

Family Reading.

The Watered Lilies.

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us,"—2 Cor. iv. 7.

The Master stood in His garden, Among the lilies fair,  
Which his own right hand had planted,  
And trained with tenderest care.

He looked at their snowy blossoms,  
And marked with observant eye  
That His flowers were sadly drooping,  
For their leaves were parched and dry.

"My lilies need to be watered,"  
The Heavenly Master said;  
"Wherein shall I draw it for them,  
And raise each drooping head?"

Close to his feet on the pathway,  
Empty, and frail, and small,  
An earthen vessel was lying  
Which seemed of no use at all.

But the Master saw and raised it  
From the dust in which it lay,  
And smiled as He gently whispered,  
"This shall do My work to-day.

"It is but an earthen vessel,  
But it lay so close to Me;  
It is small, but it is empty,  
That is all it needs to be."

So to the fountain He took it,  
And filled it full to the brim;  
How glad was the earthen vessel  
To be of some use to Him!

He poured forth the living water  
Over His lilies fair,  
Until the vessel was empty;  
And again He filled it there.

He watered the drooping lilies,  
Until they revived again;  
And the Master saw with pleasure  
That His labor had not been vain.

His own hand had drawn the water  
Which refreshed the thirsty flowers;  
But He used the earthen vessel  
To carry the living showers.

And to itself it whispered,  
As He laid it aside once more:  
"Still will I lie in His pathway  
Just where I did before.

"Close would I keep to the Master,  
Empty would I remain,  
And perhaps some day He may raise me,  
To water His flowers again."

New Select Serial.

KATHLEEN.

THE STORY OF A HOME. THINGS NOT RIGHT. CHAPTER XXX.

"You think wrongly. If you take care, you may be all right in a few days; but this is no weather for running risks." Kathleen made no answer.

"Does Joan spend much of her time with you here?"

"Yes,—a good deal. She is very kind now."

"I see she is much more fond of you than she used to be. How about her devotion to Mrs. Joliffe?"

"Oh—I don't think that was worth much," said Kathleen.

"I am sorry for it. I don't like changeableness."

"I don't think Joan can help changing," said Kathleen dubiously. "When she took to Mrs. Joliffe—abroad, I mean—she seemed to leave off thinking about Miss Jackson; and now she has taken a fancy to me, she does not seem to care for Mrs. Joliffe."

"And when she takes to somebody else she will forsake you. Uncomfortable! However, there are such characters in the world, and one must make the best of them."

"Don't go yet," said Kathleen wistfully, as Lady Catherine put away the little sock.

"I think I had better. If I stay, I may be tempted to give you a lecture, and that will bring back your headache."

"I should not mind a lecture from you. I have no one else to tell me when I am wrong," said Kathleen sadly.

"And I feel as if I had gone wrong lately, somehow. I have not been happy."

"I have seen that for some time. We will have a little talk some day, dear. I do not think to-day is the time."

"It would do me good. Just a few words, pleaded Kathleen. "I will be good, and not cry or get excited. It seems as if I had been in a sort of tangle lately, and I cannot get out of it."

Lady Catherine looked at her watch.

"I can spare ten or fifteen minutes more. What kind of tangle, Leena?"

"I don't know," was the answer; and Lady Catherine considered.

"Do you remember a little conversation that we had at Rouen last autumn?" she asked. "And a certain little sentence about self-will, which you quoted to me. Can you remember it now?"

"I am not sure," Kathleen said.

"Yes—partly. It was that 'the great cure to be worked in us is the cure of self-will,' and that 'all God's dealings with us have this one end in view.'"

"Yes; and you spoke about the different tests that had been sent to you, especially your father's going to Rome."

"I remember," said Kathleen, in a low voice. "And I thought I had learnt the lesson then. I thought I had conquered."

"You had conquered in a skirmish, perhaps, but not in the whole battle. It seemed to me not unlikely that a stronger test would be sent."

"What test?"

"That which has come since."

"Mrs. Joliffe?"

"Yes, your father's marrying again. That was the intensifying of the same discipline which began abroad. How about the cure of self-will?"

"I have not thought much about it lately."

"Not so much, perhaps, as about trying to gain or keep your own way in certain particulars."

"But, Lady Catherine, indeed I thought I had been submissive."

"To whom?"

"To Mrs. Joliffe. I have let her do whatever she liked."

"Let her!" Lady Catherine repeated with a curious expression.

"I mean—I have not resisted. I have tried to make things smooth for her."

"The question lies deeper," said Lady Catherine gravely. "Not—have you been submissive to Mrs. Joliffe? but—have you been submissive to God?"

"I don't quite know," Kathleen said softly.

"I think not. I can only judge from small matters. Suppose God willed to take from you the morning walk, for example? What then?"

Kathleen's head dropped.

"Is that an instance of cured self-will, Leena?"

"No, I see now. Thank you for telling me. I have been very wrong."

Presently she said,— "But about Mrs. Joliffe?"

"Yes,—about Mrs. Joliffe?"

"I have tried to do what I ought. And indeed I do not think she has anything to complain of."

"Nothing at all?"

"Why—does she complain, Lady Catherine?"

"No, Kathleen; not even of her long separation from her child, though the poor mother's heart is in her throat when she speaks of her."

"But that was entirely Mrs. Joliffe's own decision."

"Is it a reasonable or an unreasonable decision?"

Kathleen lifted her eyes slowly. "I do not know; I have not thought about it."

"Would Miss Dodson be happy here?"

"I don't see why not." But Kathleen looked uneasy.

"You think you could have met her as a sister?"

Kathleen's—"Oh how could I?" was involuntary.

"Well, not precisely that at the first moment. But you would have given her a warm and loving welcome."

"I would be kind, of course. And she would have my mother."

"I see," said Lady Catherine. "It was to be a case of two households under one roof. Mrs. Joliffe and her daughter on one side; Miss Joliffe and her sisters on the other side; and Mr. Joliffe as a connecting link between."

Kathleen was silent.

"Is that a true description?" asked Lady Catherine.

"I don't see how it could be anything else," said Kathleen mournfully.

"My time is up," said Lady Catherine, rising. "And I don't think I need say more. You will think the matter over quietly, and find out whether things are exactly as they ought to be."

Kathleen's eyes were full. "I don't know how to find out," she said.

Lady Catherine kissed her affectionately. "Yes, you do. Ask to be shown, if you cannot see. Picture how your Master Himself would have acted in your position. That often helps one to a knowledge of where one is wrong. I shall come again in a day or two, and meantime you are to take care of yourself, my dear child. Good-bye!"

Joan appeared presently, and asked, "Are you coming down to dinner to-night?"

"Yes, I think so," said Kathleen dreamily.

"Mrs. Joliffe asked me just now, and she said she hoped, if you did, that you wouldn't change your dress, for fear of a chill. I don't see what business it is of hers. I promised to give her message, but of course you are free to do as you like. What a long while Lady Catherine was here. How are you now?" asked Joan, with a fondling manner, oddly in contrast with her old coyness towards Kathleen.

"I am tired," Kathleen said.

"I heard Mrs. Joliffe telling papa that you ought not to go out for a few days. She said Dr. Ritchie had forbidden it, and she said he must not ask it of you. A piece of interference! He told her he had to go somewhere—I forget where—to-morrow morning, and she said, 'Yes, I shall go with you.'"

Kathleen's heart beat fast.

"Some people do like to manage things their own way," said Joan. "Well one comfort is, we are free in here. I always thought it was such a clever move of yours, getting room this to ourselves. She daresn't come in."

"I don't think it was right," said Kathleen, with an effort. "There is no harm in its being ours, but I think she ought to be able to come in sometimes. I would rather not talk just now, Joan. I want to be quiet till dinner-time."

"And you will change your dress,—just to show that you can do as you choose?"

"No,—I shall do as she advises. Joan, don't try to make me cherish wrong feelings."

Joan kissed her and went away. She often gave way to annoyance thus, having quite lost sight of her old affection for Mrs. Dodson in her new devotion for Kathleen.

At dinner Kathleen was in her usual seat, with unchanged dress and a shawl round her shoulders, for the large dining-room felt chilly after her warm little sitting-room. Mrs. Joliffe thought her looking more than usually fragile; and when dinner was over, she said in an undertone, on their way to the drawing-room,— "You would not rather go to bed at once, Kathleen?"

"No, thank you."

Two things struck Kathleen forcibly

at the same moment,—a certain suppressed tenderness and anxiety in Mrs. Joliffe's manner, and a certain extreme coldness in her own. She stopped short suddenly, conscience-smitten, and lifted her eyes to Mrs. Joliffe's with a look of almost apology. "No, thank you," she repeated gently, in a different tone. "Not just yet, I think."

Mrs. Joliffe took one of Kathleen's hands between her own. "It is hot," she said. "And I can hear that the cough is no better."

"No, I suppose I made it worse by going out this morning," said Kathleen, with resolute self-humiliation. "Lady Catherine told me I was wrong."

"Hardwicke must give you something warm to-night—unless you will let me come and see to it, Kathleen. I am an experienced nurse."

The honest blue eyes, so different in colour and shape from those of Kathleen, looked as wistful and pleading as ever Kathleen's had done.

"Yes, please do," she said, on the moment's impulse. And the sudden brightness of the other's face, not a smile, but a kind of illumination of happiness and thankfulness, like the breaking out of a sunbeam from within, amazed Kathleen. She had not expected it.

They passed from the stove-heated hall into the gas-lighted drawing-room. Kathleen went to an easy-chair near the fire, and as usual the three other girls came about her. Mr. Joliffe too sat down by her side, and petted her, and called her 'his poor little girl.' Mrs. Joliffe gave one look at them, and then went quietly away with her work to an ottoman at a little distance, as if to leave them in peace.

Kathleen noticed again with a sense of dissatisfaction. She pondered the matter, considering whether she ought to take any steps to bring Mrs. Joliffe into their circle. Justina and Olive had their worsted work, and Joan was dipping into a magazine. Mr. Joliffe proposed a game of draughts with Kathleen, while she was still debating in her mind what to do; whereupon Olive ran for the board, and Justina went for a little round table.

The door suddenly opened, and a lad stepped inside, unannounced. He seemed to have made his way in alone, as if at home. He stood there, in the full glare of the gas-light, a mere slight boy about fifteen or sixteen in appearance, dressed in a rough grey suit, with a cap in his hand. His blue eyes were wide open, searching the room, and his agitated white lips moved wordlessly.

"Who is it?" asked Mr. Joliffe, looking up.

"I've come home," the lad said huskily. "Don't be frightened. I'm not a thief, though I did get in at the study-window; and he laughed nervously. "Does nobody know me? Where's mother?"

The Rifted Cloud. A CHRISTMAS STORY.

BY LUCIE DAYTON PHILLIPS.

This beautiful story from *Our Young People* properly belongs to Christmas time; and our young friends after reading it in three or four portions may well give it a second reading all together, afterwards, perhaps on Christmas morning.

I.

Five miles distant from New York City, in one small, close room of a tenement-house, lived Alice Fane, a sewing girl. The other rooms were occupied by factory hands, except the one across the narrow hall from hers. In this lived a carpenter and his family—kind people in their way—and to them Alice was indebted for the roof that sheltered her from the snow-storm of this mid-winter day, and for the very crusts Susie and Kate had eaten at noon. She thought of this with a mixture of gratitude and bitterness, as she sat by the dying fire, her busy hands idly folded—a stern look, resembling despair, hardening the lines of her young face. Her usually brave bright eyes had, in their fixed gaze, something far sadder than tears; and, when she glanced towards the corner where two little girls were playing with some rag-dolls, she turned quickly away and shuddered.

It was hard that just at this moment one of them should rush to her with this sudden, eager question:

"May we hang up our stockings, sister?"

"Not this time, I think, Katie. We are so poor this Christmas. Perhaps, before the next one comes, I can do plenty of work; and then my darlings shall have pretty dolls, and a whole box of good things."

"Oh! how nice!" cried the child smiling brightly toward her twin-sister, still absorbed in the rag dolls. "Come here, Susie, and hear sister tell about next Christmas. Then we will be rich, and it may not be so cold as this one. Oh!—with a sigh—'I wish it were not such a long way off.'"

Susie hastily deserted her treasures and joined the others. And poor Alice, her heart almost breaking with pain, steadied her trembling voice, and, clasping the children in her arms, told them of what another, and a happier year might bring to them.

When Alice's father who was an artist, had died, leaving only his honest name, and a few strange sea-pictures for his children's legacy, she turned toward his new-made grave with a mute longing to lie there beside him; for wise and sadly experienced in sorrow for her eighteen years, she knew something of the life that lay before her. Her heart sank as she looked at her little sisters, motherless from their birth, in their pretty helpless childhood. But she had no time to spend in vain longings and hopeless grief. Her purse was empty, and she was the bread-winner for three.

Among her few treasures was a valuable locket, whose sides were enameled and studded with small diamonds—a bridal gift from her father to her mother. In their darkest days, he would never consent to part with this, a relic of his young and hopeful manhood; but Alice could not hesitate now. She carried it to a wealthy lady, who had offered to buy it once before, and obtained for it, a sum about half its value. She did not wish to remain in the city, where the little girls, when she left them, would be exposed to dangers and evil associations; and considered herself most fortunate in having means to secure, and to pay for, in advance, this little room, in the suburbs of a thriving village—not so far from the great metropolis, but that she could get work from the shops, when it was not to be obtained nearer home.

Once settled here, she looked about her with a more hopeful heart. Yet some dark days followed, in which the few dollars she possessed were consumed, and want, even starvation, stared her in the face. But she was too brave to faint so early in the struggle. When one means of support failed, she courageously turned to some other. She had inherited much of her father's talent, and now employed it in painting screens and lamp-shades, for the city shops, and in furnishing designs for braiding and embroidery. In spare moments, she learned the art of hair-dressing; and for many months now had added to the week's small income by taking in fine needlework, and gadding her weary fingers to pursue their task until midnight. Her employers always liked the lady-like working girl, and so far she had kept the wolf from the door. But now she could no longer keep him at bay. She had injured her eyes by some fine lace-work, which she had set up till near the dawn to finish for a rich customer. She had used them long after they were painful and swollen; and then the inflamed lids closed over the young eyes that had seen so little of life's beauty, and the busy, restless hands laid idly in her lap. Her money was all gone; her rent due; no bread in the cupboard? What was she to do? She thought of the two children, who had gone back to their dolls, happy and secure in the belief that "sister" would take care of them; and she covered her face with her hands. Could she see them starve or be homeless, this bitter weather? They would have no fire on the morrow, and the snow was still falling in a dreary, pitiless way.

Was it a real voice that whispered, "Look up, faint heart! Where is your trust in God? When did he ever fail you?"

"He never did!" cried the poor girl, the anguish going out of her young voice, and a ring of hope stealing in its stead. "He never did; and I mean to trust him to the very last!"

Then the tears streamed through her burning lids. But they were not bitter, and she let them have their way.

II

Now it happened—as we are wont to say when we see God's plans unfolding—that Dr. Carrol, the wealthiest man in the village, needed some repairing done to the tenement houses which he owned, and on this very afternoon had come, himself, to engage the carpenter's services. His agent usually attended to all such matters. But he had been detained in the city; and so the doctor himself "happened" to have them in charge. The carpenter's wife knew the benevolent character of this wealthy man, and she had made up her mind, while he talked with her husband, to tell him Alice's story.

The good doctor listened attentively. "Poor girl!" he said kindly. "We must help her, of course, and we cannot begin too soon. Could I see her now, do you think?"

"I suppose you could, sir," answered the woman, hesitating, and wiping away with her coarse apron the tears which her own rough eloquence had brought to her eyes, "but I wouldn't like her to know what I've told you, sir. She is that proud, is Alice; and charity goes hard with the likes of her. You might say that I asked you to look at her eyes—which I do!"

"The very thing!" said the doctor, cheerily. And Alice had scarcely removed the traces of weeping from her pale, pretty face, before he knocked at her door, in his own abrupt and hearty fashion.

She was greatly abashed and astonished when her low "Come in," was answered by the great man of the village. The small room seemed to grow smaller, and to look more poverty-stricken than it had ever done before. But this was only for a moment. Under the influence of the doctor's genial manner and kindly voice, Alice forgot both poverty and pride, and soon was telling him about her eyes, and listening hopefully to his suggestions in regard to them. And while he examined hers, and talked about their temporary inflammation, he used his own, to good, purpose. The father's legacy—those weird sea-views—still hung on the wall of the bare little room. Not one had found a purchaser. There were also some landscapes of her own, fresh and sunny, and restful to the eye, on a wild day like this—a boy's head in crayon, and some artistic groupings of wild flowers on black panel. Now the doctor loved pictures, and fancied he knew a good one, when he saw it; and the more he looked at this strange collection, the more he was persuaded he had found a way to give this girl substantial aid, without wounding her pride by offering charity.

"Your pictures, child, deserve a better light," he said, glancing at the one low window. "Your father was an artist, your friend across the way tells me. Do you paint, too?"

"I have done a few things, under his direction," said Alice; "but as I could never sell his work, I had little hope of selling mine. So I have tried to do something that pays."

"To-morrow is Christmas eve," said the doctor, musingly. "Now they generally expect me to play 'Santa Claus' at our house, and I have a little girl who only yesterday, begged me to buy her some pictures. Could you bear to part with two of these?"

Her dimmed eyes flashed joyfully as he took out a well-filled purse. Some expression that flitted over her face, illuminating its features, touched him deeply. For a moment, he shaded his eyes with his hand, though the light was far from brilliant in the poor little room. Some thought of his own pretty daughters, with their graceful, dainty ways, of their gratified wishes, and luxurious lives, made his voice husky with emotion.

"And may I take my choice, Alice?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!" cried the girl; and there was a note of triumph in her voice, as if she had said to her happy heart: "You see we were right to trust Him!"

And now the good doctor selected two that specially pleased his fancy.

"I shall have to take them away at once," he said; "for they must be framed and hung upon our Christmas-tree to-morrow night. What a fortunate call this has been! How pleased my little