Little Saint Elizabeth

By Frances Hodgson Burnett.

SHE had not been brought up in America at all. She had been born in France, in a beautiful château, and she had been born heiress to a great fortune; but nevertheless, just now, she felt as if she was very poor indeed. And yet, her home was in one of the most splendid houses in New York. She had a lovely suite of apartments of her own, though she was only eleven years old. She had her own carriage, and a saddle-horse, a train of teachers and attendants, and was regarded by all the children of the neighborhood as a sort of grand and mysterious little princess, whose incomings and outgoings were to be watched with the greatest interest.

"There she is!" they would cry, flying to their windows to look at her. "She is going out in her carriage. She is dressed all in black velvet and splendid furs! That is her own, own carriage. She has so much money that she can have anything she wants — Jane says so. She is very pretty, too; but she is so pale, and has such big, sorrowful, black eyes. I should not be sorrowful if I were in her place; but Jane says the servants say she is always quiet and looks sad."

She rarely turned her large, dark eyes to look at other children with any curiosity. She had not been accustomed to the society of children. She had never had a child companion in her life, and these little Americans who were so very rosy and gay, who went out to walk or to drive with groups of brothers and sisters, and even ran in the street laughing and playing and squabbling healthily — these children amazed her.

Poor little Saint Elizabeth! She had not lived a very natural or healthful life herself, and she knew absolutely nothing of real, childish pleasures. You see, it had occurred in this way. When she was a baby of two years, her young father and mother both died, within a week, of a terrible fever, and the only near relatives the little one had were her Aunt Clotilde and her Uncle Bertrand. Her Aunt Clotilde lived in Normandy, her Uncle Bertrand in New York. As these two were her only guardians, and as Bertrand de Rochemont was a bachelor, fond of pleasure, and knowing nothing of children, it was natural that he should be quite willing that his elder sister should undertake the rearing and education of the child.

There was a very great difference between these two people. The gray-stone château in Normandy and the brown-stone mansion in New York were not nearly so unlike as the lives they sheltered. And yet it was said that, in her early youth, Mademoiselle de Rochemont had been as gay and as fond of pleasure as either of her brothers. But then, when her life was at its brightest and gayest, — when she was a beautiful and brilliant young woman, — she had had a great and bitter sorrow which had changed her forever. From that time she had seldom left the house in which she had been born, and had lived almost the life of a recluse. At first she had had her parents to take care of, but when they died she had been left entirely alone in the great château, devoting herself to the life she had resolved upon and to works of charity among the villagers and country people.

"Ah, she is good, she is a saint, is Mademoiselle," the poor people always said when speaking of her; but they also always looked a little awe-stricken when she appeared, and were never very sorry when she left them.

She was a tall woman, with a pale, rigid, hand-

Digitized by Google

some face which never smiled. She was just, but cold and exacting. She wore always a straight gown of black serge, with broad linen bands. Her favorite reading was religious works and legends of the saints and martyrs: she strove to do only good deeds; and adjoining her private apartments was a little stone chapel.

The little curé of the village, who was plump and comfortable, and who had the kindest heart and the most cheerful soul in the world, used at times to remonstrate gently with her — always in a roundabout way, however, never quite as if he were referring directly to herself.

"One must not let one's self become the stone image of goodness," he once said. "Since one is really of flesh and blood, that is not best. No, no; it is not best."

But Mademoiselle de Rochemont never seemed mere flesh and blood, exactly; she was more like a marble saint who had stepped from her pedestal to walk upon the earth.

And she did not change even when the baby Elizabeth was brought to her. She attended strictly to the child's comfort, and tried to do her duty by her; but it can scarcely be said that her manner was any softer, or that she smiled more. For a week or two Elizabeth used to be frightened by the sight of the black dress and the rigid, handsome face, but in time she became accustomed to them; and through living in an atmosphere so silent and without brightness, a few months changed her from a laughing, romping baby into a pale, quiet child, who rarely made any childish noise at all.

In a demure way she became fond of her aunt. She saw few persons besides the servants, who were all trained to quietness also. She was a sensitive, imaginative child, and the solemn stories she heard filled all her mind and made up her little life. She longed to be a saint herself, and spent hours in wandering in the terraced rose-gardens, wondering if such a thing were possible in modern days, and what she must do to succeed in her desire. Her chief sorrow was that she knew herself to be very weak and very timid — so timid that she often suffered when people did not suspect it; and she was afraid that she was not brave enough to be a martyr. Her little dress — cut straight, and very narrow — was made of white woolen stuff, and gathered to a blue band at the waist.

She was a very sweet and gentle child, and her pure little pale face and large dark eyes had a lovely, dreamy look. When she was old enough to visit the poor with her Aunt Clotilde — and she was hardly seven years old when she began — the villagers did not stand in awe of her, but began to love her, almost to reverence her, as if she had been indeed a little saint. The little ones delighted to look at her, to draw near her sometimes, and to curiously touch her soft white and blue robe. And when they did so, she always returned their looks with a tender, sympathetic smile, and spoke to them in so gentle a voice that they were very fond of her. They used to talk her over, and tell stories about her when they were playing together afterwards.

So, in this secluded world in the gray old stone château, — with no companion but her aunt, with no occupation but her studies and her charities, — thinking of little else than martyrs, saints, and religious exercises, Elizabeth lived until she was eleven years old. Then a great grief came to her. One morning Mademoiselle de Rochemont did not leave her room at the regular hour. As she never broke the fixed rules she had made for herself and her household, this occasioned great anxiety. Her old maid-servant waited half an hour, — an hour; and then went to the door and took the liberty of listening to ascertain whether her mistress was moving about the room. There was no sound. Old Alice returned looking agitated. "Would Mademoiselle Elizabeth mind entering to see if all were well? Perhaps Mademoiselle, her aunt, might be in the chapel." Elizabeth went. Her aunt was not in her room. Then she must be in the chapel. The child entered the beautiful little place. The morning sun was streaming in through the stained-glass window, a broad ray of mingled brilliant colors slanted to the stone floor and touched with warm hues a dark figure lying there. It was Aunt Clotilde, who had sunk forward while kneeling, and had died in the night.

That was what the doctors said when they were sent for. She had died apparently without any pain or knowledge of the change coming to her. Her face was serene and beautiful, and the rigid look had melted away and had been replaced by one of perfect rest.

In less than two months from that time Elizabeth was living in the home of her Uncle Bertrand, in New York. He had come to Normandy for her, himself, and had taken her back with him across the Atlantic. She was richer than ever now, as a great part of her Aunt Clotilde's money had been left to her, and Uncle Bertrand was her guardian. He was handsome, elegant, and clever; but having lived long in America, and being fond of American life, he did not appear very much like a Frenchman — at least, he did not seem like the men Elizabeth had known, for she had seen only the curé and the doctor of the village. Secretly, he was hardly pleased at the prospect of taking care of a little girl; but family pride, and the fact that such

Digitized by Google

a very young girl, who was also such a very great heiress, *must* be taken care of, decided him. But when he first saw Elizabeth he could not restrain an exclamation of surprise.

She entered the room, when she was sent for, clad in her strange little robe of black serge.

"But, my dear child—" exclaimed Uncle Bertrand, aghast, staring at her slender figure in its severe dress.

He managed to recover himself very quickly, and was in his way very kind to her; but the first thing he did was to send to Paris for a maid and more conventional clothing.

She felt as if she were living in a dream when all the old life was left behind, and she found herself in the big, luxurious house in the gay New York street. Nothing that could be done for her comfort had been left undone.

But, secretly, she felt bewildered and ill at ease; everything was so new, so strange, so noisy, and so brilliant. The dress she wore made her feel unlike herself; the books they gave her were full of pictures and stories of things of which she knew nothing; her carriage was brought to the door and she went out with her governess, driving round and round the park with scores of other people who looked at her curiously, she did not know why. The truth was that her refined little face was very beautiful indeed, and her soft dark eyes still wore the dreamy, spiritual look which made her unlike the rest of the world.

"She looks like a little princess," she heard her uncle say one day. "She will some day be a beautiful, a lovely woman. Her mother was so, when she died at twenty; but she had been brought up differently. This one is a little saint. I am half afraid of her." He said this with a little laughter to some of his friends to whom he had presented the child. He did not know that his easy, pleasure-loving life made her uneasy. He gave brilliant parties; he had no pensioners; he seemed to think of little but pleasure. Poor little Saint Elizabeth had many an anxious thought of him in the quiet hours when he was fast asleep after a grand dinner or supper party.

He never dreamed that there was no one of whom she stood in such dread: her timidity increased tenfold in his presence. When he sent for her, and she went into the library to find him sitting luxuriously in an arm-chair, an open novel on his knee, a cigar in his white hand, a light smile on his handsome mouth, she could hardly answer his questions and could never find courage to tell him what she so earnestly desired to say. She had soon found out that Aunt Clotilde and the curé, and the life they had led, did not specially interest him. It seemed to her that he did not understand them: How could she tell him that she wished to spend all her money giving alms to the poor? That was what she wished to tell him—that she desired money to send back to the village; that she needed it to give to the poor people she saw in the streets, to those who lived in the miserable places.

But when she found herself face to face with him, and he seemed to find her only amusing, all her courage failed her. Sometimes she thought she would even beg him to send her back to Normandy, to let her live alone in the château, as her Aunt Clotilde had done.

One morning, when she dressed, little Elizabeth put on the quaint black serge robe, because she felt more at home in it, and her heart was full of determination. The night before, she had received a letter from the curé, and it had contained sad news. A fever had broken out in her beloved village, the vines had done badly, there was sickness among the cattle; there was already suffering, and if something were not done for the people they would not know how to face the winter. In the time of Mademoiselle de Rochemont they had always been made comfortable and happy at Christmas. What was to be done? The curé ventured to write to Mademoiselle Elizabeth.

The poor child had scarcely slept. Her dear village! Her dear people! The children would be hungry, the cows would die, there would be no fires to warm the aged.

"I must go to Uncle," she said, pale and trembling. "I must ask him to give me money. I am afraid, but it is my duty. Saint Elizabeth was ready to endure anything that she might do her duty and help the poor."

Because she had been called Elizabeth, she had thought and read very often about the Saint whose namesake she was—Saint Elizabeth, whose husband was so cruel to her and who sought to discourage her good deeds. And oftenest she had read the legend which told how one day, as Elizabeth went out with a basket of food to give to the poor and hungry, she had met her husband, who fiercely demanded that she should tell him what she was carrying; and when she was frightened and in her terror replied "Roses," and he tore the cover from the basket to see if she spoke the truth, a miracle had been performed, and the basket was filled with roses, so that she was saved from her husband's anger and knew also that she had been forgiven. To little Elizabeth this legend had seemed quite real, and to her it proved that if one were but doing good, there would be nothing to fear. Since she had been in her new home she had, half consciously, compared her uncle Bertrand to the wicked Landgrave, though she was too sensi-

Digitized by Google

ble and too just to think for a moment that he was really as cruel as was Saint Elizabeth's husband; only, she thought he did not care for the poor, and lived only to enjoy the pleasures of the world; and surely that was selfish and wrong.

She listened anxiously to hear when her uncle Bertrand should leave his room. He always rose late, and this morning he was later than usual, as he had had a dinner-party the night before.

It was nearly noon before she heard his door open. Then she went quickly to the staircase; her heart was beating so fast that she put her little hand to her side and waited a moment to regain her breath. She felt quite cold.

"Perhaps I must wait until he has eaten his breakfast," she said. "Perhaps I must not disturb him yet. It would perhaps make him displeased. I will wait — yes, for a little while."

She did not return to her room, but waited upon the stairs. It seemed to be a long time. It happened that a friend breakfasted with him. She heard a gentleman come in and recognized his voice, which she had heard before. She did not know what the gentleman's name was, but she had met him going in and out with her uncle once or twice, and had thought he had a kind face and kind eyes. He had looked at her in an interested way when he spoke to her, even as if he were a little curious about her, and she had wondered why he did so.

When the door of the breakfast-room opened and shut as the servants went in and out, she could hear the two laughing and talking. They seemed to be enjoying themselves very much. Once she heard an order given for the mail-phaeton — they were evidently going to drive as soon as the meal was over.

At last the door opened and they were coming out. Elizabeth ran down the stairs and stood in a small reception-room; her heart began to beat faster than ever.

"Uncle Bertrand," she said as he approached, and she scarcely knew her own faint voice, "Uncle Bertrand ——"

He turned, and seeing her, started, with rather an impatient exclamation; evidently he was at once amazed and displeased to see her. He was in a hurry to go out, and the sight of her odd little figure standing in its straight, black robe between the portières — the slender hands clasped on the breast, the small, pale face and great dark eyes uplifted — was certainly a surprise to him.

"Elizabeth," he said, "what is it you wish? Why do you come downstairs. And that impossible dress — why do you wear it again? It is not suitable!"

"Uncle Bertrand," said the child, clasping her hands still more tightly, her eyes growing larger in her excitement and fear of his displeasure; "It is that I want money — a great deal. I beg your pardon if I disturb you. It is for the poor. Moreover, the curé has written, 'The people of the village are ill; the vineyards did not yield well.' They must have money — I must send them some."

Uncle Bertrand shrugged his shoulders uneasily.

"That is the message of Monsieur le Curé, is it?" he said. "He wants money! My dear Elizabeth, I must inquire further. You have a fortune, but still I must not permit you to throw it away. You are a child and you do not yet understand."

"But," cried Elizabeth, trembling with agitation, "they are so poor when one does not help them — their vineyards are so little. And if the year is bad they must starve. Aunt Clotilde gave to them every year — even in the good years. She always said they must be cared for like children."

"That was your aunt Clotilde's good heart," replied her uncle. "I must know more of this. I have no time at present — I am going out of town. In a few days I will reflect upon it. Tell your maid to give that old garment away. Go out to drive; amuse yourself — you need fresh air. You are too pale."

Elizabeth looked at his handsome, kindly face in utter helplessness. This seemed a matter of life and death to her; to him it was a child's fancy.

"But it is winter," she panted, breathlessly, "there is snow. Soon it will be Christmas and they will have nothing! Nothing for the poorest ones! And the children ——"

"It shall be thought of later," said Uncle Bertrand. "I am too busy now. Be reasonable, my child, and run away. You are detaining me — I can do nothing now."

He left her with a slight, impatient shrug of the shoulders, and even with an amused smile on his lips.

Elizabeth shrank back into the shadow of the portières. Great, burning tears filled her eyes and slipped down her cheeks.

"He does not understand," she said. "He does not know. And I can do no one good — no one." And she covered her face with her hands and stood sobbing, all alone.

When she returned to her room she was so pale that her maid looked at her anxiously and spoke of it afterward to the other servants. They were all fond of Mademoiselle Elizabeth. She was so kind and gentle to everybody.

(To be continued.)

Digitized by Google

LITTLE SAINT ELIZABETH.

(Concluded.)

By Frances Hodgson Burnett.

NEARLY all the day she sat — poor little girl! — by her window, looking out at the passers-by in the snowy street. But she scarcely saw the people at all. Her thoughts were far away, in the little village where she had always spent her Christmas before. Her Aunt Clotilde had allowed her at such times to do so much! There was not a house to which she did not carry some gift — no child who was forgotten. And the church on Christmas morning had been so beautiful with flowers from the hot-houses of the château. It was for the church indeed that the conservatories were chiefly kept up. Mademoiselle de Rochemont would scarcely have permitted herself such luxuries.

But there would be no flowers this year. The château was closed; there were no longer gardeners at work; the church would be bare and cold; the people would have no gifts; there would be no pleasure in the little peasants' faces.

Little Saint Elizabeth wrung her slight hands together in her lap.

"Oh," she cried, "what can I do? And then there are the poor here — so many. And I do nothing."

It was not alone the poor she had left in her village who were a grief to her. As she drove through the streets she now and then saw haggard faces; and when she had questioned a servant who one day came to her to ask alms for a poor child at the door, she had been told that in parts of this great, bright city which she had not seen, there was cruel want and suffering, as in all great cities.

"And it is so cold now," she thought, "with the snow on the ground."

The lamps in the street were just beginning to be lighted when her Uncle Bertrand returned. It appeared that he had brought back with him the gentleman with the kind face. They were to dine together, and Uncle Bertrand desired that Mademoiselle Elizabeth should join them. Evidently the journey out of town had been delayed for a day at least. There came also another message — Monsieur de Rochemont wished Mademoiselle to send to him by her maid a certain box of antique ornaments which had been given to her by her Aunt Clotilde. Elizabeth had known less of the value of these jewels than of their beauty. She knew they were beautiful, and that they had belonged to Aunt Clotilde in the gay days of her triumphs as a beauty, and a brilliant young woman, but it seemed that they were also very curious, and Monsieur de Rochemont wished his friend to see them. When Elizabeth went downstairs she found the gentlemen examining them together.

"They must be put somewhere for safe keeping," Uncle Bertrand was saying. "It should have been done before. I will attend to it."

The gentleman with the kind eyes looked at Elizabeth with an interested expression as she came into the room. Her slender little figure in its black velvet dress, her delicate little face with its large, soft, sad eyes, the gentle gravity of her manner, made Elizabeth seem quite unlike other children.

He did not seem to find her simply amusing, as her Uncle Bertrand did. She was always conscious that behind Uncle Bertrand's most serious expression there was lurking a faint smile as he watched her — but this visitor looked at her in a different way. He was a doctor she discovered. Dr. Norris her uncle called him. And Elizabeth wondered if his profession had not perhaps made him quick of sight and mind.

She felt that it must be so when she heard him talk at dinner. She found that he did a great deal of work among the very poor; that he had a hospital where he received children who were ill,— or who had perhaps met with accidents and could not be taken care of in their wretched homes. He spoke frequently of terrible quarters where there was the greatest poverty and suffering. And he spoke of these things with so much eloquence and sympathy that even Uncle Bertrand began to listen with interest.

"Come," said the doctor, "you are a rich, idle fellow, de Rochemont, and we want rich, idle fellows to come and look into all this and do something for us. You must let me take you with me some day."

"It would pain me too much, my good Norris," said Uncle Bertrand, with a slight shudder. "I should not enjoy my dinner after it."

"Then go without your dinner," said Dr. Norris.

Digitized by Google

"These people do. You have too many dinners. Give up one."

Uncle Bertrand shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"It is Elizabeth who fasts," he said. "Myself, I prefer to dine. And yet some day I may take a fancy to visit these people with you."

Elizabeth could scarcely have been said to dine that evening. She could not eat. She sat with her large sad eyes fixed upon Dr. Norris's face as he talked. Every word he uttered sank deep into her heart. The want and suffering of which he spoke were more terrible than anything she had ever heard. It had been nothing like this in the village — Oh, no, no! As she thought of it, there was a look in her dark eyes that almost startled Dr. Norris several times when he glanced at her. But as he did not know the particulars of her life with her aunt and the strange training she had had, he could not possibly have guessed what was going on in her mind, and how much effect his stories were having. The beautiful little face touched him very much, and the pretty French accent with which the child spoke seemed very musical to him and added a great charm to the gentle, serious answers she made to the remarks he addressed to her. He could not help seeing that something had made this little Mademoiselle Elizabeth a singular and pathetic little creature, and he continually wondered what it was.

"Do you think she is a happy child?" he asked Monsieur de Rochemont when they were once more alone together.

"Happy," said Uncle Bertrand with his light smile. "She has been taught, my friend, that to be happy upon earth is a mere frivolity. I think I have told you that she,— this little one,— desires to give all her fortune to the poor. Having heard you this evening, she will wish to bestow it upon your pensioners."

When, having retired from the room with a grave and stately little obeisance to her uncle and his guest, Elizabeth had gone upstairs, it had not been with any intention of going to bed. She sent her maid away and sat thinking for a long time.

But just as she laid her head upon her pillow an idea came. The ornaments given to her by her Aunt Clotilde — somebody would buy them. They were her own — it would be right to sell them. To what better use could they be put? Was it not what Aunt Clotilde would have desired? Had she not told her stories of the good and charitable who had sold the clothes from their bodies that the miserable might be helped? Yes, it was right. These things must be done. All else was vain and useless and of the world. But it would require courage — great courage. To go out alone, to find a place where the people would buy the jewels,— perhaps there might be some who would not want them. And then when they were sold, to find those poor and unhappy quarters of which her uncle's guest had spoken, and to give to those who needed,— all by herself. Ah! what courage it would require! And then, Uncle Bertrand! Some day he would ask about the ornaments and discover all, and his anger might be terrible. No one had ever been angry with her. How could she bear it. She thought of Saint Elizabeth and the cruel Landgrave. It could not ever be so bad as that; but, whatever the result might be, it must be borne.

So at last she slept; and there was upon her gentle little face so sweetly sad a look that when her maid came to waken her in the morning she stood by the bedside for some moments looking down upon her pityingly.

The day seemed very long and sorrowful to the poor child. It was full of anxious thoughts and plannings. She was so innocent and inexperienced — so ignorant of all practical things. She had decided that it would be best to wait until evening before going out, and then to take the jewels and try to sell them to some jeweler.

She did not understand the difficulties that would lie in her way, but she felt very timid.

Her maid had asked permission to go out for the evening, and Monsieur de Rochemont was to dine out, so she found it possible to leave the house without attracting attention.

As soon as the streets were lighted she took the case of ornaments, and, going downstairs very quietly, let herself out. The servants were dining, and she was seen by none of them.

When she found herself in the snowy street she felt strangely bewildered. She had never been out unattended before, and she knew nothing of the great busy city. When she turned into the more crowded thoroughfares, she saw several times that passers-by glanced at her curiously. Her timid look, her foreign air, and richly-furred dress, and the fact that she was a child and alone at such an hour, could not fail to attract attention; but, though she felt confused and troubled, she went bravely on. It was some time before she found a jeweler's shop, and when she entered it the men behind the counter looked at her in amazement. But she went to the one nearest to her and set the case of jewels on the counter before him.

"I wish," she said in her soft, low voice, and with the pretty accent, "I wish that you should buy these."

The man stared at her and at the ornaments, and then at her again.

Digitized by Google

"I beg pardon, miss," he said.

Elizabeth repeated her request.

"I will speak to Mr. Moetyler," he said, after a moment of hesitation.

He went to the other end of the shop to an elderly man who sat behind a desk. After he had spoken a few words, the elderly man looked up as if surprised — then he glanced at Elizabeth — then after speaking a few more words he came foward.

"You wish to sell these?" he said, looking at the case of jewels with a puzzled expression.

"Yes," Elizabeth answered.

He bent over the case and took up one ornament after the other and examined them closely. After he had done this he looked at the little girl's innocent trustful face, seeming more puzzled than before.

"Are they your own?" he inquired.

"Yes, they are mine," she replied timidly.

"Do you know how much they are worth?"

"I know that they are worth much money," said Elizabeth. "I have heard it said so."

"Do your friends know that you are going to sell them?"

"No," Elizabeth said, a faint color rising in her delicate face. "But it is right that I should do it."

The man again spent a few moments in examining them, and, having done so, spoke hesitatingly.

"I am afraid we must not buy them," he said. "It would be impossible, unless your friends first gave their permission."

"Impossible?" said Elizabeth, and tears rose in her eyes, making them look softer and more wistful than ever.

"We could not do it," said the jeweler. "It is out of the question — under the circumstances."

"Do you think — " faltered the disappointed child, "Do you think that nobody will buy them?"

"I am afraid not," was the reply. "No respectable firm who would pay their real value. If you 'll take my advice, miss, you will take them home and consult your friends."

He spoke kindly, but Elizabeth was overwhelmed with disappointment. She did not know enough of the world to understand that a richly-dressed little girl who offered valuable jewels for sale at night must be a strange and unusual sight.

When she found herself on the street again, her long lashes were heavy with tears.

"If no one will buy them," she said, "what shall I do?"

She walked a long way — so long that she was very tired — and offered them at several places; but, as she chanced to enter only respectable shops, the same thing happened each time. She was looked at curiously and questioned, but no one would buy.

"They are mine," she would say. "It is right that I should sell them." But every one stared and seemed puzzled, and in the end refused.

At last, after much wandering, she found herself in a poorer quarter of the city; the streets were narrower and dirtier, and the people began to look squalid and wretchedly dressed; there were smaller shops and dingier houses. She saw unkempt men and women and uncared-for little children. The poverty of the poor she had seen in her own village seemed comfort and luxury by contrast. She had never dreamed of anything like this. Now and then she felt faint with pain and horror. But she went on.

"They have no vineyards," she said to herself. "No trees and flowers. It is all dreadful! There is nothing. They need help more than the others. To let them suffer so and not to give them charity would be a great crime."

She was so full of grief and excitement that she had ceased to notice how every one looked at her; she saw only the wretchedness and dirt and misery. She did not know, poor child, that she was surrounded by danger — that she was in the midst not only of misery, but of dishonesty and crime. She had even forgotten her timidity; that it was growing late, and that she was far from home and would not know how to return; she did not realize that she had walked so far, that she was almost exhausted with fatigue.

She had brought with her all the money she possessed. If she could not sell the jewels she could at least give something to some one in want. But she did not know to whom she must give first. When she had lived with her Aunt Clotilde it had been their habit to visit the peasants in their houses. Must she enter one of these houses — these dreadful places with the dark passages, from which she many times heard riotous voices and even cries.

"But those who do good must feel no fear," she thought. "It is only to have courage." At length something happened which caused her to pause before one of these places. She heard sounds of pitiful moans and sobbing from something crouched upon the broken steps. It seemed like a heap of rags, but as she drew near she saw by the light of the street lamp opposite that it was a woman with her head on her knees and a wretched child at each side of her. The children were shivering with cold and making low cries as if frightened.

Elizabeth stopped, and then ascended the steps.

"Why is it that you cry?" she asked gently. "Tell me."

The woman did not answer at first, but when

Digitized by Google

Elizabeth spoke again she lifted her head, and as soon as she saw the slender figure in its velvet and furs, and the pale, refined little face, she gave a great start.

"Mercy on us," she said in a hoarse voice, which sounded almost terrified. "Who are yez, an' what bes ye doin' in a place the loike o' this?"

"I came," said Elizabeth, "to see those who are poor. I wish to help them. I have great sorrow for them. It is right that the rich should help those who want. Tell me why you cry, and why your little children sit in the cold."

Everybody to whom Elizabeth had spoken that night had shown surprise, but no one had stared as this woman did.

"It 's no place for the loike o' yez," she said, "an' it black noight, an' men and women not knowin' what they do — wid Pat Harrigan insoide as bad as the worst of them, an' it 's turned me an' the children out he has, to shlape in the snow — not for the furst toime, ayther. Shure, 't is starvin' we are — starvin', an' no other." She dropped her wretched head on her knees and began to moan again, and the children joined her.

"Don't let yer daddy hear yez," she said to them. "Whisht now! — it 's come out an' bate yez he will."

Elizabeth began to feel tremulous and faint.

"Is it that they have hunger?" she asked.

"Nayther bite or sup have they had this day nor yesterday," was the answer. "The good saints have pity on us."

"Yes," said Elizabeth, "the good saints have always pity. I will go and buy them food — poor little ones."

She had seen a shop only a few yards away — she remembered passing it. Before the woman could speak again she was gone.

"Yes," she said, "I was sent to them,— it is the answer to my prayer,— it was not in vain that I asked so long."

When she entered the shop the few people who were in it stopped what they were doing to stare at her as others had done — but she scarcely saw that it was so.

"Give to me a basket," she said to the owner of the place. "Put in it some bread and wine — some of the things which are ready to eat. It is for a poor woman and her little ones who starve."

There was in the shop among others a red-faced woman with a cunning look in her eyes. She sidled out of the place and was waiting for Elizabeth when she came out.

"I 'm starvin', too, little lady," she said. "There 's many of us that way, an' it 's not often them with money care about it. Give me something, too," in a wheedling voice.

Elizabeth looked up at the woman — her pure ignorant eyes full of pity.

"I have great sorrows for you," she said. "Perhaps the poor woman will share her food with you ——"

"It 's money I need," said the woman.

"I have none left," answered Elizabeth. "I will come again."

"It 's now I need it," the woman persisted. Then she looked covetously at Elizabeth's velvet cloak, lined and trimmed with fur. "That 's a pretty cloak you 've on," she said. "You 've many another, I dare say."

Suddenly she gave the cloak a pull, but the fastening did not give way as she had expected.

"Is it because you are cold that you want it?" said Elizabeth in her gentle, innocent way. "I will give it to you. Take it."

Had not all the charitable ones in the legends given their garments to the poor? Why should she not give her cloak?

In an instant it was unclasped and snatched away, and the woman was gone. She did not even stay long enough to give thanks for the gift; and something in her haste and roughness made Elizabeth wonder, and gave her a moment of tremor.

She made her way back to the place where the other woman and her children had been sitting; the cold wind made her shiver and the basket was very heavy for her slender arm. Her strength seemed to be giving way.

As she turned the corner, a great fierce gust of wind swept round it and caught her breath and made her stagger. She thought she was going to fall — indeed she would have fallen, but that one of two tall men who were passing put out his arm and caught her. He was a well-dressed man in a heavy overcoat; he had gloves on. Elizabeth spoke in a faint tone.

"I thank you," she began, when the second man uttered a wild exclamation and sprang forward.

"Elizabeth!" he said. "Elizabeth!"

Elizabeth looked up and herself uttered a cry. It was her Uncle Bertrand who stood before her, and his companion, who had saved her from falling, was Dr. Norris.

For a moment it seemed as if they were almost struck dumb with horror. And then her Uncle Bertrand seized her by the arm in such agitation that he scarcely seemed himself at all — the light, satirical, jesting Uncle Bertrand she had known.

"What does it mean?" he cried. "What are you doing here, in this horrible place, alone? Do you know where it is you have come? What have you in the basket? Explain — explain."

The moment of trial had come, and it seemed even more terrible than the poor child had imag-

Digitized by Google

ined. The long strain and exertion had been too much for her delicate body; she felt that she could bear no more, the cold seemed to have struck to her very heart. She looked up at Monsieur de Rochemont's pale excited face, and trembled from head to foot. A strange thought flashed into her mind. Elizabeth of Thuringia, — the cruel Landgrave! Perhaps *she* would be helped, too, since she was trying to do good. Surely, surely it must be so!

"Speak!" repeated Monsieur de Rochemont. "Why is this? The basket, what have you in it?"

"Roses," said Elizabeth. "Roses." And then her strength deserted her, she fell upon her knees in the snow, the basket slipped from her arm, and the first thing which fell from it was — No, not roses. There had been no miracle wrought. Not roses; but the case of jewels which she had laid on the top of the other things, that it might be more easily carried.

"Roses!" cried Uncle Bertrand. "Is it that the child is mad? They are the jewels of my sister Clotilde."

Elizabeth clasped her hands and leaned toward Dr. Norris, the tears streaming from her uplifted eyes.

"Ah! Monsieur," she sobbed. "You will understand. It was for the poor; they suffer so much. If we do not help them — I did not mean to speak falsely — I thought that the good ——" But her sobs filled her throat and she could not finish. Dr. Norris stooped and caught her up in his strong arms as if she had been a baby.

"Quick!" he said imperatively. "We must return to the carriage, de Rochemont. This may be a serious matter."

Elizabeth clung to him with trembling hands.

"But the poor woman who starves," she cried; "the little children. They sit upon the step quite near. The food was for them. I pray you to give it to them."

"Yes, they shall have it," said the Doctor. "Take the basket, de Rochemont — only a few doors below." And it appeared that there was something in his voice which seemed to render obedience necessary, for Monsieur de Rochemont actually did as he was told.

For a moment Dr. Norris put Elizabeth on her feet again, but it was only while he removed his overcoat and wrapped it about her slight, shivering body.

"You are chilled through, poor child," he said. "And you are not strong enough to walk just now. You must let me carry you."

It was true that a sudden faintness had come upon her, and she could not restrain the shudders which shook her. She had not recovered from them when she was placed in the carriage which the two gentlemen had thought it wiser to leave in one of the more respectable streets when they went into the worse ones together.

"What might not have occurred if we had not arrived at that instant!" said Uncle Bertrand, when he got into the carriage.

"As it is, who knows what illness ——"

"It will be better to say as little as possible now," interrupted Dr. Norris.

"It was for the poor," said Elizabeth, trembling. "I thought I *must* go. I did not mean to do wrong. It was for the poor."

And while her Uncle Bertrand regarded her with a strangely agitated look, and Dr. Norris held her hand between his strong and warm ones, the tears rolled down her pure, pale little face.

She did not know until some time after what danger she had been in; that the part of the city into which she had wandered was one of the lowest and worst, and was, in some quarters, the home of many wicked people. As her Uncle Bertrand had said, it was impossible to say what terrible thing might have happened if they had not met her so soon. It was Dr. Norris who explained it all to her as gently and kindly as was possible. She had always been fragile, and she had caught a severe cold which caused her an illness of some weeks. It was Dr. Norris who took care of her, and it was not long before her timidity was forgotten in her tender and trusting affection for him. She learned to watch for his coming, and to feel that she was no longer lonely. It was through his care that her uncle permitted her to send to the Curé a sum of money large enough to do all that was necessary; it was through him that the poor woman and her children were clothed and fed and protected. When she was well enough, he had promised that she should help him among his own poor. And through him — though she lost none of her sweet sympathy for those who suffered — she learned to live a more natural and childlike life, and to find that there were in the world innocent, natural pleasures which should be enjoyed. In time she even ceased to be afraid of her Uncle Bertrand and to be quite happy in the great beautiful house. And as for Uncle Bertrand himself, he became very fond of her, and sometimes even helped her to dispense her charities. He had a light, gay nature, but he was kind at heart, and always disliked to see or think of suffering. Now and then he would give more lavishly than wisely. And then he would say, with his habitual graceful shrug of the shoulders:

"Yes, it appears I am not discreet. Finally, I think I must leave my charities to you, my good Doctor Norris — to you and Little Saint Elizabeth."

THE END.

Digitized by Google