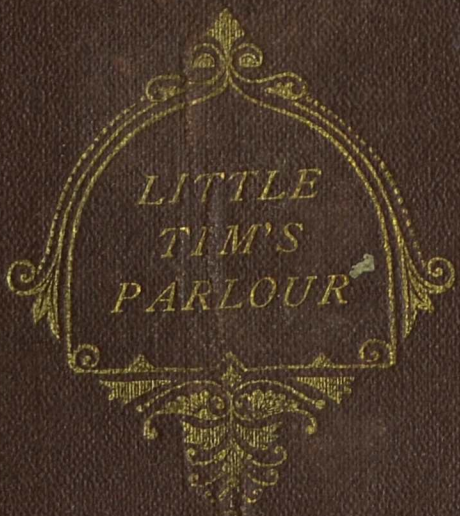
LITTLE
TIM'S
PARLOUR

Holly + Sally Pickerel
A leased Store
Cabot Saturday March
1870.

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Ursula Pascoe

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LITTLE TIM'S PARLOUR.

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LITTLE TIM'S PARLOUR.

THERE was no place set apart in the Greens' cottage for the special use of the smaller inmates. Any portion of the three rooms of which it was composed, constituted, for the time being, the nursery; and there little Tim, a grave, undergrown child of eight, kept watchful guard over a sister three years younger than himself, and a baby who had just acquired sufficient use of his own limbs to enable him to get into all sorts of peril at every moment of his wakeful existence. Thanks to Tim, however, nothing of much importance ever occurred. He knew to a nicety when baby's cradle was likely to overbalance, or baby's fingers were too near the fire, and was sure to rush forward to the rescue at the right moment. Up at the Great House at the other end of the village, where there were three nurses to look after as many children, the accidents befalling round heads

and chubby limbs were innumerable, a circumstance that Tim, who generally meditated over any facts that came to his knowledge, attributed to the bewildering variety of stairs and passages that led to their nursery. In guarding his own small charge Tim had no difficulties of that kind to contend with. The three rooms to which the baby's adventurous feats were limited opened conveniently into each other, so that he might go the round, in a slow progress that seemed perfectly satisfactory to himself, without getting into much mischief by the way.

Tim was nestled down in his favourite corner one evening with his feet busily at work on a rocker of the baby's cradle, and his eyes fixed, not as usual on the fire, but on the round bright moon outside, which he could see through the dirty uncurtained window. Both the baby and little Patty had cried themselves to sleep half an hour before, and so Tim was free to muse on undisturbed. Like many other philosophers, his meditations had not got, as yet, beyond wonder at all he saw; but unsatisfactory as they were, he was never tired of them, and could have kept them up for an hour or two

longer in perfect content. But presently Patty woke up, and began to cry again—an interruption that Tim would not greatly have heeded if the baby had not followed her example, and insisted on being taken out of the cradle and carried about the room. Tim was staggering to and fro under his heavy burden when the cottage door opened, and his father, Stephen Green, came in.

"What, isn't your mother home yet?" he asked.

"No, father."

Green threw down his basket of tools in one corner of the kitchen, and lit a great, untidily-trimmed candle that shut out the soft moonlight with its ugly glare, and revealed a scene of dirt and misery that was not to be matched, perhaps, in any other cottage in the village.

"Here's a place for a man to sit down in," said Green, angrily. "Why didn't your mother clear it up before she went out?"

Tim's mind was more ready at suggesting questions than answers, so he only stared at his father in silence, while the baby and Patty screamed louder than ever.

"Here, put that child down, and get in

some wood," said Green. "We may as well have a good fire if we can't get anything else."

Tim obeyed with great promptness, but when he came back with his pinafore full of wood, he found his father was gone. The tool-basket was still lying in the corner, so it was plain that he had not started off to any evening job of work.

"Never mind," said Tim, "we'll have the fire all the same; and I'll put the light out, too. We don't like it, do we, baby?"

Baby not having it yet in his power to express any opinion of his own, Tim was in the habit of judging for him—an arrangement that seemed to give perfect satisfaction to both parties. So the flaring dip was put out, and Tim set to work to make up the fire—a pleasant business that kept Patty and the baby well amused till their mother came in. She was still a young woman, and might once have been pretty, but now, like her cottage kitchen, she looked untidy and poverty stricken. Whose fault was all this domestic misery? Stephen Green's or his wife's? Tim was so used to the place that he did not know there was anything amiss with it, or

he would, no doubt, have pondered the question gravely, and tried to find an answer to it.

"So father's gone out again, Tim," said the mother, sadly, as her eyes fell on the empty tool-basket.

"Yes, mother," answered Tim, cheerily; "so we'll have tea."

"Oh, a fine tea, with nothing to eat but dry bread!"

"Shall I fetch some butter, mother?"

"No, they won't trust us any more at the shop till I've taken 'em some money; and I don't know when that'll be."

"Never mind, mother, we can have toast, and that will be better. Just see what a fine fire I've got."

But the mother did not seem to take heart, either at the sight of the fire, or the toast, which soon formed a crisp wall half-round the tea-tray. She was too tired to eat, she said, and after swallowing a cup of hot tea, she began to wash out a few ragged garments on the other side of the table. It would have been more comfortable to wait till tea was over, but Mary Green had no notion of doing things at a proper time; and so, as she

splashed heedlessly on, Tim had to gather his little supply of toast under his pinafore, to prevent the dirty suds flying over it.

As soon as tea was over, Tim had to put Patty to bed, and then the baby—a proceeding that both resented highly, and made as unpleasant to him as possible.

"And now," said the mother, as he took his seat again at her side, "it's time you was off too."

But an ironing fire was just made up, and Tim pleaded to be allowed to stay where he was till his father came home.

"And that won't be till twelve o'clock, or perhaps later," returned the mother, "for he never hurries himself of a Saturday night. But you may stop if you like; it's dull to sit up all by oneself."

So Tim kept his snug place, and made himself very useful—helping to dry the wet clothes, and rub the irons. It was past eleven before all the work was done; and then, as Tim and his mother were very tired, and had nothing more to do, the time began to pass rather slowly.

"I think I'd better see after your father, Tim," said Mary, at last, "or we shan't have

a penny left for next week. You can turn into bed while I'm gone."

She put on her bonnet and cloak, and Tim dragged out a little ragged cap from a pile of rubbish in one corner.

"Well, what's that for?" asked the mother sharply.

"I want to go with you, mother, just for once. Do let me!"

Again Mary yielded, for company's sake, as she said, and the two turned out into the dark lane; Tim, who had no extra covering on but the ragged cap, creeping as close up to his mother's side as he could.

"Are we going to the Raven?" he asked.

"Yes; where else should we be likely to find your father? He'll want seeing home by this time, I expect."

It did not occur to Mary that in that case Tim had better have been in bed. She was weighed down by her troubles, and had no heart to keep up even a shadow of the respect the children ought to have felt for their father.

They went on silently down the lane and over the bridge that led to the village. Here and there in the straggling street a light was

still shining from some cottage window—perhaps to guide home an absent reveller—signs of weary watching, that grew more frequent as they neared the Raven.

"Are we to go in, mother?" asked Tim, as he and his mother stood in the gas-light that flared out from the public-house passage.

"I don't know," answered Mary nervously; "perhaps father wouldn't like it. Stop a bit, Tim, and I'll see if he's here."

She passed round to the side of the house, and peered through an unshuttered window.

"Ah, there he is, and pretty comfortable too! No wonder he isn't in a hurry to get home."

Tim tried to climb up to the broad window-ledge by means of some loose bricks lying about, but, not succeeding, he asked his mother to lift him up. This she did very quietly; and then, with his face on a level with hers, he peered over the thick wire blind at the revellers within.

"O mother," he whispered, "what a fine place! Can father come here whenever he likes?"

"Yes, I wish he couldn't."

"Do you?—oh, I don't. Would they let us in too, do you think?"

"No, not unless we had plenty of money, Tim, and we havn't you know. There, come down, you've seen enough now, I think."

"No, I havn't;" and Tim held on tight to the window; "let me stay a minute longer. How nice and warm it looks, and there's father in the arm-chair! Is he asleep, mother?"

"Yes," answered Mary, bitterly, "I expect he is, and pretty sound, too."

"Mustn't it be snug, mother? Better than crying half the night with cold, as Patty does. I wonder what that picture's about over the fire-place? And there's a lot more beautiful ones! How their frames shine!"

"Yes, it costs something to keep 'em all bright, Tim."

"I dare say it does, mother; it's a fine place! What do they call it? It isn't a kitchen like ours."

"No, that name wouldn't be grand enough for it: it's a parlour, I suppose. Now then, there's the clock striking twelve, so they'll all be turned out."

Tim reluctantly jumped down, and stood

with his mother near the doorway while the revellers made their way out, some of them shouting boisterously, and reeling up against them as they passed. Last of all came Stephen Green, his gait as unsteady as any of his companions'—the consequence, Tim thought, of his having been recently disturbed from his pleasant doze in the chimney corner. He reeled up the lane, refusing his wife's assistance, and Tim followed timidly behind, reflecting on the discovery he had made—the beautiful parlour where his father took those cosy naps that sent him home so cross and sleepy sometimes. Tim could not forget it all night; it seemed to haunt his dreams; and he finally determined to ask his father to let him go there too some evening when he could be spared.

Accordingly, when the church bells had stopped the next day, and Green put on his cap to go out, Tim jumped up and inquired if he was going to his parlour.

"My parlour!" said Green; "what does he mean, Mary?"

"The room up at the Raven, I suppose. He was looking in last night, and I told him it was the parlour."

"I'll teach you to come spying after me!" said Green savagely. "You let me catch you there again, and I'll thrash you!"

He went out, banging the door after him; and Tim saw plainly he must put off his request to a more favourable opportunity.

"Why doesn't father like his parlour to be looked at?" he asked of his mother.

"Because it's a bad place, and he knows he's no business to be there."

"Is it a bad place?" said Tim doubtingly; "it didn't look like it."

"But none but wicked people go there, so it must be bad."

"But father goes," argued Tim, "and he isn't wicked."

"No; but he's doing a wicked thing when he's there spending the money that ought to be keeping you children well fed and clothed."

"Ah! I forgot the money; it's a pity it costs so much. Mother, couldn't we have a parlour at home?"

"A parlour!" repeated Mary laughing; "why, where's the gas to come from, Tim, and the bright fires, and the pictures?"

Tim considered a little, and then acknow-

ledged that there certainly were some difficulties in the way.

Later on in the morning, as the people were coming out of church, a lady that Tim had seen once or twice before entered the cottage kitchen.

"You told me you would send your little boy to school to-day, Mary," she said. "I was quite disappointed to find he did not come."

"Well, I couldn't spare him, ma'am, or he should have gone and welcome. I wanted him at home to nurse baby."

"Oh! baby must be nursed, of course. But you were not at church this morning, I think, nor your husband neither?"

"No, ma'am; but poor people can't always do as they like. I'd a good deal of clearing to get through."

"Clearing!" repeated the lady, casting rather a puzzled glance round the kitchen. "Have you a chair I can sit down upon?"

Mary coloured a little as she wiped some slopped milk off the only disengaged chair, and explained that "when you once began to have a turn-out it took so long to get straight again."

"Certainly; and for that reason I would never attempt such a thing on Sunday."

"But suppose you hadn't a clear corner anywhere, ma'am; what would you do?"

"Well, I would try to leave the clear corner over night; but, if I hadn't succeeded, I would do a little outside brushing up, and shut all the old hoards out of sight till Monday morning."

"And that would be for good then, ma'am, for I'm clearing up for other people the best part of all the week-days."

"Ah! there's nothing saved by that, Mary, depend upon it."

"But I can't see the children starve, ma'am. If Stephen won't do the right thing by 'em, I must."

"And in the mean time you are making the evil worse by driving your husband away from home. Have you thought of that?"

"No; I don't drive him away. If the place is good enough for me, it's good enough for him."

"But perhaps he's more particular than you are. Some men think a great deal about having a comfortable place to sit down in when their work is done. Jane Clements

told me she sent her husband to the public-house once by putting off her ironing till Saturday night, and that she had never done it since."

"No; because she's able to choose her own time for her work—I ain't, and so I must take it as I can. Ah, ma'am! it's easy to talk."

"Yes, that's true; but, at the same time, I know a great deal may be done by a little management. For instance, if you thought it necessary to stay at home yourself this morning, you might easily have sent Tim and Patty to school. They would have been out of the way, and baby could have amused himself in his cradle, or climbing about."

"So he might; and Patty has been dreadfully tiresome, certainly. Well, I'll see if I can get 'em off another Sunday."

Getting them off was evidently the grand difficulty, and so the lady turned to Tim.

"Can't you dress yourself for school on Sunday morning without troubling your mother?"

"Yes, ma'am, and Patty too, when I've got our things."

"He means when their clothes are mended,"

put in Mary. "You see, I don't like to see 'em go out ragged."

"I dare say not; but it would be better they went so than not at all. If you neglect to put your children in the right way now, you must not be surprised if they go wrong when they are able to choose for themselves."

"I'm sure I don't neglect them," said Mary, almost crying. "I'm slaving for them from morning till night."

"I know you are," returned the visitor, kindly; "but perhaps a little less slaving, and a little more thought, would serve them best in the end. It's the old story—a drinking husband, and a wretched home. But, Mary, many a wife has reclaimed her husband by her patience and care for his comfort, and I don't see why you shouldn't."

"It's no use trying. It was only last night I toiled to get his things all nice, hoping he'd go to church this morning, and he wouldn't."

"Did he give you his reason for refusing?"

Mary hesitated a little, and then answered—

"Yes; he said people that went to church ought to have decent homes to go back to, and as he hadn't, he was best away."

"But as you were going to have a morning clearing, you might have told him that everything would be nice and tidy by the time church was over."

"Well, so I might. But you see my temper was up, and so I said that if he'd a wretched home, he'd nobody to thank for it but himself, and then he went off in a passion."

"Ah! you forgot what the Bible says: 'A soft answer turneth away wrath.' Think of it when you are tempted to be angry with your husband next time, and perhaps you may keep him at home. Now, Tim, wouldn't you like to come to the Sunday-school?"

"I don't know, ma'am."

"Ah, you have never been there, I forgot that. Well, I can promise you that you will like it very much indeed, so you must come this afternoon, if your mother can spare you. Recollect, I shall expect you."

As soon as the visitor was gone, Mary cooked the dinner—a scanty one, which she had bought that morning at a high price in the village. Stephen remained at the Raven, knowing, no doubt, that very poor fare awaited him at home, so Tim and Patty had his share

between them; and then Mary, with her baby in her arms, betook herself next door, to tell her troubles to a neighbour. She had scarcely begun, when Tim appeared with a clean face, and his long fair hair nicely smoothed.

"Well, to be sure!" said his mother, "where are you off to?"

"The Sunday-school, mother. The lady said she should expect me."

"But not this afternoon; she meant when I could spare you."

"And can't you now, mother? Patty's going to be good till I come back."

"Well, perhaps I might, if you was fit to go. Just look at his pinafore," and Mary turned to her neighbour; "I hadn't a minute last night to mend it."

"But the lady said it was better to go in rags than not at all," put in Tim. "I don't think she'll mind 'em."

And happening to remember something else their visitor had said—the danger of parents neglecting to put their children in the way to learn good—Mary thought she had better not make any further objection.

When Tim came back again, the clearing

was still unfinished, and his mother was sitting by the fire crying.

"Father's been home," was Patty's explanation.

"Yes, and gone again; and a good thing too," sobbed Mary. She had evidently forgotten the power of the soft answer, and, perhaps, allowed her tongue to send her husband out of the house in anger again.

Tim took the baby, and sitting down on the hearth, fell to his favourite occupation of watching the fire-light. But presently his mother bestirred herself to get the tea, and his first warm cup set him chattering.

"Mother, what a fine place the school is, nearly as nice as the parlour up at the Raven. Does it cost anything to go there?"

"No, Tim; not a penny."

"That's a good thing, because the lady said she should expect me next Sunday. Mother, what's my name?"

"Why, Tim to be sure; havn't you found that out yet?"

"No, that wasn't it, mother. The gentleman at the school called me something else —'twasn't Tim, and 'twasn't Green."

"Perhaps 'twas Timothy," said the mother; "we call you Tim for shortness."

"Timothy," repeated Tim slowly; "yes, that was it; and the gentleman said he hoped I should be like him. Who was Timothy, mother?"

"Why, father's brother, and a nice one he turned out too. He brought his wife and children to misery, and then fell over the bridge one night coming from the Raven."

"O dear! the gentleman couldn't have known what a bad end he came to, mother. I don't want to be like him!"

"Perhaps he'd some other Timothy in his head. I dare say there have been a good many in the world one time and another. And was that all you heard?"

"No, mother; the lady talked a good deal about a great supper, and said we were all asked. But that wasn't true, was it?"

Mary hung her head a little, for it happened that the last sermon she had heard, which was about a month before, had been on the text, "Come, for all things are now ready," so that she could not help having some dim idea of what was meant by the Great Supper.

"But are we asked, mother?" persisted Tim.

"Yes, I suppose so; everybody is."

"Oh! I'm glad of that; why didn't you tell us? You'll get Patty and me ready in time, mother, won't you?"

Mary sipped her tea for a minute in silence, and then told Tim he was a queer one.

It was very late when the father came home that night; and Tim, who had sat up to keep his mother company, crept away to bed at the first sound of his unsteady footstep outside, to dream of pleasant parlours that never made people cross and sleepy.

He was left in charge of Patty and baby early the next morning, as his mother went off to do a day's clearing—a business she must have managed better elsewhere than she did at home, where it was often undertaken and never got through. As the baby was in a pretty good temper after his night's rest and breakfast, Tim had plenty of leisure to think over what had passed at the Sunday-school the day before, and he gave Patty now and then the benefit of any remembrance that was sufficiently clear to put into words. He was still deep in the subject when Hannah Price, their next-door neighbour, hurried in

to ask if he would run down to the village for her.

"No," answered Tim, after a minute's thought. "Mother said I wasn't to leave baby."

"Oh, never mind that! I'll look after him. Here, do you know where Jane Hart lives?"

"Yes, a little past the Raven."

"Well, you go and ask her when her master's coming to do my walls. I was expecting him all last week. Not that I care," continued Hannah, moving towards the door, "the walls are good enough for me, only the doctor's always bothering, and says we shan't be quit of the fever till they're done."

"Very well," said Tim, who had been listening intently, and thought the message rather a long one; "I won't forget."

"And you'd better rub your shoes before going in too; for Mrs. Hart, as some folks call her now, is mighty particular; I expect she'd faint right away at the sight of a little dirt." And Hannah Price, who was not troubled with any such inconvenient weakness, went off rubbing her soapy hands on an apron that could not have paid a visit to the wash-tub for some weeks past.

Tim did not quite see how Hannah in her cottage next door could attend to his baby; however, Patty was pretty trustworthy, and baby himself had shown remarkable discretion, so far, in keeping out of mischief, so he set off on his errand without any fears on his account. As he passed the Raven he tried to take a peep into the parlour, but the loose bricks that had partly assisted him before to reach the window-sill were gone, so he had to give up the attempt, and went on thinking how nice it was. If he could have succeeded in looking in he would not have been so charmed, for with the flaring gas out, the fire low, and half-dried beer stains on the table, the parlour at the Raven had rather a forlorn aspect.

Jane Hart lived at a nice little cottage at the other end of the village, with a trim garden round it, and brightly-polished windows. As he came upon that usual appendage to a decent cottage doorstep, a scraper, Tim bethought himself of Mrs. Price's injunction to clean his shoes well, and he worked away at them so vigorously that the noise he made brought Jane to the door to see what very tidy visitor was coming to see

her. Tim delivered his message at once, and, thinking that what Hannah Price had said about being perfectly satisfied with the walls herself must be part of it, repeated that too with great care.

"Well, I'm glad she hasn't her choice, Tim," said Jane, "for dirty walls are ugly things to look at, and can't be good for people's health either, as the doctor says. Here, won't you come in and rest a bit?"

Though he looked very small and pale Tim was not at all tired; however, he was glad to step into the kitchen, as the glimpse he had caught of it at the open door made him want to see more. So he ventured just inside, and then remembering Jane Hart's abhorrence of dirt, and that his mother had not been able to let him have his usual clean Sunday pinafore the day before, he stood still and looked about him. The walls and floor of the little room were daintily clean, the few bits of furniture well polished, and by the fire-place was a bright strip of carpet and a neatly-cushioned chair—items of comfort that Tim noticed with great approbation.

"Why, you've got a parlour!" he said at last.

"Of course I have, and a kitchen, too, all in one; that's handy, isn't it?"

"Yes; but doesn't it cost a great deal?"

"No, only a little trouble. Look here, when I want my kitchen I roll up this bit of carpet, and when work's done I spread it out again, and there's my parlour."

"And you've got pictures, too," said Tim, "as nice as them at the Raven."

"And better, too, for they're about good things. I don't like the pictures at the Raven."

"But I do, and so does father."

"Yes, I wish he didn't, Tim; it would be better for you and your mother, too. I hope you won't go to the Raven when you're a man."

But Tim said he hoped he should; and then, having stared for some time at the picture of a little child kneeling, he asked what it was about.

The parlour carpet being spread, brisk Mrs. Hart had plenty of leisure to answer Tim's questions, and she led him round her gallery of pictures, a business that took some time, for Tim was curious, and wanted to know the whole history of the kneeling child before going to the next picture.

"He was a good man," said Jane, in conclusion, "and learned to obey God when he was a very little boy. I should be glad to see you like him, Tim."

"And the gentleman yesterday," returned Tim, reflectively, "said he wanted me to be like somebody else—like Timothy. Did you ever hear about him?"

"Yes, and I can show you his picture;" and Jane took Tim to a brightly coloured print on the other side of the room, in which a little child was seated at the feet of a grave-looking lady.

"What's he doing?" asked Tim.

"Learning the Bible; his mother's reading it to him."

"That's not the Bible," answered Tim, pointing to a large white scroll in the lady's lap, "that's a newspaper."

"No it's not, it's the Bible—at least some part of it carefully written out. There were no bound books in those days as we have now. See how attentive he is."

"Yes, that must be the Timothy the gentleman meant. But I can't be like him."

"Why not, Tim?"

"Because my mother couldn't teach me; she wouldn't know how."

"But you can learn just as well at the Sunday-school. I hope you go there regularly."

"No, I don't; I never went till yesterday, and that was because the lady said I must."

"But how is that? can't your mother spare you?"

"Yes; but she isn't always able to get the things ready. There's the pinafore, you know," added Tim, gravely, "that's the worst."

"And hadn't you a clean one to go in yesterday?"

"No, it was so bad that mother said it wasn't worth washing. But the lady didn't say anything about it, so I hope she didn't see it."

"But I expect she did, Tim, only she was too kind to mention it. But we won't try her any more. I'll see what I can do with it; mother won't mind, I know."

She took the pinafore off at once without fainting at its dirty, ragged condition, as Tim half expected, and told him it should be

nicely washed and mended by the next day, if he would come and fetch it.

"And then you'd better bring another, Tim, so that I may have it ready against Sunday."

"But I've only got this one, and mother said as it was a'most wore out, I'd better leave 'em off."

"Did she? Oh, that won't do just yet. Now, if I'd only some little ones of my own, I could lend you a pinny to wear between whiles. But never mind, I dare say I can manage."

The circumstance of her having no children, which Jane was disposed to consider rather in the light of a misfortune, was the reason assigned by her neighbours for the extreme neatness of her cottage; but as she sometimes found time to help a poor family with little frocks and coats made out of her own or her husband's well-worn clothes, it is likely that her kitchen would have been almost as tidy even if she had had half a dozen boys and girls to race about in it.

Tim ran home at great speed, and burst into the Price's to give Jane Hart's message, that her husband would be sure to be

down to do their walls some time the next day.

"Well, he'd better not disappoint me again," returned Hannah, "or I must get somebody else, for I'm sick of seeing the doctor bothering round here. Why, lor', child!" she added, as she looked up from her cooking, "what's come of your pinny? I suppose you thought it wasn't good enough for Mrs. Hart's fine kitchen."

"No, I didn't; she's kept it to wash and mend, and I'm going to fetch it to-morrow."

"Well, to be sure! I should like to see her interfering with any of my children in that way. A nice temper your mother will be in when she hears of it."

But Mary Green was of a milder spirit than Mrs. Price, and listened to Tim's account of his brilliant prospects in the pinafore way with great satisfaction, only lamenting, as usual, her inability to attend to her children's clothes better herself.

"And she knew all about Timothy, mother," pursued Tim, "and had got a picture of him."

"Had she?" replied Mary, a little absently; "and what was he like, Tim?"

"Oh, I don't know, mother! Him and another little boy over on the other side of the room had both got red coats on, so there wasn't much difference between 'em. But that isn't it, you know, mother; what we wanted was to find out who Timothy was."

"Yes," answered Mary, still intent on some prospective cleaning, "and who was he, Tim?"

"Oh! I can't tell you much yet. But he was a good man, Mrs. Hart said she was sure about that; and when he was a little boy his mother used to teach him something every day out of the Bible."

"Ah! I expect she'd nothing else to do. Now, Tim, get out of the way, or I shan't have the hearth swept up by the time father comes in."

Mary had been so busy gossiping with her neighbour next door that she had quite forgotten how time passed; and so she was just beginning to raise a terrible dust when her husband came in, and, seeing how matters were going on, threw done his basket of tools in one corner of the kitchen, and took himself off again.

"Well, to be sure!" said Mary; "that 's

all one gets for slaving from morning till night!" and, leaving her floor still unswept, she went in next door again to talk over this fresh grievance with Hannah Price.

Some time in the next day Tim saw John Hart go past with pail and brushes; and, as very little went on in his immediate neighbourhood, he followed instantly with baby in his arms, and Patty at his heels. He was too much in awe of Hannah Price to venture unasked into her cottage; however, as she was not a chilly individual, her door was standing, as usual, wide open, and so he took up his position there to see the white-washing. John gave him a good-natured grin and nod, and made a feint of bespattering the baby with his great brush, which that small gentleman took in very good part. John was as big and heavy as his wife was little and brisk, but in good-nature and love of children they were both alike.

"I say, Mrs. Price," Tim ventured to remark at last, "are you going to have a parlour?"

"No, I should think not," returned Hannah tartly; "folks that have got children can't have such fine fancies."

"O yes they can," said John goodnaturedly; "you wouldn't catch my wife giving up hers if she'd half-a-dozen children."

"Shouldn't I? then it would give her up, and the sooner the better. I hate a place where you're afraid to turn round."

"So do I," returned John, "if it happens to be a littered place where you can't put a foot to the ground without treading on something. I say, missis, what's to be done with this heap in the corner? it'll be nicely bespattered if you leave it here under my brush."

The heap was accordingly removed into another corner, with much grumbling from Hannah about the folly of doctors interfering with people's walls; and then the whitewashing went on again.

"I ought to be the last to despise a decent room," pursued John, "for I shouldn't be the man I am now if it wasn't for ours."

"O indeed!" said Hannah scornfully, for she thought he hadn't much manliness to boast of it as it was. "And how do you make that out?"

"Well, when I was first married I was a heedless young fellow, and liked my glass of

ale at the Raven as well as any one in the parish."

"And suppose you did, what was the harm of that?"

"Well, the harm was that the one glass soon got to three or four; and at last more of my money went over the counter at the Raven than into my poor Jane's pocket."

"Ah! and a nice life she led you then, I expect."

"No, she didn't; she'd always a smile for me, go in when I would. And many's the time I thought what a brute I was, and meant to turn over a new leaf; but, as soon as evening came, the thought of the bright fire and lights and merry company at the Raven was sure to draw me away. But one evening, just as I was off, Jane asked me if I'd make her some frames for a few pictures that had been given her at the Sunday-school, and so for once I stayed at home and worked instead of going out. It was surprising how I took to them pictures," continued John, as he plastered away, "and to Jane's way of talking about them; and before the end of the week we'd got 'em all up in neat black frames, and they looked beautiful!"

"Yes, I know," put in Tim rather excitedly; "there's little Samuel and Timothy."

"It's hard to say what there isn't," answered John. "Boys and girls are never tired of coming in to look at them. Well, after the pictures was up there were curtains to put inside the windows, and flowers out, and at last a smart bit of carpet was spread in front of the fire-place. Of course that was the most startling thing of all; and, when it was down, Jane put her arms round my neck and told me it had been bought with the money I'd saved while I stayed at home to help her in getting the place nice."

"And so you've been saving up for bits more ever since," remarked Hannah contemptuously.

"No I havn't; the old bit's nearly as fresh now as when we first put it down. But somehow, when I've got my feet upon it of an evening, and a nice book to read to Jane, I never want to turn out."

"Well, every one to their taste," said Hannah; "as for me, I'd rather have my master up at the Raven than bothering about here when I'm over my work."

"Perhaps you'd get on better for his

company," said John. "There isn't a little woman in the parish that does more work in the year than my Jane, I know; and she says she can get on all the faster when I'm at home. Now then, I must shove this chest out of the way. I suppose there's nothing breakable in it."

"No; but you may just as well leave it where it is. It would be shorter work to wash round it."

"I don't think it would in the end. Here, lend a hand please;" and the heavy chest was pushed forward, when a variety of articles rolled from behind it, accompanied by a shower of dust and cobwebs.

"Well, to be sure!" said Hannah, as she groped about in the rubbish; "if this isn't my Jemmy's shoe that we lost last summer. Who 'd have thought of looking for it here!"

"Well, I should, of a cleaning-day," said John. "Come, I think it would be as well if you'd just bring your broom."

Hannah took no notice of this suggestion, but John looked so patient, and at the same time so determined not to put a foot upon the dirty heap before him, that she was obliged at last to make him a clear pathway.

It was nearly dark before the room was finished, and then John asked if he should come again the next day and do another.

"No," answered Hannah, "I expect that will be all; the doctor ain't likely to come further than this one."

"But if he says the other rooms ain't wholesome, I think you'd better have 'em done for your own sake."

"Oh, I dare say. You and he are likely to be of one mind about that. But I'm in no hurry. They've been good enough for us so far, and 'll have to do a bit longer I expect."

"Very well, just as you please," and John went off whistling.

Outside the door he found Tim, who had just rushed into his own kitchen to deposit baby in the cradle under Patty's charge.

"Well, my man, what is it?" asked John, finding Tim's trot pertinaciously accommodating itself to his long stride.

"Oh! I want to know if you think Mrs. Hart 's done my pinny?"

"Yes, I'm sure she has, if she promised it; so you come along with me and fetch it."

They kept on at great speed together, and soon reached the Raven, where the gas was lit, and a group of men, who had just left work, were loitering in the door-way.

"I say, mates," said John, "I wish we was all bound for the same port—home."

"And who says we ain't?" asked Green.

"Well, it don't look like it; but depend upon it, home 's the best place after all."

"Perhaps it is for them that don't find it full of muddle and brats when they get there."

"As to muddle," said John, "I don't like it any better than you do; but children," and he laid his hand tenderly on Tim's head, "are a blessing, Green. Why, I'd give anything to call such a little lad as this mine."

"Well, you may have him if you like," returned Green, carelessly. "I can't see what good he is."

"Don't say that, Green. You don't know what a blessing he may be to you yet. Well, good-night, and recollect what I say—home 's the best place when work 's done, and the safest."

There was more than one loud laugh of derision from the men as Tim and his friend

kept on their way again, and John's whistle, though he tried to raise it to its former pitch, sounded faint and dismal.

"Don't you like them to go to their parlour?" asked Tim.

"No; it 's a bad place, my boy, and leads to ruin in this world and the next, for the Bible says, 'that no drunkard shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven.'"

But Tim did not understand that, and so informed John that he liked the parlour at the Raven as well as his father did.

"And what do you like it for, Tim?"

"Oh, for the bright fire, and the lights, and the nice pictures on the walls."

"Well, many of the men couldn't give me a better reason, I dare say. But it 's a bad place for all that; and men turn out of it at night with their pockets empty and their senses gone. Does father ever come home good-tempered when he 's spent his evening at the Raven?"

"No," answered Tim; "sometimes he 's too sleepy to talk at all, and sometimes he 's cross, and scolds mother."

"Then I think he'd be better away from the Raven altogether, don't you?"

"I don't know," answered Tim slowly. "You see we havn't got any parlour."

"Ah! that 's it: miserable homes keep the public-house full. I wish some of the wives would take pattern by my Jane."

They had reached John Hart's cottage by that time, and the first sound of his heavy foot on the scraper brought his wife to the door, brisk and beaming.

"Here, I've brought one of your friends," said John, "to see if his pinny's done."

"Of course it is, and the Sunday one too. I've been expecting him down after them all day. Now then, John, ain't your shoes clean enough yet?"

"No, not for your fine place. Dear me, what a trouble it gives me!"

However, he went in with a broad grin on his face, and settled himself very cosily into the cushioned chair by the fireside. Tim, by special invitation, sat down on a soft stool—made no doubt for the accommodation of John's great feet—and his eyes wandered at once to the pictures. There was the infant Samuel opposite, but the companion red-coated little figure, intended to represent Timothy, was nowhere to be seen. Tim

rubbed his eyes, and looked harder, till his attention was called away to the pinafores.

"Here they are," said Jane, unfolding two neat little rolls of dark printed stuff; "one for week-days, and the other for Sunday. You must ask mother to put the Sunday one carefully away till you want it."

"And now that business is settled," said John, "sit down again, and you shall have some tea."

"I can't stop," answered Tim, sorrowfully, for there was a large home-made loaf on the table, and a plate of nice white cakes. "Patty and baby want me."

"Then you must take 'em a cake a-piece, and two for yourself, because you're a big boy," said Jane. "Here, I'll put them all in this little bag, and you may keep it afterwards to carry your books in, when you go to school."

Tim flushed up with delight at the prizes he was going to take home, and greatly wondered when Mrs. Hart told him to wait a bit longer for she had not done yet.

"I've something else to give you," she said, "and you must try and guess what it is."

Tim reflected gravely, but nothing came of

it; and John, by way of assisting, suggested a bit of plum-pudding.

"No," answered Jane, "something better than that—at least, I think so, and so will Tim. It 's the little picture we were talking about yesterday."

"What, Timothy!" said Tim, almost dropping his cakes, and staring harder than ever at the blank on the wall which the little picture had covered the day before.

"Yes; I took it down for you this morning, and now you must ask father to hang it up for you over the mantel-piece."

It seemed to Tim that poor Mrs. Hart could never be happy any more after parting with her pretty picture; however, he was afraid to suggest such a terrible possibility, in case she should be tempted to reconsider the matter, and finally decide on keeping the treasure herself; so he snatched at it a little ungraciously, and had it safely packed up in one of the pinafores before he ventured on even a word of thanks.

"I expect you 'd rather have had the pudding," said John, knowing that his own taste at Tim's age would have been decidedly in that direction.

"No, I wouldn't," answered Tim, grasping his picture tighter; "this 'll be something towards the parlour."

"Why, do you want to have a parlour, Tim?"

"Yes, I'm going to try; but I'm afraid it'll take a long time to get."

"I'm afraid it will," answered John gravely, "for it's likely mother and father'll be against it. But never mind, you mustn't give up; perhaps my little woman may be able to help you."

Jane showed her good-will and sympathy by giving him a warm kiss, and slipping two more cakes into his bag, after which he ran home to exhibit his treasures to anybody that might be there. His father was still loitering in the village, but his mother had returned, and was puffing the fire with her apron to make the kettle boil. Presents not being every-day affairs in the Greens' cottage, there was a general rush towards the table as Tim, in an excited state, began to unload himself; but the cakes happening to tumble out first, neither Patty nor the baby troubled themselves greatly as to what might follow.

"Here's the picture, mother!" cried Tim,

—"Timothy, you know; and they say we're to hang it up over the mantel-piece."

"Well, we'll put it by till father comes in, and then, I dare say, he'll do it for us."

But nothing being seen of "father," Tim grew at last impatient, so Mary hung the picture up herself; but doing it, as she did everything, in a great hurry, it looked, even in Tim's eyes, particularly uncomfortable.

"Why, bless me," said Mary, as she hurried in from putting baby to bed, and found Tim crying, "ain't you satisfied now?"

"No, mother, it don't look nice—not as it did in Mrs. Hart's room."

"Well, it is a bit too fine for our place. But never mind, Tim, I'll put it carefully away to-morrow, and then you can look at it whenever you like."

But this promise, which Mary thought would be excessively comforting, only made Tim cry the more.

"O no, mother, don't put it away. You know I thought it would be something towards a parlour."

"A parlour!" repeated Mary; "lor, child, what do we want with a parlour for you and Patty to mess about in?"

She might have included herself as the most indefatigable messer of the three; however, it had never occurred to Mary that she did anything else in the course of the day but clear.

"And who'd keep things in their places while I was away?" pursued Mary.

"I would, mother," returned Tim promptly, "if they was once there."

That was the difficulty. Nothing, unfortunately, had a place in that home; and Mary, not seeing her way to argue the matter further, suggested Tim's eating a cake that had been left at tea, and then going to bed.

Perhaps, if Tim had had a few companions about his own age near at hand to play with, he might soon have forgotten the charms of the parlour at the Raven, and been contented with his own bare home as a place, at least, where any amount of racketing might go on without much damage being done. But the young Prices next door, instead of being playfellows, were his especial torments; and whenever they were out of school he was glad to shut himself up with Patty and the baby for safety. Illness in the form of low fever had been very busy with those lively young

people lately, and carried off one of their number—the best and quietest his mother said; but that circumstance did not seem to give much concern to the brothers and sisters left behind. Then Hannah, to satisfy the doctor, had her kitchen whitewashed, leaving infection to lurk, if it pleased, in the dirty bedrooms, and fancied she had done with the fever. But she soon found her mistake. Her youngest child, Ned, a little fellow about Tim's age, but nearly a head taller, refused his breakfast one morning, greatly to the surprise of the family party seated round the table, and, keeping up his unusual fit of abstinence during the rest of the day, was at last put to bed by his mother as being either sick or sulky. The next morning her doubts were satisfactorily settled, Ned was decidedly sick, and, soon after she had made the discovery, Hannah ran in to Tim, her own children being at school, to send him off after John Hart.

"For there's our Ned just took like little Tom," she explained, "and I don't want to have the doctor throwing them walls in my face again."

Tim started on his errand very willingly,

and found Jane Hart busy washing in her little back kitchen.

"Well, to be sure, here's Tim," she said, "and my parlour carpet not down yet. Why, what's brought you round so early?"

Tim explained his business, and then Jane wiped her soapy hands, and put on her bonnet.

"Dear me! I think it would be better to send for the doctor than my John," she said. "What good's a pail of whitewash likely to do a sick child? Here, Tim, I think I'll go back with you and see what can be done."

Accordingly they started together; but Jane not being a welcome visitor at Hannah Price's cottage, was soon out again, and looked in at Tim as she passed his open kitchen door.

"Here, I've come to see if you've put the picture up," she said.

"Yes; but it don't look as it ought to," answered Tim.

"Ah! it wants a few more to keep it company. That's it, and I don't know how they're to be got."

Jane looked round the place a little sorrowfully, and then fell to hugging the baby with great zest.

"When's mother coming home, Tim?"

"I don't know; it's likely she'll be out all day."

"Then you find something to put on this little man and Patty, and come back with me. It was my baking day yesterday, and I've got no end of pies—more than John and me could eat if we kept on till it was time to draw the next batch."

With this pleasant prospect before them, Tim and his small charge started, and helped to demolish some of the pies with great relish. Then, by way of a delightful wind-up to the entertainment, Tim went down with Master Hart to see the Prices' room whitewashed. They found Ned dozing by the kitchen fire, and Hannah gossiping with some neighbour at her back door; but at the sight of John and his pails, she dashed off to make some sort of clearance in an inner room.

"It's a pity you didn't have 'em all done together," said John; "it would have saved you a deal of trouble in the end."

"Oh, of course, you and the doctor are likely to tell the same story; but I expect it won't make much difference one way or an-

other. There! now, I suppose, you can get on."

As soon as Hannah was gone, John threw open the window, and stood for a minute or two, drawing in deep breaths of the keen, fresh air with an evident sense of relief.

"Here's a pretty place to sleep in," he said; "I wonder how long my little woman could stand it!"

But Tim was used to the peculiar kind of atmosphere, and did not feel in any way inconvenienced by it. As soon as John had sufficiently refreshed himself, he set to work, and Tim watched him from a corner with great interest.

"Does it cost much to do that?" he asked.

"What, to wash a room? Well, it depends on the size. Why, what put that in your head?"

Tim not being very ready with an answer, John thought the matter out for himself.

"Ah! you're thinking of that parlour of your'n," he said; "how does it get on?"

"Oh, there's only the picture done. Mother says it's no good."

"Well, I must come and see about it. She's out most days of the week, ain't she?"

"Yes; Mondays and Tuesdays."

"Well, to-morrow's a Tuesday, so perhaps I may look in then."

All the next morning Tim was on the watch for his friend, and just as he had spread out the mid-day allowance of bread and butter on a stool, which was the favourite dining-table when the mother was away, John Hart suddenly made his appearance with a pail in each hand.

"O dear!" said Tim; "have they got the fever somewhere else?"

"Not as I know of," answered John; "I've come to look after your walls now."

Tim did not quite understand what he meant until he saw John take down the picture, and move sundry bits of furniture into the middle of the room. Then he set down the baby and stared in utter bewilderment.

"O dear, Master Hart!" he gasped, at last, "did the doctor say it was to be done?"

"No; I think it was you, or me, or my missis; I don't quite know which. Perhaps all three of us."

But that point not being of much importance, Tim did not concern himself any more

about it. That the wretched walls were going to be done at all was such a surprising fact, that he could hardly realize it, though John was bespattering them with far more energy than was necessary, in order to do honour to the occasion.

"O dear! I'm forgetting half my business," said John, pulling out a nice plump little pie from one of his capacious pockets. "Here, my missis sent you that, so you fall to, and you can look at me all the same, you know."

So the children nestled round their stool, and Tim did the honours of the pie, but was far too excited to eat the tempting portion that fell to his share.

"Isn't it good?" asked John, who had not attained to his stalwart proportions on ethereal fare, and could not see any reasonable cause for Tim's remarkable abstemiousness; "my little woman thought you'd like it."

Tim said it was beautiful, and danced with it for a few minutes round John's pail. Then, not finding his appetite grow any keener, the pie was deposited on a shelf out of Patty's reach—a necessary precaution, as there was no calculating the precise point at which that

little woman's requirements in the eating way were likely to be satisfied.

It grew dusk before Master Hart's work was done, and then as there was no candle to be found on the premises, Tim went in at next door to borrow one; an application that brought Hannah Price in at once to see what was going forward.

"Well, to be sure!" she said; "here's a pretty turn-out."

"Not just yet," answered John; "but I hope there will be before we've done. There's lots to be got rid of—dirt, misery, and no end of bad things. How's your Ned?"

"Well, I can't quite say. The doctor says he's worse, but I don't see any difference."

"Perhaps because you havn't looked sharp enough to find it out. But I'd advise you to take care, or you'll have him follow poor little Tom."

"Well, and I don't know that I should have much cause to fret if he did. Nine children's a heavy load on a woman's hands when her husband spends half his time at the public-house."

"But I thought you liked yours to go there best," said John, quietly.

"Well, so I should, if he didn't spend the money. That's all I care for."

"But you see he can't be away without. Ah! I wish you'd try to make a pleasant place at home for him, Hannah, as my little woman did for me."

"Oh, she's a clever one, no doubt," returned Hannah, contemptuously. "You mustn't expect to find another to match her."

"I don't know that. There's Tim here as bent on having a decent room to sit down in as my Jane was. So he's put up the first picture you see, and now we're doing the walls."

Hannah looked on for a minute or two longer in silence, and then went off, firm in the conviction, that if there was, as she expressed it, a born idiot in the place, that individual was John Hart.

Mary Green was greatly surprised when she came home that evening at the sight of her white walls; and, tired as she was, she set about trying to do a little clearing. But the work seeming only to increase under her hands as she went on, she gave up at last, saying "it was no use, as things would be just as bad again the next day."

"Don't you ever mean to have one then, mother?" asked Tim.

"Have what, child?"

"A parlour, like Mrs. Hart's."

"I don't know; perhaps I shall some day, when father gets steadier, and Patty's old enough to help me."

But this seemed such a very distant prospect, that Tim could take no comfort from it.

A little later his father came in, and on finding the change his kitchen had undergone in his absence, expressed great indignation, at what he called, "Jack Hart's impudence."

"But I think he meant it kindly," said Mary.

"Do you? then I don't take it kindly. If I'm obliged to live in a pig-sty, I don't thank any man for coming and reminding me of it. We shall have his wife round to clean up the place next."

Mary gave a sharp retort, and a quarrel ensued, ending, as usual, in Stephen going to the Raven, and Mary betaking herself to her next-door neighbour for consolation.

Poor Tim cried himself to sleep that night. It seemed so hard to get a parlour, that he made up his mind to give up the attempt

from that time forth, and he looked out for Master Hart the next day that he might acquaint him with his resolution; but John being busy some distance off, Tim had to keep it to himself. However, when Sunday came round again, and with it the visit to the school, which he had attended regularly since Mrs. Hart had taken upon herself to keep up the pinafore supply, he saw cause to reconsider the matter. It happened that some half-dozen little coloured prints fell to his share in the distribution of rewards, and with these he ran round to the Harts, as soon as he was out of school, in a high state of excitement. The parlour carpet was spread there, of course, and John and his wife were seated on it in great state—Jane reading aloud, and John solacing himself with a pipe.

"Well, to be sure," said Jane, as she examined the pictures one by one; "they're every bit as good as what they used to give me. Why, John, you must put some frames to 'em."

"I don't know," answered John, shaking his head, "Stephen's still sore about the walls; but never mind, I'll risk it."

So by the end of the week the pictures were up, and, as Mary Green said, looked beautiful; but, alas! both pictures and walls stood out in sad contrast to the dirt and disorder below.

"If I wasn't going out to-day," said Mary, "I'd try and clear up a bit;" but unfortunately, Hannah Price was at hand to tell her it was no good when there was a man and children about, and that she didn't see but what things would do very well as they were.

Some time in the day, Jane Hart came in to see Tim's pictures, and hug the baby, who, connecting her in some way with an unlimited supply of pies, returned the caresses with hearty good-will.

"Well, we've got so far," said Tim in his old-fashioned way; "but now I don't know what's to be done about the rest. If I was a girl, I suppose I could do it."

Jane looked at Tim and the room till her eyes began to water; and then she fell to hugging the baby again, harder than ever.

"If that was all, Tim," she said, "I'd do it right off myself; but the thing is, how long would it last? I've heard, that if folks

havn't straightened a place themselves, they don't know the value of it. Come, we must leave it to mother."

"And she'll never do it," answered Tim, sorrowfully; "she says it's no use, and so does Hannah Price."

Tim looked very weary and heavy-eyed—the effect, Jane thought, of his trouble about the parlour—so she left off hugging baby to pat Tim's head lovingly, and counsel patience.

"Come, it's no use bothering about it any more," she said. "I used to worry myself over things till they almost wore me out, so then I gave up, and they've gone on better ever since."

But Tim looked so small, that Jane did not know how she should convey to him a lesson of patient trust. She repeated the Bible verse: "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and He shall bring it to pass," but got into difficulties when she came to the explanatory part, and had to fall back to silently smoothing Tim's hair again — a process which he understood perfectly, and brightened under.

"I say, Tim," she said, at last, "suppose

I was to promise you some pies to-morrow, would you believe you'd get them?"

"Yes," answered Tim confidently; and baby began to clap his hands—a proceeding that led Jane to think she was making herself intelligible at last.

"Well, our Father in Heaven, Tim; do you know who I mean?"

"Yes; I've heard about Him at Sunday-school."

"And He says in His book that we're to ask Him for what we want, and if it's good for us He'll give it to us. Now, Tim," pursued Jane, greatly in fear of getting into difficulties again, "if you believe my promises you must believe your heavenly Father's—mustn't you?"

"Yes," answered Tim.

"And when He says He'll give you any blessing, you must wait patiently till He does it."

"But suppose mother won't help," said Tim, who was still intent on that difficulty.

"Then, when our Father in Heaven sees fit, He'll put it into her heart to do it."

Tim seemed to see the thing more clearly then, which relieved Jane considerably; but

still he looked so wan and heavy-eyed that at last it struck her that perhaps he was not well.

"Does your head ache?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Tim patiently, "and I'm a little tired and cold; but mother'll soon be back, and then we shall have tea."

"We needn't wait for her," said Jane, jumping briskly up. "I'll get you some at once."

She put fresh wood on the fire, to which Tim shivered closely up, though the day was mild, and the sun shining brightly out of doors. Then a little paper of tea was hunted out, but, not finding any sugar, Jane went in to the Prices to beg a spoonful.

"Oh, took bad is he?" said Hannah, when she heard Tim was not well. "I shouldn't wonder if he was to go off just like my little Tom. It's the way with them quiet ones."

Jane said, with tears in her eyes, she hoped not, and then hurried back to Tim, who, with his wan face a little whiter than usual, certainly seemed to belong to those "quiet ones" to whom, in Hannah's estimation, such a strange fatality was attached.

Jane waited with him till his mother came

in, and then commended him anxiously to her care. But she soon saw there was no need to do that; for, with all her faults, Mary was a mother very unlike her neighbour, Hannah Price.

"If you have to go out to-morrow," said Jane, "I'll look in and see how he is."

"I shan't leave him if he ain't better," answered Mary decidedly. "Mrs. Parkes'll be offended, but I can't help that; my Tim's worth more to me than all her work."

Both the mother and Jane had thought of the fever next door, and feared that a sad illness might be before little Tim.

Jane went in the next day to see how he was going on, and found him dozing by the fire as she had seen Tom Price do, and afterwards his brother Ned. He brightened up a little on seeing Jane, and tried to eat some delicacy she had brought with her. Mary was at home, but the place did not look any tidier for her presence.

"I havn't forgotten what you said yesterday," whispered Tim, as Jane sat down beside him.

"About the parlour?" asked Jane.

"Yes; you see I can't do anything to-

wards it now, so I'd rather it should be left as you said."

"What does he mean?" asked Mary.

After a little hesitation Jane explained; but Mary took it in very good part, and seemed a good deal touched when she heard how Tim had finally disposed of his difficulty.

"Well, I never was tidy," Mary remarked after a minute's thought. "Mother used to tell me so when I was a girl."

"And have you never tried to correct yourself since?"

"Yes, sometimes; but when you're out so much, a place gets into such a state you don't know where to begin."

"Then I'd do a bit at a time; that's how I manage with my place."

"Your place! why that's always as nice as a new pin."

"But I have to look sharp to keep it so. Suppose you was to wash out a few of the things that are lying about, and find places for them, that would be enough for one day."

"And to-morrow I shall have to go out again, or there'll be no food for me and the

children. Stephen will take his pleasure whether we're well or ill."

"But you do your day's work, Mary, and never mind about to-morrow. My John and a few more is off to a lecture in the town to-night, and perhaps he'll persuade Stephen to go too. That would be one day's wages saved, wouldn't it?"

"No," answered Mary sadly, "for they'd turn into the Raven coming back, and perhaps spend twice as much as usual."

"No they wouldn't; at least I'm sure of John and his set; and Stephen would be ashamed to be the only one to give way. So if he goes you may depend on having him safe back."

"Ah, well! it ain't very likely he'll go," returned Mary, "for he isn't very fond of your John."

That was true. Stephen and most of his associates at the Raven held John Hart in especial abhorrence; however, it was certain that he had got several of them over to his way of thinking—a circumstance that embittered the others, perhaps, still more against him. It seemed a bold effort to try his power with Stephen, especially as he and John were

worse friends than usual just then, the cause of quarrel being that little job of white-washing which John had undertaken unasked. However, he was quite ready, at Jane's request, to see what he could do with Stephen, as nothing worse could come of it, he said, than a few hard words, and for them he did not care. The hard words came, of course; but after they were spoken Stephen seemed relieved, and John bore them so patiently that, feeling at last a little conscience-stricken, Stephen said he would go, but that John was not to think he had made a convert of him, for he should take his full time out at the Raven coming back. Of course John did not stop to dispute that point with him, as it would be time enough to think about it when the lecture was over; however, he managed to look in and tell his wife of his success, thinking it might be a relief to her mind, which it certainly was; and she looked after John, as he started to his work again, with the firm conviction that he was the best and wisest man in the whole world. Then, thinking that some little blundering on Mary's part might undo all John's work, Jane put a delicate home-made loaf and pat of butter in her

basket, and went down to the Greens' cottage. She found that Mary had been carefully carrying out her directions so far as washing the odds and ends of clothing lying about went, but now that they were dried and folded she seemed greatly at a loss as to where to put them.

"Never mind," said Jane, "we'll lay 'em up there now; a neat parcel of clean clothes is no eye-sore anywhere, you know. And now we'll just straighten up the place a bit, and get tea ready, for Stephen's going to the lecture, and if he came home and didn't find things comfortable, perhaps he'd be off in a pet to the Raven."

"That's likely enough," answered Mary, as she got out her broom. "But it seems hard he should have to be humoured so."

"Well, I don't know that. When a man has been at work all day, he ought to have a nice tidy place to go home to."

"Yes, if he'd any money to bring with him, but if he spends almost all he earns on himself, I don't see that he's a right to expect much."

"But if you can coax him into spending a little more on you and the children, you mustn't mind a little trouble. Come, as

we're pressed for time this afternoon, I must help a bit."

Jane's help worked wonders. The little round table was scrubbed, the metal teapot brightened, and such a pleasant tea set out as had never been seen in that kitchen before.

"And now," said Jane, "suppose you wash your hands and face, Mary, while I see to Patty and baby."

This was a part of the preparation that would never have occurred to Mary; however, she entered into it with great zest, and when it was done, and a few tender touches had been bestowed upon Tim, she declared that they would both enjoy their tea all the better for it.

Poor Tim had not much appetite to bestow upon anything; however, the sight of his father and mother seated comfortably at tea, and giving him from time to time a kind word or look—a sort of attention he had never had much experience of before, so far as his father was concerned—was enjoyment enough.

Stephen came straight home from the lecture that night, and the next morning, as he happened to recollect that his wife had a sick child on her hands, he gave her some money before going out, so that she was able to stay

at home, and attend to her own affairs another day.

Very early Jane Hart came in to see how Tim was going on, and finding Mary still conscientiously devoting herself to the cleaning, but sadly in want of a more methodical head than her own to direct her, Jane took off her bonnet and shawl, and set to work with a briskness that was refreshing to see. A great deal was done that day, bit by bit, as Jane expressed it, in case they should begin more than they could finish. Windows were cleaned, old curtains that had been thrown aside as useless, nicely starched and mended, and, what surprised Mary more than all, dirty corners were not only routed out but made orderly, and things neatly put away that had never been known to have places before. Poor little Tim looked on approvingly while the bustle was going forward, though he could scarcely hold his head up.

"You see it was best for me to let it alone," he whispered to Jane Hart. "Shan't we have a nice parlour?"

Later in the day, after the doctor had paid his usual visit to Ned Price, he looked in to see little Tim.

"It's the fever sure enough," he said, "but I'm glad to see you're well prepared for it. You ought to give your neighbour next door a few hints about cleanliness."

Mary coloured, and felt very glad the doctor had not paid his visit the day before.

"And now you must get him to bed at once," he added, nodding towards Tim.

"But I think he likes to be here best," said Mary, "and I've done him up nice and warm."

"Yes, perhaps too warm. But never mind, bed's the best place for a sick child," and with an encouraging pat or two on Tim's white face the doctor hurried away.

"Must I go?" Tim asked of Jane, who came in the next minute from the washhouse. "Just as it's all beginning to look so nice!"

"No, my little man, we'll make you up a comfortable bed here, and then the doctor will be satisfied."

Mary did not know how it was to be done, as her supply of bedding was rather limited, but Tim was not the first sick child Jane had tended, and she undertook to send down all that was necessary. John, of course, was the messenger, and he appeared at the door

heavily laden just as Stephen was going out to spend his evening at the Raven. He received John rather crustily, and told him that he and his wife were making themselves very busy just then.

"And why shouldn't we?" answered John, good-humouredly. "If we was blest with a child, and it was taken ill, I should look to you to do as much for us."

Stephen looked a little mollified, and lingered in the kitchen, while John untied his bundle.

"Perhaps we could help a little," said John. "Here, just you hold Tim—he ain't much of a weight—while Mary makes up the bed."

Stephen took the little fellow on his knee, and Tim, who had never been so honoured within his memory before, did not know whether to be pleased or frightened.

"We shan't keep you long," said Mary, who knew her husband was on the fidget to be off.

"Why, hasn't he done work yet?" asked John, in as innocent a tone as he could command.

"Yes, you know I have," replied Stephen, surlily.

"Well, I thought so. I say, now the

evenings are lengthening out, we've a nice chance of doing a little on our own account. I was trying my hand at putting up a few shelves for my Jane the other night, but not being much of a carpenter, I couldn't give no satisfaction, and so I shall come to you to help me, as soon as your Tim's better."

"But I don't see what he's got to do with it," returned Stephen. "Mary 'll be equal to looking after him by herself, I should expect."

"Very well; then suppose you come to-night. I've just got a fresh lot of books in from the Institute, and you can have first look at 'em. Mr. Marshall 's very good, and always lets me have a few extra ones for distribution."

Greatly to Mary's surprise, Stephen went, and, about a couple of hours later, he came back quite sober, with a book in his hand. So another day's wage was saved.

Either the tidier room, and Tim's illness, or the Harts' influence, kept Stephen away from the Raven all that week, and when Saturday came round, he had a good sum to put into Mary's hand.

"O dear!" said Tim, trying to sit up, "if we go on like this, we shall soon have a carpet."

"A carpet!" repeated Stephen; "why, what do we want with that?"

"Oh, one like Mrs. Hart's," replied Tim. "When she puts it down, she's in her parlour. I should like to see it before——." He stopped suddenly, and Stephen asked, a little anxiously, what he meant.

"Oh, Hannah Price was in this afternoon," replied Mary, with tears in her eyes, "and she said Tim was going off just like her Tom. She didn't notice, I suppose, that he was wide awake and listening."

"I won't have that woman in here, and you may tell her so," said Stephen, savagely; "she's done us mischief enough already. It's my belief, that if we'd had the Harts for next-door neighbours, when we first settled down, Mary, we should have been better off now in every way."

He seemed so much cast down, that Mary was afraid he would go off to the Raven for comfort; however, it was fortunately lecture night at the Institute again, and John, accompanied by his little band, called for Stephen soon after, and then she knew he was safe for the night.

It was easy to shut the door on Hannah

Price and her croaking; but before long, neither Stephen nor his wife could help thinking that she had only spoken the truth, and that Tim was gradually sinking day by day, just as his quiet playfellow Tom Price had done. The doctor still gave them some hope. Tim had conquered the fever, he said; but, then, the poor little man had been so roughly used in the conflict, that his strength was gone, and there was no getting it up again. Stephen was lavish with his money on the child, and Jane Hart exhausted her ingenuity in making little delicacies for him; but nothing seemed to do him good. As is often the case with thoughtful children, his intelligence increased as his life appeared to be ebbing slowly away; and Stephen, who had never taken much notice of his children before, watched him as though some angel had suddenly been sent down to make him better and wiser. One evening he came in with a heavy roll under his arm.

"It's the carpet, mother," said Tim, confidently.

And so it was—a handsome strip, with brilliant colours on a dark back-ground, as Mrs. Hart had suggested; and Tim saw it

unrolled with only a quiet smile of satisfaction on his face. The parlour had been advancing so rapidly towards completion during his illness, that nothing seemed to surprise him now.

"There, you must soon get up and wear that out," said Stephen.

Tim made no answer, but kept looking at the carpet for some time with admiring eyes.

"You must roll it up in the morning, mother, when you do your work," he said, at last, "and then put it down when father's coming home."

Stephen started up, and stood for a while outside his cottage door. Then coming softly back, he found Tim asleep.

The chief thing that seemed to grieve Tim, as he lay quietly on his little bed, was his inability to go to the Sunday-school; but when his teacher heard that, she came in regularly to see him after leaving her class. The lesson he liked to listen to best, was the first one he had heard from her lips—the Great Supper, and that was talked over so frequently, that even Stephen, at last, began to pay some attention to it. One afternoon a fresh subject was chosen—the Many Mansions; and

Tim, who seemed even brighter than usual, asked his teacher what a mansion was.

"A beautiful home," she answered, and she was proceeding to picture out her subject, when Mary said softly, "Perhaps he would understand better if you was to say a parlour."

The teacher looked surprised, but took the hint, and her new definition of the word, that had puzzled him, seemed to give Tim perfect satisfaction.

"But will there be any one there?" he asked, after he had thought the matter over at his leisure.

"Yes, the Lord, Tim. Don't you remember what He says? that He will gird Himself, and make His people sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."

"O yes," answered Tim readily,—"the Great Supper—how could I forget that?" Then, after lying for a minute or two with closed eyes, he added softly, "A parlour—the Lord—the Great Supper—you'll be there, father, won't you?"

Stephen could not answer, but he slipped his hand into Tim's, and, in the silence that followed, the sick child fell asleep. His father watched steadily by him—too full of

his own thoughts to feel tired—till afternoon service was over, and John Hart stole in to see how Tim was going on. A glance seemed to satisfy him on that point, and, with a nod of approval to Stephen, John sat down on the other side of the fire-place, and fell to watching Tim too, with great energy, till his thoughts wandered away from him to his parlour.

"I say," he whispered to Mary, "suppose you was to put the carpet down; it would make the place look more lively like when he woke up."

"So it would," replied Mary; "only, you see, I havn't had the heart to think of it to-day."

However, with John's help, it was laid down forthwith, and then, as he stretched out his great feet upon it, he declared himself tolerably comfortable.

"Only," he said, "I shan't want to go in a hurry. That's the worst of having your place too nice, you see,—it brings such lots of company."

"Oh, we shan't mind that," said Mary, "as long as it's company we like, and you're always welcome, John."

"Yes, that you are," said Stephen, heartily; and so John sat on in perfect content till Tim opened his eyes again, and stared in considerable bewilderment from the bright carpet to his father's face.

"What was it we was talking about, father?" he said. "Oh, I recollect—the Lord's parlour."

"Yes, but you ain't bound for that just yet," replied Green. "You're going to stay here, and keep mother and me company a bit longer."

"And help us to finish up the place," put in John; "it isn't half done yet."

"Ain't it?" said Tim; "not now we've got the carpet?"

"No, there's lots more to do. Father's going to knock up a mignonette box to put in the window, as soon as you get well."

"Are you, father?" asked Tim.

"Yes; and you must sow the seeds."

"And they'll want a deal of looking after," said John; "seeds always do—that's the worst of 'em."

Tim thought, however, that he should be equal to the task, and said so before John left—an announcement that gave his good

friend considerable satisfaction; and he told his little wife as he sat over his pipe that night that he "didn't think Tim was going to leave them just then, though Hannah Price had chosen to keep up such a croaking about him all along."

But, to John's surprise, Jane did not seem at all pleased by the information.

"Why, do you think Hannah a better judge of a sick child than I am?" he asked.

"No, it isn't that, John; I was wondering which would be best. It seems to me that if the child was took, Green might set more store by the teaching he's had lately."

"As to that," said John, "if Green's to learn his lesson he'll do it whether Tim lives or dies. And as far as I can see, I should say a heart softened by a great mercy is likely to be more teachable than one burdened by a heavy sorrow. But you know more about such matters than I do."

"No, I don't, John. However, as we have not got the ordering of it, we may be sure it'll be right either way."

And leaving the case so, the Harts were not surprised to find that things turned out happily, and that Green learned his lesson

—a pleasant one of love for his home—though Tim lived to put up more pictures in it, and water the mignonette with untiring care. Sometimes, of course—as bad habits are not conquered all at once,—an uneasy fit came over Stephen, but then a pipe at the Harts', where he was always welcome, or an evening at the Institute, would set him to rights again. And Mary, too, had her difficulties to contend with. She did not get tidy all at once, nor Stephen very patient; but with perseverance, she conquered her faults, and, after a while, her cottage was as pleasant a picture of neatness and cleanliness as any in the village.

"You never come in to see us now, Green," remarked an old associate of Stephen's, as he and Green were leaving work one evening with several other men, John Hart among the number.

"No; my Tim's found me a better parlour than the one up at the Raven," answered Stephen, "and I mean to keep to it."

"That's right," said John Hart; "there's no place in the world like Tim's parlour, depend upon it."

And so Tim's parlour became in the village

another name for home, and the landlord at the Raven found poor little Tim the greatest enemy he had ever had. Many young wives, just settling down in cottages of their own, came afterwards to Jane Hart or Mary Green to learn how to manage them; and then, from pleasant home firesides, were gradually led to look up to the Heavenly Mansions, or, as Tim would have expressed it, the parlour above, where the Lord and the Great Supper were awaiting them.

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