

endurable his limited monotonous life and gave him courage to face the cheerless old age which is the lot of the very poor. The old age of the poor is often one of the saddest sights on earth. "They may not have led the van in battle but at least they have lost their teeth on the camp bread." They deserve something better than to be neglected and forgotten; they seem forgotten even by death. In the midst of poverty, with failing bodily and mental powers, patiently they wait until "Death with his stealing steps" comes to repair his oversight.

A spiritual affinity had been established between Joe and Amelia, so far apart in age and with such different standards of tradition. Joe's chivalrous heart went out in sympathy to Amelia; and to Amelia, Joe's poor room was a refuge in the troubled sea of her life. It was a very poor room—bare to nakedness—containing only an uncomfortable-looking folding bed, a table, a chair, and the implements of his trade. And on the wall—a picture of a Mother and her Divine Child. Amelia would steal into the room and stand timidly with her eyes fixed on Joe until he would look up to find her staring at him. In the beginning of their acquaintance this made Joe uncomfortable, and he could only stare back; but in these staring contests Joe was always worsted, being unable to sustain the fixed, sorrowful look in Amelia's eyes for long—indeed, unaccountably, he would find his own wet with tears before he turned them away. As their friendship progressed, and when Amelia could be spared from her many duties, she would sit with Joe and listen to half-forgotten memories of his boyhood in Ireland. He would tell her stories of the saints and incidents in the life of our Lord. Amelia's scant religious knowledge acquired in the elementary school she had attended was long since forgotten. All that remained in her memory were the hundredth psalm in verse and the names of Jacob's sons. So Joe's teaching fell on "good ground," and no child ever listened to a fairy tale with half the wonder and pleasure as Amelia did when Joe, in his poetic Celtic way, told the story of our Lord from His birth to the crowning act of His life on earth—the crucifixion. And Amelia listened, never dreaming that such a one as she had a share in the love of that wonderful Being.

### III.

This forlorn creature, who saw visions and felt emotions, had a vague dream. It was not a dream such as girls have when they weave for themselves a romantic future. Amelia dreamt of finding her mother, who, some instinct told her, had been white; and Amelia thought that she had been abandoned because her mother could not love a colored child.

As Amelia walked alone in the busy streets, her eyes, shining with love and humility, would rove amongst the faces in the crowd to linger on those which wore a mother's smile. Of one or other of those whom she met she would think: Ah! if that mother were only mine! And when they passed her without a glance it was but one pang the more. That she was unloved was her greatest grief; it seemed to her that she was the only person in the world who was quite uncared for.

One day Amelia was returning home—if such a miserable place is worthy of the name—after a day's work which had been much too hard for her frail strength. She was very tired. As she entered the dirty street, wondering if she should meet any of her tormentors, she saw that a fight between two drunken women was in progress, and knew, with relief, that everybody would be engaged in viewing the combat. Taking advantage of this opportunity, she was speeding swiftly along the street when she met a boy who often teased her. The look of fear deepened in her eyes; but for some reason her enemy was in a softened mood. Taking a little card, obtained who knows where, from his pocket he threw it at Amelia's feet saying in derision, "Take that. These are your brothers." Something impelled Amelia to pick it up. On the card was a picture of our Lord with several colored children around His knees. There was no need to tell Amelia whose was the central figure. It was Joe's God. After one glance at it, she slipped the card inside her dress and ran home. She could not look at her little treasure again—for there is no privacy in the slums—until late that night, when, the others being in bed, she drew it from her bosom. She looked at it, and as she looked the knowledge came to her

like a lightning-flash that this Christ, of whom Joe spoke so tenderly, knew also of her. She felt a sudden sweet certainty that she was loved. She fell on her knees with the picture in her hand and gazed and gazed until she could not see it for a rush of tears which seemed to come from her very heart—that poor little heart so hurt and crushed by life that one wondered that it was beating still! Next day Joe was shown the picture, and he confirmed Amelia's great discovery.

"Sure, daughter; I could have told you that you are God's child just the same as anybody else."

"And may I go into your church, Joe?" asked Amelia.

"With pleasure, me child, and why not? You will be welcome."

Thus it came about that Amelia became a frequent visitor to Joe's church, and owing to his teaching she did not feel quite a stranger there, although she did not understand all. As she knelt at the back of the church during Mass the priest seemed to her childish fancy to be poised between earth and heaven, a mysterious link between herself and God. She listened to his clear, compelling voice with the emotion with which one listens to music. It penetrated her lonely soul like a voice from heaven. But she liked Benediction best. The flower-laden altar! Those gleaming lights! That sense of His Presence! She asked nothing more of life than just to kneel there and adore.

### IV.

During the winter which followed Amelia took a great liberty. She fell sick! Her nagging guardian resented this, and several times daily delivered, to nobody in particular, homilies on ingratitude, with particular reference to those who, after they had been brought up by a hard-working woman and, just as they were able to earn money, were base enough to fall sick. So Amelia stole more often into Joe's room. She had fits of coughing, when her poor little shoulders shook convulsively, and Joe, looking at her meagre figure and seeing how thin and wasted she had grown, said within himself, "The child is fadin' like snow before the sun."

Then with a kind of desperate cheerfulness he would talk of the summer days when she would be well again.

But Amelia's cough grew worse, and one day in Joe's room she coughed up blood from her lungs. Joe, terrified at the sight of so much blood, which, curiously, he had not expected would be so red, laid her on his bed and sent for a doctor. The doctor came that night but could do little for Amelia, and after he had left Joe stood looking down on that spent figure with a passion of desire to do something for her. For in those dark eyes there was an added mournfulness—the mournfulness of parting. He took his crucifix and placed it within Amelia's small hand. Something forlorn in the timid tenderness with which she handled the crucifix so touched him that he felt near to weeping. "Kiss it, dear little Amelia," he said, and pressed it against her lips.

And then Joe's great idea came to him, which, like all great ideas, seemed so simple that he wondered it had not come to him before. She should be received into the Church.

And next morning on waking from the uneasy dreams that haunt a bed of sickness, Amelia saw beside her the priest whose voice had so often filled her heart with a vogue sadness. She never had thought of him as an ordinary mortal who ate and drank and did any of the commonplace things of life—still less had she thought that he would ever speak to her. But he was there, and holding her ever so gently by the hand.

When the priest left her Amelia lay very still. Her face was transfigured and tremulous with happiness because of a glory in her heart more poignant than anything she had ever felt before.

During the night she had a recurrence of the hæmorrhage and died almost at once. She died on the day on which she was baptised. Happy, happy Amelia! A pariah no longer!

When she was being clothed for the grave there was found, pressed against the heart that had ceased its troubled beating, the little picture of our Lord with the colored children around His knees.

For Bronchial Coughs, take  
Woods' Great Peppermint Cure.

**E. S. Robson**

OPPOSITE MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, HASTINGS. BICYCLE DEALER AND IMPORTER  
Good Workmanship Guaranteed.—All Accessories Stocked.—Cycle Repairs specialty.  
Prms Repaired and Tyred. Cheapest House in Town—