

THE DRUNKARDS; OR, "A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM."

(Continued.)
"Yes dear. We have all cause to be thankful to God for his mercies," said the widow.
"Yes," said Faith, thoughtfully. "We have got more than some, even now; and we are so quiet and peaceful here together. If we can't have a pudding—and it doesn't much matter about it—we will have some holly over the pictures, and make it look like Christmas, eh, mother?"
"Of course," said Mrs. Harley; "but I think, Faith, if you get paid for these things when you take them home tomorrow, I shall be able to buy some plums, and currants when we go up-town on Christmas Eve."
Faith's eyes brightened. "I dare say the lady will pay," she said hopefully. After tea, Faith went to look out of the window for a while, before the candle was lighted. It was a very quiet neighborhood, and very respectable. Mrs. Harley had seen better days, and she could not bear the thought of living in a low street; and although she had to make a pinch for it in other directions, she rented two rooms in a street which was inhabited by well-to-do house-holders.
There were not many passers-by to be seen in this street, so Faith had nothing peculiar to look upon. Besides, there were no stars out this evening to attract her attention. The sky was very dark, and the mournful wind sighed through the street.
"Mother, mother!" called Faith, suddenly, "do come and look; here is Mr. Morgan—oh, so tipsy! look, he can scarcely find his own door."
Mrs. Harley came quickly to the window, and looked down upon the man with a very distressed expression. They watched him as he thumped at the door, and then a somewhat corpulent woman made her appearance, and pulled him in.
"How sad!" uttered the widow; she turned away from the window; "and that man might have kept his carriage long ago if he had liked."
"Is he rich, mother?" asked Faith.
"He was, dear, years ago. He had several houses; but they have all gone one by one—all but two, the one he lives in, and the next to it. And they will soon go, too, if he keeps on at this rate."
"Why doesn't Mrs. Morgan try to stop him?" asked Faith, anxiously.
"She encourages him, dear. She is almost as bad as he is. I am sorry to say."
"Does she get tipsy?" asked Faith, in extreme surprise.
"Very often," said Mrs. Harley.
"Well, sometimes I have wondered what made her so fond of him," said the child. "One day she will call me 'little dear,' and make me think that she likes me, and another day she will tell me to get out of her way if I get anywhere near her. Oh, how dreadful to think she could be so bad! Isn't it a good thing to think she has no children? They wouldn't be so happy as I am, through we haven't got much money, nor a house at all."
After gazing out for some minutes longer, she continued: "And at Christmas time, too, just when people ought to be so good, because they think about Jesus coming into the world to die for us. I'm sure Mr. and Mrs. Morgan oughtn't to be drinking now, ought they, mother? People ought to try to be better, and to please God more than ever at Christmas time, when they remember that it is the time at which He sent His Son."
"Yes, indeed," said the widow; "but, instead of that, it is the time when wicked men make it an excuse for being worse than they are at other times."
"Then Christmas can't be a happy time to them," said Faith, thoughtfully. "How miserable Mr. and Mrs. Morgan must be! I am sorry for them." Faith kept her eyes on the lighted window-blind of their front sitting-room, and wondered what was going on within. "It's a little better, I keep a little servant, isn't it, mother," she said presently.
"Yes, I have often thought so," replied her mother. "She takes care of them and of the house. If they had been left to themselves, the house might have been burned to the ground before now. Come, Faith, I think we will have the candle lighted now. Draw down the blind. You need not do any more work to night; but if you like you can read aloud, and I'll try to sit up a little longer." Faith obeyed; and after sitting reading to her mother for some time, the two went to bed.
Next morning, when Faith woke, she was overjoyed to see, on looking out, that the window-blind was unfastened with snow, and that the street and house opposite were adorned with snow. "Now everything looks exactly like Christmas, mother," she said; "I'm so glad that I've got on an errand this morning."
Directly after breakfast she wanted to start off. The pretty crimson cloak was wrapped round her; her well-worn little black hat was tied on her head; and with scarcely-needed injunctions (for she was always a careful child) from her mother to take care of the little parcel, and of the money, if the lady should pay her for the work, she tripped downstairs and out into the snow, looking a veritable Red Riding-hood. Presently she had performed her errand to the lady, and had received the money due to her mother in one coin, a five-shilling piece. This she carried in her hand, feeling afraid to trust a precious sum in her pocket, for fear of being operated upon by pickpockets, of whom she had heard such dreadful tales.
To be continued.

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