

Mary. But suppose the houses are all shut up, and the little we have taken from us, don't you see we should have to take to the streets. How much better would that be?

Mrs. X. That is the very point. Has any opportunity ever offered you to leave this mode of life?

Mary. Yes, we could leave it in this way. We could become penitents, live on bread and water, sleep on hard beds until we get very thin, have our hair cut off, have some good Christian set to watch over us, and if we stand it several months, we could get a place in some lady's kitchen; but we couldn't keep it long, for many of us have been brought up ladies, and the lady of the house would always suspect us, and upon the slightest provocation would turn us out in the streets, to come back to our old life, while the men who made us what we are can rise to any position they choose.

Mrs. X. Well we have just made a proposition to Nina, which she promptly accepts. (A description of the plan.)

What do you say?

Mary. Do you really mean it?

Mrs. X. We really mean it. There has been enough said on this subject for the last eighteen hundred years. It is time there was something done. What do you say?

Mary. I will help you in every way I can, depend upon it.

The appearance of these women, known in Washington by a name we will not use, greatly surprised the lady visitors. In the presence of these ladies they were gentle, tender-hearted, sensitive, as fully alive to the charm of innocence in women, as women who possess it. If, as rumor says, they are all that is vile in the presence of bad men, then surely they need the presence of wives and mothers—not their contempt or arrogance or lofty "charity"—but their friendly presence and sympathy to recall them to their better days, and to give them hope for the future. Of course this is not all they need, but more of that hereafter.

The ladies then visited a house of the same kind further east. They found great difficulty in gaining admission, owing, as it was stated to the fact that "these are critical times," and they must be careful about seeing strangers.

After a third urgent friendly request, the lady of the house came down—a beautiful woman, so refined and lady-like that the thought there surely must be a mistake. No wonder such a woman would rather pay \$500 fine than appear in court on such a charge as was recently brought against her.

The earlier part of the conversation confirmed what the other two women had said. In matters of opinion they differed somewhat, but not in facts.

Mrs. Y. Do not the gentlemen who visit your house sometimes try to encourage the inmates to reform?

Julia. (not the name on the police records.) Oh, no! They don't come here to reform women. But some ladies came once to talk with my girls. They didn't seem to understand anything about our situation or needs, and I did not call the girls down. It isn't so much "repentance" as honest "daily bread" that they need. We all "repent" and go on sinning for the same reason, day after day. But I heard that the ladies gave a very pleasant account of me. Their gentlemen friends told me so.

Mrs. Y. Do you think this business a social necessity?

Julia. No, I know it is not; but men will always keep it up with their money for their own pleasure.

Mrs. Y. Do you believe, from your experience in this business, that women follow this life from choice?

Julia. (most emphatically.) No. I know they do not. They have nearly always been led, betrayed, or driven here.

Mrs. Y. Do you think they would leave the business if the same chances were offered to them that men find when they wish to reform?

Julia. Why should they not? Who ever offered it? In that case, wouldn't there be everything to win, and nothing to lose? A little of this life is enough for a woman, even if she wanted it to begin with.

Mrs. Y. If we propose a plan that looks just to you, will you co-operate with us in carrying it out?

Julia. Most heartily. (After a little conversation.) I feel very grateful to you for thinking of us, caring for us, and for treating us as if there might be some good left in us.

The ladies next visited a house occupied by quadroons and octoroons, and asked for the mistress of the house.

To be continued.

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