

'Provokin'!' continued the widow. 'I counted on keepin' her till he come. It does beat all how folks will stand in their own light. The's no earthly reason—ceptin' their contrariness—why she 'n' Dan shouldn't take to each other. I 'most b'lieve she does like him.'

She paused for a moment in deep cogitation. Then a smile spread slowly over her face. 'I've a good mind to try it,' she mused. 'It ain't no harm to infloounce folks for their good.' She looked down the road again. The unsuspecting Dan was plainly in sight now.

'I'll do it!' declared she. Deliberately she began: 'Daniel Hawley, you know you set ev'rythin' by Charlotte Crandall. She'd make a sight better wife than any of them silly girls down in the village. You're goin' to marry her 'fore long, an' you'll go to see her right after supper.'

Mehitable quite prided herself on the comprehensiveness of this formula, which she repeated a score of times or more before her brother got within hailing distance; then she hurried into the house to prepare the evening meal.

At supper the chief topic of conversation was the visitor of the afternoon, and certainly the bachelor was as greatly interested as one could desire.

'I s'pose Lottie ain't changed much,' he remarked.

'I don't see's she has,' replied Mehitable; 'pears younger, ef anythin', an' she was wearin' her hair pompydore.'

'Lottie is jest four years younger'n me,' said Dan. 'But I ain't no Methuseler,' he added facetiously. He was in fact fifteen years his sister's junior, a comfortable, happy-go-lucky fellow, young for his years.

'I shouldn't be 'tall s'prised,' continued Mehitable artfully, 'ef Charlotte concluded to go back to Boston. Maria'd like to hev her, an' there ain't no partic'lar reason for her stayin' up here with John's folks.'

'Oh! I guess Lottie ain't wantin' to live in the city,' retorted Dan confidently.

The widow gleaned what comfort she might from this assurance, and waited hopefully for him to announce his intention of calling on their neighbor. But apparently he had no such intention, for he settled himself all too contentedly on the porch with the weekly paper.

Mehitable occupied herself with the stocking she was 'heeling off,' till she had unwittingly knitted a heel of prodigious length. 'I'll jest hev to give him another treatment,' she said to herself in desperation. Moving her chair back and closing her eyes over and over again, she commanded the delinquent to 'go an' see Charlotte right away.'

In her absorption, she was quite unaware that her lips were keeping pace with her thoughts, till a hearty laugh reminded her that she was buzzing away in a manner not conducive to secrecy. She met Dan's laughing eyes guiltily despite her effort to appear unconcerned. 'I swan!' chuckled he, 'ef you wa'n't asleep, an' talkin' in your sleep, too, though all I could make out was somethin' 'bout Charlotte.'

'Charlotte has been in my mind consider'ble to-day,' returned Mehitable calmly, thankful to have escaped so easily. And then, to her delight, Dan arose, folded his paper, remarking carelessly that he 'guessed' he'd 'fix up an' go over to Lottie's a spell.'

'I fetched him that time,' said she exultingly, when she was by herself again. Next it occurred to her that it mightn't be a bad idea to give Charlotte an 'absent treatment,' to impress her with the fact that she was truly glad to see her friend Dan; and this she at once proceeded to do. Then, weary with her unusual mental exertions, she betook herself to bed. She slept with one eye open, however, and had the satisfaction of knowing that the clock struck 11 before her brother came tiptoeing into the house. 'I never knew him to stay anywhere so late before,' she murmured sleepily, then resumed her slumbers in the consciousness of duty well performed.

The next week Mehitable invited Charlotte to tea—incidentally 'treating' her to make sure of her coming. She came, and Dan escorted her home. After that there was more or less running back and forth

between the two farmhouses. The widow gave 'treatments' in season and out, thereby neglecting her rug and quilt making, which somehow seemed of little importance in comparison with her new avocation.

At last she reaped the reward of the persevering. One morning after breakfast Dan announced sheepishly, 'Lottie 'n' me's thinkin' of gittin' married in the spring.'

'There!' cried Mehitable triumphantly, as she bestowed a sisterly embrace, 'I knew my "treatment" would bring ev'rythin' out all right.'

'Yes, you hev treated Lottie reel nice,' said Dan gratefully. 'She's hed a notion ever sence she got back from Boston that you was beginnin' to suspicion how matters stood.'

The widow regarded him blankly. 'I dunno's I foller you meanin',' she faltered.

'You see it's goin' on three years sence I fust spoke to Lottie,' explained Dan awkwardly.

'You mean you asked her to hev you?' demanded the widow.

'That's jest it,' acknowledged the culprit, 'an' I've been askin' her, off 'n' on, ever sence.'

'But you never acted's though you cared a particle!' remonstrated Mehitable.

'Wall, you see, Lottie suspicioned you might be put out over it, seein' that you sot so much by your housekeepin', an' folks praisin' you for bein' so uncommon capable. But lately, sence you've treated her so corjul-like, she ain't been so much afeered.'

Mehitable regarded him mutely, finding it difficult to re-adjust her deep-rooted convictions at a moment's notice.

'I was some to blame,' resumed her brother. 'I kinder thought you mightn't fancy hevin' anybody comin' in to take the lead. You allus hev kep' things up to the mark, I must say. But o' course, my wife would be fust,' he concluded resolutely.

'How reedic'lous!' declared Mehitable, 'an' me longing' for years to hev you fetch Charlotte here.'

'She! you don't say so?' stammered Dan.

'Yes, I do,' affirmed the widow. 'I'm sick an' tired to death of tryin' to keep things jest so, all the time. Ef you wanten git married next week, it'll suit me all the better.'

'I'll see what Lottie says,' rejoined the bewildered swain.

'An' be sure 'n' tell her not to mind 'bout bein' overpartic'lar in her housekeepin', it's dretful wearin',' she called after him.

'Jest to think of the time wasted givin' them plaguy treatments!' murmured the schemer regretfully, as she arranged the breakfast-dishes symmetrically in a shining dish-pan.—*Southern Cross.*

GOD'S CHILD

'And you are quite satisfied now, my child?'

'Yes, Father. I want to be baptised—and I will bring Joyce, too, of course.'

The priest looked at her thoughtfully. She was such a frail little woman in her clinging black robes and the heavy crepe veil that seemed too weighty for her small head.

'Bring the child at once, to-day,' he suggested.

'Oh, Father—well, yes, I will. It is her birthday; she is two years old to-day,' she added, and a shadow clouded her blue eyes for a moment—then she smiled resolutely. 'I will go at once, Father,' she said, and went away.

It was done that day, on the day of the Holy Angels—her child was God's child now, and the thought gave the lonely mother a little more courage to face the future. It was but a few months since the child's father had been swept in an instant from the side of his wife and little Joyce. A sudden attack of an unsuspected malady had taken him off—there had been no chance for farewells, no moment in which he might look once more on the faces of his loved ones; he had been brought home—dead. He had been a good man, according to his lights, and his widow felt that in some mysterious way God had provided for his sudden