

Poetry.

The Church and the World.

BY MATILDA C. EDWARDS.

The Church and the World walked far apart
On the changing shores of Time;
The World was singing a giddy song,
And the Church a hymn sublime.
"Come, give me your hand," cried the giddy
World,
"And walk with me this way;"
But the good Church hid her snowy hand,
And solemnly answered, "Nay,
I will not give you my hand at all,
And I will not walk with you;
Your way is the way of endless death,
Your words are all untrue."
"Nay, walk with me but a little space,"
Said the World, with a kindly air;
"The road I walk is a pleasant road,
And the sun shines always there;
Your path is thorny and rough and rude,
And mine is broad and plain;
My road is paved with flowers and gems,
And yours with tears and pain;
The sky above me is always blue,
No want, no toil I know;
The sky above you is always dark,
Your lot is a lot of woe;
My path you see is a broad, fair path,
And my gate is high and wide;
There is room enough for you and me
To travel side by side."

Half shyly the Church approached the World,
And gave him her hand of snow;
The old World grasped it and walked along,
Saying in accents low,
"Your dress is too simple to suit my taste;
I will give you pearls to wear,
Rich velvet and silk for your graceful form,
And diamonds to deck your hair."
The Church looked down on her plain white
robes,
And then at the dazzling World,
And blushed as she saw his handsome lip
With a smile contemptuous curled.
"I will change my dress for a costlier one,"
Said the Church with a smile of grace;
Then her pure white garments drifted away,
And the World gave in their place
Beautiful satins and shining silks,
And roses and gems and pearls;
And over her forehead her bright hair fell
Crisped in a thousand curls.

"Your house is too plain," said the proud old
World,
"I'll build you one like mine:
Carpets of Brussels and curtains of lace,
And furniture ever so fine."
So he built her a costly and beautiful house;
Splendid it was to behold;
Her sons and her beautiful daughters dwelt
there,
Gleaming in purple and gold;
And fairs and shows in the halls were held,
And the World and his children were there,
And laughter and music and feasts were heard
In the place that was meant for prayer.
She had cushioned pews for the rich and great
To sit in their pomp and pride,
While the poor folks clad in their shabby suits,
Sat meekly down outside.

The Angel of Mercy flew over the Church,
And whispered, "I know thy sin."
The Church looked back with a sigh, and longed
To gather her children in.
And some were off in the midnight ball,
And some were off in the play,
And some were drinking in gay saloons;
So she quietly went away.
The sly old World gallantly said to her,
"Your children mean no harm—
Merely indulging in innocent sports."
And she leaned on his offered arm,
And smiled, and chatted, and gathered flowers
As she walked along with the World,
While millions and millions of deathless souls
To the horrible pit were hurled.

"Your preachers are all too old and plain,"
Said the gay old world with a sneer;
"They frighten my children with dreadful
tales,
Which I like not for them to hear;
They talk of brimstone and fire and pain,
And the horrors of endless night;
They talk of a place that should not be
Mentioned in ears polite,
I will send you some of the better stamp,
Brilliant and gay and fast,
Who will tell them that people may live as they
list
And go to heaven at last."

"The Father is merciful, great and good,
Tender and true and kind:
Do you think He would take one child to heaven
'And leave the rest behind?'"
So he filled her house with gay divines,
Gifted and great and learned;
And the plain old men that preached the Cross
Were out of the pulpit turned.

"You give too much to the poor," said the
World,
"Far more than you ought to do;
If the poor need shelter and food and clothes,
Why need it trouble you?
Go, take your money and buy rich robes,
And horses and carriages fine,
And pearls and jewels and dainty food,
And the rarest and costliest wine:
My children they dote on all such things.
And if you their love would win,
You must do as they do, and walk in the ways
That they are walking in."

The Church held tightly the strings of her
purse,
And gracefully lowered her head,
And whispered, "I've given too much away;
I'll do, sir, as you have said."
So the poor were turned from the door with
sorrow
And she heard not the orphan's cry;
And she drew her beautiful robes aside,
As the widows went weeping by.

The sons of the World and the sons of the
Church
Walked closely hand and heart.
And only the Master that knoweth all
Could tell the two apart.

Then the Church sat down at her ease, and said,
"I am rich and in goods increased;
I have need of nothing; and have nought to do.
But to laugh, and dance and feast."
The sly World heard her and laughed in his
sleeve.
And mockingly said, aside,
"The Church is fallen, the beautiful Church,
And her shame is her boast and pride."

The Angel drew near to the mercy-seat,
And whispered in sighs her name,
And the saints their anthems of rapture hushed,
And covered their heads with shame;
And a voice came down through the hush of
heaven
From Him who sat on the throne,
"I know thy works, and how thou hast said,
'I am rich,' and hast not known
That thou art naked, and poor, and blind,
And wretched before my face;
Therefore from my presence I cast thee out,
And blot thy name from its place!"

Family Circle.

Out of the Dark.

BY HESTER A. BENEDICT.

"I do wish father'd come," said little
Mrs. Knowles, laying down the sock she
was mending and crossing over to the win-
dow that commanded a view of the street,
up which her husband could not reasonably
be expected for a good two hours.

"Night's setting in early, and pitch
dark, too; not a sign of any moon; and I
shouldn't wonder if it stormed. The air's
felt like it all day."

She held the curtain aside with one
hand, and shaded with the other her an-
xious blue eyes that were strained out into
the growing dark!

"I hope Henry won't get wet. Poor
fellow."

She let the curtain fall, then drew a
chair, over which hung a merino dressing
gown, close to the fire, which she stirred
vigorously, pulling the tea kettle over to
the front lid of the Stuart, waited a minute
to stroke the side of a maltese cat—a huge
handsome fellow, whose right to the
chintz-covered lounge nobody ever thought
of disputing—then she went back to her
mending.

"You're a good wife Mary," said Grand-
mother Keese, Mrs. Knowles' mother, who
had seemed too occupied in taking up the
stitches of a heel just bound off, to hear
what her daughter said, or to notice what
she did, but whose keen eyes and ears saw
and heard everything. "A good wife.
There'd be fewer bad men in the world if
there were more women like you."

"Do you think so, mother?"
"I know so," grandma answered, hold-
ing her half-sock up to the light and trying
to find the stitches. "And I didn't use
to think you'd amount to much as a help-
meet to a man. You were such a giddy
girl, you know."

"But I love Harry, mother," the blue
eyes brightened in the lamp-light; "and
it seems to me that any girl with good
common sense to start with, and who loves
the man she marries, will do what she can
to help, as well as to make him happy!
At least—why, here, mother, let me take
up those stitches."

"Well, I reckon you may, child. My
sight ain't so good as it once was. Hark!
ain't the wind blowing uncommon hard?"

As if for answer, a stormy gust shook
the windows at that moment and beat upon
the door till it flew wide open, letting in
the snow and putting out the lights.

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed the old lady,
and "dear, dear!" echoed the young one,
shutting and bolting the door, and then
relighting the lamps.

"Oh, I do wish Harry would come!"
Mrs. Knowles added, anxiously.

Then, after a pause, in which her blue
eyes had been slowly filling with tears, she
added:

"Do you remember, mother, that it was
on just such a night as this that the child-
ren went away?"

"Yes child, I remember it well. How
the wind came tearing out of the beech
woods, with the blinding beating snow
burying up the fences."

"And mother,"—Mrs. Knowles' voice
was low and full of sorrow—"do you know
it seemed the hardest thing of all to me
that the little white souls should have to
start out to the unknown from the heart
of so terrible a night. So lonesome for
them, so—Oh mother, I don't know, but it
seems to me I could have borne it better
in the daytime, with the sun shining and
the blue sky full in sight!"

"God was in the dark and the storm,

my girl. Would he let the babies go alone,
do you think?"

"No, mother, no. I know that he car-
ried and carries them in his bosom; but
mine is empty,—but for the pain; and it
aches so hard, so hard, mother!"

"I know, I know, dear." Grandmother
was smoothing the brown hair rippling
over her knee, and her eyes had a far-away
look in them, as if their faded lids were
touched by the finger of some mournful
memory.

And the old arms went around the
young neck, and the old eyes and the
young wept silently together—the silence
broken only by the hiss of the kettle on the
stove, the tick of the clock on the mantle,
and the feet of the storm beating their wild
way everywhere without.

"Toot's so tired, sister, can't we sit
down just a tiny minute now?"

They were half way up the high hill,
beyond which, a quarter of a mile stood
the warm love-lit home of Harry Knowles.

Such delicate little waifs they were, boy
and girl, apparently six and eight years
old, and their pale pinched features told a
pitiful story.

"And Toot's so sleepy," the boy con-
tinued. "If you lie down with me and
hold me up close, as mamma used to, just
five minutes, I'll go—oh—ever so far."

The girl hesitated. She was tired and
sleepy, too, and the storm seemed to have
taken away all her strength. Her feet
were like sticks that would scarcely obey
her will, and she had nearly fainted twice
in the last half mile's walk.

"Isn't this 'way in the country?' the
boy went on. "Here are trees and fences,
and I s'pect lots of birds and bushes with
red, ripe berries on them—only it snows
so we can't see 'em. And you know mam-
ma said, 'Don't stop till you go way into
the country. 'Ain't this the country,
Helen?"

"Yes, darling," the girl replied, "and
we will stop at the very next house."

"But I can't go till I rest and sleep.
Oh, I am so sleepy!"

And the boy sunk down in a little heap
by the roadside, pulling his sister after
him. She had little wish to resist, and less
power.

"Sister?"—the boy was nestled up to
the girl's warm heart, and the snow was
spreading over them its soft, deathful
covering.

"Yes, Toot."

"Do you s'pose God'd let anything hurt
—anything hurt us—if we'd say our prayers
twice?"

"I hadn't thought of that," answered
the girl. "We must try."

"But I'm so sleepy I can't think how it
begins."

"Well, say it after me, Toot." "Now
I lay me down to sleep."

"Now I lay me down to sleep"—don't
let my head slip, Helen."

"No. 'I pray the Lord my soul to
keep.'"

"I pray the Lord my soul to keep,"

slowly repeated the boy, clinging closer to
the bosom that was his only home.

"If I should die before I wake,"

"If I should die—Oh, I am so cold!"

And, Helen, just felt the icicles in my
eyes."

The girl put her numb fingers on the
sleepy shut lids.

"They're tears, pet," she said tenderly.
"You've been crying and I didn't know
it. Don't cry, Toot."

"But you're crying," persisted the
boy.

"Only a little, dear. I was thinking of
mamma."

"Do you suppose her eyes shine up in
heaven just as they did when she put her
arms around me and said 'Dear Toot.'"

"I guess so," Helen whispered, trying
to choke down the sobs.

"But do you suppose she sees us down
here in the snow?"

"Yes Toot, because you know she said
she should always be seeing and loving
us."

"Then—then—I don't believe she is
singing with the angels. She never sung
when we were cold and hungry."

"Maybe she is asking God to take us
out of the dark and the snow. Shall we
finish the prayers now?"

"Oh yes, I'd most forgot. Where were
we?"

"Let us begin again and go straight
through twice, without stopping," said
Helen.

The snow had covered them closely ere
the prayer was said—the prayer that had
been finished with a low "Dear God, don't
let anything hurt us for mamma's sake.
Amen."

And a minute later both children were

fast asleep upon their cold, wet couch on
the hill side.

The storm increased. The wind grew
keener and angrier.

Young Harry Knowles, wending his
way from the city, where he went to the
market every day, had vacated his high
spring seat and was crouching on the floor
of his waggon, wrapped in the blankets
and talking cheerily to his iron greys.

"Never mind, my beauties," he was
saying, "only another mile and the shelter
and the food." Then after a pause:
"These for them and oh, how much more
for me; and there's many a poor fellow
going home in this storm who would as
lief stay out as go in, I think. But my
home is a home."

And the man almost forgot the cold
without, his heart grew so warm within
him.

His horses shied presently, threw up
their heads, snorted and stood stone still.

"Why Bess! Why Beauty! What's
up now? said their master springing to
his feet and tightening up the reins.

"Not a thing in sight but the snow.
Go 'long, do you hear?" and he gave Bess
a sharp cut across her flank, which made
her rear and plunge, but go forward she
would not.

Cæsar, Knowles' big dog, who accom-
panied his master everywhere, had been
standing all this time with his fore-feet on
the side board, snuffing the air, and looking
around, as dogs that are lost do, quickly,
eagerly; suddenly he bounded from the
waggon scenting and barking his way to a
little white heap in the road side.

"Well this beats me!" Mr. Knowles
said, obeying something that bade him
follow the brute.

And there they found them—the little
waifs half way up the hill, asleep in each
other's arms.

The wife went out when the horses
stopped in the back yard, close by the
poreh door—went out wrapped in a water-
proof, and carrying a lighted lantern.

"Aren't you most frozen dear," she
asked.

"Not a bit of it," her husband answered
cheerily, jumping from the waggon and
kissing the bright face that was turned up
to his own.

"Mary," he add, I think God has meant
to be very kind to you and to me. See
here."

He lifted the lantern which he had taken
from his wife's hand, and held it so, that
the light fell upon the two faces looking
from the blankets and guarded by Cæsar,
who had stretched himself half over the
small limbs that might, and might not, have
life in them.

"O Harry! are they dead?" the little
woman cried.

"I hope not. I think not. Let us see."

And so by human hands two little lives
were borne into the home out of which, by
Divine hands, two little lives had been
taken on just such a night, three years be-
fore; for the children lived and live.

"I guess our own mamma heard us pray-
ing down there in the snow," Toots said
next day, with his arms around his new
mamma's neck, while Ellen sat on grand-
ma's knee.

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