

CHAPTER III.

THE ARRIVAL.

A FEW days later John overtook Maisie at the usual place. She had been wondering what had become of him and met him with a very warm welcome.

"I hope you haven't been ill, Mr. Hardy," she said. "When you didn't come to the teachers' meeting, I thought you must be. You are always so regular."

"I've been busy," said John in a hard voice, "and I'm going to give up the school too."

Maisie looked at him with surprise. She had always loved the school and the class, and she thought that John did so too. There was a different tone in his voice also and hers became a little different as well.

"Give up the school!" she said, "I am sorry. Is Willy Slater too much for you?" This allusion to the notorious "bad boy" of his class would have brought a smile to his face another time, but John had no smiles now.

"I am going away," he said almost defiantly, then after a slight pause, "to America."

"America!" cried Maisie, "that is a long way. Shall you be away for long?"

"Oh, always, I expect," said John. "I shall stay there, I think. It is an awfully good opening, you see. My people are delighted about it."

Maisie's heart sank, but she said cheerfully, "Oh, that's very nice. How soon do you go?"

"In about a month, I think," said John.

"Oh, well, you'll have time to come and see us before then, and tell mother all about it. She will be surprised."

"I shall be very busy," said John sullenly.

"I expect you will," said Maisie briskly. "Well, if I don't see you again, I'm sure I wish you all success and every happiness."

There was a new picture of the church in the stationer's shop, but it would have been a farce to stop and look at it that afternoon, so they parted without a moment's delay.

"She doesn't care a bit," said John. "Of course, it wasn't likely with that clumsy fellow hanging about. Well, it's a precious good job I saw them before I spoke. I'm glad I'm going to America, I wish I started to-morrow."

And Maisie thought as she went with heavy feet along the street, "Fancy his going off like that, with hardly a word. Men are hateful, but I thought he was different."

And then she told her mother she had got a headache, which was true enough, and didn't want any tea, and she went up to her bedroom and cried a good while, and then knelt beside her bed and prayed that God would make her willing to do and bear anything that He might send, and she dried her eyes and washed her face, and got out an elaborate piece of work she was doing, and sat with her back to the light and talked about the misdeeds of the little maid, and the illness of the cat, and the probability of new neighbours until supper-time.

John avoided the green omnibus after that. He had quite made up his mind that he would see Maisie no more, so he came home another way now. The new way led him past a large

railway terminus, and one afternoon just as he was passing it whom should he meet but the very pair he most wished to avoid. He was too close to escape, so he just stood still as they came up.

"Oh, Mr. Hardy," cried Maisie, flushing in spite of herself, "we almost thought you must be gone as we had seen nothing of you. This is my brother-in-law, Mr. Field, and he lives in America, so he might have told you some things about it, but he's just going away now. I've come to see him off."

John was stunned. He murmured something inaudible to Mr. Field, who was impatient at the delay and anxious about his luggage, and they parted. "What an idiot I was not to find out about the fellow!" he muttered, "and now I've been so disagreeable she'll think I don't care."

The end of it was that John determined to see Mr. Field off too—from afar—and when Maisie came out of the station again alone, he joined her and they walked home together.

He learned from Maisie that her brother-in-law was anxious that the family should return to America with him, but that she was unwilling to give up her situation for an uncertainty.

Then John told his story, concealing nothing, and describing particularly the afternoon when he had first seen the stranger. Maisie laughed heartily though she shed a few tears too.

The new photograph of the church in the stationer's shop came in for a large share of attention that afternoon, for they stopped for quite a long time to admire it after they got out of the green omnibus.

HOW TO GIVE.

A FRIEND lately observed that there was no duty more plainly inculcated in the Bible than that of helping the deserving poor, but that there is no more difficult task than to find them.

An immense amount of harm is done by injudicious and ill-considered giving. We cannot bear to see the poor crossing-sweeper boy on a cold and wet day with bare feet and threadbare clothes, or the miserable woman begging, with a still more miserable baby crying for food in her arms, and with a generous impulse we bestow a coin without a thought as to whether or not we are really benefiting the one or the other. In nine cases out of ten such gifts are misplaced. The boy's money is all taken home in fear and trembling to drunken parents, who have no intention of buying him better clothes or sufficient food, and the woman keeps the child (not her own) cruelly ill-fed and ill-clothed in order to excite compassion and get money for her also to waste in drink.

An experienced worker in London has lately stated that in the course of a wide experience he has scarcely ever found a deserving street-beggar, the babies and little children with them are usually hired, and really deserving people do not beg in the street.

It is true that the world would be a dull place indeed without those dear creatures who are moved by impulse in giving and without using their judgment, but great evils are often increased thereby.

There are several qualifications needed for successful almsgiving, and one must learn how to give. To be a blessing rather than the reverse, a gift should be accompanied by "sanctified common cause," and due inquiry should be made as to the truth of the appeal made to us. It should also be, if possible, of

sufficient amount to be of real and permanent benefit, not only what will satisfy the need of the moment. It is far better to undertake one case and work for it thoroughly till it is placed on a permanent basis of safety than to give small doles to several cases. We should do well to copy the Jewish system of relief, which acts upon the principle that half-a-crown is of little use in a case of distress, whereas five pounds will effectually benefit a deserving man, and, as every Jew as a boy has learnt some trade or business, the purchase of the necessary tools or some stock-in-trade is of real service, when half-a-crown would only have purchased a few meals and left him as before. The result of this admirable plan is that a Jewish pauper is practically unknown, and we never find Jews begging in our streets. They have also a system of loans for their deserving poor, and in one of our cities, where there is a large community of these people, a report on twenty years' issue of such loans was lately published, in which it was shown that while £30,000 had been lent in various sums in that time, only £90 had to be written off as not repaid.

"Not grudgingly or of necessity" should also be in our minds when we give.

The Eastern salesman, vending fruit or grain in the market-place, gives us not only full measure "pressed down and running over," but adds a little on the very top by way of a blessing. So, too, should we give, remembering that in like manner also we receive.

Our giving should also be proportionate to our income; by this I mean that we should, at stated times, set aside a proportion of what we have for charitable purposes. This would always then be available, and we should not trust to the impulses of a moment. Many people set aside a tenth of their income, but this may be an undue proportion for people of

small means. Yet, that should he aimed at and brings a blessing with it, often in increased prosperity to the giver. To those unaccustomed to such a rule, it may seem hard at first to set aside one shilling out of every ten, but if begun in early life, one gets to look upon that shilling as not one's own to deal with except for charity. If this were universally practised, what vast sums would be available for good works. Bazaars and sales would be quite unnecessary, and there would be no need of the huge expenditure of stationery and stamps as well as of time to secure funds, and what joy there would be to secretaries of charitable societies and the clergy who now have to fret and worry, write and speak day and night in order to get the funds for carrying on the work entrusted to them.

We must not forget, however, that there are gifts besides those of money. Many who are poor in this world's goods are rich in sympathy, and are able only to mourn with the mourners and rejoice with the joyful. Still there is need for judgment even here. "A word in season—how good is it!"

Nor let us forget to give the added blessing of a prayer for the recipient, the blessing on the very top of the gift, that which may be worth more than the material benefit for the moment, and which will only be fully known in the joy of the future life where we may be allowed to see the blessed results.

"Give thy heart's best treasure. From fair nature learn.

Give thy love and ask not, wait not a return.

And the more thou givest from thy little store,

With a double bounty God will give thee more."

OLIVE.