

## **Cottages homes : a book for mothers.**

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# COTTAGE HOMES.

A BOOK FOR MOTHERS.

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Ninth Edition. Forty-fifth Thousand.

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LONDON :

JARROLD & SONS, 47, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

*Price Twopence.*

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**LONDON: JARROLD & SONS, 47, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.**



## COTTAGE HOMES.

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Two miles from the large manufacturing town of Riston, situated in one of the Western Counties of England, is a row of small red-brick cottages, called "Barker's Buildings," built some thirty years since by a retired tradesman of that name; which in its resources and situation, is rather superior to the neighbouring rows and small streets. Mr. Barker always prided himself on having respectable tenants—tenants who would pay their rent regularly, and who would in no sort damage his property; and he was tolerably fortunate, for of his seventeen houses, it was seldom that one stood vacant, whilst the tenants were always such as could scarcely fail to do him credit.

It came to pass about ten years since, at a time when the trade of Riston was depressed, provisions dear, and money scarce, that Nos. 6 and 7 stood empty for a whole quarter; and it became expedient if they were not to continue to stand empty, to lower the terms, which Mr. Barker did accordingly; although from that time he feared that the select character of Barker's tenants was no longer a thing to be boasted of and rejoiced in. No. 6 and No. 7 were let on the same day, but to very different occupants.

On Tuesday the 25th, as bright and brisk a March day as could be well desired, a waggon, the property of a farmer in the village of Berbury, some eight miles distant, drew up, and deposited in the little garden of No. 6, a load of clean, country-like looking furniture, in that state of excellent preservation which bespoke a careful possessor. A jolly farmer, Joseph Wright by name, and the owner of the waggon, was

brisk in unpacking; and his son, a tall, stout, healthy-looking fellow of thirty or thereabouts, the father of the five children who were stowed safely among the beds and soft things, did not effect half as much, although he talked a great deal more. The wife, a pleasant, plainly-dressed, young woman, did, in her quiet way, almost as much as the grandfather and father together; and it was astonishing to many mothers in Barker's Buildings, how this grand move was accomplished without any bustle or scolding whatever; and how before nine o'clock, when the farmer and his waggon were wending their way Berburywards, the five children were all in bed, the litters were nearly all cleared away, the last peg and shelf knocked up, and husband and wife sat down quietly to supper.

A new and untried life was before the wife and mother; and it needed strong faith to reconcile her to the change, from the pure fresh air of the country to the vicinity of this great black town. Farming had not prospered of late years with the elder Wright, and the plan which had hitherto been found to answer so well, of keeping his elder son to manage and overlook his agricultural concerns, had to be abandoned, as the produce of the farm decreased, and family cares and necessities became more urgent. When William was but a lad, he had spent some time with an uncle in Riston, who was engaged in a large glass manufactory in the town; and now that the farm had to be sold, and the old man was compelled to retire to a little cottage and three or four acres of land, William determined to resume his labours in the glass works, and to leave the field at home open to his younger brother David.

It was sad to leave the smiling village in the beautiful spring season—when the children began to talk of the violet and primrose gathering; to leave their birthplace too, and to go and dwell among strangers; and a few secret tears had Anne Wright

shed in the prospect. But the bitterness of separation was over now, and as she looked at her true-hearted husband, and remembered that the new dwelling contained all her dearer treasures, she felt that it was home still.

They had just completed their meal, and Anne was beginning to wash up the plates, and in earnest prepare for the rest she so greatly needed, when a girl of sixteen, without any preparatory knock, popped her head in at the door, and asked if Mrs. Wright (she had learned her name) could lend mother a little butter for supper. They had forgotten it until the shops were closed, and father was ill, and could not eat his supper without butter to his toast.

Mrs. Wright had been looking somewhat grudgingly on the delicate country butter of which but a small portion remained, but hearing that the father was ill, her kind heart opened, and she freely offered the untidy girl, whose hair was a mass of dust and disorder, the nice little pat on a clean white plate, a contrast indeed to the hands put out to receive it. "That is one of the new neighbours, I suppose," said William, who had had time to scan the slatternly visitor. "Yes, I saw them all come in while we were unpacking, a poor paralytic man, an idle looking son, and several girls. The mother came later, just before dusk, with the last barrow full of goods." The sleep in that humble dwelling was very sweet this night. The Wrights lay down in peace and slept, and awaked at morning dawn, sustained by the God they served.

May was come, less bright, Anne Wright fancied, than the Berbury Mays had been, and the children's faces less rosy already than those which smiled around the May queen in their native village. The trials of the town life were now felt; for it was a trial when they were turned into the little strip of garden to play, to have to listen as Anne always did for the loud voices of the quarrelsome little Deanes, next door, who when excited either to joy or sorrow, were

not very choice in words, and often took God's name in vain. It was a trial to know that the examples of such children were not the only evil influences around them—that the angry scolding parents too often set the little ones examples of passion and impatience, and that from frequently hearing and seeing strife and contention, the children might imitate. It was a trial, too, to be called proud, because when the Wilmots, a band of dirty, ill trained, little roughheads, came and tempted Willie and Annie into the lane to play, she called them in, that they might not come in contact with dirt scarcely compatible in Anne's eyes with decency or health; and perhaps there was a little secret pride in her heart all the while—a little contempt for the poor shiftless mother, who could suffer all this dirt and disorder, both in the children's persons and her own home.

It was the practice of certain ladies in the neighbourhood of Hunwell, to make periodical visits to certain rows and small streets around, for the purpose of delivering tracts, and ministering to the wants of the inhabitants.

For a long time Barker's Buildings had received less attention than the neighbouring dwellings, owing to the superiority of the inhabitants; but the noisy, neglected children of the poor Wilmots, and the sight of the paralytic man at No. 7, decided the ladies to go, and ascertain the real condition of the inmates. Accordingly, one Monday morning, towards the end of May, Mrs. Freshfield, a young married lady, and her companion, Miss Watt, turned their steps up the lane leading to Barker's Buildings, and came in due course to the Wilmots, at No. 4, where such a noise of screaming children met them on their entrance, that they were disheartened.

When silence had been enjoined, and the screaming child, after a hard blow, had been pushed into the back washhouse to have its cry cut there, Mrs. Freshfield opened her mission, and offered a tract. The

poor woman took it respectfully, promised to read it, and when told that it contained a few hints as to training her children properly, looked conscious and ashamed; for she loved her children with true mother's love, though in the struggle of life she had lost somewhat of the tenderness of her first maternal affection; so she listened humbly to the criticisms, of which she felt the truth; but when the ladies were gone she sat down and wept, for she thought no one could know what a poor woman's trials were but those who, like herself, were poor; and she was still crying and pitying herself, when Anne Wright appeared, that new neighbour whom she had called uppish and proud, and for whom she had contracted a most unaccountable dislike, leading by the hand a very dirty-faced little lad of ten years old: no other than her own Johnnie.

Mrs. Wright soon explained,—“I was in the Redding meadow,” she said, “with the children, when I saw your Johnnie and one of the Taylor's boys paddling in the water, and as Johnnie would soon have been out of his depth there, I made bold to bring him home.”

Up jumped the mother, who a few moments ago had been so sad, and so weary, and seizing hold of the child, shook him violently, asking him how he dared to disobey her; had she not told him never to go near the water; but he would catch it as sure as he was born, when his father came home to tea; and then turning to her neighbour she took breath and relapsed into her tone of sad complaining, saying, no mother ever had such troublesome children as she, and no one ever tried so hard, she was sure, to make them good either. Anne Wright had never read any book on education, you may be sure. All systems and plans and schemes were strange to her, but she had one or two very good notions on the subject; and, what was better, and more to the purpose, she carried these good notions out; they were these:—When her first-born

child was laid in her bosom, she asked for wisdom to bring it up aright. She knew that she was in God's sight even as her child, helpless, dependent, ignorant, wayward; and she saw in His patient dealings with her, His guardianship and His love, the example which it became her to follow to the little one He had given her. So, long ere the child could reason, she taught it to obey; not by harsh rough words or rougher acts, but by gentle force she bent the baby-will while pliant, and in the cradle it learned habits of submission.

Let no one say this is impossible, or look on the matter as a vain piece of advice, easily given, but not to be brought into practice; we are all more or less that which habit makes us. Your infant, whilst it cannot reason on your words, may yet understand your acts. "With the mother's milk the young child drinketh education." Patience is the first great lesson; he may learn it at the breast: and the habit of obedience and trust may be grafted on his mind in the cradle. To give a child, even a young infant, all he cries for, is to ensure much present crying and future wilfulness. To teach him early the duty of waiting, is to make him in after years happy, trusting, and contented.

Very sorry did Mrs. Wright feel for her new neighbour; she saw so much that was wrong, so much that needed better teaching than hers, that for a few moments she was silent. At length she said, "I am very sorry to see you so troubled; children are, no doubt, a trial; but I think sometimes we don't take it enough to heart that their faults are ignorances rather than naughtiness. Perhaps Johnnie hadn't been told the water there was deep and dangerous."

"That he had, times and often."

"That was bad," Annereplied, "and something more than thoughtlessness; but would it do any good to be severe with the boy? might not that make him timid and try to hide his fault another time."

"How, then, should he be made to remember it?"

"I think if he saw you very sorry, and if you reasoned with him kindly like, he would remember."

"Well, may-be he would; I don't know but I'll make it up with him; he's very young, you see. I sha'n't say any more about it, only it was well to frighten him a bit."

"But you said you would tell his father!"

"Tell his father! not I; he is so sharp with the children, and when he takes 'em in hand, it's no joke."

"What a pity you said so, then; for don't you see it makes a child bold and careless, when you threaten and don't perform. My mother used to say that she found the best way to keep her ten children in order was to reprove seldom, and to give few orders, but to see they were obeyed."

"Ah, it's easy either talking or writing about such things. The ladies that have just called have left me this tract, 'Plain Rules for the Management of Children:' but it is all nonsense. A child must be brought up as it can with us poor folk. Oh, dear! the clock is on the stroke of five, and my fire is low, and there will be fine words if my John does not see the water boil; there's the child screaming now!"

"Poor little thing! it is teething, isn't it?" said Anne, compassionately taking a sickly and not over clean child of ten months from the cradle where it had been sleeping.

"No, it is always fretting so night and day, never satisfied, and yet I'm sure I'm always feeding it too; it had some sop only an hour ago."

"Perhaps it isn't always hungry when it cries, and then if you feed it, it makes it worse."

"Oh, I don't see how that can be; a child won't eat if it isn't hungry."

"I am not so sure of that, I know my babies will; and often when I have thought they have not had enough, I find after all they have had too much. I think a child may be got into the way of expecting

its food regularly instead of always craving for it, if we feed it at regular times." But seeing Mrs. Wilmot colour, she said in a kind tone, "but you look so tired; it is very likely if I had bad health and sickly children, I should do the same. A well child is, after all, no rule for a delicate one. I'm sure I wish I could help you; but Mrs. Wilmot, in all our trials, it is a comfort to think of Him who is never tired of our complaints, and to whom we may go in trouble, never fearing but He will bid us welcome."

"Ah," said the poor woman, "but I seem to have no time to pray, Mrs. Wright."

"No time!" Oh, Mrs. Wilmot, do not be vexed if I say, if you have no time for prayer, you can have no strength for trial. Do you remember what very short prayers have been heard and answered by God! such as 'God be merciful to me!' 'Lord, help me!' and 'Lord, remember me!' I suppose it is'nt the length of our prayers, but their earnestness, that God looks at; always, of course, if we offer them through Jesus Christ."

There was a humble tearful look on the poor woman's face by this time, which the counsel lately given had failed to produce.

My sisters, whether rich or poor, if you go forth on your missions to one another—and each of you have a mission—without one little key in your possession, that master key which unlocks every human soul, you may twist, and turn, and shake, and knock, but you will never gain admission into the soul's sanctuary. That key is the golden key of love, which will turn the stiffest lock that ever yet offered resistance.

"Come again, won't you?" said the neighbour, wiping her eyes, "I heard you tell of your mother; I never knew what a mother's care was."

"May God pity you then, my poor neighbour," said Anne tenderly; "how much more have I to answer for!"

The ladies had by this time made the tour of the Row, and had met with varied welcomes. They were just leaving the lane, when espying Mrs. Wright opening her little gate, they returned. She had left the children playing in the small garden, and on her return found, as the best mothers often will find with the best children, that the absence of her eye had caused a little trouble. They were quarrelling for buttercups, and Willie, the elder boy, had, in right of his elder brotherhood, stood out for the honour of dividing the meadow spoil, to which right the others not yielding, a tumult had arisen, and Jenny, the elder sister, in attempting to snatch at the treasure, had scattered them on the ground in the dusty garden bed. The ladies vociferated loudly, and the children cried lustily, but the mother's presence soon brought a hush—not the hush of fear, but the awe which their weakness and naughtiness felt before her calm goodness.

An angry child met by an angry parent, loses its sense of guilt in the secret triumph of the elder's fault. To govern a child, let us remember that we must first govern ourselves. If temper will arise, indignation and annoyance strive for mastery. Let us forbear to speak until we have breathed the silent prayer to God for help; and, oh, then believe me, my sisters, for I write as one of you, to whom your trials are well known—oh, then, I say, the angry word will die on the lip, the threatening word will be forborne, and the Spirit of the dear Saviour will be given.

No one knew the conflict in the mother's bosom, but the mother herself and He to whom she lifted up her heart for patience. Patience came. The flush and the anger passed away, and she quietly began to soothe the children. She stooped down and gathered the few flowers that were not spoiled in her hand, comforted the most grieved of the little gatherers with a promise of more another day, and bidding Willie run upstairs and wash his face, and Jennv do

the same, she took the hand of one of the little ones and led the way into the cottage, apologising as she did so to the ladies for the delay in attending to them, and asking them to sit down and rest.

This was a pleasant surprise; the ladies had nearly entered the inhabitants of Barker's Buildings in their visiting book, as a very strange impracticable class, for their reception generally had been anything but cordial. They were quite consoled by the present welcome, and by the willingness which Mrs. Wright testified to send her children to the Infant School—her elder boy already went to a school in the neighbourhood—as well as the quiet respectful way in which she attended to some well-meant, but perhaps not very well-timed advice, as to the duty of teaching little children to love one another.

There is perhaps no ground so delicate to tread as that of the mother's dominion. One feels that it becomes us to touch with a very gentle hand that most difficult question—the management of children.

There is that in the mother's heart—I ask all mothers if it be not so—which naturally revolts against interference between her and her child; and perhaps if half the good advice which wise educators have written for our guidance, had been clothed in the form of sympathy rather than counsel, we should have been bettered by their well-meant attempts. Let us each bear this in mind in our intercourse with one another, and take it as a great principle, that to advise properly, we must sympathize entirely. We must make the case our own, and recollect it is not enough to feel for a person; if we would help him, we must feel with him.

The kettle was not boiling and the tea was not ready when the husband and father returned; truth to tell, the fire was out, and the whole household presented but a dismal aspect. A cross hasty man would have bounced and stormed, or sulked and grumbled. William Wright was not faultless in

temper, but he had learned self-control, and although for a few minutes he looked cloudy, his vexation soon passed away as he saw his wife's efforts to set matters to rights; and he took the baby, and kept the younger children quiet whilst the tea preparations commenced.

Willie had by this time stolen down stairs; his hot flushed face and red eyes telling a tale of woe, and he was standing sorrowfully by the faded butter-cups when his father observed him. He was not afraid, that little lad, to meet his father's eye.

"I will tell your father," was a threat never sounded in his ears; nor was his return dreaded as the signal for long details of naughtiness.

"I will never make the father a bugbear to his child; I will never poison the peace of a working man, by his fireside, with stories that I cannot manage my little ones; if I cannot, who can? I! their mother—I, a woman whom God has sent for the purpose of being a help-meet for the man, not bring up my children! what was I created for? what was I made a wife for but for this end?" This was Mrs. Wright's principle. Let us act on the same; do not let us, as we love our husbands and value their peace, be for ever pouring into their ears our petty trials and vexations. Be very sure that when a man comes home weary with the day's labour for our bread, he has need of rest; and where should he find it, if not with his wife, and by his fireside?

Ladies are apt to tease their husbands with domestic grievances; their servants are so troublesome, their house is not in a situation to their mind, or they want a trip to the sea-side or a journey abroad. Wives of another class grumble about their children or their neighbours, and complain of their hard day's work, and their aching heads and limbs. Well, whatever be the grievance, take the truth to heart, that the husband is not pleased at the necessity for such labour and such weariness; that he often marks

in secret that of which he does not speak, and that the way to ensure his sympathy, is not to grumble, but to suffer patiently. Men do not usually express all their feelings, as we of the more talkative sex are wont to express ours; but they do feel; and for our own sakes, as well as theirs, let us not drive them to seek brighter companionship at the ale-bench or the tap-room, than they can find in their cottage homes.

I never see a man rolling into the beer-shop or the gin-palace; I never look at the wretched, worn, tearful, imploring face of his wife, nor hear her piteous cry, "do come home;" but I wonder what that home was in times past, and ponder on the probable history of its decline; a history which began, may be, in as simple a cause as the murmuring discontented pining of the woman, who should have been the light and the joy of the household.

"And, so Willie, you are in trouble, what is it all about?" said the father. Willie explained—perfect love had cast out fear. The children told their faults as readily as they would have told a doctor of their aches and pains; but they did not tell them as though they thought lightly of them either. The crimson blush became deep as the child's tale was unfolded.

"Oh, Willie, and you struck little Annie!"

"Yes, father."

"I am very sorry."

How the passionate child's heart smote him that he had caused such pain—how far sorer a punishment than stripes was the tone of deep, grave, earnest sorrow with which his father spoke. There was a cloud over the little meal that night, and the boy knew what caused it—he knew too when his mother gathered them round her knee to hear their evening prayers, why those words were said, and why each child, even the little three-year old Alice, was bid to repeat them,—“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.”

The children were all in bed and asleep, dreaming of the golden buttercups and the daisy chains in the pleasant meadow—baby was in its cradle—and father and mother were seated by the cottage door, when a little white figure stole gently down the stairs, and softly over the kitchen floor, and a little broken voice sobbed out, “Oh, mother, I am so sorry!” The sorrow was turned to joy in the mother’s heart, as she heard the boy’s whisper of penitence, and folding Willie in her arms, she told him that the dear Saviour would receive and forgive him, if he really repented of his sin; that angels would rejoice in heaven as they saw him return, and that God’s Holy Spirit would help him if he sought it, and would come and dwell in his heart.

Ah, mothers, is it not worth all your toil, all your patience, all your labours oft, to hear a little one pour out its sorrows and confessions to you, and to be permitted to lead him to the Saviour who has redeemed you, and who has said, “Suffer little children to come unto me?” Train your child then to trust in you, “so shall he learn reliance on the Lord.”

Winter was at hand, colder and sterner in its mood than had been its wont for many seasons. The poor man’s wife found that the same amount of wages did not furnish her with half the comforts which the family demanded. Flour was dear; coal, which in that part of the West of England is usually so moderate, rose with other prices. Landlords were distraining for rent; the Deanes, with another large and thriftless family in No. 10, had been compelled to change their quarters. Pawnbrokers’ shops were full of goods, and yet many of those who had pawned furniture and clothes to procure the necessaries of life, went on spending their wages at the beer and gin-shops. The utmost economy which Mrs. Wright could practise was required; and even then the

children looked grave morning and evening, as they missed the butter on their bread, which they thought, and very truly, seemed coarser than in former days. Let no one say the poor are bad managers, until they know how they contrive in times of pressure to make both ends meet. Now was the time of trial in the poor man's home, when love and faith were tested; and all honour to many and many a cottage family, the poverty which entered at the door did not, according to the old adage, cause love to fly out of the window. Those who loved one another truly in prosperity, were but bound the closer by adversity; but it was those, and those only, who had sought God in the days of sunshine, who when the tempest came, found Him a very present help in trouble, and of this number were the Wrights.

"What should we have done," they often asked each other, at the close of the busy week, when John brought in his wages, and placed them in his wife's hand. "What should we have done if we had lived up to our little means? Now it is close work enough; but, oh, the comfort of that money in the Savings' Bank. Little as it is, still it is saved, and is *our own*."

It was a dark February night; the wind howled mournfully, and all around looked cheerless, when an infant stranger was laid on the humble pillow of the honest cottage matron, who received the gift with thankful joy, and without one distrusting thought that He who sent the child would withhold his Fatherly care, or deny it any needful thing.

It was late in the afternoon when the baby cry was first heard, and John, contrary to his custom, was not home when the clock struck eight. He had worked extra hours for some time past, but never had he been so late as now. The wife's heart began to fail, and her thankful joy was turning into soul-sickness, when a step was heard—alas! not his step.

The nurse opened the door. A stranger stood on the threshold; it was a rough working-man with a kindly heart, a heart that would have done credit to a prince.

"I am come from poor Wright, he said he was afraid of giving his wife a fright; he has lamed his hand badly at the works, and I came to tell her. We took him to the doctor's—he was so faint and bad; he'll be here in a few minutes. She need not frighten herself. Tell her he'll do well enough, only he looks white, mind you."

White indeed he looked, and whiter did the poor woman turn, as her husband, an hour after, entered her apartment. "My right hand, too," sighed the poor fellow, as in pain and grief he lay down that night, vainly trying to rest, and kept awake no less by the agony of his wounded hand, than by the anxiety of mind which pressed upon him.

The poor are often rich in heart friends. The anxiety of that month, when William Wright, helpless and crippled, could bring in no support, and his wife, worn with sorrow, regained her shattered strength more slowly than usual, was cheered by many kind offices; but at the month's end, when things should have fallen again into their accustomed train, there was the truth before their eyes, that the savings in the Bank were exhausted, and the lame man's hand, to all appearance, as far off use as ever. What was to be done? the rent was due, and the money not forthcoming. The children's schooling could not go on; and the parish—what would the parish say to tenants of Barker's Buildings applying for relief? The clock, the bright chest of drawers, the very table itself must go; and accordingly, clock and drawers did go, and the poor housewife's sighs and tears followed these relics of better days.

William, sad and dispirited as he was, taught the little ones as well as he was able, and saved the school-money; while his wife, poor creature, worked

early and late at her needle; and from the grey March morning light to the red glow of evening, sang "the song of the shirt," as her baby's lullaby. But this could not go on; shirt-making would not find eight human beings with home, food, and clothing, and something must be done.

"My baby is six weeks old to-morrow," said Mrs. Wilmot, one afternoon, as she sat in Mrs. Wright's kitchen for a little chat, "and I think I may now leave it. I begin to get up my strength a bit, and John is out of work, so I shall try and get in."

"Leave the child! go to work! Oh, Mrs. Wilmot, don't do that."

"Why not? and what am I to do? For all you say—don't do that!—trust me, you'll be glad enough to do the same yourself, ere long."

"Have you ever tried it?"

"No, I can't say I have, but every one must live. If the husband can't work or won't work, the wife must. I've put Johnnie out to go of errands; he is going on Monday morning to Mrs. Freshfield's, and I shall go to one of my old places, charring."

"Charring?"

"Yes, how you look; and washing too, if I can get it. It's all very fine talking," and she hugged the poor baby convulsively, for the mother's heart beat strongly within her; "all very fine; I know what you would say about leaving home and so on, and that baby will come to harm; but better that than all of us starve, which seems like enough."

Anne Wright sighed. What if it really came to that, that she must leave her children and go and earn their daily bread. Her spirit had nearly fainted within her. As the two mothers talked together, Mrs. Wilmot hushing her baby on her bosom, and Mrs. Wright stitching away at a fine wristband, her child sleeping in its cradle, the latter said, "Don't be offended with me, Mrs. Wilmot, but don't you think it a bad habit always letting a baby sleep on your

arm that way? it lets your time and does the child no good."

"It won't sleep any other way," said Mrs. Wilmot, shortly, "I have'nt had six children without finding out the way to keep 'em quiet."

The secret seemed scarcely discovered yet, for the infant was anything but quiet at the breast, and the mother, from the undue drain, looked worn.

"I believe we may get a baby into good ways as easily as bad, if we only try in time. I don't know what I should do now if mine would only sleep on my arm, or required rocking, or hushing, or feeding to get it off.

An answer was on the lips of the other matron, when a knock was heard at the door, and a fresh, rosy-looking woman, with a figure which bore witness to good living and little exercise, entered. It was the next-door neighbour of the Wrights, the wife of the paralytic man, to whom allusion was made in the early part of the story.

A visit from Mrs. Pank was so unusual an occurrence, that it put the simple-hearted Mrs. Wright in a little flurry. Mrs. Pank and her family both lived and dressed and comported themselves in a manner so different from the other tenants of the row, that very few of the neighbours ventured on any familiarity with them. Miss Sarah Pank was a dressmaker, and made a very grand appearance on Sundays, and although her younger sisters were not quite so smart, and if the truth must be told, the linen and undergarments were in a miserable condition beneath the outside finery, still they passed as well-to-do people and very rising ones, when it was remembered what a poor figure they cut but a year previously. The fact was that Mr. Pank was a poor broken-down shoemaker, who from an attack of paralysis three years before, had been obliged to give up business, and to depend on the exertions of his wife and family

for support. It is a sharp trial, the severest that can befall a poor man, when the means of such support are drawn from the wife and mother.

Time had been when the father was in health and vigour, when their home was one of comparative order, peace, and comfort. The mother, although a person of impulsive feelings and little decision of character, had, so far as she knew her duty, performed it both to the husband and children. He, although a really God-fearing and christian man, was sorely lacking in the firm resistance of evil in its early stages, which would have prevented mischief, now, alas, irremediable. Often in his lonely and suffering hours, he wrote bitter things against himself, and remembered the fate of Eli, who restrained not his children. So matters stood, when the great stroke came and deprived the family suddenly of the great means of maintenance. Happily there were no very young children. Letty, the youngest, was nine years old at the time of her father's attack. Fanny, a girl of fourteen, and Jane and Sarah just entering womanhood, were, however, all at home, and unprovided for. Sarah had waited in the shop, a duty by no means unpleasant to her, and Jane had done shoe-binding and taken in dress-making, but knew little of hard work. The only son, a gay, wild youth, the mother's idol, and likely to become a mother's sorrow, neglected a thriving little trade. The entire failure of the concern followed, and in debt and poverty they left their native town of Gloucester and came to Riston, where they had a few friends, who kindly interested themselves for the family, procuring Henry a situation as journeyman shoemaker, Jane and Fanny nurse-maids' places in the neighbourhood, whilst Sarah and the youngest child remained at home, doing what work they could get, and the former dressing much better than she could afford. Mrs. Pank went out nursing. Her first places were among small tradesmen and farmers' wives in the town and villages around, but her

pleasant manners and real skill as a nurse soon procured her better situations; and at the time of which we write, whilst poverty and privation were so severely felt by her neighbours, Mrs. Pank's trade was a flourishing one, and she was now very seldom at home. Her wages were good, and her children knowing it, cared little for exertion; and, worse than all, the mother's absence at that critical time of a girl's life, when the heart is set on pleasure and gaiety, was telling badly in the poor shoemaker's home, and report said that Sarah and her sister Jane were a scandal to Barker's Buildings. Mrs. Pank only half believed the story, and although she was not without her anxieties, she kept them to herself at present, and wished the tenants of the Buildings would keep their thoughts snug, and mind their own business.

Her face, on this Saturday afternoon, was full of important news, and there was a little patronizing air about her which betokened great tidings.

She was evidently in a bustle, and Mrs. Wright thought smelt unpleasantly strong of porter; but she supposed it was a necessary part of a nurse's diet; her nurse, she knew, required it.

"I am come to take you off, Mrs. Wright," said the fat lady, after feeling the limbs of the baby, and looking at it critically. "I've got a fine chance for you. Mrs. Cartwright, of Westbury wants a wet-nurse. Her child is just three weeks old, and you will do exactly."

The colour came and went rapidly in the mother's face, as the nurse proceeded:—"Twenty shillings a week, and presents, and dresses, and capital living. A nurse-maid to wait on you; you will live in clover. I have seen your husband in the lane; he says she will spare you, if you are willing to go. Why, bless me, Mrs. Wright, and you are crying after all! Ah! well, that's always the way at first; but, dear me, it's what dozens of mothers do, and these are not times to stick at tender feelings."

"I thank you, Mrs. Pank," was the reply, "you mean me a kindness I know. but I cannot accept it."

"You are not in earnest!"

"I am, indeed."

"William," and she turned to her husband, who entered at the moment, "it is not your wish, dear, I should go, is it?"

He hesitated—"My dear, I should be sorry enough to part; but—20s., and we are very poor."

"Not all 20s. gain though Will, remember. I must pay some woman to come and clean the house and take care of baby."

"Baby could go to mother's."

"Oh! William, and she so old and infirm. It would break my heart, too, poor as I am, to take the baby's own right from its mouth; no, no, Will, it can't be. How could I forgive myself if the children got into bad ways, or you grew sick of your comfortless home, and took to liking other places better! oh, let us keep together. If we are poor, let us be poor together."

"You are right," he replied, "we will keep together, and God will help us."

But Mrs. Pank was not to be put off: she knew whom she had to deal with at Westbury Manor, and was certain, that being crossed in this matter, would throw her lady patient back, as she said, or put her out of temper, which was all the same thing. So she tried to work a little on the motherly feelings of the good woman, and drew so very touching a picture of the cries and pinings of the infant, that, as she guessed, Anne's heart was softened.

"Why does not the mother nurse it herself?" she asked at length.

"Oh, bless you, she can't; she is so dreadfully delicate, it would kill her and the child too; besides, she has'nt the time for it. Fashionable ladies, you know, have not. But time is going, and I tell you I dare not go to my lady to-night without you. The

child is screaming and pining its life away, and the doctor says a nurse it must have. Will you come for to-night till we can find another?"

"And leave my own?"

"Oh, nonsense, a healthy child like that can take no harm. I've got the light luggage cart in the town, and will carry you back now if you will."

"Thank you, I cannot."

Mrs. Pank was now perplexed; what should she do! Perhaps if Mrs. Wilmot were neatly dressed, and had a little cleaner face, and a good meal or two, she might stop the gap. She took up her baby. It certainly did not do its nurse credit, and yet she had no alternative. A respectable married woman, healthy and strong—this was the doctor's charge.

Poor Mrs. Wilmot, she was in an agony of expectation, and when Mrs. Pank turned to her, there was a bright flush on her face, which happily turned the scale in her favour, and for lack of better she was engaged forthwith, conditionally indeed, on the doctor's approbation, and her tidying herself at once. The tidying process took some little consideration. Mrs. Wilmot's wardrobe was, alas, very scantily provided for; but the nurse promising untold dresses if she would only make the best of herself now, the bargain was made—the mother hurried off, leaving her child screaming violently in the arms of her sister-in-law—a giddy girl called in on the emergency—and her children and household in such Saturday confusion, as drove her idle husband to the beer shop, and the new housekeeper to distraction.

The last stitch was set; Anne Wright rose with an aching head, prepared to carry home the shirt. Her husband thought of the chance of 20s. lost, as he saw his wife calmly folding up her week's work.

"Fourteen shillings worth, eh, Anne," said William, with a sigh, "we must hit on something else, my girl."

"Mrs. Bradshaw, the lady to whose house she took

the shirts, told her to come into the dining-room, and speak to her. The shirts were for a visitor, not for herself. The visitor was a young married lady, with but little knowledge of the world generally, and small acquaintance indeed with the poor man's world. She looked sharply at the work. James was so very particular about his shirts. She commended sparingly. The button holes were defective, and, oh, the stitching! Did not Mrs. Wright understand there was to be a double row?

"No," Mrs. Wright said, and pointed in justification to the pattern shirt. But the servant certainly gave the message! No, the servant had done no such thing. The girl was rung for and questioned. Nothing remained, but to take the work back and finish the stitching. Of course there was no payment, and when she left the room, and sate down in the hall, to wrap up her bundle, her courage gave way, and she burst into a flood of tears. Where was the tea, the little piece of meat, and the flour to come from, that night for the family? and how was she to nourish her little one, faint and exhausted as she was? For the first time in her life Anne despaired.

At the door she met her old doctor, the master of the house, at the sight of whom she blushed, but he kindly said,—“Why should you cut your old doctor, Mrs. Wright? Why did you turn me off when your last child was born?”

“Because, Sir, I dare not add to my debt to you, so I got a dispensary doctor.”

“Don't treat me so again. Don't let the debt trouble you. How is your husband's hand? I heard of his accident.”

“He doesn't get the use of it, Sir, and this keeps us poor. We have lived on our little savings, but I am going home to-night without a shilling in my pocket.”

“Did the nurse, Mrs. Pank, come to you?”

“Yes, Sir.”

"And you refused?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Was that wise?"

"I hope you won't be angry, Sir, but I think it was. I know it was right."

The doctor thought so too, and pressing half a sovereign into Anne's hand, sent her away with a light heart to buy her small marketings, feeling that God did indeed bless those who put their trust in him. She was nearly an hour before her business was completed, and on her return she was astonished to see her husband with his bandaged hand uncovered, and Annie bathing it with salt and water.

"I have had a doctor since you went away, Anne; our old doctor, he promises me to be cured in a week, but he says the hot bandages are doing my arm hurt. And look here!" and he held up ten shillings.

"But I have got ten shillings, too. Oh, William!"

Their hearts were very full; so full that they were obliged to weep, and then to pray; but prayer was turned to praise, and they could scarcely praise for the fulness of their love and joy.

"How glad I am you did not take the place at Westbury," said the happy husband; "you were quite right. We will always keep together; it will make our joy the brighter, our sorrow the lighter."

Spring time brought hope and health again to the Wrights. As they had been careful to avoid debts, and had preferred close pinching to buying food on trust, they were able, when William got to work, once more to start tolerably clear. It was an up-hill path. The rent troubled them; and this they could for the present pay only by instalments; but Mr. Barker, when he saw their honest efforts, was willing to trust them further; and moreover he was wise enough to see that in the present depressed state of trade, and the unoccupied condition of several of his houses, such tenants as the Wrights were worth retaining.

It was a bright afternoon, in the early part of June. The children had resumed their school life; only the two younger ones remained at home. The baby, now nearly four months old, lay kicking and crowing on a clean coloured quilt or nursery carpet, which was one of Anne's household treasures; and a treasure to which her babies were mainly indebted for their fine, strong, healthy limbs. This carpet deserves a mention, and as it is within everyone's reach to procure, it may not be out of place to describe it to you here.

First of all, Anne had sewn together two or three widths of stout grey calico, and formed thereof a bag of about two yards square. This bag she had filled with oat-flights, as they are usually called, obtained for a few pence of the corn dealers, and forming a tolerably easy mattress for the purpose. The patchwork quilt was of old dresses of various colours and dates; but gay enough to please the baby. And on this quilt, secure from harm, the children of Mrs. Wright had passed many an hour in infancy. They had none of them those sad bent legs, so commonly seen among the children of the poor, and as commonly to be traced to bad nursing. Her children did not learn to walk very young, for the good reason that they were never tempted to do so, until they were strong enough to bear their own weight; but when they had taught themselves, and become courageous enough to leave the chair by which they held, every one confessed that they stepped nobly along, and did their self-teaching credit. This nursery carpet is worth your trying. A child is none the better, be it rich or poor, strong or delicate, for the constant heat of the lap or the nurse's arm. The enjoyment with which it will first kick and then crawl on the mattress, will soon convince you, if you try the experiment, that your baby, at a very early age, likes liberty. Of course you will watch that it does not feel neglected or alone; a word or

two, a smile, a song may be required, to tell the little one that you do not forget it, and when it shows symptoms of restlessness, it should at once be taken up; but I believe, in most cases, we do too much with our babies—we do not let them rest enough, and are too anxious to keep them constantly excited and alive. German nurses and mothers are great examples to us in this respect; they teach their little ones that, which we too often disturb—habits of tranquillity and patience.

Anne was very busy, but very happy. The baby was a picture of health, and in her eyes of beauty, as it cooed, and smiled at Charley, the child of two, who played bo-peep behind the cotton pinafore—Charley, proud of his guardianship, and baby content to be so guarded. It was beautiful to see how that principle of guardianship pervaded the whole household. The strong supported the weak; the elder were gentle to the younger. The ladies were going their rounds this afternoon, and at this moment Mrs. Freshfield appeared.

“When do you think,” asked Mrs. Freshfield, “that I could see Mrs. Wilmot? I have called twice, and they say she is out nursing, and no one is at home this afternoon but some very dirty children; they say the aunt who takes care of them—*such* care indeed—is out. I want to tell the mother that I cannot keep her boy.”

“Indeed, ma’am, I am very sorry, and so will she be, poor woman; isn’t he a good boy?”

“Terrible! idle, saucy, and I fear not honest.”

“Dear, dear, I am so sorry; and you see, ma’am, having no mother at home, and but an idle, drinking father, I fear there’s no chance of his getting better.”

“I cannot keep him, that is certain; he has got bad companions in the streets, and is not to be trusted. Will you tell his father I wish to speak to him about Johnnie?”

"Yes, ma'am, but he is so hard when he is angry; I'm afraid he won't do the child any good."

"Such a child needs severity, Mrs. Wright."

"Oh dear no, ma'am, I beg your pardon, I think he is just the sort that needs the gentlest treatment; hard words and hard blows make hard hearts harder."

"I am surprised to hear you talk so; I did not think you spoiled your children."

"No more I do, I hope, ma'am; they all mind my word, and they could do no more for a blow."

"Unanswerable argument, certainly; but the same mode of treatment does not answer with all, surely Mrs. Wright?"

"No ma'am, perhaps not; that is to say, a stubborn child will want greater patience and wisdom than a passionate one, whose fit of temper is soon over; but still I think whatever punishments we use, we ought to be loving and gentle with all. Of course I can only speak from what I have seen, and that is not much, but I have noticed among my neighbours' children, that the worst and most story-telling are those that are most beaten. I think lying is often taught by the rod."

"And you never beat yours?"

"Never, ma'am; it would save me present trouble sometimes, I dare say, to give the little ones a slap when they are tiresome, and I want to work; and I think there is often a great excuse for poor mothers, harassed as they are, and hard put to it to get through the day's duties, when they huff and strike their children; but that doesn't make it right nor yet good for the little ones; and I am sure, after all, there **are** many punishments a child minds and understands more than a beating, especially if it is sure of them."

"What do you mean?"

"Why ma'am, I mean that very often mothers say in a pet, 'I'll tell your father, and you'll have a

fine flogging.' I know poor Mrs. Wilmot has often threatened this to Johnnie. Well, the pet goes off, and she forgets or relents, and so the boy gets off, which a naughty child should never do. That is what I call spoiling. Now, if ever so slight a punishment be threatened, though I don't like threats, I hold it ought to be done; and the lighter the punishment, the more sure it is to be given. If I set little Charley with his face to the wall, and he sees me in earnest, he is sorry enough; the punishment makes him better."

"Well, will you tell Wilmot about his boy? It is of no use his coming next week, I cannot keep him."

Anne looked sorry, but promised. The opportunity for telling the mother was nearer than she expected.

Her work was done, her children home from school, and the father took them all into the fields when tea was over. The baby was undressed, and in its first long sleep; and little Annie remained to watch lest it awoke, and to finish a piece of work, which in her idleness and love of play she had neglected to do on the previous day. This was her punishment, and one she would remember, long after hard words or sharp slaps would have been forgotten.

Wilmot was not at home when Mrs. Wright went in, only a pale sickly girl of ten was in the kitchen, rocking a sick baby, and singing dolefully to it, as it moaned in concert. The infant's eyes were open, and it was breathing heavily.

"Your little sister looks poorly," said Anne, "where is your aunt, and the other children?"

"Gone to see the fireworks with the Lakers."

"And why did not you go?" The child blushed.

"I had no good shoes for one thing, and I didn't want to for another."

"Why didn't you want?"

"Because baby isn't well, and I promised mother, when she came last, I would take care of her."

"What does baby eat? not that, surely," pointing to some thick ill-made pudding in a cup.

"Yes,—at least no, it won't eat to-day, do what I will. Aunt made it a batter pudding yesterday, she said it wanted more food, but it came up again."

"And what is all this mess on its pinafore?"

"Treacle; aunt always gives it treacle, when it goes to bed."

"Let me look at it!"

"'Tis in that cup, but aunt always puts some drops in, and I give it baby when it won't sleep."

"Will you promise me you will never give it any more?"

"Yes; but what will aunt say?"

"Never mind, I will speak to your aunt. The baby is ill, and much of that stuff may kill it. I shall go and put my children to bed, then I will come in again and give it a bath.

She had not been in her house five minutes before the girl came, pale and breathless, to implore her to return. There was no time lost, and when they reached the cottage, the baby lay stretched out in strong convulsions. The surgeon came; the truth was told, which there was, in fact, no hiding. Opiates, daily increased in strength, had been ignorantly given by the idle girl, who had been engaged to fill the mother's place, and the baby's life was fast ebbing out.

"We little know what we do," said Mr. Bradshaw to Anne Wright, as she watched with him, by the struggles of the dying child, "when we tempt mothers to forsake their families," and he looked around. The father scarcely sobered, stood gazing vacantly on the scene, proposing to go for the mother, that the child might die in her arms; but it ended in talk, and whilst he spoke, the raised finger of the doctor silenced the incoherent ramblings of the half drunken man. A calm came over the little face, ~~the~~ worn and aged expression gave place to a baby smile, as though it knew what it had escaped, and whither it was fleeing. The

stillness of death was in the cottage kitchen. The baby died in a stranger's bosom, and in that of the baby's mother, a stranger's infant nestled. It was all over, the large mournful eyes were closed; and now who should tell the tale to the absent parent? Good Mr. Bradshaw, whose patient the lady at Westbury was, undertook the task, a harder one than he had imagined. "My baby, my baby!" and "I have murdered it!" was the mournful cry which rang in the Westbury nursery that night. Mrs. Pank was sent for, who scolded and petted and soothed by turns, but nothing would pacify the mother until the doctor consented to take her in his carriage to see the quiet form in its cold repose. Tears came then, and the grief was softening, when her eye, which had not rested on any thing but the cradle, caught sight of a delicate envelope on the table so contrasting with the soiled appearance of the cover on which it lay, that a snow-flake could not have looked whiter.

It was a letter about Johnnie, poor Johnnie, who sate in the corner of the kitchen, still and disconsolate. Ah! then the mother felt that there were worse sorrows than a guileless baby's death; and, drying her eyes, she sobbed out, "Oh, Mrs. Wright, thank God that he has taken little Fanny from the evil to come!" Anne knew what the wretched mother meant; but, "Ah!" she said to her husband that night, when they were sitting by their sleeping child, "It is a sorrowful thing, when a mother can out of her heart's misery thank God for her baby's death."

Well she might; a few months later, and Johnnie, who had once been innocent as the baby beneath the sod scarcely green, was standing before a magistrate, convicted of petty theft, one among many examples of the evil results of a neglected home.

The Panks' story has a yet more sorrowful sequel. If my readers are sufficiently interested in the tenants of Barker's Buildings, to desire any further particulars concerning them, it is possible that they may

be gratified. It is by studying the character, and reading the experience and trials of wives and mothers, that we, who are now in the burden and heat of the day, may gather strength and wisdom for the conflict; but there is one lesson, still, without which, we shall have learned but little, and it is this, that we mothers need grace to fulfil our duties aright. Mother's love is insufficient for our children's well-being, unless sanctified by God, and directed by His Holy Spirit—if we would be good mothers, we must be christian mothers, praying mothers, and we know who has said, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find."

FINIS.





