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Christ's Church Booklet By Anna Julia Cooper

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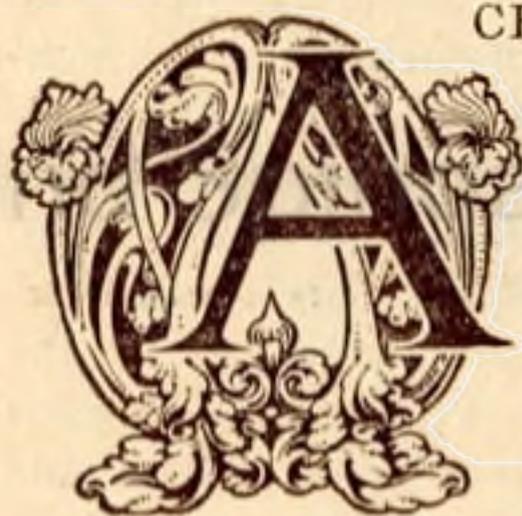


Christ's Church

ANNA J. COOPER

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CHRIST'S CHURCH



CERTAIN POOR MAN

in mean apparel went down from the rural districts to the city. It is needless to add that he fell among thieves who stripped him of whatever of worth he happened still

to possess, leaving him naked and half dead. When he came to himself and looked around he saw a vision of the Good Samaritan gleaming in the brilliant red and gold of a fine old Gothic window nearby. A countenance of ineffable tenderness glowed in the mellow lights of the skillfully wrought glass. The face was sad—oh, so sad—but the sadness was that of infinite pity and love, not of self-centered wretchedness and self-wrought ruin and woe. The hand is extended in benign benediction and kingly hospitality; upon the brow majestic sweetness sits enthroned. The figure breathed, the lips framed a bounteous, a royal *welcome*. The hungry outcast could have sworn he saw the eyes light up as they rested on him. He had known better days, and when younger, much cleaner and far happier, had heard his dear old mother tell about the Good Samaritan.

At any rate he thinks this may be a good house for him to knock at for a little human sympathy and help. He crawls up the white marble steps and stops a moment on the threshold to listen. Strains of delicious music were issuing from within, and groups of well dressed people with subdued, reverential mien, carrying in their hands dainty little books like gilded toys, filed past and were lost in the voluptuousness of soft carpets and elegant cushions beyond. At the door on either side stood, in immaculate shirt front and richest broadcloth a bowing and smiling personage who seemed a sort of master of ceremonies at some grand reception of the elite.

The poor devil at the door was entirely overcome by the splendor of what he saw. His eyes glowed like coals. His fingers fumbled awkwardly at a button on his tattered coat, and he tried hard to gulp down a tear that was choking him. Just then a sweet, rippling sound rose and floated out on the chill air. It was a woman's voice of wonderful pathos and power accompanied by the grand old chords of the organ.

"Come," she was singing. "Come unto me and I will give you rest.

"Come, ye that are heavy laden. Come, ye that labor.

*Come, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
Come! Come!"*

The wretch gathered himself up with fresh courage and crept over to one of the elegant gentlemen at the door to see what relief there was in this most generous invitation for all his need and misery. He thought he noticed a start and a look of repulsion on the part of the man at the door, but concluded that he must have been mistaken, for, just then a full chorus came in a grand swell through the open door with the words:

“For I, like you, have been a man of sorrows;

“I, like you, have made companionship with grief.

“Of all your sorrows I have been partaker!

“Come unto me, come! and you shall find relief. *Shall find relief!*”

The stranger twitched at his shabby old hat and caught his breath. Surely this was just the place that he ought to seek. Such generosity, such munificence, such a heartiness of welcome, as if he, *he* were really wanted and sought for. No questions asked apparently; just, “ye that are heavy laden,” kept rippling over the arches and reverberating under the vaulted ceiling, “Ye that are heavy laden. Come! Come!”

“Eh, will you kindly tell me what this is?” asked the bewildered stranger of the magnificent doorkeeper.

“Why this is Christ’s Church,” was the quick reply with a grand air.

"*Christ's?* Oh, yes;" that NAME, he had heard it before. He rather thought his mother must have known and loved that Name. It had seemed to comfort and gladden her a deal, too, just to whisper it softly to herself sometimes. What recollections of the old days it brought up!

"Ah, yes; Christ's House! *Is He in?*"
—Well, it seems that He was not in!

The stranger, after certain difficult explanations, which proved unaccountably hard for him to take in, was finally made to understand that the gentle folk who were entertained weekly at this house, felt very kindly toward "his class" of people and were glad to do what they could for them in a certain chapel on a certain street in the city; but here the seats were all taken, except a very few in the organ loft. He might go around to the side door. He would see the staircase and find a seat in the gallery.

"We are exceedingly glad to see any of 'your people' go to church,—but really—"

Just then the minister from the pulpit announced in a fine, orotund voice: "The text for our consideration this morning is—

"I was a stranger and ye took me not in."

But you see, the stranger at the door was—
Black!

And, of course, that settles it.

