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Title: Kate's Ordeal

Author: Emma Leslie

Release date: January 7, 2007 [eBook #20307]

Language: English

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E-text prepared by Al Haines



**William in the shop.**

# KATE'S ORDEAL

BY

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THE NATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION  
57 & 59 LUDGATE HILL, LONDON, B.C. 4

Printed 1887

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## KATE'S ORDEAL

CHAPTER I.

THE MESSAGE.



o you think Katie Haydon is pretty—I don't?" and the speaker glanced at her own bright curls as she spoke.

"Well, I don't know whether she is exactly pretty, but she always looks nice, and then she is so pleasant and merry, and——"

"And so vain and stuck-up," put in the first speaker again.

"Oh, how can you say so?" said another, a plain, quiet-looking girl, who had not spoken before. "Mother says she would make such a nice nurse-maid; so quiet and bright as she is, children would be sure to take to her."

"Well, I don't know so much about that, Mary, but I know she has asked teacher about a situation—her mother wants her to go into the nursery."

"My mother wants me to do the same," said quiet Mary Green, "but although I have spoken to teacher I do not expect to hear of anything until Katie is suited, for she asked first, and people are sure to choose her in preference to me." This was said without the least touch of envy or jealousy. Before anyone could reply to it, Katie herself joined the group. "Are we not late?" she said, breathless with her run to catch them before they reached the school. "I have some news for you. What do you think—I am going to London!" she panted, fanning herself with her pocket-handkerchief, and casting a triumphant glance at Esther Odell, the girl who had called her proud and stuck-up. Esther was always talking about going to London, and saying disparaging things of going to service—servants were vulgar and despised and she never would be a servant, though her mother and father both said she ought to get a situation. This was how Esther had talked, and it gave Kate Haydon no small pleasure to be able to come and tell her schoolfellow that she was going to the wonderful city first.

"Is it settled, Katie?" asked Mary. "Have you got a situation—are you going to service?"

Katie shook her head. "I am going to serve in a shop. My cousin has got a nice place at a baker's and confectioner's, and they want somebody to help her, and she has written to me about it."

"What a lucky girl you are!" exclaimed Esther, in a tone of envy. "It does seem hard, too, for that is just the kind of situation I want, and I daresay you would have been as well pleased if it had been in the nursery."

"My mother would have liked it better, I do believe," laughed Katie, "for she seems half afraid to let me go to London, and serve in a shop too!"

"Here comes teacher!" said Mary Green, and the conversation was dropped, as the girls hurried forward to meet the lady.

They went into school together, and in the bustle of getting their seats, Miss Eldon whispered to Kate, "Will you ask your mother to come and see me to-morrow morning, Kate?"

"Yes, ma'am," answered the girl, wondering not a little what her teacher could want to see her mother about—quite forgetting the request she had made to the lady a few weeks before. The lesson for that Sunday afternoon was about the honour and dignity of work and service, for the lady knew that some of her class had adopted the foolish notions of Esther Odell, and did not fail to bring forward this subject whenever she had the opportunity, pointing out how God had made it necessary for all to work and serve their fellow-men. Then she went on to speak of the word "angel," and how in its original sense it meant servants, and how many a household servant was a veritable angel in the family she served, and with what honour and love she was regarded by every member of it.

Listening to her teacher, it suddenly occurred to Katie that it was about the business of her becoming a household servant that her teacher desired to see her mother and her thoughts instantly reverted to Esther Odell and the pleasant prospect held out by her cousin's letter. Her mother would be only too glad to hear of a situation nearer home for her she knew, but Katie had made up her mind to go to London if she possibly could, and so the more she thought of it the more vexed she felt that her teacher should want to see her mother just now, but how to prevent it she did not know.

The girls chatted about the lesson, and about the relative advantage of going to service, or learning dress-making and machine-work, but Kate took little part in the discussion to-day; and when they reached the corner where she must leave them, she felt glad to get away, to think out the problem she had been puzzling over all the afternoon. She had not told any of her schoolfellows of the message she had been charged to deliver to her mother, so no troublesome questions or surmises had been propounded by them, and if she could only contrive to banish the whole subject from her mind—forget it entirely, her future would be settled before the next Sunday came round, for her cousin's letter must be answered the next day, and the offer accepted or declined, and she knew there were many reasons why her mother could not well decline it, unless she had something else in view for her.

Mrs. Haydon was a widow, often ailing, and never strong enough to earn her own living by hard work, but through the kindness of her brother—himself not a wealthy man—a little business had been secured for her, enough to keep her in comfort, and he had urged that Kate, being young and strong, ought to get a situation.

But nothing had come in their way likely to suit Kate, until these letters from London offering her a

situation with her cousin. Her uncle had written as well as her cousin, urging that if she had nothing else in view, she had better accept this, as she might not have such a chance again—a view of the matter that Kate fully endorsed. She was most anxious to go to London, and to serve in a shop and be called a "young lady" was so much better than going to service she thought.

But her mother shook her head rather gravely, when she ventured to say something of this to her. "I am not so sure about that, my dear. I was a servant myself for years before I married your poor father, and was much more comfortable and happy, I know, than half the girls are that set up to be 'young ladies' now; so that I hope you will never despise service, Kate," her mother had said.

Kate recalled these words, and many others that her mother had spoken lately upon the same subject, but now that it seemed as though the choice lay in her own hands, they had little weight with her. These notions were old-fashioned, she whispered to herself, nobody ever went to service now if they could possibly obtain any other employment. Even Esther Odell was going to learn dress-making, although there was a large family to keep, and her father's wages barely sufficed to supply all their wants; and thinking of Esther, made Katie decide to say nothing to her mother about her teacher desiring to see her, for she never could meet her schoolfellows' taunts and jeers about being a servant, when she had the chance of being something better. As Kate went into the little back room, behind the shop, where her mother was sitting, she noticed the traces of tears on her face, and asked rather anxiously if she was ill.

"No, my dear, I have only been thinking this matter over again, and I cannot help feeling troubled about it."

"But why should you, mother?" and Kate stooped and kissed the pale anxious face, and was about to whisper, "You may have your wish after all, for teacher wants to see you to-morrow morning." But a footstep was heard on the stairs, and she said, "Here comes Aunt Ellen;" and the next minute the door opened, and Mrs. Haydon's sister entered the room.

"Oh, you have come in, Kate. I came down to see if your mother was fretting still. It's very foolish of her, I think. Of course, we never can have things just as we wish, and if you can't get a nice respectable situation in a family, you ought to take your uncle's offer."

"Yes, yes, she shall; I've made up my mind about it now, Ellen," said the widow, hastily; while Kate turned to the window to hide her tell-tale face.

"Well, I'm glad the matter is decided so far, for you were just making yourself ill with the worry."

"I don't see why mother should worry so much about it," said Kate, petulantly.

Her aunt looked at her for a minute in silence, and then said, "Well, she cannot expect to keep you tied to her apron-string all your life. Of course, if you could get a quiet place near home it would be better;" for Aunt Ellen at that moment was asking herself the same question that Esther Odell had asked her schoolfellows an hour or two before, "Is Katie a pretty girl?" and all at once a doubt had crept into her mind about the wisdom of sending her into the midst of unknown temptations. But she put it down at once, seeing that her sister had at last decided the matter. "Of course, Kate will be careful and steady, and not make any chance acquaintances," she said, answering her own thoughts.

"Yes, yes; it is not that I am afraid of her," said the widow, hastily.

"And Aunt Ellen will always be here to take care of you," said Kate. "I would not think of going so far away, if you had to be left alone."

"Yes, yes, my dear; I was not thinking of myself at all in the matter, although I shall miss you terribly, but—but—"

"There, suppose you get your mother a cup of tea as quickly as you can, Kate, that is what she wants," interrupted Aunt Ellen; and Kate, feeling very uncomfortable, went to take her things off and get tea ready.

Mrs. Haydon was better after tea, and could talk more cheerfully of Kate leaving home. She knew very little of London herself, except what she had heard from her brother, and very little of her brother's family. He had several grown-up sons and daughters, and his wife had been dead some years. Beyond these bare facts, she knew very little about them, so that Kate would be going among comparative strangers, and it was this that had troubled the widow most.

"You shall write to your cousin to-morrow morning, Katie, and I will write to your uncle, it will be better to settle this at once, I suppose."

"Yes, mother, I am sure it will—not that I want to leave you, mother, I shall miss you dreadfully, I know, but then I may never have such a chance as this again."

"True, Kate; but still I cannot help wishing it was to some nice nursery you were going instead of a shop."

"But then it is only a baker's shop, mother," said Kate.

"Yes, yes; but it's so far away from home; if you could come to me for the Sundays, Kate, or if I

knew anything of your cousin Marion, it would be different—I should feel more easy about you."

"Oh, mother, why need you feel uneasy. Surely you do not think I should do anything wicked?" exclaimed Kate.

"No, no, my child. I hope that which you have learned at Sunday school will not be so easily forgotten. Kate, you must find out a Bible-class as soon as you get there, even if your cousins do not go to Sunday school."

"But I should think they did, mother. Marion is only a year or two older than me, and Isabel younger, so that I should think they would go."

"I don't know, my dear, I never heard that they went to a Sunday school, but I hope they do for your sake. Katie dear, you must ask that God will take care of you every moment, and pray as you never did before, 'lead me not into temptation.'"

"Yes, mother," murmured Kate hanging down her head, and almost wishing now that she had delivered her teacher's message; for how could she ask God to keep her out of temptation, when she was taking the matter into her own hands determined to have her own way at all costs?

## CHAPTER II.

### DID SHE FORGET?



atie Haydon is going to London, ma'am. Did she tell you on Sunday?" The speaker was Esther Odell, who could think of nothing else but her schoolfellow's good fortune, and, meeting her teacher later in the week, hastened to impart the important news to her.

Miss Eldon looked surprised and a little disappointed, for she had heard of an excellent opening for Kate, in the nursery of a lady not far off, who needed a bright, clever girl, able to assist the nurse sometimes with the one child, and also learn to wait upon the young ladies who were growing up. Such a nice place as this was not often to be met with, and Miss Eldon had waited at home all day on Monday, expecting Mrs. Haydon to call about it. She was on her way there now, thinking she must be ill, or something had happened; she could hardly think Kate had forgotten her message, for she was so anxious to obtain a situation only a short time before.

But Esther Odell's news made her think it was very possible Kate had forgotten all about it. "Did Kate tell you about this on Sunday," she said.

"Yes, ma'am; she ran to catch us before we got into school, on purpose to tell us. She is going to her cousin, to serve in a shop. I wish I had her chance!" added Esther, with a sigh.

"And you think it is all settled, Esther?" said the lady.

"Oh yes, ma'am, I know it is. I met Kate yesterday, and she had been to post the letters to her cousin and uncle, telling them she would go."

The lady stood for a moment in silence, debating whether she should go on and see Kate, and ascertain whether the matter was finally settled, or call upon Mary Green, and send her to see the lady about this situation. Looking at her watch, the time decided her, for it was a long walk to Mrs. Haydon's, and she would not have time to call upon Mary if she went there.

"Thank you, Esther, for telling me this. Did you say you wanted a situation?"

"Yes, ma'am, if I could hear of one like Katie's to serve in a shop and be a young lady. I couldn't be a common servant," she added, quickly.

"A 'common servant,' Esther, what do you mean?" said Miss Eldon, rather severely. "Do you know that to be a household servant you must have a character that will bear the strictest inquiry, and therefore those who are servants are known at once as respectable, honourable people, and those who employ them know their value, and esteem them accordingly? Have you so soon forgotten what I told you on Sunday?"

Esther hung her head, feeling very much ashamed for a minute or two, but at last she managed to say, "I thought servants were always looked down upon, ma'am."

"No one, whose respect was worth having, would look down upon a servant because she was a servant. We always looked up to our dear old nurse, Margaret, and loved her almost as a mother," said Miss Eldon. "Now, Esther, think over what I have said, and put these foolish notions away. I know your mother wishes you to go to service. Come and tell me next Sunday, that I may look out for a situation

for you. I must go and see Mary Green now," and the lady bade her scholar good-bye, and walked on.

Esther stood a minute looking after her. "I wish I was a lady, and could have a fine silk dress like hers," she said, half aloud. "I knew she wanted some of us to take a place, and if it wasn't for that proud Kate Haydon, I think I would try it, but I couldn't bear to think of her serving in a grand shop in London, while I was mewed up in a nursery or kitchen here. Mother must grumble a little longer; I daresay I shall hear of a place in a shop before long, and who knows but I may go to London, too;" and Esther went on her way, her mind full of the unknown glories of London, and vain wishes to be in Kate's place.

Mary Green ran in to see Kate a day or two afterwards, and tell her the news that she had got a situation at Lady Hazeldean's, as under-nurse and to wait on the young ladies.

"My dear, I am very glad to hear it," said Mrs. Haydon. "I only wish it had been offered to Kate, instead of her going to London."

"But—but I thought—" began Mary.

"Mary, do come now, before it gets dark; I want to show you my new dress," interrupted Kate, hastily jumping up from her seat, and running out of the room.

Mary followed, but more slowly, wondering not a little at what she had heard, for she thought Kate had refused this place.

"Don't say any more about this situation at Lady Hazeldean's," whispered Kate, when they were safely shut in the bedroom.

"But what can it matter? You do not want it, Kate. Miss Eldon told my mother she had spoken to you about it on Sunday, but your mother did not think it worth while calling to see her about it."

"How could she, when we had to write those letters to London directly? There, Mary, isn't that a pretty print? I am to wear print dresses and holland aprons in the morning, but Marion says we may wear what we like in the afternoon, and so I am going to have a new dress for best, and what I have been wearing on Sunday I shall wear every day there."

"Yes," answered Mary, but it was in rather an absent-minded manner, for she felt puzzled about Kate, and her strange anxiety lest she should talk about this situation she had obtained.

On Sunday, when the girls met as usual on their way to school, the prospects of their two companions were again discussed, and although a few, like Esther, wished they could go to London as Kate was going, it was agreed that Mary was very fortunate in getting such a good situation, although, as it was remarked, Miss Eldon always did get her girls excellent places.

Kate felt rather vexed at having to hear all the excellencies of this despised situation enumerated, and was not sorry to reach school, but her teacher's first words vexed her still more, and put her into a fright too.

"I was coming to see your mother last Tuesday, Kate; I hope she has not been ill."

"Oh, no, ma'am; she's quite well, thank you," answered Kate.

"Then it was not illness prevented her from coming to see me on Monday?"

Kate coloured and hung her head, as she answered, "No, ma'am."

"Did you forget to deliver my message? I think I told you I wanted to see her about a situation for you."

"You said you wanted to see her, ma'am, but—but I forgot it," said Kate, under her breath.

"Well, never mind, it does not matter much, Kate, for I hear you have a situation in London now," said Miss Eldon, thinking Kate was vexed and angry with herself for having forgotten her message. But the fact was, Kate, who was neither an untruthful nor deceitful girl, shrank from telling a direct lie. She had yielded to the temptation last Sunday because, as she had persuaded herself then, she was not required to tell an untruth, but merely to hold her tongue about the message; but now she found that to hide that wrong-doing a direct lie must be told, and, although it made her uncomfortable and unhappy, it was done. But she protested again and again to her own conscience that she would never do it again. Before she left school, however, she had another fright.

"When do you go to London, Kate?" asked her teacher, as the girls were leaving.

"To-morrow week, ma'am," said Kate.

"Well, I will try and see you one day in the week, for I want to hear all about your new situation and what your mother thinks of it," said Miss Eldon, quite unconscious of the panic her words had put Kate into.

It made her last days at home the most miserable she had ever spent, for Miss Eldon did not come

until Saturday afternoon, but Kate had been in suspense every hour during the whole week, and yet the foolish girl could not summon up the courage necessary to tell her mother the truth about the matter.

The dreadful moment arrived at last, when there came a knock at the door, and Miss Eldon entering, was soon seated in their little back room, and Kate's mother with her.

"I was so much surprised to hear that Kate was going to London," began the lady, removing her gloves for an easy chat.

"Yes, ma'am, it was a surprise to me, and something of a shock too, I may say, for I had rather she had got a nice comfortable place nearer home."

"Yes, it is a pity I did not hear of this vacancy at Lady Hazeldean's a day or two sooner, for I can quite understand how anxious you must feel at a young girl like Kate leaving home."

"Yes, ma'am, and if it had been anybody but my own brother that offered it, she should not have gone, but he has been a good friend to me, and I cannot afford to offend him. If I could only have written and told him I had a place in view for her, it would have been different. I suppose, ma'am, if you had heard of this nursery-maid's place a week earlier, you would have recommended Kate for it, as she spoke to you, I think, before Mary Green."

"Yes, she did, and I recommended her to Lady Hazeldean, when I called there and heard of it, for I thought it would be just the place for Kate; and I must say I felt a little vexed as well as disappointed that you did not come to see me last Monday week about it."

The widow stared at her visitor. "I never knew that I was expected," she said.

"Has not Kate told you since, that she forgot to deliver my message when she came home on Sunday? I told her to ask you to call and see me on Monday morning, for I could not conveniently leave home on that day, and I had promised Lady Hazeldean she should see you and Kate as soon as possible."

"And Kate knew that and never told me!" gasped the widow.

"No, no, perhaps if I had explained it all to her she would not have forgotten it, but I could not do that in school, and so I merely told her I wished to see you on Monday morning," said Miss Eldon, quickly.

"Kate, how could you have forgotten such a message?" said her mother, sharply.

But Kate stood with downcast face, and said not a word.

"You must not be angry, Mrs. Haydon; it was excusable, I am sure, if you had just received these London letters," said the lady, gently.

"I don't see how she could have forgotten such a message," said the widow, in the same vexed tone. "Did you know what I was wanted for, Kate?" she demanded, turning once more to her daughter.

But Miss Eldon answered for her: "Oh, no; she could not have known it, and so I am the only one to blame in this business," she said.

Kate felt very grateful to her teacher for thus helping her out of the difficulty, and vowed in her own mind that she would never act so deceitfully again. No, never again would she follow such a crooked path, and deceive her mother, for it was deceit; now she saw it quite plainly. But still she was afraid to confess the whole truth about the matter.

After Miss Eldon had gone, she had an opportunity of doing this, for her mother said: "Now, Kate, tell me the whole truth about this affair."

"The truth, mother?" repeated Kate. "Teacher told you the whole truth."

"But how could you forget such an important message as this, when you knew it was just what I was wishing for you to get—a nice quiet place near home?"

"But teacher did not say a word about the place that Sunday afternoon," said Kate, in an injured tone.

"But you might have known—might have guessed—what it was likely to be about. It is not as though Miss Eldon was in the habit of sending for me. She never did such a thing before."

"But still, how was I to know she had heard of a place at last? I have been waiting months and months, and nothing has come."

"I know that; but still how you could forget that Sunday afternoon, when you came home and found me in such trouble about your going to London, is more than I can understand."



### **Miss Eldon's visit.**

But the foolish girl persisted in declaring that she had forgotten all about the message, in spite of her mother's frequently expressed doubts, soothing her conscience by assuring herself that this should be a warning to her never to do so again. Kate felt quite sure about this; let the temptation be what it might, she never would yield to it again, as she had done in this instance, for it had made her miserable.

But I am not sure that Kate felt sorry enough for her fault yet to wish it undone. When she went up to bed that night, instead of kneeling down and confessing her sin to God, and asking His forgiveness, and His grace to keep her in the future, she peeped into the box that stood ready packed, and thought with a feeling of triumph that she was going to London after all, and her mother would forget all this fuss that had been made about her teacher's message when she heard how well she was getting on there; and so full was Kate's heart of these thoughts that she jumped into bed without kneeling at her bedside, but still feeling quite confident that she would never act again as she had done, now that she had got her own way, and was sure of going to London.

## **CHAPTER III.**

### **IN LONDON.**



It was night when Kate reached London, but her uncle was waiting for her at the railway station, and she and her luggage were soon stowed away in a cab, and they were rattling through the brilliantly-lighted streets. To Kate's unaccustomed eyes it was like fairyland for a few minutes, and she thought she had indeed been fortunate to obtain a place in one of these grand shops.

But she soon found there were streets in London almost as dimly lighted as their own village streets at home, and shops much less grand and imposing than those she had first seen.

At last the cab stopped, and Kate saw, to her disappointment, that it was not a broad, fashionable thoroughfare, and the shop, with its piles of buns and loaves of bread, was by no means imposing, but rather old-fashioned in its appearance, and the whole street was the same, although there were a great number of people about, and everybody seemed in such a hurry that Kate made up her mind there must be a fire or some accident must have happened, near at hand. All this passed through her mind, as her box was being lifted from the roof of the cab, as she stood on the pavement looking up and down the busy, old-fashioned street, that was so unlike what she had fancied her new home would be.

Her cousin Marion was behind the counter in the shop, and there seemed to be a constant stream of customers coming and going. "This is the best bun house in London," whispered her uncle, as he



took her hand and led her in.

The old lady, who was likewise serving, left her post when she saw Kate and her uncle, and led the way into the cosy parlour behind the shop. She seemed pleased with Kate's appearance and manner, and asked her a great many questions about her home and her mother.

"We are very quiet, old-fashioned people, ourselves," she said, "although we live in London, and I am very particular about the young people I have to help me in the shop, and never allow them to make friends among the customers. Be civil to all, but nothing more than that to anyone, my dear; that is my rule, and you must remember to obey it. Marion knows I am more strict about this than anything else, and so I hope you will remember it, too."

"Yes, ma'am, I will," said Kate; and then the old lady asked the servant to bring up some supper, and went back to the shop, that Marion might come in and speak to her father and cousin.

"I am to give you some supper, and then take you to bed," said Marion, after their greetings were over. "You will have some supper with us, father?—Mrs. Maple told me to ask you."

"No, thank you, my dear, I want to get home, and you girls don't need me now. I have told Kate she is always to spend the Sunday with us, the same as you do."

"Oh, yes, of course she will," said Marion. "You see that is one advantage of being in an old-fashioned shop like this; we have no Sunday work," she said, turning to her cousin.

"Mother will be glad to know that," said Kate.

"Yes, you must tell her when you write," said her uncle, bidding her good-bye.

When he was gone the girls sat down to supper, and Kate tried to eat, but everything was so strange, and she had such an intense longing to see her mother, that she said "yes" and "no" to her cousin's questions, scarcely understanding what they were.

The next morning, however, she felt a good deal better, and by the end of the week began to feel quite at home, for Mrs. Maple was not a hard mistress, and so Kate was able to give a good account of her home, when she wrote to her mother.

"What shall we do to-morrow—where shall we go?" said Marion, on Saturday afternoon.

"Where do you generally go?" said Kate rather timidly. "I have been going to ask you two or three times how you spend Sunday."

"Oh! I go home, and, if it's fine, Bella and I go for a walk, or a little way into the country. But you will want to see London, of course."

"Yes," said Kate, rather slowly; "I should like to see some of the grand places I have heard about, but—but don't you think we might manage to see them another time? Don't you go to Sunday school?" she asked, in a still lower tone.

Her cousin stared at her in blank amazement, for a minute or two and then burst into a merry laugh. "Go to Sunday school—a young woman like me?" she said.

"Well, not to Sunday school, exactly: I did not mean that, but to church and Bible-class?" said Kate.

"Oh, yes, we go to church sometimes, for a change, when it's wet, and it's a good place to see the fashions, too, but I never went to Sunday school in my life; mother said it wasn't genteel!"

"Mother liked me to go to Sunday school, and I promised her I would find out a Bible-class, as soon as I could," said Kate.

"Well, so you can, I daresay, after a little while, but you must look round a bit first. Now where shall we go on Sunday? You see the fine weather won't last long, and there's such lots of things for you to see. Of course, you would like to see Buckingham Palace, and the Houses of Parliament, and the Albert Memorial, and Kensington Gardens. But we can't see everything in one Sunday, so we had better make up our mind to go and see the Parks and the Memorial next Sunday."

Kate did not answer, but Marion chose to consider the matter settled. Later in the day, when they had time for a few minutes' chat to themselves, Marion said, "You will soon forget your old-fashioned, countrified notions about Sunday schools and Bible-classes. They were all very well, I daresay, for the country people could go out and get a breath of fresh air any day in the week; but you can't here, and so we are obliged to manage our Sundays the best way we can."

"Yes—but—but I should like to go to church next Sunday. Mother asked me in her letter this morning to tell her whether I had found a nice Bible-class, and where I went to church."

"Oh! well, we'll go to church for once, just to satisfy your mother, Kate, only she can't expect us to go every Sunday."

Kate thought she had better be content with the small victory she had gained, and perhaps, by-and-

by, she might be able to persuade Marion to go to Bible-class with her, and thus put an end to these Sunday excursions. In the meantime, she must go with her cousins for a walk or a pleasure trip on a Sunday afternoon, or else Marion would refuse to accompany her to school.

It seemed strange to Kate, at first, to be walking about in the noisy streets, or gazing at the fashionable, gaily-dressed people in the Park, but she soon began to enjoy discussing this one's dress and that one's bonnet almost as much as her cousins did, and her younger cousin said, "You will soon wear off all your country rust, Kate. How could you have lived in that pokey place so long?"

"Oh, it wasn't pokey a bit," said Kate warmly; "I had lots of friends there, and that is what we are not allowed to have here. Don't you find that rule of Mrs. Maple's rather hard to keep sometimes, Marion?" she added.

"What rule?" said Marion.

"About saying as few words as possible to the customers in the shop; Mrs. Maple told me she was most strict about it."

"Well, I suppose she is," said Marion, carelessly; "at least, just at first;" but they were joined at this moment by two young men, whom Kate instantly recognised as being frequent visitors at the shop.

She cast an inquiring glance at Marion, as one of them said, "This is the cousin you told me was coming to help you in the shop, I suppose?"

"I have been there all the week, and seen you several times, I think," said Kate quickly, at which they all burst into a loud laugh.

A few minutes afterwards they were joined by some more friends, who were likewise customers at the shop, as Kate's eyes instantly told her, and she wondered whether her cousin did keep the rule about friends and customers, as strictly as Mrs. Maple supposed.

Before the next week was over, she found that these friends of Marion's came in for buns or pastry when Mrs. Maple was sure to be out of the way, and a good deal of laughing and chatting went on between them.

"Of course I don't keep such a stupid rule as that, Kate, how can I?" said her cousin afterwards, when they were talking about this. "It would not do to laugh and chat with the old lady in the way, but where is the harm I should like to know?"

Kate shook her head. "Of course I don't understand business," she said, "but I thought it was a strange rule, myself."

"A strange rule! It is the most stupid and absurd one that could be thought of. Some people come into the shop every day, and to think I am only to say 'yes' and 'no' to them is ridiculous."

"But all those young men you met on Sunday—surely you knew some of them in a different way than just coming into the shop?" said Kate.

"No, I don't," replied her cousin; "I never saw them until I came here," she added, laughing.

Kate looked a little disappointed. "I—I thought you knew them so well, they seemed so friendly—that they must be friends of your brothers—that your father knew their friends and all about them," stammered Kate.

"You little goose! what difference can it make to us, whether my father and grandfather knew theirs, or whether we met last week for the first time?" said Marion, laughing.

But Kate was not satisfied. "I wish I could talk to mother about it," she said, half aloud.

"For patience sake don't look so solemn and talk so seriously about a little thing like that, and as to telling your mother everything, why no sensible girl of any spirit would think of such nonsense, for she would know that her mother could not understand about things she had never seen or heard of. Now, don't be silly, Kate, and make your mother uncomfortable about you. We went to church last Sunday on purpose that you might tell her we had been, and after that she will be satisfied, unless you tell her something on purpose to make her anxious about you." And Marion went to serve another customer, feeling sure that Kate would not say anything about these acquaintances now.

Kate certainly did not want to say anything that would make her mother anxious. Only this morning she had received a letter from her mother saying she had lost almost all her fears concerning her welfare now, for Kate's letters had given such a faithful account of Mrs. Maple's strict ways, and the stringent rule about chance acquaintances, and her resolution to induce her cousins to go with her to a Bible-class very soon, that Mrs. Haydon grew almost as hopeful as Kate about the future.

And Kate was quite sincere in her desire to induce her cousins to spend their Sundays differently, and she thought if she went with them to see the various sights of London just once or twice they would be willing to go with her afterwards. The following Sunday morning when they were dressing to go out Marion said, "Where do you think we are going to-day, Kate?"

"You said you would take me to Westminster Abbey or to St. Paul's," said Kate.

"Ah, yes, so I did; but a wet Sunday will do for those places, and they want us to go to Richmond or Greenwich Park. Which shall it be, Kate?" said her cousin, brushing her hair more vigorously.

"Who wants us to go?" asked Kate.

"Oh, you know—the friends who met us in the Park last Sunday."

"The young men who came into the shop on Friday? Wouldn't they go with us to the Abbey or to St. Paul's instead?" said Kate.

Marion laughed. "I shouldn't like to ask them," she said; "and pray don't say anything about Sunday school before them."

"I am not ashamed of it, I can tell you," said Kate, in a half-offended tone.

"No, no, of course not; but then, you see, you are not in the country now," said Marion, "and things are different in London."

"I don't see why they should be; there are Sunday schools in London, I know, and I mean to find out a Bible-class, and then you and Bella shall come and see how nice it is."

"Well, there's plenty of time for that when the fine weather is all over," said Marion a little impatiently. "Now, Kate, be quick and decide where we shall go, for I expect they will meet us as we go home, and we must tell them where to meet us this afternoon."

"Well, I would rather not go at all," said Kate slowly, for she knew her conscience would not let her enjoy the most pleasant trip that could be arranged.

"Oh, nonsense, but you must come, I have promised for you; they particularly want you to go," said Marion.

Kate could not help feeling pleased and flattered by her cousin's words, but she made another feeble protest.

"I would much rather go to St. Paul's," she said, "and if I go with you to-day you must promise to go to Bible-class with me very soon."

"Oh, I promise," laughed Marion. "And now, Kate, once more, where shall we go, for I promised you should decide this? I am a great mind to be jealous of you, my little country cousin," she added; "Bella would be, I know."

"I don't see what you have got to be jealous about," said Kate, yet still feeling pleased and elated, in spite of her better sense.

"Now let me give you a few finishing touches before we go," said Marion, a few minutes afterwards, "and I will lend you my green brooch and a veil. You must let me alter your bonnet a little one night next week. There; now you don't look quite so dowdy," said Marion, as she pushed her cousin before the looking-glass after the "few touches" had been given to her bonnet and neck ribbon.

"Come, Kate, will you take this parasol of mine?" said her cousin.

"Oh, yes, and I must take some money, I suppose," said Kate, going to her box and unlocking it. She did not like her cousin to see what a small store of money she had, and so she put the purse into her pocket as it was, but not intending to spend more than a shilling, for the little sum her mother had given her was to last three months for her extra expenses.

## **CHAPTER IV.**

### **THE LOST PURSE.**



unday "outings," in the holiday-making sense, were not much to Kate's fancy, but she had exhausted all her excuses and objections, and found herself forced to yield to Marion's proposal. So the two girls went off and found their friends waiting for them a short distance from the shop. The bells of various churches were ringing for morning service, and Kate ventured to whisper to her cousin that she would like to go, but Marion shook her head so decidedly that she gave up the point at once, but she did not take much interest in the discussion that was going on about the rival attractions of Greenwich and Richmond, saying she knew nothing about either.

At last it was decided that they should spend the afternoon at Greenwich, going and returning by water. The young men walked with them almost as far as Marion's home, but left them at the corner of the street, and nothing was said to her father about these companions of their walk. When Isabel heard where they were going she declared she must have her bonnet altered, and Marion sat down to do this while her sister got the dinner ready.

As they were going out after dinner, Marion said, "Perhaps we shall stop out to tea, father. I want to go and see a friend to-day, and she is sure to ask us to stay to tea."

"Very well, my dear, I can manage to get tea for myself and the boys," said her father, carelessly. Marion always had been allowed to do very much as she pleased, and since her mother's death, and she had got a situation, she had taken the reins quite into her own hands, and seldom asked advice, and still more rarely accepted it when it was offered.

Kate felt rather uncomfortable at first, when she thought of this steamboat excursion, but she soon forgot this in the pleasure and novelty of the scene around her, and she stifled the voice of conscience, by whispering that this would not happen again—she had only come this once, that her cousin might go with her to the Bible-class when the fine weather was over.

The steamboat was crowded, and there was a good deal of pushing and squeezing when they reached Greenwich Pier, where most of the passengers were landed.

"All tickets ready! all tickets ready!" called the man at the end of the landing-board, while another took each passenger's scrap of paper as they passed out. Kate had put her ticket in her purse for safety; and now put her hand into her pocket to get it; but to her dismay she found her pocket empty. "Oh, stop a minute, wait for me, Marion, I must have dropped my purse!" and Kate began to elbow her way through the crowd back to where she had been sitting. The place was vacant now, and she hunted all round, but no purse could be seen. "Oh, what shall I do, what shall I do!" she exclaimed, bursting into tears.

"What is it, why don't you come?" said Marion, who had now come back for her.

"My purse, my purse, I've lost it!" sobbed poor Kate.

"Lost your purse!" exclaimed Marion. "Did you drop it?"

Kate shook her head. "I don't know; I thought I put it into my pocket," she said.

The two were looking under the seats, and all round as they talked, but now they heard Bella and their companions calling to them from the pier to make haste, as the steamboat was about to leave, so they had to give up the search and run ashore.

"Tickets, Miss, tickets," said the man, as they were hastening past to join their friends. Marion gave up hers, but Kate could only repeat, "What shall I do, what shall I do!"

"Have you had a purse given to you that was found on board the boat?" asked Marion.

The man laughed at the question. "I suppose you have lost one," he said.

"Yes, and my steamboat ticket was in it. Did anyone give it to you?" asked Kate anxiously.

"Oh, no! my dear, I've seen no purse. You must pay again, that's all I can say."

"But how can I pay, all my money was in my purse," sobbed Kate.

"What is it, what's the row?" asked one of the young men, who had come back for them.

"This young lady's lost her purse, that's all," said the man. "Are you one of her friends?" he suddenly added.

"Yes, I am!" said the young man.

"Ah, well then, the matter can soon be settled. You see her ticket was in the purse, and we can't be expected to lose that."

"Precious mean of you then," grumbled the friend, putting his hand into his pocket and counting out Kate's fare.

There was a momentary sense of relief in Kate's mind, and Marion whispered, "There, now it's all right, come along and forget all about it."

But that was just what Kate could not do; and the longer she thought about it, the more miserable she grew. They went for a walk in the grand old park, which Kate would have enjoyed immensely at any other time, but conscience was reproving her for this misspent Sabbath, and then the loss of her money almost distracted her, for she was to receive her salary from Mrs. Maple by the quarter, and so it would be nearly three months before she had another penny she could call her own.

"Oh, dear, I wish I had never come," sighed Kate.

"It's no use crying over spilt milk," said Marion; "so cheer up for a little while, and let us be jolly." And she took her cousin and led her on to the rest of the party, for Kate had preferred to drop behind and indulge her gloomy thoughts alone.

"Here, William!" she said, "try and cheer her up a bit, she feels dull about losing her purse."

The young man tried to "cheer her," as he had been directed, but it was not any easy task. He was not the sort of companion Kate had been used to, and could talk of little but music-halls, and theatres, and the last popular song, and singers—things which Kate knew nothing about, and could not interest her just now; so that the afternoon passed slowly away.

They were leaving the Park now, and Bella was declaring that she must have some tea before she went home.

"Well, then, I'll sit down on this seat," said Kate, "and you can come for me when you are ready to go home," and Kate went over to the seat, but was closely followed by the rest.

"Come, come, we can't allow this, you know," said her self-constituted guardian, William; "you are under my charge, and you must come and have some tea."

"Oh, do please leave me alone; I shall feel better here," pleaded Kate.

"Nonsense, Kate, a cup of tea will do you good," said Bella impatiently.

"But you forget I have lost my purse, and have no money to pay for it," replied Kate, a little bitterly.

"But I told you that did not matter," interposed the young man again; "my purse is at your service. I will give it you, if you like—if you will only laugh and chat as you did on board the steamer."

Kate smiled, and thanked him, but declined to accept either purse or tea from him.

"You are almost a stranger to me, and I feel vexed that you should have had to pay for my steamboat ticket," she said.

"Oh, Kate, how rude you are," said Marion, crossly; "there, come along to tea, and I will pay for it, if you will not accept William's kindness."

"I cannot," said Kate; "and I would much rather stay here than go to a tea I cannot pay for."

"Well, you shall pay me back, if you like—if that will satisfy you," said Marion, impatiently; and Kate reluctantly rose from her seat, and followed the rest, who had already turned in the direction of the park gates.

Marion and the rest seemed to enjoy their tea, and laughed and chatted, and tried to rouse Kate into something like merriment too, but Kate felt too anxious and unhappy to laugh at anything—even the poor jokes and witticisms of William although they were made for her special benefit and which afforded her so much amusement when they first started.

"Really, Kate, it is too bad of you to let your loss spoil the fun for everybody," said Marion, reproachfully, as they turned towards the steam-boat pier once more.

"I don't want to spoil your fun, I only want you to leave me alone," said Kate, crossly. And Marion did leave her alone for the rest of the evening, but her self-appointed friend would not. He paid her steamboat fare back, and talked to her assiduously as he had done during the afternoon, but with little better success, and Kate was thankful when the miserable day came to an end, and she was once more in the little bedroom she shared with Marion.

"And do you really mean to say, Kate, that you took out all the money you possessed?" said her cousin, as she began to undress.

"Yes. I know it was very foolish," sighed Kate.

"How much was there altogether?" asked her cousin.

"Nearly six shillings."

"Oh, well, that wasn't much," said Marion, rather contemptuously, "and I daresay you will be able to manage until your mother sends you some more."

"I shall not ask mother—I'll wait until Mrs. Maple pays me my wages."

"Say salary, my dear, that is more genteel," said Marion. "But how are you going to manage for your letters; and you'll want new neck-ribbons, and that bonnet will never last you three months."

"It must, and I shall have to do without neck-ribbons. There, don't bother me to-night," concluded Kate.

"I don't want to bother you, and you are a goose to bother and worry yourself as you do about trifles. Most girls would have forgotten the loss of a paltry purse when they had a nice-looking young man like William so kind to them. You must make it up to him, you know; he will expect it," said Marion.

Kate lifted her head, and looked at her cousin but Marion turned her head aside.

"Make it up to him. What do you mean, Marion? Of course I shall pay the shilling I owe him for my steamboat fare, I told him so when I said 'good-night.'"

"You did! How can you be so rude or so stupid, which is it? Don't you know they like to pay for us, if they can get the chance. I let them do it sometimes; it pleases them, and don't hurt me."

"What, when you have the money in your pocket, and can pay for yourself?" exclaimed Kate, in astonishment.

"Yes; why shouldn't they spend their money if they like it; and besides, I make it up to them," added Marion.

"How do you do that?" asked Kate.

But Marion did not answer. She began to feel half sorry she had told her cousin as much as she had.

"How do you make it up to them?" repeated Kate.

"Oh, don't bother me to-night, I'm tired. Keep your eyes open, and you'll see for yourself," concluded Marion, as she got into bed.

Kate kneeled down, as she always did, for the habit of prayer was too strong to be broken all at once. She felt ashamed and unhappy as she kneeled down, and she wished she could pray as her mother and teacher had often told her—pouring out her whole heart before God. Poor, foolish Kate, she had read often enough those words, "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God;" and yet she was afraid to bring this trouble to Him.

Her thoughts were also running on her cousin's last words, and after she got into bed, she said again:

"I wish you would tell me how I can make it up to William—about that shilling, I mean; it will be such a long time for him to wait before I can pay it."

"I should think it would, if you mean to wait until you take your salary," said Marion, impatiently.

"Well, then, tell me what I can do besides. How do you make it up when they pay shillings for you?"

"Keep your eyes open, and you'll see for yourself some day. But you'd better shut them now and go to sleep, or you won't be able to keep them open at the right time," concluded Marion, as she turned round to put an end to the talk.

But after a minute or two, Kate said, "You might tell me when it is the right time to keep them open, Marion."

"Oh, don't bother; go to sleep. Haven't you heard 'there's tricks in every trade'?"

"I don't know; perhaps I have."

"Well, then, keep a sharp look-out, and you'll soon learn the tricks of ours." And Marion was soon fast asleep; but it was a long time before Kate could close her eyes, for conscience was at work again, urging her to tell her mother of her loss, and all that led to it. But Kate was afraid. She could not bear to forfeit her mother's good opinion, and make her anxious. She might even send for her to come home, and Kate did not like the idea of that at all. She was very comfortable in this "old-fashioned place," as everybody called it, and not at all inclined to go back to a quiet country life.

## CHAPTER V.

### DISCLOSURE.



an you oblige me by putting this bill in the window Miss?" asked a pleasant-looking young woman, who often came into the shop for a loaf or a few buns.

"I daresay we can," said Kate, taking the bill and reading it. It was the announcement of a tea-meeting at a Sunday school in the neighbourhood, and Kate forthwith determined to speak to this young woman when she came in again, and ask her if there was a Bible-class there for elder girls and young women.

"Look here, Marion," she said, holding up the bill to her cousin, "I suppose I can put this into the window?"

"I suppose you can, but I shouldn't; I should throw it under the counter!" said Marion in a tone of contempt.

"But why?" asked Kate.

"Well, we can't put in all the bills that are brought, and so I never put that Sunday-school rubbish anywhere but under the counter."

"Well, I shall put it in the window," said Kate, decidedly, and as she had charge of the one where the piles of loaves were placed, she put it in the most conspicuous corner. "I did not know there was a Sunday-school so near," she went on; "I shall ask that young person when she comes in again if they have got a nice Bible-class there. Perhaps she goes to it herself, and would take me with her for the first time."

"You seem to forget Mrs. Maple's rule about making friends of the customers," said Marion quickly.

"So do you, I should think," retorted Kate.

"I am not a new hand: I have been here some months, and know the ways of London better than a country girl," replied Marion.

"Well, I don't believe Mrs. Maple would mind me speaking to this young woman about a Bible-class; you don't know anything about it, and I must ask someone. She would not mind it so much as our talking to those young men as we do."

"Well, ask her and see!" said Marion, scornfully.

"I've a great mind to," said Kate.

"Do; go now! Kate, you are the greatest simpleton that ever came to London, I think. I do believe you would go and ask this, as though you were afraid your tongue was not your own. Talk to her if you like, only don't grumble any more about me talking to my friends, as you do sometimes."

If Kate had only known it, Mrs. Maple would readily have granted a breaking of her rule in favour of this customer, for she knew her to be a good, industrious young woman, who would influence her aright; for although not a Christian herself she had a great respect for those who were, and knew they were the most trustworthy and reliable in business.

But Kate was laughed out of her intention of speaking to Mrs. Maple about this, and as she happened to be in the shop each time this customer came in during the next week, she had no opportunity of asking her what she wished, and so another Sunday came round without any effort being made to discover the Bible-class she had told her mother she would find.

During this week Marion's friends came in nearly every day, and Kate noticed that they ate a good deal of pastry as they stood laughing and chatting with them, for Kate was easily drawn into the talk now, but Marion always took the money for what they had, so that she did not know what money really was paid.

One day she ventured to say, "I suppose William has a very high salary, as he can afford to spend so much in buns and cakes, and go out for Sunday excursions?"

"And pay for people who are so foolish as to lose their purses, you should add," laughed Marion.

But it was no laughing matter to Kate. Already she had been obliged to borrow a postage-stamp from her cousin to send her customary letter to her mother, and she had a keen suspicion that it had been taken from Mrs. Maple's desk, of which Marion kept the key. The following Sunday it was arranged that they should go to Greenwich again, and though Kate protested at first that she would not go, she was at last persuaded to join the party, Marion offering to pay for her, or to lend her the money to pay for herself. This time Kate enjoyed herself almost as much as any of them. She had succeeded in quieting her conscience, so that it did not trouble her as much as it did at first. How she succeeded in keeping her mother quiet and hopeful too, she alone knew, but she did not write home quite so frequently now, and made excuses for shorter letters by saying she had so little time to write.

Marion contrived that she should not have an opportunity of saying much to the young woman who brought the Sunday school bill, for she always went forward to serve her if they were by themselves in the shop. Once Kate got so far as to ask her if they had a Bible-class at the Sunday school, but Marion came up and interposed at once.

"What is the use of your asking questions about a Bible-class here? We are not here on Sunday, and it would be too far for you to walk backwards and forwards three or four times a day."

"Yes, I suppose it would," assented Kate slowly.

"We have a very nice class, and the lady who teaches would be glad to see you if you would come," ventured the customer.

"But she can't; it is impossible," said Marion; and this ended the conversation, for the young woman did not like to press it further, and, truth to tell, Kate was beginning to enjoy the Sunday walks and excursions, and therefore was not so anxious to join a Bible-class as she had been at first.

So the pleasant days and weeks of autumn slipped away, and when Kate sometimes asked her cousin what she had meant by saying she must make it up to William for paying for her steamboat fare, she laughed, and said she would find out some day if she only kept her eyes open.

Kate had kept her eyes open, as she thought, but Marion had not allowed her to see too much, for she did not quite feel sure how far Kate might be trusted with their secret yet; but her friends were not aware of this, and one day, Marion having gone out on business for Mrs. Maple, Kate was alone in the shop when William and a companion came in.

"Marion has gone out," said Kate.

"Has she? Something unusual, isn't it?" said the young man carelessly.

"Yes, very unusual," said Kate, "it is not often we get sent out."

"The old lady is out of the way, I suppose?" said William confidentially, as he helped himself to a sponge-cake from a plate on the counter.

"Yes, or else I dare not talk to you," said Kate, laughing.

"Well, we came in to ask if you couldn't both manage to go to the theatre one night," said William, helping himself to something else from the counter, and handing the plate to his friend.

"Me go to a theatre!" exclaimed Kate; "I have never been in my life."

"Just the reason why you should go now, then," said William, with his mouth full of lemon cheesecake. "Tell Marion what I say, and I know she will agree with me. Tell her I have a chance of some orders this winter, and you two shall have the first I can get hold of."

"You are very kind," said Kate. "I am sure Marion will be pleased, if she can only manage to go."

"And won't you be pleased too?" said the young man, looking round for another untasted dainty.

"I—I don't know, I don't think I shall be able to go; I don't see how we can both get out together."

"Oh, Marion will manage that, I daresay. You must go, Kate, if I can get the orders."

After a little more talk and a little more persuasion, William said he would take two pennyworth of buns, and gave Kate twopence as he spoke.

Kate handed him two buns and glanced over the impoverished plates on the counter, trying to reckon how many had been taken, while he in equal astonishment looked at the small bag she handed to him.

"Miss Kate, I am a wholesale customer, you know," he said at last.

"Wholesale?" repeated Kate; "I don't understand. Of course I know we supply a few shops at a different rate—at wholesale, as you call it, but—"

"You don't mean to say Marion has never let you into the secret of our wholesale trade," whispered William.

"I don't know what you mean, I'm sure."

"Well, never mind, it don't matter; I've got two buns, and I've paid for them;" and William was turning away from the counter, but Kate said quickly—

"Stop a minute; there are those other things you've had off the plates."

"Oh, it's all right, I'll settle with Marion for them. Good afternoon." And the next minute he was gone, leaving Kate in a state of bewildered astonishment not easily described. She knew that Marion often helped herself to stamps, envelopes, and paper out of her mistress's desk, but she could not think



that she would rob her to such an extent as William's words would imply, for it was robbery, nothing less, to give away their employer's property for favours bestowed on themselves. *This*, then, was how such favours were to be made up to them.

Kate longed for, and yet dreaded, her cousin's return, that she might talk to her about this, yet wondering at the same time how she should begin, how she should tell her what she thought of it. But, as it often happens, Marion herself helped her out of the difficulty, for as she came into the shop she said, in a hurried whisper, "Anyone been in, Kate?"

Kate nodded. "Go and get your things off, and I will tell you all about it," she said.

"Oh, I can guess your news, I think; he can get us some orders for the theatre? Isn't that it?"

"Yes, that and something else," said Kate rather gravely.

"Oh, never mind the 'something else,' that's enough. Kate, it will be splendid; he always gets orders for the best seats in the first-rate theatres. You must go."

"I don't know whether I shall, I must talk to you about things first. How are these orders to be paid for?"

"Paid for? That's nothing to do with you or me either, Kate. Orders are always presents."

"Yes, but we are expected to make it up, and to rob Mrs. Maple to do it."

"Rob her? What do you mean, Kate? If you were not my own cousin I'd make you prove your words," said Marion angrily. "What do you mean, I say? If you are a thief, begging me to give you her postage-stamps, I am not; I can buy postage-stamps for myself."

"I did not ask you for Mrs. Maple's stamps," said Kate indignantly; "I asked you to lend me your own until I could pay you for them."

"Lend you my own! why, you knew I had not got any," exclaimed Marion. "Where was I to get them but out of the desk?"

"Well, I've kept account of how many stamps I have had, and you shall put them back. But it was not the stamps I was thinking of, Marion."

"Oh, no, of course not; we never see ourselves as other people see us."

"I told you William came in this afternoon. Well, he ate a good deal of pastry off the plates, and then gave me twopence for some buns, expecting half a dozen, I suppose, for he was very much surprised that I only gave him two, and said he was always served at the wholesale price, and then went away without paying for anything he had eaten."

"Well, suppose he did?" said Marion, coolly, "didn't he tell you he was keeping an account with me?"

"He told me to tell you he would settle with you about that."

"Well, what more do you want? How dare you charge me with being a thief? The idea of your coming here and saying such things of me, who was here long before you were! It only shows what a bad, wicked girl you must be, and what you would do yourself if you only had the chance. I have a great mind to go to Mrs. Maple this minute, and tell her what a dangerous person she has in her house, and how we have all been deceived in you."

Marion had almost talked herself out of breath, and Kate out of her suspicions. As her cousin went upstairs to take off her things Kate began to feel like a culprit in the matter, as though she ought to beg her cousin's pardon for judging her unjustly; and yet when she was left alone again calmly to think over all that had happened that afternoon and many previous afternoons, she could not but think that her suspicions were correct; she rather dreaded Marion coming down again, but, to her surprise, Marion seemed to have forgotten her anger by the time she appeared, and came into the shop smiling and pleasant as though nothing had happened.

"I have not told Mrs. Maple anything about our quarrel, Kate," she said, quite coolly; "I am sure you do not mean what you said just now, and it would vex her, I know, if she knew we had begun quarrelling."

"I almost wish you had told her," said Kate.

"Well, my dear, I am not so fond of making other people uncomfortable as you are, and so I think we had better keep the affair to ourselves. I don't mind telling you this much, I do sometimes give William a bun over what he pays for, at the retail price—let him have them at the wholesale rate, as he is a pretty good customer."

"But now let me try and remember what William had, for I went to the drawers and filled up the plates again."

"That was right; never let your plates be half empty if you can fill them. Now you had better tell me what William had," and Marion took a note-book from her pocket, and appeared to set down the items as Kate could recall them.

"I don't think he had anything else," said Kate, when nearly a shilling's worth had been called over.

"Well, we'll forgive him if he has," said Marion, replacing the book in her pocket with a smile. "Don't look so grave, Kate; I'm not going to rob Mrs. Maple, as you accused me of doing a little while ago. Everybody in business lets their own friends have things at a wholesale rate. Mrs. Maple sells to the shops on those terms, and why shouldn't I let William have them at the same price? it makes no difference to her."

"Oh, yes it does—it must; and, besides, the things are not ours, but hers, and we ought to sell them at the regular price, and no other."

"You are too strict, but you will find out that such strict notions won't do in business. I tell you everybody does it—show their friends a little favour in buying and selling, and we must do the same or we might as well be in a convent."

## CHAPTER VI.

### AT THE THEATRE.



Marion so far overcame her cousin's scruples that she said no more about the young men's non-payment, and when William or one of his companions asked for buns and gave her twopence, which was the sum usually paid whatever they might have, she did not hesitate to give them four or five, or even half a dozen if he said, as he sometimes did, "Make it half a dozen this time, Kate."

But Marion was not quite so pleasant with these friends as time went on, for the promised orders for the theatre did not come, and Marion was disappointed and impatient.

"It's no good being so cross with a fellow; I tell you I'll get the orders next week, if I possibly can," said William, one afternoon, when Marion was more than usually snappish.

It was drawing near to Christmas now, and the days were short and dark and cold, so that pleasure trips and excursions down the river were out of the question; it was often impossible for them even to go for a walk in the parks on Sunday.

"You've told me the same thing before, and here I have been moped up for a month, waiting for them. I tell you I'll get somewhere by myself; I can't bear this dull life much longer," concluded Marion.

"Well, I'll get the orders to-morrow, if I can," said William, and this time he was as good as his word. He came in the next afternoon, and with a triumphant flourish handed Marion the coveted orders for herself and Kate.

"Oh, my! they've come at last, and for to-morrow night, too," exclaimed Marion, examining the papers critically.

"But we can't both go," said Kate, peeping over her shoulder at the magic papers that had worked such a wonderful change in her cousin's temper, for Marion had been very cross lately, and scarcely spoken a civil word to Kate.

"Who says we can't both go?" demanded Marion; "it would serve you right not to let you go—to leave you here in the shop while I am enjoying myself in fairyland."

"No, no, that won't be fair," said William. "Kate must go, or the party will be spoiled."

"Who else are going?" asked Marion.

"Oh, a lot of young fellows; some you do know and some you don't. We shall be a jolly party, and will take good care of you girls."

"Have they all got orders?" asked Kate.

"No, it isn't likely; most of them will pay for themselves; they can afford to do it better than you or I can, but they will be none the less glad to have our company."

"But I don't see how I am to go," said Kate again.

"Oh, leave that to me, I'll manage it," said Marion. "We must both get out somehow, but it won't do to tell Mrs. Maple where we are going."

"The old lady would have a fit, I suppose?" said William, speaking with his mouth full of cake.

"Oh, ten fits all at once!" laughed Marion. "We must take care she doesn't find out where we have been."

While William was amusing himself by eating sponge cakes and tarts, Marion sat down at the desk and began writing a letter. "You must wait for this," she said; "I want you to take it to the post-office close to our home, and post it there. You see I am writing it to myself, asking myself and Kate to go home for a few hours to keep father's birthday to-morrow evening. I shall show it to Mrs. Maple, of course, and she'll grumble a bit at first, I daresay, but she'll let us go, I know."

"All right. She isn't half a bad sort, is she?" said the young man.

"No, that she isn't, and I hate to deceive her," said Kate, warmly.

"Well, she'll be none the worse for it, you goose," said Marion, laughing.

"I—I don't think I'll go," said Kate.

"There, take the letter, I'll manage her," said Marion, impatiently, as William was about to expostulate. "She'll come fast enough, I tell you."

"All right. I'll come in to-morrow to arrange about meeting, for we must go together. Mind, you must go, Kate," added the young man, as he slipped the letter into his pocket.

"Now, Kate, don't let us have any fuss with you about this," said her cousin, as the shop door closed and they were left to themselves.

"I don't want any fuss, but I don't want to go to the theatre."

"Well, stay at home, then; I'm not going to persuade you," said Marion, crossly, and then some more customers came in, and there was no opportunity of renewing the discussion for some time, and Marion did not refer to the matter again that evening.

The letter Marion had written reached them by the last post that night, and after she had gone through the form of reading it she took it at once to Mrs. Maple. "Will you read this, ma'am? They want us to go home for the evening to-morrow, if you can spare us."

"What, both of you?" said Mrs. Maple, taking the letter and putting on her spectacles as she spoke.

"Your sister writes very much like you, Marion," remarked the old lady, as she looked at the envelope again; not that she doubted Marion or suspected she would even attempt to deceive her—it was done almost without a second thought. But Marion had provided against such a scrutiny. The post-marks were quite correct, and Marion answered quickly, "Yes, ma'am, our handwriting is very much alike. We went to school together."

"Well, I don't know what to say to this," said Mrs. Maple, rather crossly, as she handed back the letter. "It is very inconsiderate of your father, I think, wanting you both at once."

"You see, they are going to have a few friends and we don't often have company, now," said Marion, twisting the corner of her apron as she spoke.

"Well, well, there's something in that, to be sure; but still it's very inconvenient for me. I must send and see if my niece can come and mind the shop for an hour or two to-morrow night. Will you want to stay out all night, or can you get home so as to be ready for the morning?"

"Oh, we will come home at night, ma'am; father will bring us home, if you won't mind us being late for once."

"Oh, I can put up with that; it's the shop I'm thinking of, if my niece cannot come."

"Well, then, we cannot go?"

"You cannot both go, certainly, if she cannot come to help me. I will send Mary with a note the first thing to-morrow morning."

Marion went back and told Kate the result of her "managing." "We shall go, never fear," she said confidently.

"I don't seem to care about it a bit, now. I wish you had not asked for me," said Kate.

"Now, don't be a simpleton, or you will make me cross. Don't want to go, indeed! What next, I wonder, after all the talk there has been about it? Really, Kate, I have no patience with you!"

"Well, I wouldn't mind if it wasn't deceiving Mrs. Maple; and then, somehow, I seem to have such a dread of it."

"Fiddlesticks! what next, I wonder?" said Marion contemptuously.

They saw Mary go out with the note next morning, and a wild wish seemed to seize Kate to run after her and tell her not to go. "I do hope she can't come," she said, half aloud; but her cousin would not notice the speech.

Mary, who knew the errand she had been sent upon, told them in a whisper as she came through the shop that it was "all right," and very soon Mrs. Maple came out and said they could go home for the evening—could go to tea, if they liked.

"Thank you, ma'am, but after tea will do. From four to six is always a busy time at both counters, and so we will not leave until that is over."

William came in before the busy time, and arranged to meet the girls in time to take them to the theatre. Kate felt it would be useless to resist further, and agreed to go with them without further demur, putting her vague fears out of mind as far as she could, and determined to enjoy herself as much as possible.

Just as William had left the shop, Mrs. Maple came in and filled two bags with pastry and buns. "There, you had better take these home with you," she said, when she had filled the last, and speaking to Marion.

"Thank you, ma'am, I am much obliged; father will be pleased," said Marion, but Kate felt thankful she was on the other side of the shop, and could hide her tell-tale face, for she knew she blushed with shame at the way they were deceiving their kind mistress.

When they went up to put their things on after tea, she said, "Oh, Marion, I feel like a thief, taking these things for your father, and we know he will never see them."

"There, make haste and pack away one lot in your bag, and hold your tongue," said Marion, impatiently.

"What shall we do with all these?" asked Kate; "Mrs. Maple has given us such a lot."

"Why, eat them, to be sure; William and the rest will help us. There, you put as many as you can in your bag, and we'll save them to eat when we come out, and they must take the rest between them," said Marion.

Kate filled her leather bag and Marion took those that were soon to be disposed of, and with a parting word from Mrs. Maple not to be very late, the girls set off.

Their friends were waiting for them at the corner of the street, and when they reached the doors of the theatre they were joined by several other smartly-dressed young men, who paid for their seats, and to whom money seemed of very little account. They condescended to laugh and chat with the two girls and eat some of the pastry, and Marion felt immensely flattered by their attentions.

Kate was in a state of bewilderment the whole evening. She had never seen a theatre before, and the whole scene was so strange and new, and the performances on the stage were so real to her that she paid little attention to other things, and was scarcely aware that some of the party changed their seats once or twice during the evening. The performance came to an end at last, all too soon for enraptured Kate, who found it hard to reconcile herself to her surroundings all at once.

"Come, Kate, don't go to sleep," said Marion, laughing at her dazed look round at the crowd.

All the people were leaving their seats now, and our party got up too.

"Open your bag, Kate, I should like a bun now," said Marion, and she took one herself and handed some to the rest of the party, who were pushing and elbowing their way through the crowd.

"What a dreadful crush there is," said Marion. "Kate, you haven't brought another purse to lose, have you?" she whispered.

Kate shook her head, for she was eating now from the bag as she carried it open in her hand. The next minute some one cried out, "I have been robbed—my watch has gone!" and the crowd surged back, and Kate was almost pushed off her feet.

There were cries of "Police! police! stop thief! stop thief!" and during the confusion that ensued Kate and Marion, who managed to keep together, were pushed into a corner and separated, from all their friends.

"Shut up your bag, Kate, or it may be snatched out of your hand, gaping open like that," said Marion.

"Oh! what is it, when shall we get out?" exclaimed Kate, turning very pale.

"There, don't be frightened," said Marion. "The crowd will move on directly, and the others will wait for us outside. It's nothing but a few pickpockets, you need not look so frightened."

"Oh, I wish we hadn't come!" said Kate, fairly trembling with undefined terror. She shut her bag, for neither she nor Marion could eat anything now, and even Marion began to get frightened at last, for

only murmured words among the crowd could tell them what was going on, but there was a bustle and expectancy and a swaying to and fro of the multitude that convinced Marion something unusual must be taking place, for they did not move a step forward for all the pushing and squeezing.

"Oh, dear! how late we shall be," said Kate, after a few minutes' waiting. "Can't we get out, Marion?"

"No, that we can't until the crowd moves. There, don't be frightened; Mrs. Maple won't expect us yet," said Marion.

It was some time before there was any perceptible movement in the crowd, but at last the two girls were released from their corner, and pushed their way on with the rest.

Once outside, they began to look about for their former companions, but could see nothing of them. The crowd had almost dispersed now, for they were nearly the last to leave the theatre, and so there was no difficulty in looking round, but neither William nor his grand friends could be seen.

"Well, that is mean of him to walk off and leave us like this!" said Marion, crossly.

"Never mind; let us make haste home by ourselves," said Kate, who was frightened at the lateness of the hour, for they had heard a clock strike eleven several minutes before.

But Marion would stop and look round once more. "I wonder where they have gone?" she said.

"Oh, do come!" said Kate; "perhaps they thought we had gone on, as we were so long getting out."

"Perhaps they are waiting for us at the corner," said Marion, who was unwilling to give up the hope of seeing these grand new-found friends again. She hurried on by Kate's side, and at the corner of the street stopped again and looked all round.

"Oh, don't wait, Marion, they are home by this time," said Kate, hurrying on.

Marion was obliged to hurry after her, but she was cross and out of humour. "I will give it to Mr. William when he comes in to-morrow!" she grumbled; "I never saw such bad behaviour in my life, leaving us to go home by ourselves at this time of night. There, do stop a minute, Kate; how fast you are walking. I thought I saw one of them then," and Marion stopped and looked round.

But no one was to be seen; indeed, the street seemed to be deserted, for no one was about but themselves, and, their footsteps ringing sharp and clear on the hard, frosty ground, seemed to fill Kate with terror again.

"Oh, pray do make haste, Marion," she cried, in a half-suppressed tone, as though she was afraid of the sound of her own voice.

"Oh, all right, you need not be in such a fright. I suppose you were never out late at night before," said Marion.

"Not so late as this, and by myself too," said Kate.

"Oh, well, we shan't be long," and Marion hurried on now, and in a few minutes they had reached the well-remembered street—quiet now, for a wonder, as it seemed to Kate, and she began to breathe more freely.

The shop was shut up, of course, but Mrs. Maple came to let them in almost as soon as they had rung the bell. "Has your father gone?" she said in some surprise, at seeing the girls by themselves.

"Yes, ma'am; he has gone to take a friend home," said Marion, quickly.

They went straight up to bed, and Kate put her bag into her box, where she usually kept it, without thinking of the buns that were left.

"I'm so glad it is over and we are safe at home again," said Kate with a sigh of relief.

"I hope we shall soon have another treat just like it," said Marion, thinking of her new friends.

## **CHAPTER VII.**

## **CONCLUSION.**



he two girls were in the shop next morning when a man came in and asked to see Mrs. Maple.

"I can serve you," said Marion who thought he looked at the window as though he wanted to give an order.

"Thank you; I don't doubt your ability, young woman, but I want to see your mistress."

Marion tossed her head rather disdainfully as she went into the little back parlour, for she did not like being called "young woman" by this stranger.

Mrs. Maple came out into the shop, and Marion returned to her work of dusting, while the stranger said a few words in an undertone to the old lady.

"What did you say?" she gasped, looking as though she had been shot, "come in here and tell me, for I'm sure this is a mistake."

"No mistake at all ma'am, for I kept my eye on them all the way from the theatre," he said.

He had followed Mrs. Maple into the back parlour, and the old lady had sat down, for she seemed unable to stand after the shock the man's words had caused her.

"Now tell me all about it," she said, "and I will call them in and ask them."

"No need to do that, ma'am; at least not just yet. They were both out until nearly twelve o'clock last night, you admit, and I tell you I watched them home from the — theatre, where they had spent the evening among a gang of smart young thieves. Three or four of them were taken, but there are several watches and other valuables still missing, and I have a warrant to search for these and arrest your two shop-women."

"What, take them to prison! But I tell you it must be a mistake; the youngest is a young girl only a few months from the country, and the other, her cousin, is a thoroughly respectable young woman, who has been with me nearly a twelvemonth now."

"That may be, ma'am, but still they were there, and with a party of thieves, too. Will you call them in and let me question them?"

"Well, I will call the younger one first. Kate!" said Mrs. Maple, opening the door.

"Yes, ma'am," answered Kate readily.

"Come in and tell me where you went last night," said Mrs. Maple. Kate turned crimson as she looked from the stranger to her mistress. "Now tell the whole truth about it, Kate. I don't believe what this person says—that you were in bad company, but where did you go?"

"To the theatre," faltered Kate.

"You did!" exclaimed her mistress; "and who, did you go with?" she added.

"With—with some friends," said Kate.

"And who were they, pray?" said Mrs. Maple, sternly.

But Kate shook her head. "Most of them I did not know. William Minn took us; he brought us the orders."

The man noted her answers down in a book, and then said, "I must search her boxes."

"Very well," said Mrs. Maple. "Kate, you ought to know that this is a policeman, and he must search your things for some property that was stolen at the theatre last night."

"Mine," gasped Kate; but there was no time to say more, for Mrs. Maple led the way to her room, and she slowly followed behind the detective.

"Which is your box, young woman?" asked the man.

Kate pointed to it, and handed him the key.

"I had that bag with me last night," she said, as he took it out.

The man instantly opened it, and took out some half-eaten buns and cakes. "From your shop, ma'am," he said grimly.

"I gave them to her before she went out," said Mrs. Maple, stiffly, for she did not believe the policeman's story, though Kate had admitted having been to the theatre.

But the next minute she and Kate both felt as if they had been struck, for he drew out two gold watches with the broken links of the chains still attached.

"Where did you get these?" asked the man coolly.

But poor Kate could only shake her head, and stare in blank astonishment at the sight. Mrs. Maple had dropped into a chair, exclaiming, "Oh dear! oh dear! I never could have believed it."

"No, ma'am, I daresay not; of course you have been cruelly deceived in these two young women," said the detective, turning over the contents of Kate's box in search of other stolen property; but there was nothing more to reward his search, and in a few minutes he said, "Now, ma'am, if you'll call the other young woman up I will soon finish."

"Yes, yes, to be sure, Marion must come," said Mrs. Maple; and in a minute or two Marion came in, wondering not a little why she had been called, and what could be the matter.

"You were at the theatre last night, Marion, and this is a policeman come to search for some stolen property," said Mrs. Maple.

Marion saw it would be useless to deny the charge now, and did not attempt it. "I know we were at the theatre last night," she said, "but I have nothing but what is my own;" and she handed her keys at once to the policeman.

"All right, young woman; but whether I find anything or not you must come with me to answer a few questions with the other prisoners when they are brought before the magistrate to-morrow morning."

"The other prisoners!" gasped Marion, now turning as pale as her mistress and Kate.

"Ah, the fine friends you were with last night. One or two of them are well-known gaol birds, and the rest are not much better."

Marion looked at Kate and then at her mistress, as the policeman proceeded to turn out her box.

But Kate had not spoken since she saw the watches taken out of her bag, and sat staring in a sort of dazed stupor at what was going on.

"Kate, why don't you speak and tell them we were not with thieves?" said Marion indignantly.

But Kate shook her head. "I don't know where they came from," she said.

"But you know William Minn is a very respectable young man," said Marion, reproachfully.

But Kate did not seem to hear, and when the policeman told her to put on her bonnet and shawl she did not attempt to move. But she let Marion put them on for her, and then went downstairs with the rest, but said not a word in explanation of how the watches came into her bag.

Marion was crying bitterly now, and vehemently declaring her own and her cousin's innocence, but Kate did not cry or say a word, and the policeman looked at her in some alarm as he went to the door to send a colleague who was in waiting to fetch a cab to remove his prisoners. Crying he was used to, but he did not understand this silence, and knew not what to think of it.

He told Mrs. Maple while he was waiting for the cab where he was going to take the girls, and that Marion's father would be permitted to see them if he came to the prison in the course of the day. They would be examined before the magistrate the next morning with the other prisoners who had been taken at the theatre, and perhaps by that time Kate would confess who had given her the watches. But, alas! before the next morning Kate had to be removed to the prison infirmary, and her mother was sent for by Marion's father, who was so overwhelmed with trouble at what had befallen his daughter and niece that he hardly knew what to do.

Kate was soon seriously ill, for the shock had brought on an attack of brain fever, and during her wild ramblings and half incoherent talk her nurses heard a good deal of how Mrs. Maple had been deceived and robbed by her trusted shop-woman, but no word about the watches found in her possession did Kate ever utter.

By the time Mrs. Haydon reached London the first examination of the prisoners was over, and Kate was so far exculpated from the charge brought against her, for one of the principal thieves voluntarily stated that the girls had nothing to do with the robbery—the watches had been dropped into the open bag without Kate's knowledge, when the alarm was first raised, and this fact was so far borne out by the policeman, who stated how readily Kate had handed him the bag, saying she had it with her at the theatre. Mrs. Maple was also present to give the girls a good character, but this was somewhat modified by the confession of William Minn, who, being pressed by the magistrate, gave a full account of his acquaintance with the girls, and how he and his friends had been supplied with pastry at Mrs. Maple's expense, by the two foolish girls. Marion denied nothing now. Her only anxiety seemed to be to screen Kate as much as she could, and she declared that Kate had been led into doing what she did by her direction.

But it was small comfort to Mrs. Haydon to hear that her daughter had been led to do wrong through the influence of her cousin. The shame and disgrace of her darling daughter having been in prison so bowed her with woe that, added to the bitter pain of not being able to nurse her in her illness, almost laid her on a bed of sickness. Marion was released, and returned home some days before Kate

could be removed from the infirmary, and a more unhappy household than that can scarcely be imagined. Marion had, of course, lost her situation and her character too, and was so crushed in spirit that she did not need the reproaches of her brothers and sisters to make her feel the shame of her position more keenly.

Bitter as her aunt had felt against her for leading Kate astray as she had done, she could not but pity the poor girl, and reflect, too, that Kate was, after all, more to blame than Marion, for she had been more carefully taught than her cousin.

At last Kate was able to be removed from the infirmary to her uncle's house, but she felt little joy or hope at the thought of getting better.

"I don't deserve to get better, mother," she whispered, when her mother was trying to coax her to take a little beef-tea. "I know where I have been all this time, and why you could not come to be with me always. Oh, mother, mother!" and Kate covered her face with her hands and sobbed so violently that her mother grew quite alarmed.

"Hush, hush, Kate, you must be quiet, or you will make yourself worse, and if you are not fit to live how can you be fit to die?" said her mother, firmly.

Kate shuddered, but checked her sobs. "Oh, mother, I was so afraid I should, and I'm not—I'm not fit to die. I have been such a wicked girl, mother. I did not steal the watches, but I have done things quite as bad—I've deceived everybody, mother."

"And yourself too," said Mrs. Haydon.

"How could I do that, mother? I knew all the time that I was doing wrong."

"Of course you did, my dear, but you had begun to deceive yourself long before you came to London, and that was when the mischief began. I think I have been to blame, too, perhaps, for I was proud of my truthful, upright girl, and may have let you hear me say more than was good for you to hear and you grew proud and self-righteous as a Pharisee."

"And now, now I am the worst girl living," sobbed Kate. "Oh, mother, I've thought of it all the while I was in prison. I, a Sunday scholar, in prison," she repeated with a shudder. "I have been a shame and disgrace to my class and teacher as well as you, mother, but I've sinned against God worst of all. Oh, mother, will He ever forgive me do you think?"

"Yes, Kate; He will forgive anything you have done or can do, for the sake of His dear Son, and if you are spared—as I hope and trust you may be—you must live a very different life in future. You thought you were strong enough and good enough before and did not need His grace. You never felt that you were a sinner needing the blood of Christ to cleanse and pardon you, but now——"

"Oh, mother, mother, my sins are too great," broke in Kate. "How could the Lord Jesus forgive such a wicked girl as I am?"

"Because He loved you—loved you so much as to die for you, Kate. My dear, you have thought so much of your own goodness that it is hard for you to believe now that God can forgive you without your deserving it; but was it as hard for you to believe that I would forgive you?"

Kate shook her head. "I knew you would forgive though I never could deserve it, because you always loved me so much," she said slowly.

"My dear, God loves you more than I do, with a wiser, purer, better love than even mine, and He wants you to believe it now, Kate, and hope in Him. I know you have been so weak and foolish that you cannot have any hope of yourself; but hope in God, my darling, confess all your sins to Him, tell Him the weakness and folly you have been guilty of, and ask His pardon for the past and strength and grace to live a new life in Christ for the future."

"I have prayed that He would pardon me, but oh, mother, how can I hope, how can I believe? He is so great, so holy."

"By taking Him at His word. If I told you anything, Kate, do you think it would be honouring me to say, 'You are so good, mother, I can't believe half you say?' Yet this is the way you are speaking of God; He says, 'Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out,' and 'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' Mind, Kate, it was Jesus Christ, not the sinner's repentance, the tears he shed, the grief he felt, but Jesus Christ, who died 'the Just for the unjust.'"

After this talk with her mother Kate grew more calm and less unhappy. The prospect of going home, however, so different from what Kate had anticipated that return would be, was anything but pleasant now.

"Oh, mother, how can I meet Miss Eldon again?" she whispered one day.

"It will be hard for you, I know, but you must bear it, Kate, as part, at least, of the punishment of your sins. Sorrow and shame must follow sin, and though God forgives us He does not—cannot take away the consequences of them. They are bitter enough to you and poor Marion, too, for situations and character are both lost, and it is not easy work to regain a good character when once it has been lost."



Kate's future was, of course, a great anxiety to her mother, especially after they got home and Kate grew stronger. News of her disgrace had somehow got wind in the village and many of her former schoolfellows shunned her, especially Esther, who said she had her own character to take care of.

Gentle, brave, Mary Green, now the trusted servant of Lady Hazeldean, however, contrived to see her old schoolfellow as often as she could; and Miss Eldon, convinced of her repentance, offered at last to receive her as kitchenmaid in her own house—a situation Kate would have despised before, but which she was very grateful to get now. She also asked the lady to help her cousin if she could, and at her request a friend took Marion into her service, where for the first time she had the opportunity of learning those truths Kate had been taught before she went to London. Marion profited by what she was taught, and she and Kate both became useful and honoured women, loved and respected by all who knew them, and few remembered now that they had once been in prison or passed through such a shameful and bitter experience as "KATE'S ORDEAL."

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