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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OUR KATIE ***

OUR KATIE.

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OUR KATIE.

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"She taught us how to live, and—Oh, too high
The price of knowledge—taught us how to die."

Katie was born in Ireland, but at an early age her parents emigrated to this country and settled in Brooklyn, not a great distance from the Lee Avenue Sabbath-school. She was one of a family of ten children, of whom several were older than herself, yet from her earliest childhood she appeared to be a ruling spirit among them. Naturally quick and apt to learn, she readily adapted herself to the manners and customs of the new people she was with, and it was her earnest desire that her family should do the same. [4]

Katie was not beautiful, nor even pretty, but there was an earnest look in her large dark eyes, and an expression of frankness in her countenance. Her amiable disposition endeared her to every one, and the influence she possessed among both old and young was truly surprising. At an early age she began to take charge of the younger children; and here her care was like that of a mother. She was anxious they should learn habits of order and cleanliness, and she used to offer some little reward to the one who excelled for a certain length of time in these virtues. [5]

It is related of Katie, as showing her obliging disposition, that when at home, it was her custom on every Monday, the general wash-day, to collect around her all the children of her acquaintance, and amuse and entertain them, to the intense delight of their grateful mothers; for the little ones all loved Katie, and would oftentimes yield to her a more willing obedience than to those better entitled to receive it.

Katie's connection with the Sabbath-school began with its organization, her name being the tenth enrolled upon the register. And little did the Secretary think, as he glanced upon the little Irish girl standing so timidly before him, that beneath that rough exterior was hidden such a noble spirit as was afterwards manifested—nor that the humble name then recorded was yet to be known throughout the land, and that its sound was to bring tears into eyes which never beheld the owner. [6]

From the first, Katie manifested the most absorbing interest in the school, which continued unabated till her death. The second Sabbath she brought all her younger brothers and sisters; and during the entire period of her sojourn here, though the school increased from ten to ten hundred members, there was not one more regular and punctual in attendance than they. None were more entirely devoted to the interest of the school than Katie. It was to her more than meat or drink. No weather was so inclement as to detain her from any of its meetings. There was no clothing, however poor and dilapidated, which could not, under Katie's skilful fingers, be made to assume an appearance of neatness, at least long enough for her to attend Sabbath-school. Is not here a lesson for many a richer child who, with every possible advantage, yet seizes upon the slightest pretext for remaining absent from her class, careless alike of the blessing she refuses and the pain she causes an anxious teacher. [7]

Katie was always the first one of her class present, and here her sweet disposition manifested itself most forcibly. Extremely neat in her own person, the want of neatness in others annoyed her exceedingly, and that any one should come to school with soiled clothing, or dirty face and hands, was to her almost an unpardonable sin; therefore each new arrival was scrutinized most closely, and the pump near the school-room has witnessed many and many of her charitable ablutions. She generally carried a small comb in her pocket, which she never scrupled to use; and it was often difficult to recognize in the clean-faced, smooth-haired child who returned with her [8]

from one of these cold-water expeditions, the wretched little object she had "carried out."

Katie was one of our home missionaries, and a more devoted, faithful one it would be difficult to find. Her ardent love for the Sabbath-school, and the instruction she there received, made her anxious that others should share the same blessing. It appeared to be a rule of her life never to come alone. Much of her spare time was occupied in searching through the lanes and hovels for those unblest with religious influence, and bringing them in to the Sabbath-school. The locality in which she resided was inhabited mostly by the lower class of Irish Catholics, who were bitterly opposed to the cause for which she so unweariedly labored. Yet, although the difficulties she encountered were neither few nor easily surmounted, she was very successful, and the numbers which through her means were added to our school were very large. It was her custom either to call for them herself at their homes, or else meet them at some place she should appoint, and then with her little band to start for the school, taking the pump in her way if she thought it necessary. [9]

She was willing to be placed in any class, or to make any sacrifice the superintendent required; and the welfare of the school was always preferred to her own pleasure. No teacher ever had Katie in her charge, but felt that she was indeed a blessing to the class. Studious and attentive, she always knew her lessons perfectly, and it was no uncommon thing for her to repeat several hundred verses from the Bible and hymn-book at one time. [10]

Her own recitations completed, her attention was next given to the other members of the class; and if, as was too often the case, there were any unprepared with lessons, Katie always considered it her especial duty to assist them as much as possible, finding easy places in the Testament or short hymns for them to learn. In this way many who would otherwise have been totally deficient, were enabled to recite a dozen verses before leaving the room.

Her knowledge of Scripture was, for one so young, truly marvellous. Every great historical event recorded on those sacred pages she knew by heart. With the beautiful Psalms of David, the sublime prophecies of Isaiah, and the solemn, yet mysterious revelations of John, she was equally familiar; and on being once questioned by a teacher in whose class she was temporarily placed, where she had learned so much about the Bible, she replied, "I learned it all in Sabbath-school." She could commit to memory with great facility; and being very fond of reading, no spare moment found Katie without a book or paper in her hands. [11]

Katie belonged, for some time, to an Industrial school in Brooklyn; and the teachers and managers bear a willing testimony to the high character she maintained while there. Diligent, attentive, and obedient, her lovely disposition soon rendered her here, as everywhere else, a universal favorite; while her prompt and efficient aid in all the minor duties of the school, made her almost invaluable as an assistant.

But it is time to speak of Katie's spiritual life; and short as the record must necessarily be, it is yet sufficient to prove that "not by might, nor by power," but by the Holy Spirit alone are we made wise unto salvation. When she first entered the school, the Bible was to her almost a sealed book. True, she was not unacquainted with the name of Christ, nor that he lived and died for sinners; but beyond the knowledge of this simple fact, she was entirely ignorant. That she was personally interested in the matter was something she had never dreamed of. This life alone occupied all her thoughts; and it was left for a Sabbath-school teacher first to open her eyes to the necessity of a preparation here for the life beyond; to teach her the true significance of that sorrowful life which Jesus led on earth, the thorny crown and the agonizing death on the cross; to show her that it was for her sake he suffered, for her sins he was numbered with transgressors. It was all new to Katie, something she had never heard of before; and the interest she at first manifested became more and more intense, as week after week some new truth was unfolded, some new idea gained of the great plan of redemption through a crucified Saviour. [12]

The influence of the Holy Spirit upon Katie's mind was like the rising dawn, not a sudden change from midnight darkness to the full and glowing splendor of noonday. She could not, probably, have given a connected account of her experience, and pointed to the day and hour in which she first felt the love of Christ, nor to the moment when for the first time she felt the joy of pardoned sin through his perfect merits. All she knew was, that whereas once she was blind, now she saw; and she was content. [13]

One Sabbath a new teacher, in whose class Katie was placed a few months previous to her death, took occasion privately to address her on the duty of personal religion, urging upon her the importance of giving her heart to Jesus while in her youth. With a bright, happy smile, Katie replied, [14]

"Why, teacher, I do love Jesus now."

"Well, Katie, I am glad; but you must love him with all your heart, so much that you will be willing to give up all your own wishes for his sake; to do any thing he requires, however hard it may seem, and to work for him all your life; and to try and grow more and more like him every day. This is the kind of love I mean."

Katie humbly replied, "I think I love him a great deal, but I know it is not enough—it is only a little child's love; but when I get older, then I will love him as much as grown persons do." [15]

Only a child's love! The teacher's eye grew dim as she remembered the words of the blessed Master: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the

kingdom of heaven."

Katie seldom spoke of herself. Deeds, not words, alone spoke of the change within. Yet her life bore beautiful testimony to the profession she made. And what better evidence could be required that the love she professed was genuine, than that her life daily assimilated more and more to the divine pattern which Christ hath given? He himself said, "By their fruits shall ye know them."

As may already have been inferred, Katie's parents were extremely poor, with a large family of small children to support; and the father being out of employment much of the time, they often wanted even the necessaries of life, and it was no uncommon thing for Katie to go supperless and hungry to bed. Therefore, as soon as she was old enough, she felt that she must do something to assist her parents in supporting the family. Only one path was open to her, and that was domestic service. Unhesitatingly she availed herself of it. Whatever her strength was equal to, Katie was willing and glad to do; and in seeking a place, she had but one stipulation to make—which was, that she should be allowed the privilege of going to Sabbath-school on Sunday afternoons. Some kind friend procured for her a situation in New York, where she would have light work and high wages. The distance appeared to make no impression whatever on Katie, as she asked the usual question, "Can I go to Sunday-school every week?" On being told that it would not be convenient to have her absent on that day, no persuasions could induce her to accept it. And it was so in every instance. [16] [17]

Though she began service at the early age of twelve years, yet in no case did she ever fail of giving satisfaction. Faithful in the discharge of her duties, active, and obliging, she invariably won the love and esteem of all who employed her. But she did not change often. With one family, the first she entered, she remained over eighteen months, and then only left because sickness demanded her presence at home.

She devoted all the wages she received to the wants of the family, never retaining a penny for herself. Once when urged by her mother to do so, Katie replied, "Yes, mother, just as soon as the children get fixed up." But, poor child, this seemed a hopeless task—there were so many of them, and little shoes will wear out, little frocks will get torn—so that Katie never came home without finding it necessary to supply some article of clothing. Yet she always did it cheerfully, thankful that it was in her power to assist at any sacrifice. Thus this noble girl toiled on month after month, looking for and receiving no reward, save in beholding the happiness she conferred at home, and each day studying how she might increase it. Surely of her it might well be said, "She hath done what she could." [18]

About six weeks previous to her death, she obtained a situation in a highly estimable Christian family in Brooklyn. And here she appeared to grow more spiritually lovely, more tender and affectionate in her manner, more thoughtful for the comfort and welfare of others than ever. The new friends with whom she was living had lately been called to pass through peculiarly severe affliction. One after another of the loved voices in that family circle had been hushed and silent in death, and yet that dread messenger who had summoned them away still lingered. The husband and father of that stricken band had for a long time been ill, and all felt that in his death their bereavement was soon to be complete. [19]

Katie soon endeared herself to every one in the house. She was to them like an own child, and as such was treated. Seeing her destitute condition, they at once furnished her with suitable clothing. Katie's gratitude was unbounded, and the affectionate manner in which she always spoke of them showed how truly she appreciated their kindness. Her quick and ready sympathies were awakened as she learned of their repeated trials, and by every means in her power she endeavored to console them. A daughter near her own age, whom they had recently lost, appeared to interest her most deeply. She never wearied talking of her, and would frequently say to the mother, "I am sure I shall see and know your dear R— in heaven." With the invalid father, Katie was a great favorite, and when she was not otherwise engaged, he loved to have her with him. Katie would then take her little Bible and read to him the sweet promises of Jesus, or sing some of the many beautiful hymns she learned at Sabbath-school. Her simple comments on what she read at once amused and interested him, while her glowing faith seemed to quicken and increase his own. Who shall say that the ministrations of this blessed child were not instrumental in lightening his pathway to the tomb; dispelling the doubts and fears which cluster round it, and revealing more distinctly the smiling face of Jesus to him who was so soon to pass through the dark valley? [20] [21]

A favorite hymn was the following:

I'm a pilgrim, and I'm a stranger,
I can tarry, I can tarry but a night;
Do not detain me, for I am going
To where the streamlets are ever flowing;
I'm a pilgrim, and I'm a stranger,
I can tarry, I can tarry but a night.

There the sunbeams are ever shining,
I am longing, I am longing for the sight;
Within a country unknown and dreary,
I have been wandering, forlorn and weary.
I'm a pilgrim, etc.

Of that country to which I'm going
My Redeemer, my Redeemer is the light;
There is no sorrow, nor any sighing,
Nor any sin there, nor any dying.
I'm a pilgrim, etc.

[22]



Katie was soon known to every child in the neighborhood. During her hours of recreation she would gather them all about her on the steps, and tell them stories from the Bible, talk about heaven, or sing with them from her hymn-book; and the eager attention which they gave her proved that they were well entertained. Though living now at a distance of over three miles from the Sabbath-school, yet she never failed of being present, generally starting from ten to fifteen minutes earlier than was otherwise necessary, in order to stop at home and see that the other children were ready, for Katie would never consent to their being absent. To be sure, she always had the whole of them to wash and dress, but that was no hardship, for she was too active to allow of its consuming much time, and in an incredible short space she would be seen marching down the street with her little band in regular order, teaching them a lesson to repeat as she went along; for in this, as in every thing else, they depended entirely upon Katie.

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The last Sabbath Katie ever passed on earth found her in her usual place; but her sad look attracted the attention of her teacher, who kindly inquired the cause. With tearful eyes she replied, "The gentleman I live with is very sick; we do not think he can live till next Sunday." Her foreboding proved true, and on the following Tuesday he died. Then it was that Katie seemed almost an angel of mercy. She not only consoled them with words of hope and encouragement, but endeavored in every way to relieve them of all care or thought, apart from the one great sorrow which overshadowed them; while the delicacy and tenderness of feeling she manifested throughout this whole trying season, would not have shamed the most fastidious refinement. But at last it was all over. The precious dust had been laid in its last resting-place, and now the busy cares of life may not longer be forgotten. The day after the funeral, thinking that Katie looked pale, and that the air would do her good, Mrs. D— sent her out towards evening for a short walk. On her return it was found that she had been several miles out of the way, to procure something she knew the physicians had ordered for a little grandchild of Mrs. D—, and which they had not known where to obtain. Thus was she to the very last thoughtful and careful for others.

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That evening after the rest of the family had retired, Mrs. D— and Katie remained in the parlor, speaking of the home their departed friend had gained. Katie then took a small lamp in her hand, and sat down to read. It is supposed that, overcome by fatigue, she fell asleep, when the lamp slid from her grasp to the floor and ignited the bottom of her dress. In an instant she was enveloped

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in flames. Mrs. D— seized a rug and sprang to her assistance; but Katie, frightened, ran through the hall into the yard, where she fell. By this time their screams had brought assistance. The poor child was raised and carried into the house, but every particle of her light summer clothing had been consumed, and her body burned in the most shocking manner. Medical aid was instantly summoned, and every thing possible done to alleviate her sufferings, but it was at once perceived she could survive only a few hours. Katie received the intelligence with a smile of joy, and instantly remarked, "Now I shall indeed see your daughter, very, very soon." She requested them to send for her own family, and also for her Superintendent, that she might see them once again before she died, or rather hear them, for her sight was entirely destroyed. Her mother was soon beside her, and her agony as she beheld her child was heart-rending. Katie took her hand, saying, "Dear mother, please don't cry so; if you do I cannot talk to you, and I have so much to say. See, I am not crying. Oh, please don't." Katie then told her about the accident, and how happy she felt in view of death; and said, "Oh, mother, it is so blessed to feel that I am going to be with Jesus for ever." Then, with a clear, sweet voice, she sung,

[27]

"My heavenly home is bright and fair,
No pain nor death can enter there;
Its glittering towers the sun outshine,
That heavenly mansion shall be mine.
I'm going home, I'm going home,
I'm going home, to die no more."

All through those hours of terrible agony, not a complaint, scarcely a groan, escaped her; but words of prayer and praise were continually upon her lips. "Jesus is my best, my only friend," she said; "he is close beside me now, and I know he will not let me perish." Again she sung this beautiful hymn,

[28]

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From thy side a healing flood,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure.

Could my tears for ever flow,
Could my zeal no languor know,
This for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and thou alone.
In my hand no price I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death,
When I rise to worlds unknown,
And behold thee on thy throne,
Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

When she concluded, there was not a dry eye in the room. Perceiving that she was sinking rapidly, the physicians ordered stimulants to be administered; but the moment Katie felt them upon her lips, she turned away and absolutely refused them.

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"Don't you know," she exclaimed, "that I belong to the Band of Hope?"

"But, Katie," urged her friends, "your superintendent would give it to you himself, were he here now."

"Well, when he comes and says so, then I will take it."

"But, Katie, you may die before he comes, if you don't take a little now."

"Then I will die," exclaimed the noble girl, "but I won't break my pledge."

She appeared to appreciate every thing which was done for her, and her expressions of gratitude were most touching. Several times she said, "Oh, how I do love everybody, but Jesus best of all;" and then, with clasped hands, she prayed. And as the words of holy trust fell from her lips, there was not one present but felt it was "well with the child."

[30]

Her mind appeared to dwell much on the Sabbath-school: "I shall never see it again," she once said, "but Oh, I shall see heaven so soon!" and then, in a sweet, but feeble voice, she sang two verses of a favorite hymn:

"I'm travelling home to heaven above,
Will you go? will you go?
To sing the Saviour's dying love,
Will you go? will you go?"

The crown of life I then shall wear,
The conqueror's palm my hands shall bear,

And all the joys of heaven I'll share;
Will you go? will you go?"

Not a doubt or fear appeared to dim the glory of her faith. The last hour, so terrible to many, brought to her only the most ineffable joy and peace.

Fearing that Mr. Johnson her superintendent would not arrive in time, she left a most affectionate message for him. [31]

She then bade all her friends good-by, thanked them for the care and attention shown her, and entreated them all to meet her in heaven. Sinking back, she murmured, in an exhausted tone, "*Dear*, DEAR Saviour."

Mr. Johnson now entered, but too late, for it was thought Katie was gone. She lay a few moments longer, silent and motionless; scarcely a breath came from these parted lips to indicate that she yet lived. Suddenly collecting all her remaining strength, with uplifted hand, she exclaimed, in a glad, exultant voice, "Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory?" The raised hand slowly drooped upon her bosom, a few fluttering breaths, and Katie was ours no longer.

A solemn silence filled the chamber, unbroken by even a single sob. It was a season never to be forgotten by the few who stood round that lowly couch. What, Oh what but the religion of Jesus could have stood the test of that awful hour? What but his infinite love could have enabled her to endure such terrible sufferings—to go singing into the swelling waves of Jordan, and even as its billows closed over her, to send back the triumphant cry, "Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory?" [32]

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES:

Obvious errors in spelling and hyphenation have been corrected from the original:

Page 20: *eomments* corrected to *comments*

Page 29: *wont* corrected to *won't*

Punctuation has been corrected without note.

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