCK.

Three Angels on the First Christmas Morning.

When God created man He commanded His angels to visit him on earth and guide him in his ways, so that he might have a foretaste of the bliss of the life to come. But man sought after sensual joys in the place of those in heaven, and growing greedy of worldly fruits, began to quarrel with his neighbors for the possession of them; and the guardian angels wept among themselves. But when the strong oppressed the weak and took from them by force the product of their toil, Justice rose up sorrowing, and, leaving earth, flew back to heaven. And when the weak overcame the strong with treachery and deceit, and got from them by cunning what they feared to take by force, Truth rose up sorrowing, and, leaving earth, flew back to heaven. And when the injured went forth to slay their injurers, and crimsoned the plain with their brothers' blood, Peace rose up sorrowing, and, leaving the earth, flew back to heaven.

Thus each bad act scared some good angel from the world, until Forgiveness, the most beautiful of all, alone remained behind. And when she heard Anger and Revenge whisper dark deeds in men's ears, and counsel them to repeat that had been done to them, she rose up sorrowing and said:

"I will not leave the earth. While my sister angels were here I might have rested in my Father's bosom, for man needed me not; but now that they have fled, I will seek to make man listen to my voice, telling him that as he cherished forgiveness here, so that forgiveness will cherish him hereafter."

At that moment a new and most beautiful star blazed in the heavens. It was the star of Bethlehem. Pointing to it Forgiveness said, "Behold, the light of the world. It shines as a promise that I will ever dwell upon the earth." And Peace and Love, repenting, flew back and have never since left the earth. So the loveliest angels of heaven came home to the world on the first Christmas morning.

A MOTHER'S XMAS STORY.

Mother and I were sitting by the fire on Christmas night. Twenty happy years we had spent together, almost alone, for father died before I knew him; and we had never been rich, and were perhaps a little selfish, for we loved each other so heartily that we could scarcely spare time from each other for the few of our own class whom we came across, who being better off than ourselves, and holding themselves rather higher, seldom seemed to need our help or sympathy. We had plenty of poorer neighbors whom we loved and who loved us, but they in no way interfered between us or made the happiness we felt in being together less complete. It was only in the last year that a new strong interest had come into our lives, and this Harry brought; and on New Year's day he and I were to be married. From the first moment when he brought me home to mother, having picked me up from the muddy pavement, where I had fallen bruised and helpless in the midst of a crowd, she seemed to take him into her heart, and never from that day did she let one jealous feeling come between her and me. Of course, she was to live with us; even Harry could not have made a home for me without her, and the only thing she ever did which for the moment we thought hard, was when, a week before, she had insisted on Harry's going home for Christmas. "Go to your father and mother, Harry, and leave Janet with me," she said. "You and she hope to be together all your lives; give us old folks one more chance of feeling you all our own." And Harry, with a look at me to see what I thought, had agreed.

"COME AND SIT HERE, JANET."

So that Christmas evening Mother and I were alone. There had been something in mother's manner all day which I could not not understand. She seemed to have something on her mind. She was loving and tender to me, so tender that I thought that no one had ever had a mother like mine, and yet sometimes when I spoke to her she scarcely heard me. But we had a quiet, happy day—we always were happy together—and late in the evening mother sat down in her chair by the fire and said:

"Come and sit here, Janet, on your little stool, and put your head on my knee. I have a story to tell you to-night."

"A story, mother dear? Oh, that is lovely, like being a child again!"

"It is a true story, Janet, of your life and mine. I have never cared to tell it to you before, but I am not afraid now—my child and I have loved each other all these years—no, I am not afraid."

"What could you be afraid of, dear mother?"

"You shall hear and judge," she said, putting her hands on my head, and then she began: "When I was young, younger than you are, I was engaged to be married. My home was very unhappy, and when Andrew Western came and asked me to marry him I was ready to revere the ground he trod upon. He had been coming backward and forward to our house for some time on business with my father, and I believe that from the very first day he saw my misery. We were—and to my remembrance always had been—poor, but if I had been a boy my father would have possessed thousands a year. I never wondered that he hated me, that my mother mourned and fretted from morning till night; they had brought me up to feel guilty of a crime, and I did feel it in my inmost heart. It was no marvel that, when Andrew asked me to marry him, I looked upon him as an angel of deliverance. I loved him with an intensity which amazed and frightened him. It was in vain he tried to make me sober and reasonable. It was in vain he told me that such worship was wrong and foolish, that it gave him no happiness, while to me it must bring disappointment. I could not listen, and at last I wearied him. He said little about it after awhile, but he went away, and once more my life was desolate. He said he would come back, but he never did. He wrote to me often, kind, tender letters, but they chilled my heart; and then one day he wrote to tell me that it must be all over between us. He told me how he had striven to hold fast by his old love for me, but he could not; the mere effort pained him, the thought of my passionate devotion filled him with dread. He could never return such love, he could never endure to have it lavished upon him; once for all he would give it a death blow; when his letter reached me he should be married.

"I had another lover then, Janet, and I almost hated him, but before many weeks were over I became his wife. He loved me always, but we quarreled. I could not pretend to love him, and he grew reckless; our home was miserable, and within a year he died. I was too ill to know what happened for a long time after that. Strange faces passed before me, strange voices spoke kindly words of pity, and once every day it seemed to me that Andrew came and stood by my bed. When at last I woke to reason again, you were beside me. Oh, how I loved you! How passionately I loved you! You seemed to me to be all the world, and you saved my life!

"My husband had not left me in poverty, I had no need to work, and I spent my whole life in watching over you. I made no friends, for I cared for none. I forgot the miseries of my father's house; I forgot my quarrels with my husband; I forgot even my love for Andrew, and was scarcely moved when I heard that death had visited his home as well as mine, and that he was indeed desolate, for his wife had died and left him childless. Three happy years passed away almost without a cloud. You grew and throve. Every day seemed to my delighted eyes to give a new charm, a new beauty to my treasure; and then in the midst of my joy you fell ill. Day and night, night and day, I watched by your bed—nay, Janet, give me no thanks; it was selfish love! It was all in vain that doctor and nurse argued with me. I would not leave you. It was fever and must run its course, they said. If you should recover, my strength would be needed when you could know and call for me; but I would not listen, and one night as I sat beside you all the room grew dark, and I knew no more. When I recovered I could not rise from my bed, but I implored with passionate tears to be taken to you. Then some one came forward and sat down beside me and took my hand, and I saw that it was Andrew. It gave me no surprise to see him there. I dimly remembered that I had seemed to see him before when I was ill, and for the moment his presence calmed me.

"'Mary,' he said, in his old, quiet tone, 'if you do not do as I tell you you will die; and, what is more, the child will die too.'

"I sprang up with a scream and struggled to go to you. 'My child, my child!' I cried.

"'She is not your child—she is mine,' he said, in that calm tone of truth which had never failed to convince me, and which now pierced like a sword of ice into my heart. 'Yes, she is mine! Listen.' His quiet eyes controlled me, his quiet words subdued me. 'When you were very ill, dying, they thought, my name was often on your lips, and they discovered and sent for me. On the same day a child was born to each of us, and my wife and your child died. "We might have hoped for her if her baby had lived," said the doctor; and I gave my child to you. Can you not bear what I have borne?'

"Oh, Janet, my child, his words were healing, and the sorrow that from that hour I tried to bear was taken from me!"

At first when mother ceased speaking, the world, and love, and life seemed to me to be blank and hollow, but in a few moments I rose from my seat and kneeled at her knees.

"Oh, mother, dear—my father?"

"He died long ago. Janet, do you love me?"

"Then, as we kissed each other I knew that in all our lives of happy love dear mother and I had never been so near together.

THE COMPLAINT OF SANTA CLAUS.

The snow lies deep on the frozen ground,
And the Christmas night is cold,
And I shine before the rime so hoar—
Can it be I am growing old?

Long years ago when the Christmas chimes
Made merry the midnight sky,
When the carolers' call filled houses and hall,
And wassail and mirth ran high.

When the harlequin mummers reeled and danced,
And the great yule log blazed bright;
When the walls were green with a summer sheen,
In holly and yew bedight;

When the faces of all, the young, the old,
Were brimming with sparkling cheer—
Aye, those were the times when Christmas chimes
Were the merriest sounds of the year!

I snapped my fingers in Jack Frost's teeth,
While the snow was wavering down,
And the icicles hung from my beard I flung—
My beard that was then so brown!

And I wrapped myself in my grizzly coat,
And lit my pipe with a coal
From Hecla's crest, where I stopped to rest,
On my way from the Northern Pole.

My reindeers—O, they were brisk and gay—
My sledge, it could stand a pull;
My pack, tho' great, seemed a feather's weight,
No matter how crammed and full!

My heart it was stout in those good old days,
And warm with an inward glee;
For I thought of the mirths of a thousand hearts,
Where the little ones watched for me.

So I gathered my sweets from far and near,
And I piled my cunningest toys
(Unheeding the swirls), for the innocent girls,
And the rollicking, roguish boys.

But the times have sobered and changed since then,
My merriment flags forlorn:
My beard is as white as on Christmas night
Of old was the Glaston thorn.

Tho' my wrinkled-up lips still hold the pipe,
No longer the smoke-wreath curls;
But saddest to see, of sights for me—
My frolicsome boys and girls

Have grown so knowing, they dare to say—
Those protesters wise and small—
That all saints deceive, and they don't believe
In a Santa Claus at all!

Ah, me! 'tis a fateful sound to hear;
'Tis gall in my wassail cup;
The darlings I've spoiled, so wrought for and toiled,
The children have given me up!

My heart is broken. I'll break my pipe,
And my tinkling team may go,
And bury my sledge on the trackless edge
Of the wastes of the Lapland snow.

My useless pack I will fling away,
And in Germany's forests hoar,
From an icy steep I will plunge leagues deep,
And never be heard of more.

MARGARET J. PRESTON.

About this time the newspapers teem with advice to husbands—how to treat wives, what to buy for them, and to be sure to buy something. Immediately following mandatory articles of this kind come suggestions to wives to make home pleasant for husbands during the days of good cheer. So much is done for infants that a little gentle reminder to the big married children may not come amiss; but is the editorial mind a safe one to go to for hints on how to maintain connubial felicity? Marry! I know not, forsooth! as Shakespeare's people say when they are nonplussed. Every one must work out the problem for himself.

Merry Christmas is here, with a smile and a cheer,
Let all your old troubles and quarrels be ended;
For the friend that is near have a greeting most dear,
And breathe a good wish for the foe who's offended.
Though with him was the spite,
And with you was the right,
In kindness of spirit forgive him to-night
For whoever makes plea 'neath the evergreen tree
A prince of good fellows, and welcome is he.

In the pure soul, although it sing or pray,
The Christ is born anew from day to day,
The life that knoweth Him shall hide apart
And keep eternal Christmas in the heart.

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS.

CHRISTMAS.

Hang up the vine and the holly,
Sign the cross over the door,
That joy coming in with the Christmas,
May go from the place nevermore.

Gather love gifts for the children,
Guard well the mystical way,
That the Christ child comes at the midnight
To bless with bright favors the day.

Bring in good cheer and be merry,
Dance and ring out glad song;
The stars of a Bethlehem desert
Looked down on a Christ happy throng.

Go ye in hovel and highway,
Guests to bring in to the feast;
Angels shall unawares greet ye
In those the world counteth as least.

Sound the sweet Christ loving anthem—
Echoes will bear it on high—
To the angels made joyous forever
By Christmas of love in the sky.

Bow down and worship the spirit
Of the feast, the invisible King;
Lo! He cometh in scarlet and purple
To gather a world's offering.

MARIE LE BARON.

THE CHRISTMAS ROSE.

A little way up one of the Rhætian Alps, beneath the shade of an old black pine, grew a Christmas rose.* The summer had passed, and the short days had come, when the wind blows and the snow flies, and the hardy little mountain rose had two buds. "Dear me," fretted the rose, "I wish I could blossom when other plants do. There would be some pleasure in displaying oneself for the dainty blue gentian or the pretty eyebright, but with no one to admire me, I see no use in blooming at all."

"Ho! ho!" laughed the old pine, waving his shaggy arms, "Ho! ho! what a little grumbler. The snow and I will admire you. You are named after the blessed Christ child, and ought to be happy and contented. Push up through the deepening snow, little friend, and expand your buds into perfect blossoms; we were all made for a wise purpose, and we shall know what it is when the time comes if"——

Just then the north wind blew so hard the old pine was quite out of breath, and for some reason he never renewed the conversation.

"All the world is dead except the pine and me," murmured the rose, "and perhaps I had better follow his advice. If I was made for a wise purpose I shall not be forgotten." So she took good care of her beautiful buds, and the day before Christmas the black pine saw her blossoms, white and perfect, peering up through the white snow.

Now, the two little children of Klotz, the wood cutter, were nearly heartbroken, for their mother was sick, and that morning the kind neighbor who had watched by her side through the night had said, "God pity this home; I fear your mother will die before night." Their father sat by the fireplace, speechless with grief, and answered them neither by word nor look when they crept up to him for comfort. So at last they stole out of the door, and, hand in hand, wandered a short way up the mountain side, following the forester's tracks till they came in sight of the old black pine.

FINDING THE CHRISTMAS ROSES.

"If all the mothers in the world were dying that hard old pine would not care," said the boy, bitterly. "Let us go back into the valley, sister; there we will find good people, with kind hearts, while here there is no one to care for us."

"There is one who cares for us even here," cried the sister, spying the Christmas roses, and in a moment she had scraped away the snow and plucked them. "We had forgotten the Christ child, and that to-morrow is His birthday. Let us take the roses to the church, and there pray that our mother's life may be spared."

So they hastened down the mountain to the village church, where they found the good pastor busy trimming the altar for the Christmas festival. He took the flowers and put them, with some feathery moss, into a tall white vase. Then he knelt with the children and prayed for their mother's life, and the roses nodding on their stems smiled as though the gift asked for were already granted. When they returned home their father met them at the door and exclaimed joyfully, "The fever has turned and your mother is better. Thank God."

The Christmas rose had fulfilled its destiny. Ah, me! the black pine was right. We were all made for a wise purpose, and we shall learn what it is in God's own good time.

*The Christmas rose is not a rose, it belongs to the family Hellebore, black Hellebore, so called from the color of its roots. Its large white flowers are produced in winter, and it grows only in cold climates. The flowers are white or tinged with red.

God rest ye, little children; but nothing you affright,
For Jesus Christ, your Saviour, was born this happy night.
Along the hills of Galilee the white flocks sleeping lay,
When Christ, the child of Nazareth, was born on Christmas day.

AN EDITOR'S CHRISTMAS.

This is Mr. Worthington's story just as he told it to a number of us one Christmas evening at his house. Mr. Worthington isn't Mr. Worthington at all in real life, but a very famous man whose tongue and pen carry great weight:

My first journal was a country weekly in Doonville. A "flourishing and fearless" journal, was the way my kindly disposed contemporaries spoke of it in their "able" pages. Its name was The Trumpet, and I speak only the plainest truth when I say that it gave forth no uncertain sound. I was a very young man and very ambitious. I thought I knew exactly what a forceful weekly newspaper should be, and I hadn't the least doubt of my capacity to construct and manipulate such an engine of reform and advancement. That is the way of the very young, God bless them. Before they have had a hand to hand encounter with life they feel so strong and confident they believe they can do anything, and this very belief, mark you, is what makes the phenomenal successes we so often admire and wonder at. The Spaniards have a proverb, "He who expects good luck will get it," and it is as true a sentence as ever was penned. Believe you can do anything, and you can, if any one can do it. Success, like the art of swimming, is largely a matter of confidence.

I worked very hard on The Trumpet. I was business man, editor and staff. I had very decided ideas in regard to bettering the world, and started out with the praiseworthy intention of extinguishing several "giant wrongs," under which I plainly saw that society suffered. We all have the reformatory spirit much stronger in us in youth than later on, for the reason, perhaps, that we haven't fully measured the strength of our antagonist, the existing system of things. I was sincerely anxious to thoroughly represent all worthy local interests. To that end I scoured Doonville night and day, and "wrote up" all sorts of things that never before had been described by pen, or immortalized in type. I wanted to wake up my fellow townsmen and women to the interests that lay close around them, and of all things I wanted them to properly appreciate The Trumpet.

I intended to issue a magnificent Christmas number of my beloved journal, twice its ordinary size and brim full of the most alluring holiday matter I could create and rake up. To perfect that number I almost worked myself into a decline. Looking back upon it now, from the standpoint of what I beg to be permitted to call mature common sense, I commend myself heartily for the industry, zeal and confidence I nursed into respectable development in those old, hard working, moneyless days on The Trumpet.

Among other attractive features for my Christmas paper I determined to write up the very poor of Doonville. I could thus be the means of conferring two benefactions—giving the rich a chance to taste of the blessing of giving—for it is more blessed to give than to receive—and also open the way for the poor to be helped. And on Christmas, you know, all hearts are said to be tenderer and more generous, and many are glad of an opportunity to do something for the needy.

Doonville was a small place, and so very prosperous that I scarcely knew where to go to hunt people so poor that I dare intrude upon them and tell their wants in my "valuable and widely circulated" paper. Many of its citizens were very rich, and none whom I personally knew had fallen below decent and tolerable poverty. But down below Doon's mills, on the river bank, were some broken down houses about whose doors I had sometimes seen very ragged and very dirty children playing. I determined to go thither and investigate.

I had this thought in my mind as I was going to office one morning just two days before Christmas. I determined to go out that afternoon and begin the search. I hadn't gone far when I met "Calamity" Parker. That was what I called him when my speech was without bridle, for I held him in great contempt.

He was a tall, thin, broken down creature, who posed as a gentleman and moved about with a solemn, unhealthful gait and distributed religious tracts. He always seemed to me a frightful excrescence on society, although he had the discretion to say but little. It fretted my progressive spirit to see him crawling around thrusting his weak literature under more intelligent and busier people's eyes. "The day and generation are beyond tracts," I said to myself, "and here is this threadbare fraud keeping up this relic of fogyism." I despised him so heartily I could hardly speak a decent good morning as he passed me. I think he felt that I disliked him; but he had cultivated the unctuous affectation of godliness and an appearance of patience and sweetness under slights and taunts, and invariably returned a smile for a frown. That very habit made him detestable to me.

I began to think about him as I went along. He had only been in Doonville a couple of years, and I had never heard of his doing anything but distribute tracts and preach on the street corners down by the mills. I concluded that it was time he was abolished. Accordingly my first work on reaching the office was to write a half column editorial article on "religious frauds," in which the practice of tract distributing received merited castigation. I drew a picture of the typical tract man, of which Parker was the model, which wasn't calculated to make his path in Doonville any smoother. This incisive, and I may say "able," article, which was certainly a flaming sword of righteous wrath against the tract fraternity, was to adorn the Christmas number.

Then I started out in my search for poverty in a self satisfied spirit. It is delightful to do something that wins one's own approbation. I found the row of old houses all locked and tenantless save one, the last one and the worst one. It was in a state of dilapidation so hopeless that its owner hadn't even thought it worth while to shut it up. The result was that it was tenanted without his permission having been asked. A family of dull brained, sallow skinned, chronically indigent, half dead creatures who had been crawling westward in worn out wagons drawn by dying horses, had taken possession of it by permission of necessity. They had reached Doonville just as their horses succumbed to the inexorable, and there they were, sick, freezing, starving and dying in a state of destitution unspeakable.

I saw through the windows that the house was inhabited, though the only figure I could see moving about was more ghostlike than human. On pretense of borrowing a match I knocked for admittance. A match! such a thing was a far off, undreamed of luxury to the family within. There was neither fire nor food in the house, and the wind, the rain and the snow came in at will through the glassless windows. Haven't you noticed that the very elements conspire with poverty to make his victims wretched?

A skeleton man sick unto death lay on the floor, his head on a bundle of dry leaves. Two famished children, ill and feeble, were on the semblance of a bed in another corner of the room. A very old woman sat helpless by the side of the sick children, whose emaciated and miserable mother groped about feebly trying to give help to the others. The only one who seemed to have any life to speak of left was a wan and ragged little girl with delicate features and big, old eyes.

I got fire and food for them, and did all I could for their immediate relief. Then I rushed to the office of The Trumpet and wrote such an account of them as would be sure to send the good people of Doonville to their door with abundant relief. It was a long and graphic article, and realistic to a startling degree. We were not illustrating newspapers then as now, so I could only picture the suffering of this family in words. However, I gave the article tremendous head lines and a prominent place. The Trumpet was issued the next day, which was the day before Christmas, and it went forth on its work of arousing the pity of Doonville for the family in the old house by the river. I was very busy all that day and could not go to see them. But when night came and I lay down to rest I had the satisfaction of feeling that they were provided for, and that I had been the instigating cause of their relief. I fancied the surprise and sorrow the benevolent Mrs. Barclay would feel when she visited them, carrying aid, as she was sure to do after reading my article. And how distressed, I thought, Mr. Archibald Doon would be when he realized that so sad a case of want existed in the town of which he was so proud. And others—ever so many others—would be equally interested and equally helpful. In imagination I saw the philanthropists of the the community, one after another, going down to the old house by the river side carrying aid and sympathy.

The next morning was Christmas. It was cold and clear, with a sharp wind blowing—traditional Christmas weather, called cheery in stories, I think, but very uncomfortable for those who are thinly clad. After breakfast I started down to see my poor friends by the river. I wanted to help them, but all I could do would be but a cipher in comparison with what had already been done. But I thrilled with the pleasure I would experience in seeing their improved condition, knowing I had had a hand in it.

How forlorn and desolate the house was, even as seen from afar off! And oh! the dreariness of Christmas to those within!

A man approached the house just ahead of me. A second glance told me that it was the tract distributor. I felt a spasm of wrath at sight of him. How dare he mock those wretched people with his printed twaddle about the preciousness of their souls when their bodies needed food, and fire and clothing?

THE THIN LITTLE GIRL OPENED THE DOOR.

He knocked, and the thin little girl with the pale, delicate face opened the door, came out, and shut it behind her. The tract distributor took off his hat, she looked up at him, and I knew she spoke, though I was not near enough to hear what she said. I noticed, too, that she raised her hand in gesture—a solemn and intensely dramatic gesture, it seemed to me, for one so young to make unconsciously. A queer sort of chill crept over me. The tract distributor opened the door and went in, but she stood outside, and was still standing there when I reached the door.

Somehow, when I was quite near her I could find no words to utter. She seemed to understand, and pointing to the door, said: "You can go in if you want to. Father died this morning!"

I stood speechless in the presence of that child's tearless sorrow.

"But help came to you yesterday?" I said, my heart sinking as a possibility I had never thought of flashed into my mind.

"Yes, he—the man who has just gone in—came and was very kind. He stayed by father all night, and was only away a little while; but father died while he was gone."

"And—did—did—nobody else come yesterday?" I stammered.

"Nobody else," said the child, looking up surprised at the question.

I felt ashamed to go in and face the tract distributor in the presence of the dead he had comforted and whom I had left for others to comfort—others who never came.

He greeted me with gentle kindness, and as I clasped his hand in that woeful dwelling I inwardly bent before him in self-abasement.

We went out together to plan for the funeral and procure further aid for the living.

"You did a good work when you wrote about these people," he said, "and I thank you, for otherwise I should not have known of their existence in time to be of help when they needed it most."

With what shame I remembered my article on religious frauds, of which I had been so proud only two days before.

From that hour we became warm friends. As I learned to know him well I looked back in amazement at my former conclusions in regard to him. "Calamity" Parker, indeed! It would have been more fitting had I named him Beneficent Parker. His life was a benediction—unobtrusive and self-denying; he gave of his abundant sympathy and slender worldly means without reserve. Nor was his never failing patience and sweetness of spirit the cloak of hypocrisy, but the result of years of spiritual aspiration and discipline, which I have never yet begun to attain. His habit of distributing tracts was merely the outward manifestation of a helpful spirit—a habit contracted in a bygone day among simple people. It hurt no one. For aught I know it may have benefited some. Why should I assume that because a man had an inoffensive habit, of which I disapproved, that he was a fit subject to be insulted in the public prints, derided behind his back and sneered at when he was present? It was the ignorance of youth, my children—youth, over-confident youth, which thinks it knows everything and often knows nothing. I had not then learned that each one has his own way of doing good, and has his rights, too. Neither had I learned that it is foolish and wicked to judge people whose real lives we do not know and cannot know—or to judge at all.

It was some time before I got over my surprise at the apathy of the philanthropists of Doonville in regard to that wretched family. I was at a loss to understand how they could eat their Christmas dinners in comfort, after reading about the distress of the poor souls in the old house. I did not then know that people unused to seeing poverty are slower to lend a helping hand than they who see it every day; that when we have not the poor always with us we forget how to be benevolent and sometimes grow very selfish.

GERTRUDE GARRISON.