

times. But luckily, her faith in herself as God's particular favourite was unshakable, and so she always emerged serene and confident from these encounters with her daughter.

Well—if not entirely serene and confident, then near enough to it for there really to be no cause for worry.

God will show himself to Sylvia, she assured herself. She will repent and reform her ways. All I have to do really, is believe that, and keep the way open for God. He will do the rest.

Sylvia was quite content with this arrangement. It enabled her to get her own way with a minimum of overt disobedience and a maximum of enjoyment.

MRS. FOWLER had a neighbour called Mrs. Pendleton. Mrs. Pendleton had enjoyed Mrs. Fowler's patronage for 15-odd years. Being a shy, unassuming little woman, she was quite glad to take her place under Mrs. Fowler's wing at Church affairs and afternoon tea-parties, to appear helpfully when Mrs. Fowler had a boring visitor or a trying relation to stay, and to run the less pleasant errands that Mrs. Fowler's activities with the Lord entailed. She was quite happy with the mild, reflected splendour that fell on her from Mrs. Fowler's magnificent progression. For really, Mrs. Fowler had had some marvellous successes with her healing. Her unflinching optimism, her assertive personality, her spontaneous cheerfulness, her radiant health—they all acted as a sort of hypnosis on certain types of people.

Why, I believe what she says is right. I believe I am well, they began to say to themselves: I believe there is some power working in me to make me healthy again—and, before they knew it, they were out of their beds, quite bewildered as to how it had happened, but somehow sure that Mrs. Fowler was the handmaiden of the Lord, and no mistake about it.

Well, now, Mrs. Fowler would chant. Isn't the power of the Lord marvellous? Isn't he to be praised? Don't you feel grateful to him? I'm sure you want to fall on your knees and worship him. I'm sure you'll dedicate your life to him now. You'll be a new disciple.

Sometimes it was a little uncertain whether Mrs. Fowler meant a new disciple to herself or to God, or whether she meant to claim gratitude for herself or her Lord. But whichever it was, her cured patients inevitably thought her a living wonder.

And not a drug or a patent medicine do I use, she affirmed. Only herbal ointments and drinks, right food and right thinking.

When patients overwhelmed her with thanks, she invariably said, though flushing with pleasure, Oh, don't thank me. It's no honour to me. It's God working through me, you know. I'm only a channel for divine forces — there's no credit due to me.

Well, Mrs. Pendleton had never been cured by Mrs. Fowler. Indeed, she was never ill, except for a cold now and then, or a touch of rheumatics. But all the same, it was perfectly clear to her that Mrs. Fowler was a wonderful woman. Of course, she couldn't expect Mrs. Fowler to waste any of her precious time visiting her, but as a compromise, she often inveigled Sylvia to come over, holding an apple or an orange at the fence. She was a lonely woman, for her husband,

whom she had dearly loved, had been dead for eight years, and she had had no children.

Sylvia had often been minded by Mrs. Pendleton when her mother was away healing, and she really needed no bait to lure her over the fence. She loved the shy little woman who somehow knew how to talk to a young girl so as not to make her feel inferior and naughty, but an equal and good.

And Sylvia always was good with Mrs. Pendleton. She often told long stories about the wonderful things she had done—and then at the end of it they would look at each other and suddenly start to laugh helplessly. Mrs. Pendleton, of course, knew it was all lies, and Sylvia knew she knew—but Mrs. Pendleton never took it seriously like mother did. She seemed to think it was extremely funny, and after they had laughed together Sylvia would say, Of course, none of it's true, you know, Auntie Pen. Oh, isn't it? Mrs. Pendleton would cry in mock amazement. I was certain every word of it was true, and off they would start laughing again.

I wish I could live with you, Auntie Pen, said Sylvia. It'd be so much nicer than at home.

O, my dear! cried Mrs. Pendleton, genuinely shocked. You mustn't say that. Your mother's a wonderful woman. Just look at the good she's done, the people she's healed! Why, it's almost miraculous!

Oh, but Mummy doesn't do it, said Sylvia, God does. He and mother work together, you know.

Mrs. Pendleton looked sharply at the thirteen-year-old girl, but only a blankly innocent gaze met hers.

So she said, Of course He does. Your mother's very close to God.

AFTER she had been seven or eight times to visit Gertrude, Mrs. Fowler had a dream one night. She dreamt she died and appeared in heaven. She walked along a street very like the one in which she had lived, hearing music which gradually grew louder and louder. It was the thunderous chant of angels singing. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Mrs. Fowler hastened her steps. It's me they're singing about, she told herself happily. I'm going to meet God. He's going to say, Well done, thou good and faithful servant.

A rosy light played about the house-tops. The chanting grew more thunderous.

Blessed are the pure. . . . Little children ran out into the streets trailing garlands of flowers. They scarcely seemed to notice Mrs. Fowler, but ran on in front of her, hastening to the top of the road, where a huge crowd was gathered.

Wait, children! cried Mrs. Fowler. You're supposed to be escorting me. Bring your garlands and strew them on my path.

But the children ran on unheeding, laughing and shouting. Then Mrs. Fowler saw the crowd divide before her.

They're making a passageway for me, she thought, and cried loudly, Hosannah in the name of the Lord!

But no one took any notice of her, for out from the crowd hesitantly stepped

(continued on next page)

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