CHAPTER IX.

TWO SHILLINGS.

Next morning, when the friends meet as usual, Keziah is still troubled and grave.

They walk side by side almost in silence for a few minutes, until suddenly Millie bursts out:—

"Keziah, I can see it is quite useless to try and deceive you. I'll tell you everything—everything!"

Keziah stops short, and looks at her in utter astonishment.

"Yes; I saw at once that you had discovered how unhappy—how dreadfully unhappy I am at home! I try to pretend not to mind it, but I can't hide it from a real friend—oh, I can't!"

Here Millie's handkerchief comes out, and is held to her eyes; she is apparently sobbing bitterly.

"It's always the same. I try, try, try to please father, but I can't; he won't let me love him, he won't let me have a friend! Oh, Keziah, don't turn from me, don't let my troubles drive you away as they have all the rest!"

Keziah is greatly shocked to hear this.

"Millie, Millie, don't, don't talk like that! Of
course I won't leave you, and I'll only love you better if you're in trouble.”

“How good, how sweet you are! You are the kindest, sweetest, bravest friend I ever had in my life!”

Even Keziah feels that this is rather too much, for she has done nothing. But, then, how very pleasant it is; how much nicer than Cora's coldness or Rosalie's selfishness!

It is surprising how quickly Millie cheers up after this little scene. The pair walk to school arm-in-arm, and now Keziah is quite sure that she has found her friend. A friend who needs her, who loves her!

The vague, uneasy feeling which warned her that all was not quite right, has passed away.

All that day Millie cannot do enough to show Keziah how much she prizes her friendship. They walk home together after school, Millie talking all the way of her troubles.

“I've no sisters or brothers, and even mother doesn't understand me,” she says, mournfully, as they reach the corner of Park Road, “and you are my only real friend. Ah! do let me walk quite up to your door with you. Is this your number? What a nice little house! Now, good-bye, dearest Keziah, I'm so happy with you!” and after an affectionate kiss she runs away.

Tea over, Ruth comes in as usual, and Keziah gets out her books. The two girls have not seen very much of each other lately, and it so happens that Millie Steele's name has not even been mentioned between them.
"Is Cora Holloway still determined not to speak to you?" asks Ruth, as she turns over the leaves of Keziah's arithmetic.

"Cora? Oh, I suppose so!"

"You are not worrying so much about her unkindness?"

"No. You see, it isn't any good; and, besides, I think you were right, I didn't care for Cora as much as I thought."

"And you intend never to have another friend, Keziah?" asks Ruth, with a sad little smile.

"Well, I won't say that—the fact is, there's a girl at school now—"

"Oh, Keziah, have you found another Cora or Rosalie already?"

"I didn't find her, she found me, and she's not a bit like Cora or Rosalie. She's done everything she could think of to make me like her; she says she never met anyone like me, and she thinks 'Keziah' a lovely name, and, then, she's in such dreadful trouble. Hark! there's a knock at the street-door. Who can it be at this time of the evening?"

"I'll go whilst you look over your arithmetic again, I've found the place."

And Ruth steps into the narrow passage, and opens the door.

A girl of about her own age is standing on the doorstep; she looks up eagerly.

"Does Miss Keziah Greene live here? Oh, please tell her that I want to see her most particularly. I must see her, I shan't keep her a minute. I'm Millie Steele; she'll know."
What can this girl want with Keziah? Ruth feels that she does not at all like the eager, yet sly, look in her eyes.

Keziah is very much surprised when Ruth takes in the message; she is more surprised still when she goes to the door, and Millie, seizing her by both hands, bursts into tears on her shoulder.

"Oh, Keziah, I'm in such dreadful, dreadful trouble!" she sobs.

"Oh, Millie, what is it—what can have happened?"

"I came straight to you; you're the only person in the world I can ask to help me, and I don't think you will refuse?"

"Of course not. But what is it—what can be the matter?"

"Father sent me to get two shillingsworth of stamps, and—and I've lost the money, and I daren't go home—I daren't!" Millie's sobs almost appear to choke her.

"How terrible! But, Millie, what can I do?"

"If you would lend me two shillings for a little while—just a day or two—I should be so truly, truly thankful! You told me you'd got two shillings."

"Well, so I have, but I'm not supposed to spend it all at once. I'll ask mother."

"Oh, no, no, no! If you do that father is sure to hear of it. I'll return it in a day or two for certain. I only want you to lend it. Oh, Keziah, you will help me, won't you? I've no one but you!"

Keziah is overcome by Millie's eagerness and
Tears, so without further hesitation she runs upstairs and soon returns with the money, whereupon Millie throws both arms around her neck, and kisses her, apparently, in a most affectionate manner.

"And, Keziah, you won't tell anyone, will you? It's only for a day or two. Now, promise."

"Very well."

"Ah! you are a real friend; I'll never forget what you've done, never."

And she runs away with Keziah's precious two shillings in her hand.

Keziah returns to her lessons in a rather uncomfortable frame of mind. She is just realising that she has promised to keep a secret from her mother; but she seeks comfort in the thought, "After all, it is only for a few days."

Ruth glances at her thoughtful face; she nears her run upstairs, and half suspects what has happened.

"Is that the girl you were speaking of—your new friend?" she asks.

"Yes; that's Millie Steele."

"Steele! I've heard the name before. I've heard something about Millie, too."

"You've heard no harm concerning her, I suppose?" Keziah cries sharply; having trusted Millie, she feels bound to defend her.

"I've heard that she doesn't always speak the truth," says Ruth quietly.

"What a shame! Poor Millie! just because she's unhappy at home, everybody is unjust to her."
"How do you know she's unhappy at home, Keziah?"

"Because I've been there, and have seen it for myself."

Keziah has quite forgotten that she believed something had been done to displease Mr. Steele, until Millie told her that he was always the same.

"Did Millie tell you herself that she was unhappy?"

"Yes."

"My Captain says we should always be on our guard with people who complain of their homes to the first person they meet."

"How can you be so unjust! She didn't tell me a thing until we'd agreed to be real friends. Poor Millie, I won't hear another word against her!"

And so the matter was, for the time being, allowed to rest.

"Keziah, do let us go out together this afternoon—it's a half-holiday, you know, and we so seldom get the time for a real long talk."

It is Millie who is speaking.

"That will be very nice, Millie. Where shall we go? The flowers in the park are lovely just now, and there are plenty of seats."

"Oh, no! the park is so dull—and, besides, one can never get a seat to oneself. I know, let's look round at the shops, perhaps we shall see a handkerchief like those of mine you admired so much, and I heard you say you wanted a hair-ribbon."

"Did I, Millie? I don't remember that."
"Oh, yes you did! We'll buy one, and, perhaps, look at some handkerchiefs. What fun we shall have!"

"But, Millie, I've only threepence left in my purse—and two farthings."

"Oh, I daresay that will do! You haven't said anything about that two shillings at home?"

"No; you see, I promised. But, Millie, somehow I feel that mother ought to know. I should be so glad to tell her."

"That would never do! But you needn't worry. I shall pay you back in a day or two. Well, I'll call for you directly after dinner. We shall enjoy ourselves! The shops in the High Street are splendid just now."

Millie is right, the shop windows are very gay indeed this sunny afternoon, and Keziah and she find plenty to look at.

Left to herself, Keziah would spend most of her time over the big, beautiful roses and orchids in the flower-shops, but Millie does not care for flowers, and drags her away.

"Ah, this is the place we want!" she cries, pausing before the window of a large draper's.

"Oh, I know this shop! Mother often buys things here."

"Does she, dear? That's all the better. Now, these artificial flowers are something like, and—why, look here, the very shade of ribbon you want; and only threepence farthing a yard! Come along, a yard of this you must have," and she links her arm through Keziah's and marches her into the shop.
"This is the ribbon-counter; sit down, Keziah—you should try to look as though you were quite used to shopping, you know."

Millie, at any rate, appears quite used to it. In spite of her bewilderment, Keziah cannot help admiring the business-like way in which she says, "We wish to look at some ribbons, please," and turns over the large boxes placed before her.

"Ah! this is the colour—look, Keziah. We'll take a yard of this, please."

"There's a yard and three-quarters here, miss; you can have the piece for fourpence halfpenny," says the shopwoman in a persuasive voice.

"Very well," answers Millie, grandly.

But Keziah whispers, "Millie, I can't pay for all that, I told you I hadn't the money!"

"Oh, that's all right! I owe you ever so much more."

"What can I show you next, miss?"

"Well, let me see—we did want to look at some fancy handkerchiefs—"

"Millie, I can't buy them!" whispers Keziah again.

"Oh, don't fuss so! We do want to look at them, you know we decided that. Look, aren't they just lovely! Now isn't this lucky—here's the very sort you wanted—why, we might have searched for weeks and not found them. Yes, we'll take two of these, please. Oh, how sweet, I must have one of these with the dear little rose-buds! That's all, I don't think we want anything more to-day."

"Nothing more, miss?" and the shop-assistant
"'MY FRIEND HASN'T ENOUGH CHANGE WITH HER TO PAY TO-DAY.'"
takes out her pencil and does a little rapid arithmetic.

"One and ninepence three-farthings, please," and she passes the bill to Millie.

"Oh, it's this young lady's! I'll pay you for the handkerchief I've bought when I give you back the two shillings, Keziah." This last sentence in a whisper.

"But, Millie, you know I can't pay her—you must tell her, I can't," returns Keziah, desperately.

"Very well. Oh, my friend hasn't enough change with her to pay to-day; but that doesn't matter, does it? She lives at No. 8 Sunnyside Villas."

"I would rather the young lady paid now," says the shopwoman.

"Well, she can't! But I'm sure you know Mrs. Greene—that's her mother—she buys all her things at this shop."

"Oh, I'm to send the bill in to Mrs. Greene?"

"Yes, that will be best."

"But, Millie——"

"Oh, come along, Keziah, we shall be late for tea. Here's your parcel."

"I'm sure mother won't like this, Millie. I'm certain she'll think I've wasted the money."

"Nonsense! My mother wouldn't mind, and you've told me over and over again that your mother is the best in the world."

"So she is; but I ought not to have spent the money without asking her first."

"My dear girl, you are old enough to buy a
hair-ribbon for yourself, surely! And it made me wretched to see how much you longed for those handkerchiefs. Why, if I had my way, you should have everything you wanted!"

"It's very nice of you to like me so much, Millie. When do you think that bill will come in?"

"Oh, to-morrow, I expect. Perhaps you had better tell your mother to-night. I wish I could come and explain; but father said I must be in by tea-time. Good-bye!"

Keziah walks home, quaking inwardly.

"Oh, dear, why did I allow Millie to buy these things? The dear girl is so anxious to please me, and she doesn't know how particular mother is—perhaps a little too particular, considering how old I am. Well, I can't tell her to-night, because Jack is coming home early; perhaps I shall feel better about it in the morning."

Keziah is not sorry when the day is over, and she is able to get to bed to "sleep off" the unhappy feeling concerning that wretched parcel.

"You bought a ribbon for your hair yesterday, Keziah? Why, I gave you a new one only this week; surely you did not need another already?" observes Keziah's mother the next day.

"It was such a pretty colour, and so cheap; and—and I bought two handkerchiefs, and please could you let me have my pocket-money for next month. I—I haven't enough to pay for them."

"You brought them away without paying for them! That was very wrong of you, for you know how much I dislike any kind of debt,
Keziah. What can have possessed you to act in this manner without saying a word to me?"

"They were so cheap," mutters Keziah, hanging her head.

"Bring them to me."

Mother speaks quite sternly, and it is with a throbbing heart that Keziah hurries upstairs, and returns with the little parcel. She has no pleasure in its contents now. "Hateful things," she thinks. "I wish I could throw them away!"

"Keziah, how could you buy such rubbish! The ribbon is quite unsuitable—I could never allow you to wear it, and the handkerchiefs are only made for show—quite useless. What is the amount of the bill?"

"One and ninepence halfpenny," gasps out poor Keziah.

"Well, you have the two-shilling piece your grandmother gave you at Christmas, you must pay the bill with that, and I trust the loss of your money will be a warning to you in future."

Keziah's heart beats faster still. Her two-shilling piece. What would mother say if she knew?

"Take it to the shop this afternoon, and let me never hear of your doing such a thing again."

"Oh, mother, I shouldn't have time; you know Millie Steele is to come home with me to tea this evening."

"Very well; to-morrow, then. Keziah, you must promise never to do such a thing again, unless you wish me to feel that I cannot trust my daughter."
Keziah promises, with many tears, and to herself she says, "Oh, I'll never keep anything from mother again! Millie must give me my money at once, and I'll pay the bill directly."

As it happens, she does not get a chance to speak to Millie all day, and May Smith, who is going in the same direction, walks up the road with them when they return home in the evening.

Then Millie has to be introduced to Mrs. Greene, and, of course, mother pours out the tea. Mother is very grave still. Keziah is uneasy, and Millie unusually silent. Altogether, it is quite a relief when the meal is over, and Keziah takes her friend into the garden.

"I can see that your mother doesn't approve of me," Millie says, directly they are alone.

"Millie!"

"I am sure of it. I suppose you've told her all about that two shillings."

"Indeed, I have not! Oh, Millie, you know I haven't! Mother likes you all right, but she's angry with me about those things we bought; she says they're all useless, and I must pay for them at once. So—so you'll give me my money back to-night, won't you?" she adds, timidly.

"To-night! Why, I haven't a penny!"

"But, Millie, you must. You said you only wanted it for a day or two."

"A 'day or two' generally means a week or two—you ought to know that."

"But I must have it—or tell mother that I've lent it to you!"

"No, no; you promised. Wait a moment,
I've thought of a way out of the trouble. Come with me to my aunt's to-morrow afternoon, she's very fond of me, and I'm sure if we ask her she'll give me the money directly."

"Where does she live?"

"Oh! Clark's Square, in the City."

"I'm sure mother wouldn't like me to go to the City without her knowing."

"Well, we shouldn't be long, you know. Mrs. Greene would only think you were having tea at my house."

"What! not tell mother? It seems to me it would be much better for you to go to your aunt's by yourself."

"I'm far more likely to get it if you're there to show that what I say is true——" Millie stops short, and turns rather red, then she goes on hurriedly.

"I did think you wouldn't refuse to help me, when I'm trying all I can to think of a way to get you the money. We should be back quite early."

"But it costs money to go to the City," falters Keziah.

"Only twopence each way. You've threepence and I've a penny, and my aunt will pay the return fares."

"But—but I can't do it; it would be deceiving mother."

"What nonsense! You will ask Mrs. Greene if you can spend the afternoon with me, and that will be true enough. Goodness me! there's that sly girl from next door—Ruth What's-her-name
—watching us from her garden! Meddling thing! What business is it of hers?"

"She's not sly, or meddling either! She's the truest, kindest girl in the world. I only wish I were one-half as good and true myself!" cries Keziah, flashing out; and for one brief minute she doubts, she almost dislikes, Millie Steele.

But Millie is quick to read her face, and replies, "How thoroughly you believe in your friends—how truly you trust them! I'm glad I'm one of your friends, Keziah, dear. Come, shall we go indoors and ask about to-morrow?"
CHAPTER X.

A FALSE STEP.

"You are quite sure your aunt will give us the money?" asks Keziah next morning. The two girls are already on their way to the station.

Yes; Keziah is going, and her mother does not know about the plan.

"Oh, quite sure! She's given me money several times so as to save me from a scolding. She knows how severe my father is."

"But, Millie, are you always losing money?"

"Losing money! I never lost a penny in my life. I'm not so silly," cries Millie indignantly.

"That is," she adds, checking herself, "I never lost any before the other day."

"Then why does your aunt give you money?"

"Oh, just to get the things which all girls want! She knows I never have any money from father."

"What does your father say to that, Millie?"

"Is it likely I should tell him? Why, he'd expect me to buy my own shoes if he knew."

"Mother says that we ought to tell our parents everything," says Keziah gravely.
"Oh, yes, I know! but we can't always do that. You can't tell your mother what you're doing now."

"I could, and I would directly, if you'd only give me permission to break my promise. Oh, Millie, do! Mother would be angry just at first, but when she saw that I was really sorry for having deceived her, she would forgive me, I am sure."

"Yes; if you promised to have nothing to do with me in future. Do you think I don't know? Do you think I've never been served that way before? Is that your idea of being a friend—just to make things all right for yourself, and leave me out altogether? Oh! I did think that you were above such meanness; I did think you would keep your word—that you were a different sort of girl to that, Keziah!" And Millie turns away, and covers her face with her handkerchief.

"Millie, don't! You know I didn't mean it like that. Of course, I should take all the blame on myself. Millie, I say—"

"Oh, how cruel you are!" sobs Millie. "Why can I never find a real friend?"

"Millie, I only say that that is what I should like to do," says Keziah sadly.

"I shouldn't dream of telling tales of you—I hate tell-tales!"

"Millie, do be quiet. You know I've agreed to do as you wish."

"Yes; so you have. Well, I'll try not to think any more of what you've just said. By the way, why aren't you wearing your new hair-ribbon?"
Didn't I tell you that my cousins liked people to be nicely dressed?"

"Your cousins! You didn't say anything about cousins at all. Oh, I do hope we're not to see a lot of people!"

"Do you? Well, I've six cousins, all nice, bright girls, and then there's Bertie, and Cyril Foster, and Tom Mitchell—they're nearly sure to drop in to tea."

"I do hope they won't come while we're there; you'll come away directly, won't you?"

But Millie only laughs. "Here's the station. I'll get the tickets. We're in luck's way; there's a train just signalled."

And away she darts to the booking-office, leaving Keziah standing alone on the platform.

A train journey is usually a great treat to Keziah. She loves the rush and excitement of travelling; but to-day a horrid, guilty feeling quite destroys her pleasure.

Suppose some of these people know her by sight, and tell her mother that they have seen her here? Even if she is not found out, is mother never to know about this journey to the City? What! keep a secret from mother all her life—?

"Here are the tickets—quick, Keziah—quick—the train is just coming in!"

Millie, all eager and breathless, seizes Keziah by the arm, and, as the train steams into the station, fixes on a carriage, and almost before it has stopped, pushes her in.

"Didn't I manage that splendidly?" she pants, sinking back into a seat. "Why, how worried
you look, Keziah! You silly girl, we're just in for a bit of real fun!"

"I do wish mother knew."

"Nonsense! I haven't told my mother. We're old enough to take care of ourselves, I should hope. What a glum face you're making! You're not afraid of going about without your mother, are you?"

But Keziah does not answer. She feels more certain than ever that she is doing wrong.

Arrived at the big City station, Millie takes her arm again, and what with the delightful bustle, and the crowds of people all round her, Keziah forgets her forebodings for a few minutes. Millie is chattering away gaily, and she is beginning to answer in the same style, when suddenly she feels Millie's hand tighten on her arm.

"Now I call that real bad luck! Who would think that sly girl would spy on us even here!"

Keziah looks up quickly, and as she does so she catches sight of Ruth's face at the window of a train that is moving out of the station!

Ruth has seen her, and is very troubled at the sight. She is returning home from a short visit to her grandmother. But what is Keziah doing alone with that girl?

"I will call in this evening and try to win her confidence," thinks Ruth.

She does not go to Keziah's mother at once, because she never dreams that Mrs. Greene knows nothing of this visit to the City, and it is growing dark when at last Ruth knocks at the Greene's door and asks to see Keziah.
"Keziah? Oh, she's spending the day at Millie's house—naughty girl, she ought to have been home an hour ago."

Ruth's pale face flushes, and a quick look of alarm flashes into her eyes.

"Oh! Mrs. Greene, she isn't at Millie's house; she's gone to the City—didn't you know?"

"Gone to the City? How do you know? Ruth, what do you mean?"

"Oh, Mrs. Greene, I saw her. Mother sent me to grandma's this morning, and just as the train that brought me home was moving out of the station, I saw Keziah and Millie Steele on the platform."

"With Millie Steele! What time was that?"

"About one o'clock. Oh, Mrs. Greene, I'm so dreadfully sorry I did not come to you directly I got home—but, indeed, I never dreamt that you did not know."

"One o'clock, and it's now past eight! What can she be doing? She was supposed to spend the day at Millie Steele's house. I can't understand it. Keziah has always been so truthful, so trustworthy, I cannot believe she would wilfully deceive me—and Millie Steele, too, so quiet and well-behaved—there has been a dreadful mistake made somewhere!"

"Mrs. Greene, I'm afraid you don't quite know Millie Steele; I hate to speak unkindly of anyone, but—" Ruth stops, and hesitates.

"What? Please tell me! Isn't Millie to be depended on?"

"A girl I know says that Millie is deceitful
and extravagant, she is always trying to get money from her friends to spend on ribbons and laces, and her father has found her out in this so often that he won't let her bring anyone to the house if he can help it."

"Why did I not know? Oh, what shall I do if she is not home soon? It is getting quite dark. She may be lost in the great City, and none of us know in which direction to look for her."

"Perhaps Mrs. Steele knows where they are?" cries Ruth eagerly, "I'll go round to her house. I'll run all the way, and be back directly."

"You are a good girl, Ruth! Yes, be quick!"

Ruth is quick. She darts down the road, and, never pausing to take breath for an instant, arrives, panting and flushed, at the Steeles' door.

In her agitation she rings more violently than she intends, and, in spite of her anxiety, is rather startled at the loud peel which follows.

Mrs. Steele is evidently startled too, and is soon hurrying to the door.

That she is in a bad temper is very clear.

"Well, and who are you, I should like to know, and what do you mean by pulling my bell in that fashion?" she snaps.

"I'm so sorry—I didn't mean it."

"Didn't mean it! If you've broken my bell, you shall pay for it, whoever you are."

"Oh, please forgive me. I've called about Keziah—Keziah Greene, you know. Her mother is so dreadfully anxious about her; please do tell me where she is."
"I don't know anything about her, and if I did I shouldn't tell you—wrenching at my bell like that!"

"But Mrs. Steele, you must tell me. Your girl Millie has taken Keziah to the City, and her mother sent me to you."

"Then you can just go back to her again."

"But Keziah has never been out so late by herself before," Ruth continues. "She knows no one in the City, and she is not used to finding her way about."

"Oh, indeed! Well, my compliments to Mrs. Greene; I should just like to come round and give her a piece of my mind. Her precious daughter has led my Millie into no end of extravagance—buying rubbish handkerchiefs, of no use to anybody, and then insisting on her paying for them straight away. Millie came to me last night almost crying about Keziah's meanness."

"Mrs. Steele, you must be mistaken! Keziah is the most generous, straightforward girl I ever met with."

"Oh, very well. My girl tells untruths, I suppose, for she said Keziah would give her no peace about the money, but threatened every day to tell her mother."

"Oh, dear, there must be some mistake—that isn't like Keziah at all. Only tell me where my friend is now, and I'm sure Mrs. Greene will explain everything afterwards."

"I don't know where she is."

"Millie didn't tell you where they were going?"

"No."
"Does she often stay out as late as this?"
"Very likely, Miss Impertinence!"
"Has she friends in the City?"
"Why do you want to know?"
"Oh, Mrs. Steele, don't you see that if you can't give me an idea as to where she is, Mr. and Mrs. Greene will have to go to the City, and search and search until they find her?"
"What nonsense! Can't two girls go out for a few hours together without all this fuss? I've no patience with such coddling ways!"
"Ah! there's Mr. Steele coming up the road, perhaps he'll know where they're likely to be."
And Ruth is darting off to meet him, when Mrs. Steele catches her by the arm.
"Yes, go and complain to her father, do, and get the poor girl into trouble. Since you will make a fuss, I expect they've gone to Millie's aunt's house for the evening."
"But where's that? How shall we know where to go?"
"Ridiculous! Why can't you leave them alone? No. 2 Clark's Square, near the Lyne Hotel. There, get away with you!"
Ruth speeds up the road, repeating the words, "No. 2 Clark's Square" over and over again, in case she should forget them. As she turns a corner, she almost runs into Jack Greene, Keziah's elder brother.
"Oh, here you are!" he exclaims, nearly as breathless as herself. "I'd just got in when you left, and mother sent me after you. Have you found out where Keziah is?"
"Yes," pants Ruth. "Clark's Square, in the City—at least, she might be there. I've had such work to get the address from Mrs. Steele."

"What a brick you are, Ruth! As for Keziah, she deserves a good fright for giving us all this trouble. What are we to do next? It's father's late Saturday, worse luck!"

Mrs. Greene is standing at the open door anxiously watching for their return.

"No sign of her yet, Ruth," she says sadly.

"Have you found out where she is?"

"Millie's aunt's—No. 2 Clark's Square!" pants Ruth, still out of breath.

"But where is that? I never heard of it before."

"It's near the Lyne Hotel, Mrs. Steele says," cries Ruth.

"Oh! I know where that is," cries Jack suddenly—"Western Street, you know."

"Western Street? My grandfather's shop is in Western Street!" exclaims Ruth, surprised.

"But what are we to do now?" asks Mrs. Greene, helplessly. "Oh, Jack, if only your father were at home!"

"Let's look up the next train, mother; perhaps you can fetch her home."

"But Bennie—he's so feverish and queer; I'm afraid to leave him—"

"I'll sit beside his crib the whole time you are away, Mrs. Green; he'll be all right with me," volunteers Ruth.

"Of course he will, mother. Now, let's see. 'Up trains, City.' Ah! here we are. Eight-thirty—you've lost that; nine-one—that doesn't
stop at our station; nine-fifty—that's the next. How annoying—over an hour to wait!"

"Oh, dear, dear, how I wish your father were at home!" repeats Mrs. Greene tearfully.

"I have it, mother! Why not telegraph?" cries Jack.

"Telegraph to Clark's Square?"

"Yes; tell them to send Keziah back directly, or we'll send a policeman, or something!"

"A telegram wouldn't be delivered there much under an hour, and then Keziah would have to come back alone—that is, if they let her come at all."

"I know!" cries Ruth, joyfully. "Why not telephone? That would only take a few minutes."

"Ruth, don't be silly," says Jack, irritably. "How can we telephone to a place where there's no telephone laid on?"

"Oh, Mrs. Greene—Jack—I've thought of the way!" Ruth's cheeks are flushed, and her eyes dancing with excitement. "I'm so glad—so very glad I went up to grandpa's to-day, for, you see, he's got a telephone! It has just been laid on to his shop in Western Street. We'll telephone to him, and grandma will go to Clark's Square and bring Keziah home. Now, isn't that a splendid plan?"

"That it is!" cries Jack, catching her enthusiasm at once. "Ruth, I was a sneak to call you 'silly' just now. You're a brick—the most thorough brick I ever saw in my life!"

But Mrs. Greene looks more bewildered than ever.

"Oh, I have," says Jack, confidently. "But, Ruth, what about your grandfather's number?"

"The number is printed on his new bills, and grandma gave me one to-day."

"Run and get it, there's a good girl, and we'll be off in no time. The nearest telephone is in the Library Buildings, you know."

Another minute and the two are hurrying down the road together.

"Jack you must work the telephone; I don't understand it, you know," whispers Ruth, nervously, when they reach the office.

Jack laughs as they enter the door. He soon gets possession of the instrument, and gives the number.

"Are you there?"

Ruth is pale with anxiety.

"No; you don't know me. I'm Jack Greene; I'm speaking for Ruth Golding," shouts Jack down the 'phone.

"Now, Ruth, fire away—it's all right; what am I to say?"

Ruth dictates her plan in a low voice, and Jack repeats her words in his most manly tones; then he listens again. "Your grandmother's going," he says, ringing off and stepping away from the instrument.

Mrs. Greene looks a little happier when they return and tell her what they have done. They are just beginning to calculate the time it will all take, when they are startled by a loud knock.
"Keziah!" cries Ruth, and she flies out of the room, closely followed by Jack and Mrs. Greene.

"Only a letter, and without a stamp, too!" Ruth hands it to Mrs. Greene.

"It's a bill—I don't owe any bills!" she says; then she sees that it is the account for the ribbon and handkerchiefs.

"What can be the meaning of this? Keziah promised she would pay for them at once."

"Perhaps she hadn't enough money," suggests Ruth.

"She had a two-shilling piece—it must be in her purse now. Surely, she cannot have taken that with her to spend in the City, after all her promises to me!"

"Keziah would never break a promise!" cries loyal Ruth.

"We will go up to her room and see." Mrs. Greene goes to the drawer in which Keziah keeps her special treasures, and taking out the purse she finds it is empty.

"Oh, Ruth, the money is gone! I could not have believed this—to deceive me, to disobey me in this way—it's too dreadful!"

"I feel sure Keziah is not so much to blame as you think, Mrs. Greene. She believes in Millie, and Millie has deceived her in some way. I feel certain that Millie is at the bottom of it all."

CHAPTER XI.

CLARK’S SQUARE.

"Horrid little tell-tale! Of course, she’ll run straight to your mother and tell her where she saw you," cries Millie, as she looks longingly after the train which is carrying Ruth home; for we must now return to the two girls at the City station.

"If she does, it won’t be for the sake of telling tales, but because she thinks it right," answers Keziah, much distressed.

"Oh, yes, I know—thinks it right to get other people into trouble. Well, if she tells, she does. I, for one, am going to enjoy myself while I can, and I advise you to do the same. Come along, there are some lovely shops down this road; ever so much better than those in our poky old High Street."

"I don’t care about shops just now, Millie—indeed, I don’t. Oh, do let us get the money as quickly as possible and go home. How can I be happy whilst mother is worrying about me?"

"She won’t worry, she’ll know you’re all right. Now don’t be horrid, and spoil everything, just as we’ve got the chance of a bit of real fun."
"Millie, I would much rather go straight to your aunt's house," says Keziah tearfully. "I can't bear to think of what mother will say when she hears about all this; I really couldn't enjoy myself."

"Oh, very well, come along," cries Millie, shortly. "I suppose I must do as you say, since you've made up your mind to be disagreeable," and she leads the way in silence.

At last they reach a dusty square, with a railed-off space in the middle, where a few trees and smoke-grimed shrubs are growing.

"This is Clark's Square," says Millie, breaking the silence. "Of course, in the City it's awfully grand to live in a square. All the richest people live in squares," she adds loftily.

Keziah is duly impressed; though she cannot help thinking that Clark's Square doesn't look a very nice place to live in after all.

"They won't expect us a bit, calling at this time," remarks Millie, sulkily, as she rings the bell. "There, just as I thought, no one to answer the bell; all the girls upstairs dressing for the afternoon. It's all your fault for hurrying here so early," and she rings again.

A slow, heavy step is heard within, and the door is opened by a stout, good-natured looking woman.

"Why, it's never Millie?" she exclaims in a hearty voice. "Why, Millie, I'm glad you've come to-day. The girls have quite a tea on. Who's your friend, my dear?"

Millie's face clears. "Oh, Keziah Greene—we
go to the same school. Keziah, this is Aunt Jane. Are all the girls upstairs?"

"I really couldn't say, my dear. Come in, both of you. Millie, show your friend where to leave her hat, and then come down to me in the sitting-room," and the stout lady walks away, leaving them standing in the hall.

"Aunt Jane's in a very good humour, that's fortunate," remarks Millie as she leads the way upstairs.

"You'll ask her for the money directly, won't you, Millie? I'm so anxious to get home."

"Oh, I daresay!" answers Millie, carelessly. "By the way, Keziah, as I never have any money, and Aunt Jane has plenty, I'm thinking of asking her for three shillings instead of two—she'll never miss it."

"She looks very good-natured."

"She's good-natured enough. Come in here; this is Amy's room. Put your hat on the bed. Your hair's all right, only I do wish you had that new ribbon. Well, now we'll go down. Remember, it's to be three shillings."

"What is to be three shillings? I don't understand you."

"Yes, you do; we've just settled it. Aunt Jane must think I owe you three shillings instead of two."

"Millie!"

Keziah utters but the one word, and stands staring. Can she believe her ears? Is Millie really deliberately planning to tell an untruth—to trick her aunt out of her money?
It may seem strange, but until this moment Keziah has never suspected that Millie is not a straightforward girl. Blinded by Millie's pretended friendship and admiration, she has failed to see through many little acts of deceit, many untruthful speeches.

But she cannot blind herself to the wrongdoing here.

"Millie!" she repeats, and in so horrified a tone that Millie turns round and faces her sharply. "Millie, I can't believe that you would really ask me to tell your aunt an untruth!"

"Rubbish!" snaps Millie; but for all her pretence of not caring, she turns red at the horrified tone in Keziah's voice.

"Millie, say you don't mean that!"

Millie mutters something about "a ridiculous fuss," and looks out of the window.

There is a long silence. At last Keziah sees her fancied "friend" as she really is—as she has been from the first. Many things that she had passed over without trying to understand, become plain to her now.

How undutifully she spoke of her father—how unjustly of Ruth! How eager she was to borrow the two shillings, how careless about paying it back.

"She almost made me buy those handkerchiefs; she has led me into deceiving mother. Ruth warned me against her. Oh, how foolish, how wicked I have been!"

Keziah picks up her hat. "I'm going home," she says, and walks to the door.
But Millie bounds across the room and catches her by the shoulder.

"Indeed, you shan't! You've spoilt my day already. You shan't disgrace me too. You'll stay to tea and behave yourself. You can't get home," she adds, with an unpleasant laugh. "Remember, I have to ask my aunt to pay for the tickets, and you don't know the way, besides!"

"Millie!" gasps Keziah again, too shocked and hurt at the change in Millie's manner to utter another word.

"Well, it's too bad—that it is! I've tried all I could to plan a nice day for you, and give you a treat, and this is the way you serve me! You've told me often enough what a dull life you have, and how hard you have to work at home, and I so looked forward to giving you a happy day. It is hard, indeed it is, to have you turn on me in this way!"

Soft-hearted Keziah feels rather touched at this.

Millie is not a truthful girl, not at all what she once thought her; but perhaps she meant to act kindly after all.

"Of course, I'm sorry if you are disappointed, but you know I cannot do as you wish. And, Millie, I must go home directly."

Millie is just about to answer, when the door is flung open boisterously, and the smartly-dressed girl Keziah had noticed chatting to the baker's lad at the area door enters quickly.

"Hallo, Mill! you're here, then? So glad
you’ve come to-day; who’s your friend?” and she fixes a decided stare on Keziah’s face.

“Oh, Amy, I’ve brought Keziah all this way to see you, and now she must go home at once; isn’t it horrid of her? Do make her stay. You don’t know how much good it will do her to see a bit of life. She’s always poked up at home, you know, and she’s growing up to be just the primmest, most old-fashioned girl that ever was seen.”

“Of course, she’ll stay!” returns Amy, lightly, evidently caring very little as to whether she does or not. “I say, Millie, it was just like you to come to-day; you always seem to know when we’re planning to have some fun.”

“Of course I do! Do you suppose I can’t tell? I guessed you’d have friends to tea to-day, and Keziah and I arranged between us to give you a little surprise.”

“Millie! how can you say that?” interrupts Keziah, hotly indignant again. “We came because we wanted to see your aunt, and we must see her at once; after that, you can stay or not, as you like. I am going home!”

“What can you two girls want with mother?” asks Amy, looking curiously from one to the other.

“Oh, nothing—only something Keziah wants to ask her about,” answers Millie, carelessly; “but there’s no hurry.”

“There is hurry!” cries Keziah, excitedly. “Millie, you must settle it all at once!”

“If you can’t settle whatever it is without
mother, you'll have to wait,” remarks Amy, nodding her head; “she's just gone out, and won't be home until after tea.”

“There, now! you must wait, whether you like it or not, so it's no use being disagreeable, Keziah. You can be nice enough, if you like. Come, Amy, let's go down to the others.”

“The boys haven't come yet; Nellie and Beatie are out, and Emmie and Katie are curling their hair—that always takes them nearly an hour, you know; but, I say, Mill, do come and help me with the bread and butter.”

The cloth is already laid in the somewhat dingy sitting-room. Keziah wishes the windows were wider open to let out the smell of stale tobacco-smoke, for the air down here strikes her as decidedly “stuffy.”

Amy and Millie disappear into the kitchen, and Keziah is left alone.

How wretched she feels as she seats herself on the hard, horse-hair sofa, and, leaning her head on her hands, begins to think!

Ah! what was her unhappiness at Rosalie's coldness, or Cora's unkindness to this! Her feelings were hurt by the former, her self-love by the latter; but this time it is her conscience, her soul, that has suffered. She has deceived her mother, she has acted without her knowledge, and she is, perhaps, causing her keen anxiety at this very moment.

And she must sit here and wait, and wait, and do nothing! She is full of misgivings, too, about Millie's cousins; she feels quite sure that they
are not the kind of girls her mother would care to have her visit.

For a whole hour Keziah sits alone; she is miserable, and feels that she deserves to be so. "Oh, what dreadful mistakes I make in choosing my friends! But this is the worst of all!"

Big tears are stealing slowly down her cheeks, and her breast is beginning to heave with sobs, when she hears a great sound of scrambling and laughing in the hall above; the sounds grow rapidly louder, the door bursts open, and a troop of boys and girls enter, all chattering together.

Keziah starts to her feet, wondering what she ought to do; the boys and girls scatter noisily through the room, and Millie and Amy appear with the bread and butter and cake.

"Beatie, Nellie, Emmie, set the chairs round," orders Amy, "and, Millie, you had better introduce your friend while I make the tea."

Now, Millie has by no means forgiven Keziah for refusing to be guided by her any longer, and, as she puts it to herself, she means to "serve her out." So she calls out quite loudly:

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is my friend, Keziah Greene, and what do you think? Why, she considers it really wicked to go out to tea!"

The boys stare, the girls laugh, Keziah turns quite white.

"She does, she told me so just now; she wanted to go home directly she heard you were all coming. But, then, there's hardly anything she doesn't think wicked. I know she doesn't approve of the
"THE BOYS STARE, THE GIRLS LAUGH, AND KEZIAH TURNS QUITE WHITE."
way you girls are dressed. She never wears bangles or necklaces, or feathers in her hats, or lace on her dress. Oh, no; she doesn’t think it right—do you, Keziah, dear?"

But Keziah’s lips are quivering, and she cannot utter a word.

"Now, girls, what are you laughing at? Come, all of you, tea is quite ready," and to Keziah’s intense relief, Amy bustles them all into their places, and so, for the time at least, she is left in peace.

She has a chair at the end of the table farthest from Millie; but though she has tasted nothing since the morning, she cannot eat, even her cup of tea seems to choke her. Millie’s jeering words have put the finishing touch to her self-reproach and misery. She feels altogether out of place among these noisy, loud-voiced boys and girls. Silent and nervous, she shrinks if they only look towards her, and all the time she is thinking:

"Oh, if mother only saw me here! Over and over again she has told me not to be seen laughing and talking with girls who frizz their hair, and dress like Millie’s cousins, and the boys are not nice. Our Jack always cuts the bread and butter at home, and wouldn’t think of letting me fetch his chair; but these boys allow the girls to wait on them all the time. Oh, when will Millie’s aunt come back? I shall go straight to her when she does, and tell her everything. She looks so good-natured; I’m sure she’ll let me go home."

Meantime, the rest of the party are talking over various plans for amusing themselves after tea.
"Let's walk in the Park and listen to the band," suggests Amy.

"Oh, no; that's so slow!" cries Bertie, one of the boys from next door.

"Besides, it's raining," remarks Millie.

"So it is—pouring, I declare. Well, we must just have games at home, I suppose; we can take this table out of the way, and make as much noise as we please until mother comes home."

Keziah looks from one to the other in great surprise. Do these big boys and girls mean to play romping games like children? She is scarcely eleven yet, but she gave up little children's play some time ago.

"All right. I vote for blind-man's buff!" cries a fat, sandy-haired boy, whom the others call Tommy Mitchell.

"No, thanks, Tommy; it's much too hot for anything of the sort, and, besides, I don't forget how you tripped me up with a chair last time we played."

"Of course, that's half the fun. Oh, do let's have it; everything else is so slow!"

"Well, go and play by yourselves, boys; we girls have the tea-things to wash, and the salad to make for supper."

"Play by ourselves? No fun in that!" cries Cyril, a dark-haired boy, with a face much too old for his years. "I say, Bertie, while the girls are at work, I'll show you some of the conjuring tricks my uncle taught me. Come along, we must get clothes-peggs and things."

"Oh, let us come, too—let us come, too!" cry
some of the girls, Millie amongst them, and they follow the boys out of the room.

Nellie and Emmie pack the tea-things together, and Amy steps briskly to and fro, putting the chairs in order. Keziah is standing forlornly by herself, such an expression of distress and dismay on her white face that presently even careless Amy notices it.

"Have Millie and you quarrelled?" she asks, with a nearer approach to kindness than anything she has said yet.

"I—I don't know; I suppose so," stammers bewildered Keziah. Then suddenly she bursts out, "Oh, it isn't that! I must go home. I must go home! I've promised my mother never to play rough games with strange boys and girls, and she doesn't know I'm here, and——"

"Go home, then. I'm sure we don't want you. I can't think why Millie brought you here at all," interrupts Amy, much offended.

"But—but I don't know the way, and I haven't any money for the train."

"And you expect me to give you some? Likely thing indeed! Millie brought you here, and she must get you home again," and she flounces out of the room.

The other girls carry the trays away, and again Keziah is left alone.

She was wretched before, she is terrified now. What will those dreadful boys and girls do when they return? Will they try to force her to play with them? She has no friend, no one to appeal to.
"How cruel Millie was! Yes, and I feel sure she will try to make the others cruel to me also. But I will not play with them; no, I will not. I have disobeyed mother already, they shall not make me break my promise, too!"

For a long, long time she sits there, listening to the clatter of girls' voices in the next room—the distant shouts of the boys; apparently, she is quite forgotten.

It is quite dark before they all troop in again, flushed and excited, Amy with a taper in her hand, from which she lights the gas.

"Goodness me!" she exclaims, as she turns up the jets, "if we haven't left that friend of yours alone all this time, Millie, in the dark, too."

"It's her own fault for being so disagreeable; well, at any rate, we'll make it up to her now. Come, Amy, let's have a game of forfeits; let's make her play, whether she likes it or not," she adds, spitefully.

"Forfeits—oh, yes, forfeits!" cry several girls.

"Very well," agrees Amy. "I'll hear the forfeits first—this is my chair. Now, then, come along all of you.

"Yes; come along, Keziah!" cries Millie, clapping her hands.

But Keziah stands quite still, staring straight before her.

"You perfect silly, you shall play!" screams Millie; still Keziah does not move.

"Make her play! Beatie, Emmie, Nellie, she thinks herself too good to play with us—she
never does anything she’s been told not to—no, indeed!”

“Come, we won’t stand any nonsense here. You’ll just have to play!” and to Keziah’s intense terror Emmie and Beatie seize her by the shoulders and drag her into the middle of the room.

At that very instant the door-bell rings violently.
CHAPTER XII.

JUST IN TIME.

"What's that?" The girls look at one another.
"Oh, nothing particular," declares Amy, "perhaps the post. Mother has her key, and it's father's club-night, you know. Katie, answer the bell directly!"
"I don't see why I should be made to go just because I'm the youngest—go yourself," says rebellious Katie.
"How dare you speak to me like that? Go at once I say!"
"Shan't!"
The bell rings again, and more violently than before.
"Katie, if you don't go this minute I'll tell mother about that plate you broke—I know where you've hidden the pieces."
Katie leaves the room slowly, grumbling to herself, and hanging the door after her.
"Now, girls, let's go on with the game—what do you say—shall we begin with Keziah Greene?"
"Yes—yes; oh, good—that will be fun!" cry all the others, amid loud bursts of laughter.
"Very well; now who'll call out the forfeits first?"
"Tommy Mitchell—do have Tommy Mitchell," cry several girls. "He always thinks of the funniest things."

"Come along, Tommy—now, Keziah, you're going to play—we won't stand any more nonsense."

Keziah looks round the room desperately—thoughtless faces, curious eyes, Millie's spiteful smile—no one to take her part. For a minute her heart fails her. Oh, what will they do if she refuses to obey them?

"I—I don't know how to play," she says, trembling from head to foot. "Oh, please, please leave me out!"

"Nonsense! Anybody can play at forfeits. I sit in this chair; Tommy kneels beside me with his eyes blind-folded; then I hold up something belonging to somebody—a glove or shoe, or anything like that—and ask him what the owner of that thing is to do; then he says something, and the owner has to do it, has to pay the forfeit—see? before she may take her thing back."

"But suppose it's something she ought not to do?" asks Keziah, trembling more than ever.

"As though we should tell you to do anything you ought not—rude little thing!" cries Amy.

But one girl whispers, "Why, that's half the fun," and Keziah hears her.

"Now, girls, collect the forfeits. Keziah must give me a shoe, as she wears neither ribbons nor bangles."

"I can't play—I can't indeed! Let me go into the next room—I don't mind sitting by myself."
I don’t mind being alone in the dark; but I can’t play—I really can’t!"

“You shall play! Emmie, Beatie, give me her shoe.”

“No—no—no!” But the more terrified Keziah appears, the louder the laughter grows.

Suddenly Katie reappears, and raising her voice to a perfect scream to make it heard above the din, she cries:

“Amy, you must come! There’s an old woman at the door, and she says she won’t go away until she’s seen Keziah Greene. I told you it was no use sending me.”

The laughter stops suddenly, but Keziah cries, “It’s mother—mother has come to take me home! Oh, mother, mother!” and she breaks away from her tormentors and runs towards the door. Alas! half a dozen hands catch her by the skirts, and drag her back in spite of her struggles.

But Amy turns to Millie. “You had better go and see this person, whoever she is—the whole thing is your doing,” she says sharply.

“It can’t be Mrs. Greene—she doesn’t know anything about this place,” replies Millie sulkily. “Why didn’t that little silly say Keziah wasn’t here?”

“I’m not going to tell stories just to please you,” retorts Katie. “It’s all Amy’s fault for sending me to the door.”

“We shall have to let her go, I suppose,” says Amy.

“Oh, what a shame!” cries Tommy Mitchell. “I’d just thought of the funniest forfeits for Miss
Keziah—you would have laughed yourself into fits."

The door-bell rings again.
"There, she's ringing the bell to make you hurry up—she'll come right down here if you don't make haste. Amy, do go and see if you can't make her go away."

Amy pushes her way through the circle of boys and girls, and runs upstairs.
"Too bad to spoil our fun like this," says one girl. "Now, Tommy, what was it you thought of? Do tell!"
"Oh, do—do!" cry several voices, and they gather round grinning, fat-faced Tommy, laughing and whispering together.

We all know what boys like Tommy Mitchell think "good fun"—silly tricks, spiteful "practical jokes," generally painful to the feelings, often harmful to the soul; but Keziah never hears what it is she has escaped, for suddenly she realises that the way to the door is clear! In an instant she has darted out and is flying up the stairs.

There are loud outcries and a rush of feet behind her, but she has a good start, and terror gives her strength; before anyone can touch her, she reaches the hall.

Two figures are standing there, just beneath the gas-lamp, Amy, and—she springs forward—then stops short—no, it is not her mother, but an utter stranger!

A little old lady, very quietly dressed, with kind, dark eyes, and grey hair. Her hand is on Amy's arm, and Amy is hanging her head and
looking ashamed. They both glance up quickly as Keziah bounds up the stairs, and the little old lady takes a step towards her.

"I think you must be Keziah Greene, my dear," she says, holding out her hand. "I am Ruth Golding's grandmother, and I've come to take you home."

Poor Keziah's overwrought feelings give way altogether at the sound of that kind voice—she just throws her arms round the old lady's neck, and bursts into a passion of tears on her shoulder.

"Hush, hush! you mustn't give way like this—indeed, you mustn't, my dear!" says the old lady, trying to check poor Keziah's almost hysterical sobbing. "Come, come, fetch your hat, and we'll start for home directly. It's getting very late now, and your mother must be in a sad way about you. Keziah, you must control yourself. Think of your mother!"

"Yes—yes—I will. Oh, Mrs. Golding, only take me home!" and with a great effort Keziah manages to choke back her most violent sobs; though her breast is still heaving painfully when she runs upstairs for her hat. She finds it in the dark, and as she returns hears Amy making excuses to Mrs. Golding for not sending her home before. "We knew nothing about it—it was nothing to do with us," and so on.

One or two boys and girls are listening and whispering at the top of the stairs leading down to the sitting-room, but Millie is not amongst them. Evidently she thinks it safest to keep out of the way.
Another minute, and the door of No. 2 Clark's Square has closed behind them, and Mrs. Golding and Keziah are walking down the wet street. The rain beats in their faces, in spite of Mrs. Golding's umbrella; but Keziah is far too glad and thankful to care for that. Yet when she thinks of home and mother, she is fearful too.

"Oh, Mrs. Golding, is mother very angry?" she says, clinging to her new friend's arm.

"More troubled than angry, I should think, my dear; but, of course, I don't know."

"Didn't you come from mother? Then how did you find out where I was—how could you find out, when even mother didn't know?"

Mrs. Golding explains. Keziah is silent for a few moments; then she says, in a low voice: "It was Ruth's doing, after all?"

"Yes, my dear, Ruth is a good girl, and a true friend, but I expect you know that as well as I do."

Again Keziah is silent. "A true friend." The words echo in her mind strangely. How she has longed for a friend, how hard she has tried to find one, how bitterly she has been disappointed!

She is still thinking deeply when they reach the great City station, where she caught that glimpse of Ruth this morning. Mrs. Golding gets tickets; fortunately, a train is almost on the point of starting.

They hurry down the long platform, and Keziah feels almost as though she were moving in a dream. The great electric lamps, the bustle, the noise bewilder her tired eyes and weary brain,
and through it all the dull, heavy sense of wrong-doing, of disgrace weighs painfully on her heart. They have the carriage to themselves, and Keziah leans back in her corner with a weary sigh.

"So it was Ruth who helped me after all; if she hadn't seen me this morning—oh, dear, how long ago that seems now—I should be in that dreadful house still! A true friend; yes, she has been one to me, and I wouldn't believe her when she warned me against Millie. I've hardly spoken to her lately. I pretended not to see her this morning when she was watering her flowers before breakfast—I was so afraid she would ask me how I was going to spend the day.

"Suppose she saw me turn away—saw that I did it on purpose—after she's been so good and kind to me, hearing my lessons night after night, helping us all so when Bennie was ill—oh, that would be dreadful!"

"Yes, little Ruth is a good girl," continues the old lady thoughtfully, as though speaking to herself. "I am sure she comes into our dull old shop like a ray of sunshine. And such a nice voice she has too; many a girl who could sing as sweetly as she can would be always wanting to show off; but she never thinks of singing unless she's asked, and then it's only for the sake of singing the Lord's praises, and giving other folks pleasure. And then, fine as some folks think themselves, I always say that to my mind our little Ruth's face is the most beautiful I have ever seen."

Keziah stares. Ruth beautiful?—plainly-dressed, quiet Ruth, with nothing fine or showy about her!
“I suppose it’s the true and loving spirit one sees in her eyes,” says Mrs. Golding, still thoughtfully, “and she’s a wise little soul, too—just wonderful sense for one so young. Well—well, the Bible says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and Ruth fears, aye, loves the Lord with all her heart.”

Wise, loving, beautiful with the best and truest beauty, what a friend Ruth would make! Keziah feels a sudden glow at her heart with the thought; then as suddenly a chill runs through her.

Would Ruth take her for a friend? Ruth, so good, so wise—she so full of faults, so weak-willed, so foolish? And Ruth, who until now has seemed so within her reach, such an everyday, commonplace sort of friend, seems lifted into another position altogether.

“Oh,” she thinks, “I would be only too glad, too thankful, to have such a friend! But it’s too late now, she’s borne with me, and borne with me, and listened to all the silly things I’ve said, and tried to show me how to behave sensibly—oh, if I had only understood how good she is before! There was Rosalie, and then Cora, and now to-day—oh, how self-willed, how blind I have been! How could I think so much of those girls, and neglect the real friend close to me all the time!”

And Keziah crouches still lower in the corner, sobbing bitterly; while the very whirr of the iron wheels seem throbbing out the words, “Too late—too late!”
CHAPTER XIII.

RUTH.

How wearisome that journey is to poor tired Keziah! Yet she is sorry when it is over, for now she has her mother to face. What will she say—what will she do?

Again kind little Mrs. Golding tucks the exhausted girl's arm under her own; the rain is heavier than ever, and, in spite of all the old lady's efforts with the big umbrella, Keziah's thin dress is soon wet through; yet, feverish and excited, she hardly notices the fact.

Hurriedly turning a corner, they almost run into a dark figure, battling with a dripping umbrella, held against the wind.

"Holloa—beg your pardon!" cries a voice Keziah knows at once, for it is her brother Jack's. "Why, if it isn't Miss Keziah at last! Well, I hope you're satisfied—here's mother nearly out of her senses about you, and Ruth and I tearing about all the evening like a couple of lunatics. What on earth made you go off in that way, without a word to anyone? Your precious 'friends' again, I suppose!"

"Oh, Jack—oh, please, please don't!" sobs Keziah.
"Come, my boy, don’t say anything about it to-night, she’s thoroughly upset, and very sorry besides," interposes Ruth’s grandmother.

"Sorry? So she ought to be. Why, mother’s in such a state she’s made me meet every train."

"Is Ruth with her?"

"Of course. Ruth’s always on the spot when she’s wanted. The way that girl thinks of things, and her pluck, and—you know. She’s as different as white from black from all those stupid girls ‘Ziah takes up with. Now what was it, after all? I suppose you found her at Clark’s Square—awfully good of you to go."

"We’d better leave all that until Keziah has seen her mother. Remember, I must go back to-night, and the last train leaves in half an hour."

"Fancy you taking all this trouble for us! Anyone could see that you are Ruth’s grandmother—a sort of Ruth grown old," he adds with a boyish laugh.

"Yes, yes, so you are," whispers Keziah under her breath, and she sighs deeply. Somehow, Ruth seems getting farther and farther away from her every minute.

They have all seen how much better Ruth is than other girls—all save her own stupid self. How could she have been so blind?

A few minutes bring them to their own door, which Jack opens with his key. Keziah is trembling so again that she can scarcely stand.

"Here she is, mother!" sings out Jack; and the next instant she is folded close in her mother’s arms.
There are no scoldings—no reproaches.

Mrs. Greene is far too thankful to have her little daughter back safe and sound to remember how naughty she has been; and, indeed, Keziah needs no scolding to make her understand. No one could blame her more than she is blaming herself.

On her mother's shoulder, before she sleeps that night, she sobs out a full confession of all her doings during the past few days. She tells of the fate of her two-shilling piece, of her efforts to get it returned, of all the mistakes which followed.

"Oh, mother, if you knew how wretched I have been since I had a secret from you! I knew it was wrong yet I thought I couldn't help it—but you may be sure, mother dear, that I will never have one again. I can never forget to-day, and all the troubles my wrongdoing led to. I've been so miserable—so wretched, I never spent such a horrid day in the whole of my life. If it hadn't been for Mrs. Golding, and—and Ruth, I don't know what would have become of me. Mother, I quite forgot to thank Mrs. Golding."

"We will go to her home and thank her together; she must be a good, kind woman—as Jack says, a sort of Ruth grown old."

Keziah is silent. She is dimly conscious that Ruth was in the passage when Jack opened the door, but she slipped away without speaking.

"Does Ruth despise me too much to care to see me again?" The thought torments her but she is afraid to ask her mother any questions.
A strange new shyness of Ruth has grown up in her mind. Much as she now longs for Ruth's friendship, she is almost afraid to meet her.

In spite of her weariness and exhaustion of body and mind, Keziah sleeps badly—she wakes so often that the night seems never-ending. At length, towards morning she falls into a deeper sleep, from which she awakes to find the sun streaming into her room, and her head throbbing with pain.

Presently mother peeps in, and seeing how ill she is feeling, will not let her attempt to get up, but brings her weak tea and toast, and bids her lie still and try to rest.

But she cannot rest, her head aches so; her face is burning, and there is no cool place on the pillow.

It is Sunday, and she can hear the bells ringing. If it were Monday, she could not go to school to-day. When Ruth hears she is ill, will she come to her? Oh, how hot her head is—how parched her throat—and the tea only makes her feel worse.

Will Ruth come? Oh, dear! why did she act so foolishly, why has she made it so impossible for Ruth to really love her?

"Of course she won't come. She helped me yesterday just because I was in trouble, as she would help anyone. Oh, what a wicked girl she must think me!" and Keziah tosses restlessly again to the other side of the bed.

As she does so, the door-handle moves gently; she looks up—Ruth is in the room.
Their eyes meet, and a deeper flush than that of fever burns in Keziah's cheeks, and she turns quickly away, all trembling and ashamed, drawing the sheet over her face.

But Ruth steps swiftly to her side.

"Keziah!" she cries. "Keziah, what is the matter? Why do you hide from me, Keziah, dear?" And Ruth steps quickly to the bedside, and with gentle fingers draws the sheet from Keziah's fevered face, laying a cool hand lightly on the throbbing forehead.

"Oh, dear, how hot your head is—you are quite ill; no wonder after all you went through yesterday. Keziah, I longed to tell you last night how glad I was to see you safe home again; but I knew your mother would want you all to herself, so I slipped away with dear old granny. Granny told me how she found you, and how sadly troubled you seemed. Perhaps some day you will tell me all about it? I'm so sorry, so very sorry for you, dear."

"It was my own fault, all my own fault," moans Keziah; then she adds, with a little sigh of relief, "Oh, how nice and cool your hand feels!"

"Does it, Keziah? Then I'm sure some cold water would ease the pain. Look at what I've brought you; you must eat some of these, whilst I get a basin and sponge to bathe your poor head."

"Grapes! Oh, how kind of you! They're just what I've been longing for. How good you are to me!"
"WHAT A DREADFUL THING TO SAY!"
And she lies back on her pillow with closed eyes, while Ruth deftly touches her aching brow with the wet sponge.

"That's ever so nice; I feel better already. I always feel so comfortable when I'm with you, Ruth."

Ruth laughs softly. "Now, dear, you mustn't talk like that, or I shall begin to think you mistake me for one of your friends—your special friends, you know."

"Oh, Ruth, don't—please don't make fun of me! I've never had a real friend—never, and now I suppose I never shall have one."

"Never have a real friend? What a dreadful thing to say!"

"No; I've done nothing but make terrible mistakes, and now I haven't any friends at all. Why is it, Ruth? Why have all my friends failed me like this?"

"Perhaps, dear, because you didn't choose your friends in quite the right way," answers Ruth very gently.

"There was Rosalie; I really tried to make her like me; tried as hard as ever I could."

"But think, Keziah; you knew nothing about her when you chose her for your friend, save that she was bright, and nice-looking, and seemed good-natured. Weren't you really rather unjust to poor Rosalie; didn't you make quite an idol of her for a time, and then get angry and hurt because she couldn't give you the sympathy and steady affection that had never been a part of her character?"
Keziah is silent, for she feels that this is only too true.

"Cora Holloway treated me shamefully," she mutters, after a long pause.

"But, then, you never really loved Cora at all. Keziah, forgive me. I don't want to talk about these things whilst your head pains you so."

"But I want you to talk; do, please. I've been thinking about it all so much, and my head's better; you sponge it so nicely, Ruth. Well, about Cora?"

"I'm afraid, dear, as you only liked Cora because she looked grand and imposing, and lived in a fine house, you couldn't expect any better treatment than you received. As for Millie Steele—"

"Oh, don't talk about her, please; I was altogether wrong there, I know that. I just did what she asked me, because she flattered me—said I was clever, and bright, and pretended to like me when she didn't care for me one bit. I can see that now; and, Ruth, I never really cared for her. Often and often I felt that the things she said were all wrong; yet I wouldn't own it to myself; it was so nice to have some one always making a fuss of me! And to think how she turned on me yesterday; why, she did all she could to make those cousins of hers tease and ill-treat me. I couldn't have believed that any girl would act so unkindly."

"Ah! Keziah, what else could you expect? You listened to her, you allowed her to persuade you into deceiving your mother. Those who
tempt us to do wrong are always the first to turn on us. An untruthful girl cannot make a true friend."

Again there is a short silence, which Keziah breaks by saying very timidly, "Ruth, what is the right way of choosing a friend?"

"I think, dear, that we can only choose our friends rightly by remembering that there is only one perfect Friend for us all—a Friend we must love so much that we like all our other friends only for their likeness to Him, and for what He did for them, and for us, and all the world."

"You mean Jesus Christ," says Keziah, in a very low voice.

"Yes, dear. We must think of Him and His service before everything, and then we shall never go wrong. 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.' That is what my Captain always says to us. She says it is the only way we can make really helpful friends."

Keziah does not answer for a minute or two. She is thinking deeply.

"You are more like Him than any girl I have ever seen," she says at last with a little quiver in her voice.

"Oh, Keziah, don't! You mustn't talk like that!" cries Ruth quite distressed.

"Well, it's true; and everybody who knows you thinks so."

"Keziah, you mustn't; I can't bear it." And this time it is Ruth who turns away and hangs her head.
"I know you can't love me after all the bad
and silly things I've done and said—at least not
for a long, long time. But, Ruth, I'm going to
make you like me by doing things to deserve your
friendship, and so, perhaps, some day—"

Ruth looks up suddenly, and her sweet brown
eyes are glittering with happy tears. "Keziah,
dear, dear Keziah, I do love you—I've always
loved you—you're so warm-hearted, so generous,
I've always felt we should be true friends; and
I've waited, and hoped, and been so sorry—"

"You!" Keziah catches Ruth's hand in both
hers. "Oh, Ruth, I'm not good enough, indeed,
I'm not; but you must help me, dear, and I'll
try so hard; but, oh, I can never hope to be as
good as you?"
CHAPTER XIV.

HOW TO CHOOSE A FRIEND.

That day is a happy one for both girls, certainly the happiest Keziah has spent for many months. Ruth sits with her, brings her delicious bread and milk of her own making, and then reads her to sleep.

It is late in the afternoon when Keziah awakes, feeling tired still, but otherwise quite well.

"I can get up now, I'm sure, my headache has quite gone," she says gratefully to Ruth, who is still with her. "Oh, Ruth, I believe it just comes natural to you to do the right thing for everybody! You never had to learn to think for others; you were never selfish and thoughtless like me!"

"Keziah, you never made a greater mistake in your life. You are naturally far more unselfish than I am."

"Now look here, Ruth, I want to believe everything you say, but I really can't stand that, you know. You'll be telling me next that you're naturally fond of fine frocks like Rosalie Thorne, or shops and silly games like Millie Steele."

"It would be quite true."

"Ruth!"
"Yes, Keziah; you see you haven't known me very long—not a year yet. Two years ago I longed for a big hat trimmed with roses, and worried mother to put frills on my frocks, and looked forward to the time when I could frizz my hair and wear high-heeled shoes."

"Oh, Ruth, that would never do! You wouldn't be Ruth dressed up like that—you were never meant to be that kind of girl, I'm sure."

"So I realised, dear, when God came into my life, and changed it all."

"And do you never wish for the old days back again? Have you quite, quite given up caring for everything?" asks Keziah, rather wistfully.

Ruth laughs outright. "Oh, Keziah, how oddly you talk! It's just because I care for so many lovely things now, so many beautiful, deeply interesting things that I haven't time in the day, or room in my mind, for the old, dull amusements, the old, narrow, silly thoughts and feelings."

Keziah feels rather puzzled, and does not answer.

"But surely you know all this as well as I do. Did you particularly enjoy your tea with Cora?"

"It was horrid."

"Or your walks and talks with Rosalie?"

"Not after the first."

"Or shopping with Millie, or her cousins' idea of a 'bit of fun'?"

"Please don't!"

"I'm not saying it in reproach; I only want you to notice that when people think only of
amusing themselves, they don't succeed in getting much happiness out of their lives, for all their trouble. They have quite as much disappointment, and worry, and envy, and bitterness as they do fun. I never saw an unhappier face than Cora's, or a more discontented one than Millie Steele's. How much better to leave all these disappointing things alone, and try to be really happy!"

"You mean, I suppose, never to have any friends, or go out to tea, or——"

"Stop a moment, Keziah, to show you that you are mistaken, I invite you to tea with a dear friend of mine this very afternoon. That is, if you really feel well enough."

Keziah starts. "A friend of yours?"

"Yes; one I love very much, who has helped me greatly, and who, I believe, will help you."

"Oh, a grown-up friend," says Keziah, relieved. "Your Captain, I suppose?"

"My Captain is all I have said and more; but I'm not speaking of her just now. I mean a girl like ourselves. She is a darling, and you will soon love her as I do."

"I'm pretty sure I shan't, mutters Keziah under her breath. "Ruth is to be my friend, and I don't want other people interfering!"

"While you dress, I'll run and pick Aggie some flowers—poor dear! She loves them so."

"Flowers, too! Ruth never gives me any of her flowers," thinks Keziah. "I'm sure I shan't like her—who is she—why hasn't Ruth told me about her before?"
Ruth talks cheerfully as they set out together, but Keziah makes very short answers. She would be ashamed to own it, but she is certainly rather jealous of "Aggie" already.

"Why, I do believe it's the whole family!" cries Ruth suddenly.

Keziah looks up. A little troop of children are trudging down the road; a shabby troop they are, odd, neglected little things, pale and sickly-looking. The eldest is a girl of about nine, and that the baby in her arms is roaring at the top of his voice, is only too certain.

So sad and pitiful do they look, dragging along through the thick dust, that for a while Keziah quite forgets her selfish thoughts; for all jealousy is selfishness.

"Oh, Ruth, what poor little things! Can't we do something to brighten them up a bit?"

The answer comes quickly enough from the children themselves.

"Oh, there's Miss Wuth—there's Miss Wuth!" screams the eldest girl, "come along. Johnnie hold your noise do—Miss Wuth'll hear you!"

Dejected faces brighten up as though by magic; even the baby's yells cease, and the whole party swoop at Ruth as though she were something good to eat.

"How sweet to have the very sight of one bring such happy smiles to such poor little faces! What has Ruth done to make them love her so?" thinks Keziah, watching them. "Can't I do something? I know that big baby is much too heavy for that thin little girl to carry. Ruth, would baby Johnnie
let me carry him?" and Keziah goes up to him and holds out her arms.

Baby Johnnie half makes up his mind to cry again, but thinks better of it, and lets Keziah take him.

"Oh, thank you, miss, he does make my arms ache so," says his little nurse.

"You poor little thing—I'll carry him every step of the way!"

It is a pity Keziah does not understand the bright look Ruth gives her at the words.

"Ruth, it makes my heart ache to see these poor little mites with these old battered hats—they don't shade their eyes from the sun one bit. I've two old straw-hats at home; do you think they would wear them?"

"I should think so, indeed!" cries Ruth, with that happy light shining in her eyes again.

"I've outgrown my holland pinafores," continues Keziah, thoughtfully, "and, if mother doesn't mind, I should like to give those too—they want a good deal of mending, though."

"Well, I'm making baby Johnnie a frock, suppose I come over to your house after school to-morrow; we could sit in the garden, and sew and talk together?"

"That would be delightful. I know! I'll trim the hats afresh with that green ribbon I bought when—oh, I forgot, you don't know about that yet?"

"Well, if you like, you shall tell me to-morrow. Come, you must give Johnnie back to his little
mother; we can’t take him quite home, or Aggie will wonder what has become of me.”

Aggie again! Why should Aggie have all this consideration? Keziah’s smiles fade away.

“I do believe Ruth wants me to think that she likes Aggie best,” she thinks; and she says “good-bye” to the little family so ungraciously that Ruth is quite puzzled.

“Is your head paining you again?” she asks.

“Oh, no,” answers Keziah shortly.

Ruth looks rather surprised, but says nothing. They are in a very poor street now; narrow, dull, and airless.

“I suppose this is a short cut to your friend's house?” says Keziah presently, looking rather disgusted.

“No, this is where she lives,” and Ruth stops, and knocks at a dingy door.

It is opened after a while by a cross-looking woman, very poorly dressed.

“Is Aggie better to-day, Mrs. Twist?”

“No, she isn’t; and, what’s more, the doctor said yesterday that she never will be—just a burden on me as long as she lives.”

“Poor Aggie! She tries to be patient.”

“Oh, I daresay. You’ll want to make tea as usual, I suppose; the kettle’s boiling.”

“That’s nice—see, mother’s sent you a whole packet of tea this time. We can go in, I suppose?”

“Of course! She’s been wild to see you.”

Ruth steps across the room to an inner door. “Come, Keziah,” she says, and opens it. “Aggie, I’ve brought my friend, Keziah, to see you.”
A tiny room, lighted by one small window; a narrow bed, and on it, lying at full length, the figure of a girl of twelve or thirteen. Keziah has never seen such a pale, fragile-looking creature, such thin hands—never seen, too, such a look of love and joy as flashes into the patient eyes as they rest on Ruth's face.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come! I try to be patient; but—did mother tell you?—the doctor says now that I shall never be well, or run about like other girls any more!"

And this is Ruth's friend! This poor, pale cripple, the girl of whom she was jealous! Keziah hangs her head, and is too ashamed to speak.

But after Aggie and Ruth have had a little whispered talk together, and Ruth has bustled into the next room to get the tea, she feels that she must make some effort, for the sick girl is looking at her—oh, so wistfully and timidly!

"Do you really have to lie here all day long?" asks Keziah, rather huskily.

"Oh, yes, miss! there's something wrong with my back; it's been bad for two years."

And Aggie speaks quite cheerfully.

"How dreadful!"

"Well, miss, it was cruelly hard at first—that is, before your friend found me out; but she's made all the difference. I used to fret terribly, and think God was cruel and unjust to treat me so much worse than other girls, and when the pain came I felt half mad."

"And why aren't you like that now?" asks Keziah, in a very low voice.
"Oh, she told me all about the Saviour, and what He suffered for me, and she sings of the bright Home beyond the skies, and tells me how free and strong I shall be there at last; and when I want to get up and help other people, she shows me that though I can't ever work for Jesus, I can bear things for Him."

And Keziah thinks, "Ah, what a beautiful thing to do! How grand to bring peace and joy into this poor girl's dreadful life!"

Presently Ruth returns with the tea-tray, which she arranges on a little rickety table by Aggie's bedside.

"Tea, ladies, please," she says cheerfully. "We shall have quite a prayer meeting this evening—shan't we, Aggie? Keziah can sing, too; and, do you know, Aggie, she used to live in the country, and can tell the loveliest stories about the birds and beasts. Tell Aggie about your tame hedgehog, Keziah."

Keziah tells the hedgehog story, and many country tales besides. She has never told them so well before; but, then, she has never had such a keenly-interested listener as poor Aggie.

"This has been a happy day," she remarks, as Ruth and she walk home together.

"Yes, dear, and you have helped to make others happy, too," says Ruth quietly.

"Is this the kind of happiness you meant, Ruth, when you spoke of a truly happy life this morning?"

"Yes—just the beginning of it; but, oh, Keziah, there is so much, so very much besides!"
Think of the wonderful joy of really feeling that you are working for the Lord; that you are taking His messages of love, and peace, and hope to poor despairing souls! And then, somehow, you enjoy everything that is really true and beautiful so much more thoroughly when you are fighting on the Lord’s side—all the wonderful things He has made have such a meaning for you—you love them all so much, and the old, narrow, selfish life looks so poor and mean!"

"But somehow I can’t help being interested in pretty things," says Keziah, with a slight return to her manner of this morning.

"Of course you like pretty things—so do I. Only I like to be sure that what I am admiring is really a pretty thing, and not only a sham."

"Real things, sham things—Ruth, I don’t understand."

"By shams I mean all the useless things, the senseless things, the harmful things, that so many girls run after just because they won’t stop to think. All amusements that make us discontented with our daily work, or give us false ideas about life, are sham amusements. For instance, novelettes. You don’t read novelettes, do you, Keziah?"

"I read part of one, once; but mother took it away," and Keziah blushes a little, as she remembers "Ernestine," and the ideas she formed from it about a friend.

"The worst of novelettes is, they give one such altogether untrue ideas about people and about
everything. And nothing can be really interesting if it is not true, can it, Keziah?"

"I suppose not. Still, it did seem nice that Ernestine—that was the girl's name in the story—should have such a lovely time after she had been so dreadfully miserable. You see, her stepmother was very unkind to her, and made her work ever so hard, and only gave her shabby clothes to wear; and then an old miser, who lived next door, died, and left her all his money—and she had thousands and thousands of pounds all of a sudden."

"And so you think she must have been quite happy?"

"Well, you see, things are horrid sometimes when you haven't much money, aren't they? Now we are obliged to live in a very small house, and there's always something to do. Of course, I love them all at home very much—you know I don't mean anything against them—only—"

"Only you are still thinking a little too much about the shams, dear."

"But it is miserable sometimes when Bennie is cross, and mother has a headache, and Jack wants his tea in a hurry—"

"Ah, yes, I know, your trials are real enough; it's the sham cure that you have in your mind of which I am speaking."

"The girl in your story was supposed to become perfectly happy because she was rich. Riches do not make people happy. Cora Holloway is the richest girl you know, yet I should think her life was about the dreariest it is possible to imagine.
Always discontented, always thinking of herself, without one true friend, without an atom of real love for anyone."

"That's quite true, Ruth, she hasn't a friend. You know I told you what a fuss she made of Isabel Smythe? Well, they've quarrelled dreadfully. I saw them meet in the High Street the other day, and they just stared each other straight in the face, and went on without speaking."

"Sham friendships always end like that. Those two never really cared for each other! I dare say they made a great show of being very affectionate; but they only met to chatter about dress, and tell unkind little tales of people they knew. Why, such friendship as that is no better than an artificial flower. Bright enough to look at from a distance, but when you really see into it, all the beauty disappears—there is no scent, no seed, nothing but a coloured rag after all."

"But real friendship is like a lovely spray of apple-blossom!" cries Keziah, enthusiastically, "so sweet, so full of scent, and then, all the time, you know that when the petals fall a beautiful apple will be left behind."

"Yes, and the Bible tells us that we are to know things by their fruit, doesn't it? Artificial flowers cannot bear fruit, and sham friendships can do no good to our souls. To be really beautiful a thing must be true."

"Why, Ruth, I didn't know you could talk like this!"

"Oh, Keziah, I feel it all so much, and when I think of the wonderful things that are to come,
I could sing for joy. We do have troubles now, dear, and sometimes they seem hard to bear, but look to the end! That is the great reality—all sorrow, all pain, gone for ever, our robes white as snow, shining as the sun, golden crowns on our heads, golden harps in our hands, more than all, and above all, the presence of the Lord Himself; and the joy of having helped, ever so little, to bring others with us to that Heavenly Home!"

Keziah lifts her head, and her honest grey eyes are filled with a new light.

"Oh, Ruth," she whispers, "teach me to be more like Him; teach me how to love the true things, and turn from the shams; teach me how to love the Lord with my whole heart, and to love His service too.

"Ah! I am only just beginning to see how full, and wide, and beautiful it all is myself. But, Keziah, we will learn together. Shall we?"

And Ruth turns and kisses her.

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