

real gift of exhortin', an' that he often wouldn't be able to get a prayer meetin' started if it wasn't for me.'

The matron shook her head. 'About the baby?' she reminded her guest.

'Well,' Mrs. Cowslip's face settled into lines of grievance, 'yesterday Luella went to a meetin' of the woman's club of—the place where I come from this mornin'. She left me an' the hired girl—Luella keeps hired help an' John keeps a man; he needs one, of course, for the barn work, but as I tell her, I always got along without hired help, an' I had a big family, to hers; not but John can afford it, though. Anyway, she left us to take care of little Jacky. He was colicky an' cross. He fretted an' worried, an' I dandled him an' rocked him, but it didn't seem to do no manner of good. So I told Emma—she's the help—to go to the apothecary's an' get me a little paregoric. She was scared to, for Luella had made her as notional as she is herself about paregoric; but I told her I was mistress there when her mistress wasn't at home, an' she went. An' I was just puttin' away the bottle when Luella came in. She came early because she was anxious about the baby.'

'Be it ever so humble,' quavered the voice from the corridor, 'there's no place like home.'

'Well, what Luella said to me, an' what my son, John, stood by her in sayin', an' what my own husband—my own husband, Mrs. Matron, that ain't crossed me before in forty years—not since we was first married what he stood by her in sayin', I—I—'

Her fine pride and ire gave way. Her lips lost their determined line and shook; her firm old chin quivered and she sobbed.

'So this mornin' I took the egg money,' she went on brokenly. 'I kept the hens at John's—an' started for my daughter's. I didn't go to our station, for they'd find out from Dan Simms that keeps it that I'd come to New York. I walked—an' it's four miles an' there are two hills, too—to the next village. Twice I was scared. The Fowlers were gathering in their pumpkins down at the roadside patch, an' I thought if Sam Fowler saw me he could tell Pa which way I had gone, but he didn't. An' the Lahey children were up in an apple tree near the fence, but they didn't see me either. Nobody stopped me. I went on, past our own farm, that I'd left to be—to have my own husband stand by Luella Johnson against me—an' I'd have gone in there an' never left it again, but the people that rent it—I could just see some of them up around the dooryard; weedin' out my chrysanthemum border, maybe! Well, anyway, I went on to—to the next station an' bought my ticket, an' then I had only seventeen cents left. But I wouldn't go back. They shan't know, none of them, where I am, till I'm with Josephine. She'll stand by me, not by Luella Johnson. An' do you think she'll like the butter dish?'

The song stage of inebriety had passed from the occupant of the cell, and she demanded to know, with many objurgations, why she found herself in surroundings so distasteful to her. But the old lady, lost in the bitter recollections of how another ruled in her stead, no longer listened.

The hideous night wore on, and the curiosity of the earlier evening returned to her. The alarm in the matron's room kept clanging. The offscourings of the city were gathered up. Mrs. Cowslip watched through a crack in the door of the matron's room, in which she was finally allowed by that good-natured woman to stay. The procession of erect, painted creatures and of shambling, dishevelled ones passed by, this with a purple stain on her cheek where she had fallen, those with the marks of each other's fingers on throat and forehead. The whole shocking array she saw. She heard the screams, the oaths, the songs from the corridor into which they passed, in the firm, unmoved charge of the small, kind, unsentimental matron. Her ruling passion mounted high. She wished to address, exhort, improve, direct them.

Finally she persuaded the matron to let her walk through the prison before the tiers of cells. At the sight of her a silence fell, so strange an apparition was she in that place, in her homely, grandmotherly garb, with all the records of a clean and simple life set fair upon her. When she had passed, some laughed harshly and broke into singing, that none might deem them weak, but others silently turned their faces toward the whitewashed wall against which their boards were propped, and hid their faces.

Before the cell of the early comer the matron paused.

'This is the one you heard singing earlier in the night,' she told Mrs. Cowslip. 'Maggie, this is a lady from the country who was lost too late to go on with her journey, and she is looking about her. It makes her very sad to see you foolish girls, and the trouble you bring on yourselves.'

Maggie had been asleep for some hours. She had waked to address some pointed observations to her unseen companions on the subject of their noisiness. Now she eyed Mrs. Cowslip surlily.

'If it makes her so sad, she ain't under any force to look, is she?'

'For shame, Maggie! Have you no respect for gray hairs?'

'Not when they come a'pryin'.'

'Pryin'!' cried Mrs. Cowslip. 'I ain't pryin', you unfortunate creature! I'm only wishful to have you see your wrong-doin' an' your sin, an' to—'

'Bah!' cried Maggie. There was a rustle throughout the prison, denoting a movement of the occupants of the cells towards the gratings. Maggie turned away, as one done with conversation. Then she whirled again.

'What do you know about it?' she asked fiercely. 'Was you brought up a foundlin'?'—Was you, I say?'

'No,' faltered Mrs. Cowslip.

'No! You wasn't. An' was you put out to service before you was twelve? No! An' was you a slave for a boardin' house before you was fifteen? No! An' was you glad enough to marry the first loafer that ever spoke a soft word to you? No! Or to take his beatins' if he'd only make up with you again? No! Or to work the flesh off your bones to get him money, so's he'd stay with you? No! An' he never left you, did he? Your husband ain't never deserted you, has he? He's a nice, white-haired old gentleman with a cane—oh, I see him—an' he thinks you're wonderful good because you ain't never done none of the things you ain't tempted to do! An' your children—they ain't robbed you an' cast you off, I'll bet! It's "Mother, this," an' "Mother, th. an' "Where's Mother's armchair?" an' "Mamie, run upstairs for your grandma's glasses!" Oh, I know, I know!'

'Come away, come away, Mrs. Cowslip,' urged the matron. 'There's no use trying to stop her when she gets going on like this.'

'No, no,' said the old lady, shaking off the hand that would have led her away.

'Neat an' warm your house,' went on Maggie, sing-songly. 'Lovin' an' willin' the hands about you. What cause would you have to go an' drink? But are you grateful for what you've got?' She came close to the barred door of her cell and peered out, her hands above her bleared eyes, the better to see. 'You're not! You're not! Of course you don't steal! You've no cause to! Of course you don't drink! What have you got to forget? But you've got your sins—I know—you've got your sins an' no excuse for them.'

She turned and paced to the end of her cell. Then she wheeled about.

'Go down on your knees,' she said, fiercely, 'an' thank God for a good husband an' good children an' a good home.'

The bell clanged peremptorily in the matron's room. She caught the quivering old lady by the arm and hurried her away to that dismal shelter. She pressed her gently down into the chair. 'There, there,' she said, soothingly, 'stay there and I'll be back in an instant.'

When she returned from that visit to the sergeant's desk, the slow tears of old age were crawling down Mrs. Cowslip's finely wrinkled cheeks.

'There,' she said, putting a slip of paper into the matron's hand—'there's the address—for the telegram; an' he—the policeman, you know, in there—he might say that I'm sorry if—if they was upset at home.—Exchange.'

'TABLET' READERS!—Watch our advertising columns. The firms whose names appear there are progressive, enterprising, up-to-date. They want your trade and are prepared to cater for it. Give them a trial. And do us the kindness of mentioning the 'Tablet'.—***

MYERS AND CO., Dentists, Octagon, corner of George street. They guarantee the highest class of work at moderate fees. Their artificial teeth give general satisfaction, and the fact of them supplying a temporary denture while the gums are healing does away with the inconvenience of being months without teeth. They manufacture a single artificial tooth for Ten shillings, and sets equally moderate. The administration of nitrous-oxide gas is also a great boon to those needing the extraction of a tooth. Read advertisement.—***

For Absolute Strength, Extreme Simplicity, Freedom from Weak or Undesirable Points, and abundance of Excellent Working Features throughout, EXCELSIOR PLOUGHS are UNRIVALLED. They will do perfectly the work that can be expected of any plough, and are guaranteed to give satisfaction in any soils where a plough can work. They have extra length of land beam, specially made mould boards, and steering gear of the most complete and approved kind. Revolving swivel steel circular coulters. Double furrow, £11 10s; three furrow, £16 10s.—Morrow, Bassett, and Co., sole agents in New Zealand for Cockshutt Farm Implementations.—***

Hancock's "BISMARK" LAGER BEER.

**NEW ZEALANDS
NEW INDUSTRY**