

Prayer-Book and Ledger.

By M.S.P.

A STORY FOUNDED ON FACT.

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CHAPTER V.

Mrs Broome - or "Mother Broome," as she was more often called—had been to London on one of her errands of mercy, and as she leaned back in the railway carriage she was meditating upon the sad scenes which she had that day witnessed. She was a stout, comfortable looking personage of about fifty, and as you caught the glance of her keen grey eyes over the gold-rimmed spectacles, and noted the genial smile which played around the corners of her mouth you felt at once that this was a woman to be trusted and confided in. Mrs Broome, like most to whom God has given a special work, had known sorrow. Up to the time of her engagement to Mr Broome her chief confidante had been a favourite brother two years younger than herself. Into her ear had been poured all his boyish confidences, while he, in his turn, was made the recipient of hers. Left orphans in childhood, they had clung to each other with an unusual warmth of affection, and when Janet went to a home of her own Charlie also shared it, for they could not be separated. Charlie was clever and bright, much sought after by the young men of his own circle, as he was always to be depended upon to make an entertainment "go." And so it came about that he was rarely at home in the evenings, and when he did return his eyes had an unnatural brightness, and he was sometimes not quite himself. And when, in the early days of her married life, his sister knelt—as one turned to stone—beside his coffin, and noted the ugly gash on his fair forehead, received in the drunken brawl which had cost him his life, she registered a solemn vow to devote her life to the victims of the accursed traffic. With her husband's willing co-operation she had sought out drunkards discharged from prison, had found work for them and in many instances been successful in getting them to sign the pledge, and lead altogether different lives. By degrees her quiet work had become so well known that rarely a day passed without her assistance being sought by some broken-hearted wife or sorrowing mother, and as family cares made little demand upon her time, her afternoons were generally spent in seeking to alleviate and help, for "Mother Broome" was a childless wife.

"Blessed is that mother that never had a child," exclaimed an old Irishwoman in excess of grief at the wandering of her own first-born; and, in spite of the ridicule heaped upon the Hibernianism, the words were truer than she knew.

Many a woman who has never held in her arms her own child has a heart large enough and tender enough to mother all creation, and is herself thrice blessed in the blessings which she sheds upon others.

As the train drew up at Lee Mrs Broom emerged from her third-class carriage and walked with a firm step across the platform, exchanging a cheery "Good-night" with the porter as he took her ticket. A few minutes' walk brought her to a row of semi-detached villas, at the door of one of which she knocked. It was opened by a short, squat figure in a very short dress, and with apron all awry. Her broad, good-humoured face was surmounted by a shock of rough red hair upon which a cap appeared to have dropped from the skies.

Mrs Broome never had to advertise for a servant, having always a number of waifs and strays waiting for some hospitable door to open to them. No one knew what an afflic-

tion these raw, untrained girls were to her, or how their rough, untutored ways jarred upon her sensibilities. But she took them one after another in the Master's name and for the Master's sake, and she had her reward.

"A jintleman called to see ye, ma'am." (Everybody in male attire was "a jintleman" in Bridget's vocabulary be it observed.)

"Who was it? I hope you remembered to ask his name, Bridget."

"Sure an' I axed him and he said niver a word, only give me a ticket! An' what did I do wid it, at all, at all? Sure and faith, these tickets will be the death av me; there's tickets wid the coal and tickets wid the meat, but niver a lump av coal nor a bit av meat did he bring."

During this speech Bridget was diving into the depths of her pocket and ransacking the letter-box, but all in vain. At last a bright thought struck her, and, tramping down the hall, she took from a hook on the kitchen dresser a crumpled visiting card with which she triumphantly returned.

Mother Broome adjusted her glasses and read the name:—*Richard Joyce*, and having ascertained that the "jintleman" was to call again during the evening, retired to take off her bonnet and prepare for tea.

(To be continued.)

Children's Corner.

I have just read, with a great deal of pleasure, about a New York gentleman's plan, this summer, for a number of poor children from the crowded districts of that great city. This good, kind man rented a large farm of nearly fifty acres, on top of a high hill, near Freeville, N.Y. Then he invited 120 boys and 30 girls, between twelve and fifteen years of age, choosing the wildest and roughest that he could find, to go to this farm for the summer. Now this is something which is often done, you will say, and think there is nothing very remarkable about it, perhaps. The notable part is this: Having gotten his company all safely landed at the farm, Mr George (for that is his name) divided them into six classes, and proceeded to organise a "general government" in the camp by the children, and for the children. Wasn't that a splendid idea? He himself was president, of course, and the members of the cabinet were his assistants. They had a secretary of the treasury, a secretary of police and correction, a commissary-general, and a postmaster-general. The first thing the children did was to hold a "congressional election," and organise a senate and house of representatives. Each one of the six classes had a member in the senate, and for every twelve members of a class there was a member in the house.

The children had their own money, of variously coloured paper, and were paid regular wages in this money—ninety cents a day for the best labour, seventy cents for medium, and fifty cents for unskilled work. It cost forty-three cents a day to live; so in this way they were given an idea of the use of money and how to earn it.

Don't you think that when these little "roughs" returned to the city that they realised more clearly just what the community was to them, and they to it? Having been given police power themselves, they were more ready to serve the interests of law and order in the great city, and to become good, law-abiding citizens. I think Mr George's idea a capital one, and am glad to learn that it will probably become a regular institution. There certainly would be fewer children in houses of correction if there were more interested people to teach them "self-government."—*Aunt Jane*, in "Union Signal."