

had the smallest appetite. But for all that, the Weekeses still sat down to table together whenever it was possible—their neighbors said because they were “stuck up”; it would have been much more economical to keep the teapot on the fire and the loaf on the table, and let people help themselves as necessity required. Men, of course, liked to have some one to wait on them and their meals handy, but women!— And every one knows that you eat more if you sit down to it, and talk while you are at it. But them Weekeses! Why laws! everybody knowed how stuck up they was!

Yet there was nothing especially refined or supercilious about them to the ordinary vision. Mrs. Weekes wore an ancient Mother Hubbard wrapper, so dingy either with age or dirt that its very pattern was undiscernible; her scanty hair had probably not been brushed for several days. It is true that Patty had an exterior rather more trig; this was a necessity in her position as saleslady in a store near by, which, though not precisely a haunt of the gilded rich, had a certain reputation to keep up and required a fair amount of neatness in the personal appearance of its employes. Ronald and Jack—tall, loosely built and unshaven—were in shirt sleeves of faded seersucker. Dora was in curl papers and soiled finery, and no one noticed that Christine's elderly cashmere had been carefully mended and her brown hair brushed smoothly away from a fair, sweet, innocent face, as surprising to meet amid such surroundings as a daisy on a dust heap, for the family took as little thought for their youngest member as they did for the morrow; that was the precise state of the case, though Christine was hardly aware of it.

“Mother,” said Ronald, “if I had the change to spare I'd take you to the theater tonight.”

Mrs. Weekes had both elbows on the table and was eating her coffee and bread, in a homogeneous mass, from a heavy stone china bowl. She looked up, as Ronald spoke, with something like pleasure in her eyes; he was the only member of her family who ever supposed that she still cared to go anywhere. “‘Tain't no use for me to think about goin' nowhere, Ronny, boy,” she said, “I ain't got the clo'es to go in.”

Patty groaned. “If only you wouldn't say ‘‘tain't’ and ‘ain't got,’ mother,” she said; “why should you? You never did when we were little, or allowed us to. Why should you begin it now?”

“I dunno,” replied Mrs. Weekes, meekly. “My! suppose I had said that when your grandpa was alive!” and she sat up a little straighter as her mental eye glanced towards a photograph that hung on the wall of the dingy front room—parlor by courtesy—a portrait of a gentleman, severe of aspect, wearing a black silk gown and white bands. “But no one would take me now for a clergyman's daughter,” said Mrs. Weekes.

They were supping in the kitchen; there was a dingy red cloth on the table, the pan in which the fish had been cooked stood in the sink, unwashed and redolent; the greasy, smoky kerosene lamp vied with it in odor, and on a smaller table near the window were piles of unwashed dishes, and the “boys'” hats and coats. Patty's “things” had been carefully put away in one of the two middle rooms, airless and windowless, which formed the sleeping apartments of the family. To be sure there was a window in the front room; a long

CHRISTINE.

BY KATHERINE PEARSON WOODS.

I.

The Weekeses were at tea together, an occurrence sufficiently rare to serve as the beginning of their family history. Very few people in the Wyvern Tenements ever sat down to table *en famille*, and the Weekeses themselves had almost gotten out of the way of it. For, you see, the first thing in the morning “the boys,” as they were still called, had to be gotten off to their work, that is, of course, when they were so fortunate as to be on a job; when they were not they lay in bed until aroused by hunger. But there was always Patty's breakfast, for Patty had been in the one place for several years, and by the time Dora and Christine were ready for theirs the mother had picked up what she wanted and washed it down with a cup of tea. This was on days when they were fortunate enough to have breakfast at all; like other dwellers in the Tenements, they could recall times and seasons when the most patriotic member of the family was he who

passage ran from the front door to the back, which opened on a square bricked yard in which stood the pump, for more than half the year the only water supply for the inhabitants of all four stories. For the water pipes ran unprotected up the outside of the house; it was impossible to prevent freezing except by turning off the water, which was done, therefore, early in the fall. In summer, on the other hand, the water was boiling hot by the time it reached the third floor. So there was really some excuse for the upper floors when they went unwashed; but the Weekeses had the fount of cleanliness at their very door. However, there is contagion in the habits of our neighbors.

"There's a free show," said Dora, "just round the corner, Ronald; you could take mother there without needing any change. A sort of a thing they call a revival. Maybe," with a giggle, "Patty'd like to go, too."

"If it would do any good," murmured her mother, weakly, "all you children might go, just as well's not. It don't make no—any—difference 'bout me."

"If you mean it might bring us better luck," observed Patty, severely, "nothing will do that while you are all so shiftless; look at that pile of dishes now!"

"O! let up on your old charity organization gag," interposed Ronald, roughly; "I don't care what you say to the girls, but mother's been a hard worker all her days, and if she chooses to take it a little easy in her old age!"

"It's just since we've been in this house," remarked Jack; "mother seems to have lost ambition, and I don't know as I blame her much. But it was Patty nagged us into coming!"

"And Miss Guest that nagged Patty," said Dora. "I don't see what business it was of hers whether the rent was within our means or not, specially as we haven't got any means anyhow. She never had to pay it, and we might just as well be comfortable, for we never do pay rent wherever we are."

"And nothing ever looks clean, not if you wear your heart out over it," said Mrs. Weekes, with a scared look at her eldest daughter.

Christine had been silent until now; in fact, she was usually silent, but at this moment she looked up and said quite distinctly, "I might have cleaned up a little; I will tomorrow, but I was at the revival."

"Why, how did you manage to wake up enough to get there?" asked Ronald.

The girl held her own amid the questions and laughter. "It was good to be there," she said; "I wish you would go, all of you. Captain Praise-the-Lord is a man of God."

"But what good is it going to do you? That's what we are excited about," said Jack, lazily; "has it brought you any luck yet, outside of washing your face?"

"Let the child alone that never saw her father," interposed Mrs. Weekes, with unusual self assertion; "if she wants to go to the revival, she shall. My! there was a time when I was as religious as anybody. Gracious, how firmly I believed that the Lord would provide, but he never did, or leastways not enough, so as after a while I give up hoping and stopped going to church; but I ain't got no objection to any of you children going, and you boys shan't make fun of your sister, leastways," weakly, "not with my consent."

Never, perhaps, had a soul tragedy been

revealed in fewer words or with less sense of its awfulness, yet in her way the woman had suffered at the time.

"I guess," said Jack, "that's why we ain't exactly a religious crowd; none of us, that is, but Patty, and some way," with a manner of refined satire which for the first time made one realize that his grandfather had been a gentleman, "some way Patty don't seem to make religion attractive."

Patty's reply was to plume and preen herself like a bird, to smooth her hair, touching the silver comb that held up her knot, glancing down at her plaid dress and black brilliantine apron and generally congratulating herself in this silent manner upon the favor of Providence. When she looked up from this employment a man stood in the doorway, intently regarding them—a man with strangely bright eyes and a nautical look of readiness for either fair or foul weather. His voice had a thrill of enthusiasm that contrasted strongly with the drawling accents of the Weekeses, and for that reason or some other stirred them in a way which they felt inclined to resent.

"I am Royal Fern," he said; "men call me Captain Praise-the-Lord. Will you not come to the revival?"

No one answered; even Christine drooped her head and was silent, but that excited no surprise, for Christine was always in a dream about something or other and had never been known to be equal to an emergency. Captain Royal let his eyes wander slowly around the room, resting keenly and yet lovingly on each face. To the inward amusement and conciliation of the "boys" he then addressed himself to Patty.

"You will come to us and find happiness, my sister? Only the Lord can give rest to your poor soul."

Patty tossed her head and answered that she was already a Christian, but the statement only brought a look of pain into the bright eyes. "If so, praise the Lord," he answered; "and you, my brothers—ah!"

He paused abruptly. Christine had just lifted her head, and Captain Royal knew the young face with its large, pale blue eyes. He had seen it every afternoon and evening since the revival began—three days ago; seen and labored with her to give her heart to the Lord, but so far without success. Now he found her here, in this house, which, as he passed it, he had seemed to feel an impulse from the Lord, bidding him enter. What did it mean? Captain Royal fell silent, and could not tell.

Ronald and Jack, however, finished his sentence in their own minds, and the latter answered, "Not very likely," he said, "unless there was money in it."

"There is no money in it at all," said Captain Praise-the-Lord, cheerfully, "if a man goes into it for the sake of money."

"O boys, boys!" murmured their mother, as Jack added that he would turn Christian or Turk, either, if it were made worth his while. "Don't think hard of them, captain, now don't; it's the trouble we've had, all our lives, that has set them against religion."

"Tell me," said the captain, sitting down unasked upon a chair which must have disgusted his fastidious neatness had he not been so bent on saving souls. He fixed his eyes, as one instinctively turns towards the light, upon that pure, sweet face of Christine's, with those strange, dreamy eyes, almost like the blind eyes of a new-born infant.

So, while the boys sneaked their coats and hats off the table and slipped away, and Patty washed dishes and tidied the surface of the room with a good deal of unnecessary clatter, Mrs. Weekes told him about her father, the parson, and how she had married rather beneath her, though he was a good husband, the Lord knew; but how he had died just before the birth of little Christine, and, though she had trusted the Lord would provide, they had grown poorer and poorer, until at last they had come to these rooms, which she had never thought in her father's time she should come to the like; still, she couldn't say but there was them as was worse off, for the boys was good boys, though the last place they had the foreman had sworn at Ronald, and asked him why in something he didn't take hold somewhere, or, anyway, have grit enough to swear back. But none of 'em hadn't never been able to keep a place, except Patty, and maybe that was because she was a Christian; but though Patty was a good daughter and brought home her wages regular, there was no denying but she took it out in bein' sassy. But she had trusted the Lord would provide."

"Wherefore," asked Captain Praise-the-Lord, "were you doing his work that he should do yours?"

Mrs. Weekes looked at him with open mouth. This, to her, was a new way of considering the matter.

"His words are these," said the captain, "'Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.' That promise has never failed, but the Lord loveth not an idler. If you will not labor for the things of the kingdom, he will force you to labor for the meat that perisheth. Let us pray."

Patty, rather inconsistently, went on with her dishes, but the other women dropped on their knees; even the boys opened a crack in the door of their "dark chamber" to hear that strange prayer.

"What we want, Lord, is thy fire," said Captain Praise-the-Lord, "the fire thou didst send to the prayer of Elijah. Send it now, Lord, send it right here; not to burn and destroy, but to set aflame with love. It's a pretty hard world anyway. We want love enough to make it easy; love enough to make us willing to be clean, even when the weather's cold and the water hard to get at; love enough to make us take hold any place where there's a rope loose; love enough to trust thee and serve thee, even though the heavens be as brass and thou appear to answer not. Love enough to be a Christian and a good daughter, without being puffed up about it and despise others. Lord give us love, for Christ's sake. Amen."

He rose to his feet as abruptly as he had knelt. "Good-by," he said. There needed no other word about the revival. What there was to say had been said to the Lord. Now Royal Fern had but to depart, leaving it in his hands, for this prayer had not been designed to influence the human hearers of it; it had been spoken to the Lord.

At the door those strange, blue eyes of Christine's met his and held him for a moment. They did not seem asleep now; rather they were full of a light that was dazzling to the man, he did not know why. He put his hand before his own as he went out into the night. "It has come to her, at least. The maiden is a chosen vessel unto thee; praise the Lord!" said Captain Royal.