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The Hymn Book.

ELLEN MONTGOMERY'S BOOKSHELF.

BY THE AUTHORS OF

"THE WIDE, WIDE WORLD," "QUEECHY," "SPECULATION,"
&c., &c., &c.

Warner, (Susan)

With Illustrations by J. D. Watson, Printed in Colours.



SIXTH THOUSAND.

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1866.



THE STORY
OF
ELLEN MONTGOMERY'S BOOKSHELF.

THOSE people who ever knew Ellen Montgomery, will remember, perhaps, her friend Miss Alice ; and perhaps remember too, that in Miss Alice's bookcase at the parsonage, Ellen found a supply of pleasure for her reading-time. There were "Cook's Voyages," and "Plutarch's Lives," and divers other books with which she used to delight herself, in those days when yet she was living with Miss Fortune. All this was told about in the history of Ellen which has been published. But it was not told in that history, as indeed no book can tell quite everything, that there were a few of Miss Alice's early childish books, for which, as well as for the grander works mentioned above, Ellen Montgomery had a great liking ; and not Ellen Montgomery alone, but Ellen Chauncey, also. When she had once read them, Ellen by degrees gathered them all down from the upper part of the bookcase, and stowed them away by themselves, on a short shelf near the bottom, where she could easily and at any time get at them ; Miss Alice having cleared out for her the books that used to stand there before.

And it fell out at one time, that Mr John, having brought

home a set of new books, was looking for a place to put them, and happened to fix upon the row which held Ellen's favourites. "What do these children's books down here, Alice?" said he, pulling them out; "the place for these is at the top." "Oh, stop, you must not, John," said his sister—"that is Ellen Montgomery's Bookshelf." And Mr John smiled, and put the books back again in due order; though not so well but that Ellen, the next time she came, found that somebody had been meddling with them. For she had left "Mr Rutherford's Children" at one end, and "Carl Kringen" next it; and now "Carl Kringen" was at the end, and "Casper" next, and "Mr Rutherford's Children" in the middle.

It is possible, I suppose, that other children might like what Ellen liked. But these books of hers cannot be found now at any of the bookshops; so we will give out the first volume of "Mr Rutherford's Children" (there are two volumes) by way of trial; and if that is liked well enough, "Carl Kringen;" and in time, maybe, the whole Bookshelf. I hope they will be liked, because otherwise the "Bookshelf" will never be finished; and unfinished things are disagreeable.

I am the friend of all Ellen Montgomery's friends.

ELIZABETH WETHERELL.

SUGGESTIVE.

I THINK it necessary to come to the help of the Public. Lest Miss Wetherell should not have her dues, they are giving her the dues of every one else ; and whatever my hand may have to do on "Ellen Montgomery's Bookshelf," there it is—even though "a discerning public" perceive it not. No matter for that—I had as soon be behind the books as before them ; but must enter my protest against facts which are no facts.

Therefore, kind Public, Messrs Editors, and Friends in general, I propose this division of the volumes ; by which my sister and I will each in turn have written them all. *Whatever book or part of a book you particularly like, thank Miss Wetherell for it ;* and let all those pages which are less interesting be charged to the account of

AMY LOTHROP.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAP. I. WHERE THEY LIVED,	1
„ II. THE BIRDS, THE CRAVAT, AND THE MINISTER,	5
„ III. CHERRY AND DASH, AND WHERE THEY WENT,	14
„ IV. THE WET STRAWBERRIES,	21
„ V. HEADACHE AND LOCUST FLOWERS,	29
„ VI. WHAT SHALL I GIVE?	33
„ VII. MARY'S BIRTHDAY,	40
„ VIII. CHICKENS AND EGGS,	45
„ IX. THE SILKWORMS AND THE BUTTERFLY DOOR,	55
„ X. CATS AND CRACKERS,	64
„ XI. CLEVELAND,	72
„ XII. A LETTER AND AN ARRIVAL,	81
„ XIII. THE CURIOSITY BOX,	87
„ XIV. EDITH AND HER COUSIN,	96
„ XV. GOING PLEASURING,	104
„ XVI. THE END OF THE SUMMER,	111

	PAGE
CHAP. XVII. WINTER QUARTERS,	122
„ XVIII. WINTER DRESSES,	130
„ XIX. HOUSE BURNINGS,	136
„ XX. THE LEAF-CUTTER'S STORY,	142
„ XXI. SAPPHIRES,	149
„ XXII. THE CHIMNEY SWEEP AND THE FISHERS,	158
„ XXIII. SEEDS OF HAPPINESS,	169
„ XXIV. HAPPINESS,	177
„ XXV. THE CARRIER PIGEON,	184
„ XXVI. EDITH'S FOUR VISITS,	193
„ XXVII. TWO OR THREE THINGS,	199
„ XXVIII. KITTY WHITEFOOT,	209

CARL KRINKEN; OR, THE CHRISTMAS STOCKING.

	PAGE
THE STORY OF THE THREE APPLES,	227
THE STORY OF THE PENNY,	238
THE STORY OF THE PURSE,	253
THE STORY OF THE TWO SHOES,	284
THE STORY OF THE PINE-CONE,	323
THE STORY OF THE HYMN-BOOK,	338
THE STORY OF THE CORK BOAT,	351
THE STORY OF THE STOCKING ITSELF,	353

CONTENTS.

ix

CASPER.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I,	371
CHAPTER II,	379
CHAPTER III,	387
CHAPTER IV,	392
CHAPTER V,	396
CHAPTER VI,	404
CHAPTER VII,	410
CHAPTER VIII,	417
CHAPTER IX,	422
CHAPTER X,	430
CHAPTER XI,	437
CHAPTER XII,	442
CHAPTER XIII,	450
CHAPTER XIV,	458
CHAPTER XV,	467
CHAPTER XVI,	474

MR. RUTHERFORD'S CHILDREN.

MR RUTHERFORD'S CHILDREN.

CHAPTER I.

WHERE THEY LIVED.

WILD-ROSE LANE ran down from Dusty-turnpike to the sea-shore, but, as you might suppose, it was a long distance between the two. No one who saw the clouds of dust on the turnpike, or the sparkling of the blue water of the sea, would think there could be a straight road from the one to the other. To say the truth, the lane was *not* straight. For a while after it left the turnpike its course was pretty direct ; but then you might have thought that the lane was sometimes sociable and sometimes solitary in its taste ; for it would run off on purpose to meet a queer-looking little brown house with ever so many children, and pigs, and chickens, and a little black dog that barked at everything but the lane ; and then, as if the lane itself were quite disgusted, it would take a short turn into the cool quiet woods. It was a wonder it did not stay there always.

A great many things lived by the side of this lane. And first there were the wild roses, which grew finely and just as they felt inclined—wandering about after the lane's example. They climbed over the fence, and hung down their heads to look through it ; and they laid their little red cheeks on the rails, and on the posts, and sometimes on the green bank below ; only the buds stood up quite straight to look about them. They were very plain common roses, with four or five red petals and a great yellow centre ; but they were very

▲

sweet, nevertheless, and now and then their perfume came up even to Dusty-turnpike.

Among the roses the little birds built their nests, and lived there with the thorns to protect them. Nobody could see the nests from the lane; only you could see the birds lighting upon the roses, and then creeping into some little place where there must have been something in the shape of a house. The song-sparrows had bluish eggs, with brown speckles all over; and the chipping-birds had light-blue eggs, with dark spots at one end. Nobody ever disturbed them, for the lane was very quiet; and when the rose-leaves fell down upon the eggs, there was nothing to brush them off but the wind, and that could hardly get in, the hedge was so thick.

A great many butterflies lived in the lane; and the bees did not live there exactly, but they came every day, and then went back to the hive at night; and there were some caterpillars too, but these there always will be where there are butterflies, and the birds had the less trouble to get their breakfasts. Only the little chipping-birds had a very nice taste, and preferred bread; and they used to fly off to Mr Rutherford's house, and pick up the crumbs that were shaken from the table-cloth and swept out of the door.

For Mr Rutherford lived by the side of Wild-rose Lane; and he thought there were no butterflies so merry, and no red-cheeked roses so sweet, as Mary and Edith, his two little daughters. They were not really his daughters, though he called them so, and though he loved them; and they loved him as if he had been their father, but he was only their father's brother.

Mary and Edith were orphans. Before they were old enough to know and feel the sorrow or the loss, God took away both their parents from earth to heaven; and indeed there was no reason to feel sorrow, for the children were as well taken care of as they could be; and their father and mother had loved God, and tried to serve Him while they were here, and had prayed Him to forgive them for Christ's sake; and the Bible says, that "whosoever believeth in Him hath eternal life."

Mr Rutherford's house stood just by the side of the lane. It was large and white, with a front verandah and a back verandah and a great many windows. From some of these windows you could look far away, over green meadows and streams of water, to where the sun used to set in summer; but in winter it went down behind a clump of pine trees. In front of the house you could see very little way—there was just the lawn and the hedge, and then on the other side of the lane there were a great many cherry-trees that stood up so straight that their heads seemed to touch the sky. It was quite wonderful that the boys who used to climb up after the cherries never seemed to fall.

All about the lawn in front of Mr Rutherford's house there were a great many flowers; and behind the house, though there were no flowers, there was another green lawn, which stretched away till it fell in with a grove of locust trees. Beyond the grove the hill was very steep, and at the foot there stood the barns and carriage-house.

Further still, outside the barnyard, was the cow's green meadow and the brook where the water-cresses grew.

Within doors it was no less pleasant. The drawing-room was oval-shaped and had three windows. Here stood a little tea-table, a large old-fashioned mahogany sofa with chairs to match, and two little carpet stools—the favourite seats of Mr Rutherford's children. The paper on the walls had a yellow ground with large bunches of green flowers; brass andirons stood in the open fire-place; there were vases of artificial flowers on the mantel-piece, and a great many flowers in the green carpet.

In the back parlour were two large cupboards, a brown carpet, a sideboard instead of a sofa, and maple chairs instead of mahogany. There were two benches here also, and on one of these Edith seated herself the first day of her arrival, and looking up at the vases said, "Well, this is a fine house!"

But, when I say her *arrival*, I mean only her return home after a winter spent in town, when she was of that happy age which forgets between autumn and spring. For in this

house had Edith spent the most of her short life, and even Mary could remember little of any other. Here had Mr Rutherford's children lived all the years that their father and mother had been in heaven; and God had watched over them, and kept them alive, and well and happy. They did not always think who it was that took such care of them, and gave them sleep at night, and let them awake every morning to such pleasant days; they did not know that God never forgot them—that He took much better care of the two little helpless children than their father and mother could have done; yet it was so. And Mr Rutherford's children were very happy. Plain and simple as everything was at Rose-hill, Edith found enough to admire; whether she studied the green lilies of the valley on the drawing-room paper, or the many colours in the drawing-room carpet; and in the garden there was always something beautiful. To look at the dark blue spider-flower and wonder whence came its name; to find the little red and white poppies and the merry-faced johnny-jumpers springing up in the gravel walk; and above all to stand and watch the evening primroses at sunset, and give them one of her gentle breaths when they did not open fast enough;—these were never-failing pleasures.

The two children slept in a large room over the back parlour, with only a closet between it and their aunt's room. Their own room was the pleasantest, Edith thought, for it had three windows; and she was very fond of the great mahogany bedstead where they slept, and of the polished brass andirons where she used to see the odd reflection of her own face, and the green wire fender with its brass top-rail all studded with brass knobs, like the turrets on a battlement.

It is evening in this room; and on the edge of the bed kneels a very little child, while in front of her—standing and making of her arms and herself a sort of barricade—is a girl some years older. And what are they doing? The elder child is trying to teach the younger her first prayer; and the baby—as I may almost call her—somewhat unwillingly, and with

a very slight sense of the meaning and importance of the words, repeats after her sister in her own broken English—

“Our Father, which art in heaven.”

And this was the first thing that little Edith could remember about herself.

CHAPTER II.

THE BIRDS, THE CRAVAT, AND THE MINISTER.

It was summer weather, and Edith wore no stockings, but only little high morocco shoes tied round the ankle.

Thus it happened one morning, that while Mary still sat on the floor busy covering her bare feet, Edith sprang up, exclaiming, “Ah, I have got done first!”

“Good reason why,” said Mary; “you have no stockings to put on. But I wonder what you call ‘done,’—look at your shoe-strings.”

“Because I don’t know how to tie a bow-knot; and if I tie them in a hard knot they never come out. Oh! here is a little stone got into my shoe. Would it not be nice to wear bare feet?—so cool.”

“But nobody does, except poor children,” said Mary.

“Oh yes,” said Edith; “the chickens have bare feet—and the cats.”

“No, the cats have stockings,” said Mary; “fur stockings.”

“How nice that would be,” said Edith, laughing. “I wish I was a cat.”

“I don’t wish you were,” said Mary, “because then I should be one too.”

“Then we should be two kittens,” said Edith; “with whiskers and fur stockings.”

“And claws,” said Mary.

“No, we need not have any claws,” said Edith, “because you know we shouldn’t want to scratch anybody. And we

wouldn't have green eyes either. But oh, won't you show me how to tie a bow-knot?"

And sitting down on the floor opposite her sister, the two little feet were stretched out with the dangling shoe-strings.

"Now do you see?" said Mary. "You make a loop of this one so, and put the other round so, and"—

"But I can't see *so!*" exclaimed Edith. "You must come close beside me."

"Oh yes, you can," said Mary, as she drew the knot. "Now you can tie the other one in the same way."

"I can't—I don't know how. You must come here and show me."

"No, indeed," said Mary, "you can see perfectly well if you will only take the trouble," and up she got and began to brush her hair; while Edith sat looking at her outstretched feet, the tied shoe and the untied shoe, with a very doubtful face.

"Why, Edith, what is the matter that you look so disconsolate?" said Mrs Rutherford, as she threw open the closet door and came in. "There is not the least fog out of doors this morning: how comes there to be any in here?"

"What does the fog do?" said Edith, looking up with a brightened face.

"The fog makes the blue sky look gray and the sun look dim, and everything else dark and uncomfortable."

"Except the spiders' webs," said Edith. "Ah, Aunt Esther, you forget how bright they look with the dewdrops on them."

"Well, but are your eyelashes spiders' webs?" said her aunt, as she took Edith up on her lap.

"No, indeed," said Edith, laughing and shaking her head about; "but you see, Aunt Esther, I didn't know how to tie a bow-knot, and Mary wouldn't show me so that I could learn."

"So that you would learn," said Mary.

"There is a verse in the Bible," said Mrs Rutherford, who was quietly tying the other shoe, "which says, 'Little children, love one another.'"

Edith looked down at her shoes, and Mary brushed her hair more earnestly than ever.

"I think there is a verse in the Bible for almost every thing," she said at last; "but then one never remembers them at the right time. I can think of plenty of verses afterwards."

"Aunt Esther, did *you* ever learn the whole Bible by heart?" inquired Edith.

"No, love, I never did."

"What an idea!" said Mary. "I don't believe anybody could."

"I believe some people have done it," said her aunt. "But without learning the whole Bible, Mary, you and Edith might learn one verse every day, and see how well you can obey it."

"That would be so nice," said Edith. "What verse shall we learn to day?—'Little children, love one another'?"

"Yes," said her aunt, smiling, "I think that will do very well."

Edith jumped down from her seat, and then she danced all the way down stairs and into the garden to bid the flowers good morning. Nothing could be more fresh and lovely than they all were; and as she walked along from mosspink to periwinkle, her admiration was too great to be spoken; she could only fold her hands and look at the beauties with a very grave little face indeed. But by the time she had gone once round the lawn the bell rang.

"Oh, Aunt Esther!" she cried as she ran in, "there is such a beautiful sweet-william out!—with pink stripes and dark in the middle."

The family were all gathered in the back parlour for prayers; but Edith was in no mood for anything quiet; and though she did keep still until prayers were over, she came singing to the breakfast-table, and while a blessing was asked her eyes went out of the window.

It so happened that one of the chipping-birds had already come from the lane to get crumbs; and he hopped about the verandah, and gave Edith a look out of his little bright eyes that was quite irresistible; Edith laughed.

"That was very naughty," said Mr Rutherford, gravely though gently, when he had concluded.

Edith coloured and hung her head.

"I saw a bird in the verandah," she said, "and it looked at me, and I laughed."

"We hold down our heads," replied her uncle, "that we may see nothing to make us forget that we are speaking to God. We cannot expect Him to bless us if we think of something else while we ask for His blessing."

Edith understood and remembered, and never again listened with open eyes.

Breakfast over, Mr Rutherford began to make ready for town, and the children ran off to do their part of the preparation. This was to get the prettiest rose that could be found on either of their own little monthly-rose bushes; for they never forgot that their uncle liked to have one in his button-hole as he drove to the city; and there was generally quite a consultation as to which rose was the largest, and pinkest, and sweetest. This morning the best was found upon Edith's bush, and she followed her uncle to the willow-tree where the gig stood, with the rose in her hand, and some request in her mouth, which was the subject of a long confidential whisper.

"What were you talking about?" said Mary, as Mr Rutherford drove off, and Edith came skipping back from the willow-tree.

"Oh, never mind—you mustn't ask. Suppose we go and look for those queer flowers in the grass,—and oh, Mary! let us watch the little bird on her nest; but we'll find the flowers first."

The flowers grew on a long stalk here and there among the grass. The grass was pretty tall now too, though not ready for mowing; but these particular flowers that the children were so fond of, were taller still, and lifted their purple heads above the green blades of grass—modestly enough perhaps, but still in a very decided manner. The flower itself was quite pretty; but the plant's chief attraction lay in the stem.

"See, here is a fine one, Edith," said Mary, when they had

run about for a few minutes. Edith stood eagerly by to watch while her sister broke off the flower. From the end of the stem came out some large drops that looked like very thick milk; Mary held that end in the sunshine, and immediately the white drops began to grow yellowish, then orange, and then of so deep a colour that they looked more like treacle than milk. At this point the flower was thrown away and a fresh one sought out.

The bees were humming around the white clover, and the butterflies were flitting lazily about in a dainty sort of way; and the birds in the hedge sang as if their throats were full of music. The children ran about till they were tired, and then jumped into the long grass and lay down. And the grass stood up straight on all sides of them, so that all anybody could see at first was a broken place in the grass; then they could find what looked like a picture of Mary and Edith in a pretty green frame.

"How pleasant it is!" said Edith, shutting up her eyes quite tight; "I don't want to go in ever—do you?"

"I don't know," said Mary; "I suppose I might, some time or other. If it were tea-time—and we had strawberries for tea."

"Oh, if it were tea-time," said Edith; "but that is a great way off; and I don't care about dinner much."

"I wonder what the little bird is doing," said Mary, "and how she gets on with her nest. Suppose we go and see."

"Well, suppose we do," said Edith.

So they got up and left their own little nests in the grass, and went to the house and into the front parlour. The window at which they placed themselves opened upon the verandah, along the front of which roses and honeysuckles stretched and twined themselves, supported by two or three iron chains. Among the leaves and flowers by which the chains were quite hidden, a little brown bird was building her nest. The children stood perfectly quiet, hardly daring to stir for fear of frightening her, and watched the progress of the work. The nest was nearly finished. Little sticks, and twigs, and stalks of hay, were nicely plaited together, to

make a rough-looking little tea-cup—rough on the outside, but within there were no twigs allowed to show themselves, only dry grass; and now the bird brought long horse-hairs and wove them in, to make the nest still softer. Then she sat on the edge of the nest with her head a little on one side, lost in doubt or admiration, Edith could not tell which.

“What do you suppose birdie is thinking of?” said she, softly.

“Thinking how nice her nest looks, perhaps,” said Mary. “There she goes!”

She was gone a longer time than usual, the children thought, and they were talking very earnestly about the reason; but when they looked again, there she sat on the edge of the nest, and in her bill a little white feather. She turned her head about two or three times, gave a little low chirp, and then jumped down into the nest, feather and all.

“The nest must be almost done now,” said Edith, joyfully, “because birdie is making her bed.”

“Miss Edith,” said Janet, who had come into the room without being noticed, so busy were eyes and thoughts with the bird. “Miss Edith, here is something for you, miss. Michael is just come home with the gig a minute ago, and he brought it.”

“For me!” said Edith, “what can it be? Are you *sure* it’s for me, Janet?”

“That’s what Michael says, miss.”

“Do open it, Edith,” said her sister.

Edith unfolded one corner of the parcel, and immediately hugged it up to her breast with a face of great delight.

“How very good!” she cried. “Oh, I’m so glad! Uncle Ruth is too good!”

“But what is it?”

“Why you see,” said Edith, “I asked him—but I didn’t think he would do it to-day—to get a little silk handkerchief for Aunt Esther; and then as soon as he got to town he bought one and made Michael bring it home. Isn’t he good?”

“ But what made you ask him ? ”

“ Because I heard her say she wanted one, and I thought I should like to give it to her. And you see,” continued Edith, as she undid the parcel, “ it is perfectly beautiful ! I like the colour so much—it is straw-colour ; and it is fringed too. Come, let us go and give it to her ; ” and they ran away up stairs, where all the exclamations of pleasure were again and again repeated.

The children had finished all their lessons and eaten their dinner ; and now the sun was sinking slowly down in the west, and the long shadows lay across the lawn from one side to the other. Everything looked a little weary and quiet. The countrymen drove down the lane in their waggons which had looked so spruce and clean when they went to market in the morning ; but now the wheels were muddy, and the rest of the waggon splashed and soiled, and the horses hung down their heads and trotted slowly along ; and even the countrymen looked tired, till they remembered that they were going home to tea, and then they touched their horses with the whip to make them go faster.

The chickens had finished their tea, and were sauntering along to bed, but stopping to eat everything they found by the way ; and the birds were looking for a nice roosting-place in the trees, and some of the flowers were folding up their pretty leaves ; while the evening-primroses were just beginning to open their eyes, which were too weak to bear the sunlight. Up in the sky the clouds were bright with red, and gold-colour, and purple, that did not look as if they could ever sleep ; yet they too would by and by be gray and quiet like all the rest.

Mary sat in the drawing-room window reading “ Northern Regions,” and Edith stood by her side with “ Original Poems ” in her hand, but just then she was looking out of the window. For the little bird seemed inclined to try her feather-bed, and she had got into the nest and out again about half-a-dozen times ; fidgiting and chirping and hopping about as if she did not know what to do with herself. Edith watched her with great interest,—then she heard the gate

at the foot of the lawn open and shut. Mary heard it too, and looked out.

"There comes Mr M'Ilvaine, Aunt Esther," she said.

"Who is Mr M'Ilvaine?" said Edith, standing up on her toes to see the better.

"Why, our minister—that preaches to us every Sunday," said Mary, going back to "Northern Regions."

"Aunt Esther," said Edith, who was endeavouring to make up her mind how she liked Mr M'Ilvaine out of the pulpit, "do all ministers wear black clothes?"

"A great many of them—perhaps all."

"And do they all look so grave, as if they didn't feel happy?"

But Mrs Rutherford had no time to answer this difficult question, for the visitor came in and took his seat by the window.

Edith eyed him with some distrust: neither black clothes nor grave looks quite suited her taste; and Mr M'Ilvaine was not destined this day to grow in her favour. For a while she looked at him with a face as grave as his own, and then going to the sofa she began softly to "slide down hill" upon one of its round cushions; and her mind being thus happily diverted from all sublunary affairs, she was greatly astonished when Mr M'Ilvaine suddenly turned round and addressed himself to her.

"How many eyes have you, Edith?" said he.

Nobody could have mistaken the number of Edith's eyes at that moment. The question was asked just when she and the cushion had pleasantly reached the ground together; but without making any attempt to regain her place on the sofa, Edith sat still on the cushion, and opening her eyes very wide indeed, answered,—

"Two, sir."

"And how many ears?" said Mr M'Ilvaine, without smiling in the least.

Edith thought for a minute, to make sure she had the right number, and said as before, "Two, sir."

"And only one mouth, have you? How many?"

The little mouth said very softly, "One."

"You have two eyes, and two ears, and only one mouth;—then you should see a great deal, and hear a great deal, and say very little."

Edith looked exceedingly mystified, but ventured no reply, and the sofa cushion was left to take care of itself for the rest of the visit; while she sat with her hands folded, only resting herself now and then by changing their position, and putting sometimes the right hand on the top and sometimes the left, or by drawing a very soft long breath.

At last the visitor went away, and then the tongue began to assert its rights.

"Aunt Esther, was I making any noise?"

"Not the least."

"Then what made him say that to me?"

"I suppose he thought it was a good thing for children to know and remember."

"You don't think so, Aunt Esther?" said Edith, leaning her arms upon Mrs Rutherford's lap and looking up in her face. "You like me to talk and ask questions?"

"Yes dear, always. But strangers might not like it so well—they might call it troublesome."

"I shall never ask *him* any!" said Edith, "and I didn't, either. But, Aunt Esther, when I said there was a little grease spot on Mrs Anable's dress, she said children shouldn't have such sharp eyes."

"Don't you think the tongue had something to do there, Edith?" said her aunt, smiling.

"Yes," said Mary, "you know you are to see a great deal more than you tell."

"So I did," said Edith, "there were *two* grease spots. And I thought it was very kind to tell her of them."

"I have no doubt of your good intentions, my dear," said Mrs Rutherford, "but by and by you will understand the difference between other people's business and your own. And for the present, try never to hear what you are not

wanted to hear, nor to say anything that will trouble anybody,—then your little ears and tongue will be in pretty good order.”

“And how about the eyes, Aunt Esther?” said Mary.

“If our eyes are often lifted up to God for His help and blessing, He will not let them go far wrong,” said her aunt. “And then we shall look at ourselves with more knowledge, and at our neighbours with more charity.”

CHAPTER III.

CHERRY AND DASH, AND WHERE THEY WENT.

THE carriage-house and barn stood, as I have said, at the foot of the hill behind the house. The road wound round through the trees, going pleasantly down all the while, till it came to the barnyard gate. Here were a number of buildings—the carriage-house and harness-room, the barn, the stable, and the cow-house. Round the barnyard there was quite a high wall.

“Come, Edith,” said Mary, one afternoon, “let us go down and see Michael harness the horses.”

“Are we going to ride?” said Edith. “Because if we are, we must get ready.”

“Oh, we shall have time enough—I can get ready while he is driving up the hill, can’t you? We can set off just before him.”

“Well,” said Edith. “But we shall have to run very fast. Come.”

Off they went, down the road and through the lime-trees, till they came to a shady place near the top of the wall. There they sat down.

Everything looked very pretty. The sun was just high enough to throw a beautiful yellow light between the long shadows, and the sky was perfectly blue, without the least bit of a cloud. Far down in the meadow they could see the white cow lying down among the buttercups, and the red

cow standing up and switching her tail about to keep off the flies; and it would seem that some flies had found their way into the stable, for the horses stamped their feet now and then with great energy. The chickens were picking about the barnyard, and sometimes an old hen would stoop her head and go under the fence, and then stoop her head and come back again. One hen, with buff-coloured feathers, was rolling and kicking in a dusty corner, as if her object was to get as dirty as possible.

"What a hen!" said Edith. "I never did like that old yellow hen."

"Your white hen has been there too," said Mary, "and there she goes again, see. I wonder where Speckle is."

"Oh there she is, down in the meadow by Whiteside," said Edith. "I can just see her. How red her comb is!"

Michael now came down the road and threw open the great doors of the carriage-house, and drew out the barouche into the road. Then he shut the doors again and went through a little door into the harness-room, and coming out with a great load of leather and brass trappings, he went off to the stable.

"Now he will have them out very soon," said Mary. "I hear him: what do you suppose he means by 'Come up, sir'?"

"I don't know," said Edith. "Perhaps one of them was lying down."

And now the stable door opened, and a pretty brown horse, bearing his half of the load of leather, came out, and marched along through the gate which Michael had left open, till he came to the carriage, and then he stepped very carefully over the pole and took his place at the other side of it.

"That's Cherry!" exclaimed both the children together. "How pretty he looks! how nice he is! That's just the way he always does. And there comes Michael leading Dash."

Michael put Dash in his place, and began to make all fast; and then stroking his hand over Cherry, and giving him one

or two pats, he looked up and smiled at the children, as much as to say, "Did you ever see a better brushed coat?" and the children looked at the smooth, shining horses, and the clean harness and carriage, and the bright brass mountings, and smiled back their approbation. Then they ran away to the house to get ready.

In those days Mary and Edith wore nankeen jackets with tight sleeves and two or three little round capes; or if the weather was very warm, they put on white tippets and long white sleeves made like a mitten at the hand. These sleeves had strings at the top, which were pushed under the short frock-sleeves, and tied to the shoulder strap; in Edith's opinion it was a most ingenious system of torture. She thought her frock-sleeve was never made large enough for her arm, and somebody's hot fingers besides; and by the time she was fairly equipped, she was in a fidget all over. But these uncomfortable feelings soon vanished when she was seated in the barouche and wheeling round the lawn; and once through the gate and out on the open road, with the fresh air and sweet sight and smell of the wild-roses in the hedge, it would have taken much more than heat or uncomfortable sleeves to cloud her face. Sometimes she sat on the back seat among the cushions, and her feet not within speaking distance of the floor; sometimes both children were on the front seat together.

And there they would sit, watching the shadows of the coachman and horses, of the carriage and their own little selves, straw-bonnets and all, as they danced up and down the road-side, now on the grass and now on the ground, and now in the hedge, and wondering what made the horses' legs so long and their bodies so short.

Once they went towards the sea-shore, and then the water would come glimmering and sparkling through the trees long before they reached it; and when they got nearer, and Michael stopped the horses, the children could hear the waves splash and break upon the beach with a sound that was enough to put one to sleep. Sometimes "the shady road" was chosen, through the woodland, where they rode

in a beautiful softened light, with the long shadowy trees thrown across from side to side ; where the squirrels ran races up and down the trees, and the wild flowers grew in the deep shade ; and the birds started from their wayside nests at the sound of the carriage, and fluttered away and then back as the wheels rolled off.

And then the drive home—with rather more quietness and soberness than they set out—the occasional drooping of little eyelids—the thoughts that came up in little minds about tea and radishes—the way the horses pricked up their ears and trotted on, as they drew near the gate—the stopping there for Garret to swing back the great barriers—the pause at the front steps—a pause of both body and mind, as it were : how pleasant it all was ! And perhaps if Edith happened to be particularly sleepy, she didn't open her eyes at all till they got to the house ; not even to look at the great button-wood trees by the gate, nor the flowers that grew round the lawn, but sat quite still, her little head nodding about, her ears just hearing the grating of the wheels over the gravel stones, but her eyes not once looking out to see whether they ran over the poppies and johnny-jumpers as well, until Cherry and Dash stopped at the front steps. It did happen, more than once, that Edith failed to open her eyes even there, and that Mr Rutherford had to lift her out of the carriage, and carry her into the house and lay her on the sofa, a very sleepy little child indeed. And then Mary would get a little soft blue shawl to lay over her, and Mrs Rutherford would shut the blinds a little ; and Edith knew nothing about that or anything else till she found herself sitting on somebody's lap, and trying very hard to open her eyes. But she usually smiled long before that desirable point was attained, just to let people know that she would wake up as soon as she could. And when Mary said, "Come, Edith ! don't you want some tea ?" Edith said, "Yes—I think so"—and let her head fall on Mr Rutherford's shoulder again.

Even on Sunday the children had a ride, but that was only to church ; because Ferrytown was too far away for them to walk. So they used to be ready very early, and

drive to church ; and when they had all got out, Michael took the carriage away to some safe place where Cherry and Dash could be in the shade and out of harm's way, while he went to church too.

Mr Rutherford's pew was not like those you see now-a-days. It was very large, and square ; with high sides painted white except at the top, where there was a mahogany rail : at least the children thought it was mahogany, but I presume it was only stained wood. There were dark purple covered cushions all round the pew, that looked as if a great many people had sat on them and worn them down from their first freshness ; and the purple was of so very doubtful a shade, that one could hardly tell whether it was red grown dark, or black grown light, or whether the cushions had always been purple ; and they looked too old to remember anything about it themselves. And the hymn-books did not seem a bit younger. There was no doubt about their colour—for towards the top of the covers and along the back there were spots of dark brown leather that seemed almost as fresh as it had ever been ; but elsewhere it was worn to a soft light brown, and even the gilt letters on the cover were not very distinct. Yet still the children could read there, "William Rutherford ;" and they were never tired of hearing their uncle say that this book was given to their father when he was a little boy ; and that this other, so very much worn, which had "Christian Rutherford" written on the fly leaf, had belonged to his mother. There was no need to tell the children to handle them carefully,—they would not have turned down a leaf, or held either book except in both hands, for anything in the world. These books seemed to Edith so much older than the minister, that it was quite wonderful. She couldn't always understand him very well, and she used to think sometimes that she would much rather read the hymn-books.

"I mean to do it next time," she told Mary, one day. "I think I could keep awake a great deal easier."

"Oh no, you mustn't!" said Mary, seriously.

"Why may not I?"

"Because it isn't respectful," said Mary. "Aunt Esther told me once that when people are talking to you it is very disrespectful not to listen to them."

"But he is not talking to me," said Edith.

"Oh yes, he is—he is talking to everybody in the church."

So lest she should be disrespectful, Edith used to sit up very straight and try to listen; and then she would slip down off the cushion and sit on her mother's little foot-stool; and when she found herself looking at the little brass nails and perhaps counting them, she would get back on the seat again, and sit up straight as before. And by and by she would forget all about the footstool, and the minister, and being respectful, and then she could just feel Mrs Rutherford taking off her little straw hat and putting her arm round her; and presently Edith was fast asleep, with her head in Aunt Esther's lap, and her little feet stretched out on the old purple cushion.

It happened one Sunday that while she was asleep it began to rain; and when at last she sat up and looked out of the church-door that was by the side of the pulpit, there to be sure were raindrops pattering down at a great rate. Edith was very much surprised, and she called out quite loud, "Oh, it rains!" and then when she saw all the little girls in the next pew laughing and putting up their books to hide their faces, she hung down her head, and felt very much ashamed, and afraid she had done something very disrespectful.

When they came out of the pew there were always plenty of people to shake hands with, so that the going down the aisle was a rather slow affair. There was one lady in particular whom Edith used to notice, because she was always there—in the same bonnet, and shawl, and parasol, and the same curls inside of her bonnet, which never got shaken down in the least; and she always came forward just at the same time and place to shake hands with Mrs Rutherford; Edith thought she must be a very good person.

The ride home was pleasant, though it was through the hot sun; but the children had little green parasols, with

green fringe and white tops and handles, and of course nobody could mind the sun under them.

When they reached home, Mrs Rutherford used to let the children lie down on the bed till dinner-time, if they felt tired, and almost always they took a book to read. Sometimes Mary picked out an easy story in "The Lady of the Manor," for Edith, but generally she chose one of her own little books, "The Millennium," or "Nathan Dickerman," or "Anna Ross." The "Millennium" was a great favourite. Not that Edith could understand all the talk about "wool, hair, and feathers," or some other things there related; but she liked to read the description of the beautiful feathers of the blue jay, and of the young mountain-ash, (she thought their own could not be the right kind,) and of the basket covered with silver paper—the children's walk to the village—and of their good friend: she did not wonder at all that the children loved him.

They never went to church in the afternoon—it was so far that there was not time after dinner. But they had Bible lessons at home, and there were hymns that Edith liked to read and to learn, and sometimes she learned verses in the Bible. Once when she asked for something to learn, Mrs Rutherford told her to choose some verses out of the fifth chapter of Matthew. Edith found the place, and then she thought she would be very clever and learn the whole chapter; so she began with great spirit, but by the time she had learned eight or ten verses she was as tired as a little child need be. Before tea both the children used to read aloud to their uncle, and then he would explain the chapters to them, and tell them about their father and mother, how they were willing to leave all and go to Christ; and had wished but one thing for their little children, that they might love and serve Him too.

It happened one Sunday that Mr Rutherford had a headache all day, and could not hear the reading; but when Edith and Mary came to bid him good-night he kept hold of their hands and said, "Who has read in the Bible to-day?"

There was a minute's silence—then Edith said in her grave

childish way, "I have read six chapters;" and she noticed and long remembered her uncle's peculiar smile, though at the time she did not quite understand it.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WET STRAWBERRIES.

To drive to the ferry for Mr Rutherford or to walk a part of the way to meet the carriage was a very common expedition, and one much liked by the children. There was always a little hurry and bustle about getting off so as to be sure and be in time, and then the wheels rolled so smoothly and the horses trotted so fast, that even when the dust blew and the sun shone into their eyes, nobody minded it. For as Mary said, they could turn their heads toward the other side where the sun didn't shine, and as for the dust—why they could wash their faces when they got home: they were going to meet Uncle Ruth, and that was enough.

One day as they went pleasantly along, Edith began—

"Aunt Esther, please will you tell me about my little waggon and about Mary's going to Cleaveland?"

"Don't you recollect it, Edith? I thought your memory went back as far as that."

"Oh yes, I remember it very well, but I like to hear you tell the story so much."

"I think she does tell it 'so much,'" said Mary.

"Why, Mary! I have not heard it for a long time! not since last winter, I am sure. And Aunt Esther always tells it so nicely."

"Well, then," said Mrs Rutherford, "it was fine summer weather"—

"Like this?"

"Warmer than this; and Mary had not been well, and Mrs Salisbury thought it would do her good to go to Cleaveland."

"I don't wonder she thought so," said Edith. "It is so

pleasant at Cleaveland. And grandmamma came for Mary, didn't she?"

"Grandmamma came in the coach."

"She spent the day here—I remember that," said Mary.

"Yes, she spent the day here, and after tea she was going to take you away. But when the coach came to the door, and you went down the steps with your bonnet on, Edith began to cry and said you should not go—that she would not let you."

"And what did Uncle Ruth do?" said Edith.

"Uncle Ruth took you up in his arms and tried to comfort you, and told you that Mary would be back in a few days."

"And did I stop crying?"

"No, you cried harder than ever, and declared she should not go. And at last he promised that if she went, you should have a little waggon to play with instead. And you looked up and said, 'What, Uncle Ruth?' and then your head went down again on his shoulder. But you listened to what he said and got a little more quiet, though there were very big drops in your eyes as the carriage drove off."

Edith laughed heartily. "How very funny!" she said. "I wouldn't take a waggon for her now, though."

"No, you would have to let me go without anything, I should think," said Mary.

"And is that the same little waggon I've got now?"

"The very same."

"What a nice one it is," said Edith. "I like that little waggon."

And now the salt breezes began to meet and refresh them, for the carriage was approaching Ferrytown; and presently Michael stopped the horses by the little wharf where the boat came in. She was not there yet, but they could see her paddling on towards them, and long before she was near enough to let them see anybody, the children were sure they saw Mr Rutherford. The boat came nearer and nearer, and then to be sure they did see him, with a basket in his hand, standing there and smiling at them. Then careless people

began to jump ashore before the boat was made fast ; and the boatman fastened the chain and began to wind it up on his great wheel ; and people a little more careful than the first, jumped over the great bar at the end of the boat. Then the bar was taken away, and everybody hurried off to be out of the way of the horses, who were very eager for their turn. And then they came tramping out of the boat, making a great noise and clatter, while Mr Rutherford's horses were trotting off to Rose-hill, as fast as their feet could carry them. For a few minutes the sharp sound of their shoes rang out from the paving stones of the main street of the little village, and brought to the doors the few children that were not already there. Meantime, the sun was getting lower and lower, and shone into the carriage with pleasant smiles that troubled nobody's eyes and lit up everybody's cheeks—which indeed were bright enough already.

“How nice those radishes look !” said Edith, as they passed some shops where the long red bunches lay piled together.

“They look better than they would taste, I suspect,” said her aunt ; “radishes are not always good at this time of year.”

“What time of year is it ?”

“To-morrow will be the first of June.”

“Will it ?” said Edith. “Oh, then, we shall have some strawberries !”

“What makes you think you will have strawberries to-morrow ?” said Mr Rutherford with a smile.

“Because, Uncle Ruth, when I asked Aunt Esther when strawberries would be ripe, she said in June, and to-morrow is June, and I mean to look for them *very* early to-morrow morning.”

“I am not sure that you will find any, however,” said Mrs Rutherford, “for it will be only the first day of June, and the weather has not been very hot.”

“Well, I can look,” said Edith. But, behold ! when the morning came there were rain-drops instead of strawberries ; and they fell in such abundance that the children could not

set foot out of doors. It was an extraordinary thing to see clouds and falling rain, and little streams of water trickling down the window panes on the first day of June, Edith thought; and even Mary watched the rain two or three times as if she supposed it did not like to be looked at, and would therefore remain in the clouds if she remained at the window.

"What do you think about it, Mary?" said her sister, jumping up to follow Mary and put her little arms round her. "Will it clear up?"

"It will not clear up for your looking, Edith," said her aunt. "If you come away from the window, and do your lessons, the morning will seem much the shorter."

"But, Aunt Esther, I have got strawberry in my lesson to-day; and if I say it over and over till I can spell it, I shall long for them worse than ever."

"No worse than if you stand there and *think* it over and over."

"Well, what shall I read to-day, Aunt Esther?"

"I think I shall find you something about the African deserts, to teach you the value of clouds and rain."

"Still!" said Edith again—"I don't believe it will make me like it to-day."

"Perhaps there are no strawberries ripe," said Mary. "I mean to believe that; as the fox thought the grapes were sour."

"He was a very foolish fox, I think," said Edith. "I dare say he didn't think so at all. Aunt Esther, do you want me to be like the fox?—do you want me to think there are no ripe strawberries?"

"No, I would rather see you bear patiently the thought that there are; though I am by no means sure of the fact. But it would be a pity if we could not be contented *one* day more without strawberries."

"But perhaps it will rain to-morrow."

"Perhaps it will," said Mrs Rutherford, looking up with a very sunshiny, catching smile.

"Now, Aunt Esther, what makes you laugh?"

"What makes you laugh?"

"Why because you look so funny," said Edith.

"But would it not be sad if it should rain to-morrow?"

"Why no, love—it would be good,—everything is good that God orders. And now it would be good if my little Edie were to pick up that neglected geography which lies on the floor, and make some use of it."

Lessons went on accordingly. Then came dinner; then Edith began to copy a letter, while Mrs Rutherford sat by and directed.

"Take care, Edith—you don't want that last letter."

"But I thought you said, C, a, k,"—

"C, a, is pronounced like the letter k;—I did not mean you to put that down too."

"Will you please to scratch it out then," said Edith.

"There is one good thing about making mistakes—it gives me such a nice little rest." And then shrugging up her shoulders she said with a long breath,—

"I'm so tired; and I haven't run about one bit to-day."

"That is the very reason you are tired. Come, you shall not write any more: get Mary to go and ride on the rocking-horse with you."

Mary was soon found and very ready for play of any kind; so with one more hopeless look at the weather, the children proceeded upstairs to the garret,—their play-room when the sky-roofed one had taken to itself an under roofing of clouds or a wet floor.

The garret was large and light, with many little oval windows, where the spiders flourished and flies met their fate; and whose dusty panes gave a very gloomy view of things. On one side of the garret a locked door shut off various stored away articles from busy hands and eyes: on another a ladder led up to a kind of open loft, the landing-place on the way to the sky-light. It was a queer-looking dark region up there, with bits of lumber, old chairs, and an immense piece of pitch pine pushing themselves out from the obscurity. Nobody ever went up there,—only once Edith could remember seeing her aunt follow Garret up the ladder when

the kitchen chimney had amused itself by making a bonfire, and everybody was afraid that the roof would follow the example.

But down below, in the garret itself, all was bright enough, despite the cobwebbed windows. In the middle hung a fine swing, securely fastened to one of the beams ; close by stood the rocking-horse ; a hook and ring were on one of the up-right timbers ; and at one end of the garret, dolls and tin dishes marked out a more special play-room.

To-day the swing claimed first attention ; and as the wide seat would admit them both, Edith climbed in and placed herself with her face towards the doll end of the garret, while Mary turned her looks in the opposite direction, and then making great efforts she touched the ground with her toes again and again till the swing began to move, after which a very little push kept it going fast enough. And then they both began to sing :—

“ Swing, swing ! as high as you can !
 Hold fast of the rope and don't be afraid ;
 The rafter is wide,
 And the rope is well tied,
 And the knots and the seat are carefully made.

“ Play, play ! it's pleasant to play,
 It's pleasant to laugh, and pleasant to sing.
 And though it does rain,
 We will not complain—
 People ought to be happy without everything.”

“ How nice the dolls look ! ” said Edith, when they had gone through the air once or twice in silence.

“ Yes, they look pretty well,” said Mary with a contemplative air. “ I don't know, Edith—it strikes me that Miss Jenkins wants bleeding—just look at her arms.”

“ But they are always that colour,” said Edith ; “ if you were to bleed her ever so much you couldn't make her arms white.”

“ I don't care,” said Mary, “ I am going to try.”

And down she jumped, and seized Miss Jenkins, whose arms were of a very decided pink kid.

"Now I shall take this large pin for a lancet," said Mary, "and you can hold that little wooden pail, Edith, instead of a basin."

"But the little wooden pail has got beads in it," said Edith.

"Turn them out into that tin box. Come!"

A few pointed applications of the pin to the pink kid plainly showed what the inside of Miss Jenkins' arm was made of; for some grains of bran began to sprinkle the bottom of the little wooden pail, and the doll's arm did not indeed grow less pink, but much less round and hard than it had been before.

"Her arms won't be alike now," said Edith. "What will you do with this one?—it does not look pretty."

"Oh, I don't know," said Mary; "never mind. Stuff it."

How long they might have played and talked in the garret is uncertain—for at this moment it received a most unexpected visitor in the shape of a long sunbeam. During their play the weather had been gradually improving, and at length this one ray escaped from its cloudy prison, and lit up all in its way. The cloud, the wet tree tops, the glittering blades of grass, the dusty garret window and its brown timbers, and the intent little faces that bent over Miss Jenkins. Down went the doll, regardless of consequences—down went both children to the parlour.

"What in the world is the matter?" exclaimed Mrs Rutherford, as Mary burst in. "Has Edith fallen out of the swing?"

"Oh no, ma'am, not at all; but don't you see that sunbeam?"

"I see more than one; but what then?"

"Why, the strawberries," said Edith, her breath just enough for those three words.

"Strawberries! And how are you to get at them? the grass is as wet as possible."

"But they are not in the grass," said Mary.

"But they are in their own beds, which is just as bad."

And the sunbeam faded again.

"Well," said Mrs Rutherford, after a little pause, "I believe I must try what I can do. Get my overshoes, Mary, and you, Edith, a basket."

"May I get too?" said Edith. "May I go with you?"

But this could not be; and as the next best thing, they ran up and seated themselves on the stairs by the passage window, to watch their aunt, and consider the question of her bringing home the basket full, or half full, or empty. Also whether she got a ripe strawberry every time she stooped down, or whether her hand dived in among the wet leaves to no purpose but that of a cold bath.

"I am *sure* she had one that time," said Edith.

"No, she didn't; I was watching the basket all the while."

"But you can't see it."

"Yes I can—down there on the walk."

"Oh, I see," said Edith. "Perhaps she put one in her mouth then. Oh, I wish I was there!—*that* was one—I saw it!"

"How carefully Aunt Esther holds up her dress," said Mary; "it cannot get wet at all. There, she is coming back; I daresay she is tired with searching about in those wet beds. Don't go down yet, Edith; wait till she gets under the window, and then we can look right into the basket. Oh, dear! why does she stop to look at that laburnum?"

"It's very pretty, I'm sure," said Edith. "Oh, let me open the window one minute—I must. Aunt Esther, *please* bring me a May rose! (they're June roses, I think.) Don't get your feet wet. Did you get any strawberries?"

"No wonder she laughs," said Mary. "She can't scream out answers to all your questions, child."

"She nodded her head though, if she did laugh," said Edith. "Oh, I can see the strawberries! look, Mary, how red the basket is! She has a great many! Come, let us go," and away she ran.

"Ah! please hold the basket down, Aunt Esther, because

I can't see. How good you were to go! I'm so much obliged to you. What a quantity you have got!"

"I did not bring your rose, Edith," said Mrs Rutherford; "there was so much wet grass between me and the rose-bushes that I thought it best not to venture."

"I'm very glad you didn't, dear Aunty; the strawberries will do for one night, I should think. But shall we keep them till Uncle Ruth comes home, and then eat them all together?"

"With all my heart; I do not think there are enough to hurt us if we do eat them 'all together,'" said her aunt.

Whether Edith thought that the words implied some doubt of the wholesomeness of strawberries in general, or of these in particular, certain it is that she looked very soberly into the little basket as she walked off to set it in the pantry.

CHAPTER V.

HEADACHE AND LOCUST FLOWERS.

AND for several days they were very busy and happy; for the strawberries ripened fast, and little fingers and baskets made frequent visits to the beds. But one morning—whether it was that she had been too much in the hot sun, or had eaten too many strawberries, or both—Edith got up with a headache.

"You couldn't have gone out much to-day, any way," said Mary, "for it rained last night, and the grass is all wet."

"Well," said Edith, with a rather long breath, "but I wish my head didn't ache."

"I tell you what," said Mary, "we will go and sit in the bath-house."

"I don't think I want to go," said Edith.

"And I doubt very much whether you should go," said Mrs Rutherford.

"But, Aunt Esther, fresh air is good for a headache; and I have a great deal to tell you, Edith—you had better come. I'm going to take my pillow case there to hem."

"Well, I'll go," said Edith, though rather doubtfully. "Perhaps it won't make my head any worse," and putting on her sun-bonnet, she went slowly down the flagged walk to the bathing-house—a little square building with a window and a door, and a green shower-bath overhead. Thither Mary's quicker steps had already brought her; and she was sewing very busily when Edith came in, and placed herself on a stool at her feet.

"What did you want to tell me, Mary?" she said, wearily.

"What do you think?—come, guess."

"Oh no, indeed I can't, you must tell me."

"Well, then, Susan says that her cousin has got ever so many little kittens, and she says the next time she goes to Canterbury she will get us two."

Edith did smile in spite of her headache.

"I'm very glad! how nice it will be. You'll have one and I'll have the other. And, O Mary, what colour will they be? do you think they will be both alike?"

"I don't know—I told her not to get black ones if she could help it; but I suppose she'll have to take what her cousin gives her."

"I'm very glad," said Edith again, as she sat pressing one little hand on each side of her face; "but I must go into the house, my head aches so. I can't stay here."

"And I will go to," said Mary, "it is hot here, and then you can lie down."

By the time they reached the parlour, Michael had got back from town; and he came and stood in the parlour door and said very gravely—

"Miss Errick is dead, ma'am."

There was a general exclamation, for this acquaintance of theirs had been quite well when they last heard from her.

But Michael could tell them no particulars; he had merely heard the news, and that Mr Rutherford was to go to the funeral that afternoon.

It would pass along the road, and when it was first seen from the windows, the children went down and stood under the willow-tree, where they could watch the procession.

As they stood there silent and sober, Garret came up; and after standing by them a few minutes, he broke off a willow twig, and sitting down on the dog-house, he began to twist and weave a ring for Edith's middle finger. Then he made one for Mary, and then both children begged him to teach them this new kind of goldsmith work. But by the time it was learned Edith's head grew worse again, and she grew pale and was obliged to go up-stairs and lie down on the bed.

The west windows were open, and as the child lay there looking out and breathing the sweet air, she thought—in most unphilosophical language certainly—that nothing out of doors looked as if it had the headache. It was odd, too, that this thought rather soothed her own; it was like some soft cool hand upon her hot forehead.

“What is it smells so sweet, Aunt Esther?” she said.

“The locust flowers.”

“Oh, are they out?” said Edith, half raising herself, “and I wanted so much to see them! What do they look like?”

“Like the laburnum flowers except in colour. Do you see something very white on that tree at the end of the grove?”

“Yes,” said Edith, sinking back, “I think I do, but the sun is so bright. Are there many flowers out?”

“Not a great many; the trees are young yet.”

“Won't you tell me about the flowers, Aunt Esther?”

“What shall I tell you?” said her aunt, smiling. “They are perfectly pure white, almost transparent, as pure as all Christians will be when they come to heaven—‘without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.’ And they are very, very sweet; sending their perfume to a great distance. And so, Edie, when God's children are what they ought to be,

when they love Him and do His will, all their influence is like the fragrance of those locust flowers. It makes the very name of Christian sweet ; it spreads abroad through the world, drawing everybody towards what is 'lovely and of good report.'

"Did Uncle Ruth plant those trees?" said Edith, after a little while.

"Yes."

And then she lay quite still for some time.

There Mr Rutherford found her when he came home, with her head on the pillow, and the warm sunshine falling over her feet.

"I am very sorry your head aches, my darling," he said, bending down to kiss her.

"Yes, Uncle Ruth—Oh, it will be better by and by."

"How pleasant it is to think that in heaven there will be 'no more pain, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor any more death,'" said he.

Edith smiled, and a little flush came over her face.

"Papa never has headaches now," she said.

"Shall I read to you, Edith?" said her uncle, a moment after.

"If you please, Uncle Ruth, if it won't tire you. There is 'Idle Hours' on the bed ; I tried to read, but it hurt my eyes."

And Mr Rutherford read the story of "Little Zoe," and of her being sick, and such a good child. And by and by Edith began to think that she was sick,—and then that she was a bee humming about that very bunch of locust flowers on which the sun had shone so brightly ; and then—she opened her eyes and found that she had been asleep, and that the sun was down and the tea-bell ringing. And there on the bed lay the bunch of locust flowers.

"Your head must be better," said Mrs Rutherford, smiling at the eagerness with which the child threw herself upon that sweet tribute from the woods.

"Oh yes," said Edith. "Oh, how sweet these are ! How could Uncle Ruth get them ? I thought the tree was too high."

"That bunch was on the end of a bough that hung down within reach. But come, tea is ready."

And lifting her off the bed, for she looked a little pale yet, Mrs Rutherford brushed her hair till it looked something like a sunbeam itself, and then they went down to tea.

"May I eat any strawberries?" said Edith, as she saw the heaped-up glass dish which stood on the table.

"Not to-night, I think."

And going round to the corner of the table next her aunt, Edith stood there with the locust flowers in one hand and a soda biscuit in the other, seasoning the second with the first, and now and then casting a look at the strawberries.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT SHALL I GIVE ?

MARY's birthday was at hand ; and some hearts were full of expectation, and many heads of preparation for its coming. Company was invited, and rooms were arranged, and white frocks were spotlessly done up. Moreover, Aunt Esther made some of her sponge-cake—such as nobody else could make—at least so thought Edith, who had watched the making, and baking, and icing, with perfect pleasure and content. It was such a big cake too—the whole size of the baking-pan—little pound cakes by the side of it made small show ; only the piece of citron in each stuck up its head as much as to say, "*I am good ;*" while everybody must admire the hearts, and diamonds, and rounds, and ovals, in which they were baked. Then the loaves of bread looked so brown, and smelled so sweet ; and china and glass dishes looked so pleasant and sociable as they came out of the pantry. One would have supposed they had been new gilt for the occasion, and had never looked bright before.

"Aunt Esther," said Mary, the afternoon before the important Tuesday, "you won't forget my wreath?"

"What wreath?"

"Why, you promised to make me a wreath for my birthday!" said Mary, throwing down her book. "Don't you remember?"

"May I have a wreath, too?" said Edith.

"No, of course not," said Mary. "You can have a wreath on your own birthday; you don't want one on mine; it would be foolish."

Edith looked a little disappointed.

"I don't see that, Mary," said Mrs Rutherford: "I may as well dress Edith with flowers in honour of your birthday, as the vases in the drawing-room. I can easily make the wreaths of different flowers, and put some distinguishing mark upon yours, that nobody may doubt who is the queen of the day."

"I don't care about being a queen if there are too many princesses," said Mary. "I shan't have a wreath if everybody else has."

"But I'm not going to have one," said Edith. "Aunt Esther is going to make only one, for you."

"Or only two," said her aunt.

"You need not make two," said Mary, significantly, and the subject was dropped for a few minutes. Then the discontented little lady began again.

"I think it is very stupid for two people to be wearing wreaths. And why should Edith have one? It isn't her birthday—she has nothing to do with it."

"Oh, Mary!" said Edith, "you know I always enjoy it very much."

"Well then, you will be happy enough without a wreath."

"That is neither kind nor wise," said Mrs Rutherford.

"I don't care," was the reply; and Mary's mood ended in a flood of tears. Nor were hers the only tears, for very sympathising and imploring drops were in Edith's eyes as well. But they only aggravated Mary's displeasure.

"What are you crying for?" she said. "Aunt Esther has not been scolding *you*—I do wish you wouldn't do everything that I do."

Mrs Rutherford looked at her watch.

"We are going to walk on the high road, Mary," she said ; "if you wish to go, you must get ready at once."

She went upstairs, followed by Edith, who had just lingered one minute to beg her sister to come—"she couldn't go without her."

And Mary did come, but she was so long in putting on her things that the others were half-way to the gate before she made her appearance. She stood in the hall-door for a moment and then called out, "Aunt Esther, will you come back and tie my bonnet? It is in a knot and it's too loose."

"I will tie it if you will come here," said her aunt.

"May I go back and do it?" said Edith.

"No," said Mrs Rutherford ; and after standing for a moment as still on the walk as was Mary in the hall-door, they turned and walked on, though Edith almost walked backwards, so constant was her desire to watch the door. But the same dismal-looking little figure stood there yet, as long as she could see it.

Edith walked on with a very heavy heart, and two or three little sighs were heard that were quite out of keeping with the song of the birds in the hedge. She was thinking what a pleasant walk they might have had ; and now she did not want to walk at all, but would rather have been at home.

They had reached the road, and Edith's little feet were going very thoughtfully along in the dust, when a loud noise on the other side of the road made her start and squeeze Mrs Rutherford's hand with all her might. She looked across. A little blue cloud of smoke was just blowing away, and a little boy-neighbour of theirs was walking along and looking at her. In his hand he held a little brass cannon, and while Edith looked, it was loaded and fired off for the second time.

Now the noise was certainly not very tremendous, and Mrs Rutherford assured Edith they were in no danger of being shot, but the little cannon did full execution nevertheless. Edith put Mrs Rutherford between her and the

mischief-maker, and then she walked on in alternate fear and fright ; for the cannon was loaded and fired just as fast as Master Theodore's fingers could manage that operation.

"Theodore," said Mrs Rutherford, at length, "don't you know that you frighten this little girl very much ?"

Theodore looked at her but made no answer, except that a little smile on his face seemed to say he had suspected as much before, and another discharge followed immediately. Edith was forced to stand fire, till to her great joy they turned a corner which Mr Theodore did not.

"Aunt Esther," said Edith, presently, "please don't tell Mrs Delue."

"Why not ?"

"Because—I don't know," said Edith, "but I wish you wouldn't. Oh, see! Aunt Esther, there comes the carriage, and there is Henry too!"

Henry was there, in truth, and not long did he stay there ; for in some mysteriously quick way he was out of the carriage and had his arms round his mother's neck in all manner of joy and delight.

"And here is one of the young ones," he said at length, taking her up in his arms. "How do you do, Chrysocoma? Are you glad to see me?"

"Yes, I am very glad," said Edith, laughing. "But what makes you call me so?"

"I didn't call you 'so'—I called you Chrysocoma."

"Well, what does that mean?" said Edith, laying her face close to his, by which means her hat fell off.

"Why, it means 'golden locks,'" said Henry, as he jumped into the carriage, still holding her fast. "You look as if you had rolled your head about in the sunshine."

Edith laughed, and laid her head back against him with an air of great content.

"Harry, we are going to have two kittens," she said.

"Two kittens! why, we had two before."

"But I mean real kittens."

"For me to play with?"

“No, not for you, for me and Mary—at least for Mary and me.”

And at the thought of Mary, Edith became grave again, and her eyes fell. But only as far as the cushion, for there they saw a thin package which looked suspiciously like a book.

“Take it up and open it, Edie,” said Mr Rutherford, smiling. “It is for you.”

“For me ?” said Edith. “Oh, thank you, Uncle Ruth !” and her little fingers were soon busy with the twine.

“But, oh, you forgot !” she said, stopping short when one knot was untied, “you forgot, Uncle Ruth—it isn’t my birthday, it’s Mary’s.”

“And can people never have presents except on their birthdays ?” said her uncle, smiling.

“Why, yes,” said Edith, untying knot number two and knot number three, “but I didn’t expect it. But haven’t you got something for Mary ?”

“We shall see when to-morrow comes.”

And Edith untied the last knot with a better satisfied look, which changed into one of great pleasure as she beheld a little square blue “Peter Parley’s First Book of History ;” especially as she felt quite sure that the brown paper in her uncle’s lap could contain nothing but a present.

They had a merry tea-drinking that night ; even Mary laughed and talked almost as usual ; though there was now and then a shade upon her face that her uncle knew must come from some unseen cloud. After tea, when the others had gone out into the garden, and she yet stood rather moodily by the window, Mr Rutherford came and sat down by her, and drawing her down upon his lap he kissed her, and asked her if she was glad to be so near eleven years old.

“I don’t know, Uncle Ruth,” said Mary, her eyes filling fast at his kind words,—“I thought I should be glad.”

“And how comes it that you are not ?” said he, gently.

“I don’t know,” said Mary again, and still looking out

of the window. "I believe I was cross to-day, and it is not pleasant to be cross on one's birthday, and I wish it was any other day in the year, I'm sure."

"But instead of trying to get rid of the day, had not we better get rid of being cross?" said her uncle.

"But I can't," said Mary. "You see, Uncle Ruth, Aunt Esther promised to make me a wreath to wear to-morrow; and then what must Edith do but want one too? And Aunt Esther thinks she ought to have it, and I say it is very stupid; and it makes me cross whenever I think of it."

"Well, let us leave that for a while," said her uncle, "and go back to something you said a minute ago. Why is it particularly disagreeable to be cross on one's birthday? It is certainly so, but why?"

"Because one ought to be particularly good, I suppose," said Mary.

"And why ought one?"

Mary hesitated, and her uncle spoke again.

"There was once a child travelling along a road where there were a great many toll-gates. Her home lay at the end of the road, and all along, from gate to gate, the way was sometimes pleasant, and sometimes difficult; yet had she written directions for her journey, which if followed would 'make the rough places smooth,' and give her always 'straight paths for her feet.' Now these toll-gates were in reality all at the same distance apart, yet they did not seem so. For a while they seemed so far from each other that it was quite an event to reach one, and quite an amusement to pay the toll; and the little traveller marched up with quick steps and laid down a book, or a plaything, or some childish clothing. And the old man at the gate always gave something in return; a few trifles at first, with which the child was so pleased that she noticed not one little light straw which the old man bound upon her shoulders; and each one added another straw.

"Several of these gates were passed, and yet the child had hardly looked back; but one day it came into her heart to stop and think; and sitting down just before the next gate,

she looked over all the road she had come. It looked very small, and she had thought it so long.

“‘That is the first gate I remember,’ she said to herself ; ‘and when I came to the next one it rained, and the man gave me two straws to carry, and not much else. And between that and the next one I was so very sick, and it tired me to go on. But God let me live and not die, and He has taken care of me every bit of the way.’

“She turned then and looked forward over the road she had to go. But she could not see much of it ; she could not even count the gates, though she thought she saw a great many. And a wish came over her that God would guide her past them as He had hitherto done ; and then she began to think within herself what she should lay down at the next gate, for it was very near. Some childish habit or dress or plaything did not seem enough, she was thinking less of herself now, for she thought of these words, ‘What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me ?’ And remembering the disciples who left all to follow Christ, she prayed that at this next gate she might lay down every evil word and work, and give herself wholly unto the Lord, to be His dear child, His willing servant, for ever.”

The last rays of the sun were falling upon Mary’s head as her uncle spoke these last words, but she heeded them not. Her head was upon his breast, and she was sobbing out tears of sorrow and shame and better purposes. The crossness was all gone now, and only a little sore pain about her heart told that it had ever been.

“Shall we lay down all this ?” whispered her uncle ; “and take up and bear the name of Christ with earnest prayer and endeavour to be changed into His likeness ?”

“We, Uncle Ruth ?” she said, looking up in some surprise.

“We, love. You at your gate, and I at mine.”

“But what have you to lay down, Uncle Ruth ?” said Mary. “Do people *always* lay down something ?”

“Always ; through their whole life. I have laid down many a thing at these gates, Mary ; a dear friend sometimes,

and sometimes I trust a little of my own self-will. Or if not, remember this, if nothing evil is laid down, then do we lose something good; if we are no nearer to God than we were last year, then are we further off; and we have not merely lost the year, but we have fallen back in our way to heaven."

"And what does the man at the gate give you, Uncle Ruth?" said Mary, laying her hand caressingly upon his face.

"Different things," said he, smiling. "Two little daughters to love, and better hopes for them, and of them. When He can find nothing else He throws down a little snow on my head."

"Oh, Uncle Ruth! he shall not!" and Mary's arms were clasped tight round her uncle's neck.

"And do you like to look forward to the other gates?" she said, presently.

"I like to look over them. I am not careful about their number now, dear Mary, for the heavenly country is better than this."

Mary looked up and kissed him with very tremulous lips.

"I will try," she whispered, and then she broke from him and ran upstairs.

CHAPTER VII.

MARY'S BIRTHDAY.

THE sun rose amid some rather doubtful-looking gray clouds, but the wind soon swept them away—even while Janet and her broom went through the parlours for the last time. There was not a particle of dust nor of cloud to be seen. And when the sun got higher and poured in its bright light, everything looked clean—as clean as Mary had prayed last night that her heart might be, and as she hoped it had really become. Poor child! she did not know how soon the world's dust would find its way in again, or indeed how

much there was yet remaining. Only "he that is dead is freed from sin."

"Come, children! get up!" clamoured Henry, at their door. "The sun is up, though it isn't his birthday."

"And I shan't get up, if it is mine," said the half-awake Mary.

"I say, Mary!" pursued Henry, "why didn't you come to meet us last night? I forgot to ask you."

"That is nobody's business," said Mary. "I didn't choose to come."

"Don't let off all your fireworks this morning," said Henry, "I advise you. Keep them for to-night. They do not make much show in such sunshine."

Mary started up in desperation, but now opening her eyes for the first time, the light they met silenced her. What sunshine it was! as if it came from the world beyond all those gates she must pass through. They were very sorrowful eyes that she hid again in the pillow.

Then came another knock at the door.

"Where's Chrysocoma? Is she asleep too?"

"Oh no, she's not asleep," said Edith, in a just audible whisper.

"Let her come forth then."

"You had better go, Edith," said Mary, "only don't pick the flowers for our wreaths till I come."

"Are we going to have wreaths?" exclaimed Edith. "At least I mean are you going to have one?"

"Yes, and so are you."

Edith bestowed two or three very thankful kisses upon the back of Mary's neck and went off.

"Why does not Mary come?" was Henry's first greeting.

"I don't know," said Edith—"I think she is tired. And she is not dressed."

"That is a reason. But as to being tired, people are always tired when they ought to get up."

"But I am sure she is tired," said Edith, "she looks so. And I don't think she liked what you said about fireworks."

"I don't believe you did," said Henry, laughing. "Ah,

Chrysocoma! I couldn't think what made you look so grave at me this morning. But I won't tease her any more, and I'll beg her pardon for that—if she ever gets up so as to give me a chance."

After breakfast, the first thing was to pick flowers, which the children did in no measured quantity; and Edith having filled her basket, filled her little apron as well, chiefly with poppies, for which the basket had found no room.

"My dear Edith!" said Mrs Rutherford, "what am I to do with so many poppies? If I were to put them all in the dish there would be no room for anything else."

"But the wreath," said Edith.

"But I do not believe poppy wreaths would be pretty."

"Oh, Aunt Esther, if you had been out on the gravel-walk, you would have seen how pretty they looked."

"In the gravel-walk, yes—but on your head."

"If you have a poppy wreath, Edith," said Henry, "you will have to sit in the corner all day and nod."

Edith looked very puzzled till her eyes got down to her apron again,—then they brightened up.

"Just look at this little red one, Aunt Esther—it's so black in the middle,—and here is another that is purple. I don't know I'm sure what Harry means by nodding, but I think they are beautiful."

"You don't know what I mean by nodding?" said Henry—"look here, then, and I'll show you,"—which he did till Edith nearly dropped the whole apron full of poppies for laughing.

"Well, if I put enough poppies in the vases you will let me make the wreaths as I like?" said Mrs Rutherford when Henry's head was persuaded to remain quiet.

"Oh yes—unless"—said Edith, hesitating, "unless you would put just this one poppy bud in mine. See, Aunt Esther, it is white, and the leaves are not open yet."

That one was promised, and then Mrs Rutherford began to arrange dishes, and vases, and flower tables; now and then to lay aside some particularly pretty bud or leaf for the wreaths. When the making of these came, it was hard to tell whether the children were most pleased or curious.

It was pretty work. The flowers were so fresh and smelled so sweet, and Mrs Rutherford's hand was so skilful. It was wonderful to see her fasten down the stems so neatly, and then to see a leaf start up as if by magic to cover the joining; while a white jessamine poked out its head here and a rosebud there, just as if they had sense, and knew where they were wanted. And satisfaction was complete when, the hair on both little heads being nicely brushed, the wreaths were put on and fitted exactly. Edith thought Mary's looked "splendid," and took it for granted, that her own could not be far behind: the white poppy bud at least must look well.

It took some time to get used to such unusual adornments; there seemed to be danger of their falling off, for as Edith remarked, "What could keep them on?" and the first going down stairs was a very stately affair. But both heads and wreaths were happily forgotten after a while.

Their friends began to come about twelve o'clock, and many of them brought Mary some little present—a painted pincushion or a basket. One or two were so thoughtful as to bring Edith some trifle also, which, not being expected, was particularly welcome. As for Mary, she cared less about them, having found her plate at breakfast loaded with presents that she liked better—the brown paper especially having contained a most beautiful book. But she received the last arrivals graciously enough, and returned to her book with new pleasure.

Many of the guests were grown-up people—as much out of Edith's sphere as she was out of theirs; so, after speaking to them all, she took possession of the only little child of the party (who was indeed somewhat smaller than herself,) and took her out upon the lawn to see the flowers. Edith found it hard work. Little Emily knew none of her old friends in the borders, nor seemed to wish to make their acquaintance. She would not say whether she thought the pink or the blue bachelor's-buttons were the prettiest; she walked right over the poppies in the walk, pulled up the johnny-jumpers, and was perfectly insensible to the charms of "love in a puzzle."

Edith was in despair.

"Shall we go and see Garret mow?" she said, directing little Emily's eyes and ears towards Garret and his scythe.

The immediate answer was the deliberate march of Miss Emily's red shoes over the border, taking moss pink and what other trifles there were in her way. But when she came a little nearer to Garret she stopped short, perfectly sure that the scythe was to be employed to destroy her peace and well-being; and when Edith, by the more roundabout road, had reached her, she was crying in great dismay. All comforting assurances were of no effect, and Edith marched her off into the house again. Then she herself came out to have a run among the cut grass, and to watch the flying grasshoppers with their pretty yellow wings, and the birds that came all the way from the hedge to pick up every one that was small enough.

Then Edith noticed the drooping white flower heads that lay in the swathe.

"What makes you cut down the daisies, Garret?" she said. "And here are some buttercups too. Oh, Garret! that is too bad."

"Why, Miss Edith, they ain't flowers—they're nothing in life but weeds."

"What makes weeds, I wonder," said Edith; "why are they not just as good as any flowers, Garret?"

This was more than Garret could tell, so he shifted the question.

"You see, Miss Edith, they grow among the grass so—I couldn't let 'em stand if I wanted to. If I was to mow round every bunch of daisies," he added, shaking his head, "they'd be gone to seed by the time I got through, and you'd be grown up, Miss Edith."

"No I shouldn't," said Edith, gravely. "Uncle Ruth says you mow very fast, Garret; and it would take me a great while to grow up."

"Then we'll have a beautiful young lady here," said Garret.

"Oh, I don't know," said Edith, who was braiding three



Edith and the Chickens.

blades of grass with great intentness. "Everybody does not grow up pretty. Oh, I know what I'll do, I'll make a leaf carpet." And away she ran to the bladder-senna tree.

It had large smooth leaves, and with a quantity of these in her frock and a tumbler of water by her side, Edith was soon seated on the front steps making a carpet: for by wetting the leaves she could make them stick together quite securely.

Then came tea, when all the cakes small and great made their appearance; and after tea the company went away.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHICKENS AND EGGS.

"AUNT ESTHER," said Mary, one day after dinner, "may we go into the garden and look for strawberries?"

"The strawberries are all gone, child, long ago."

"Oh no, ma'am; I don't mean the Lafayettes, nor the—the—what *do* you call them?—the Chilis; but the little Alpine strawberries that grow by Edith's garden. You know they bear all the summer."

"Oh yes!" said Edith, jumping down from her chair, "and then I can see if any of my damask roses are out. May we, Aunt Esther?"

"If you will not stay too long. The sun is very hot."

"We won't stay too long," replied the young ones as they ran off.

The garden lay to the north of the house; and on either side the gate as you entered were the two little plots of ground which the children called their own. They were not very full of flowers as yet, though from time to time Mr Rutherford brought home some roots or plants that he had found in the market, and placed them here. The last arrival of this kind had been a bunch of golden buttons for Edith and a fine tuberose for Mary, and these were flourish-

ing nicely. But Edith's chief delight was her damask rose-bush, while Mary took no small pride in a little double-flowering almond. Early in the season this had been covered with delicate blossoms, as if a light fall of pink snow had rested there; and Edith's patience was sorely tried, for her rose-tree at the same time presented nothing but green leaves.

"I don't believe my rose-bush can have such pretty flowers," she said, "if it ever has any at all!"

But as the days passed on, the almond flowers faded, while on the other side of the walk some little rose-buds made their appearance; at first green like the leaves, then by degrees striped with dark red, as if it were the dress of a little fairy who was trying very hard to get out; for there was every day more and more red and less and less green. To-day there was a rose open—not to its full extent, but in a beautiful half-blown state of sweetness.

"Oh, it is lovely!" Edith exclaimed, in ecstasy. "Did you ever see anything so beautiful?" and then carefully taking hold of the stem she bent it down until nose as well as eyes could have the benefit of it.

"Oh me, how sweet!"

"I don't believe it is half so sweet as this," said Mary, who had betaken herself to the Alpine bed, and was now holding up one of the berries.

"Are there any strawberries?" said Edith, suddenly letting go the damask rose, which flew back with such energy that the bunch of bee-larkspur thought itself called upon, and returned the visit the next time the wind set that way.

"Are there any strawberries?" repeated Edith, when she had watched how the two neighbours knocked their heads together.

"Any? I think there are! Just look at all these red ones," said Mary, turning up the leaves, "and there are some white ones."

The strawberries were very tempting and sweet, and of such a nice size as the children remarked—"all ready cut up

into mouthfuls." It was very pleasant too this eating first a red and then a white one, and all the talk about which was best. Then suddenly Mary jumped up and uttered a loud scream.

"Why, Polly, what in the world is the matter?" exclaimed Edith, when she had echoed the scream. "Did you see a snake?"

"No, indeed, I did not, but just as I was picking a large white strawberry, a great ugly toad jumped out of the leaves close by my hand; and it did startle me so! I wonder if he thought I had no business to eat strawberries. Ugh! it makes a cold chill run all over me."

"I wish a cold chill would run all over me," said Edith, "for I'm very hot. But toads don't poison anybody."

"I don't care," said Mary, "they are very ugly and disagreeable. Come, let us go in. I don't want strawberries if I can't have them without toads."

"How you did scream!" said Edith, laughing.

"Well, so did you."

"Oh well, because I didn't know what was the matter."

"That was particularly wise, to scream for you didn't know what."

"Ah, but I screamed because you did, you know. I thought there must be something the matter. I shouldn't scream for the toad; I am sure, I don't care that for him," said she, snapping her fingers.

"I do wonder what is the use of toads," said Mary, "or if they are only made to frighten people."

"I think not," said Edith, "they don't frighten me at any rate; but I'll ask Uncle Ruth what they are good for, if I don't forget."

When the beauty of roses and the ugliness of toads had been much talked about to Mrs Rutherford, Edith held up the bunch of berries she had brought, and said, "Now, Aunt Esther, you shall have these strawberries upon one condition."

"Not a hard one, I trust," said her aunt, smiling, "for certainly your berries look very tempting."

"Don't they!" said Edith. "And just smell them; now does your nose confirm the report of your eyes, as Mary said to Uncle Ruth the other day?"

"Perfectly!" said Mrs Rutherford. "And now for conditions."

"Now for conditions! I want very much to know why you call these Alpine strawberries, and where they grow, and why the toads hide among them; and why my roses are damask roses—I thought you said damask was some kind of stuff like the cover of that big chair."

"For one condition you had better say four," remarked Mary.

"No, the condition is that I answer all these difficult questions," said Mrs Rutherford. "Well, Edie, the strawberries are called Alpine because it is said they grow wild on the Alps."

"The Alps!" repeated Edith, "those are the very high mountains in Switzerland, that always have snow on them. I had them once for my geography question. But what makes you say, 'It is said?'"

"Because I have never been on the Alps myself, and therefore know about them only from other people and books."

"I don't believe they do grow there, then," said Edith. "How can strawberries live in the snow?"

"They can live where the snow melts off in the summer; and it is only the tops of the mountains that are white all the year round."

"I wish I could see them," said Edith; "it must be very funny to see strawberries and snow on the same mountain. O Mary, we haven't looked for eggs to-day."

"I can't go now," said Mary, "I must read my Rollin."

"Yes, I thought you wanted to read Rollin very much, by the way you have been looking up and listening to me."

"Suppose you give her nothing more to listen to, then," said Mrs Rutherford. "What if you were to try how much you can get interested in the boundaries of Alabama?"

"Oh, Aunt Esther!" said Edith, laughing. "I know

what you mean. Well, where is the atlas? But I don't think I shall get interested at all, because you see it isn't interesting. But I fancy I know them already. It is bounded on the north by"—

"Don't study aloud," said Mrs Rutherford; "you will disturb Mary."

"But you have not told me about the toads, nor the damask roses," said Edith, suddenly coming back from the boundaries of Alabama.

"We will talk of them another time. I must be busy now, and so must you."

And Edith did try to be busy and quiet, but it was hard work, much harder than the boundary question. And though she sat on the floor with the atlas in her lap, she occasionally broke the silence by such ejaculations as "High diddle diddle!" or a line of "The little kits about the house," adding in an under tone, "I wish we *had* little kits, I'm sure."

"Miss Edith," said Janet, coming in while the western boundary was in demand, "Garret has found a hen with ten little chickens, and he says, wouldn't you like to come and put 'em in the coop, Miss?"

"Ten little chickens?" screamed Edith, springing to her feet and dropping the atlas, "Where are they? where did he get them? Oh yes, I should like it very much!"

"Garret's below with the chickens in a basket, Miss."

Edith looked down at the atlas and then up at her aunt; but Mrs Rutherford never raised her eyes.

"I will come in two minutes, Janet," she said, drawing a long breath and sitting down on the floor again; "tell Garret to wait for me. I'll come as soon as I can. I have only got to find the capital of Alabama."

In two minutes it was found and stowed away in Edith's head; the atlas was put back in the drawer; and running down the steps, Edith skipped along the walk to the locust grove, where she found the old hen in a coop.

"What a pretty old hen!" said Edith, looking in. "But what makes her scream and push her head through the coop so?"

Garret, who had been sitting under the trees with the basket of chickens, now came and looked at the old hen just as if he hadn't been watching her for the last ten minutes, and said, "I suppose she wants her chickens, Miss."

"Oh, where are they?" said Edith. "I'll give them to her this minute."

But when she had cautiously lifted the cover of the basket and peeped in, the chickens seemed quite too pretty to part with.

"Why can't I keep them in here, Garret? and then I could play with them so nicely. Do you think the old hen would care? I don't believe she loves them half as well as I do."

"She loves them very much, Miss," said Garret, shaking his head. "She just gave them all she could find to eat, and she flew at me like everything when I tried to catch 'em."

"But she might have some other chickens," said Edith, with a fresh peep into the basket. "I dare say we could find some ugly ones that would do very well for her."

"She wouldn't have them, Miss," said Garret; "most hens will kill any strange chickens that come near them."

"Well, you shall have these, old hen," said Edith. "Oh, what dear little soft things! and so fat. They're a great deal prettier than if they had feathers. Let me see: I'll put down this brown one first—no, the black one; I like that least. There is only one black, and one brown, and two gray, like the old hen; and how many—one, two—don't run about so, I can't count you, chickies—one, two, three, four, five, six white ones. There now, I hope you are satisfied, old hen."

The old hen did seem to be satisfied, for after a few turns up and down the coop, and a great deal of scratching and clucking, she established herself in one corner and spread out her wings to accommodate the chickens. They, crowding and struggling to get under her—now pushing one another out, and now in—at length made their mother cover a larger space than Edith would have thought possible.

She stood in rapt attention. Suddenly the hen got up and walked to the other corner, with the sleepy chickens trooping after her ; but when she had scratched about for a little there, she returned and established herself once more in her old place. Soon, all the chicks were disposed of but one little gray one, which could by no means get under cover ; but wisely resolving that his feet should be warm if his head was not, he jumped upon the hen's back ; and to Edith's great delight, a white chicken, who was perhaps in rather strait quarters, thrust his head out through the feathers of the old hen's wing.

"I never saw such black eyes as he has !" thought Edith, while her own grew very bright and big. And then they were all quiet, except an occasional sleepy chirp of remonstrance against the encroachments of a brother chick, or a soft murmuring "Peep !" of pleasure. Even the old hen shut her eyes and seemed to doze, opening them now and then, however, to make sure that Edith was not going to shoot her.

How long Edith stood there with folded hands, gazing into the coop, is uncertain. Garret had long since gone to his work, and the sun was climbing higher and higher into the tree-tops, and the chickens had dreamed a perfect variety of things ; yet she stood there, one foot standing quietly by the side of the other foot, and the wind blowing her little white apron to and fro ; the empty basket by her side ; and those two little clasped hands never stirred from each other. A chipping-bird, as he flew home to his nest, very nearly lighted upon her for a little post, she stood so still.

And how long she would have remained there is also very doubtful, if Mary and the egg-basket had not come running down the road.

"Oh, there you are, Edith," said Mary, "and the chickens too, I suppose. Are they pretty ?"

"Oh, they are beautiful !" said Edith, without stirring her position.

It was agreed, however, that Mary should see the brood another time. "It would be such a pity to wake them up ;"

and when Edith had eagerly told all she had seen and heard, they proceeded to the barn.

"Where's Garret, I wonder?" said Mary; "you know we want him to open the barn-door and go up the ladder for us."

Garret appeared at her call, and opened the door and looked in the hay loft, but could find no eggs; then he returned to his work.

"It is odd there are none up there," said Mary; "there *ought* to be some: and there are only two in the nest on the floor. I'll tell you what, Edith; there might be a nest up in that corner, in the hay behind that old blue door that looks as if it had been thrown there on purpose? Do you see?"

"Yes, I see," said Edith, standing on tiptoe; "at least I see the door. But you can't climb up there: shall I call Garret?"

"No, no; I want to go myself. I tell you I can climb better than he can, this minute. Stop, I must take out these eggs for fear I should break them. Now, you stand still; don't step on the pitchfork or tumble out of the door."

Edith laughed and stood still, and her sister scrambled up on the heap of hay.

"Oh, Edith!" she exclaimed, as she put her head behind the blue door, "here is a nest, and ever so many eggs in it!"

"How many?" said Edith, wishing very much that she was big enough to climb heaps of hay.

"I don't know yet. There are eight, I believe; but you know I must leave one for a nest-egg, so there are only seven for us."

"Well, that is a good many," said Edith, folding her hands in a new position, and looking very much pleased.

"Yes, indeed; and they are such large ones, too. There must be more than one hen that has a nest up here, for some of the eggs are brown and some are white."

"I suppose they think it is a nice place," said Edith. "But now, Polly, take care of yourself coming down—the hay is slippery. Now, let me see; oh, what beauties! how nice

and white they look, all but that one, and that is as brown as Aunt Esther said my neck would be—as brown as an Indian. I thought you said *some* of them were brown—there is only one.”

“Well, one is some,” said Mary.

“Is it?” said Edith. “Well, may I look in that other new nest that we made in the cowhouse yesterday? You took all the eggs out of this one.”

“I don’t believe there is anything there,” said Mary, as they crossed the barnyard; “but you may look. Hens do not always like the nests other people make for them.”

“So hens are people, are they?” said Edith. “Now we’ll see. Oh, let me open the door: I can. Oh, yes, here are two new eggs in the nest! I dare say Speckle laid them—she’s such a nice little hen. I wish I could take them both.”

“Well, take them, then,” said Mary, “and I’ll put in this nest-egg out of the manger; the hens don’t lay there any more. Now let us make haste, Edith, it’s time for Uncle Ruth to be home, and you know he will bring the fan to-night, so I want to meet him first.”

“What sort of a fan will he get?” said Edith.

“I don’t know; but I asked him not to get one with either a pink or a green ribbon, so that it need not be like yours.”

“Why, I should like it to have a ribbon like mine,” said Edith; “you are so funny; you never want anything if anybody has got something like it.”

“There is the gig coming along the lane,” said Mary; “take this basket, Edith; I must run.”

“But Mary!” called out little Edith, into whose hand the basket was thrust, “I want to run, too; and I can’t with the basket.”

Pat, pat, went Mary’s feet along the walk, and presently Edith began to run too, then she heard the eggs go rattle, rattle, in the basket, in a very breakable sort of way. She stopped and looked in; they were not broken yet, but they might be. Then she set the basket down under a lime tree; no, that would not do; somebody might knock it over, or steal it. She took up the basket again, her heart swelling

and her lips trembling with the disappointment, and walked on towards the house as fast as she could ; but with very faint hopes of getting there in time to see the fan presented, much less unrolled. Suddenly Mary came flying down the walk towards her again, and catching the basket in one hand and Edith's hand in the other, she began to run for the house ; but carrying the basket so steadily that the eggs did not say a word. Neither did Edith, for she was too much out of breath ; and after all they got to the gate as soon as the gig did, and Mr Rutherford jumped out and walked with them.

"Uncle Ruth," said Mary, after the first greeting, "have you got the fan ?"

"What does that look like ?" said he, with a smile, and handing her a flat and very fan-like little parcel.

"Oh, that must be it," said Edith ; and as Mr Rutherford passed into the house, the children stood still on the gravel walk and opened the paper. There was the fan, of dark gray feathers, and with a purple ribbon fastened to the handle. It gave great satisfaction.

"It is prettier than either of ours," said Edith, "and the ribbon is longer. I'm very glad ! But oh, Mary, how good you were to come back for me ; because I never should have got here if you had not."

"No I was not good," said Mary ; "and I didn't go back because I wanted to help you ; so you need not thank me for it. If I had been good I shouldn't have left you in the first place."

"I think you were very good," said Edith, contentedly. So they went in and gave Mrs Rutherford her birthday present, and she was quite as much surprised and pleased as they had expected.

"Uncle Ruth," said Edith, when she had taken hold of his hand, and was walking up and down the drawing-room with him after tea ; "did you get the ribbon because you liked the fan, or the fan because you liked the ribbon ?"

"I think the ribbon had the most to do with my choice. I had picked out a fan with a pink ribbon, but then I remembered Mary's prohibition."

"Oh, I wish you could have got that," said Edith, "and then it would have been like mine. "Is this fan as pretty as that one?"

"Quite as pretty."

"What nice things ribbons are," said Edith, after a pause.

"Do you know what they are made of?"

"Why, no, Uncle Ruth, they look a little like Aunt Esther's silk dresses, only they are softer."

"They are made of silk threads, as those dresses are ; and the silk threads are made by a worm."

"A worm, Uncle Ruth ! Garret showed me some worms the other day when he was digging, but they didn't look as if they could make silk or anything else. They were very ugly indeed."

"Those were earth-worms ; the silk-worms are short and thick, and of a whitish colour."

"And can they make ribbons?" said Edith, wonderingly.

"They make the silk threads from which ribbons and all other silk things are woven. Some day I will take you to Mr Granding's and show you his silk-worms, and then you will understand more about it."

"Oh, thank you, Uncle Ruth !" and so it was settled.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SILK-WORMS AND THE BUTTERFLY DOOR.

"MARY !" cried Edith, the minute she opened her eyes next morning, "did we find any eggs in that nest yesterday?"

"What nest?" said Mary, very sleepily.

"Why that new nest we made in the cow-house,—don't you know?"

"Why yes, child, of course we did. How can you forget so!"

"I didn't forget, but I thought that perhaps I had dreamt it."

"Well you didn't dream it—at least you may have dreamt it, but it is true; so I hope you are satisfied."

"We found two eggs, didn't we? I was thinking of two nice white eggs."

"And if you had been thinking of twenty you needn't have waked me up. Do go and leave me in peace and quiet."

"Ah, but you ought not to be quiet," said Edith. "You had better not go to sleep again, I can tell you, or you'll be as late as you were yesterday. Come!—get up!"

"Won't you go and feed your chickens, Edith?"

"Oh my chickens!—poor little things—I dare say they are hungry. But I'm not ready yet, you see, so they must wait."

And then came an eager and determined splashing in the basin, which would have told any person with one ear open that Edith was washing herself; but both Mary's ears were more than half shut, therefore she took up a different idea.

"It does not rain, does it?" she inquired, a little more sleepily than before.

"Why no!" said Edith, laughing merrily as she rubbed her face with the towel. "If you would only open your eyes you would see that it doesn't. I wonder they don't get open in spite of you—the sun is right on them. There!—I do believe I heard one of the chickens cry. Mary, how long do you suppose it will be before they get feathers?"

"How many feathers?" said Mary, who between Edith and the sun was waking up "in spite of herself." "They will have some in a week, I dare say."

"Well, I mean a great many feathers—wings and tail and all, just as the old hen has. How long will it be before they are as big as the old hen?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Mary, turning over. "How can I tell? By the time the old hen is superannuated, I should think."

Edith stood with an intensely grave face, trying to imagine what superannuated could mean; but Mary's now resolutely closed eyes gave no encouragement to further questions, and catching up her sun-bonnet she ran down to the kitchen.

At least she was running down, when Mrs Rutherford called her.

"Where are you going, Edith?"

"To get some meal, Aunt Esther, to feed my chickens."

"It is too wet for you now, dear; stay here till after breakfast."

"But, Aunt Esther," said Edith, appearing at the parlour door, "my chickens must be very hungry."

"I do not believe they are awake yet," said Mrs Rutherford. "What do you suppose would become of such little chickens if the old hen should let them go out in the wet grass so early in the morning? No, no, you may be sure she takes as good care of her chickens as I do of mine; and see, here comes breakfast."

"I don't think I'm a chicken at all," said Edith, laughing. "Then you don't really think they are awake?"

"I do not suppose a single one of them has his eyes open. But where is Mary, is she not up?"

"She hasn't got her eyes open, either, I believe," said Edith; and jumping up-stairs she not only awoke her sister with the news that the coffee-pot was on the table, but also slightly aroused her sister's displeasure by sundry comparisons drawn from the supposed fact that the chickens were yet slumbering. Whence Edith came to the wise conclusion that it is best not to say much to people until they are quite awake.

"I shall come home early this afternoon," said Mr Rutherford, as they sat at breakfast, "and we will drive out to Grandin's. I promised Edith to show her his silk-worms."

"What does he keep them for, Uncle Ruth?"

"More for amusement than anything else, I believe."

"Oh, let us have some too," said Edith; "it would be so nice to have the silk threads and make ribbon."

Mr Rutherford smiled.

"It takes more than silk threads to make ribbons," he said; "and perhaps when you have seen the worms you will care less about having them. I think your chickens are much prettier pets."

Thus reminded of her new charge, Edith got a saucer and spoon and went off to the meal-tub ; and when she had carefully mixed as much as chickens with full-grown appetites could require, she ran down to the lime-grove, and soon found to her disappointment that the old hen was able to eat much more than all the chickens put together. However, they chirped over their tiny breakfast with a satisfied air that was very pleasant as far as it went, and Edith comforted herself with the hope that they would have larger appetites in time.

The afternoon was very clear and pleasant. Mr Rutherford came home early as he had promised, and they set out in high spirits for Mr Grandin's, such high spirits indeed, that Edith not taking good care of her little parasol, a jolt of the carriage flung it into the road, and in a moment the wheel had passed over it. Well, it could not be helped ; but she thought that it did not mend the matter much, and her complacency was not fairly restored till she caught sight of the rustic summer-houses, and smelled or fancied she smelled the flowers in Mr Grandin's garden.

They were very cordially received, and the garden was very beautiful. Flowers—flowers—everywhere, and curious trees and shrubs, and little white rabbits hiding their red eyes behind prison bars, where Edith pitied them very much. And as they walked about, Miss Grandin picked all sorts of beautiful and sweet flowers for them, till all Edith's fingers were too few to hold her share.

Then they went into the house to see the silk-worms. Edith did not like them near so well as she expected. They were large whitish-coloured things, with too many feet for beauty, Edith thought, walking about and eating leaves, and looking very comfortable and very ugly. What could they have to do with pink ribbons? And just as she was thinking how well it was they were shut up, Miss Grandin opened a little door in the frame, and taking out a particularly large worm, laid it lovingly against her cheek. Edith turned away in great disgust and looked at a cage of white mice, which

seemed quite beautiful by comparison; though in themselves she thought them very ugly and ill-used.

"Why, Edith!" said Mr Rutherford, when he came in from the garden, "I thought you wanted to see the silk-worms?"

"I have been looking at them, Uncle Ruth, but I did not want them to get on me."

Miss Grandin laughed, and put the worm back and shut the door; and then very unwillingly Edith came up to the frame again. But Mr Rutherford wanted her to hear all they were talking and telling about the worms, how that in the first thirty days after one is hatched it eats sixty thousand times its own weight of leaves, and increases forty times in length and nine thousand five hundred times in weight. How it takes twelve pounds of cocoons to make one pound of reeled silk; and this one pound makes fourteen yards of excellent Gros de Naples.

"What is reeled silk?" said Mary.

"The cocoons are thrown into boiling water to destroy the moth, and then they are stirred about with a bunch of twigs till the twigs catch the ends of the silk threads, then the threads are wound off upon a reel."

The cocoons were very pretty, Edith thought; but she entirely disapproved of the boiling water.

"Why must they kill the moth, Uncle Ruth?" she asked.

"Because it would eat its way out through the cocoon, and so injure the silk."

"How many threads would the moth cut?" said Edith, with an endeavour to get at the probable loss of letting it live.

"Properly speaking there is but one thread on each cocoon, but as it is wound round and round, the moth, in eating its way out, would cut this thread many times."

The balance between loss of life and of silk was easy to strike in Edith's mind. Why could they not piece the silk?

"But that stuff looks so rough," said Mary, "not a bit like threads of silk."

"That is only the outer covering; the fine silk thread is underneath."

"I should not think there would be much room for it," said Mary. "A very short thread would make that little cocoon."

"The cocoon is small, I grant you," said Mr Rutherford, "but so is the silk very fine; and the thread which makes that little cocoon is about three hundred yards long, spun double. It is very light too, and ten thousand cocoons do not generally yield five pounds of silk."

And here Mrs Grandin (thinking perhaps that Edith must be tired and bewildered with the long threads of silk), opened a closet door, the inner surface of which was entirely covered with butterflies, and beetles, and dragon flies, and ichneumon flies, and chafers, of every size and colour, and mixture of colour. What could make them stay here? Edith wondered, but she did not like to ask. So she stood still and looked at the butterflies, and they stood still too, there did not a wing flutter. They were not even tempted by Edith's bunch of flowers, though she looked down to see if none of them had transferred themselves.

Then Mrs Grandin pointed to a large purple emperor on the door, and began a long story of how she had been walking in the garden to look at a new Amaryllis; how the butterfly had alighted on her shawl; how the gardener had cried out and she had chid him; and then how she had skilfully covered her prize with a bell-glass. Edith felt more and more puzzled. Would Mrs Grandin really catch a live butterfly and stick him up there? and how could she? and were all the occupants of the door dead or alive at that present moment? She could not tell; but somehow the door did not look so pretty to her now; and she was just turning away to the white mice again, when Mrs Rutherford took leave, and they came away. No sooner were they all in the carriage than Edith began:—

"Uncle Ruth, what *did* make those butterflies stay on that door?"

"They were fastened there."

"Fastened there?"

"Yes; if you had looked a little closer you would have seen a small pin thrust through each."

"But I don't understand," said Edith, knitting her brows with excess of perplexity; "I thought she said that large butterfly got on her shawl in the garden?"

"So she did; and it was there she caught him."

"But if he could fly about he was not dead?"

"Certainly not; I believe none of the butterflies were dead till they were pinned up to the door. People seldom find dead butterflies in such good preservation."

"Mrs Grandin must be a nice woman!" said Mary, coolly.

"Some people are very fond of collecting insects," said Mr Rutherford, with a slight smile at Edith's speechless face; "and as they would not stay in the house alive, these people take various ways of killing them. Sometimes they are killed instantly by being pierced with a pin dipped in a very strong and poisonous liquid,—sometimes they are merely fastened up to a door and left to die at their leisure. This, .. believe, was the fate of those you saw to-day."

"But it is *dreadfully* cruel! don't you think so, Uncle Ruth?"

"Dreadfully cruel, indeed; but unfortunately there are plenty of people in the world who are willing to do cruel things for their own amusement."

"I don't want ever to go there again," said Edith, who really looked pale at the idea of such an unscrupulous slaughter of butterflies.

"Not even to get such flowers?" said Mr Rutherford.

"Look at those roses and geraniums in your hand, Edie."

"Yes, Uncle Ruth—they are very sweet, but I don't like people that do so."

"I do not like the things they do," said her uncle, "but you must not judge the people too harshly. All are not equally tender-hearted by nature, nor by education. I do not suppose Mrs Grandin had the least idea that there was anything wrong or cruel in what we dislike so much."

"I don't see why she should take the trouble to be cruel for butterflies," said Mary. "I'm sure I would not."

"Oh, I would!" said Edith. "If it *was not* cruel I would get some too. They are such beautiful things!"

She sat for some time with her head a little on one side, her hands with the beautiful bunch of flowers hanging listlessly down in her lap, and her eyes fixed on the road; but not apparently thinking of it or its shadows, to which the setting sun gave more and more length and distinctness every moment.

"Edith!" said Mrs Rutherford, "are you asleep?"

"Oh no, Aunt Esther, I was thinking—do butterflies ever die? I mean unless somebody kills them?"

"Yes, indeed; they are by no means immortal, nor even very long lived."

"Then if I found any dead ones I might keep them, might I not?"

"To be sure. I do not think you would ever get so very fond of them as to catch live ones too."

"But what will you do with them, Edith?" said Mr Rutherford. "I doubt whether Aunt Esther would care to have her closet doors ornamented in such a manner."

"Oh, I wouldn't put them on the doors, Uncle Ruth," said Edith, smiling. "I can put them in a box—if I get any."

"You have no box," said Mary.

"Yes I have, a little tin box that had soda powders in it—no, that is too small."

"Well, when that is full you shall have another," said Mrs Rutherford.

"But Aunt Esther, I'm afraid that is too small for *anything*."

"Don't you think it would hold a beetle,—or a lady-bird?"

"Oh yes," said Edith, laughing, "but I was not thinking of beetles; I was thinking of that great purple butterfly."

"I fear you will not find such a one very soon, dear Edie; they live in the tops of the high trees, and seldom come down within reach of people's fingers."

"But if one died he might have to come down," said Edith.

"Well dear," said her aunt, smiling, "if one does, you shall have a box for it."

"You will never want to sing 'I'd be a butterfly' again, Edith," said Mary.

"Oh, yes, I shall," said Edith; "because you know if I was a butterfly I would never let Mrs Grandin catch me!" And she began to sing—

"Oh I'd be a butterfly—flitting about
From roses to lilies, now in and now out.
I'd flutter all day in the sun's pleasant ray,
And with butterfly brothers I'd merrily play.

"And I'd be a honey-bee—busy and bright
From sunrise at morning till dew-fall at night.
Sweet honey I'd store, till the season was o'er,
And the comb and the hive were too full to hold more.

"Oh, I'd be the violet, modest and sweet!
And almost unseen in my shady retreat;
Yet there can be no doubt I should soon be found out,
For my perfume would spread itself all round about.

"And I'd be the lily that lives in the vale,
With tall leaves to shelter my flowers so pale.
I'd hang my head there with my sisters so fair,
And our breath should be borne on the soft summer air.

"But now, sir, you must not believe that we would
Be a butterfly, flower, or bee if we could.
Oh no! we agree that we rather had be
Just such little children as those you now see."

"Yes," said Mr Rutherford, "and just such little children as those wishes would make you. As light-hearted as the butterflies, as busy as bees—and seeking honey from the best flowers—as modest and humble as the violet. And how can you be like the lily?"

The children did not speak, and then Mrs Rutherford looked up and said softly, "That you keep yourselves unspotted from the world."

CHAPTER X.

CATS AND CRACKERS.

THE children were eating a lunch of bread and milk. Seated by a little table behind the parlour door, they took alternate spoonfuls out of the same bowl.

"Do you like the crust or the soft best?" said Mary.

"I like the crust best."

"So do I. It is a pity we both like it best."

"Well," said Edith, "you take a mouthful of crust, and then I will take a mouthful of crust. That will be fair."

So they ate away at "the soft," and then Mary would say, "Now let us take some crust;" and a few bits of crust were taken accordingly.

"Why did we have lunch to-day?" said Edith.

"Because Uncle Ruth is coming home to dinner, so it will be late," said Mary. "And Aunt Esther says we may go and see Betsy Donovan."

"Oh, that will be very nice," said Edith. "I like to go there, don't you?"

"Yes, pretty well," said Mary. "Now, Edith, you took crust twice running."

"Did I?" said Edith; "well, I didn't mean to do so. I was thinking about Betsy Donovan, so I suppose I took it accidentally."

"Never mind, I don't care," said Mary. "You may take two pieces more if you like. But, Edith, if Betsy offers us any candy to-day, do not let us take it."

"Why?" said Edith; "I like that candy very much. Betsy gave me some twice, and I ate it all up. It tasted just like cloves. I never saw such candy anywhere else: why shouldn't we take it?"

"Because," said Mary, "Betsy keeps it to sell, and it does not seem right for us to eat it. I know it is very good, but she might get a penny for every stick she gives us; and she is poor."

"Well, if that is all," said Edith, "I'll give her a penny for it too. I would have asked Aunt Esther for one before if you had told me."

"But Betsy wouldn't let us pay for it," said Mary—"I'm sure she wouldn't. She is always very glad to give it to us, but then I don't think we ought to take it."

"Well, I won't, then," said Edith, "but it is a great pity."

The children got ready, and set out with Janet to walk to Betsy Donovan's little house. It was quite a long walk from Mr Rutherford's, but on a pretty winding road, so shady with trees and sweet with flowers, that most people would have called it too short.

The house was very small, and as brown as summer suns and winter storms could make it; for paint it had none, except upon the roof and the front door, and they were both red. The front window displayed a variety of temptations to the passer-by to stop and spend his money, if he had any; and if he had not, to stand outside and wish that he had. And as Betsy's house stood by the sea-shore, and a great many fisher-boys went that way, the grass under the window was almost as well trodden and worn as the boards of her little floor. For in the window stood candies upon every little ledge, leaning some one way and some the other; while reels of cotton, penny trumpets, whistles, cigars, and scalloped gingerbread, were arranged in what is commonly called "tempting confusion" upon the window and the window-sill.

There was only a little strip of grass by the house, and then there came shore-weeds, and the mere shore itself, stretching down in sandy barrenness to where the wet feet of the little waves came frolicking over the pebbles. Odd-looking sea-birds, with long necks and legs, stalked about over the sand, on which an old fishing-boat or two lay drawn up high and dry, out of reach of the tide. Everything was very still this afternoon, and even a windmill that stood off in the distance was as motionless as if it had no arms, or did not know how to use them. Andrew Donovan was down

on the shore mending his fishing-net, and Betsy sat sewing on the step of the door.

Of course she was very glad to see the children, and provided them at once with the very best and smallest chairs that she had. And the next thing was to take down two sticks of that very yellow-striped candy from the window, and give one to Mary and one to Edith. And they could no more have helped eating it than they could have helped wishing for it—Betsy put it into their hands, and would hear no word of refusal. She would also have made them eat some of the scalloped gingerbread, but it was most resolutely declined. As neither of the children were partial to gingerbread, this was the easier done.

And so they sat there for a while with great satisfaction—Janet and Betsy talking, and Mary and Edith perched up on their chairs eating the yellow-striped candy.

Then came two little ragged boys for something out of the window—a scalloped gingerbread—which they immediately divided, and two bunches of queer little red rolls of something. Edith watched these commodities delivered, and the pennies received, with great interest.

“What sort of candy was that, Betsy?” she inquired, as Mrs Donovan came back to her seat.

“It wasn't candy at all, love—it was just fire-crackers.”

“Fire-crackers!” said Edith, “what are fire-crackers? Oh, Mary! what's that?”

A queer little pop outside the door called forth this last exclamation; and then there was another pop, and another, and then a whole succession of them, coming so fast that Edith was almost too frightened to ask questions.

“What is it? it is very disagreeable—I'm afraid of it.”

“It's only the fire-crackers,” said Betsy. “They won't hurt you—they don't hurt anybody.”

“But I don't like them at all,” said Edith, drawing close to her sister, who sat up quite straight and courageously, though not liking the crackers herself. “I wish they would stop—what makes those boys do so?”

"They are for the fourth of July," said Betsy; "they bought them on purpose to fire them off."

"But it is not the fourth now," said Mary.

"No, Miss, but the boys isn't particular about the time, so they have the crackers."

"But what shall we do?" said Edith, "we can't get home—why must they do that for the fourth of July—I wish they wouldn't."

"They've gone off a bit now," said Janet, looking out between the sticks of candy and scalloped gingerbread. "I think we can get away before they come back again."

And saying good-bye in great haste to Betsy, the two children ran off from the house so fast, that Janet could not come up with them until they stopped at what they thought a safe distance.

"Let us gather some flowers to take home," said Mary, when they were in the wood road again. "See, here are wild roses."

"And here are buttercups, and some great white flowers."

"No, they are only great bunches of white flowers," said Mary.

"Oh!" said Janet, "don't pick that, Miss Edith. Elder's nothing but a weed—the farmers' boys all cut them down. And with all the pinks and poppies you've got at home too."

"I don't care," said Edith; "I like these very much, they are so sweet. And the pinks we have got now are not sweet a bit, and the poppies never are. I think poppies would be too pretty if they were sweet. This is not sweet either, but it's pretty."

A green vine, with bunches of purple flowers and green and red berries, was twining in and out the fence, and clambering over a branch of the elder.

"Don't pick that," said Mary, "it is poison. Maria Delue calls it nightshade."

"Here are nice flowers," said Edith, running up to a tall blackberry bush that had put forth its white stars somewhat late in the season.

"Yes, and nice thorns, too," said Mary. "You had better come away. Don't you remember the fox that tried to get through the bramble hedge?"

"I wish I had all those stories," said Edith, quitting the blackberry. "I like them so much—all about the foxes, and the cocks, and the iron pots."

"Well, I'll tell you something," said Mary. "I knew you wanted that book, and so I asked Uncle Ruth to get it for you."

"Oh how good you are!" said Edith. "Do you think he will get it to-day?"

"I can't tell—perhaps he may, and perhaps not. Some days he is too busy to think of anything. Come, let us sit down here and rest, and I'll tell you a story."

"Oh, do!" said Edith, running to seat herself on a stone, "that will be so nice."

"Well then, once upon a time" —

"But what makes you always say, 'Once upon a time there was?'" said Edith. "Why don't you say, 'There is?'"

"Oh because I don't want you to suppose it is a true story," said Mary. "'There is,' means something true, you know, and 'once upon a time' stories may be true or not. But there is a great deal of truth in this one, only it is not all true. There was once a little worm crawling about on an oak leaf. And there were half-a-dozen other little worms that were his brothers and sisters. And they used to go up and down the leaf, and when they had eaten the most of it up they went to another. Then every night they all slept in a great soft web where the dew could not get at them.

"One day somebody told this first little worm" —

"Who told him?" said Edith.

"Oh, I don't know," said Mary. "Somebody told him that he must spin a little house for himself, and shut himself up, and stay there for ever so long."

"Was he to die?" asked Edith.

"No, he shouldn't die, but he must stay there for a long

time, and then he should come out again. But he never could be a little worm any more."

"What should he be then?" said Edith.

"Why he should be a butterfly, with golden wings and bright eyes; and he should fly about all the day long, and call at the flower houses and eat honey."

"Well, that was a great deal better," said Edith, "I don't like little worms—much."

"He didn't think so," said Mary. "He thought he would rather be a worm, and he was very sorry to think he never should crawl about on oak leaves any more."

"And did he spin his house, and live there, and come out a butterfly?"

"Yes," said Mary, "he was obliged."

"Well," said Edith, "when he was a butterfly, did he find any of the other little worms that had turned into butterflies, too?"

"I don't know," said Mary. "Yes, I suppose so. Of course he did."

"Why, Mary," said Edith, who had been thinking very gravely for two minutes, "you have made this all up from what Aunt Esther was talking about yesterday! I heard her say that people do not die when we say they die, any more than a worm dies when it turns into a chrysalis."

"I saw a worm and a butterfly both on a rose," said Mary, "and it made me think of it. I was thinking how papa and mamma are watching for us, and wondering that we don't long to come to heaven."

By this time they were rested and walked on. It so happened that Mr Rutherford did remember Edith's book that very day, and the first thing he gave her, after a kiss, when she got home, was a nice little dark brown volume, full of pictures, and with "Æsop's Fables," in gilt letters on the back.

"I hardly know whether it is a very nice copy, dear," he said; "but I found it not easy to get one at all."

Edith's thanks were few, for upon opening the book, such a delightful mixture of "foxes, and cocks, and iron pots,"

caught her eye, that there was nothing for it but to sit down at once and begin to read.

But she was not half through the foxes before Mrs Rutherford said it was too dark to read.

"Come down to the garden with me," she said, "and see how your flowers grow."

"In one minute, Aunt Esther," said Edith.

But by the time she had finished the last speech the bramble made to the fox, thinking to herself how funny it would have been if the blackberry had talked so to her, Mrs Rutherford was half way down the green slope. Edith went hop, skip, and jump, to overtake her, and in her haste tumbled over, and was near demolishing a little toad, which, however, got off with no very serious injury.

"See the consequence of running so fast," said Mrs Rutherford; "you have almost killed that poor little toad."

A word thoughtlessly spoken!

Poor Edith! the idea of running over or hurting anything was bad enough; but an implied possibility that it might have been avoided, made matters still worse. She bestowed several very tender looks upon the toad, and would have given him any assistance in her power; but whenever she even *thought* of taking him from the grass to the gravel walk, the toad hopped off in the most unthankful manner. So Edith at last followed her aunt, carefully enough this time, and wondering within herself if she was never to run fast any more, or if toads were to be always in the way—or, as it has been more poetically expressed, "if the world was not wide enough for her and the toads too!"

She looked at the flowers with a very sober face, and though she answered all Mrs Rutherford's remarks about them, her thoughts were on the slope with the unfortunate and ungrateful little toad. Edith had really felt quite hurt by his turning the cold shoulder to her in such a manner.

From these sorrowful thoughts she was at last happily aroused by the sight of some one coming up from the gate; it was Susan, just returned from Canterbury.

It was plain that she had something wrapped up in her apron,

and in a moment both children were running. Mary dashed through the grass, but Edith, remembering the toads, went round by the gravel-walk; and by the time Susan had reached the willow-tree, both little breathless runners were there too. She set down her basket, and unrolling her apron, she showed two little kittens, fast asleep, and pretty and soft enough almost to justify the children's exclamations. Both were gray and white.

"But how shall we know which is which?" said Edith. "Oh, I'll tell you; this one has two gray ears, and that one has one white ear. Now you choose."

"Well, I'll take gray ears," said Mary.

"Then I'll take white ear," said Edith. "I like it quite as well. Now, kitty, don't scratch me. Poor kitty!" she exclaimed, in some doubt, as the kitten, clinging to Susan's apron with all its might, wrinkled up its nose and mewed most piteously. "What's the matter? I won't hurt you."

"I wouldn't hurt her if ye did, I guess," said Susan. "Here, I'll put 'em in yer aprons," said she, disengaging the kittens with what seemed no very gentle pull. "There, now take 'em off and put 'em to bed."

But where were they to sleep?

The children said up-stairs, but Mrs Rutherford said down, and down it was; though many were the fears that the kittens would take cold in a basket of hay on the kitchen hearth. And the next question was what they should be called, for to go to sleep and dream of unnamed kittens was impossible.

After much deliberation, Mary, to whom the matter was referred, named her own, Bess, and the other, Cupid; and then, after one farewell pat, and a minute's silence to see "if they were purring," the two kittens, who slept up-stairs, went thither.

CHAPTER XI.

CLEAVELAND.

THERE were few people that came oftener to Rose Hill than Mrs Salisbury; and she was the children's grandmother. Whenever her coach was seen coming along the lane, there was great calling and rejoicing from one to the other, and great desire to hear some of grandmamma's stories over again; and, it must be confessed, some curiosity to know what was in grandmamma's basket. There was also a great deal of interest connected with the crimped and puffed borders of her caps; and though Edith had been told about fifty times how they were done, she always forgot and asked again, or perhaps she liked to hear Mrs Salisbury's description. If the old lady had a favourite of the two children, it was certainly Mary; but this seemed to Edith quite proper and natural, for she was the oldest, and knew so much the most; and she never drew any other inference from the relative size of their workboxes or papers of candy. But she was very much surprised one day when Mrs Salisbury said, "Edith, I want you to go back with me to Cleaveland."

"Want me?" she said, jumping up off the floor. "Is Aunt Esther going?"

"No, nobody is going but you. Grandpapa made me promise to bring him one of his pets, and Aunt Esther and Mary will come to-morrow or next day. Will you go?"

"This morning?" said Edith, doubtfully. "No, grandmamma, I don't think I can."

"Well, will you go this afternoon? Come," she added, seeing that Edith looked more dismayed than pleased, "don't you want to see grandpapa and Brutus?—and you shall have a little bed all to yourself in my room."

The little bed was a great temptation—it was moreover very flattering to be asked; and in spite of some undefined misgivings at her inmost heart, Edith consented to go in the afternoon, and having once consented, she would not draw back. It would be very foolish, she thought, and unkind,



Mary teaching Edith a Prayer.

too, when she was so much wanted. For Edith was very particular about people's feelings. Many a time her aunt's arm thrown over her at night when they were sleeping together, was a heavier weight than her little body could bear quite pleasantly; but she would have been crushed rather than say she found such a token of Aunt Esther's love uncomfortable.

So Edith consented to go to Cleaveland; and immediately after an early dinner, the coach came to the door. Mrs Salisbury had already gone down the steps, and Edith was following, when suddenly she turned round and ran up again.

"Oh, Aunt Esther," she said, drawing Mrs Rutherford to one side of the hall, "will you please give me a verse for to-morrow?"

Her aunt looked down at her, and smoothed away the hair from that little upturned face.

"It must be a short one," said Edith, "because you know if I couldn't remember it, I might not know where to find it."

And stooping to kiss her once more, Mrs Rutherford said—

"Our Father, which art in heaven."

"Look up to Him, Edith, and rest upon Him a great deal more than you do upon me. You are not going away from Him."

Before the scale of pleasure or pain had fairly descended (perceptibly at least) in Edith's mind, she was in the coach and outside the gate.

There was no doubt about it then. Into the scale which held her going away from home, Edith threw all manner of thoughts and recollections, and imaginations too, till it went down, and down, and down. Before they reached the high road, Mrs Salisbury chanced to look at her little companion, and saw that though she was perfectly quiet and silent, the tears were running down her cheeks as if their fountain were inexhaustible.

"My dear Edith!" she said, "what is the matter? Are you ill?"

Edith might have answered that she never cried for being ill, but she only shook her head.

"Don't you want to go with me? Do not cry, love, and I will tell Tim to turn, the minute we get to the road. I would not take you on any account, if you do not want to go."

No, Edith would not consent to turn back; she was steady in her resolve to go on; and by dint of rubbing her eyes very hard, at last made them understand what was expected of them; though whenever she tried to smile, tears would come first. But if her face could have been seen when no one was looking at it, Mrs Salisbury would have given Tim the order to turn without more ado.

The drive was long. How long it seemed to Edith when her heart flew back—when she thought how happy they all were at home!—but it ended at last; though it was too dark for her to see much besides the old chimneys against the evening sky, and the white gate through which they passed and wheeled round to the front of the house.

"Oh, how sweet the honeysuckles are!" said Edith, sitting up straight on the broad, thick cushion of the coach, roused at last by the perfume which came wafted in through the window. And when Mr Salisbury came out and lifted her from the carriage, and made the old mastiff carry her on his back across the verandah and into the hall, she felt quite cheered. And then, when she was in the old parlour, taking off her things and looking about, she brightened up yet more.

Tea was just getting ready; and not only was there the pleasant sound of cups, and saucers, and spoons, but a most agreeable smell of toast and smoked beef, and above all of green tea, through the apartment.

Edith walked round the table, admiring the little silver peacocks on the cover of the sugar-bowl and the teapot-lid as she had often admired them before, and comparing the device on the spoon handles with that on their own spoons and forks at Rose Hill. On the whole, she preferred the oakleaf to the shell, and had no doubt R was a much prettier letter than S. And so for a while matters went on well enough.

But when all the old well-known objects had been examined, and tea was over, and the table cleared, Edith's face

began to take up its former gravity ; and after some vain efforts to amuse and brighten her up, Mrs Salisbury proposed that she should go to bed.

They went upstairs, and there sure enough was the little bed, as nice and white as could be. Edith was really pleased, for she had never in her life slept by herself.

“Is this where Mary slept ?” she inquired.

“Yes,” said Mrs Salisbury, “this is the very same bed. And I shall be in this other bed, close by you, and will get you anything you want.”

Edith thought if that were the case, she would have Aunt Esther and Mary there directly ; but she was in no mood to talk, and went to bed as fast as possible without stopping to say her prayers. Not that she forgot it ; but Mrs Salisbury did not ask her to kneel at her lap as Mrs Rutherford would have done, and a new maid was there whom she had never seen, and altogether Edith felt strange and uncomfortable ; and getting into her little bed, she hid her face and prayed there—not without many tears. She knew they had prayed for her that night at home, for her uncle never forgot to mention Mary when she was away, and she felt quite sure he would not forget Edith ; but here nobody had prayed for them, or seemed to think of praying at all. She wondered what could be the reason ; and then she went to sleep and dreamed again the old dream about the bee and the locust flowers. Meanwhile her grandmother had gone down stairs, and the new maid sat by the window, looking out. But when Mrs Salisbury came up again, and looked at the little sleeper in her white bed ; the yet wet cheek and eyelashes made her think it would be some strong reason which should make her bring Edith alone to Cleaveland a second time.

Morning brought brighter prospects—when does morning not brighten all within as well as without ?—and when Edith awoke, her little heart turned a pirouette the very first thing, and she thought it was doubtful whether anybody could ever shed tears for anything. So she lay in her little bed thinking all manner of pleasant thoughts. First, it was highly probable

that Aunt Esther would come to-day ; or if not, Mary might come, or her uncle ; or at all events they would all come to-morrow. Then she had an indefinite number of things to do to-day, to get ready for them, and no less than three distinct topics of conversation already stored up, that were to be revealed to no one but Mary. And over and through all, there was that undefined sense of gladness, which seems to ride into this world from heaven direct, upon the early sunbeams.

A little noise at her side made her turn her head ; it was only Mrs Salisbury snoring. Edith wondered very much how anybody could snore or sleep, such a fine morning ; and getting out of bed very softly she began to dress herself. She was accustomed to do this, and always put her clothes in nice order on a chair at night, with her shoes and stockings under it on the floor, that she might know just where to find them. But when she was dressed, and had paid her respects to the old-fashioned washstand in the corner, Edith began to feel lonely again, and to wish that somebody else would wake up. And then she remembered her verse ; and she knelt down and prayed that her Father in heaven would always love her and make her His child.

Then she went and stood at the window, and watched the busy swallows that were fluttering and twitting about their nests under the eaves of the verandah.

"Edith !" Mrs Salisbury called out from the bed, "come away, child—don't stand there, you will tumble out."

"Oh no, grandmamma," said Edith, but coming away at the same time, "I wasn't leaning out at all ; and there is the roof of the verandah, too."

"No matter," said Mrs Salisbury, "if you fell out, you might roll down. Go down stairs, dear, and I will come presently."

So Edith went one step at a time down the broad stairs, which gave no creaking acknowledgment of such little feet ; stroked the great white cat that walked through the hall and away from her with the air of a person at home ; and finally herself walked into the parlour.

How pleasant that old parlour was on a fine morning, it would be hard to tell any one who had never seen it. Two windows opened upon the verandah. Between them hung an old-fashioned mirror, its round frame set with so many knobs of gilding that you might have thought there were a dozen Ediths in the room, from the number of little faces there represented.

Opposite this mirror were two doors—the one leading to the kitchen department, the other the entrance to a large closet. A pleasant place that closet was, with its brown stone cake-jars, and glass pickle-jars, and white earthen jars of peaches, and purple glasses of crab-apples. The hall door was on a third side of the room, and the fire-place and two more windows on the fourth. Several old family portraits, of Edith's great-great-grandfathers and mothers, hung upon the walls; and a clock of very uncertain age ticked in the corner.

It was a favourite maxim with Mr Salisbury that a fire was too pleasant a thing to be given up at any time of year; and on this morning as on every other of the three hundred and sixty-five, the fireplace held coals and ashes and two or three sticks of wood and an insinuating little flame; though the amount of the two last articles varied with the season.

On one side of the chimney stood an old mahogany work-table, a mahogany chair with a leather-covered cushion, and a mahogany footstool. The leather was of no particular colour except that of Time's bestowing; only in one corner could Edith's eyes find out a small spot of blue; and she often thought how splendid the chair must have been in the days of its glory. Beneath the work-table was a very small brass-nailed trunk.

Mr Salisbury's chair, with its three or four large square cushions, had the other corner of the fireplace, and he himself had the chair.

There he sat, reading the newspaper when Edith came in; and Brutus lay on the rug, and agreed to all his master's notions about the fire. For Brutus had grown old, too; and was no longer in so frisky a mood as he used to be when

Mary was a little child ; when she used to walk round him with most fearful and respectful admiration, and say, " Poor little dog ! poor little dog ! he won't hurt you ! "

She might have walked over him now, and he would hardly have raised his head. When Edith bid him good morning he only beat the floor rather hard with his tail.

The breakfast-table was set with blue India china, and the peacock tea-service ; the humming-birds fluttered about the honeysuckles on the verandah ; the swallows twittered round their nests ; and the sun sent his long glad beams, past birds and bees and flowers, through the front windows of the old parlour, till they rested upon the breakfast-table and Edith. No wonder they all looked bright.

" Well," said Mr Salisbury ; " good morning. Have you slept off the blues ? "

" Oh, yes," said Edith, " but I didn't know I had any. What are blues, grandpapa ? "

" Blues ? " said he, looking at her over his spectacles. " Why, blues—are not precisely reds. You have heard of rose colour, have not you ? "

" Oh yes," said Edith again. " My damask rose is rose-colour. But what makes those swallows come into the verandah so ? And what are they doing ? "

" Doing indeed ! " said Mr Salisbury, looking over his spectacles again, but out of the window this time and with very different eyes. " Why, they are building under the verandah roof. I have had the nests knocked down half-a-dozen times, and I think they are built up all the faster. "

" Had the nests knocked down ? " exclaimed Edith.

" To be sure. Just see what a mess they make," he added, as a bit of mud fell from the loaded beak of a swallow. " And only look in that corner where the last one was knocked down, and see how dirty the paint is. "

" But if there was a nest there, the paint wouldn't look dirty, would it ? " said Edith.

" No, I suppose it would not," said Mr Salisbury, " but the nest would. "

" Oh, I think they are so pretty ! " said Edith.

"Those mud nests?"

"Oh yes, grandpapa, I think they are beautiful. And there is a bird inside of one now looking out. How funny his eyes look!"

"About as funny as yours do, I think," said Mr Salisbury.

"Well, the nests shall stay, if you like them."

"Oh, may they?" said Edith. "And won't you knock down any more?"

"Not one. The swallows may thank you for it."

"I'm sure I thank you very much, grandpapa," she answered. "I am so glad the nests may stay. It is such a pity the swallows should have so much trouble for nothing."

Breakfast was now ready, and they sat down to the table; but to Edith's sorrow again, her grandmother began to pour out the coffee, and Mr Salisbury gave her some potato, without one word of thanks to the Giver of all good; but just as if the fine morning, and breakfast, and all their happiness, had come by chance. She had never been there without her uncle before, and did not know the habit of the family. Edith felt very much puzzled, and tasted her tumbler of milk and set it down again, feeling not quite sure whether she ought to begin her breakfast.

"What is the matter, Edith," said Mrs Salisbury,—“the milk is not sour, is it?”

"Oh, no," said Edith, "it's very good."

"Then why don't you drink it?" said Mr Salisbury.

"Drink it up and have some more."

"Because I haven't thanked God for it, yet," said Edith, folding her hands gravely together; "and Aunt Esther says I ought to always thank everybody for everything. She does, if it is ever so little."

Mr Salisbury swallowed his coffee and set down the cup.

"Wife, give me another," he said. "Why, Edith, people do not return thanks till after breakfast, that I ever heard of."

"Oh, but Uncle Ruth always asks a blessing," said Edith, "and he says that is one way of thanking God."

"Well," said Mr Salisbury, "as I have half-finished my

breakfast you may as well begin yours, and you can talk about this another time."

After breakfast Mrs Salisbury got ready to go out and walk in the garden, and Edith watched her with much pleasure. It was always very amusing to look at her grandmother's prunella shoes—so very different from her own little kid ones; and Mrs Salisbury's sunbonnet, so perfectly white, so beautifully quilted, was worth anybody's attention. An old green silk parasol, antique and faded, completed the outfit; and if the parasol could have been changed into blue satin, it is doubtful whether it would have suited Edith so well, or in her opinion have kept off the sun so effectually. She had a kind of reverence for both articles; and could not feel hot while the one was upon her grandmother's head, and the other held over her own.

And in this attire they walked round the garden and visited the pigs—Mrs Salisbury very busy with her own plans and arrangements, but often ready to hear Edith talk; and Edith quite able to be amused in silence whenever it was needful.

Then they came into the house and sat down on a little flight of steps that led from the kitchen to the laundry, to shell the peas for dinner.

"Have you any little chickens, grandmamma?" said Edith.

"Yes dear, a good many: you shall see them after dinner. We have two broods of bantams."

"What are bantams?" said Edith.

"They are little white chickens with feathered legs. They look as if they had on some of your frilled trousers."

Edith was much pleased with the prospect of seeing "such funny chickens;" and the peas being all shelled, she went to wash her hands and get ready for dinner.

CHAPTER XII.

A LETTER AND AN ARRIVAL.

NOT even a visit to the bantams and the promise of a pair to take home with her, could keep Edith's heart at rest all the afternoon. For Aunt Esther had said that perhaps she and Mary would come "to-morrow," and it was "to-morrow," and "perhaps" is a very unquieting thing.

But though eyes and ears were on the watch for a carriage, none came—except imaginary ones; and the frequent coming of these was not to be endured without growing sad. Edith's face became as decidedly in twilight as did all the objects out of doors; and the little sigh now and then, told that her heart had too much pent up within it.

At last, just as the candles were lit, Mr Salisbury came into the room with a letter in his hand.

"Wife," said he, "do you know anybody in this neighbourhood named Nerissa Botherford?"

"Oh, I am sure it's for me!" said Edith. "You don't read it right, grandpapa, that's all. Please give it to me!"

"Oh—I see!" said Mr Salisbury. "Maybe it is—'Miss Edith Rutherford'—*that's* it. But you can't read the first word."

"Ah, but please to read it to me!" and the tearful words were not to be trifled with. Mr Salisbury sat down by the little stand, put on his glasses, and read as follows:—

"DEAR EDITH,—How are you all? Was not grandpapa very much surprised to see you?' (No, not a bit.) 'I suppose you play with shells a great deal. Do you want to come home? Don't you want to see Aunt Esther and all of us very much?' (Not she!) 'We manage some way or other to go on very pleasantly without you.'

"Upon my word," said Mr Salisbury, looking over his spectacles at Edith, "she does not deserve to have her letter read. I think I shall put it in the fire, and you and I will play backgammon."

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"Oh no, please don't!" said Edith.

"Well, *I* would if it was my letter. However—'We manage to get along very pleasantly without you, but I have not played with dolls once since you went away. Yesterday I brought up—Cuper, Caterpillar'—What the mischief is this?"

"It must be Cupid," said Edith, laughing and crying together. "That's my kitten."

"Oh, Cupid—'I brought up Cupid and Bess, and warmed a cushion for them; and they were here the greatest part of the morning.' (That is one way to bring up kittens!) 'I sucked one of those oranges grandmamma gave me, and then played with the skin.'

"Wife," said Mr Salisbury, laying the letter on the table and his spectacles on the letter, "I wish you would take care what you give those children. Here is Mary sucking oranges and then playing with the skin! It is no wonder she looks pale. What's the matter, Edith? I don't see much to laugh at. And here is more of the same kind.—'I made some maple sugar fine, and then partly dried it. Aunt Esther was going to write to you, but she is washing hard'—what on earth does that mean? Can't she get a washerwoman?"

"Oh, it can't be that, grandpapa," said Edith, "because you know she never does wash."

"Well, then, I'll wipe my spectacles and look again—it is '*sewing* hard to be able to come to Cleaveland to-morrow evening or Thursday morning. Cupid is this morning lying on the green cloth.' (She had much better be in the barn.) 'I am curing myself of sucking my tongue, but you must not go and beg for me. Give my love and a kiss to all, not forgetting yourself. Aunt Esther says she does not know what to do without you. Your affectionate sister,

"**MARY RUTHERFORD.**"

"Well, there is some sense in the end," said Mr Salisbury as he folded up the letter, "but how you are to kiss yourself, *I* don't know. I suppose I may deliver that message. Now what shall I do with this?"

Edith stretched out her hand for the letter, nor did they

part company the whole evening. Sometimes she would try to spell out a sentence or two, and sometimes she was quite satisfied to see the outside of it, folded up in her hand.

"Grandmamma," she said, a little before bed-time, "if you are not *very* busy, would you please tell me about the time when you used to go to eat clams, when you were a little girl?"

"To be sure I will," said Mrs Salisbury; and she took Edith on her lap and began:—

"When I was a little girl, about as old as Mary, I used to go to school and have a holiday every Saturday. And sometimes, when all the girls had been very good, and had learned their lessons well, our mothers used to give us leave to have what we called a pic-nic."

"That was to go and eat clams?" said Edith.

"Yes, that was what we meant by it. So then the first thing was to go down to the shore and see old Carlin. Old Carlin was a fisherman, and he had a beautiful little boat which he called the *Mayflower*. And he was a very nice, careful man, and very good to us if we behaved ourselves; so that our mothers knew we might be trusted with him. And we used to go on Saturday morning and ask old Carlin if he would take us to Snipe Island in the afternoon; and perhaps he would say that the tide would not do for Snipe Island, but he would take us to Shell Island; and he would say we must be sure and come by four o'clock, and not keep him waiting.

"Then at four o'clock we were all there, and each girl had her basket. Some brought tea and coffee, and some brought milk and sugar, and cake and bread, and cold ham, and butter, and pepper and salt, and a clean table cloth, and a tea-kettle, and cups and saucers, and plates, and gridiron. And the *Mayflower* was all ready too; and when all the children and baskets were nicely stowed away, we set out.

"Then when we got to the island we used to run about, and play at tag, and pick up shells, while old Carlin was getting clams."

"How did he get them?" asked Edith.

"Why, he used to take a spade and dig them out of the mud, or wade in the water and pick them up. And when he had got enough he would call out, 'Come, girls!—it's time for supper.'

"And the boys all stopped their play, and ran to pick up drift-wood and make a fire, and the girls filled the tea-kettle from the beautiful little spring, and put it on to boil."

"What was drift-wood?" said Edith.

"It was wood that had fallen into the sea, and drifted and tossed about for a great while, till some high tide threw it up on the shore,—and then it lay there in the sun and became as dry as could be. And when we had made the fire, we put up two cross sticks and a straight one across, and on that we hung the tea-kettle. Then, when there were plenty of red-hot coals we put our gridiron down, and roasted the clams, and then we had tea."

"It tasted good, didn't it?" said Edith.

"Indeed it did! And when we had eaten enough, we washed up all the cups, and packed our baskets, and then went to play again. And when the sun was just dipping into the sea, old Carlin would call out—

"'Come, girls!—it's time to go home.'

"And then we all stopped play and got into the *May-flower* again, and reached home just before it was quite dark—tired enough, I can tell you."

By this time Edith was tired too, and so near asleep, that she almost forgot to bid Mr Salisbury good-night.

Mary had made a bright suggestion about the shells, and next morning Edith begged that she might have them to play with.

Their play with shells was very peculiar. The children named them after a fashion of their own, calling some pigs, and some elephants, and some cows, as any fancied resemblance directed. And when the back of a large shell had been slightly waxed, a little shell could be made to stay thereon, and so ride about in triumph.

So, after breakfast, Mrs Salisbury took a bunch of keys from her bag—where they had rubbed and jingled about till

every key was as bright as a looking-glass—and proceeded upstairs to what was called the spare room.

It was furnished in a peculiar style.

The chairs were of some light yellow wood, curiously cut and carved on the back into various figures and devices—the centre-piece of this open-work being always some animal. It was Edith's delight to go from one chair to another, admiring the stag's head always thrown back, and the cow's tail always laid round upon one side, and the tiger, the elephant, and the wild boar, always displaying their own peculiar marks of ferocity; until, from leaning so long upon the cane chair-bottoms, her elbows were so deeply indented and honeycombed as to be themselves matter of curiosity.

The bureau in this room was as unlike all other bureaus as the chairs were unlike all other chairs. Old dark wood, most carefully inlaid with two other and lighter coloured kinds, suited well the carved drawers and dovetailed top; and the bureau's contents were the best of all. It always seemed to Mary and Edith a true conjuror's bag, from which their grandmother brought forth curiosities that had no rivals elsewhere, and no limit but her will. Coins, engravings, scent-bottles, pretty boxes, sweet-smelling nuts, shells, pictures, stones,—too many things indeed to be mentioned, were here stowed away; and it was from one of these bureau-drawers that Mrs Salisbury now took a large box of shells, and carried it down into the parlour for Edith's amusement.

But it was like the king who bought Punch, and when he got him home found that Punch was nothing by himself. What were the shells to Edith without Mary?—and how could she play with them? She could, to be sure, put a pig on an elephant and push them about; but if the pig fell off, there was nobody to laugh, and if it stuck on, there was nobody to admire. She was soon tired of the shells and asked for the billiard balls—two or three odd ones which seemed to have rolled into the house no one knew how, on purpose for playthings. Mrs Salisbury got out the balls from her work-table drawer, and Edith sat down on the floor to roll them.

But it was poor sport to send the ball off to the corner of the room and then get up and go after it ;—she had no heart to slide down on the great chair cushions,—what should she do ? Her eye fell upon the little brass-nailed trunk ; and begging for the key, Edith pulled out the trunk and began to examine and arrange its contents. Tapes, thread, needles, and buttons, were unfolded and refolded ;—for the fifty-first time, at least, Edith looked at the old-fashioned thread-case which was used in revolutionary years, and heard her grandmother tell how scarce everything was then ; and how she had often hemmed a cambric handkerchief and a brown towel with the same needle.

At the bottom of the trunk lay a little package nicely pinned up in white paper, containing some of Mary's attempts at painting. Curious drawings they were ; little baskets such as nobody ever saw, filled with flowers that nobody ever heard of. But their colours were bright, and Mary had painted them,—reason enough for their interest in Edith's eyes ; and when she had looked and talked herself tired, Mrs Salisbury took her up on her lap and sang—

“ Little Bo-peep
Fell fast asleep,”

till Edith fell asleep too, out of pure sympathy.

What woke her up ! She did not know at first, when she started up and rubbed her eyes, only she thought she had been dreaming of riding to church. But it was very dark in the room, and she could not see anything distinctly, till at that moment candles came in ; and then she saw that Mrs Salisbury was smiling at her ; and looking round, there stood Mary, and Mr and Mrs Rutherford were just behind. Oh, how glad Edith was ! and her spring to them told them so instead of words, indeed as words could not. She was too happy that evening, and talked away like a little cricket. How gladly she shared her little white bed with Mary, how charmingly they played with shells the next day ! Mary decided that the box wanted putting in order ; and they emptied all the different kinds of shells into separate little

saucers, and dislodged the runaway little shells which had lodged in cracks and corners, and put them with their proper kind. To be sure the task was rather long and tedious, but it was done at last, and well done.

There were other amusements. Before breakfast Edith had espied a peacock's feather in one of the trees before the house; and after several trials Mr Rutherford had brought down the prize. And then he balanced the long slender thing on his forefinger, to Edith's great delight.

"How could it get up in that tree, Uncle Ruth?" she said.

"I suppose the peacock roosted there last night."

"What, up in that tree?"

"Yes; in fine weather they always roost in the tree-tops, and when it is going to rain they choose some of the lower branches."

"But what made the peacock leave it there?" said Edith.

"I suppose it dropped out of his tail," said Mr Rutherford, smiling.

"I hope he does not want it," said Edith, as she stroked the long feather, "for I should like to have it very much."

"He must do without it," said her uncle. "We should be puzzled to put the feather back again, or to find the right bird. And a peacock's tail-feather is not much of a curiosity to himself, Edie."

They went back to Rose Hill that day. The two bantams in the coach-box, in a most uncomfortable state of mind—the children full of pleasure and talk. There was only one thing to be regretted—Edith had left her feather at Cleaveland.

But as she remarked, "She could get it next time."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CURIOSITY BOX.

It did not seem likely that the larger box would be soon needed. Collecting went on slowly. Whatever became of the dead butterflies, they did not fall in Edith's way, and

she began almost to despair of ever finding any. To be sure, she did find a flying grasshopper lying on the walk one day, but he did not look nearly so pretty with his yellow wings folded up and the brown ones folded over them. He had lost one of his legs too ; so, though Edith put him in her box, she did not think much of him.

One morning, as she stood in the grove while the chickens ate their breakfast, she saw on one of the trees what seemed to be the wing of some insect ; and looking nearer, she found that there was a little hole in the tree, and into this hole the insect had crept. It seemed to be dead, for it took no notice of the gentle ascertaining pushes of Edith's finger, and at length she carefully pulled it out. It was a curious kind of brown bug, an inch and a half long, and quite dead.

"There," said Mary, "you see it is worth while to look. No wonder you never found anything before. This you got by taking a little trouble for it."

Edith felt half disappointed, nevertheless ; it was a bug certainly, but it was not a purple butterfly nor even a yellow one. However, as Mary said, she had got it by taking pains, there was something in that ; so the bug went to keep the grasshopper company.

But the little tin box looked very empty.

"I wish I could find something to put in my box, Aunt Esther," she said.

"I wish you could, my dear. Will nothing do but butterflies ?"

"Oh, I should like anything curious," said Edith.

"Anything curious ! Well, I think I must go curiosity-seeking with you this afternoon ; and in the meantime you may have this, if you think it remarkable enough to lie alongside of the brown bug."

It was a silk-worm's cocoon.

"Oh, I like it dearly !" cried Edith. "Oh, thank you, Aunt Esther ! Where did you get it ?"

"I hardly know, dear ; I found it this morning among a quantity of old things in a drawer."

"And if the moth should come out and should die, I might keep that too ?" said Edith. Mrs Rutherford smiled.

"I do not think the moth will ever come out," she said; "I must have had that cocoon a long time."

"Why didn't it come out before, I wonder?" said Edith, "do you think this was once put into hot water?"

"Perhaps so."

"Well, I'm very glad I have got it, and perhaps we shall find some more this afternoon."

In the afternoon, however, Edith's patience was sorely tried, for one visitor after another came in, and she began to despair of her walk. They were not people that she and Mary cared to see, and after being "very good" and very tired for some time on the little stools by the fireplace, they jumped up and ran out to play in the hay.

Now it was well that Garret was so good-natured a man; for although the hay itself was in no danger of harm, yet to see the nice cocks which he had carefully put up, so unceremoniously dealt with, was, or might have been, a trial of patience. But he *was* very good-natured; and when Mary plumped down upon one hay-cock, and Edith scrambled up to the top of another, Garret only smiled and shook his head, and told them they were making him "a fine piece of work."

I suppose there never was anything so sweet as hay—nor anything so pleasant as to tumble in it;—certainly these children thought so, as they chased each other from cock to cock, and lay at the bottom, and lay at the top, and rolled all the way down; and regarded the sharp points of the hay which stuck into their elbows and knees as mere trifles of life! No, there never was anything half so pleasant; and their light weight did not do Garret much mischief after all.

At last, fairly tired, they sat themselves down against a large haycock, near the gate, to rest and grow cool.

"I think the grasshoppers must be roasted to death," was Mary's first remark as she fanned herself with her sun-bonnet.

"Perhaps they are," said Edith, "only their faces don't get red. And I suppose they *have* to hop."

"No," said Mary, "they can walk—I've seen them walking on the road."

"Oh yes, so have I," said Edith, "but they look so funny."

I don't believe they *could* walk far. Oh dear! I am afraid we shall have no walk this whole afternoon!"

"There comes one of the people at last," said Mary: "perhaps the rest will follow him. What book has he got in his hand, I wonder? he had not one when he came. I hope he has not been borrowing some of mine. I do believe it is my 'Sandford and Merton.' Run and see, Edith."

"Oh no!—I can't," said her sister.

"But you must! Run, make haste, or he will be out of the gate."

"Well, why don't you go?" said Edith. "I don't want to know what he has got."

"No, I want you to go; now Edith run! I tell you he will be gone."

"I don't care if he is," said Edith getting up very slowly; for she didn't like the task, though Mary's seniority and earnestness prevailed according to custom. "I wish he was, I am sure! What shall I say?"

"Tell him he can't have it—that I am reading it."

By no means resolved to tell him that, or anything, Edith set forth and walked towards the gate; rather sidling along among the haycocks, and in perfect uncertainty what to do. By sundry timid looks, however, she satisfied herself of what she was most willing to believe, that the book in question was not "Sandford and Merton;" so waiting till the gate closed upon the gentleman, returned to her sister.

"Well, what did he say?"

"I didn't ask him—I didn't think it looked like 'Sandford and Merton.'"

"What did it look like? any of my books? my 'Son of a Genius?'"

"I don't know," said Edith.

"Did you go up to him?"

"No, I was afraid to go."

"Afraid!" said Mary. "Well you *are* a nice child to do anything!" and she got up and walked to the house.

All the visitors were gone, but it was too late for a walk.

Mr Rutherford presently came home, and they had tea, and after tea a great romp with the kittens.

Cupid and Bess were in a most flourishing state of health and happiness, and not even the older part of the family could help laughing at their antics ; while the mirth of the children was unmeasured.

Bess would set up her tail in the air, and with a most wild look of ears and eyes catch hold of the green baize with her claws, shake it, then with another set of the tail frisk off, hotly pursued by Cupid—who all this time had lain in close ambush under a chair. Then came a roll and a tumble, a boxing of ears and kicking, a jump off and a standing at defiance, and then another roll and another frisk. Then Mary would lift up one corner of the cloth and throw it over one or both of the kittens, and such a fuss as there was then ! and such a noise when they were released ! The kittens played and the children laughed till bedtime, and neither one nor the other knew how the evening passed.

The next morning, as usual, Edith was out very early among the flowers ; but as she stepped carefully on the border, where her foot would do no harm, to look at a little caper-tree just then in fruit, she was checked by something drawn tight across her forehead—as if the fairy of the caper-tree had put up a light barrier. Edith drew back, and then saw what seemed like a spider's web—all begemmed with dewdrops, and stretching from a rosebush on one side of the caper-tree to a rosebush on the other. But could it be a spider's web ? it looked and felt more like a thread of fine sewing-silk. Her doubts were soon answered ; for looking up a little higher she saw the proprietor of this thread and some others like it, in the shape of a very large and beautiful spider. His body was perhaps as large as a common beetle, and of a bright yellow colour, but with sundry stripes of black and red ; and his legs quite large enough to support it. Edith felt really afraid of him, for though he hung there very peaceably in his web she thought he looked fierce enough. *Mentally* she transferred him to her tin box ; but

as for anything further, she would hardly have ventured to touch him if he had been dead. So she contented herself with gently touching the lowest thread from time to time with her finger, and thinking how very strong it was, how beautiful the spider, and how very little she would like to have him jump upon her. Moreover, she wondered if he had stayed out all night in the dew, and if such remarkable spiders were to be found in anybody's garden but their own. She was just running to call her uncle to see the insect, when she herself was called to breakfast.

At breakfast the children were told that Mrs Lee, a sister of Mrs Rutherford's, was coming to stay a week at Rose Hill. This announcement gave great pleasure, and plenty to talk about.

"Is Aunt Eunice going to bring all her children?" said Mary, as they sat upstairs after breakfast.

"No—only Fulvi. Kitty stays at home to keep house."

"Aunt Esther," said Edith, who had been thinking in very grave silence, "do you like Fulvia? Is she a nice child?"

"What do you think, Edie?"

"I haven't seen her for a great while," said Edith with a considering look. "I don't know—I used to like her very much. But I was thinking of what she did about the gooseberries. Was that right?"

"What did she do about the gooseberries? I am sure I don't know."

"Don't you remember, Aunt Esther, when I was a very little child and told a lie?"

The case was this. When Edith was indeed a very little child, Fulvia Lee paid a visit at Rose Hill; and she and Edith one morning helped Mrs Rutherford to pull the stems off a quantity of gooseberries. Having occasion to go down stairs, Mrs Rutherford left the two children and the dish in the upper hall, bidding them take no more berries, as she thought they had eaten enough. But the temptation was too strong, and Edith took one more—just one,

When Mrs Rutherford came back, she asked if they had touched the fruit ; and upon another temptation Edith answered, though hesitatingly, " No."

" Yes, she did," said Fulvia : " I saw her take one."

There was no need that anybody should say a word more, for Mrs Rutherford's look of sorrow called forth tears enough to be long remembered ; and even now Edith could not speak of the event without a sad face. But though she did not wish that Fulvia had kept silence, her speaking did not quite suit Edith's notions of highmindedness.

They went to walk that afternoon, to see what could be found in the way of curiosities ; and Edith carried a little basket which gave Mary at least one laugh.

" Do you think you will get that basket full of butterflies in one walk ?" she said.

" But I must take something," said Edith.

" Very true," said Mrs Rutherford, " and a basket so small that it would hold only one butterfly would hardly keep that from tumbling out. See, here is something curious already." She had picked up a twig with one or two brown rough-looking nobs on it near the end.

" These little knots of wood !" said Mary. " Oh, Aunt Esther, you are laughing at her now yourself."

" Indeed, I am not ; in the first place they are not knots of wood, and in the second they are very curious."

" Well, what are they, then ?" said Mary, a little impatiently.

" They are oak-galls. Some insects, you know, lay their eggs upon leaves and twigs, but there are others which first make a puncture in the twig or the leaf."

" What is a puncture ?" said Edith.

" If I were to prick your arm with this pin I should make a puncture in it," said her aunt. " The pin would leave a very small hole through the skin. The gall-fly makes such a little hole through the skin of the leaf or the bark of the twig, and in this little hole she deposits an egg ; and the substance of the twig being thus wounded grows out over

the egg, and by degrees covers it entirely ; sometimes with such a rough knob as this, sometimes with a smooth little round ball."

"But what becomes of the egg?" said Mary. "I should think it would spoil it to be covered up with all that stuff"

"It is that very stuff, as you call it, which preserves it. The egg is kept from too much heat, or cold, or wet ; and when the grub is hatched it lives there quite safe through all the stages of its growth, then changes into a chrysalis, and then the little gall-fly eats its way out, and goes to lay its eggs on some other twig. Look, do you see that little hole?"

"Well, that is curious, to be sure," said Mary. "But what does the worm live on in there?"

"On the substance of the gall."

"Here is one without any hole in it," said Edith : "I have turned it round and round."

Mrs Rutherford cut it open, and there, to be sure, was a little worm.

"I wish you had not cut that one, Aunt Esther," said Edith, "though it can't be helped, and I am glad we saw the worm, too ; but I should like to have one with a hole and one without a hole."

The gall was placed in Edith's basket, and they walked on.

"Are galls good for anything?" said Mary.

"Not this kind ; but the oak-galls which are brought from the East Indies, and from those countries that border on the Mediterranean, are very valuable. They are used to make ink, and in dyeing."

"And do they dye things this pretty brown colour?" said Edith.

"No, dear, they dye them black."

The walk had begun with good promise, but as they went on and on, nothing more appeared, though Edith's eyes, and hands too, hunted about on every side. Flowers there were in abundance, but they were not the things most desired at present ; though the beautiful bunches of meadow asclepias,

and the more splendid scarlet hibiscus that grew in a wilderness of wild plants by the water, could not be passed without gathering. There were butterflies, too, in plenty; but they only flitted about in the sunshine and refreshed themselves with sips of honey, in perfect disregard of Edith and her basket; and she could not find it in her heart to be sorry that they were alive and in such comfortable circumstances. But she did sigh a little, once, when she looked from a great swallow-tail down into her basket.

"Cheer up, Edith!" said Mrs Rutherford, smiling, "collectors of curiosities must never be discouraged."

"But I have found nothing, Aunt Esther, only this one gall—and you found that."

"Well, dear, if patience does not give way, it will grow all the stronger for being tried. Disappointments are better than butterflies sometimes, and perhaps we shall find the butterflies to-morrow."

"Well, perhaps we shall," said Edith, trying hard to look bright, and feeling as some other people have done, that if patience be "a good root" it is not a very sweet one. "I suppose people do not generally find a great deal at once. Will you please to hold my flowers, Aunt Esther, because I can't crawl under the fence with my hands so full."

But when Edith had crawled far enough to get exactly under the rails, she called out in a tone of great delight, "Oh, I have found something now! I have found something now! It isn't a butterfly, but it's a beetle! A great yellow beetle, with such shining wings! I think he is dead."

The beetle was dead, and so made no objection to Edith's picking him up; which indeed she did with a carefulness that could not have hurt a live beetle.

"Don't you mean to come out from under the fence, Edith?" said Mary, who by this time had jumped over.

"Yes, I'm coming," said Edith, "but the fence isn't very high—from the ground, I mean. Look! is not he beautiful?"

Even Mary declared he was "quite pretty," and well satisfied now, Edith reached home and ran upstairs for her tin

box. Down she came in a minute again, and asked Mrs Rutherford if she could give her "some little old box."

"Is the tin box full, Edith?"

"No, Aunt Esther, but this gall that you gave me is so heavy I'm afraid it will roll about and break my yellow beetle; and I should like another little box so much."

Mrs Rutherford hunted up an old wafer-box which was just the thing; but as it was thought to be too handsome for the gall, the yellow beetle was shut up there in solitary grandeur.

CHAPTER XIV.

EDITH AND HER COUSIN.

"WILL you come and see me feed the chickens this morning, Uncle Ruth?" said Edith.

"Pray do, Uncle Ruth," said Mary, "it's really curious. Do you know that when Edith stoops down near the coop, some of the chickens jump up on her back."

"And oh, Uncle Ruth!" added Edith; "sometimes all the chickens have run down the bank except one, and when he sees me coming he runs and calls the others, and then they all run home as fast as they can."

"Call each other to breakfast!" said Mr Rutherford, as he followed the children. "That is a likely story!"

"But they really do," said Mary. "I never saw anything so funny."

"There is nobody here now but Brownny," said Edith, as she ran up to the coop. "Chickie, chickie! Now Uncle Ruth, you watch."

Certainly Brownny's behaviour was remarkable. Instead of picking up the meal which Edith threw down by the coop, he ran off to the edge of the bank, at the foot of which the other chickens were disputing themselves; and whether he called to them, or whether his appearance alone was to be considered as the breakfast-bell—a kind of telegraphic de-

spatch that Edith had arrived—it is true that the whole brood came scampering up as fast as little legs and half-grown wings could bring them, and that was pretty fast. And when they had eaten enough, and Edith came and crouched down by the coop, she had a gray chicken on her head and a white one on her shoulder in no time—exactly as Mary had said.

“Uncle Ruth,” said Edith, as they walked back to the house, “do you know that my little bantam-hen made a nest by one of the locust-trees, and there were seven eggs in it ; and yesterday she came off with seven little bantam-chickens, and Garret says she went into the long grass where he couldn’t find her. And now he says he’s afraid to mow there, for fear he should tread on the chickens.”

“He must watch for them to-night,” said Mr Rutherford. “Perhaps the hen will not choose to sleep in the grass, and she may take them back to the nest again.”

It came into Edith’s head that it would be a fine piece of fun to look for the chickens herself ; so she set off for the plat of unmown grass, and Filly went after her.

Filly was a little white dog belonging to the children, and as fond of hay and of play as they were.

By the time Edith reached the place where the hen was supposed to lie hid, she had got into a great frolic with Filly.

It was a nice place for a frolic. All about under foot the cut grass lay in soft masses, now higher, now lower ; while at the edge of this part of the meadow, redtop and clover lifted their pretty heads, untouched as yet by Garret’s scythe, and swayed and swept to and fro as the summer breeze went by on its wanderings. Edith forgot all about the chickens, and began to run races with Filly, and to cover him up with the cut grass ; and then she took a run in the grass that was not cut, and as it was rather long for Filly’s short legs, he went bounding after—taking leaps that were pretty to see ; and no less pretty were his white head, and soft feathery tail, amidst the sunshiny green grass.

All at once Edith heard a queer little noise—not like a

hen cluckling or cackling, but such a noise as a hen might make if she should chance to snore. Edith jumped out into the clear space and looked about her ; and there, cautiously peeping out from among the standing grass, were the red comb and the yellow beak of the little runaway hen.

"Oh, Filly," said Edith, "this will never do!" and then she danced off away from the bantam, and of course Filly, being an unsuspecting little dog, danced after her ; though if he had known what lay hid in the grass he would have danced just the other way, for it would have been his perfect delight to frighten every one of the chickens out of its wits.

But Edith got him away to the house, and when he was safely shut up there she went back with Garret to see after the chickens ; and before long the whole brood with their little feathery-footed mother were in a nice coop. Edith herself caught several of the little downy things, though they hid among the grass till it was hard to find them.

Mrs Lee arrived that night, but so late that the children had little more than time to look at each other and then go to bed. But long before the tired travellers thought of getting up next morning, Edith was on the watch for their first movement ; and as soon as she heard steps in Mrs Lee's room, she begged for admittance.

Fulvia Lee was putting on her shoes and stockings, and Edith stood by to see, with her hands behind her.

"I hope you feel rested," she said, "because we shall want to run about a great deal to-day."

"What for?" said Fulvia, who, being a city child, had but limited ideas of running about.

"Because it is pleasant!" said Edith ; "and to find things. Have you got any green shoes?"

"No," said Fulvia.

"Uncle Ruth bought me a pair last week."

"I have got some red ones," said Fulvia.

"Have you?" said Edith ; "I daresay they must be very pretty. Are they pink or red?"

"Red," said Fulvia ; "they're quite as red as mamma's shawl."

Edith thought something less red would suit her taste better, but she only said, "Did you ever see any purple butterflies?"

"No," said Fulvia again. "I saw two butterflies once, but they were yellow."

"I'm so glad you have come!" said Edith, "for now we can look for things together; you shall keep all you find and I'll keep all I find, that will be fair. Don't you like yellow beetles very much?"

"I don't know what they are."

"Well, they are like—no, they are not like a butterfly either, but they have hard shiny wings, and such sharp feet! my yellow beetle always sticks to my hands when I take him up."

"I shouldn't like them then," said Fulvia.

"Oh yes, you would, very much, because they are beautiful. They are dead, you know, they couldn't hurt you. I shouldn't like a live one, either."

"Shall we find any purple butterflies?" said Fulvia.

"Oh yes!" said Edith. "At least I have not found any yet, but I hope we shall. Have you any little chickens?"

"I haven't got any—I have seen them."

"Well, I have a great many,—at least, I have seven of my own, and Uncle Ruth lets me feed his."

"Who gave you yours?" said Fulvia.

"Grandmamma gave me two old little white ones, when I went to Cleaveland, and the hen made a nest under a tree, and now she has seven chickens. She took them into the grass, and we had such work to find them! and Filly almost found them too."

"Who is Filly?"

"My little dog—at least, our little dog—Mary's and mine."

"I mean to have some chickens when I go home," said Fulvia. "I have two pigeons now."

"Pigeons!" said Edith; "oh, they are beautiful. Henry said he would bring us some next time he came. Are yours fantail pigeons?"

"I think not," said Fulvia. "What are fantail pigeons?"

"They have very curious tails," said Edith, "they stretch them out just like a fan. I saw some at Mr Grandin's. Oh, I wish you had been there! We saw some silk-worms too; but I'll show you my cocoon. And Aunt Esther says that perhaps we shall go to Cleaveland while you are here, and then we shall have such fun!"

"Where is Cleaveland?" said Fulvia, whose imagination could hardly keep up with Edith's rapid stream of delights, past, present, and future.

"My grandmother lives there," said Edith, "and it is a beautiful place, and she has got a great many shells."

"So have I," said Fulvia. "I have a box full. A man who had been in a ship a great way off, picked them up, and he gave them to me. I have got some coral, too."

"I have a coral necklace," said Edith. "Now shall we go and feed the chickens? Oh no, it will be too wet. But we can kneel in the chairs by the window, and I will show you where the coops are. I'll go, and you come when you are ready."

"I'm all ready now," said Fulvia.

"But you haven't said your prayers yet," said Edith, stopping short.

"No," said Fulvia. "I don't always; sometimes I do, and sometimes I forget them."

"Well, but you don't forget them now," said Edith.

"No," said Fulvia. "Oh, come! I don't want to wait now."

"But you do want a great many other things," said Edith. "You want to be well, and to have a pleasant day, and you don't want to say or do anything naughty. I think it is very disagreeable to feel naughty, don't you? And Aunt Esther says we can't help it unless God helps us."

And leaving Fulvia half persuaded of the benefits of saying her prayers, at least when she did not forget, Edith went down stairs and waited for her in the parlour window.

After breakfast, Mr and Mrs Salisbury arrived, and as they had come to spend the day, the horse was taken out of the gig and put to refresh himself in the stable, and the gig was left under the willow tree.

When Edith had told all the news about the bantams, and had eaten several pears from her grandmother's basket, she drew Fulvia out of the room.

"Come," she said, "now we will go and sit in the gig."

"But I'm afraid of the horses," said Fulvia.

"Why, there are not any horses there," said Edith, "there never was but one to begin with."

"I saw three in the stable," said Fulvia.

"But the gig is not in the stable—I mean grandpapa's gig, down under the willow-tree."

So they ran to the willow-tree and clambered into the gig.

Whoever has seen this little vehicle with no horse attached, will remember that the shafts rest upon the ground, so that the seat is in anything but a horizontal position; and this gig was just like all others. It tilted up behind in the most remarkable manner, and why the children liked to stay there is a mystery, but like it they did; and though they slipped and slid off the seat, while the smooth oil-cloth on the floor kept their feet slipping and sliding as well—there they stayed; and talked and jumped in and out until dinner was ready.

"Where have you been all the morning?" said Mr Salisbury, as the two children came in with glowing and happy faces: "hunting chickens, or choking the cat?"

"Oh no, grandpapa," said Edith, "we have been playing in the gig."

"In the gig! Why, child, I should not think you could stay there two minutes. You could not sit on the seat, I am positive."

"Oh yes, we did," said Edith. "At least, sometimes we stood up, but sometimes we sat down too."

After dinner the children played in the garret for a while, and by the time they were tired of dolls and swinging, Mrs Rutherford gave them each a string of blue and a string of red beads, which she had just found in her drawer.

Here was work enough for the rest of the day. The strings were immediately cut, and then began the business

of re-stringing. It was not easy to get the right sort of needle, for one that was large enough for the thread was too large for the beads ; and many were the wishes expressed for a horse-hair, which Mary said would go through any beads that ever were heard of. But this difficulty was got over and the work went on swimmingly. The beads were strung and re-strung in all sorts of fancy patterns—two blue and one red, and two red and one blue, or five red and three blue, or a blue necklace with red stars. Then Edith concluded that she preferred simplicity, and her beads were left in one long string of two and two ; while Fulvia chose the still simpler style of one and one.

Then Edith's string broke, and the beads went rolling over the floor, several of them watching their opportunity to slip into a mouse-hole or a crack, so that Edith could by no means get them all again. And then Fulvia very generously offered to give Edith some of hers, which Edith would not hear of ; and when they were at last all in order again, Mary came and proposed that they should make some earrings for Miss Jenkins. Then little short pieces of thread were filled with beads, and tied so as to make a loop ; and several of these loops fastened together made the earring. The great difficulty was how they should be worn, for Miss Jenkins had no very perceptible ears ; but Mary undertook to manage that ; and when she had thrust a crooked pin into each side of the doll's head, where her ears ought to have been, the bead loops hung on well enough, and Miss Jenkins was adorned—at least the children thought so.

“What shall we do now ?” said Fulvia, when tea was over, and Mr and Mrs Salisbury had gone. “We must do something, Edith, because I don't want to get sleepy. Mamma would make me go to bed.”

“I would just as soon go to bed as not,” said Edith.

“But you mustn't go till I do. Let us sit down in the corner, and you tell me a fairy-tale.”

“Oh, I don't know any,” said Edith. “Mary knows a great many, and she tells them to me sometimes. But she won't come now—she is reading. I know some hymns.”

"So do I," said Fulvia; "and I know some little poetry stories. Come, you begin."

"No, you must begin," said Edith, stroking her frock off her lap with great satisfaction.

"Well, I'll begin then," said Fulvia. "It is a story about a little cat and a bird's nest."

"Oh, that must be beautiful," said Edith. "Who taught it to you?"

"My cousin, and she said it was all true."

"Pussy! pussy! mischievous cat!
What in the world would you be at?
Ah, come away,
Pussy, I pray!

"A bird in that hawthorn has her nest;
See what a flutter is in her breast!
Poor little thing,
She fears your spring.

"The fruit of many an hour's toil,
Your little savage paw would spoil.
Leave it alone
Till the young are flown.

"For, pussy, you have enough to eat—
Plenty of other food just as sweet.
It's a shame to kill
When you've had your fill.

"'Tis not of much use to talk to a cat.
A very few mornings after that
The nest was torn,
The old bird forlorn."

"What is forlorn?" said Edith.

"Mamma said it meant that the bird had not anything left in the world that she cared about."

"Why, did the cat eat *all* the young birds?" said Edith.

"Yes, every one of them."

"I hope my cat won't do so," said Edith, thoughtfully.
"Oh, I think that poetry is perfectly *beautiful*!"

"It is perfectly time to go to bed," said Mrs Lee, coming up to their corner.

"Oh but, mamma," said Fulvia, "Edith hasn't said her hymn yet."

"Well, she may say it now then, and I can hear it too."

"I don't know which to choose," said Edith, "but I suppose you would like them all."

"I think when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How He call'd little children as lambs to His fold,
I should like to have been with Him then.

"I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arms had been thrown around me,
That I might have seen His kind look when He said,
'Let the little ones come unto Me.'

"Yet still to His footstool in prayer I may go,
And ask for a share in His love ;
And if I thus earnestly seek Him below
I shall see Him and hear Him above :

"In that beautiful place He has gone to prepare
For all who are wash'd and forgiven ;
And many dear children are gathering there,
For of such is the kingdom of heaven."

CHAPTER XV.

GOING PLEASURING.

THEY went to Cleaveland. Mrs Lee and Mrs Rutherford on the back seat of the carriage, Mary and Mr Rutherford on the front ; while the no-particular seat between each two was well filled by Fulvia and Edith.

A beautiful day it was, with a clear north wind and fast-driving white clouds ; the trees bending and swaying, and all the bonnet-ribbons in the carriage in a most animated flutter, and Edith's little white tippet sometimes blowing entirely round ; at which feat the children all laughed as heartily as if it had been something very funny, and quite unheard of heretofore.

Then Edith showed Fulvia the precise spot where she had dropped her parasol, and Mary pointed out the old house where the robbers used to live. The very horses seemed to catch the spirit of the day, and snorted and tossed their heads as if they too were going visiting.

There was great anxiety to see who would have the first glimpse of the old chimneys; and when they reached the gate, without waiting for Michael to close it and remount, Mr Rutherford drove straight on to the house himself, the wheels making a delightful sound on the gravel as they went.

The peacock's feather was sought for immediately, and found—over the old looking-glass in the parlour. With that Edith and Fulvia amused themselves till dinner was ready.

“Where is Fulvia, Aunt Esther?” said Edith, who, by the time her turn came to be helped, had discovered that her little companion was not at the table. “Where is Fulvia? I thought I saw her by Aunt Eunice.”

“Your aunt sent her to dine in the next room, because the table was so full.”

“Oh, she will be very lonely there all alone,” said Edith. “May I go and eat my dinner in the other room too?”

“To be sure, if you wish.”

So Edith got down from her chair, and taking the large dinner-plate (she had no mind to leave that) in both hands, and it was all that both could do to carry it, she marched off to join Fulvia in her temporary banishment, and they ate their dinner together very contentedly.

Then they went out, and Edith displayed all the wonders of the place, dwelling at large upon the varied and marvellous excellences of every tree, and flower, and shrub. Suddenly they came upon a little basket waggon, standing empty among the trees.

“Oh, see there!” cried Fulvia; “now we can ride.”

“But I wonder whose it is,” said Edith.

“I think it is that lady's who has the baby,” said Fulvia; “the lady that wears such a great many yellow ribbons on her cap.”

"Well, we can get in, at any rate," said Edith; "we shan't hurt the waggon, if it is that lady's."

"But we can't both get in," said Fulvia.

"Oh yes, we can; you get in first and sit on that seat! now curl up your feet and I'll get in. Have you got room enough?" she said, when they had fidgeted for a while as well as they could for want of room.

"I have not much," said Fulvia; "I think if we were in mamma's trunk, now, the top wouldn't shut down."

Both children laughed very heartily at this conceit.

"I think it wouldn't," said Edith, "there would be too much in it—two frocks and two aprons too many. Is it not pretty to see the trees hang down all round us so?"

"Yes," said Fulvia; "but what makes them hang down?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Edith. "How nice it is here; it won't tumble our frocks much, and it is so pleasant. Don't you think this is a pretty house?"

"Yes," said Fulvia; "but not so pretty as yours—I would rather be there."

"Oh no, it is not so pretty as ours; I should think nobody's house is; but I like to be here though. Are your feet very warm?"

"Yes, and I can't move them a bit."

"Well, let us get out then, and I'll show you some more things. Oh! there are the hydrangeas; see, they are in those boxes, and they have pink flowers; and sometimes people put stuff on the ground and then the flowers are blue—no, they are pink—I forget which it is, but they are different, somehow. I think they are beautiful, don't you?"

"Yes," said Fulvia; "are they grandmamma's?"

"Why, she isn't your grandmamma, she is mine," said Edith, quite forgetting the ownership of the hydrangeas to assert her own claim to Mrs Salisbury.

"But she is mine, too?" said Fulvia.

"I don't know," said Edith; "but she *can't* be yours!—she is mine, you know."

At this clear summing up of the evidence, the children met Mary, and Edith proposed that they should visit the pigs.

"They are not pretty," said Mary; "I have been to look at them; there are no little ones, but only two ugly big ones. Let us go to the granary, and build cob-houses."

And away they all ran to the granary; and with hard labour of three pair of hands they had soon reared a most imposing cob edifice—not perhaps like any other house that ever was built, but still "very fine."

"Now, if we could only set fire to it," said Mary, "it would make such a splendid blaze."

"Let us go and ask grandpapa if we may," said Edith, and off they all ran again, out of breath with eagerness and the expected conflagration. But Mr Salisbury looked grave at the proposal.

"Will you pay for my granary, if you burn it down?" he said.

"Why, no, grandpapa! but we don't want to burn down the granary—it is only our cob-house."

"Only your cob-house made of my cobs," said he. "Well, you are welcome to them, so far as that goes. But did you never hear of one house setting another on fire?"

"But this is so little, and the granary is so big," urged the children.

"And how far is the little house from the big one?—as far as I am from the window?"

"Oh no," said Mary, "as far off as the mantel-piece."

"I don't think it will do," said he, shaking his head; "but look round, Edith, and tell me what you see on the table."

"I don't see anything but tea-things, grandpapa. Oh, you mean tea is ready."

"Precisely, and that is better than cob-houses, any day. So now we will have tea, and to-morrow will find a substitute for the fire—we may try some water instead."

It was decided that next morning they should all set off for the shell-banks. Mary begged that she might go in the coach with Mr and Mrs Salisbury, and the rest were to go in their own carriage.

The morning was beautiful, and the horses were stamping at the front door at the very minute for which they were

ordered. Mary provided herself with a book, and entered the coach in a very satisfied state of mind ; and she looked so particularly comfortable there, that perhaps Edith might have begged to go in the coach too, if she had not remembered Fulvia. And besides, to say truth, it was not a little doubtful whether Mary's feet would willingly give up the second half of the front seat, of which they had immediately taken possession. However, if she had more room than Edith, she had not so much fresh air, and she could not look about so well ; but probably with her book she did not care much about that.

Edith cared about it and so did Fulvia : both children were as wide awake as they could be, watching and rejoicing in every new thing.

By degrees the country changed as they drove on : meadows were lost in sand-banks and the road itself became sandy, so that the feet of the horses sunk deep at every step. Then came the sea-breeze, fresh with the smell of the salt water ; and now and then the water itself could be seen, far away beyond the sandbanks.

"I fear the tide will be in when we get there," said Mr Rutherford, "and then we shall see no oysters to-night."

"Where do oysters come from, Uncle Ruth ?" said Edith.

"From the bottom of the water—there they live and grow fat."

"But how do people know where they are ?"

"Sometimes I suppose they are found by accident, sometimes by a search in what seem promising places. Often the fishermen make oyster beds for themselves. What would you think of planting oysters ?"

"I should like it," said Fulvia, "for then I could have as many as I wanted."

"Yes, if they didn't die," said Edith. "My flowers die sometimes when I plant them."

"Planting oysters is done in a very different way. The fishermen take a peculiar net, which is fastened to three slender bits of iron, and drag it along the bottom of the sea so that the oysters are forced into it.

"Then when they draw up the net, they find old shells, and bits of wood and stone with the young oyster brood fastened to them. These shells and stones the men throw into some creek or arm of the sea, and there the little oysters, which are very, very small at first, grow and fatten, and in two or three years are large enough for you to eat."

"For you, Uncle Ruth," said Edith—"I like the little ones best. But do the oysters stick fast to these stones when they grow up?"

"I cannot answer for all grown-up oysters," said Mr Rutherford, smiling, "but I believe they are generally found holding fast to something solid and substantial; and often the shells lose their natural shape and take that of the rock or sea-plant to which they cling."

"Uncle Ruth," said Edith after a pause, and speaking rather doubtfully, "what kind of things are oysters?"

"What kind of things?—very good things, I think."

"But I mean," said Edith, "have they got any sense—do they know anything?"

"Enough for all their purposes. An oyster knows that he must open his shell when the tide is coming in, and shut it when the tide is going out. It is said too, by people who know more of them than I do, that oysters are very sensitive to sounds, smells, and light. It is certain that if you sprinkle salt on one that is out of water, he will immediately open his shell; and fishermen say that in clear water you can see the oysters close their shells when the shadow of a boat passes over them."

By this time the carriages had reached the little shell-bank hotel, and the children were eager to go at once to the beach to look for curious things; for Edith had some hope that she might find more than shells.

Michael was the first person who picked up anything, and his prize was an immense conch shell, which he brought and presented to Edith; although it was not only very ugly, but as much as she could well lift. Edith felt doubtful of its being "a shell" at all; and by Mary's advice she laid it quietly down on the sand again, after Michael had gone away.

They walked about for a long time, and Mr Rutherford showed the children a star-fish, which he said was the oyster's worst enemy; and he explained to them how it clasps its rays round the shell of the oyster and remains there until the oyster is dead; after which the shell opens, and the star-fish can eat the fish at his leisure.

Pretty shells were not plentiful—the children were fain to content themselves with a few tiny clam and scallop shells—valuable for the same reason as the brown bug of the locust-tree—and one or two mussels which Edith admired for their fine blue colour; and then they walked back to tea and oysters.

The hotel was full; one large room was all that could be had, and in that the ladies and the children bestowed themselves, while the gentlemen were to sleep somewhere and somehow upon sofas. This room, however, was well supplied with beds, and among the rest there were two cots for Mary and Edith—who thought it a remarkable piece of good fortune. Mary especially went whisking about the room, talking and laughing in a state of great excitement, and at last sprang upon her cot with so much energy that “down came lullaby, baby and all,” as the song says,—Mary and the cot lay on the floor.

Nothing was hurt, however, except the cot, but that was a ruin; and there was no help for it—Edith must give up her cot to Mary and creep into some little place in the large bed.

But they were all too tired to lie awake, and the first half of the night passed off very quietly. Then Edith waked in a violent fit of crying, which of course aroused the rest. What could be the matter?

It was not easy to find out; and the child's grief, though unaccountable, was so very heart-felt, that Mrs Lee and Mrs Rutherford cried for sympathy. At last Edith found words to tell, that she had dreamed her father came to life, and that he looked like Uncle Ruth, and that he died again.

“And he said,” added Edith bursting into another fit of

tears, "he said that Mary had killed him because she wouldn't study her lessons!"

It was long before Edith could be soothed and comforted, and then she rather sobbed herself to sleep.

But the effects of the dream were pretty well slept off before morning, and after another meal of oysters and another walk after shells, the whole party set out for home.

"I declare," said Mr Salisbury, when they had driven a few miles, "I never remembered that broken bedstead!—however, I shall be there again in a week or two, and the man certainly added enough to the proper amount of his bill, to pay for two or three bedsteads."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE END OF THE SUMMER.

"UNCLE RUTH," said Edith, as they sat at breakfast one morning about a week after Mrs Lee and Fulvia had taken their departure, "isn't it very wrong for spiders to kill flies?"

"What had we for dinner yesterday?" was her uncle's strange reply.

"Why, I don't know, Uncle Ruth. Oh yes, you said it was mutton. But then I was talking about the spiders."

"And I am talking about the mutton. Do you know where it comes from, and how we get it?"

"Yes," said Edith, with a grave face, "I remember you told me once;" and then after a pause she added, "Ah! but we must have dinner, Uncle Ruth."

"And so must the spider."

"Then it is right for him to catch flies?"

"To be sure it is—just as right as for your chickens to catch grasshoppers. You never thought they were doing wrong, did you?"

"Oh no," said Edith, "but Garret says it makes them grow fat."

"And are spiders in duty bound to keep themselves thin?"

said Mr Rutherford, laughing. "Then there's your cat, Edith—what do you think of that mouse she caught yesterday?"

"I know," said Edith, "and Fulvia says her cousin's cat caught ever so many birds."

"And so will yours, I have no doubt."

"It is very bad," said Edith, "I don't like to think about it. But then, Uncle Ruth, I would a great deal rather see the chickens eat, than the spiders; I don't like to see the flies caught—it is disagreeable."

"That is partly because you do not like the spiders, I fancy," said Mr Rutherford, "and don't care whether they have anything to eat or not; though I must confess that to see an insect caught in a trap and then slain and eaten in cold blood, is more disagreeable than to see it picked up and swallowed at a mouthful. But, what put all this in your little head?"

"Why, Uncle Ruth, yesterday Mary and I went over to Mrs Delue's, and we went up into their garret to see Maria's playthings; and Theodore came up too, and he caught all the flies he could find and put them into a great spider's web that was there. And Mary said he ought not to do so, and he said he ought, and that spiders wanted to eat just as much as anything else. And then I wondered whether they ought to have anything to eat, and whether it was right to catch flies for them."

"Spiders certainly want to eat," replied Mr Rutherford, "and they do no wrong in spinning their webs and eating all they can catch; but I think we must stop there. I should be very sorry to amuse myself with killing anything—even grasshoppers for the fattening of the bantams, Edith. So we may let the spiders provide their own dinner."

"Are spiders of any use?" said Mary. "I mean, does anything eat them?"

"Yes; birds, and some large insects—wasps for example. If you were to open the nest of a kind of mason wasp, you would find a number of imprisoned spiders—put there for the young grub to feed on when it is first hatched."

"Uncle Ruth," said Edith, "you remember that great yellow spider—oh no—you did not see it—but its web was so strong! I think it was stronger than the silk thread you showed me at Mr Grandin's."

"Well?" said Mr Rutherford.

"Well, Uncle Ruth—why don't people make spiders spin for them, and let them be of some use?"

"I don't know how one could *make* a spider spin," said Mr Rutherford, "but people have tried the experiment of shutting them up in cages, and then using the silk which they spun for themselves."

"And was it good, did it make nice things?"

"Very nice things of some kinds—such as required only a short thread. But the plan did not work very well, for the spiders sometimes left spinning and took to eating each other up."

"That is just like them!" said Edith. "Do you know, Uncle Ruth, the other day I found a spider's web on a currant bush, and there were two yellow butterflies' wings in it! and they were all broken, too."

"Oh, ho!" said Mr Rutherford. "So now we have the source of this little *jet-d'eau* of indignation against spiders. Well, to come from them to ourselves, I am going to Courtland next week, and I think you had all better go too. What do you say?"

Everybody liked the plan very much, and the children immediately began to make additional little plans of their own.

"I'll ask grandmamma to take me to town and buy us each a basket," said Mary, "we must have something to carry books and everything in."

"And, Uncle Ruth," said Edith, "won't you please to bring us home a very little candy to put in our baskets? because we might be *very* hungry on the boat."

"And as the baskets are to carry everything, they must have everything to carry," said her uncle, smiling. "The candy shall be forthcoming, Edie, I promise you."

This was Friday, and they were to go the following Tues-

day. Of course all had to be busy ; at least Mrs Rutherford had, and the children were or fancied themselves equally occupied.

That day Michael brought home a bundle, and it proved to be made up of sundry pairs of socks, striped with all the colours of the rainbow ; not up and down, but round and round—something like what worsted workers call *chené*.

“ Sit down and try them on, Edie,” said Mrs Rutherford, handing her a pair of which the prevailing colours were fawn and blue.

“ But they are not mine,” said Edith.

“ Do you think they would fit me ? ” said Mrs Rutherford, holding out her foot. “ Why, Edith, did not you know that your old socks were worn out ? ”

Edith sat down on the floor without more delay, and the two bare feet were quickly succeeded by two encased in the *chené* socks. Edith curled and uncurled her toes with great satisfaction.

“ They are so nice ! ” she said, “ so soft and warm. I think I like this pair best. Oh, I don't know either—there is one with pink stripes—and another with purple. Now, Aunt Esther, which do you think prettiest ? ”

“ I advise you not to like one better than the rest,” said Mrs Rutherford, smiling ; “ because if you preferred the blue you might not properly enjoy the pink—or a recollection of the pink might efface the glory of the purple.”

Edith laughed and pulled off the blue socks that they might be marked with the others.

The baskets were got, and pretty they were ; both alike, of green and white wicker-work, only Mary's was somewhat the larger. This was Monday ; and in the afternoon Mr Rutherford brought home a paper of candy that far exceeded Edith's modest request for “ a very little.”

It was delightful to pack the new baskets ; to expend a great deal of trouble and ingenuity in making things lie close, where there was room enough for them to lie as they would.

“ What book shall I take, Aunt Esther ? ” said Edith.

“ I would not take any, my dear.”

"But Mary is going to take one; she has got 'Rose and Emily' in her basket."

"Well take one, then, though I do not believe you will read much. Take that little red book that lies on your shelf; what is the name of it?"

"Oh, my 'Grateful Tribute,' that is the very thing."

"I will put this at the bottom," said Edith, pulling out of her basket the little handkerchief, and the little bottle of Cologne, and the small paper of candy, "it will go best there."

"But then you will have to unpack all your basket when you want to read," said Mary.

"Well, where shall I put it?" said Edith; "if I put it on the top, the cover does not shut tight, because the book is so square; and besides, then I should have to unpack my basket to get at the candy."

"I advise you to pack the basket just in the way you think best," said her aunt; "consider and judge for yourself."

So, after a great deal of consideration and trying, Edith laid the little square book at the bottom, and the paper of candy upon that; while the little space at one end of the basket held the Cologne bottle, and the little space at the other the pocket-handkerchief. And the cover shut down tight, and Edith felt perfectly satisfied.

Then, before she went to bed, she put on a chair everything she would want in the morning; the dress, and the gloves, and the clean trousers and stockings. The last thing was to set the little basket there too, as if that could possibly be forgotten!

Tuesday morning rose very dark; which was indeed no fault of the morning—for sky and stars were as clear as could be—but only of those people who would get up before it was light.

Edith had no mind to be of the number, and it was not until "Wake up, Edith!" had been several times repeated, that she opened her eyes. Then she upstarted and had pulled off her nightcap in a moment, after which she pro-

ceeded to wake up at her leisure and to ask questions ; for the moving lights and figures about her were somewhat bewildering.

"What is the matter, Aunt Esther ? does it rain ? are not we going ?"

"If you can resolve to get up," said her aunt. "I should not like to go and leave you in bed."

"But what makes it so dark ?"

"What makes it so dark ? Why, because it is not light yet. The sun is not thinking of getting up any more than you are."

"It seems I am not the only person who can lie in bed," observed Mary.

"Especially at four o'clock in the morning," said her aunt.

Edith was out of bed directly. "How I like to dress by candle-light !" she said.

"Yes, it is pleasant enough, sometimes," said Mary.

"Aunt Esther," said Edith, pausing with one black shoe held ready for her foot, "have you put my green shoes in the trunk ?"

"Yes, and the green shoestrings."

"Ah, you need not laugh at me—I thought perhaps you might forget to put them in, and then I might want them."

Breakfast was ready before people were ready to eat it, but as nobody wanted to eat a great deal, they had time enough. Only of course everybody was in a hurry after breakfast—Mr Rutherford supposing they should be left, and one trunk refusing to be locked ; and then they were driving off very fast. Both baskets were tightly grasped lest they should run away—both little faces wore a look of complete satisfaction.

It was too dark to see porpoises as they crossed the ferry that morning, and I doubt whether people who were on a journey to Courtland would have thought them worth looking at. The thing most to be desired was that the boat should make haste, and that the horses should trot as fast as possible across the city. It was all done in good time, and they were on the deck of the *Morpheus* full ten minutes before the last bell rang.

Not idle minutes those. All of the human race that one could see were hurrying about in a most confused state of mind ; and the boat herself was puffing off steam, but in a more regular and business-like fashion ; while her paddles dashed forward and then back, and as if she were only withheld by the creaking cables from starting forth on her way. There was a minute of great noise and bustle—the cables were slipped from the great wharf posts—and “Now we are off!” cried Mary, while Edith stood silently watching how fast the wharf sailed away, and what a long line of foam there was between them already. Singling out one particular wave in the boat’s wake, she tried to keep her eye on it ; and by the time she had so chosen about twenty and lost them every one, Edith felt sure that the thing was impossible.

By this time, too, she was tired, and wanted a seat, but not one could be found ; she had chosen to watch the foam, and other people had chosen to take the chairs. What was to be done ? Edith was really tired ; and besides, if she stood up how could she read her “Grateful Tribute,” or eat candy, or, in fact, do anything else ? and to sit on Mr Rutherford’s lap was almost as bad, and the half of Mary’s stool was not very inviting, for there was no back to it.

“I’ll go and look for a chair,” said Edith ; “there may be one standing behind somebody.”

“I am afraid there will be somebody in it,” said Mrs Rutherford ; “but you may look, if you won’t go out of sight.”

And Edith looked and looked. She picked her way round about among the crowd, stepping over some people’s feet, and other people’s umbrellas ; now brought up short by a carpet-bag, and now by an immense wicker-basket. The people not only had the chairs, but they had the floor too, and some had more chairs than one. But as grown-up people always think that children can do without the comforts and conveniences of life, no lady moved her book and parasol, and no gentleman his boots from one of those extra chairs which Edith would have liked so much

"What do you want, my dear?" inquired another gentleman who had just come from the forward-deck. "What are you looking for?"

"For a chair, sir," said Edith; "everybody has got one but me—I wish there was just one more."

"I dare say there is one more," said the gentleman, smiling. "You have not looked all over the boat, have you?"

"Oh no, sir. Aunt Esther told me not to go out of sight, so I have only looked on this side and a little bit on the other."

"Come with me and we will look further," said the gentleman; and after a glance towards Mrs Rutherford to make sure that she saw the proceeding, Edith followed her new acquaintance very willingly. He found her a chair after a very short search; not indeed an unoccupied one, but as it held only *part* of somebody, that part was dislodged with a courteous "By your leave, sir;" and whether patent leather boots liked the floor or no, Edith liked her chair and was very glad of it; though when the gentleman had placed it for her by Mrs Rutherford, he hardly stayed long enough for her to thank him. And there she and Mary sat for the rest of the day, and read their books and ate candy by turns.

Night found them both asleep in the Mervyn hotel at Courtland.

During the first two days it rained; and as they had little to do within doors, Mary proposed that Edith should have a new book to help to pass away the time. But when Mr Rutherford had brought a pretty little "Vacations at Home," with a marbled cover and red back, a new difficulty arose.

"I'll read it aloud to you, Edith," said Mary.

"But I would rather read it to myself," said Edith.

"Oh no, this is much the best way, and then you see we can both read it at once."

"Well, you read it first and I'll wait," said Edith.

"But I can't do that, because it is your book," said Mary, "I'll read it to you."

"I would a great deal rather read it to myself," said Edith, "but you may read it aloud if you wish."

The book was a great amusement, even read aloud; and when the children were tired of that, they amused themselves by running up and down the wide hall of the hotel, but softly, so as not to disturb other people.

One day after it had cleared up, Edith was playing there when the head-waiter came by. He had taken a great fancy to her, and now he stopped and took her up in his arms, and asked her if she had ever seen any ducks, and if she would like to see some?

"No," Edith said, "she had never seen any; but she would like to see them very much. Did they look like bantams?"

Forsyth laughed, and telling her she should see, he carried her down into the yard, where were ever so many ducks—white and purple and green and black. Edith thought they were quite splendid.

"But what do they keep them shut up here for?" she said. "I should think they would not like it."

"They won't be shut up here long," said Forsyth; "you will see some of them on the table for dinner."

"For dinner?" said Edith. "Are they going to kill all those pretty ducks?"

"Every one of them."

Edith was like the little girl in the fairy tale—"she turned away her head and wished herself at home,"—and Forsyth took her up-stairs again.

"Aunt Esther!" she exclaimed, as soon as she reached their own room, "don't eat any ducks for dinner!"

"May not I eat a small piece of one?" said her aunt.

"Oh no, indeed you mustn't," said Edith, "because they are all running about the yard now! I saw them, and they looked so pretty."

"Why, where have you been, Edith? and what is all this about ducks? There are a great many ducks running about in different places."

"Forsyth took me down to see some ducks," exclaimed Edith, "and I liked them so much, and he said we should have them all for dinner."

"When I shall like them very much," said her aunt.

"Why, Edith, my dear, all the ducks you ever tasted were alive once—did you not know that? Have you forgotten about the spider's dinner and ours?"

"No," said Edith, "but these ducks were so pretty, and I never saw any before, and they have such bright eyes. I wouldn't eat one for anything."

"Well, perhaps we shall not have a chance after all."

And whatever was the reason, no ducks appeared on the dinner-table, and Edith certainly enjoyed her dinner the more for their absence. With the dessert came on large dishes of fine plums, and a gentleman near Mrs Rutherford took a purple one and a white one and offered them to Edith. But whether she thought she had had her share already, or whether some of the fear with which she regarded the gentleman was transferred to the plums, I do not know; but she steadily refused to take them, and even put her face down in her aunt's lap for very shyness. Thereupon the plums were offered to Mary, who took them at once; and then Edith began to think she had been very foolish.

"Edith," said Mary, that evening after tea, "I have got a letter for you in my basket."

"A letter for me!" said Edith: "who can it be from?"

"It is from Cupid Gray," said Mary, "who lives at the sign of the hearth-rug."

"Why, she is not gray," said Edith, when they had both laughed; "her name ought to be White."

"No, it is Gray," said Mary; "Cupid Gray and Bessie White."

"But where did you get the letter?" said Edith.

"Never mind," said Mary; "I got it—somewhere. Now sit still and I'll read it to you."

"It looks just like your writing!" said Edith, peering over to look at the letter.

"Hush!" said Mary. "Of course, if anybody taught the cats to write, I did. Now, Edith, sit still!"

So Edith sat still, only her eyes sparkled very much as Mary read:—

"My much-loved friend, what makes you stay
So long from home and me away?
It makes my heart with sorrow burn;
I fear that you will ne'er return.
I have but one friend left, and she
Is busy oft, nor thinks of me.
Why aren't you here to plead my cause
Against the rigorous dairy laws?
To shelter me beneath your chair;
And when you can't protect me there,
Out of the window quick to throw,
Or make me to the garret go?
About the barn there are strange cats,
Who make sad havoc of the rats;
So that when I go over there,
I cannot even get my share.
And mice are scarce, and things in feather
Are thought too precious altogether
For cats to eat. Upon my word,
One day I caught a tiny bird;
But scarce had I my prey half shaken,
When from me it was roughly taken!
A chicken then I thought to try—
But Biddy on me had her eye,
And quick before I was aware
Her namesake scream'd, and she was there!
Your tender heart it would have grieved
To see the blows that I received.
But I of woes will say no more,
Though of them I've a plenteous store.
Beneath the honeysuckle bush I lie,
And think of you, and watch the sky,
And wash my face and smell the clover,
And take the sunshine in all over.
With every breeze my hairs now float,
And soon I'll have a bran new coat;
My eyes are as the gooseberry green,
And redder nose was never seen.
Writing so long has tired my paw,
And scarcely can I move a claw.
Come back again my head to tap—
To let me rest upon your lap—

To help me when all angry get—
Come back once more to see your pet.
Hoping my note may not prove stupid,
I sign myself,

YOUR LITTLE CUPID."

"Oh ! that is splendid !" said Edith, laughing and clapping her hands. "But Bess ought to have written too."

"Yes, but Bess's letter was private and confidential."

A week had been spent at Courtland in walking and driving, and then the family set out for their own home ; and Mary longed for her pet books again, and Edith for her chickens and kitten ; and to wonder how she could have been so glad to leave them.

CHAPTER XVII.

WINTER QUARTERS.

IN one of the streets of the great city there may yet be seen a large hotel, which was an old building when Edith was a little child. It was built of gray stone, and had chimneys enough for a whole row of houses, and as many windows as if it meant to take in all the sunbeams for its own use. But the sunbeams did not choose to go. They liked better to dance on the weathercocks of the tall church steeples, and to run up and down the sides of the houses, and to lie on the pavement. They never even glanced upon some of the hotel windows, and at others there were blinds and thick curtains that it was too much trouble to get past ; and there were still others where the sunbeams really went in but did not stay,—there was no "trap to catch" them.

There was, however, one large room in the hotel upon which the sun looked with particular approbation ; and this room Mr Rutherford had chosen for a winter parlour. A thick brown carpet covered the floor, and the curtains were brown, and the chair-covers,—not a dull dingy colour, but

the sort of brown glow that the sun gives to a ripe butter-nut. The cloth upon the table was red.

Next to this room were two neat bedrooms which opened into each other, and this was the whole establishment, except a little room for Janet somewhere.

For sometime the brown parlour had been quite shut up ; but one morning early in December, though it was late enough in the morning, the shutters were opened and the fire was made ; and then Timon—who was the man in charge of that part of the house—went and looked out of the window. Presently the fire roared out to him to come and take the blower off ; and when Timon had carefully turned the rug wrong side up, he went away and locked the door after him.

The coal blazed on by itself then, and the curtains brightened up and looked quite sociable, and even went so far as to cast reflections upon the carpet because it lay there on the floor. But the carpet knew his place, and kept it ; neither did one of the chairs move a foot. Then the sun came in and said that everything looked very pleasant ; and the little motes swam about in the warm light, and looked perfectly happy.

At that very time Mr Rutherford's barouche was coming from Rose Hill after Cherry and Dash, as fast as it could ; and on the back seat sat Edith and Mary, muffled up in all sorts of cloaks and wrappers, for it was very cold. Janet was in the barouche too ; but Mr and Mrs Rutherford meant to stay at Rose Hill until the afternoon.

"I'm glad we are going to town," said Edith, "and I'm sorry too."

"I'm not," said Mary. "I'm all glad."

"I didn't like to leave the cats," said Edith, looking out of the barouche with a sober face.

"Oh, they will do well enough," said Mary, "and we shall do a great deal better. I mean to see a great many things."

"What things ?" said Edith.

"Oh, I don't know," said Mary,— "all sorts of things. There are the wild beasts and the glass-blower."

"Well, what *are* wild beasts ?" said Edith, knitting her brows. "Mrs Delue said Theodore was as wild as a hawk."

"But that is not the kind of wild I mean," said Mary,—
"I mean *real* wild beasts—that people put in a menagerie."

"What is a menagerie?" said Edith.

"Why, the place where they keep wild beasts," said Mary.

"I don't know what wild beasts are yet," said Edith.

"Oh dear," said Mary; "well, you can't expect to know everything yet, so you may as well begin by being contented. I mean lions, and tigers, and elephants, and bears, and wolves, and panthers."

"I saw a picture of a wild boar once," said Edith.

"They don't keep them in menageries," said Mary; "they are too much like pigs."

"Will Uncle Ruth take me with you to the menagerie?" said Edith.

"No, I think not," said Mary; "you would be frightened to death, and think the lion was going to eat you up."

Edith looked grave, as if she thought that quite possible; but by this time the carriage was rattling over the pavement, and made such a noise that nobody could hear anything else. The children were silent, but Mary's eyes roamed earnestly about, while Edith's thoughtful face, as she sat back in the carriage, left it doubtful which member of the cat tribe occupied her attention. At last the carriage stopped at the door of the hotel, and the children got out and went quietly after Janet to the brown parlour.

"Oh, they have lit the fire!" said Mary—"how comfortable! But what a funny brown room! I wonder why Uncle Ruth had not blue curtains, or red, or orange colour."

"I like the brown curtains," said Edith, who was warming her hands at the fire; "and the carpet too. It looks so comfortable."

"Well, I suppose it is comfortable, but it isn't pretty," said Mary, as she went round the room and looked at everything. "It will be better when Aunt Esther's work-table comes, and the books, they will look like something. O Edith, we shall have dinner here to-day, all by ourselves—Aunt Esther said we might. And we can have just what we like, too. Now you take off your things, and then we'll sit

down by the fire and talk, and I'll tell you all I'm going to do."

Edith's ideas of things pleasant to do were held in check by the brick walls and noisy pavement, and by the total absence of cats and flowers; but she took off her cloak and hat, and her little worked moccasins, after which her feet were so cold that she wished she had them on again. So she drew along a brown chair and sat down by the fire to try what that would do. But the chair was so high that Edith could not touch even her toes to the floor, and with a little sigh she said—

"Oh dear!—I wish we had our little stools. My feet hang down."

"Why don't you stick them out then?" said Mary.

"Because it tires me," said Edith. "But I can curl them up, and sit like a Turk."

"There is somebody at the door," said Mary, jumping down from her brown chair, and running to open it.

A man stood there with a paper in his hand.

"What does Mr Rutherford want for dinner?" said he.

"Mr Rutherford is not here," said Mary,—“he has not come yet. He will be here to tea.”

"Somebody in No. 20 wants dinner," said the man, looking at his paper.

"Is our room No. 20?" said Mary, running out into the hall to look up at the door. "Oh yes, so it is. Yes, we want dinner."

"How many?" said the man, taking out his pencil.

"Two," said Mary.

"There's Janet," whispered Edith, who had come down from being a Turk.

"Hush!" whispered Mary, "she will dine down-stairs with the servants. There are only two."

"What will you have?" said the man. "Here's the bill of fare."

Now Mary did not know in the least what the bill of fare was; but she took the long paper, which was covered with writing, and tried what she could make of it.

"Roast chicken" was plain enough, and so was "boiled turkey," but then followed "larded partridges," and "chickens sautés," and "fricandeau de veau." Mary drew Edith to the fireplace.

"What shall we have?" she said.

"I don't care," said Edith,—"beefsteak is very good."

"But we have that at home," said Mary. "Let us have chickens done in this way—I don't know how it is."

"Perhaps you might not like them," said Edith.

"Oh, everything here is good, I suppose," said Mary, "only I don't know what they mean by this word. I think I shall tell him chicken, and then he can bring whichever he likes. You can have some beefsteak too, if you like, Edith."

"Oh, I like chickens very much, if they are good," said Edith. "What are you going to have besides?"

"I forgot all about that," said Mary,—"here it is, over on the other side. I think we'll have some pumpkin pie, Edith."

"But I like custard a great deal better," said Edith.

"Well, you can have it, then. We'll have some chicken, if you please," she said to the man, "and some pumpkin pie and custard."

The waiter smiled, and taking the paper, he went out again and shut the door.

"Now, Edith," said Mary, "let us put away our things, and then we shall be quite ready for dinner."

"I think we had better brush our hair too," said Edith, "for yours is as rough as can be. But we have not any things to put away yet."

"Oh yes, we have," said Mary. "There are our cloaks and hats, and our gloves; and we can take our night-gowns out of the little bag, and lay them on the bed to be ready."

So they went into the little room which Janet said was theirs, and having with some difficulty unlocked the little bag, proceeded to unpack it. A hairbrush appeared first, and then a night-gown.

"That's mine," said Mary,—"now where is yours, I wonder?" But Edith's night-gown was not forthcoming.

"But I brought it to you!" said Edith, "don't you remember? and laid it on the chair by the window. I know I did, because I told Aunt Esther it was there, and she said you wanted to pack the bag."

"Yes, and so I did," said Mary, "but it seems I did not put in your night-gown. If Aunt Esther does not get here before we go to bed, Edith, you will have to sleep in a petticoat. I'll lend you one of mine that will come up round your neck; and I'll tie up your head beautifully in a pocket-handkerchief."

"Well, that would be very nice," said Edith. "Quite as good as a night-gown, wouldn't it?"

"No, not quite as good, but it would do. And now if you will fold up your cloak and put it in one drawer of the bureau, I'll fold up mine and put it in another; and then they will be out of the way. I think you had better take the lowest drawer, because you can reach it easily."

The cloaks were folded and put away, and the heads were brushed, and then the children returned to their brown chairs by the parlour fire.

"I wish dinner was ready," said Edith; "I'm very hungry."

"Oh, we shall not have dinner this great while yet, I suppose," said Mary.

"Well, tell me a story then, will you?" said Edith.

"What would you like to hear?" said Mary.

"Oh, I don't know," said Edith. "Anything."

"Well then I'll tell you about—about a hungry squirrel. There was once a squirrel in the very top of a sugar-maple tree."

"Was he a striped squirrel?" said Edith.

"No, I think he was a gray one, with a long bushy tail, and eyes as bright as fire-flies."

"But what was he doing on the top of the tree?" said Edith. "Because his nest must have been down in some hole."

"Of course," said Mary, "but he went up there to look about. Do you suppose squirrels never want to know what

is going on in the world? You see they work and work in some hole for ever so long, and then they take a little journey for pleasure, up to the top of a tree. There was not much to be seen that day, however; only an old woman going to market with a load of turnips, and a cornfield full of pumpkins, and two chickens fighting in the barnyard."

"What were they fighting about?" said Edith.

"Oh, about their dinner," said Mary. "One of them had found a little caterpillar, and the other wanted it. So there was not much for the squirrel to see; but the sky was very blue, and the cornfields looked very yellow, and the squirrel thought he would go and try the corn some day. And after he had stayed up there a good while he began to feel hungry, which was very natural; but there was not a thing for him to eat nearer than the cornfield, and that was two miles off."

"Why didn't he get some nuts?" said Edith.

"Because he was up in a maple-tree. And the next tree was a maple, and the next was a chestnut, but there had not been any frost to open the skins. So the squirrel ran down to the ground and looked about, but he didn't see his dinner anywhere; so he thought to himself that he might as well take a walk and look after it. When he had passed quite a number of trees he came to an oak, and on the oak there were beautiful little green acorns in brown cups; but the squirrel thought they were not good enough for him, so he went on. By and by he came to the road, but there he had a great many frights, and wished himself back in the woods again; for whenever a waggon came along, he had to run and hide under the fence, and if there was a big dog behind the waggon, the squirrel felt sure he should be found out. At last he saw a little long green thing lying just in the middle of the road; and with a hop, skip, and jump, the squirrel went up to it, and found that it was a beautiful ear of green corn. So then he had a fine dinner and something for supper besides. Why, Edith! what are you about?"

For Edith had got as tired with the squirrel's long walk as

he must have been himself ; and now her head went nodding forward, and she almost fell into the fire.

"I think you had better go to sleep if you can't keep awake," said Mary ; and Edith did manage to get from her brown chair, and to the brown sofa, and there she slept till the table was set, and the dinner ready.

It was a very fine dinner, the children thought,—probably because they had ordered it and had to eat it by themselves ; and as the waiter had brought even more than they asked for, there really was a great deal for two such little people.

The chicken was there, as large as life—or nearly so, for the feathers made some difference ; and a wee little beef-steak, and vegetables. And then, for second course, there was not only a whole pumpkin pie and three custards, but also two little plates of ice-cream, and a dish with some mottoes and lady-apples. The children thought they had never enjoyed any dinner so much ; and Timon, that was the waiter, took as good care of them as possible.

After dinner they told stories again for a while, and then sat still by the fire, feeling very tired and sleepy, till tea-time. And soon after tea they went to bed. Mr and Mrs Rutherford had not yet arrived, but Janet was there to do anything for them ; only for a while she could not do much more than laugh at Edith's new-fashioned night-gown and cap. Mary had made her put on one of her own petticoats, which being much too long made Edith look like a little old woman ; and then for fear she should take cold from sleeping with a bare neck, Mary folded a clean handkerchief and pinned it close round her throat. Another handkerchief must do duty as a night-cap, but it was hard to make it stay on. Mary folded and twisted and pinned ; and sometimes Edith cried out, "Oh, you are twisting my hair all up !" and sometimes she gave her head a little shake, and away went the new cap upon the floor.

"I'll tell you what, Edith," said Mary, "you must get into bed and then I'll put it on ; and if you lie down very carefully, I think it will stay."

Edith got into bed therefore, and then Mary knelt down

on the counterpane and tied the handkerchief on once more, and Edith lay down very carefully. But she forgot to be careful after she went to sleep ; and when Mrs Rutherford came, and went into the children's room to look at them, Edith's little round head lay on the pillow, with nothing on but its own brown hair, and the new cap was nowhere to be seen.

CHAPTER XVIII

WINTER DRESSES.

GREAT was the amount of talk next morning at breakfast, and many the discussions and plans. To be sure, the tumblers of milk were very different from the milk at Rose Hill ; and the bread was not nearly so sweet as that which they had at home ; but all was new, and that veil of novelty softened and covered up a great many things.

"Only I wish we had some rye-bread toast," said Mary ; "but I suppose we shall not see that this whole winter."

"Oh yes, Miss," said Timon—"I can get you some in a minute."

"Can you !" cried both the children. "Oh, then, please do."

Timon took up his waiter and marched off, and the children enlarged upon the excellence of the rye-bread toast.

"I do believe the milk will taste a great deal sweeter than it does with this white bread," said Mary. "How good it was of Timon to go for it !"

But when Timon returned, behold it was a plate of *dry* toast that he had brought. The children looked at each other and were very nearly bursting into a laugh ; but since he had taken so much trouble for them they would not tell him that he had made a mistake ; so they thanked him, and then broke up the toast into the milk and made a very good breakfast.

After breakfast Mr Rutherford went down to his office, and Mrs Rutherford began to unpack.



Edith's Winter Dress.

"We put away our things yesterday," said Edith.

"I see you did!" said her aunt, as she opened the bureau drawers; "but at this rate of putting away, it would take about forty bureaus to hold our clothes. Here is one little cloak taking a whole drawer to itself, and another little cloak taking another drawer, and two little pairs of gloves playing hide and seek in another."

The children laughed, but they thought it was a great pity the little cloaks could not stay where they had been put so carefully,—it did not seem half so nice to have them hanging up in the closet far above their heads, in the row of little frocks.

"I don't think I have a *great* many frocks, Aunt Esther," said Edith, when she had two or three times counted over the little skirts which she recognised as her own.

"I don't think you have, my dear,—you have outgrown almost all your frocks, and one of the first things I must do is to get you some more."

"How many?" said Edith.

"Two or three."

"Oh, get her a red one," said Mary.

"Blue is pretty," suggested Edith,—*"and brown."*

"You would look pretty in a brown dress!" said Mary.
"Have red, and blue, and orange."

And when the new dresses came home, they were just what Mary wished—plain blue, and red, and orange. And the next day Miss Mantilla came to make them up.

That was the worst of it!—new dresses must be made up,—must be cut, and tried on, and fitted; and sometimes Edith thought she would rather not have them than go through so much trouble.

No matter what she was doing,—whether dressing her doll, or listening to the most interesting story from Mary,—Mrs Rutherford was sure to say—

"Come, Edith, Miss Mantilla is ready to try on your dress."

And the doll must be laid down and the story broken off for ever so long. But that was not all. The raw edges of the stuff scratched her bare neck and arms till they were

quite red, and the armholes were always tight; and Miss Mantilla's fingers always cold; and it was of no use for Edith to shrug her shoulders and twist away from the fingers, for there the fingers must go; and there they did go, and she had to bear it. Then she was turned about, and stroked, and patted, just as if *she* was in wrinkles; and then Miss Mantilla's thimble scraped her neck, and her scissors went clip; clip all round Edith's neck; and then Edith cried out—

“O Miss Mantilla! that pin went quite into me!”

Which Miss Mantilla declared was “too bad;” and having pulled the pin out, she stuck it in again further than before.

And Edith being by this time quite tired out, she gave a little stretch, and said, “Oh dear!”—and away went half-a-dozen basting threads. Then it had all to be gone over again.

But when the fitting was done, and Miss Mantilla had only to sew, then Edith's part of the fun began; and she used to look on until her eyes were tired. Miss Mantilla's fingers went flying about so fast, that sometimes Edith thought she must be only making believe to sew; but the needle flew about too, and Miss Mantilla's fingers left a long train of little stitches. All this was very amusing; but better still was the finishing work, when the frocks were ready to trim. On two of them the trimming was simple enough,—a yellow braid went upon the blue frock, and a green braid upon the red one, in all proper places on waist and sleeves and skirt, but without any twists or turns. But in trimming the orange dress, Miss Mantilla's fancy took a turn, and so did the green braid—many a one; till Edith's little frock looked much more fanciful and complicated than herself, and seemed almost like a uniform in the service of that gay dahlia, “the King of the Yellows.” One of the ladies in the hotel said it looked like spinach and eggs—but what if it did? Edith could make out nothing against it on that score; and though the dark red dress was her favourite, she thought the orange frock very pretty and still more wonderful.

And this was the fashion of their life that winter.

Mary and Edith used to wake quite early in the morning,

and lie talking to each other, and watching the faint light shadows that came into the room through the cracks of the window-shutters. There was no getting up then; for the fire was not made, and all the children could do was to keep themselves warm in bed. Sometimes they got very tired of lying still, and longed to hear Timon rattling the cinders in the grate; and then again, if Mary was in the mood to tell stories, the chance was that neither of them wanted to get up at all, not even when breakfast was nearly ready. On such occasions Janet used to come in and throw open the shutters, and make such a noise that there was no use in trying to tell or to hear stories any more for that morning; and then the children jumped up and got dressed as fast as they could, that they might do something else that was pleasant.

After breakfast there were lessons to learn, just as there were at Rose Hill, and there were walks too; but not along the lane and among the sweet flowers. It was very amusing, though, to see so many people, at least when Edith could keep out of their way; for sometimes they almost ran over her; and the sky was quite as blue as it was in the country, only you could not see much of it. The church spires, too, looked pretty, stretching away up from the earth, with their little gilt vanes that always told which way the wind blew. Edith used to wonder how they found out for themselves. And the shop windows were full of beautiful things; but with so many people standing about that the children never dared to stop, even if Janet would have let them.

When dinner time came, they all went down to the long table in the great dining-room; but that was not very pleasant, Edith thought, and she was always glad to get upstairs again; and they had tea in their own quiet parlour. And after tea there was pleasant talk or reading, and sometimes the children played jackstraws, or drew little pictures out of a book; and then they had prayers, and the young ones went to bed.

Janet always came into their room at night as well as in the morning to see if they wanted anything; and as she was

very fond of the children, and liked to help them, so they liked to be helped, and began to let Janet do a great deal too much for them. There was great danger that they would become lazy little children, and quite unable to help themselves. And Mrs Rutherford knew nothing of it; for after she had kissed them and said good night, she did not see them again till they were asleep.

But it happened one evening, that the washerwoman brought the clothes just after the children had left the parlour; and as soon as Mrs Rutherford had looked over the clothes, she took Mary's and Edith's into their room to put them away. And this was the state of things.

The candle stood on the dressing-table, and the glass was swung down as low as it could be; and before the dressing-table sat Mary in her night-gown, fastening the buttons of that article of dress, and taking the effect thereof in the glass as she did so. Meanwhile Janet was pulling off her shoes and stockings.

"Now, Janet," said Mary, when the last stocking was off, "if you will just bring me my night-cap, I shall be all ready."

"Are you sure you do not want Janet to carry you across the floor to the bed?" said Mrs Rutherford. "Why, my dear child, if you went on in this way for a year, you would almost forget that you had hands and feet of your own, and quite forget how to use them. You must not come in here any more at night, Janet, nor in the morning either. I should not know what to do with two helpless little girls that could not get their own nightcaps."

Janet smiled and said, "Yes, ma'am," and went away; and Mary sat twisting the strings of her cap, but not looking in the glass just then.

"But why is it wrong, Aunt Esther?" she said at last. "Janet likes to do things for us—she said so."

"I have no doubt of it, my dear. But how would you like to grow up without knowing how to dress yourself?"

"I shouldn't care," said Mary, "so long as I had anybody to dress me."

"And so long as you had, it would not so much matter, though every one ought to know how. But suppose when you grow up that you should have no waiting-maid?"

"But I would have one," said Mary.

"So I thought when I was a child," replied her aunt, "and I have never had one yet. But jump into bed now—Edith is half asleep."

"Oh no, I am not," said Edith, who was sitting on the floor in her night-gown. "Please talk, Aunt Esther."

Mrs Rutherford smiled, and sitting down on the side of the bed, she told them both to get in and cover themselves up warm, and she would tell them a little story.

"Do you remember the little sparrows we used to see last summer, Edith?"

"The little young birds that used to come on the gravel walk, and the old ones used to feed them?" said Edith.

"Oh yes! How pleasant it was last summer, Aunt Esther!"

"Well, it will be pleasant this winter too, I hope," said her aunt. "But my story is about such a family of young birds. They came out of five little speckled eggs in a nest that was built in a rose-bush."

"Was the rose-bush in our lane?" asked Edith.

"Yes, if you choose. And when the little birds first broke their shells and came out, they had no feathers, but little thin coats made of down. Ugly enough they were then, though the old birds thought they were beautiful, and they were too weak and small to do anything for themselves. Then the old birds kept them covered up very warm all night and in rainy weather, and would on no account suffer them to leave the nest; and all day they went skimming about, over the grass and over the ground, to find insects and crumbs for the young birds to eat. And when one of the old birds had picked up a crumb, he flew straight to the rose-bush, and alighted on the edge of the nest; and then all the five little birds jumped up and cried out and threw back their heads—and there were five little open mouths waiting for the crumb."

"How did the old bird know which was the hungriest?" said Edith.

[Faint Title]

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records for financial and operational purposes. It emphasizes the role of the accounting department in providing reliable data to management and stakeholders.

2. The second section addresses the challenges faced by organizations in the current market environment. It highlights the need for strategic planning and flexibility to adapt to changing market conditions and customer demands.

3. The third part of the document focuses on human resource management, discussing the importance of talent acquisition, development, and retention. It outlines various strategies to attract and motivate top talent in a competitive market.

4. The fourth section deals with operational efficiency and cost management. It explores how process optimization and lean manufacturing principles can be applied to reduce waste and improve productivity across the organization.

5. Finally, the document concludes with a summary of key findings and recommendations. It stresses the importance of a holistic approach to business management, where all functional areas work in harmony to achieve the organization's long-term goals.

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"How did the old bird know which was the hungriest?" said Edith.

"The old bird served them all in turn, and never forgot whose turn it was ; but the little birds seemed to forget, and each one opened his mouth every time. And so they lived in the nest till their feathers were grown, and it was time that they should learn to fly ; and then the old birds helped them out of the nest and taught them. The little ones were very much frightened at first, and thought it very cruel when their mother jumped up from where they were standing, and flew into a little bush full three feet off ; but they soon got used to it, and flew about quite merrily. And then, when she brought them down on the gravel walk, and picked up little worms, the young ones ran screaming after her, and thought she would feed them as usual ; and sometimes she did, and sometimes she swallowed the worm, and made them find one for themselves. And in that way they learned how to fly, and how to take care of themselves in every way. And now it is time that these little birds should go to sleep."

"There is one thing," said Edith ; " we shall never have to fly away and take care of ourselves somewhere else, as the birds do."

Mrs Rutherford stooped down and kissed them both ; but she made no reply ; and Edith wondered if those could have been tears in her eyes, and she thought about it till she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOUSE BURNINGS.

It was one of the children's great delights to spend the day with Mrs Salisbury. She was established in town now, at her own house, and always as glad to have the children's company as they were to give it. So very often they would put on their brown merino cloaks and black fur tippets and broad white beaver hats, and go with Janet to the great house in Broadway, where their grandmother lived. Mary and Edith thought everything in that house as beautiful as

could be. It was such a pleasant change too from their own room at the hotel; and it seemed so like old times to run up and down stairs, and along the hall, and to pay a visit to the kitchen. And there was such fine places for hiding themselves and their handkerchiefs in Mrs Salisbury's dressing-room and bed-room,—as for interfering with the folds of the heavy curtains in the parlours, or venturing to lay a handkerchief even *under* the chairs, the children would never have thought of it. The curtains looked much too grand to encourage such pranks, and every chair set its great claw feet down upon the bunches of flowers in the carpet, like Æsop's lion claiming his share of the day's hunt. It was very clear that such parlours were not made for the little scrambling mice to play hide-and-seek in; and Mary and Edith gladly left the finery for the fun, and went upstairs. And Mrs Salisbury liked the fun as well as they did, though in a different way. Balls might roll over the floor when she was taking her afternoon nap, the morning paper be cut up to make houses, and her table be covered with whole villages; and just opening her eyes to see that the young ones were in no danger from anything, Mrs Salisbury would tell them that their houses "looked airy," or that balls must have a great deal of patience,—and go to sleep again. There never was such a house, or such a kind old lady at the head of it; and therefore all particularly fine amusements were reserved for her benefit. It never seemed to occur to Mary and Edith that paper houses would stand on any other table, or that any scissors but grandmamma's could cut them out,—which scissors were always given with many a charge to take care of the points and their own eyes, and generally with the information that a few days ago the grinder had sharpened them nicely. To which the children always replied—

"Oh, how sharp they are! How much did you pay him, grandmamma?"

And she always said "sixpence."

Which the children thought was very reasonable, and wondered how the grinder could make a living.

What a mysterious piece of work it was to make the houses! To fold the paper nicely, and cut off all the top except what was wanted for chimneys, which left, to be sure, a very airy house with no roof; and then to cut a great many little windows, and two or three large doors, and to make as much variety as possible by leaving some windows half open and one door half shut. Then there were paper fences to make and set up, so as to connect the houses and give them a neighbourly look; and sometimes a little paper woman that was supposed to be very talkative might be seen leaning over the fence, or a lazy little paper man trying hard to stand up in a doorway. But the villages only did one day's work; and before the children went home at night, they used to put all the fences and houses down on the fender, and have what they called "a great conflagration." But this part of the business Mrs Salisbury always superintended; and when Mary had been allowed to light one end of the village, both children were made to stand off at a safe distance.

Queer little newspaper houses! all covered with printed letters; and sometimes upon one you could read, "To let,"—or upon another, "Wanted,"—or perhaps, "Prime, Ward, & King,"—or "Peter Harmony & Co.;"—while Peter Harmony's next neighbour might be, "Strayed, or Stolen!" The houses took name from the words on them; and during the conflagration Mary would cry out—

"See, Edith! R. L. & A. Stuart are burning up!"—or Edith would clap her hands as poor little "For Sale" took fire. And when there was nothing left in the pan but a long wavy streak of white ashes, the children would look at it quietly for a minute, and then go down stairs to dinner,—Mary perhaps making the sage remark—

"I'm afraid we have made a little mess in your fireplace, grandmamma."

"Suppose we were to go back and sweep it up, then," said Mrs Salisbury; and she turned and walked back to the fireplace and took up the hearth-brush

"Oh let me do it," said Mary.

"Yes, you may do it, but first I will show you how."

"Why, anybody can sweep up ashes," said Mary. "I know how as well as can be."

"You are like a silly little pigeon I used to hear about, when I was a little girl," said her grandmother.

"Oh please tell us about that," said Edith.

"I don't know about being silly," said Mary, "but I know I can sweep up ashes."

"Very well," said Mrs Salisbury, "you may try."

And Mary swept and swept, but the more she did to the hearth the worse it looked ; and the ashes spread about and made white streaks instead of walking off nicely before the brush. Mary threw the brush down.

"I don't believe *anybody* could sweep up *that* hearth," she said.

But Mrs Salisbury took the brush, and in a minute the hearth was as clean as if there had been no conflagration.

"Now why couldn't I do that?" said Mary.

"Because you did not know how," said her grandmother.

"But what is the story about the pigeon?" said Edith.

"The story is," replied Mrs Salisbury, "that when the pigeon first came into the world, all the other birds came and offered to teach her to build a nest. The cat-bird showed her its nest all made of sticks and bark, and the sparrow showed theirs which were woven with moss and hair. But the pigeon walked about in a very self-satisfied way, and turning her pretty head from side to side, '*I know how!*' said the pigeon, '*I know how!*' Then the blackbird showed his nest, which was fastened to some reeds, and swung about over the water : and the turtle dove said hers was easier to build than all, for it was quite flat and only of sticks laid together. But the pigeon turned her pretty head as before, and said, '*I know how!*' So at last the other birds left her. And then the pigeon found that she did not know how after all ; and she went without a nest, until man took pity on her, and built a pigeon-house and put some hay in it."

The children were exceedingly amused with this story,

and went down stairs turning their heads about and saying, "I know how!" till Mrs Salisbury told them that she thought they had played pigeon enough for one day.

"I am going to town in the carriage after dinner, children," she said: "should you like to go with me?"

"I should," said Mary.

"Aunt Esther said I must come home directly after dinner," said Edith, "because I have got a little cold, and she did not wish me to stay out late."

"Take Mary with you then," said Mr Salisbury, "and I will take Edith home. We will go shopping by ourselves."

"Ah, but I haven't any shopping to do," said Edith.

"But I have," said Mr Salisbury, "and I want your help. I'll take care you do not stay out too late."

So Mary went off in the carriage, and Edith took hold of Mr Salisbury's hand and went forth on foot.

Presently they came near a large toy shop, and even before they got up to it, Edith could see the baskets, and drums, and woolly dogs that hung up at the door. Here Mr Salisbury paused and looked in.

"Are you going to get grandmamma a basket?" inquired Edith. "She said she wanted one."

"Not I!" said Mr Salisbury. "A basket indeed! I have come out for nothing less than a baby."

"A baby!" said Edith.

"Yes, a baby. They keep babies here, don't they?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Edith, a little doubtfully,—*"they keep dolls."*

"Nonsense!" said Mr Salisbury; "I tell you they are babies,—they cry like mischief if you pinch them hard enough."

"I daresay they would!" said Edith, laughing, "because you couldn't pinch them—not the wooden ones."

"None of your wooden babies for me," said Mr Salisbury,—"I want a wax one. Do you think you could choose out a wax baby, Edith, that a little monkey of about your age would like?"

Edith looked up at him and began to think she understood

the matter ; but she was a little body of few words, and so she only smiled and they entered the shop.

There were dolls or babies enough. Dressed and undressed—wax, wooden, and kid,—flaxen hair, brown hair, black hair, and painted hair,—curled hair and straight,—blue eyes and black eyes, and shoes of every possible colour. The wax dolls, indeed, were rejoicing in bare feet, or sometimes in a pair of kid slippers ; but the wooden ladies had shoes of more colours than all the rest. Edith particularly admired a pair of purple-shod feet ; but Mr Salisbury had his own ideas about shopping. He promptly ordered away all the undressed dolls, saying that it would be time enough for her to make other people's clothes when she could mend her own,—then he threw aside all the satin-dressed, and muslin-dressed, and silk-dressed, and spankled dolls, which he said were much too fine to be looked at for a moment. Edith all the while stood smiling by, quite willing that he should choose for her, and glad that she could be in no danger of getting one that cost too much.

At last a doll appeared which suited all parties, and this doll Mr Salisbury bought. It was moderately large, of wax, and with a little wig of flaxen hair ; surprisingly blue eyes, that looked as if no earthly persuasion could induce them to close for a moment ; and as surprisingly red lips. She wore a dress of red merino, trimmed round the skirt and sleeves with three rows of narrow black velvet, and round the neck with lace ; and the dress being low and short-sleeved, displayed her waxen arms and neck to the best advantage. She had shoes of red leather, and a white tucked petticoat and drawers.

Mr Salisbury would not have the doll wrapped up, for he said babies might as well get used to the cold air first as last ; and they went forth again—Edith holding her new possessions very carefully round the waist with her thumb and finger.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LEAF-CUTTER'S STORY.

IT did seem strange to Edith that the very day when she had intended to take her new doll out a-walking, that very day it should rain; but there was no mistaking the fact. Even before she was out of bed in the morning, when she first woke, Edith heard the slow tinkle, tinkle, of the rain, as it ran down the lead pipes from the eaves.

"Mary," she said, as soon as that young lady gave any signs of stirring; "are you awake?"

"I am now," said Mary—"I wasn't. Always wake people first, and then ask them."

"Well, I didn't mean to wake you up, but I'm afraid it rains."

"What if it does?"

"Why you know we were going to see the glass-blower, and I meant to take my doll."

Mary turned over on her back and listened.

"Yes—it rains, sure enough," she said. "Well, we must stay at home—that's all I have to say."

"But you must say a great deal more; I want you to talk to me. Now, Mary, you have slept enough. We must get up very soon."

"When I grow up, I mean to have my breakfast in bed," said Mary.

"That will be very lazy," said Edith.

"No, it won't—it will be very pleasant."

"What would you choose to be, if you could be anything?" said Edith.

"I would choose to be," said Mary,—“a lady having breakfast in bed, and a very interesting book to read.”

"I think I would rather be a little bird," said Edith, "I should like to live in a nest so much."

"Then you would *have* to take breakfast in bed," said Mary.

"Oh, but it wouldn't seem like it," said Edith, "it's so different."

"I'll tell you what we will do to-day," said Mary, "we will get Aunt Esther to tell us a story. You know she said she would every rainy day."

"Yes, when we had all learnt our lessons nicely," said Edith, "so she did." And inspired by this recollection they both jumped up and dressed themselves without any delay.

"How wet the street is!" said Edith, as she opened the shutters and peeped out. "O Mary, I'm glad we are not little beggar children."

"Yes, is not it very happy?" said Mary; "I wonder how they manage to live!"

"Aunt Esther said she would take us some day to see," said Edith.

"Well, but look," said Mary, "the people over the way will see you undressed at the window!"

"They can't see anything but my night-cap," said Edith, coming slowly away, "and that won't frighten them, I suppose."

"No, it is not large enough to frighten anybody," said Mary, turning round and laughing. "What a little bit of a thing you are, Edith!"

"Well," said Edith, as if it were an evil which could not be helped at present.

"Breakfast! breakfast!" said Mrs Rutherford, coming in. "Who's ready for breakfast?"

"I am," said Mary.

"I am too—almost," said Edith. "I have just to brush my hair and my teeth, and—" the rest of the sentence was lost in the basin of cold water.

"You have just got to do what is not done," said Mrs Rutherford, laughing. "Suppose I were to tie some of these petticoat strings, would that expedite matters?"

"Yes, indeed," said Edith; "but I was looking at the little beggar children out of the window. And you know you said we might go and see them some day. But oh, to-day, Aunt Esther," said Edith, twisting herself half round and

putting her hands together, "to-day you know you must tell us a story."

"Must I!" said Mrs Rutherford. "About Rosamond's day of misfortunes, when she got up too late?"

"Oh no," said Edith, laughing, "because I can read that for myself, and I have, a great many times. But I mean a real story—out of your head."

"Because it is a rainy day," said Mary.

Mrs Rutherford smiled and promised; and after breakfast when the lessons were done, the two children sat down at her feet on the floor, and she began

THE HISTORY OF A LEAF-CUTTER.

"It is a sad thing to be separated from one's home and friends," sighed the leaf-cutter, as he lay on the table after his mistress had gone to bed.

"And pray who were they?" said the penknife, rather scornfully; for he was mother-of-pearl and inlaid with gold, and he thought the leaf-cutter had no business to have friends—or at least to speak of them.

"They were very sound, substantial friends," said the leaf-cutter,—“at least one of them—my twin brother; for you must know I was once an elephant's tusk."

"Cruel thing!" said the penknife—(he was four-bladed.)

"I don't know about that," said the leaf-cutter,—“people must do as they can; and I was brought up to push my way in the world. I assure you there were few things that could withstand me—that is, in my youth; for time has brought me so many changes that I am hardly the skeleton of what I was."

"I should like very much to hear your history," said a little lead pencil; quite modestly, however, for he had come from the mine and from the heart of a cedar tree, and felt that he had seen very little of the world, and had hardly a right to ask questions.

"What part of a pencil comes from a mine?" said Edith.

"Why, the lead," said Mary.

"Does it?" said Edith. "Oh yes, I believe I knew that. Well, Aunt Esther, I like that little lead pencil."

The penknife said nothing for some time, and then remarked, rather sharply, that if they could not sleep, they might as well talk; and that if the story was begun at once, perhaps some people would stop fidgeting. For the lead pencil rolled over from the other side of the table in order to hear the better.

"You would not suppose," said the leaf-cutter, "that I had ever been six feet long. I can hardly believe it myself."

"And pray, how much is six feet?" said the little pencil; for the tallest of his relations did not exceed six inches.

"About half the height of this room," said the leaf-cutter. "But, as I was saying, it seems to me now like a dream, when I think of the beautiful jungles I used to frequent in the island of Ceylon."

"Did you come from Ceylon?" said the penknife, with more civility than he had hitherto shown. "I once lived in those parts myself; though indeed I cared little for your tangled jungles, and much preferred the sea-water. Ah, that was glorious! One could see so far!"

"Yes, it is well to be able to see far when one cannot move about," said the leaf-cutter, rather dryly; "but as I went through the jungles whenever and wherever I pleased, their thickness was no objection. However, it is natural to like what one has been used to."

"What do you mean by not moving about?" said the penknife, sharply. "I travelled as much as I wanted to do—quite."

The leaf-cutter gave an assenting little tap on the table, and replied—

"Yes, very probably,—it must have been quite a severe trial to take that long journey in the diver's bag. But it signifies little which of us went about the most—I did enough, certainly. Ah, it was splendid the way my brother and I would occasionally run through a rhinoceros! Talk of jungles!—*there* was thickness, I can tell you. But it was a word and a blow with us—right through,—and then we could throw him off as you, Mr Penknife, would a quill shaving."

The little lead pencil rolled quite away at this speech, and got under cover of a large book,—the idea of shaving was dreadful to him. But the leaf-cutter looked peaceable enough as he lay there flat on the table—the worst that could be expected from him was a little bluntness; so the lead pencil took courage and rolled back again.

“I do like that little lead pencil so much!” said Edith.

“I wonder,” continued the leaf-cutter, with what was intended for a sigh, “I wonder how I bear the change so patiently—only that one cannot well chafe upon this mahogany table. And in my literary pursuits I am really so squeezed up between pieces of business that I have no time for regrets. Then one has to take a peep at all the new books, you know—and then, to be sure, it is my old trade of going through things.”

The lead pencil was in a most unsettled state of mind, and rolled backwards and forwards as if he had been on rockers.

“Somebody is making a very extraordinary noise!” said the penknife, thrusting out a blade to see what it was. “If he were my dearest friend, I would cut him!”

The pencil was still immediately—that is, as still as he could be, for he could not subside at once into perfect quietness,—so he thought the best thing was to speak.

“Pray, sir,” said he, “excuse me, but I think you have not yet told us why you gave up your agreeable life in the jungle?”

And the little lead pencil shuddered, and then remarked that “the wind blew very hard.”

“Ah, I don't like that,” said Edith. “Little lead pencils shouldn't tell fibs.”

“Perhaps the wind did blow,” said Mary.

“Yes, but that wasn't what made him roll about,” said Edith.

“Then you think that a person may say what is true, and yet not speak the truth?” said Mrs Rutherford.

“And not be true himself, I mean,” said Edith. “Uncle Ruth said that depended upon the person more than on what he said. Because he might believe something to be

true when it was not, and he might say true words and mean to make people believe something else."

"Like the lead pencil," said Mrs Rutherford.

"Well, Aunt Esther," said Mary, "the pencil wanted to know why the leaf-cutter gave up the jungles."

"I did not give them up," said the cutter. "And to say truth, I never rightly understood how it was brought about; but one day my brother and I found ourselves lying on the ground, and we were never able to get up afterwards."

"How did you come here then?" said the penknife.

"I tell you I did not come; I was brought."

"It must be very stupid to have so little control over one's own motions!" observed some of the sand as it ran through the hour-glass.

"Well," said the leaf-cutter, "I had motion enough, whether it was stupid or not. First, my brother and I were taken up by ever so many men, and put into a cart, and then we were jolted and jarred all the way to Columbo, (that is the capital of Ceylon, Mr Pencil,) and there I was tumbled into a ship and left in darkness and solitude for I don't know how many months. But the hardest trial awaited me in this country; for the ivory-dealer who chose me failed to get my brother, and thus we were separated.

"I perceive," said the leaf-cutter, suddenly pausing in his account,— "I perceive, from the increased attention and silence of my audience, that they are fast subsiding into that state which best befits the hours of darkness."

Nobody answered at first, till a cricket chirruped out that he was wide awake, and meant to remain so, whereupon everybody else made similar assurances.

"When I arrived at the home of my purchaser, then," continued the leaf-cutter, "I lay for a few days in a little dark brick house, with a great many strange tusks that I had never before seen. Of course that was not agreeable, for your real ivory is seldom sociably inclined, and I thought any change would be a blessing. But it shows how little we can judge of things beforehand.

"As soon as I was released from my prison, I was seized

by two great iron paws, and held tight while a saw deliberately—or rather very fast—sliced me up into as many pieces as the overseer thought proper. That particular slice which contained my personal identity was then chipped and sawed, and polished and cut away by a succession of iron tormentors.”

“Hard work that,” observed the penknife, sleepily; for the leaf-cutter had stopped, and it seemed to be expected that somebody should say something.

“Very hard indeed,” responded the cutter, “and as you see I grew thin under it. But I found this—that when one saw had scratched me dreadfully, and left me all in ridges, the next saw always effaced these, but was sure to leave its own marks instead. And I became so used to the business, that at last they left me quite smooth and even in my disposition—indeed I think nothing now could roughen me much that did not go quite through me; and when I was set up in a window to look all day at the sun, I never even tried to look at anything else; though, to be sure, my window gave me no opportunity. But to do the best we can in all circumstances is without doubt the grand secret of life.”

The leaf-cutter paused; but no one responded, for the sands were all still in the bottom of the glass, and the little lead pencil as dull as he could be; and if the penknife had been a morning-glory, he could not have shut himself up more completely. As for the cricket, he was busy eating a hole in the window curtain.

And thus left to himself, at the end of his long story, the leaf-cutter felt rather flat.

“I should think he might,” said Mary. “But why was he set up in the window?”

“To bleach and grow white.”

“Oh!” said Edith, “do they bleach leaf-cutters?”

“Yes; and piano keys. The pieces of ivory are put in a sort of greenhouse, close up against the glass, and left there for months till they become quite white.”

“Well,” said Edith, “I’m glad I’m not an elephant’s tusk, if they *do* get used to it.”

CHAPTER XXI.

SAPPHIRES.

"EDITH," said Mrs Rutherford one day after dinner, "will you go up and see Mrs Clarivaulx this afternoon?"

"Quite alone?" said Edith, opening her eyes.

"Quite alone."

"Must I, Aunt Esther?"

"She asked me to let you come."

"I am very sorry," said Edith.

"You had better go, Edith," said Mary; "they have so many pretty things there."

"Well, you come too, then."

"No; I have seen them, or at least some of them. I don't want to go again."

"And I don't want to go at all," said Edith, "but I am glad I have not got my yellow frock on." For Miss Clarivaulx was the lady who had called the yellow frock "spinach and eggs."

So Edith laid her doll carefully down on the sofa, and opened the parlour door and went out, and shut it after her in the most deliberate way, as if she were in no haste to have her short walk over. The sun was already down, and indeed none of his beams had got into the large hotel for a long time; and the halls and staircase were in very dingy twilight. Edith walked slowly along, feeling her way by the balustrade, and thinking that after all she liked twilight much better than daylight for making visits, when a bright light shot up from below. Edith peeped through the balusters and saw one of the waiters lighting the great lamp down-stairs. And then came another gleam from up-stairs; for some one was lighting a lamp there too.

"It will be just as bad as daylight soon," thought Edith; and her little feet went pit-a-pat up-stairs, and stopped at Mrs Clarivaulx's door, when her heart went much as her feet had done. She gave a little knock. Nobody answered, though it was plain from the noise that there was no lack of

people within. Edith uttered a little sigh, which might have meant, "Oh dear!" and knocked again. She thought they must have heard her this time, for everybody seemed to stop talking at once; but if anybody cried "Come in," it was in such a faint voice that Edith did not choose to act upon it. Once more she knocked, and then Mr James Clarivaulx opened the door.

He didn't see Edith for some time—he was such a tall young man, and she such a little thing; and when he did, he was doubtless puzzled to know who she was and what she wanted. But wisely supposing that she must want something, he asked her to walk in—and in she walked.

"Oh, it is little Edith Rutherford!" said Miss Clarivaulx, —and Edith had the pleasure of being immediately brought to the fire, and kissed by half a dozen people.

They were all sitting about the hearth-rug, with little plates of almonds and raisins, and they offered some to Edith; but she had eaten as many as she wanted at dinner.

It was a large room—very long and wide, and full of windows; and full too, as it seemed to Edith, of everything else. So many armchairs and footstools, and embroidery frames and musical instruments; and such a number of little tables covered with little things, and of book-racks filled with books, that Edith began to think the family possessions must have no limit. This was the general impression the room made upon her mind when she first went in, for after that she did not look about at all, but made herself well acquainted with the pattern of the carpet, and never raised her eyes unless somebody spoke to her.

"What do you do with yourself all day, Edith?" said Miss Emma Clarivaulx.

"Oh I don't know, ma'am," said Edith; "a great many things."

"A great many things!" said Mr James. "What are they? come, let me hear. I'll bet you a box of sugarplums you do not do anything but play in a baby house."

"I have not got a baby house," said Edith; "at least not a real one."

"Only an unreal one," said the young gentleman. "What may that be, pray? A castle in the air, peopled with dolls?"

"I don't know, sir," said Edith; "but last summer Mary and I used to lay the two little stools on the floor, and make a baby house out of them."

"And do the two little stools lie on the floor still?"

"No, sir; we left them standing by the mantelpiece at home."

"I have lost my bet, then," said Mr James, "and my sugarplums too." And he went to one of the little tables, and brought from thence a little round wooden box very prettily painted, which he gave to Edith.

"Oh no, sir, if you please," she said, drawing back; "I mean—I don't know what it is."

"Why they have sugarplums," said Mr James; and he opened the box, which was full of the prettiest sugarplums that could be. "Take it, child—I lost my bet."

"Yes, sir," said Edith; "but I mean—I didn't make any bet,—Aunt Esther told me never to say so."

"Well," said Mr James, "she didn't tell me, and I made a bet; and I tell you the box is yours, and here it goes into your pocket." And there it went.

"Did you bring your doll to town, Edith?" said Miss Emma Clarivaulx.

"Yes, ma'am, I brought it," said Edith, with a little smile, "and the other day grandpapa bought me a new one; but I don't care much about playing with it alone, and Mary does not always want to play with me."

"And what are the playthings that throw this most im-personal doll into the shade?" said Mr James. "What do you like to play with?"

"Oh, I like Noah's Ark a great deal better," said Edith; "but I haven't got one now. And books are better too, sometimes."

"You do not know how to read," said Mr James, "you are not more than three years old, Edith?"

"Yes, sir, I'm six and a half; but I knew how to read a great while ago."

"In the spelling-book, I suppose?"

"No, sir, I didn't study the spelling-book much—I didn't like it, and Aunt Esther thought I was not learning very fast, so she put me into the Bible."

"Well, that is a safe enough place to be put in," said Mr James, facetiously.

"Hush!" said Miss Clarivaulx. "What do you mean, Edith? How did she put you into the Bible?"

"Into the first chapter of Genesis, you know, ma'am—I began there; and I used to spell all the words I didn't know, and so read one verse every day. And by and by I read two verses, and then three. And Aunt Esther used to explain it to me."

"That was when she wanted you to go to sleep, was it not?" said Mr James.

"Oh no, sir; I think it is very interesting."

"Think what is?"

"Why all that in the Bible," said Edith,—“about how there was not anything at first, and how the world was made, and the beautiful garden, and the dove and the olive leaf.”

"It was there then that you got so fond of Noah's Ark, I suppose?" said Mr James. "Now I'll be bound you don't know what an olive branch is, Edith—what does it look like?"

Edith had an indefinite idea that the gentleman was laughing at her; and she looked down at the carpet more gravely than ever.

"I don't know exactly, sir," she said—"I never saw a real one. There was a little picture of one in my hieroglyphical Bible."

"One would think," said Mr James, "that this child was a little Methuselah, and had devoted one century to dolls, and another to Noah's ark, and two or three more to the Bible. How long did it take you to learn hieroglyphical, Edith? ten years?"

"I don't know, sir," said Edith. "No, it couldn't be so long as that, because I am only six years old."

"Well, who was the first woman?" said Mr James, laughing. "I don't believe you know."

"Eve, sir," said Edith, with a smile.

"No such thing; she was Mrs Adam."

"Does the Bible say so?" said Edith. "I suppose I haven't read that part."

There was a great burst of laughter at this—Mr James's merriment would not let him sit still; and again Edith felt very grave, though she hardly knew why. She was thinking to herself how pleasant it was down-stairs in their own room.

"For shame!" said Miss Clarivaulx, "to tease the child! She is a very good child, and knows more about some things than you do. Come here, Edith—come with me to the window, and I will show you some pretty things. There, we will have the light on this little table. Would you like to see them?"

"If you please, ma'am."

So she went to the little table by the window, where Miss Clarivaulx presently brought a large box which Edith thought very beautiful, even on the outside; for it was of some dark wood and inlaid with gold and ivory. But within it was full of beauties. All manner of trinkets and chains, rings and breastpins, and a great many queer things all sparkling with gold and jewels, of which Edith knew not the names and could not imagine the use. Miss Clarivaulx took them out one by one, and showed them to her.

Sometimes it was a large green emerald set in a ring, or a purple amethyst not set at all, or, prettier still, some fair blue sapphires; and when a diamond bracelet was displayed, Edith's little eyes were quite dazzled, but still she liked the amethyst and the sapphires best. Then came out a little gold dove with blue eyes, and wings all sprinkled with diamonds, so that Edith said he looked as if he had been out in the dew; and Miss Clarivaulx held it up against her neck ribbon, where it sparkled beautifully.

"How do you like it?" said she.

"Pretty well, ma'am," said Edith. "But it does not look much like a dove."

"Why not?" said Mr James, coming up to the window.

"Because it has no feet?"

"Oh no!" said Edith; "Uncle Ruth says that little birds always curl up their feet when they fly, so of course I couldn't see them; but doves have such pretty eyes."

"What is the matter with those eyes? why, they are as blue as the sky."

"Yes, sir, but they haven't any expression," said Edith, looking at the turquoise eyes, which were indeed very lack-lustre.

"I wonder what is the expression of your eyes," said Miss Clarivaulx, laughing. "I should like to find out. Edith, will you come up here for a little while every day, and let me paint your picture?"

"I don't know, ma'am; I'll tell Aunt Esther," said Edith, with a face that took the proposal rather gravely.

"Tell her I want you to come *every day*," said Miss Clarivaulx, "and she must let you to please me."

And then the tea-bell rang, and Edith went down-stairs.

"O Edith," said Mary, the moment she opened the door, "come here quick." So Edith ran to the fireplace in a great hurry.

"Now open your mouth and shut your eyes"——

"Very well," said Edith; "but don't put anything bad in it." And she opened her mouth and shut her eyes, and then immediately opened her eyes and shut her mouth, so quick, indeed, that she was near catching Mary's fingers.

"Take care!" said Mary. "Well—what is it?"

"Why, it is only a sugarplum," said Edith.

"Ah," said Mary, "but where do you think it came from? that is the question."

"Why, when you were out yesterday with grandmamma, you went to the confectioner's."

"No, I did not."

"Then Uncle Ruth brought them home."

"No, he did not."

"Well, I don't care then," said Edith ; " I have got a whole box of sugarplums in my pocket."

"Have you?" said Mary. "Did Miss Clarivaulx give you some? But never mind, you must guess about these."

"But how can I guess?" said Edith. "Anybody might have brought them."

"Come, children," said Mrs Rutherford, "come to tea."

"But I must show Edith first," said Mary. And so she took her into Mrs Rutherford's room and showed her — there stood Henry. How glad Edith was! and how merry they all were! Edith forgot all about Miss Clarivaulx and the blue-eyed dove, and never once thought of Mr James and his box of sugarplums till she went to undress and felt them in her pocket. And then she was too sleepy to tell anybody about her visit.

But the next morning, when Mr Rutherford had done reading the paper, he threw it down on the table, and taking Edith up on his lap he asked her how she liked Mrs Clarivaulx's room.

"Oh, very much!" Edith said.

"Had you a pleasant visit?"

"I think they liked me to come, Uncle Ruth—I'm sure they tried to please me."

"Well, did they not please you?"

"Yes," said Edith, hesitating a little; "only they laughed at me."

"What about?"

"I don't know exactly," said Edith; "but when I told them how Aunt Esther taught me to read, and when I said Miss Clarivaulx's dove hadn't pretty eyes, Mr James Clarivaulx said I was like Methuselah."

And Edith looked up rather sadly.

"Like Methuselah!" said Mr Rutherford. "When he was how old? six years or six hundred?"

Edith laughed.

"I don't know I'm sure, Uncle Ruth, he didn't say. Perhaps it was six!"

"At all events, Edith, one is not much the worse for being laughed at."

"No, Uncle Ruth, but I thought I might have made some mistake."

"I don't suppose Methuselah knew *everything* even when he was nine hundred and sixty-nine," said Mr Rutherford, smiling. "Now tell me about the wonderful box you were describing to Henry this morning."

"The box was beautiful, Uncle Ruth! But oh! the prettiest thing was a precious blue stone, a sapphire! There were a great many diamonds and other things too, but the sapphire was the prettiest."

"Prettier than the diamonds?"

"Oh yes, I liked it better. This diamond in your pin is pretty, Uncle Ruth, but Miss Clarivaulx's bracelet was so bright; I couldn't see much, it quite dazzled my eyes. I could see a great deal more in the sapphire."

"Papa is laughing at you too," said Henry.

"No, I am not," said Mr Rutherford; but he did smile a little at something. "What did you see in the sapphire?"

"I don't know," said Edith, looking up at him, "but I liked it."

"Do you remember what the Bible says about sapphires?"

"Does it say anything about them?" said Mary, whirling round on her music stool, where she had been half playing, half listening for some time.

"They are put above all other stones there, for the throne of God is compared, for beauty and clearness, to a sapphire."

And, taking the Bible, Mr Rutherford turned to several passages.

"And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven for clearness."

"Does that mean anything more than the sky, papa?" said Henry. "Is it not merely a figurative way of speaking?"

"What do you think of these, then?"

"And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone.

"Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne."

"But why should a sapphire be chosen rather than anything else?" said Mary. "I mean, why do you suppose it was?"

"Blue was the emblem of truth among the ancients," said Mr Rutherford; "that may be one reason."

"When it says in Revelation that the wall of the new Jerusalem shall be garnished with precious stones, the first was a jasper and the second was sapphire," said Henry.

"Yes, and in Isaiah this promise is made to the Church of God, 'I will lay thy foundations with sapphires.'"

"Edith does not understand you very well now, papa," said Henry.

Mr Rutherford smiled and stroked her hair.

"Where do you think sapphires come from, Edie?"

"Mary told me last night," said Edith; "they come from Ceylon."

"Yes, the oriental sapphires, as they are called, which are the fine ones. There are some found in Europe, but they are of a whitish colour."

"I thought all sapphires were blue," said Mary.

"Not all; some are green, and some purple, and some yellow."

"Miss Clarivaulx showed me a purple stone," said Edith, "but she said it was an amethyst."

"Yes, that is the name given to the purple sapphires; while we call the green emerald, and the yellow topaz."

"But they look so different," said Mary.

"Is not a white or a yellow rose just as much a rose as a red one?" said Mr Rutherford,— "only they do not take different names like the sapphires. The ruby itself is of just the same materials, but differently proportioned. An-

other proportion still, makes what is called Adamantine Spar,—a very hard stone that is used in the East Indies for cutting and polishing others that are more precious ; and one more change in the proportion gives you Emery—that dark stone the powder of which polishes needles and many other things. Are you tired of hearing about sapphires ?”

“Oh no,” said Edith, “only I wish I knew what proportion is.”

“That you shall know at once. If Aunt Esther were to fill up my cup almost full of tea, and then put in a spoonful of cream, that would be one proportion, and if the cup was half full of tea and the rest of milk, that would be another.”

“Oh, I understand now,” said Edith. “I wish I could see the sapphire again—I could think of so many things.”

“Yes,” said Mr Rutherford. “And whenever either of you look at a sapphire let it remind you of ‘the heavenly city,’ ‘the New Jerusalem.’ ‘Which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.’ ‘For the foundation of the wall was garnished with precious stones ; and the second stone was a sapphire.’”

And before Mr Rutherford went away he gave the children this text to learn about the heavenly city :—

“There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie : but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CHIMNEY SWEEP AND THE FISHERS.

“AUNT ESTHER,” said Mary, a day or two after the conversation about sapphires, “may I have the three Fishers here to tea ?”

“What sort of fishers are they ?” said Henry, “trout or whale ?”

"You know very well," said Mary, with dignity.

"It is well for me if I do," said Henry, "for no one seems inclined to enlighten my ignorance. But it might be important to know whether they will require blubber for tea."

"Whale fishers don't eat blubber," said Mary.

"Yes, they do—after a fashion. When the blubber is boiled down they eat the scraps that are left—they like them too."

"May I, Aunt Esther?" said Mary, turning again to Mrs Rutherford.

"If you like, my dear. But how has this friendship grown to such a height in so short a time?"

"Why you know, ma'am, I see them every day at my French."

"Where does your French live?"

"I would tell them to let my French alone, if I were you," said Henry.

"Well, I see them at Mme. Junon's then," said Mary.

"Henry, why do you talk when nobody wants you to talk?—And to-day, Aunt Esther, I walked home between them."

"That was a privilege," said Henry.

"And their sister, the little one, is the nicest little thing I ever saw," pursued Mary. "Yesterday when I went in she threw her arms round my neck and kissed me."

"I'm sure that was very disagreeable," said Edith. "I shouldn't like to have her do it to me, at all."

"I should not object to have one little thing throw her arms round my neck and kiss me," said Henry,—*"not a fisher girl."*

"I'm not a fisher girl, am I?" said Edith, laughing and climbing up on his lap.

"Not a bit of it."

"Very well—you may talk," said Mary. "I think they are remarkably nice girls."

"A great deal remarked upon, at all events," said Henry.

"There, that will do," said his mother. "You may ask them to come here to-night, Mary, if you choose—or to-mor-

row." And happy in this permission, Mary went off to Mme. Junon's.

"I think you and I will have a walk, Edith," said Henry. "How would that do by way of amusement?"

"Oh, it would do nicely for me," said Edith, looking up at him.

"And so it would for me."

"I'll tell you what, then," said Edith; "I'll get ready directly, and we will go and buy things."

"What are you going to buy?"

"Oh, a *great many* things—for Christmas. And I have been saving up my money, and Aunt Esther has it. I'm going to make a pin-cushion for Uncle Ruth. See, here it is, all cut out. It is three-sided."

"So I perceive."

"And you see," continued Edith, as she ran for her cloak and then began to put it on; "you see, Henry, I have sewed one side already."

"What a clever little gipsy you are," said Henry. "I hope you mean to give me a pincushion too?"

"No, I believe not," said Edith, laughing. "I shall not have time to make another; Christmas is almost here."

"Well, come—are you nearly ready? Here—I'll tie on this great flapjack of a hat. Don't you get blown away very often?"

"Oh, but I must speak to Aunt Esther first," said Edith; and, going off into the further corner of the room, Mrs Rutherford stooped down, and Edith put her arms round her neck, and they whispered together. At last Edith came back with a satisfied "well"—which said the business was arranged, and taking Henry's hand they went forth.

Edith wondered to herself as she went along, why people did not make more use of their eyes: or at least why they *did* run against such little people as she was; for unless she kept a sharp look-out for herself, somebody would hit her shoulder and turn her half round, or knock her beaver hat down over her face, or give her tippet such a twitch that it was a marvel it did not go off altogether. Henry took as

good care of her as he could, but the streets were very full and the people very busy.

"Now what do you want to buy?" said Henry, when they came to a quieter place.

"First," said Edith, "I want a thimble—a real silver thimble. It's for Janet, and Mary is going to give her a new pair of scissors. Won't it be nice?"

"But you don't know how large it must be," said Henry.

"Oh yes, I do, for Mary looked on her old one for me, and there was number eight on it. Aunt Esther advised her to do so."

"Number eight," said Henry. "How much do you suppose a new silver thimble with number eight on it will cost?"

"I don't know," said Edith. "Will it cost a great deal?"

"I don't know either; we will see. What next?"

"Next," said Edith, speaking with great earnestness; "next comes something for Mary."

"What is that to be?"

"It is so hard to tell," said Edith. "Because you know she does not like *everything*, and if I were to get what she didn't like it would be a pity."

"It would be sad indeed," said Henry, "for her and you too."

"A book is the best thing," said Edith, "but then I don't know what book to buy; and besides, I'm afraid I have not got money enough."

"You had better give me your money," said Henry. "Let me take it and pay for your purchases, and then I can tell you when you are in danger of spending too much."

"Yes, that will be best," said Edith, "and then I shall be sure not to lose any of it."

By this time they had reached the thread and needle shop where silver thimbles were to be had; and from the box brought out for her inspection Edith chose one that was very bright in its newness, and had a number eight engraved very distinctly on the side. This thimble Henry paid for and put in his pocket.

"Aunt Esther said she *thought* Mary would like an emery bag, if I got a pretty one," said Edith.

"What is an emery bag?"

"Why, it is something to put your needles in when they get rusty," said Edith.

"These are emery bags," said the shopwoman, handing down another box, full of very red cloth strawberries, with very green leaves and very yellow seeds.

"Oh yes; get her an emery bag, then," said Henry; "for she is often complaining of her needles."

Edith chose that particular strawberry in which the colours were brightest; and that also was bestowed in Henry's pocket. Then she stood still and thought for some time.

"Well, Edith," said Henry at length, "what now—what do you want next?"

"I want two things more," said Edith. "But you mustn't ask who they are for!"

"Not a word."

"Well, then," said Edith, "I want a little basket and a pair of gloves. And I should like very much—do you think I have money enough to fill the basket full of sugarplums?"

"I'll fill the basket for you," said Henry, "and the gloves too, if you like."

But Edith assured him that was unnecessary; so he stood by while she picked out a pair of dark kid gloves—and she knew what size they must be too—and then they went to the basket-shop, and bought a pretty little red and white willow basket.

"Now Edith," said Henry, "when we get home, I'll take all your things to my room, and hide them so that nobody can see them till the right time."

"But we haven't any sugarplums yet," said Edith.

"No, I shall not get them till the day before Christmas; for they should be as fresh as can be. I won't forget them."

"Oh no, I'm sure you won't. But haven't we bought a great deal with a very little money?"

"What do you call a very little money?" said Henry.

"Why, half-a-crown is not a *great* deal," said Edith.

"No, that it is not," said Henry, with a wise shake of

his head. "It will not often buy more than half-a-dozen things."

"I have only bought four things," said Edith. "Do you know Mary is painting a whole packet of new little pictures to give grandmamma; and I think she'll be so pleased. She always likes everything Mary does."

"Are you painting some too?"

"Yes; I have painted two or three," said Edith,—“there's a little basket of flowers and a little red house. Mary drew the basket tumbling down because she said it was not so stiff. But I don't think the flowers look so pretty—and I had to turn it upside down to paint them.”

Henry laughed, and, catching Edith in his arms, he ran with her up the hotel steps and then up to their own parlour. There he set her down and went to his own room with the basket and gloves and emery bag and thimble.

"The three Fishers are coming," was Mary's first salutation as Edith came in.

"Are they?" said Edith. "I'm not very glad."

"You ought to be glad," said Mary. "I wonder you are not. They are not coming till after tea though."

"Why not?" said Edith.

"Oh, I don't know—they said they couldn't. I suppose they wish to have tea at home."

"Do you think they will want to play with my new doll?" said Edith.

"Why no, child! I don't suppose they ever do such a thing as look at a doll! Why, they are older than I am."

It was doubtful whether Edith was most crestfallen at having made such a mistake as to suppose that the Fishers could play with dolls, or glad that her new doll would be in no danger of being harmed by careless hands. The doll should not have the indignity, however, of being visible and yet not be looked at; so Edith laid her carefully on her back in her own bureau drawer, with little pocket-handkerchiefs for a bed, the red dress carefully smoothed down, and the flaxen curls placed so as not to be entangled. When she

went back into the parlour Mary was at the piano, playing away as heard as she could.

Edith took out the little three-sided pincushion, and came and sat down close by Mrs Rutherford and began to sew; and she did not speak a word until the second side was finished.

"Don't you think I had better do the other side now, Aunt Esther?" she said; "and then it will be all done, and I can put it away."

"I would put it away as it is, if I were you," said her aunt. "You are tired now, and you cannot sew well when you are tired."

"I am *so* tired!" said Edith, leaning back against Mrs Rutherford. "You see Henry and I walked a good way, and I was so busy all the time; and I have been sewing—and the Fishers are coming here to-night."

"Does that make you feel tired now, Edie?"

"Yes, I think it does," said Edith, "because you know I don't want them to come. O Aunt Esther! if you could just tell me one little story!—it would rest me so nicely."

"Suppose you were to tell me one—would not that do as well?"

"But I don't know any," said Edith.

"Look out in the street, and tell me a story about anything you see there. I have no doubt it would amuse me very much."

"But I don't know anything about anything that is in the street," said Edith,—“nor about anybody.”

Mrs Rutherford laid down her work, and taking a chair that stood in the window-seat, she lifted Edith up on her lap.

"Now tell me what you see," she said.

"A great many things," said Edith. "There are houses, and churches, and carts, and carriages, and people, and little children, and chimney sweeps. Tell me a story about that little black chimney sweep, if you please," she added, as the little boy, in his sooty blanket and woollen cap, and tattered pantaloons, went along the street, not walking nor running

like other boys, but with a sort of rolling gait, as if he did not know how to walk.

"I don't know much about him," said Mrs Rutherford, smiling, with her eyes full of tears, as the little sweep looked up at their window and showed his white teeth in their curious red and black setting.

"Do you know *anything* about him, Aunt Esther?" said the little fair child on her lap.

"Yes, I know something," said Mrs Rutherford. "I will tell you first what I know, and then what I do not know."

"Yes, that will be very nice," said Edith. "Funny, too, I should think."

"No, I am afraid it will not be funny; but it will be true. First of all then, I know that the little sweep is just of that age when boys love to run and jump, and eat sugarplums and plenty of bread and butter."

"Yes," said Edith, "Henry does. But he often gives Mary and me his sugarplums, because he says he would rather we should have them."

"And I know," continued Mrs Rutherford, "that, instead of going sometimes to school and sometimes to play, this little sweep has to work very hard for his breakfast, dinner, and supper—and I know that he has a great strong man for his master, and that such men are not always kind to such little boys. I know that he must get up very early in the morning, and go singing about the streets till some cook calls to him to come and sweep her kitchen chimney."

"Does he go?" said Edith, who was getting very much interested.

"He must go; for his master is with him. Christmas day, perhaps, for then they are most of all busy, he goes out before it is quite light to some house where he has promised to come; and then he creeps up the narrow flue with his brushes—sweeping, sweeping—the black soot falling all about and upon him,—till he has reached the very top of the chimney, and can stick out his head and his brushes into the open air. I know that if he is afraid to go up, or does not

clean the chimney well, his master often treats him very harshly. And that is the way he spends the cold winter mornings."

"Is that all you know about him?" said Edith, with a little sigh.

"No," said Mrs Rutherford, more slowly, "not quite. I know that poor little child is a sinner—that his sooty blanket is not more foul and black than his natural heart. I know that when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God, that poor little sweep shall be there—along with all the kings and mighty men of the earth. And I know that God is no respecter of persons—and that Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost."

"Tell me some more, please," Edith whispered, for Mrs Rutherford sat silent for a while.

"I'm afraid it is too sad a story for you, Edie."

"Oh no," said Edith, "I like to hear it. What don't you know about him, Aunt Esther?"

"A great many things, love. I don't know whether he has any time to play—or half enough to eat. I don't know whether he ever has any clothes that are not just as ragged and dirty as those we saw him wear. I don't know whether his master is kind or cruel; nor whether the little sweep has any bed but the floor or any home but a cellar. I don't know whether he ever had a Christmas present in his whole life. And, O Edith, most of all, I do not know whether he has ever heard that God hates sin and will surely punish it. I do not know whether the poor little sweep has anybody in the world to love him, nor whether he knows that the Lord Jesus loved him and gave Himself for him."

Mary had left the piano and come to the window while Mrs Rutherford spoke, and Henry was there too. All the children were silent for a few minutes when the story was done; then Henry exclaimed—

"Why should we not give him a Bible, and then he will know."

"We will, if he knows how to read, and we can see him again."

"I'll undertake to find him," said Henry, "if it is that boy who went by a little while ago. I have seen him before."

"Yes, that was the boy," said Edith. "And he had an old blanket on, and a cap with a little red top-knot."

"But then, perhaps, he may not know how to read," said Mary, "and perhaps his master wouldn't let him have a Bible."

"We could try," said Henry. "And if he is not able to read we could talk to him."

"You could not talk much to him in the street," said Mrs Rutherford, "and I could not let you go home with him. You may bring him in here if you like. Now Edith, dear, jump down, for I must go out on some business."

The children talked a great deal about the story and the little sweep all the afternoon; but as evening drew on, Mary's thoughts came back to the Fishers, and their coming to spend the evening.

"I wonder how we shall amuse them," she said. "We can play on the piano—that is one thing."

"And blind man's buff—that is another and a better thing," said Henry. "I'll catch all the Fishers and eat them up in no time."

"I think you would make a great deal of noise if you did," suggested Edith.

"I think they would," said Henry.

"Well, but help me to think," said Mary. "We have so few things here—they are all at home. There are my costume cards—and the conversation cards—and the engravings—and the piano"—

"And the window curtains," said Henry. "Hide the handkerchief is rather stupid, but it's better than those conversation cards. Leave them to me—I'll frighten them out of their wits, and that will be amusement enough."

"Ah no, please don't," said Mary. "Now Henry, be good, will you? just this once; and don't do anything disagreeable. If you had boys here to see you I wouldn't try to frighten them."

"Good reason why," said Henry—"you couldn't if you

did try. But I won't do anything *very* bad, Mary—you know I won't when I say so."

Tea came, and soon after that the three Fishers; and the younger one immediately gave Edith such an embrace and kiss, that for some time after Edith only looked on in amazed silence.

When the engravings and the costumes and the conversation cards and the piano had done their part of the entertainment, the children were allowed to go into Mrs Rutherford's room and play any active games that they liked; and then Henry certainly did his part well. He caught the Fishers and everybody else when he was blinded; and when he was not, he jumped over people's heads and crawled away under their arms, so that it was next to impossible to catch him. Then he hid the handkerchief in all manner of impossible places, so that the children were in despair; and yet all the time he found out their handkerchiefs with no trouble at all. At last he hid Edith herself, and nobody could find her. They looked under the bed, and in the bed, and behind the bureau.

"Well, little people, have you played long enough?" said Mrs Rutherford, opening the door. "Where is Edith?"

"That is just the thing," said Mary,—“Henry has hidden her and we can't find her.”

"Do you give up?" said Henry. "Don't tell them, mamma—I'll tell you. Do you give up?"

"I suppose we must," said Mary, "but it's very provoking."

"Come out, Edith," said Henry.

Then one of the window shutters began to move, and it opened quite wide out, and there stood Edith behind it.

"Now if you are all ready," said Mrs Rutherford, "I want you to come into the other room and try a new sort of play."

"A new sort?" said all the children. "Is it quiet or noisy?"

"Quiet."

"That's good, for we are tired. Is it my lady's toilette?"

"Why, that is as old as the hills," said Henry; "and noisy too."

"You shall see," said Mrs Rutherford, as she led the way into the next room. "Now you must all stand with your faces to the wall, and your hands close over your eyes."

"How long?" said Mary.

"Till I tell you to come and sit down."

"This is a very queer play," said the children, as they took the required position. But before they had stood there many minutes their curiosity became much excited, for Mrs Rutherford was stepping about the room, and what could she be doing?

"Now you may come and sit down," she said at last; and the children whirled round like so many tops and ran to take their seats.

And there upon the table stood a dish of oranges, and another of little cakes, and another of cocoa-nut cakes and mottoes. And that was the play.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SEEDS OF HAPPINESS.

ONE would have thought that all holiday preparations must be entirely finished by this time, so long had the children been talking and looking forward; and yet on the morning of the twenty-fourth of December, when Christmas was just at hand, everybody seemed as busy as if it had taken them quite by surprise. Edith in particular had the third side of the little pincushion greatly on her mind; but as Mrs Rutherford represented to her that if she fainted away for want of food neither the pincushion nor anything else would get done, Edith consented to eat her breakfast before beginning operations in the gift line. But as much of the work in each one's thought was to be kept secret from some one of the others, the faces around the table that morning were singularly grave and considerate. Only Mr and Mrs Rutherford preserved their equanimity, and talked and laughed much as usual. And they even knew what they were eating

for breakfast; which the children did not, but probably mistook the bread for pincushions and the tea for a decoction of sugarplums. But Mr Rutherford desired Timon to give them an early dinner in their own parlour that day, and that was something remarkable.

After breakfast the work began in earnest. Now there was really very little to do; but then talking it over and thinking it over and showing and admiring, made it go twice as far. The pincushion was finished and filled with pins and wrapped up in white paper; and then Edith went off with Henry to his room to see the sugarplums and fill the basket. There were three white papers of sweets on the table by the basket.

"Three papers!" said Edith. "O Henry, what can be in them? I didn't know you were going to get more than one."

"Look and see," said Henry. "They are prettier mixed, don't you think so?"

"Oh yes, a great deal prettier!" said Edith, as she opened the first paper. It was full of burnt almonds, red and white. And the second had chocolates, and the third all manner of pretty and nice drops.

"But there is no candy," said Edith.

"No," said Henry, "I thought these would look best in the basket. You know the sticks of candy would not go in whole, and they are not so pretty broken."

"No, that's very true," said Edith. And having put a good layer of the almonds at the bottom, she poured on some chocolates and then plenty of the drops, and then more almonds, until the basket was quite full.

Mary meanwhile had been finishing her preparations; but the grand difficulty of all was, where the presents should be put.

"It is very easy for the rest, you know," said Mary, "because we go to bed first; but if we put the things in their room they will see them to-night, and so spoil all the fun."

"Yes, indeed," said Edith. "I'll tell you, Mary; we will get up in the morning, very, very early, and run in without

making the least bit of noise, and put them on the dressing-table."

"How shall we do about Janet's presents?" said Mary. "Oh I know! You know she will come in here while we are at breakfast, to open all the shutters and make the bed. Now let us put the thimble and scissors in a paper, and tie it up tight, and then write 'Janet' on the outside. Then we could hang it on the bedpost or on one of the knobs of the shutters, and she would be sure to find it."

The little package was made up accordingly, and labelled; and Edith gave Mrs Rutherford the pair of gloves for Henry and the emery bag for Mary, to put with the rest of their presents.

Then there was nothing to do but to sit together in the corner and talk of other Christmas days, and the presents they had had; and "Do you remember, Edith?" and "O Mary, have you forgotten?" was heard very often.

"What would you like to find in your stocking to-morrow?" said Mary, "if you could choose."

"Oh, I don't know," said Edith,— "I think my stocking would be rather funny if I had to fill it. Let me see—first I should put in a cat."

"No, you *wouldn't!*" said Mary.

"Yes, I should. A cat, and a bunch of flowers, and a book—no, two books, or three—and a new parasol. Because mine has never been *very* good since it was run over."

"Well, I think you would have a queer stocking," said Mary. "It wouldn't be half so good as mine. I should put in books, too—a great many; but then they would be large splendid books—with fine engravings, full of them—and very interesting,—and bound in all sorts of different ways."

"Wouldn't you put in anything but books?" said Edith, upon whom the description of Mary's imaginary library seemed to make a deep impression.

"I don't know," said Mary. "I might if there was any room after I had books enough. Yes—I would put in a box of chessmen, and some new music—and a watch."

"Then you wouldn't have any sugarplums?" said Edith.

"Yes, I would shake them down among the other things—burnt almonds and carraway comforts and rosedrops."

Edith sat quite silent with the thought of such a magnificent stocking.

"What do you suppose you *will* get?" said she.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Mary. "I don't want to think about it. I can't bear to know what I'm going to have beforehand."

"Come to dinner, little people," said Mr Rutherford from the table. "What are you talking about so busily?"

"Oh, we were talking about our stockings," said Edith. "Mary was telling me what she would put in hers if she had to fill it."

"How would she like to find it unfulfilled?"

"I shouldn't like it at all," said Mary.

"How many children do you think there are in this city whose stockings are as empty on Christmas morning as on any other, till they put their feet in them?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Mary—"a great many, I suppose. But then they are poor children, Uncle Ruth, and have no stockings."

"That makes the case better, certainly."

"What happy children we should be if we could only go barefoot!" said Henry.

"No, but I mean," said Mary, "you know, Uncle Ruth, they don't expect presents; and so it does not matter so much."

"Don't you think it would be a pleasant surprise to them to have presents?"

"Yes, I suppose it would," said Mary, rather unwillingly.

"What is the reason you dislike to talk about these poor children?" said Mr Rutherford, smiling and patting her shoulder.

"It is so uncomfortable," said Mary, with a little corresponding twist on her chair, "and it makes me feel as if I ought to give them my presents; and I don't want to do that."

"And I do not wish you to do so; your presents would

not be fit for them. But let us see if there is nothing we can do. We expect to be very happy ourselves to-morrow, and I for my part should like to give away a little happiness to-night. Let us see how much we have to spare, and then we will go together and spend it."

"Money do you mean, papa?" said Henry. "I have half a crown."

"And I have sixpence," said Edith.

"And so have I," said Mary; "at least I have got two shillings."

"Well, there are four sixpences," said Edith, "and mine makes five. Five sixpences and half a crown."

"That is just five shillings," said Mr Rutherford, smiling.

"What have you got, mamma?" said Henry.

"Oh, Aunt Esther must have a great deal," said Edith.

"I have not a great many sixpences," said Mrs Rutherford; "but I have half a dozen pair of little woollen stockings."

"Aunt Esther!" said Mary, "is that what you have been knitting all these evenings before the candles were lit, when nobody else could see to do anything?"

"That is the way mamma always does," observed Henry, as if he felt quite proud of her.

"Well," said Mr Rutherford, "we have something to give away, and that is a thing to be glad of. The proverb says, 'Would all mend one we should all be mended;' and if everybody would try to make some one person happy, there would be few miserable people in the world. Now, let us get ready and be off."

"Why, where are we going?" said the children.

"To find somebody that needs our spare happiness," said Mr Rutherford, smiling.

The children ran in great haste to put on cloaks and hats, and when they came out Mrs Rutherford was all ready with her parcel, and Mr Rutherford had a small basket in his hand.

"What have you got, papa?" said Henry. "Bibles! Oh that is the best of all."

"And here are other little books too," said Mary; "Anna Ross, and the Young Cottager, and Nathan Dickerman."

"But here is another basket," said Edith, "only there is nothing in it."

"That is for Henry to carry, and we will find something to put in it," said Mr Rutherford. So they set out.

It was a cold afternoon, and the sun was off the streets, and the wind very keen. Certainly if anybody had spare happiness on hand, there was no want of people who had none. How cold the little ragged children looked; and the blind men sitting by the wayside heard no cry that "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by;" and no one told them where to look for Him.

"How shall we spend our money, Uncle Ruth?" said Mary; for Edith walked behind between Henry and Mrs Rutherford.

"How would you like to spend it?"

"I don't know," said Mary.

"Edith," said Mr Rutherford, looking back at her, "what will you do with your sixpence?"

"I don't know where we are going," said Edith.

"We are going to see some poor children," said Mr Rutherford. "What will you take them?"

"Would they like some cake?" said Edith.

"I have no doubt they would, very much."

"I wonder which would be best," said Edith, "some cake or some candy. Which could I get most of, Aunt Esther?"

"You can buy six long pieces of gingerbread, or a little round loaf cake, or six sticks of candy."

"I think I will buy the candy," said Edith. "I should like that best myself."

"I shall buy them some gingerbread," said Henry. "It is worth all the candy that ever was heard of."

So they all went to the candy shop, where Edith chose out six stick of candy of six different kinds, and then to the baker's. There Henry got his gingerbread, and Mrs Rutherford bought two loaves of bread and a pound of soda cakes.

"What are those for, mamma?" said Henry.

"One of the children is ill."

Then they walked on again.

"Uncle Ruth," said Mary, "if one of them is ill could I not buy some white grapes for her? I always like grapes better than anything else when I am ill."

"That is a good thought, my child," said Mr Rutherford, "you cannot do anything better."

"Mary always thinks of the best things," said Edith, with a little sigh. "But then I had only sixpence."

But when she felt Mrs Rutherford give her hand a little squeeze on one side, and Henry on the other do the same, Edith brightened up, and looked down into Henry's basket at her paper of candy. It did not look very large, but Edith knew it was sweet.

When they went into the grocer's shop for the grapes, Mrs Rutherford bought two or three more things, and put into the basket; and then they walked away very fast, and turned off into a little street that was both dirty and narrow. So was the house where they stopped and went in; but the room was clean where the poor children lived, and the children themselves were dressed neatly, though their frocks and aprons were patched a great many times. Two of them sat on the floor winding rags for the rag-carpet makers; and the eldest lay in the bed, looking very pale and sick. She had slipped down on the ice and broken her arm, and it was all bound up in splints and bandages. The mother of the family was sewing; but she put down her work when they came in, and gave them the best seats she had; and then Mrs Rutherford told her to go on with her sewing and they could talk to her just as well.

"How fast she sews!" whispered Edith to Mary; "but she has forgotten to put any coals on the fire, and it has gone out."

"Hush!" said Mary in a low voice; "I don't believe she has any to put on."

Edith felt almost frightened at the very idea; and moving softly up to a little box that stood on the hearth, she looked

in. It was black, as if there might have been coal in it, but now there was nothing but a few chips. Edith thought she would try to find out a little more.

"What made you let the fire go out?" she said to one of the children who were cutting rags. The child looked up, but made no answer; and then the woman got up as if she had heard the words too, and threw some of the chips in the grate and set fire to them; but it was not what Edith called a fire after all.

Then Mrs Rutherford gave the poor children some of the bread and gingerbread for their supper; and Mary gave the little sick girl the paper of grapes; and she said she had never tasted anything so nice in her life. But the candy and some other little things were given to the mother, to hang up in the new stockings after the children should be in bed.

So Mr and Mrs Rutherford came away, having left a good deal of happiness behind them, and yet came away with more than they took in with them.

"Papa," said Henry, "it makes me think of what they said in the 'Pilgrim's Progress,'—

'A man there was, (though some did call him mad,)
The more he cast away, the more he had.'

"Aunt Esther has three pairs of stockings yet," said Mary.

"Now I think you little ones have walked far enough," said Mr Rutherford; "therefore you may go home with Aunt Esther, and Henry and I will take the basket and the rest of the stockings and try to find somebody that wants them."

It was getting dark as the children reached home, and the shops were lit up, and the beautiful toys and candies and books showed better than in the daylight. And whenever a gentleman passed them with a nice paper-covered parcel in his hand, or a lady went by with what looked like a Noah's Ark or a box of tea-things done up in a paper, the children smiled and touched each other, and thought there was happiness going home for somebody

"We had such a nice walk!" Henry said, when he came home; "and papa gave away everything that was in the basket, and all his Bibles and books; and he seemed to know just where to find the people that wanted them. And what was the best, he sent that poor woman where you went a whole load of coal, and two or three other people just as much."

"What did you do with your half-crown?" said Mary.

"I bought a toy for a poor little sick boy papa told me of."

The children went to bed very early, for they were tired; but after they had slept a good while something woke them up,—not wide awake, but just so that they could see a candle in the room, and hear a pleasant rustling of paper near the head of the bed. There was happiness preparing for them!

CHAPTER XXIV.

HAPPINESS.

NOTWITHSTANDING the many thousand young people that were in haste to begin so pleasant a day as Christmas-day, the day was long in coming; and of all things that lay in bed late that morning the sun himself was the latest. In fact he did not get up so late again for many a long month. Christmas had begun, and still the stars were to be seen and the sun was invisible. At last, however there came a little bright look in the eastern horizon, just in one spot like a little half circle; and in the country the cocks began to crow, but in town nothing awoke. Then two or three little clouds that were flying about the sky ceased to be mere dark spots, and looked soft and whitish, and the frost on the ground began to show itself. For everything was covered with a thick frost, and the earth was frozen hard. The sun had not made his appearance yet, but only sent on a light ahead; and some of the people were content with that and would not wait for him. Anybody that happened to be in the street

might have seen a little glimmer from several windows ; where in one room there was a maid-servant lighting the fire, and in another a group of children in their nightgowns and nightcaps, examining their new-found treasures.

Mary and Edith had no light in their room—Mrs Rutherford always said it was soon enough for them to get up when they had daylight to work by ; but they woke up almost as early as if they had been country chickens.

“Merry Christmas, Mary !” came out of the darkness on one side of the bed.

And “Merry Christmas, Edith !” from the darkness on the other.

“Is it almost time to get up ?” said Edith.

“Why no, child ; you can’t see your hand yet.”

“It looks quite light out of the window,” said Edith.

“I think it looks quite dark,” said Mary. “I can see stars. Now, Edith, I’ll tell you what we will do. You know the stockings are on the bedposts just here by our heads.”

Edith gave a little wriggle under the blankets, expressive of her belief in the fact.

“Well,” said Mary, “I’ll stretch out my hand and feel my stocking, and you stretch out your hand and feel yours ; and then we’ll try and guess what we have touched. Now, Edith, you must take but just one feel.”

“No,” said Edith, getting up in the bed and trying to find the bedpost.

“You will fall out of bed,” said Mary, “if you don’t take care. There lie down—I have felt mine !”

“So have I !” said Edith, huddling down out of the cold air. “I felt the cat !”

“Nonsense !” said Mary, “there isn’t a cat in your stocking—you need not think it.”

“But I *felt* it,” said Edith. “May I get up again and take her out ? because she must be very uncomfortable there.”

“There is not one there !” said Mary. “How long do you suppose a cat would remain still in your stocking and never mew nor move ?”

"She might have mewed when we were asleep," said Edith, turning over on her back to be ready for the next outcry.

"No, no, you lie still," said Mary, "and we'll talk about it. It could not be a cat, but it might be something else. I felt something sharp in my stocking."

"What did it feel like?" said Edith.

"I don't know," said Mary—"that's the very thing. It was too thick for a book I should think, this end of it."

"Well, why should we not get up and look?" said Edith. "I'm sure I can see my hand before my face now."

"I shall wait," said Mary, "till I can see the furthest corner of the dressing-table. It will be dark enough then, you'll find. Besides, I like to think about things a little while. What could that have been, Edith?"

"It *must* have been a cat," said Edith.

"I don't believe it was any more a cat than you are," said Mary; "but I meant the thing in my stocking."

"Oh," said Edith; "perhaps it was a box."

"A box!" said Mary—"I don't know—it felt rather like that. But what could be in it?"

"Sugarplums?" suggested Edith.

"No, it is not a sugarplum box—I don't want that to be in it,—it is sharp-cornered and hard, and down near the foot; so it must be something heavy."

"Why did you feel the foot?" said Edith. "I put my hand in at the very top."

"I didn't want to put my hand in—only to feel. O box! I wonder what you are!"

"Well, why don't you look?" said Edith.

"Could I see if I did?"

"O Mary!" said Edith, suddenly jumping up to a very upright position on her knees in the bed; "we have not put the things in Aunt Esther's room yet! Let us go and do it now, and perhaps it will be light by that time."

"There is no use in going till we can see," said Mary. "We might break our necks over the chairs, and wake aunt besides. You had better lie down again."

"I think I see a little bit of the dressing-table, though," said Edith.

A little dark shadowy line did begin to show itself in that corner, and the children watched it with strained eyes. Then they shut their eyes for a minute, and when they looked again, the dressing-table was plainly to be seen.

"Now I'll tell you what, Edith," said Mary, "we will take in the other things first; and then we can enjoy ours in peace and comfort."

So they both jumped up, and going very softly on tiptoe through the half-open door into their aunt's room, Edith laid her pincushion on the table and set the little basket of sugarplums close by; and Mary placed there a guard-chain she had made for Mr Rutherford and a pretty silk bag for her aunt, and then they ran back again.

"When did you buy the bag?" whispered Edith.

"The other day when I was out with grandmamma. Now for the stockings?"

It was dark yet, but they felt about till the stockings were unfastened from the bedposts, and then jumped into bed—each with her prize.

It would be too much to describe all that the stockings held,—to tell of the books, and pictures, and sugarplums, and from whom they came. Edith's cat turned out to be a pretty little fur muffler, to wear round her neck when it was too warm for her tippet; and Mary had one like it. The box was the very box of chessmen which Mary said she would put in her stocking; and the men themselves were prettily carved out of red ivory and white.

The day was brightening, and the milkmen ringing their bells; but the children heeded them not. Then from under the window a little voice came up, "Sweep ho!"

"There's the little sweep!" said Edith. "Oh, I wonder if he has had any presents!"

"Well never mind that now," said Mary, "because we can't give him any till we are up and dressed at least. Have you got everything out of your stocking?"

"Yes; I believe so," said Edith, shaking it out.

"Here is something in the toe of mine," said Mary,—
"some queer little thing—I wonder what it can be."

Edith knew what it was well enough; and she sat there and laughed to herself in the dark—for dark it was still, compared to broad daylight—but she said not a word.

Mary shook out the little package, and then took off one paper after another till she came to the little red emery-bag, with its green leaves and yellow seeds and strawberry shape.

"Why, you funny child!" she said, "you must have given me this?"

"Yes, I did," said Edith. "Do you like it?"

"It looks pretty," said Mary, "as well as I can see it, and it will be very useful. I am very much obliged to you, Edie." And she leaned over and kissed her, and Edith felt paid.

"I wish I knew where all *my* things came from," she said.

"Which do you guess is my present?" said Mary.

"My Noah's Ark," said Edith.

"No; Henry gave you that. He told me he meant to give it to you."

Edith guessed and guessed.

"It is the little silk apron," said Mary; "and I made it for you myself—trimmed it and all."

"Oh, I'm sure it is beautiful!" said Edith, trying eagerly to get a better view of the apron. "How good you are, Mary! I like it so much better for your making it!"

"Aunt Esther thought you would."

"And I am sure this is the prettiest Noah's Ark I ever had, too," said Edith, once more slipping back the little hook that fastened in her antediluvian treasures. "I saw a beautiful red cow and a yellow bird—and there's a pigeon."

"No; it is a dove," said Mary. "Don't you know the dove brought the olive branch?"

"Then were there pigeons too?" said Edith.

"I'm sure I don't know—yes, I suppose there were," said Mary.

By this time everybody was stirring. Mrs Rutherford came in to tell the children how pleased she was with her

presents, and then they got up, that they might enjoy theirs in more comfort.

The first thing for Edith to do after breakfast was carefully to examine the Ark, within as well as without, and to set all the different animals in order upon the table, that she might know what sort of a flock she had.

A strange-looking flock it was. A gray elephant with very white tusks, a gray camel with one hump, and a yellow camel with two; a black horse, more shiny than even Cherry and Dash, and another of a reddish and very freckled complexion; while the red cow turned out to be only a white cow with red sides, apparently a distant relation of the white dog with brown ears. Then there were birds—not in pairs, but single specimens—a yellow bird and a black bird, and a blue bird and a gray bird—a duck, a hen, a swan, and a pigeon. There was also a full representation of the human race,—Mr and Mrs Noah in long yellow dresses and brown hats; while another couple in red, one in brown, and one in blue, represented his three sons and his three sons' wives. There was besides a rat and a mouse, and a butterfly and beetle of overshadowing dimensions; while a pretty white sheep and a spotted pig came out hand in hand, their feet being fast locked together; and the dove, lest she should lose her olive leaf, had it glued fast to her mouth. Altogether it was a very fine affair, and the animals were quite manageable, and went back into the ark without the least difficulty. The elephant had sometimes a fancy to push his trunk out, and the duck's bill would now and then get in the way, but these difficulties were soon got over.

Mary meanwhile was regaling herself with a new book in one corner, and Henry with one of his new books in another; while Edith made the grand tour of her presents, and enjoyed them all by turns.

As for Mrs Rutherford, the bag hung on her chair, and the basket stood on her table; and whenever she caught Edith's eye, she would smile at her and take a sugarplum.

In the course of the morning, just when Edith had with great difficulty persuaded the dove with the olive leaf to

perch quietly upon the ridge of the ark, with the pigeon and blue bird on either side; the other animals being tastefully grouped around on the crimson table-cover, and Noah and his family variously employed about them; Timon knocked at the door. Mrs Rutherford said, "Come in," and in walked Timon with a large wooden cage. And from the cage there came a soft cooing, half in fear and half from habit. The box was for Master Henry, Timon said, from one of the gentlemen in the house; and the children all ran to look in.

There were two of the prettiest birds that could be, with brown bills, and gray heads, and gray and white backs, and purple and green necks. Their feet and eyes were red, but not with weeping; for except a little surprise and confusion, they looked as comfortable as birds need be. They were carrier pigeons, Mrs Rutherford said.

"What are carrier pigeons?" said Edith.

"Why, pigeons that carry letters," said Mary. "I have read about them."

"Wait till next summer," said Henry, "and see if they don't bring you letters."

"Then you must send them to Rose Hill to spend the winter," said Mr Rutherford.

"Yes, so I must," said Henry. "Garret will take care of them."

"But how could they bring us letters?" said Edith.

"Why, you see," said Henry, "if I leave them at Rose Hill all the winter, they will like it so much that they will be anxious to go back there, naturally. Then in the spring I shall take them to school with me; and love of home being a characteristic of pigeons which deserves encouragement, I shall some day write a letter and tie it under the wing of the pigeon that is most home-sick. Then I shall dismiss him from school—in other words, let him fly."

"But then you will lose him."

"The pigeon being dismissed from school," said Henry, "will do precisely what I should do in similar circumstances,—he will fly to Rose Hill as fast as his wings can

carry him ; and under one of his wings you will find my letter."

"Shall we really?" said Mary. "I should like to see it so much, and then I should believe it better than ever I did. Oh, I wish you could try immediately!"

"But the pigeon always goes to the place where he last lived," said Henry, "so it would be of no use. We don't want to give him back to Mr Smith or Mr Tompkins."

"How fast can his wings carry him?" said Edith.

"I don't know how fast mine can fly. Some carrier pigeons have been known to fly almost a hundred and fifty miles an hour."

"But how shall we know how fast yours flies?" said Mary.

"Why," said Henry, "I will write on my letter what o'clock it is, or at least at what o'clock I send the pigeon ; and then when he comes you must see what o'clock it is, and so you will know. O mamma, I wish you would tell the children your pretty story about the carrier pigeon! I should like to hear it again myself."

The children joined their entreaties, but Mrs Rutherford said—

"Look at the clock! Don't you know that we are to eat our Christmas dinner with Mrs Salisbury? Some other day you shall hear the story."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CARRIER PIGEON.

It so happened that the very next day after Christmas was stormy ; and the children not only put in their plea for "a rainy-day story," but begged that it might be that very one of the carrier pigeon, about which Henry had said so much. Mrs Rutherford therefore took her work and sat down between the fire and the window, and Henry placed himself on the floor at her side ; while Edith stood by the table to

overlook the march of a long caravan with the two camels at its head. For she thought she could look and listen too; and besides Mary sat by the table with her work, and the new emery-bag was there in plain sight, and sometimes in use; which was to Edith, a source of great satisfaction. And all being thus quietly established Mrs Rutherford began.

“The carrier pigeon that I am to tell you about, was for three weeks shut up in a snow-white eggshell; and in the same nest there was another little pigeon, a prisoner like himself. The nest was not much of a nest—only some hay laid together in a little room in the pigeon-house; the little room having but one door and no window.”

The children looked at each other when Mrs Rutherford said it was not much of a nest, and Mary said—

“Do pigeons *never* make a nice nest, Aunt Esther?”

“The tame pigeons make none at all, as I told you; they merely take the box and hay that are provided for them. And the nest of the wild pigeon is but a poor affair compared with that of the oriole and all the weavers and basket-makers of the bird race. It consists only of a few sticks and straws laid loosely together. But these carriers lived in a pigeon-house; and there the two little birds broke the shell and came out two unfledged little pigeons.

“The two old birds had taken turns in hatching the eggs and now took equal care of the young ones. For a time these were fed from the crops of the old birds; who first swallowed the food, and when it had undergone some peculiar change in their crops brought it up again, and put it into the little bills that were always wide open for something to eat. Then by degrees they were allowed to have a little grain with this food; and at last grain alone,—oats and corn and beans and buckwheat. By this time the soft down which had covered them when they first came out of the shell gave place to feathers, and they were soon completely dressed in pigeon-clothes.

“It was a proud day for the little carriers when they first went out of their room door, and flew off with the old birds in the fresh sweet air and sunshine among the trees. They

thought at first that they would never go back ; but their wings were soon tired and they were glad to fly home, and creep through the little door, and nestle down under the old pigeon's wings.

"One day when they were full-fledged, they found upon getting up in the morning, that their door had been made fast during the night ; and though there was a little hole to let in the air, there was none by which a pigeon might get out. Then suddenly a man came to the pigeon-house, and opening a door in the roof which nobody knew of before, he put down his hand, brought up both the young carriers, and put them in a basket. Then he opened the little door and let the old ones out ; but the young ones he carried off in his basket, walking along the high road, till they were a mile or two from home.

"The man stopped then, and setting down his basket, he raised the cover."

"And did the pigeons get away?" said Edith, turning round with her little make-believe pigeon in her hand.

"To be sure they did. Both flew up out of the basket, and went darting about as if they were not sure of their freedom even yet. Then they flew round in a little circle, and then in one a little larger and a little higher from the ground, and so up and up, and wider and wider, each time till they caught sight of the barn and pigeon-house where they were brought up. And then they darted off in a straight line, and never stopped till they were at the pigeon-house and had run through the little door into their old nest."

"But what did they fly round and round for?" said Mary.

"It is supposed that they do this, taking a wider and higher circle each time, only until they see some familiar object or some object they have passed on the road they have travelled, by which to direct their flight home. When pigeons are let fly from a balloon, they drop down until they can see something of the earth, and then fly round in the same way ; only in that case each circle is *lower* than the last."

"But, Aunt Esther," said Mary, "is *this* part of your story? Might not all that happen to any carrier pigeons?"

"All that might and does happen to all carrier pigeons that grow up and have an education; and without it they are no more expert than any other birds for carrying letters. They must be taken from home repeatedly, increasing the distance every time, until they are thoroughly trained to return from any place however far off."

"But where is your story, mamma?" said Henry. "I like to hear all this, but I have read it before; and then if dinner time comes and papa, we shall lose the story. I know it begins like all other stories, 'There was once a little boy.'"

"Oh, they do not all begin so," said Mary. "Some of them begin, 'There was once a beautiful young lady.'"

"Fairy tales," said Henry.

"This one does begin about a little boy," said Mrs Rutherford, smiling; "and he lived in the corner of a large estate in England. His mother was dead, and his father worked upon the land as a day labourer; and his grandmother kept the lodge at one of the great gates. And at this lodge little Timothy and his sister spent the most of their time; for though now and then they went back to their father's hut for a day or two, it was lonely there, and they were glad to return to the lodge. It was a great amusement to sit and watch the carriages go by, and to run out and open the gate for those who wished to come in or out; and it was pleasanter still to pick up a penny or a halfpenny when one found its way through a gentleman's fingers, and so down to the ground. This did not happen so often as you would suppose, and still little Tim and his sister found their box of pennies was filling up very fast.

"One day there had been few carriages passing, and in the afternoon Tim sat down in front of the lodge with his fingers in his mouth, for want of something better to do with them. And casting his eyes about for the same reason, Tim saw at a distance something white down in a clump of bushes. He had something to do with his feet at least now, for they scampered along in a great hurry till he reached

the bushes. And there Tim was greatly delighted, and soon disappointed quite as much. Far down in the bushes lay a little white pigeon. It had struggled and struggled till it had worked itself through them, thorny though they were, and now it lay on the ground almost dead, and was fluttering yet, though feebly. There was a little blood on some of the white feathers of one wing, and Tim knew that it must have been wounded by a shot. But he could not reach it. He worked and worked, tugging at the bushes, and sticking the thorns into his fingers, but all to no purpose; and half-crying, he ran back to the lodge again.

“O granny, granny, there's a white pigeon in the thorn bushes, and I can't get at it!”

“Little Hetty ran out at once to see the pigeon, and Tim ran with her; while old Mrs Lucas laid down her knitting, and, pushing her glasses high up on her white cap, followed on more slowly. There was the pigeon, to be sure, and there was a hole large enough to bring him through could they but reach him.

“Run back for the tongs, Hetty, child,” said the old woman, “and take care not to fall down.”

“Hetty ran as she was bid, and then came slowly back with the tongs; and when Mrs Lucas had pulled her glasses down to their proper place again, she carefully pushed the tongs through the little open place in the bushes towards the pigeon.

“O granny! you'll kill him!” cried Hetty.

“Yes, you'll kill him!” said Tim, his tears beginning to run down again in the old tracks.

“Silly things!” said the old woman; “well, then, you shall have him roasted for supper.” At which idea Hetty's tears came forth as plentifully as Tim's.

“Oh, we would rather have him alive, granny!” she said.

“Mrs Lucas made no further reply; but went on pushing her tongs in and in till she reached the pigeon, who, on his part, seemed frightened enough, but he was too weak to flutter much, even if he had been out of the bushes. The-



The wounded Nun.

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The wounded Nun.

Lucas put one foot of the tongs under the hurt wing, so as not to hurt it again; and the other foot of the tongs on the other side of the pigeon, over that wing to hold it fast. Then she carefully lifted the pigeon up, and walked slowly towards the door until she had brought him quite out through the garden, walking over Tim and Hetty, who had been hiding their eyes behind her, and rolling them down on the grass; but they did not mind it she did not.

'Now, where's your basket, children?' she said, as she opened the door and took the bird up.

'We have no basket,' said Hetty.

'We didn't bring one,' said Tim.

'Silly things!' said the old woman again. 'Never go to anything without having something to put it in.'

'I'll carry it in here,' said Hetty, holding out her little black apron.

'No, you can't,' said Mrs Lucas. 'I shall have to take the bird myself in my hand. Run home, run home.'

'But is it alive?' said Tim and Hetty.

'Lively enough, I'll warrant you,' said Mrs Lucas. 'One of its wings is hurt, but I can cure it.'

'So she took the pigeon home, and put it in a basket, and looked after it with good care and feeding the wing got well, and the pigeon was as lively as ever.

'Now, Tim,' said Mrs Lucas one morning, beginning to open the cover of the basket.

'What are you doing that for, granny?' said Tim and Hetty both at once.

'Be still and listen,' said Mrs Lucas. 'Now, Tim, as I was going to say, do you take this pigeon up to the dovecote, and ask Mr Riley if he has lost a nun.'

'What is a nun?' said Tim rubbing off the tears which were beginning to start in anticipation of the loss of the pigeon.

'That pigeon is a nun,' said Mrs Lucas, 'because its tail and its head and the end of its wings are black, and all the rest is white.'

'But what must I take it up to Mr Riley for?' said Tim.

Mrs Lucas put one foot of the tongs under the hurt wing, so as not to hurt it again ; and the other foot of the tongs on the other side of the pigeon, over that wing to hold it fast. And then she carefully lifted the pigeon up, and walked slowly backwards until she had brought him quite out through the hole, walking over Tim and Hetty, who had been hiding their eyes behind her, and rolling them down on the grass ; but if they did not mind it she did not.

“ ‘ Now, where’s your basket, children ? ’ she said, as she shortened the tongs, and took the bird up.

“ ‘ We have no basket, ’ said Hetty.

“ ‘ We didn’t bring one, ’ said Tim.

“ ‘ Silly things ! ’ said the old woman again. ‘ Never go to fetch anything without having something to put it in. ’

“ ‘ I’ll carry it in here, ’ said Hetty, holding out her little check apron.

“ ‘ No, you can’t, ’ said Mrs Lucas. ‘ I shall have to take it myself in my hand. Run home, run home. ’

“ ‘ But is it alive ? ’ said Tim and Hetty.

“ ‘ Lively enough, I’ll warrant you, ’ said Mrs Lucas. ‘ One of its wings is hurt, but I can cure it. ’

“ So she took the pigeon home, and put it in a basket, and with good care and feeding the wing got well, and the pigeon was as lively as ever.

“ ‘ Now, Tim, ’ said Mrs Lucas one morning, beginning to tie down the cover of the basket.

“ ‘ What are you doing that for, granny ? ’ said Tim and Hetty both at once.

“ ‘ Be still and listen, ’ said Mrs Lucas. ‘ Now, Tim, as I was going to say, do you take this pigeon up to the dove-cote, and ask Mr Riley if he has lost a nun. ’

“ ‘ What is a nun ? ’ said Tim rubbing off the tears which were beginning to start in anticipation of the loss of the pigeon.

“ ‘ That pigeon is a nun, ’ said Mrs Lucas, ‘ because its tail and its head and the end of its wings are black, and all the rest is white. ’

“ ‘ But what must I take it up to Mr Riley for ? ’ said Tim.

“‘Because it belongs to him, dishonest little boy,’ said Mrs Lucas, who had a way of speaking to her grandchildren that sounded very harsh, but did not mean much.

“‘Oh, yes! take it up, Tim,’ said Hetty, ‘because if it is his, he must want it.’

“‘And now hear,’ said Mrs Lucas. ‘Tell him exactly how you found it, more than three weeks ago, and how I got it out of the bushes; and tell him it has had the best of corn and beans since.’

“‘I think I should like to go too,’ said Hetty. ‘May I, granny?’

“‘Go where ye like,’ said the old woman, ‘only not into mischief. I don’t want you.’

“So Hetty and Tim set out on their walk, carrying the basket between them. It was easy enough to carry, except, indeed, when the pigeon tried to get out; and then Hetty and Tim set down the basket, and held down the cover with all four of their little hands. It was a beautiful walk through the woods, and over the smooth green grass; and in some places there were deer feeding, and in others the beautiful cows; but the children were rather afraid of them, and liked the trees much better. And when they came to the dove-cote, they would doubtless have wished for a dozen pair of eyes, if such an idea could have entered their heads.”

“‘Why should they wish for so many eyes?’ said Edith.

“‘Because there were so many things to see. There were so many pigeon-houses, and more pigeons than they could have counted in a long time, even if they had known how to count. Some flying, and some on the ground, and some on the pigeon-houses, eating and walking about, and putting their pretty heads out of the little pigeon-holes that led to their nests. And there were a great many different kinds. The common pigeons were there, fat and comfortable-looking, with their pretty bobbing heads, and gray and white feathers; and the fantails with their pretty spread of white feathers; the horsemen with their ruffs of feathers; the pouters, walking about with their crops puffed out like a

little balloon; the tumblers turning somersaults in the air, though on the ground they were quiet little pigeons of particularly pretty colours; and, lastly, there were plenty of nuns and carriers.

“Tim and Hetty stood still in the midst of the pigeons, looking about with great delight and wonder, and listening to the soft cooing from so many feathered throats, till Mr Riley came up to them, and asked what they wanted. Then they showed him the little cured pigeon, and told him how long it had been sick, and how much it had eaten, just as they were bid. And Mr Riley took the little nun out of the basket, and put it on the ground, and there never was anything prettier than the way it walked about and cooed, and bent its pretty head when it found itself at liberty.

“‘I would let you have it to keep,’ said Mr Riley, ‘only if you did not keep it shut up, it would fly back here in a trice; and it is a shame to put such a creature in prison. But I’ll give you two little young carriers that have never been out of the nest, if you can take care of them.’

“‘Oh yes,’ Tim and Hetty said, with sparkling eyes, ‘they could take care of them.’

“‘Well, you shall have them, then,’ said Mr Riley, ‘to pay you for being so kind to this one and bringing it back. And you shall have a bag of barley, too, to pay for its keep.’

“So he took their basket and went off, and presently came back with a little bag in one hand and the basket in the other; and in the basket were two young carrier pigeons, little soft things, just fledged, and rolling about there against each other. Hetty and Tim were almost out of their wits with joy; and at the same time so much afraid of hurting the pigeons if they walked too fast, that the wonder was how they got home at all.

“‘Well! little lazy children,’ Mrs Lucas said, when she saw them; ‘so you have come home?’

“But she was very much pleased with the bag of barley, and admired the pigeons almost as much as their little owners did. And when Tim’s father came to see them, he was so pleased with their pets that he set to work and made

them a pigeon-house; and there the young carriers lived in great style, and in course of time grew to be old carriers, with ever so many young ones of all ages and sizes."

"That is not all the story, mamma," said Henry, when Mrs Rutherford ceased speaking.

"That is all the first part; there is a continuation."

"Well continue, won't you, mamma?"

"Oh please do, Aunt Esther!" said Mary and Edith.

Mrs Rutherford smiled and went on.

"Several years passed away, and Hetty and Tim were grown bigger, and had been to school, and had learned many things. But the best of all was, they had learned to fear God and keep His commandments; for so their school-mistress taught them and set them the example. And as they began to love God more, so did their love grow towards every one else,—towards every living thing—even their own little pigeons. Everything had better and kinder care and attention; and old Mrs Lucas often said there never was such another boy and girl; and that for her part she couldn't see where they had picked it up."

"I remember that," said Henry, laughing. "Well, mamma?"

"And so for a time," said Mrs Rutherford, "they were as happy as a family could be. But then they began to see that Tim was growing thinner and thinner, and that he was not nearly so strong as he used to be. Hetty saw it first; and she talked and talked to her father and grandmother till they became frightened and sent for the doctor. But the doctor could do none of them much good,—above all, Tim.

"'Change of air would be the best thing,' he said,—and 'a month at the sea shore,'—or 'a little voyage'. But how was Tim to get either? where was the money to take him? God provided a way. That same Mr Riley who took care of the dove-cote heard that Tim was ill, and told his master—the gentlemen to whom the estate belonged. And he was going to the seaside with his family, and he said that Tim should go too; and that he would pay his expenses. There was great rejoicing in the little lodge at the gate when this news came; and then Hetty fell a weeping and Tim looked

very grave. For he thought that very likely he should never come back to see them again; and she saw what he thought. Nevertheless he would try—it would be wrong not to do what he could.

“‘I will take a basket of the pigeons, Hetty,’ he said, ‘and then I can write without paying any postage; and my letters will come very fast. But the last one in the basket shall stay there as long as I do.’

“And Tim went, and the pigeons; and one after another came back with the letter tied under its wing. But none except the first one said that Tim was any better, or that he was likely to get well; and Hetty began to give up all hope. There was only one pigeon left now,—the others had all come home, and were flying about as usual; but Hetty watched for that one till she was almost ill.

“‘Silly child!’ Mrs Lucas would say to her, ‘what good does it do?’

“‘No good, granny—only to me,’—and Hetty would take up her hat and go out to a clear space in front of the lodge, and there sit down and watch the sky.

“At last, one afternoon, when it was growing late, and Hetty had almost made up her mind to go in, she saw a little dark speck on the distant blue sky. It came nearer and nearer, and she saw it was the pigeon; and wheeling two or three times about her head it came and perched at her feet. But there was a black ribbon round the bird's neck, and the letter beneath its wing had a black seal; and Hetty knew that her brother had taken a longer flight than the tired pigeon—even to ‘the land that is very far off.’”

CHAPTER XXVI.

EDITH'S FOUR VISITS.

“WILL you tell us another story to-day, Aunt Esther?” said the children one morning, about a week after the story of the carrier pigeons.

"It is by no means a rainy day," said Mrs Rutherford; "look how the sun shines."

"But Henry has gone away, and we are quite alone," urged Edith.

"You need not be alone. I am going out in grand-mamma's carriage to pay visits, and you and Mary may go with me."

"Then I will take one of my new books," said Mary, "and have a pleasant drive."

"You cannot read very well when we are driving about, I should think," said Edith.

"No; but when you and Aunt Esther—I mean, when Aunt Esther and you—are in the houses seeing the people, then I can read."

They all got ready accordingly; and when the carriage came, Mary took her book, and Edith her doll, and then went down and jumped in, and the carriage rolled off.

At the first two places where it stopped, Mrs Rutherford left both the children, and made her visits alone. But at the third she told them they might come with her. Mary, however, chose to stay with her book; but Edith got out with her aunt, and went into the house. It was not a very amusing visit; the ladies did not talk of much that she could understand; but when Mrs Rutherford was coming away, the lady of the house kissed Edith, and asked her how old she was; and then went to a table at one side of the room, and brought back a little ear of wheat, made of sugar, and very pretty, which she said Edith might take home to remember her by. So that was something to look at and talk about till the carriage stopped at Miss Sutherland's. Here Edith went in again.

Miss Sutherland was rather an oldish lady, with a very stylish dress, and a very gay voice and manner. She talked very fast too, and rather loud; so that Edith could hardly understand what she said. Talking away, first to Mrs Rutherford and then to Edith, and then to both at once, with bows and smiles in plenty, Miss Sutherland seemed overflowing with satisfaction.

"Now I'm going to give you something," she said to Edith, "just for coming so far to see me. See here is a little India basket—how do you like that?"

"Very much, ma'am," said Edith, for the basket was small and round, and very pretty.

"But you need not think I am going to give you all the sugarplums that are in it," said Miss Sutherland, "I must keep them to give to some other little girl, as there will not be any basket for her."

So she emptied out the sugarplums, and Edith's satisfaction in having the basket was alloyed only by the fear that Miss Sutherland thought she wanted the contents too.

The next was a very different house. The ladies were all up-stairs in the second story; and as Mrs Rutherford knew them well, she went up there with Edith, and saved them the trouble of coming down.

There again Edith couldn't understand much that was said; and she sat on a little stool, and felt very tired, till one of the ladies brought out a plate of gingercakes exactly suited to her comprehension. But just as she had raised one to her mouth, it came into Edith's head that Mary was particularly fond of gingercakes, and that doubtless she was very hungry in the carriage. The cake came down from Edith's lips directly, and she sat with it in her hand. Then she thought to herself, if the ladies should see it they would ask why she didn't eat it,—and then they would feel as if they must give her another; and so she laid the cake under her handkerchief. But this produced a difficulty which Edith had not foreseen. For when Mrs Haddam began to hand round the cake plate again, she saw that Edith had none, and came to her first of all. But Edith refused.

"Do you like them?" said Mrs Haddam.

"Yes, ma'am, very much."

"Then why don't you take another?"

Edith hesitated a minute, and then uncovering her ginger-cake, she said—

"I have not eaten this yet, ma'am."

"What are you going to do with it, Edith?" said Mrs

Rutherford ; for she saw that the lady looked a little surprised, and she wished the child to explain herself.

"I wanted to take it to Mary," said Edith, looking towards Mrs Rutherford with eyes that said she too had noticed Mrs Haddam's face.

"Oh, well, then, take another for yourself," said the lady ; and Edith had to take it, though she did not want to do so.

"How long you have stayed," said Mary, when they went back to the carriage.

"We have been eating gingercakes," said Edith.

"Oh, dear, I wish I had gone too," said Mary. "I'm as hungry as I can be."

"I brought you one," said Edith. "It is only one, but I could not bring any more, you know."

"I am very glad to get one," said Mary ; "and very much obliged to you too."

"Edith," said Mrs Rutherford, "you may always bring home to Mary anything that is given to yourself, but it is better, dear, just to hold it openly in sight, and let people see what you are doing. I know why you did not in this case, and I like the feeling ; but other people do not know you as well as I do, and might not understand you."

"Did I do anything wrong ?" said Edith, her eyes taking the same look which Mrs Haddam had before called forth.

"No, love—not in the least. But when a thing is really right, it may just as well be done in the open daylight."

There was one more visit to pay—to Miss Hall ; but Mary, being now fortified with the gingercake, preferred her book as before and would not go in.

Miss Hall was another talkative lady,—very cheerful, and pleasant, and kind, but with a brisk manner of speech which made Edith a little afraid of her. So many of her remarks sounded like "true words spoken in jest," that they seemed to Edith like little raps over the knuckles, or little trips, or anything else that was sudden and disagreeable. After talking a while to Mrs Rutherford, she asked Edith "what she thought she had got for little folks ?" and as Edith professed herself unable to guess, Miss Hall went to a pantry

and brought out a large China plate. And on the plate were cocoa-nut cakes and various kinds of candy. Most of them Edith had seen before ; but on the very top, across all the others, lay a broad, flat, and thick piece of sweet composition, very pink and very nice. Now Edith had always been taught to take the nearest and uppermost piece of cake or bread from a plateful, and the same rule seemed to apply to candy. Moreover, she wanted to taste the pink stick—but then it was too large to appropriate to herself. All these thoughts passed quickly through her mind as Miss Hall offered her the plate ; but trusting that the pink stick could be broken, she laid hold of it with that intent.

"No, no," said Miss Hall, in her brisk manner, and with a smart little toss of her head, "you need not think you're going to have all my cinnamon candy—I cannot let you, I like it very much myself. But I will break it, and then you can have a piece."

Edith would gladly have taken anything or nothing after that ; but the plate was carried off, and in due time she received a fragment of the pink cinnamon stick. But whether or not the words had spoiled it, she certainly found the fragment particularly dry and unsatisfactory.

"Aunt Esther," she said, when they were once more wheeling off in the carriage, "don't you think it would be better for me never to take *anything* at all that they give me when I go with you to make visits ?"

Mrs Rutherford smiled.

"No, Edie, I would not make such a rule. Little people are expected to take sweet things when they are offered."

"Are they ?" said Edith.

"What are we stopping here for, Aunt Esther ?" said Mary.

"My shoes."

"Oh, may I get out and ask for them ?" said Edith.

Mrs Rutherford said "yes," and the steps were let down, and Edith got out. She walked into the shoe shop, and up to the counter.

"Are Aunt Esther's shoes done ?" she said.

"Whose shoes?" said the man.

"Oh!" said Edith, "I mean, are Mrs Rutherford's shoes done?"

They were, and tied up in brown paper, and Edith carried them back to the carriage. And the carriage rolled away again towards home.

After tea Miss Emma Clarivaulx came down to see them; and she danced a Russian dance for the children, and sang as well; and then she took out of her pocket a little pack of cards and played all manner of tricks with them. She could tell any card that Mary and Edith chose out of the pack, and then she would make them take just the one that she chose; besides bringing all the cards of one sort together in the middle of the pack, without seeming to do anything but shuffle them. Then she said she would tell their fortunes.

All sorts of things were said to Mary about her music and her books; and then to Edith about her doll and her cat, and finally her teeth. Miss Emma said that Edith would lose two teeth before long. Edith knew that she ought to lose two—there were two just in the way of new ones that were coming; but she had never been able to make up her mind to go to Dr Bunker and have them out. Therefore Miss Emma's prediction did not astonish her much. But when the young lady had gone up stairs, and they were all quiet again, there came a knock at the door. And when Mr Rutherford opened it, there stood Dr Bunker! he had come for the very purpose of taking out those two little teeth.

Edith thought it was rather hard to have two taken out at once, and bad enough to have any taken out at all; but when Dr Bunker had taken the trouble to come there because she was afraid to go to him, she thought she could not say a word.

Only after the first tooth was out, Edith proposed waiting till to-morrow for the second; but Dr Bunker said she had better sit down and have that one out too, and she did.

There was great rejoicing then in Edith's heart, and the

end of the evening was very pleasant. Especially as Mr Rutherford let both the children sit up till half-past nine o'clock, and took them down to the supper table; and there Edith ate some oysters and vinegar, and Mary regaled herself with a piece of cold partridge.

"Aunt Esther," said Edith, when they were going to bed, "was not it *very* strange that Miss Emma Clarivaulx should have told in my fortune that I should lose my teeth very soon?"

"It was just about as strange as most of the things that fortune-tellers predict," said Mrs Rutherford, smiling. "She knew Dr Bunker was coming, Edie."

"Oh, did she!" said Edith. "Then of course it was not strange."

"But do fortune-tellers never really foretell events?" said Mary,— "I mean things they have not been told?"

"There is a God that revealeth secrets," said Mrs Rutherford—"we do not read that other beings have that power, except such as He has intrusted with it for some great purpose."

CHAPTER XXVII

TWO OR THREE THINGS.

AND so the winter wore away and the spring came; but the children had been so busy with their books and their play, that they were quite surprised when Mrs Rutherford told them it was the first of March.

"The first of March! why it only wants three months to strawberry time," said Mary, who was rather given to such calculations,— "and six months to the end of summer."

"And it is only six months since the end of summer, if you calculate that way," said her aunt.

"When shall we go home again?" inquired Edith.

"In April or May."

"How pleasant that will be!" said both the children;

and then they began to count the days that were left as each one fled away, and Mary would say to her sister—

“You can see that it is spring, Edith, only look how blue the sky is; and the grass is getting green in the court-yards.”

“Yes, and I saw some crocuses out in one of them,” said Edith.

For some time, now, Edith had been going up-stairs every afternoon to let Miss Clarivaulx paint her picture; but it was not very pleasant work. In the first place, she had to sit perfectly still; that was well enough; but then she was afraid to smile or speak, and if her foot or her hand were ever so tired she did not like to move it. And worse than all, Mr James Clarivaulx would talk to her, and try to make her laugh whenever he was in the room.

“How do you like your looks to-day, Edith?” he would say. “Are not you in love with your own picture?”

And it seemed very rude not to speak and say, “No, sir,”—and yet if she opened her mouth she might not shut it again just right. And if she made no answer at all, Mr James would perhaps come behind her and tickle the back of her neck. Therefore, on the whole, Edith was very glad when Miss Clarivaulx told her one afternoon that the picture was almost done, and she should have it to take down with her. But there was more to do than she had counted upon, and the picture was touched and retouched as long as the daylight lasted. Then Edith took it in her hand and went down stairs, feeling very glad that nobody else wanted to paint one. She was so tired, she could hardly get down stairs.

But Mr and Mrs Rutherford and Mary became quite excited over the picture, and looked at it and talked about it for a long time; and Mr Rutherford said he should go out and get a frame for it. So off he went.

“You don't seem to care much about the picture, Edith,” said Mrs Rutherford, coming up to her.

“Yes, I like it,” said Edith.

“What makes you sit over the fire so? are you cold?”

"I cannot think how anybody can be cold this warm day," said Mary.

"I was a little cold," said Edith, "and tired. I feel warmer now."

"Look up at me," said her aunt.

And Edith looked up, but her little face was very pale, and her eyes looked dark and heavy.

"How would you like to go to bed?" said Mrs Rutherford.

"Oh, very much!" said Edith; but when she got down from her chair her feet were unsteady, and she could hardly walk. Mrs Rutherford carried her into the next room and put her to bed, and she went to sleep; and then after a while her cheeks began to be very red, and she tossed about in the bed, and talked of all sorts of things without waking.

Mary had a little bed made for her on the floor that night; and when Edith opened her eyes next morning just as the sun rose, there was Mrs Rutherford sitting by her with the same dress on that she had worn last night. Mary was standing there too, in her night-gown; and Edith heard her say softly—

"Aunt Esther, do you think she is very ill?"

"No, I'm not very ill," said Edith, shutting her eyes again. "I'm only a little ill."

"How do you know?" said Mary.

"Because I know how I feel," said Edith. "You had better get into bed, Mary, or you will be ill."

"Oh, I slept in a nice little bed on the floor," said Mary, throwing herself down on it. And Edith tried to sit up and see it; but she was weak and fell back on the pillow. Then Mrs Rutherford told her to lie quite still, and said she must not talk, and Mary must not talk to her any more for a while.

Edith was right. She was not *very* ill, and still she had to lie in bed for a number of days, and have the doctor, and take medicine. And the shutters must be partly closed, so as to keep out the sunlight; and the door must be shut lest Mary, or the sound of Mary's piano, should come in too often. Mrs Rutherford stayed by her all the time; but

then she knew how to nurse, and could talk to her when she wanted talking, and let her lie quiet when she wanted rest. Mrs Salisbury came often to see her too, but she seldom stayed a great while, for Edith never seemed to wish for a change of nurses. It troubled her when she was so hot with fever, to have the clothes tucked tight down on each side of her neck, and perhaps a blanket pulled up over her. But she never said anything till Mrs Salisbury was gone, nor indeed then ; but she would push the clothes out, so that they lay loose about her neck as before, and Mrs Rutherford would quietly pull down the blanket.

Through the long night, when Edith was hot and restless, Mrs Rutherford would sing to her and bathe her face and hands with vinegar ; and Edith could hear Mary say from her little bed on the floor—

“ Does she feel any worse ? ”

And Mrs Rutherford always answered—

“ No, I think not, ”—or, “ I hope not. ”

And Edith always spoke up and said—

“ Oh no, I feel a great deal better. ”

In the early morning she could sometimes hear the little sweep going his rounds ; and Edith used to wonder whether he ever was ill, and who took care of him. But as she began to get better herself she slept more in the mornings, and heard less ; and then it was so pleasant to sit up in the bed against the pillows, and have her face washed and her hair brushed before Mr Rutherford came to see her. Then when breakfast was ready, Mrs Rutherford would go into the parlour, leaving the door open so that Edith could see them all at the table ; and it was Mary's great delight to carry in the little cup of weak tea, and the little piece of toast for Edith to eat, and to sit on the bed and hold the little waiter with the cup and the plate on it in her lap.

“ When you are well enough, Edith, ” said Mary, one morning, “ we will get Aunt Esther to tell us another story. I expect she will tell us a good many while you are ill. ”

“ Oh, I am well enough to-day, ” said Edith, biting her piece of toast.

"No, you are not," said Mary. "Aunt Esther says you must not be excited till you are quite strong."

"A story would not excite me," said Edith,— "it would do me good."

"It would not put you to sleep, I think," said Mary. "Here—don't you want some tea?"

"But your tea will be cold," said Edith, after she had taken one sip.

"I don't care if it is," said Mary. "I am in no hurry for breakfast, Edie."

"But you had better go now," said Edith, "because I have done."

"How pale you look, Edie," said Mary, as she set down the waiter and then came back to see that her sister was nicely covered up. "I wonder when you will be well enough to get up."

"Oh soon, I think," said Edith, with a little smile.

"I am glad you are getting better," said Mary, as she went off with the waiter.

Edith lay very quiet all the morning; but when she had eaten her dinner, and the others were still dining, Mary came into the room with a bound.

"Here is grandmamma!" she said.

"Why she comes every day," said Edith.

"Yes, but where do you think she comes from? and what do you think she has brought you, Edie?"

Edith could not guess; but she looked anxiously towards the door till Mrs Salisbury came in, and then rose up in bed and stretched out her hands with an "Oh!" of wonderful surprise and pleasure. For Mrs Salisbury had just come from Cleveland, and in her hand was a large bunch of spring flowers; and for the rest of the day Edith hardly needed either food or sleep. As medicine the flowers were unequalled.

They were put on a chair close by the bed, so that Edith could touch them with her hand, and when she got up and lay on the sofa for a while the flowers went too. She was never weary of smelling them and turning them round to

look and examine, and searching if there might be one unseen flower among the leaves. Very lovely they were, and sweet and spring-like. The daffodils, with their full round yellow faces, looked as if they must have lived upon sunshine; and their narrow green leaves stood up bowing and bending and pushing themselves into Edith's face when she tried to smell the flowers. The little blue-bells were delicious to look at, with their thickset flowery heads, and the snow-drops stood gracefully alone in the world, and looked very cold. Then there were polyanthus clusters, in warm winter jackets of rich brown and yellow; and delicate striped crocuses, and the pretty narcissus, and an early hyacinth; with sprigs of box and fir and lavender. The room was sweet and cheerful with them, and Edith was cheerful too.

"Aunt Esther," she said, after dinner, "I think I feel well enough to hear a story to-day."

"Not content with the story spring has told you?" said Mrs Rutherford, smiling.

"Oh yes, I am content," said Edith, looking fondly at her flowers, and touching the blue-bells with a gentle finger; "but I think I could enjoy both together."

"Well, so you shall," said Mrs Rutherford. "Mary, I suppose you will want to hear too."

"Indeed I do," said Mary, springing up on the bed. "What is this story going to be, Aunt Esther?"

"It is called, 'The cat who got a situation in a crockery shop.'"

Edith put her hands together with a very pleased look, and Mary gave a little bound on the bed and looked at Edith.

"There was once an old woman," began Mrs Rutherford, "who was so very poor that she could not get food enough for herself and her little boy to eat. They lived on the outskirts of a small village, and she used to get little jobs of washing and cleaning, and Jack, her little son, would run errands or pick up sticks, or do anything he could for a penny. And when Jack was very little they did manage to live, though his mother hardly knew how. But as Jack grew, his appetite grew also; and the little loaf which was

once enough for both now vanished with great rapidity, and Jack looked about for more. And Mrs Kip felt that would not do. What would do she hardly knew, for Jack was too young yet to work much at anything. So she turned the matter in her mind a great deal.

“‘Jacky,’ she said, one morning, when she had given up eating that he might have more, ‘how would you like to go and take care of Mr Mug’s cups and saucers?’ For Mrs Kip thought she would put the question in as pleasant a form as she could.

“‘Take care of them, mother?’ said Jack. ‘Why what could I do with Mr Mug’s cups and saucers?’

“‘Why you could sweep out the shop,’ said his mother, ‘and call Mr Mug when people came to buy crockery and he was absent, and watch that they did not steal any cups before he came.’

“‘No, I couldn’t, mother,’ said Jack, ‘because if I went to call Mr Mug I couldn’t see what the people did; and if I watched them he wouldn’t come till the next morning,—so that’s plain.’

“‘No more you could,’ said his mother, ‘but I think you will find something to do, and you are going there on Monday morning.’

“‘To stay for good?’ said Jack.

“‘Always stay for good wherever you do stay, Jack,’ said his mother; ‘but Mr Mug is going to let you come home every Saturday night to stay here till Monday again.’

“‘Then I won’t go,’ said Jack.

“‘Yes, you will, Jack,’ said Mrs Kip, earnestly. ‘Because you will have plenty to eat and be very happy—and because I want you to go, and the fifth commandment says, “Honour thy father and thy mother.”’

“Jack was silent a little at this; though if the truth must be told, his mother’s assurance of ‘plenty to eat,’ had more effect than his fear of the fifth commandment. Yet that had its weight also.

“‘I have a great deal to say to you, Jack,’ said his mother, ‘but I can’t think of it now,—maybe I shall before Monday.’

“‘If you don't, you can tell me next Saturday,’ said Jack.

“‘Well, I remember one thing,’ said his mother; ‘it is a great deal worse for little boys to disobey, when their mothers can't see them, than when they can.’

“‘Why so?’ said Jack.

“‘I don't quite know myself,’ said Mrs Kip, ‘but I think it is.’

“‘God sees them always, doesn't He?’ said Jack.

“‘Yes,’ said his mother, thoughtfully, ‘I believe He does; only if He ever sees them more at one time than another, Jack, I'm sure it is when nobody else is looking on. So do you remember that, dear.’

“‘Why, I'm not going to do the first thing wrong, mother,’ said Jack. ‘You'll see. Mr Mug will say he never heard of such a boy.’

“‘Well, dear, I hope he will,’ said Mrs Kip, smiling at him through very tearful eyes. And on the next Monday morning Jack departed.

“It was not far that he had to go,—only down one green hill, and through a meadow, and along a bit of dusty road. And as Jack was barefoot, the dust mattered but little. He stopped just before he got to the village, and washed it off in a brook that ran under the road; and then was very careful to walk on all the tufts of grass and stones till his feet were dry, lest he should have mud instead of dust.

“The village was not very large, and Mr Mug's crockery shop was very small; but the piles of plates and of cups seemed to Jack so immense, that it was wonderful to imagine their being ever used up. Mr Mug was just opening the shop; and his first salutation was to lay his hand on Jack's head, and by dint of hard pressure thereon to bring Jack's face into the air; upon which, having looked as long as he thought proper, Mr Mug released Jack, and said, ‘Well!’

“‘Well!’ said Jack in return.

“‘What did you come for?’ said Mr Mug.

“‘To take care of your cups and saucers,’ said Jack.

“‘How will you go to work?’ said Mr Mug, walking into the shop, followed by Jack.

“Jack looked about to see what there was to do ; and as the bowls and platters and plates all said the same thing, Jack spoke it out.

“‘Dust them, sir?’

“‘No such thing,’ said Mr Mug. The first time you dust them, I’ll dust you.’

“‘It was very dusty as I came along,’ said Jack, looking at the sleeve of his jacket, as if he thought Mr Mug’s suggestion rather a good one ; ‘but not so bad as it is in here.’

“‘Crockery-ware never wants dusting,’ said Mr Mug solemnly.

“‘Oh !’ said Jack.

“‘Now you must stay here all day and mind the shop,’ said Mr Mug. ‘There’s a stool, and there’s the door, and this here’s the crockery ; when a customer comes in, get off your stool, and keep an eye on the crockery, and ring this bell ; and don’t look at the customer, nor at anything *but* the crockery, till I come. Then you may get on your stool again. You may get up there now.’

“‘Please, sir, I haven’t had my breakfast,’ said Jack.

“‘What is become of it?’ said Mr Mug.

“‘Please, sir, we eat it all up yesterday,’ said Jack. ‘We can do no work on Sundays, and so sometimes we have not anything to eat on Mondays.’

“Mr Mug looked at him very much as if he were a cracked pitcher, or something of that sort, and it was a doubtful case whether he were worth mending ; but then he walked away, and forthwith returning and ordering Jack to get on his stool, he provided him with a large bowl of bread and milk, and received in return Jack’s heart.

“And Jack sat there and disposed of it leisurely. Not that he did not eat fast at first, for he was very hungry ; but the bowl was large, and after the first attack Jack thought he might as well take the good of it a little more at his ease. So between mouthfuls he took a survey of the store. Mr Mug had gone to his breakfast, and there was nothing to be seen but a great many of his namesakes, with their family connexions of every sort and degree. Bowls and pitchers and

platters, and mugs and cups and plates, were on the shelves and on the floor,—some yellow, and some brown, and some painted, and many that would have been white but for a thick overcoat of dust. Jack looked at his bowl to see if it came out of the shop, and presently found a pile of bowls to match upon one of the shelves. Here it suddenly occurred to him what a remarkable thing it would be to knock down that very pile of bowls,—and to follow up the crash with a row of plates and a score or two of pitchers, and how astonished Mr Mug would be—and his mother how sorry—and what a splendid noise it would make! Jack was so taken up with these bright ideas, that though he remembered to finish his breakfast, he forgot all about Mr Mug, till that gentleman came and tapped him lightly and good-humouredly on the head, as if his own morning meal had been a satisfactory one.

“Jack found that he had little to do, and plenty to eat,—it was a fine place. He had just to watch the customers, and call Mr Mug, and carry home a bowl here and a pitcher there as they were ordered. At night he slept in the shop, while Mr Mug occupied a room that opened into it; but Jack’s little bed was spread on the floor, with a long row of white pitchers on one side of him, and a row of yellow earthen pudding-dishes on the other. And there he slept well enough, and dreamed of knocking the bowls down just as he had thought of it in the morning.

“But the next morning, when Jack got up, the first thing he saw was a little white pitcher lying on its side with the handle broken off. And Jack felt dreadfully frightened. He had not done it in his sleep—that was certain; for he had dreamed of nothing but bowls,—yellow bowls with a brown stripe,—just such as his bread and milk came in. But how had he broken it? or had he broken it at all? or who had? There he stood looking at the pitcher, when Mr Mug came; and Jack forthwith explained to him all his doubts and perplexities. Mr Mug, however, was a good-natured sort of a man, and all he did was to tell Jack to be more careful, and that it would be well for him to eat less

supper at night, and then he would not dream and kick about in his sleep. To eat less breakfast or supper was, however, what Jack could not do. He did not eat all his bread and cheese at dinner, but stowed away a piece in his pocket for the first hungry occasion; but the bread and milk was irresistible. And the next morning there was a broken soap-dish lying on the floor near Jack's feet. In consequence—Mr Mug said, though Jack could not see of what, unless of that soap-dish having been left on the floor while all the others were on the shelf. But, however it happened, there was something knocked down, or broken, or cracked almost every night; and Jack felt very miserable, and Mr Mug was very near being angry. He did threaten to get another boy who should be more careful; but Jack's tears, and his great enjoyment of his bread and milk, so far pleaded his cause that when Saturday night came Mr Mug told him to come again on Monday morning, and try for another week before he gave him up."

"You are not going to stop there, Aunt Esther?" said Mary.

"That is not all the story?" said Edith.

"That is as much as it will do for you to hear at once," said Mrs Rutherford, smiling, "and I am going to stop there till to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

KITTY WHITEFOOT.

THE children were lying comfortably in bed next morning when Mrs Rutherford came in to look over the bureau drawers.

"Aunt Esther," said Mary, "how came you to call your story, 'The cat that got a situation in a crockery store?' I think it was the boy who did."

"Speak not of the day till the sun be set," replied Mrs Rutherford.

"What does that mean?" said Mary.

"It means that you should not judge of a thing till you know the whole."

"Well, when will the sun be set?" said Mary.

"The sun usually gets up first," said her aunt.

"Oh, how funny you are!" said Mary, laughing and jumping out of bed. "But Edith must not get up—I don't know, but I think it is fortunate you are ill, after all, Edie—just a little; or there is no telling when we should hear the rest of the story."

Mrs Rutherford smiled, and told Edith to lie still and she should hear it after breakfast. Which she did.

"When Jack got home on Saturday night," said Mrs Rutherford, "he found his mother and a nice little supper all ready and waiting for him. Mrs Kip having but one mouth to feed all the week, was quite able to prepare something better than usual for the extra little mouth on Saturday; and for her part she was so taken up with Jack that she wanted no supper. And Jack was very glad to see her, but he wanted his supper nevertheless.

"Well, how do you get on, Jack?" she said, when Jack's mouth showed some symptoms of being tired. "Is Mr Mug good to you?"

"Good as he can be," said Jack. "So's the bread and milk."

"Then you get plenty to eat?"

"Just as much as I can, and more," said Jack. "I meant to have brought you a great deal in my pocket, mother, and I've put something there every day; but I never can find it in the morning."

"I suppose you eat it up in the night," said his mother, smiling.

"No, I don't," said Jack,— "not a crumb."

"Well," said Mrs Kip, "is it a pleasant place?"

"First-rate!" said Jack, "if the cups and saucers wouldn't get broke."

"Wouldn't get broke!" said his mother. "Why, who breaks them?—You?"

"No, I don't," said Jack. "Somebody does."

"Mrs Kip asked a great many questions about this curious breakage of cups and saucers, which Jack answered as well as he could, and then she began to wash up her own crockery—thinking very deeply all the time.

"Where did you leave your bread and cheese every day, Jack?" she inquired.

"In my trousers-pocket," said Jack; "and all night they hang on a chair by my bed."

"I think I know what breaks the cups and saucers," said Mrs Kip.

"Why, who?" said Jack. "It wasn't me."

"No, I know it wasn't," said his mother, "but I think I know what it was. I can stop the breaking too. But you must get Mr Mug to let you stay there one week more, and next Saturday I'll see what I can do for you."

"So on Monday morning when Jack went back he told Mr Mug what his mother had said; and Mr Mug laughed and said he might try. And all that week Jack ate bread and milk and minded the shop just as he had done before; and the pitchers were knocked down just in the same way, and now and then one of them was broken. It was well Mr Mug had given his promise at the beginning of the week, or Jack might have found himself at home before the middle of it.

"But when Saturday night came, and Jack went home, Mr Mug told him he would try him for three nights more; and after that, the first time anything was broken he must go home for good. And Jack walked along the road, and up the hill and down the hill, feeling very sober; for he had got very fond of Mr Mug and of the bread and milk. And he wondered what his mother would do for him, and whether she could do anything.

"Mrs Kip was sitting out on the doorstep, knitting a white mitten for Jack to wear in the winter.

"Well, little boy," she said, "so you've come at last. How have things gone this week?"

"Just as bad as ever," said Jack. "There's been two

cups broke, and a mug; and Mr Mug says he'll be broke next if I don't stop.'

"'I thought you knew nothing about it,' said Mrs Kip.

"'No more I do,' said Jack; 'but that's what he says.'

"'Well,' said Mrs Kip, 'I'll try what I can do—at least I'll try what something else will do. Come into the house, Jack, and I'll show you—since you can't keep the cups safe you must have a companion that can.'

"'Oh, Mr Mug won't have more than one boy in his shop,' said Jack,—'he says that's one too many.'

"'Never mind Mr Mug just now,' said his mother, as she led the way into her little cottage; 'you attend to me. Look here'—

"Mrs Kip went to her closet and brought thence a small basket, over which was laid a piece of old calico.

"'What's that?' said Jack.

"'Something to help you take care of Mr Mug's dishes,' said his mother; and she set down the basket on the hearth and bade Jack open it.

"Jack took his time about it, however, for he did not feel in the least sure what might be within; therefore he raised one corner of the old calico just a little way and peeped in. It was all dark; but Jack thought he saw something moving about.

"'Take off the cover, little boy,' said his mother. And Jack boldly pulled the piece of calico quite away from the basket. But as he pulled, and as the calico slid along the hearth, out jumped a little black kitten and gave chase; catching the calico with her claws and teeth, frisking off with it, running round after her tail by way of variety, and playing a thousand pranks, to Jack's infinite delight. The kitten was perfectly black, and as shiny as if she had been oiled; but her left fore-foot was perfectly white, and her eyes as green as two gooseberries.

"Jack was so busy watching what the kitten would do, and trying to make her jump over his hand, that he forgot all about the broken crockery; until his mother said—

"'Well, little boy, don't you think Kitty Whitefoot will take good care of Mr Mug's cups and saucers?'

“Oh what a pretty name !” said Jack. ‘Kitty Whitefoot ! But what can she do, mother ?’

“Why, she can catch the rats and mice,’ said his mother ; ‘and I believe that when the rats and mice came down after the bread and cheese in your pocket, they knocked down the cups.’

“Jack sat and looked at Kitty Whitefoot for a long time after that, wondering to himself whether she was equal to such great performances ; and Kitty Whitefoot ran after her tail.

“‘But, mother,’ said he at last, ‘what will Kitty Whitefoot have to eat ?’

“‘Why, sometimes she will have mice,’ said his mother ; ‘and when she has not, she must have some of your bread and milk.’

“Before Monday morning came, Jack and the kitten were the best possible friends ; and when he set out for Mr Mug’s store, Kitty Whitefoot went in the basket. But Mr Mug shook his head at her. In the first place he didn’t believe the rats broke the cups—and if they did, the cat would break just as many,—pretty work she’d make scampering over the shelves ! However, Jack begged so hard that Kitty Whitefoot might stay, and repeated so often what his mother had said, that Mr Mug replied—

“‘Well—let her out then—we shall see very soon. There’ll be fine work on the shelves now !’ And so there was, but not just in the way Mr Mug expected.

“As soon as Jack uncovered the basket, Kitty Whitefoot jumped out, looking very wild and frightened ; and then with another bound she was up on the shelves, and hid behind a pile of dishes. Jack called and Mr Mug called, but Kitty did not appear.

“‘Well,’ said Mr Mug, ‘I can’t stand all the morning looking for cats. I’ll give you your breakfast, Jack, and then do you get the cat down and send her off. She’d do mischief enough if she stayed on the floor, but to go up on the shelves at that rate at first !—there wouldn’t be a whole dish left in a week.’

“So Mr Mug brought Jack his bread and milk, and repeating, ‘Send her away, Jack, as soon as you can catch her,’ he went off to his own breakfast.

“Jack sat eating his breakfast in a very sorrowful state of mind. In the first place, he was very fond of the kitten, and then if she must be sent away he saw no hope of his staying long himself. If the rats and mice *did* destroy the dishes, it was only Kitty Whitefoot who could destroy them. He wondered what she could be doing up there on the shelves, and why she did not come down; and as he wondered he heard a little mew, and there up on the shelf were Kitty Whitefoot’s green eyes peeping out from behind a pile of yellow earthen bowls.

“‘Pussy! pussy!’ said Jack. ‘Kitty Whitefoot.’

“‘Mew!’ said Kitty Whitefoot, switching her tail about and curling it round a teacup.

“‘Come down!’ said Jack. In answer to which Kitty Whitefoot rubbed her head against the bowls and purred. Then Jack recollected that if she did come down he should have to send her away, and so he said very softly—

“‘Stay there, Kitty Whitefoot!’ and got another little mew by way of answer.

“‘Now we’ll have the cat down,’ said Mr Mug when he came in from breakfast. But as if Kitty Whitefoot had understood him she straightway jumped up to a higher shelf, and from that to another, till she reached the top one of all; where she sat and looked over the edge at Mr Mug and Jack with the utmost complacency, and was doubtless purring—though they were too far off to hear. Mr Mug brought a step ladder, and a broom, and a walking-stick, but got no nearer to Kitty Whitefoot for them all. They could see her black tail disappearing behind a pile of dishes, but when the pile was removed she was not there; and the chase went on till Mr Mug was tired. He couldn’t throw anything at her, or he should break, as he said, ‘more dishes than her neck was worth,’—all he could do was to give it up for the present, and repeat his charge to Jack to catch her upon the

first opportunity. But the opportunity did not come that day. Kitty Whitefoot made a most particular personal inspection of all the shelves and all the dishes, and then curled herself up in a pudding-dish and went to sleep; but she paid no visit to the floor, and only mewed a little when Jack spoke to her. But when night came, and Mr Mug had gone to bed, and Jack was stretched on the floor, then did Kitty Whitefoot descend and examine all the dishes and shelves that she had looked down upon through the day. Jack heard her jumping about in the dark, and sometimes purring quite close to his ear, but though he once touched the tip of her tail, that was all. And Jack slept very quietly through the night; but when he woke up in the morning Kitty Whitefoot was up on a high shelf as before, winking and looking down at him with green eyes.

“There were no broken dishes, however—Jack looked, and Mr Mug looked, but there were none even turned over; and Jack ate his breakfast in quite good spirits. What Kitty Whitefoot ate was a mystery,—she never came down—she never mewed as if she were hungry,—if she mewed at all it was in a kind of sociable way, as if she felt lonely up there on the shelves. It was a curious thing to see her walking round among the dishes, her long black tail curling about, and her eyes shining down from behind bowls and pitchers; but she never broke one, and from that time there were no more broken dishes in Mr Mug’s store. Neither was Jack’s bread and cheese ever again stolen from his pocket at night. Moreover, a dead rat was on more than one occasion found on the floor of a morning—or perhaps half a mouse,—as if Kitty Whitefoot had found more than she could eat; and Mr Mug declared she was the best cat that could be. Jack was in high favour now, and every Saturday night when he went home he was so full of Kitty’s praises that he almost forgot to take out of his pocket the week’s wages that were there wrapped up in paper. And Mr Mug and the crockery shop flourished exceedingly, and so did Jack and Kitty Whitefoot.”

"Is that all?" said Edith.

"That is all of the story."

"Have you got anything else to tell us, Aunt Esther?" said Mary.

"Yes, I have something else to tell you," said her aunt smiling,— "a piece of news—your uncle says that next week if Edith is well, we shall go back to Rose Hill."

CARL KRINKEN;
OR,
THE CHRISTMAS STOCKING.



Karl Krunken and the Breaker.

CARL KRINKEN;

OR,

THE CHRISTMAS STOCKING.

WHEREVER Santa Claus lives, and in whatever spot of the universe he harnesses his reindeer and loads up his sleigh, one thing is certain—he never yet put anything into that sleigh for little Carl Krinken. Indeed, it may be noted as a fact, that the Christmas of poor children has but little of his care. Now and then a cast-off frock or an extra mince-pie slips into the load, as it were accidentally; but in general Santa Claus aims at higher game—gilt books and sugar-plums, and fur tippets, and new hoods, and crying babies, and rocking-horses, and guns and drums and trumpets; and what have poor children to do with these? Not but that they might have something to do with them—it is a singular fact that poor children cut their teeth quite as early as the rich, even that sweet tooth, which is destined to be an unsatisfied tooth all the days of its life, unless its owner should perchance grow up to be a sugar refiner. It is also remarkable, that though poor children can bear a great deal of cold, they can also enjoy being warm—whether by means of a new dress or a load of firing, and the glow of a bright blaze looks just as comfortable upon little cheeks that are generally blue, as upon little cheeks that are generally red; while not even dirt will hinder the kindly heat of a fire of coals from rejoicing the little shivering fingers that are held over it.

I say all this is strange—for nobody knows much about it ; and how can they ? When a little girl once went down Broadway with her muff and her doll, the hand outside the muff told the hand within that he had no idea what a cold day it was. And the hand inside said that for his part he never wished it to be warmer.

But with all this Santa Claus never troubled his head—he was too full of business, and wrapped up in buffalo skins besides ; and though he sometimes thought of little Carl, as a good-natured little fellow who talked as much about *him* as if Santa Claus had given him half the world, yet it ended with a thought, for his hands were indeed well occupied. It was no trifle to fill half a million of *rich* little stockings, and then—how many poor children had none to fill ? or if one chanced to be found, it might have holes in it ; and if the sugarplums should come rolling down upon such a floor !

To be sure the children would not mind that, but Santa Claus would.

Nevertheless, little Carl always hung up his stocking, and generally had it filled—though not from any sleigh load of wonderful things ; and he often amused himself, on Christmas Eve, with dreaming that he had made himself sick with eating candy, and that they had a pile of mince-pies as high as the house. So altogether, what with dreams and realities, Carl enjoyed that time of the year very much, and thought it was a great pity Christmas did not come every day. He was always contented too with what he found in his stocking ; while some of his rich little neighbours had theirs filled only to their hearts' *discontent*, and fretted because they got what they did not want, or for something that they had not got. It was a woeful thing if a top was painted the wrong colour, or if the mane of a rocking-horse was too short, or if his bridle was of black leather instead of red.

But when Carl once found in his stocking a little board nailed upon four reels for wheels, and with nothing better than a long piece of twine to draw it with, *his* little tongue ran as fast as the reels, and he had brought his mother a very small load of chips in less than five minutes. And a

small cake of maple sugar which somehow once found its way to the same depending toe, was a treasure quite too great to be weighed ; though it measured only an inch and a half across, and though the maple trees had grown about a foot since it was made.

"Wife," said John Krinken, "what shall we put into little Carl's stocking to-night ?"

"Truly," said his wife, "I do not know. Nevertheless we must find something, though there be but little in the house."

And the wind swept round and round the old hut, and every cupboard rattled and said, in an empty sort of way, "There is not much here."

John Krinken and his wife lived on the coast, where they could hear every winter storm rage and beat, and where the wild sea sometimes brought wood for them, and laid it at their very door. It was a driftwood fire by which they sat now, this Christmas Eve, the crooked knee of some ship, and a bit of her keel, with nails and spikes held in their places by rust, and a piece of green board stuck under to light the whole. The andirons were two round stones, and the hearth was a flat one ; and in front of the fire sat John Krinken on an old box making a fishing-net, while a splinter chair upheld Mrs Krinken and a half-mended red flannel-shirt. An old chest, between the two, held patches and balls of twine ; and the crooked knee, the keel, and the green board, were their only candles.

"We must find something," repeated John. And pausing with his netting-needle half through the loop, he looked round towards one corner of the hut.

A clean rosy little face and a very glossy set of thick curls rested there, in the very middle of the thin pillow and the hard bed ; while the coverlet of blue check was tucked round and in, lest the drift-wood fire should not do its duty at that distance.

John Krinken and his wife refreshed themselves with a long look, and then returned to their work.

"You've got the stocking, wife?" said John, after a pause.

"Ay," said his wife, "it is easy to find something to fill."

"Fetch it out then, and let us see how much it will take to fill it."

Mrs Krinken arose, and going to one of the two little cupboards she brought thence a large iron key ; and then having placed the patches and thread upon the floor, she opened the chest, and rummaged out a long, gray, woollen stocking, with a white toe and heel, and various darns in red. Then she locked the chest again and sat down as before.

"The same old thing," said John Krinken, with a glance at the stocking.

"Well," said his wife, "it's the only stocking in the house that is long enough."

"I know one thing he shall have in it," said John ; and he got up and went to the other cupboard and fetched from it a large piece of cork. "He shall have a boat that will float like one of Mother Carey's chickens." And he began to cut and shape with his large clasp knife, while the little heap of chips on the floor between his feet grew larger, and the cork grew more and more like a boat.

His wife laid down her hand which was in the sleeve of the red jacket, and watched him.

"It will never do to put that in first," she said ; "the masts would be broken. I think I'll fill the toe of the stocking with apples."

"And where will you get apples?" said John Krinken, shaping the keel of his boat.

"I've got them," said his wife, "three rosy-cheeked apples. Last Saturday, as I came from market, a man went by with a load of apples ; and as I came on I found that he had dropped three out of his waggon. So I picked them up."

"Three apples," said John. "Well, I'll give him a penny to fill up the chinks."

"And I've got an old purse that he can keep it in," said the mother.

"How long do you suppose he will keep it?" said John.

"Well, he'll want to put it somewhere while he does keep it," said Mrs Krinken. "The purse is old, but it was hand-

some once, and it will please the child, anyway. And then there are his new shoes."

So when the boat was done, Mrs Krinken brought out the apples and slipped them into the stocking, and then the shoes went in, and the purse, and the penny—which of course ran all the way down to the biggest red darn of all, in the very toe of the stocking.

But there was still abundance of room left.

"If one only had some sugar things," said Mrs Krinken.

"Or some nuts," said John.

"Or a book," rejoined his wife: "Carl takes to his book wonderfully."

"Yes," said John, "all three would fill up in fine style. Well, there is a book he can have—only I don't know what it is about, nor whether he would like it. That poor lady we took from an American wreck when I was mate of the *Skeen-elf*—had it in her pocket, and she gave it to me when she died—because I didn't let her die in the water, poor soul! She said it was worth a great deal. And I think the clasp is silver."

"Oh, I daresay he would like it!" said Mrs Krinken; "give him that, and I'll put in the old pine cone—he's old enough to take care of it now. I think he will be content."

The book with its worn leather binding and tarnished silver clasp, was dusted and rubbed up and put in, and the old sharp-pointed pine cone followed; and the fisherman and his wife followed it up with a great deal of love and a blessing.

And then the stocking was quite full.

It was midnight; and the fire had long been covered up, and John Krinken and his wife were fast asleep, and little Carl was in the midst of the hard bed and his sweet dreams as before. The stocking hung by the side of the little fireplace, as still as if it had never walked about in its life, and not a sound could be heard but the beat of the surf upon the shore and an occasional sigh from the wind; for the wind is always melancholy at Christmas.

Once or twice an old rat peeped cautiously out of his hole,

and seeing nobody, had crossed the floor and sat down in front of the stocking, which his sharp nose immediately pointed out to him. But though he could smell the apples plainly enough, he was afraid that long thing might hold a trap as well; and so he did nothing but smell, and snuff, and show his teeth. As for the little mice, they ran out and danced a measure on the hearth and then back again; after which one of them squealed for some time for the amusement of the rest.

But just at midnight there was another noise heard—*as somebody says*—

“You could hear on the roof
The scraping and prancing of each little hoof;”

and down came Santa Claus through the chimney.

He must have set out very early that night, to have so much time to spare, or perhaps he was cold in spite of his furs; for he came empty-handed, and had evidently no business calls in that direction. But the first thing he did was to examine the stocking and its contents.

At some of the articles he laughed, and at some he frowned, but most of all did he shake his head over the love that filled up all the spare room in the stocking. It was a kind of thing Santa Claus was not used to; the little stockings were generally too full for anything of that sort—when they had to hold candy enough to make the child sick, and toys enough to make him unhappy because he did not know which to play with first, of course very little love could get in. And there is no telling how many children would be satisfied if it did. But Santa Claus put all the things back just as he had found them, and stood smiling to himself for a minute, with his hands on his sides and his back to the fire. Then tapping the stocking with a little stick that he carried, he bent down over Carl and whispered some words in his ear, and went off up the chimney.

And the little mice came out and danced on the floor till the day broke.

“Christmas day in the morning!” And what a day it

was ! All night long as the hours went by, the waves had beaten time with their heavy feet ; and wherever the foam and spray had fallen upon board, or stone, or crooked stick, there it had frozen, in long icicles, or fringes, or little white caps. But when the sun had climbed out of the leaden sea, every morsel of foam and ice sparkled and twinkled like morning stars, and the Day got her cheeks warm and glowing as fast as she could ; and the next thing the sun did was to walk in at the hut window and look at little Carl Krinken. Then it laid a warm hand upon his little face, and Carl had hardly smiled away the last bit of his dream before he started up in bed and shouted—

“ Merry Christmas ! ”

The mice were much alarmed, for they had not all seen their partners safe home ; but they got out of the way as fast as they could, and when Carl bounded out of bed he stood alone upon the floor.

The floor felt cold, very ; Carl's toes curled up in the most disapproving manner possible, and he tried standing on his heels. Then he scampered across the floor and began to feel at the stocking, beginning at the top. It was plain enough what the shoes were, but the other things puzzled him till he got to the foot of the stocking ; and *his* feet being by that time very cold (for both toes and heels had rested on the floor in the eagerness of examination,) Carl seized the stocking in both hands and scampered back to bed again ; screaming out, “ Apples ! apples ! apples ! ”

His mother being now awakened by his clambering over her for the second time, she gave him a kiss, and a “ Merry Christmas ! ” and got up ; and as his father did the same, Carl was left in undisturbed possession of the warm bed. There he laid himself down as snug as could be, with the long stocking by his side, and began to pull out and examine the things one by one, after which each article was laid on the counterpane outside.

“ Well, my boy, how do you like your things ? ” said Mrs Krinken, coming up to the bed just when Carl and the empty stocking lay side by side.

"First rate!" said Carl. "Mother, I dreamed last night that all my presents told me stories. Wasn't it funny?"

"Yes; I suppose so," said his mother, as she walked away to turn the fish that was broiling. Carl lay still and looked at the stocking.

"Where did you come from, old stocking?" said he.

"From England," said the stocking very softly.

Carl started up in bed, and looked between the sheets and over the counterpane, and behind the head-board; there was nothing to be seen. Then he shook the stocking as hard as he could, but something in it struck his other hand rather hard too. Carl laid it down and looked at it again, and then cautiously putting in his hand, he with some difficulty found his way to the very toe; there lay the penny, just where it had been all the time, upon the largest of the red darns.

"A penny!" cried Carl. "Oh, I suppose it was you who was talking, wasn't it?"

"No," said the penny. "But I can talk."

"Do you know where *you* came from?" said Carl, staring at the penny with all his eyes.

"Certainly," said the penny.

"I dreamed that everything in my stocking told me a story," said Carl.

"So we will," said the penny. "Only to you. To nobody else."

Carl shook his head very gravely, and having slipped the penny into the little old purse, he put everything into the stocking again, and jumped out of bed; for the drift-wood fire was blazing up to the very top of the little fireplace, and breakfast was almost ready upon the old chest.

But as soon as breakfast was over, Carl carried the stocking to one corner of the hut where stood another old chest; and laying out all his treasures thereon, he knelt down before it.

"Now begin," he said. "But you mustn't all talk at once; I think I will hear the apples first, because I might want to eat them up. I don't care which begins."

THE STORY OF THE THREE APPLES.

"I ASSUME to myself the task of relating our joint history," said the largest of the three apples, "because I am, perhaps, the fairest minded of us all. The judgment and experience of my younger sister Half-ripe are as yet immature, and my little brother Knerly is unfortunately of a somewhat sour disposition, and therefore less likely to represent things in a pleasant light. My own name is Beachamwell."

At this opening the two smaller apples rolled over in an uncomfortable sort of way, but said nothing.

"As for me," continued Beachamwell, "I have not only been favoured with a southern exposure, but I have also made the most of whatever good influences were within my reach, and have endeavoured to perfect myself in every quality that an apple should have. You perceive not only the fine roundness of my shape, but also the perfect and equal colour of my cheeks. My stem is smooth and erect, and my eye precisely in a line with it; and if I could be cut open this minute I should be found true to my heart's core. I am also of a very tender disposition, being what is usually called *thin-skinned*; and a very slight thing would make a permanent and deep impression on me. My behaviour towards every one has always been marked by the most perfect smoothness, and on intimate acquaintance I should be found remarkably sweet and pleasant."

"You'd better not say any more about yourself at present, Beachamwell," said Carl, "because I might eat you up before you got through your story, and that would be a pity. Let me hear about Half-ripe and Knerly."

"My sister Half-ripe," said Beachamwell, "though with the same natural capabilities as myself, has failed to improve them. Instead of coming out into the warm and improving society of the sun and the wind, she has always preferred to meditate under the shade of a bunch of leaves; and though in part she could not help doing credit to her family, you will perceive that her time has been but half improved—it is only one of her cheeks that has the least proper colour,

while the other displays the true pale green tint of secluded study ; and even the seeds of influence and usefulness within her are but half matured ; but mine will be found as dark as"—

"As the chimney-back?" suggested Carl.

"They are not exactly that colour," replied Beachamwell, "being in fact more like mahogany."

"Well I never saw any of that," said Carl, "so you don't tell me much. Never mind—I shall know when I cut you up. Now, be quick, and tell about Knerly ; and then give me all the history of your great, great, great grandfather apple."

"Knerly," said Beachamwell, "was a little cross-grained from the very bud. Before he had cast off the light pink dress which as you know we apples wear in our extreme youth, the dark spot might be seen. It is probable that some poisonous sting may have pierced him in that tender period of his life, and the consequence is, as I have said, some hardness of heart and sourness of disposition. As you see, he has not softened under the sun's influence, though exposed to it all his life ; and it is doubtful whether he ever will attain a particle of the true Beachamwell colour. There are, however, good spots in Knerly ; and even Half-ripe can be sweet if you only get to the right side of her."

"I'll be sure to do that," said Carl, "for I shall go all round. Come, go on."

"Unfortunately," said Beachamwell, "I cannot give the information which you desire about my respected and venerable ancestors. The pedigree of apples is not always well preserved, and in general the most we can boast of is the family name : nor is that often obtained except by engrafting upon a very different stock. For one generation back, however, we may claim to be true Beachamwells. From root to twig the parent tree was the right stuff. The remarkable way in which this came about, I am happily able to tell you.

A number of years ago, one Thanksgiving Eve, Widow Penly was washing up the tea things, and her little boy, Mark, sat looking at her.

"I wish we could keep Thanksgiving, mother," said he.

"Why, so we will," said his mother.

"But how?" said Mark, with a very brightened face.

"What will you do, mother?"

"I'll make you some pies—if I can get anything to make them of," said Mrs Penly.

"Ah, but you can't," said Mark, his countenance falling again. "There are not even any potatoes in the house. You used to make potato pies, didn't you, mother, when father forgot to bring home the pumpkin?"

"Yes," said Mrs Penly, but as if she scarce heard him; for other Thanksgiving Days were sweeping across the stage where Memory's troop was just then performing.

"So what will you do, mother?" repeated little Mark, when he had watched her again for a few minutes.

"Do?" said the widow, rousing herself. "Why, my dear, if we cannot make any pies we will keep Thanksgiving without them."

"I don't think one can keep Thanksgiving without *anything*," said Mark, a little fretfully.

"Oh no," said his mother, "neither do I; but we will think about it, dear, and do the best we can. And now you may read to me while I mend this hole in your stocking. Read the 103d Psalm."

So Mark got his little old Bible and began to read:—

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies."

"Don't you think, Mark," said his mother, "that we could keep Thanksgiving for at least *one* day with only such blessings as these?"

"Why, yes," said Mark, "I suppose we could, mother—though I wasn't thinking of that."

"No, of course not," said his mother; "and that is the very reason why we so often long for earthly things—we are not thinking of the heavenly blessings that God has showered upon us."

"But mother," said Mark, not quite satisfied, "it goes on to say, '*Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*'"

And Mark looked up as if he thought his mother must be puzzled now, if she never was before.

It did occur to Mrs Penly, as she glanced at the child, that his cheeks were not very fat, nor his dress very thick; and that a greater plenty of pies and other nourishing things might exert a happy influence upon his complexion; but she stilled her heart with this word, "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of such things."

"I am sure we have a great many good things, Mark," she answered, cheerfully; "don't you remember that barrel of flour that came the other day? and the molasses, and the pickles? We must have as much as is good for us, or God would give us more; for it says in another part of that psalm, 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.' I wouldn't keep from you anything that I thought good for you."

"But you are my mother," said Mark, satisfactorily.

"Well," said the widow, "the Bible says that a mother may forget her child, yet will not God forget His children. So you see, dear, that if we have not a great many things which some other people have, it is not because God has forgotten to care for us, but because we are better without them."

"I wonder why," said Mark. "Why should they hurt us any more than other people?"

"God knows," said his mother. "It is so pleasant to have Him choose and direct all for us. If I could have my way, I dare say I should wish for something that would do me harm—just as you wanted to eat blackberries last summer when you were ill."

"But we are not sick," said Mark.

"Yes we are—sick with sin; and sin-sick people must not have all that their sinful hearts desire; and people who love earth too well must want some of the good things of this world, that they may think more of heaven."

“Well,” said Mark, the last thing before he got into bed, “we’ll keep Thanksgiving, mother—you and I; and we’ll try to be as happy as we can without pies.”

“We may have some pleasant thing that we do not think of,” said his mother, as she tucked the clothes down about him.

“Why, what?” said Mark, starting up in an instant. “Where could anything come from, mother?”

“From God in the first place,” she answered, “and He can always find a way.”

“Mother!” said Mark, “there are a great many apples in the road by Mr Crab’s orchard.”

“Well, dear,” said his mother, “they don’t belong to us.”

“But they’re in the road,” said Mark; “and Mr Smith’s pigs are there all day long eating them.”

“We won’t help the pigs,” said his mother, smiling. “They don’t know any better, but we do. I have cause enough for thanksgiving, Marky, in a dear little boy who always minds what I say.”

Mark hugged his mother very tight round the neck, and then went immediately to sleep, and dreamed that he was running up a hill after a pumpkin.

But Mark woke up in the morning empty handed. There were plenty of sunbeams on the bed, and though it was so late in November, the birds sang outside the window as if they had a great many concerts to give before winter, and must make haste.

Mark turned over on his back to have both ears free, and then he could hear his mother and the broom moving up and down the kitchen: and as she swept she sang:—

“Rejoice, the Lord is King!
Your Lord and King adore;
Mortals, give thanks and sing,
And triumph evermore;
Lift up your hearts, lift up your voice;
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

“Rejoice in glorious hope,
Jesus the Judge shall come

And take His servants up
To their eternal home ;
We soon shall hear th' archangel's voice !
The trump of God shall sound—Rejoice !”

Mark listened a while till he heard his mother stop sweeping and begin to step in and out of the pantry. She was not setting the table, he knew, for that was always his work, and he began to wonder what they were going to have for breakfast. Then somebody knocked at the door.

“Here is a quart of milk, Mrs Penly,” said a voice. “Mother thought she wouldn't churn again before next week, so she could spare it as well as not.”

Mark waited to hear his mother pay her thanks and shut the door, and having meanwhile got dressed, he rushed out into the kitchen.

“Is it a whole quart, mother ?”

“A whole quart of new milk, Mark. Isn't that good ?”

“Delicious !” said Mark. “I should like to drink it all up. I don't mean that I should like to do so really, mother, only on some accounts, you know.”

“Well, now, what shall we do with it ?” said his mother. “You shall dispose of it all.”

“If we had some eggs we would have a pudding,” said Mark, “a plum pudding. You can't make it without eggs, can you, mother ?”

“Not very well,” said Mrs Penly. “Nor without plums.”

“No, so that won't do,” said Mark. “It seems to me we could have made more use of it if it had been apples.”

“Ah, you are a discontented little boy,” said his mother, smiling. “Last night you would have been glad of anything. Now, I advise that you drink a cup of milk for your breakfast”——

“A whole cupful ?” interrupted Mark.

“Yes, and another for your tea ; and then you will have two left for breakfast and tea to-morrow.”

“But then you won't have any of it,” said Mark.

“I don't want any.”

“But you must have some,” said Mark. “Now I'll tell

you what, mother. I'll drink a cupful this morning and you shall put some in your tea; and to-night I'll drink some more and you shall have cream, real cream; and what is left I'll drink to-morrow."

"Very well," said his mother. "But now you must run and get washed and dressed, for breakfast is almost ready. I have made you a little shortcake, and it is baking away at a great rate in the oven."

"What is shortcake made of?" said Mark, stopping with the door in his hand.

"This is made of flour and water, because I had nothing else."

"Well, don't you set the table," said Mark, "because I shall be back directly; and then I can talk to you about the milk while I'm putting on your cup, and my cup, and the plates."

It would be hard to tell how much Mark enjoyed his cup of milk—how slowly he drank it—how careful he was not to leave one drop in the cup; while his interest in the dish of milk in the closet was quite as deep. Jack did not go oftener to see how his bean grew, than did Mark to see how his cream rose.

Then he set out to go with his mother to church.

The influence of the dish of milk was not quite so strong when he was out of the house; so many things spoke of other people's dinners that Mark half forgot his own breakfast. He thought he never had seen so many apple trees, nor so many geese and turkeys, nor so many pumpkins, as in that one little walk to church. Again and again he looked up at his mother to ask her sympathy for a little boy who had no apples, nor geese, nor pumpkin pies; but something in the sweet quiet of her face made him think of the psalm he had read last night, and Mark was silent. But after a while his mother spoke:—

"There was once a man, Mark, who had two springs of water near his dwelling. And the furthest off was always full, but the near one sometimes ran dry. He could always fetch as much as he wanted from the further one, and the

water was by far the sweetest ; moreover, he could, if he chose, draw out the water of the upper spring in such abundance that the dryness of the lower should not be noticed."

"Were they pretty springs ?" said Mark.

"The lower one was very pretty," replied his mother, "only the sunbeams sometimes made it too warm ; and sometimes an evil-disposed person would step in and muddy it ; or a cloudy sky made it look very dark. Also the flowers which grew by its side could not bear the frost. But when the sun shone, it was beautiful."

"I don't wonder he was sorry to have it dry up, then," said Mark.

"No, it was very natural ; though if he drank too much of the water it was apt to make him sick. But the other spring"—and the widow paused, while her cheek flushed, and on her lips weeping and rejoicing were strangely mingled.

"There was 'a great Rock,' and from this 'the cold flowing waters' came in a bright stream that you could rather hear than see ; yet was the cup always filled to the very brim, if it was held there in patient trust, and no one ever knew that spring to fail, yea in the great droughts it was ever full. And the water was life-giving.

"But this man often preferred the lower spring, and would neglect the other when this was full ; and if forced to seek the Rock, he was often weary of waiting for his cup to fill, and so drew it away with but a few drops. And he never learned to love the upper string as he ought, until one year when the very grass by the lower spring was parched, and he fled for his life to the other. And then it happened, Mark," said his mother, looking down at him with her eyes full of tears, "that when the water at last began slowly to run into the lower spring, though it was very lovely, and sweet, and pleasant, it never could be loved *best* again."

"Mother," said Mark, "I don't know *exactly* what you mean, and I do know a little, too."

"Why, my dear," said his mother, "I mean that when we

lack anything this world can give, we must fetch the more from heaven."

"You love heaven very much, don't you, mother?" said Mark, looking up at her quite wonderingly.

"More than you love me."

Mark thought that was hardly possible; but he did not like to contradict his mother, and besides, they were now at the church door, and had to go in and take their seats. Mark thought the clergyman chose the strangest text that could be for Thanksgiving Day, it was this:—

"There is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes."

When church was over, and Mark and his mother were walking home again, they were overtaken by little Tom Crab.

"Come," said little Tom, "let us go and sit on the fence and eat apples. We sha'n't have dinner to-day till ever so late, because it takes so long to get it ready; and I am so hungry. What are you going to have for dinner?"

"I don't know," said Mark.

"I know what we are going to have," said Tom, "only I can't remember everything. It makes me worse than ever to think of it. Come—let us go and eat apples."

"I have not got any," said Mark.

"Haven't got any!" said Tom, dropping Mark's elbow and staring at him—for the idea of a boy without apples had never before occurred to any of Mr Crab's family. "Oh, you mean you have eaten up all you had in your pocket?"

"No," said Mark, "we haven't had any this year. Last year Mr Smith gave us a basketful."

"Well, come along, and I'll give you some," said Tom.

"I've got six, and I think three will do for me till dinner. Oh, Mark! you ought to see the goose roasting in our kitchen? I'll tell you what—I think I may as well give you the whole six, because I can run home and get some more; and I might as well be at home, too, for they might have dinner earlier than they meant to have it."

And filling Mark's pockets out of his own, Tom ran off.

"It so happened," said Beachamwell, turning herself round with a tired air when she got to this point in her story, "it so happened, that Mark, having stopped so long to talk with Tommy Crab, did not get home till his mother had her things off and the table-cloth laid; and then, being in a great hurry to help her, and a rather heedless little boy besides, there being, moreover, but one table in the room, Mark laid his six apples upon the sill of the window which was open. For it was a soft autumn day—the birds giving another concert in the still air, and the sunshine lying warm and bright upon everything. The apples looked quite brilliant as they lay in the window, and as Mark ate his queer little Thanksgiving dinner of bread and a bit of corned beef, he looked at them from time to time with great pleasure.

But when it was almost time for the apples to come on table as dessert, Mark suddenly cried out, "Mother! where are my six apples?"

"Why, on the window-sill," said his mother.

"There are but five! there are but five!" said Mark. "I must have lost one coming home! No, I didn't, either." And running to the window, Mark looked out. There lay the sixth apple on the ground, appropriated as the Thanksgiving dinner of his mother's two chickens.

Mark could hardly keep from crying.

"It is *too* bad," he said, "when I had but six! The ugly things!"

"You called them beauties this morning," said his mother.

"But just see my apple," said Mark, "all dirty and pecked to pieces."

"And just see my little boy," said his mother, "all red and angry. Did you suppose, my dear, that if apples rolled off the window-sill, they would certainly fall inside?"

"I will take care, I'll never put anything there any more," said Mark, gathering up the five apples in his arms and letting them all fall again. But they fell inside this time, and rolled over the floor.

"You had better decide how many apples you will eat now," said Mrs Penly, "and then put the others away in the closet."

"It is too bad!" said Mark. "I had but six; and I thought you would have three and I should have three."

"Well, you may have five," said his mother, smiling, "the chickens have got my part. And some good may come of that yet, if it only teaches you to be careful."

"Oddly enough," said Beachamwell, "some good did come of it. When the chickens pecked the apple to pieces, the seeds fell out, and one seed crept under a clover leaf where the chickens could not find it. And when the snow had lain all the winter upon the earth, and the spring came, this little seed sprouted and grew, and sent down roots, and sent up leaves, and became an apple tree."

"How soon?" said Carl.

"Oh, in the course of years, by the time Mark was a great boy. And the tree blossomed and bore fruit; and from that time Mark and his mother never wanted for apples. He called it the 'Thanksgiving tree;' but it was a true Beachamwell, for all that."

"But stay!" exclaimed Carl, catching hold of Beachamwell's stem in his great interest, "Mark isn't alive now, is he?"

"No," said Beachamwell, twisting away from Carl and her stem together. "No, he is not alive now, but the tree is, and it belongs to Mark's grandson. And the other day he picked a whole waggon-load of us, and set off to market; and we three were so tired of jolting about, that we rolled out and lay by the wayside. Thus it was that your mother found us."

"Well, that is certainly a very pretty story," said Carl; "but nevertheless, I'm glad my stocking was full. Now I will let you, Beachamwell, and Half-ripe, and Knerly, lie on the chest and hear the rest of the stories, for I like this one very much."

Carl was tired of sitting still by this time, so he went out and ran about on the beach till dinner time; and after dinner he went up to his corner again.

The sun came in through the little window, looking askance

at Carl's treasures, and giving a strange, old-fashioned air to purse, and book, and stocking. The shoes looked new yet, and shone in their blacking, and the apples had evidently but just quitted the tree ; while the bright penny gleamed away in the fair light, and the old pine cone was brown as ever, and reflected not one ray. Carl handled one thing and another, and then his eye fell on his small portion of money. He might want to spend it ; therefore, if the penny could do anything, it must be done at once ; and as he thought on the subject, the sun shone in brighter and brighter, and the face of the penny looked redder and redder. Then the sunbeam fled away, and only a dark little piece of copper lay on the chest by the side of the new shoes.

"Now, penny," said Carl, "it is your turn. I will hear you before the purse, so make haste."

"Turn me over, then," said the penny, "for I can't talk with my back to the people."

So Carl turned him over, and there he lay and stared at the ceiling.

THE STORY OF THE PENNY.

I CANNOT begin to relate my history, said the penny, without expressing my astonishment at the small consideration in which I am held. "I wouldn't give a penny for it!"—"It isn't worth a penny!" such are the expressions which we continually hear ; and yet truly a man might as well despise the particles of flour that make up his loaf of bread.

People say it is pride in me ; that may be, and it may not. But if it be, why should not a penny have at least that kind of pride which we call self-respect ? I was made to be a penny, I was wanted to be a penny, I was never expected to be anything else, therefore why should I be mortified at being only a penny ? I am all that I was intended to be, and a silver shilling can be no more. Pride, indeed ! why

even Beachamwell here is proud, I dare say, and only because she is not a russet ; while I think—Well, never mind, I have bought a great many apples in my day and ought to know something about them. *Only* a penny ! People cannot bargain so well without me, I can tell you. Just go into the market to buy a cabbage, or into the street to buy a newspaper, and let me stay at home ; see how you will fare then. Indeed, when there is a question about parting with me, I am precious enough in some people's eyes, but it hardly makes up for the abuse I get from other quarters. There is indeed one rather large class of the community who always think me worth picking up, though they are over ready to part with me. To them alone would I unfold the secrets of my past life. I might have lain mute in a man's purse for ever, and rubbed down all the finer parts of my nature against various hard-headed coins ; but there is something in the solitude of a boy's pocket which touches all the sympathies of our nature, even beforehand.

I am not, however, continued the penny, I am not at all of friend Beachamwell's temperament,—in fact, I never had but one impression made on me in my life. To be sure that was permanent, and such as only Time can efface ; though no doubt he will one day soften down my most prominent points, and enable me to move through society with a calm and even exterior. For it happens, oddly enough, that while beneath the pressure of years "the human face divine" grows wrinkled and sometimes sharp, a penny grows smooth and polished,—a little darker and thinner perhaps than formerly, but with as good business faculties as ever.

When that time arrives, said the penny, we refuse to tell our age ; but until then we are perfectly communicative. I would at once tell you how old I am, but that you can see for yourself.

I shall not give you a detailed account of my origin, nor of the fire and water through which I passed in order to become a penny. If, when you grow up, and you are still curious about the matter, you can travel over to England. Down

in Cornwall, you will find what may be called my birth-place, and learn, with full particulars, why I left it. Neither shall I relate how I was pressed, and clipped, and weighed, at the Mint, nor speak of the first few times that I went to market and changed hands. My present history will begin with the pocket of a rich old gentleman, into which I found my way one afternoon, along with a large variety of the "circulating medium."

"You do use such big words!" said Carl.

"Because I have travelled a great deal," said the penny. "It is the fashion. But to return to the pocket."

What a pocket it was!

At the bottom lay an overfed pocket-book, bursting with bank bills new and old, while another of like dimensions held more value, snugly stowed away in notes and bonds. The leather purse in which I lay had one end for pence and the other for gold and silver; but with my usual love of bright company, when the old gentleman slipped me in among a parcel of dingy pence, I slipped out again, and ran in among the half-sovereigns. For I was the only new penny the old gentleman had, and as by right I belonged about half to him and half to the bank, the cashier and he had some words as to which should carry me off. I believe the old gentleman chuckled over me half the way home.

If this part of my story teaches nothing else, said the penny, with a moralising air, as he stared at the ceiling, it will at least show the folly of going out of one's proper place. Had I been content to lodge with the pence, I should have been set to do a penny's work,—as it was I was made to do the work of shillings, for which I was totally unfit. It fell out thus.

The old gentleman walked leisurely home, having very much the air of a man with a pocket full of money,—as I should think from the deliberate and comfortable way in which we were jolted about; and when he rang his own door bell it was already quite dark. A dear little girl opened the door, dressed in a white frock and black apron.

"Oh, grandpa," she said, "I am so glad you are come, be-

cause a little boy has been waiting here ever so long for five shillings."

"Well, my dear," said the old gentleman, "five shillings are worth waiting for."

"But he is in a great hurry to get home before dark, because he says the children have no bread for supper till he buys it," said the little girl. "He brought a pair of boots and shoes for you, grandpa, and his father is very poor."

"Is he?" said the old gentleman. "Then I am afraid my boots won't be mended properly. However, Fanny, my dear, you may take him the money for them, if you like."

"Shall I fetch you a light, grandpa?" said the child. "It is too dark to see."

"No, no—not a bit of it,—I know how a crown feels, well enough. He shall have a crown for once in his life, at all events."

And opening the most precious end of his purse, the old gentleman's unerring thumb and finger drew forth *me*, and laid me in the little girl's open palm. The soft little hand closed upon me, and down she ran to the lower entrance.

"There," she said, "there it is. Grandpa has sent you a crown. Have you got a great many little brothers and sisters?"

"This isn't a crown," said the boy, too busy examining me to heed her last question. "He has made a mistake—this is only a penny."

"Oh, well, I will take it back to him, then," said the little messenger. "I suppose he could not see in the dark." And away she ran.

The old gentleman by this time was enjoying his slippers and the newspaper, between a blazing fire and two long candles in tall silver candlesticks.

"Grandpa," said the child, laying her hand on his knee, "do you know what you did in the dark? You gave that boy a penny instead of a crown—was it not funny?"

"Hey! what?" said the old gentleman, moving his paper far enough on one side to see the little speaker, "gave him a penny instead of a crown? Nonsense!"

"But you did, grandpa," urged the child. "See here—he gave it back to me. It was so dark, you know, and he took it to the window to look ; and he said directly it was only a penny."

"Which he had kept in his hand for the purpose, I'll warrant," said the old man. "Took it to the window, did he ?—yes, to slip it into his pocket. He need not think to play off that game upon me."

"But only look at it, grandpa," said the child,—“see—it is only a penny. I'm sure he did not change it."

"I don't want to look at it," said he, putting away her hand. "All stuff, my dear—it was as good a piece as ever came out of the Mint. Don't I know the feel of one ? and did I not take it out of the end of my purse where I *never* put copper ? Bad boy, no doubt—you must not go back to him. Here, William"—

"But he looked good, grandpa," said the child, "and so sorry."

"He will look sorry now, I'll be bound," said the old man. "I say, William !—take this penny back to that boy and tell him to be off with it, and not to show his face here again."

The command was strictly obeyed ; and my new owner, after a vain attempt to move the waiter, carried me into the street and sat down on the next door-step. Never in my life have I felt so grieved at being only a penny, as then.

The boy turned me over and over, and looked at me and read my date, with a bewildered air, as if he did not know what he was doing ; and I, alas, who could have testified to his honesty, had no voice to speak.

At length he seemed to comprehend his loss ; for, dropping me on the pavement, he sunk his head on his hands, and the hot tears fell fast down from his face upon mine. Then, in a sudden passion of grief and excitement, he caught me up and threw me from him as far as he could ; and I, who had been too proud to associate with pence, now fell to the very bottom of an inglorious heap of mud. As I lay there, half smothered, I could hear the steps of the boy, who,

soon repenting his hastiness, now sought me—inasmuch as I was better than nothing ; but he sought in vain. He could not see me and I could not see him, especially as there was little but lamp light to see by, and he presently walked away.

I am not good at reckoning time, said the penny, but I should think I might have lain there about a week—the mud heap having in the meantime changed to one of dust—when a furious shower arose one afternoon, or, I should rather say, came down ; and not only were dust and mud swept away, but the rain even washed my face for me, and left me almost as bright as ever, high and dry upon a clean paving-stone.

I felt so pleased and refreshed with being able to look about once more, that of what next would become of me I hardly thought ; and very wet and shiny I lay there, basking in the late sunshine.

“I thought you said you were high and dry,” said Carl.

“That is a phrase which we use,” replied the penny. “I was high and dry in one sense—quite lifted above the little streams of water that gurgled about among the paving-stones, though the rain-drops were not wiped off my face : and as I lay there I suddenly felt myself picked up by a most careful little finger and thumb, which had no desire to get wet or muddy. They belonged to a little girl about ten years old.”

“You pretty penny,” she said admiringly—“how bright and nice you do look ! and how funny it is that I should find you ! I never found anything before. I wonder how you came here—I hope some poor child didn’t lose you.”

While she thus expressed her opinion I was busy making up mine, and truly it was a pleasant one. Her cotton frock was of an indescribable brown, formed by the fading together of all the bright colours that had once enlivened it—water and soap, and long wear, had done this. But water and soap had also kept it clean, and a very little starch spread it out into some shape, and displayed the peculiar brown to the best advantage. Instead of an old straw bonnet with soiled ribbons, she had a neat little sun-bonnet ; but this

being made of a piece of new pink cotton, made her face look quite rosy. I could not see her feet and shoes, for my back was towards them, but I have no doubt they were in nice order—she was too nice a child to have it otherwise. Her hair was brushed quite smooth, only when she stooped to pick me up one lock had fallen down from under the sun-bonnet, and her face was as simple and good as it could be. With what contented eyes did she look at me!—she did not wish she had found a piece of gold—indeed I thought it doubtful whether she had ever heard of such a thing. But I saw that her cheeks were thin, and that they might have been pale but for the pink sun-bonnet. Whatever *she* meant by “a poor child,” little Fanny would surely have given the name to her.

Suddenly she exclaimed—“Now I can get it! Oh, I am so glad! Come, little penny, I must give you away, though I should like to keep you very much, for you are very pretty; but you are all the money I have got in the world.”

Now for the candy-shop, thought I; for as she turned and began to walk away as fast as she could, I peeped into the little basket that hung on her arm and saw there a small loaf of bread—so I knew I was not to go for that commodity. She did not put me in the basket, but kept me fast in her hand as she tripped along, till we came to a large grocer's shop. There she went in.

“Please, sir, to let me have a penny worth of tea,” she said, timidly.

“Got sixpence to pay for it?” said one of the shopmen, to make the other shopmen laugh, in which he succeeded.

“No, sir, I have got this,” she said, modestly showing me, and giving me a kind glance at the same time. “It is only a penny, but it will get enough for mother, and she is ill and wanted some tea so much.”

The young men stopped laughing, and looked at the child as if she had just come out of the museum; and one of them taking down a canister, measured out two or three good pinches of tea into a brown paper and folded it up. The child took it with a very glad face, laying me down on the

counter with a joyful "Thank you, sir," which I by no means repeated, I wanted to go home with her and see that tea made. But we pence can never know the good that our purchases do in the world.

The shopman took me up and balanced me upon his finger, as if he had half a mind to give the child back her money, and pay the sum of one penny into the till out of his own private purse. But habit prevailed; and dropping me into the till, I heard him remark as he closed it, "I say, Bill, I have no doubt now that is a good child."

I had no doubt either.

We were a dull company in the till that night, for most of the money was old; and it is a well-known fact that worn-out coins are not communicative. And some of the pieces were rusty through long keeping, and one disconsolate little sixpence which sat alone in the furthest corner of the till was in a very sad state of mind; for he had just laid himself out to buy some rice for a poor family and now could do nothing more for them—and he was the last moneyed friend they had.

In this inactive kind of life some time passed away, and though some of us were occasionally taken to the market yet we never bought anything. But one evening a man came into the grocer's shop and asked for starch, and we hoped for bright visitors; but I had no time to enjoy them, for I was sent to make change. The messenger was a manservant; and with the starch in his hand, and me in his pocket, he soon left the shop and went whistling along the street. Then he put his other hand into the pocket, and jingled me against the rest of the change in a most unpleasant manner—picking me up and dropping me again, just as if pence had no feeling. I was glad when he reached home, and ran down the area steps and into the kitchen. He gave the starch to the cook, and then marking down on a little bit of paper what he had bought and what he had spent, he carried it with the change into the parlour. But what was my surprise to find that I was in the very same house from whence I had gone forth as a crown-piece!

The old gentleman was asleep in his chair now, and a pretty-looking lady sat by, reading; while the little girl was playing with her doll on the rug. She jumped up, and came to the table and began to count the change.

"Two and sixpence, mamma—see, here are a shilling and two sixpences, and fivepence, and a penny. Mamma, may I have this penny?"

"It is not mine, Fanny—your grandfather gave James the money."

"Well, but you can pay him again," said the child; "and besides, he would let me have it, I know."

"What will you do with it, Fanny?"

"Don't you know, mamma, you said you thought you would give me one penny a month to spend?"

"To do what you liked with," said her mother. "Yes, I remember. But what will you do with this one?"

"Oh, I don't know, mamma—I shall see if grandpa will let me have it."

"Let you have what?" said the old gentleman, waking up.

"This penny, grandpa."

"To be sure you may have it! Of course!—and fifty more."

"No, she must have but one," said the lady, with a smile. "I am going to give her an allowance of one penny a month."

"Fiddle-de-dee!" said the old gentleman. "What can she do with that, I should like to know?—one penny—absurd!"

"Why, she can do just the thirtieth part of what she could with half-a-crown," said the lady, "and that will be money matters enough for such a little head. So you may take the penny, Fanny, and spend it as you like; only I shall wish to be told about it afterwards."

Fanny thanked her mother, and holding me fast in one hand she sat down on the rug again by her doll. The old gentleman seemed very much amused.

"What will you do with it, Fanny?" he said, bending down to her. "Buy candy?"

Fanny smiled and shook her head.

"No, I think not, grandpa—I don't know—I'll see. Perhaps I shall buy beads."

At which the old gentleman leaned back in his chair and laughed very heartily.

From that time, whenever little Fanny went to walk, I went too, and she really seemed to be quite fond of me; for though she often stopped before the candy shops or the toy shops, and once or twice went in to look at the beads, yet she always carried me home again.

"Mamma, I don't know how to spend my penny," she said, one day.

"Are you tired of taking care of it, Fanny?"

"No, mamma, but I want to spend it."

"Why?"

"Why, mamma—I don't know—money is made to spend, is it not?"

"Yes, it is made to be spent—not to be thrown away."

"Oh, no," said Fanny, "I would not throw away my penny for anything. It is a very pretty penny."

"How many ways are there of throwing away money?" said her mother.

"O mamma—a great many! I could not begin to count. You know I might throw it out of the window, mamma, or drop it in the street—or somebody might steal it; no, then it would only be lost."

"Or you might shut it up in your box and never spend it."

"Why, mamma!" said Fanny, opening her eyes very wide, "would it be thrown away then?"

"Certainly—you might just as well have none. It would do neither you nor any one else any good."

"But I should have it to look at."

"But that is not what money was made for. Your penny would be more really lost than if you threw it out of the window, for then some poor child might pick it up."

"How surprised she would be!" said Fanny, with a very bright face. "Mamma, I think I should like to spend my money so. I could stand behind the window-curtain and watch."

Her mother smiled.

"Why, mamma? do you think there would not be any poor child passing by?"

"I should like to see that day, dear Fanny. But your penny might fall into the grass in the courtyard, or into the mud, or a horse might tread it down among the paving-stones; and then no one would be the better for it."

"But it is only one penny, mamma," said Fanny,—"it does not matter so much after all."

"Come here, Fanny," said her mother, and the child came and stood at her side. The lady opened her purse, and took out a little gold piece.

"What is this made of?" said she.

"Why, of gold, mamma."

"Think again."

So Fanny thought, and could not tell, while she leaned her head against her mother, and played with the little gold coin. Then she laid it upon me to see how much smaller it was, and how much brighter. Then she cried out, "Oh, I know now, mamma! it is made of a hundred and twenty pence."

"Then if every day you lose 'only a penny,' in one year you would have lost more than a sovereign and a half. That might do a great deal of good in the world."

"How strange that is," said Fanny. "Well, I will try and not lose my penny, mamma."

"There is another reason for not losing it," said her mother. "In one sense it would make little difference whether or not I threw this little gold piece into the fire—you see there are plenty more in my purse. But, Fanny, they do not belong to me." And taking up a Bible she read these words—"The silver and gold are the Lord's."

"Do you think, Fanny, that it pleases Him if we waste or spend foolishly what He has given us to do good with?"

"No, mamma; I won't get my beads, then," said Fanny, with a little sigh.

"That would not be waste," said her mother, kissing her. "It is right to spend some of our money for harmless

pleasure, and we will go and buy the beads this very afternoon."

So after dinner they set forth.

It was a very cold day, but Fanny and her mother were well wrapped up, so they did not feel it much. Fanny's fur tippet kept all the cold wind out of her neck, and her little muff kept one hand warm while the other was given to her mamma. When that hand got cold, Fanny changed its place, she put it in the muff, and took the other out. As for me, I was in the muff all the time; and I was just wondering to myself what kind of a person the bead-woman would prove to be, when I heard Fanny say—

"Mamma! did you see that little girl on those brown steps? She had no tippet, mamma, and not even a shawl, and her feet were all tucked up in her petticoat; and"—and Fanny's voice faltered—"I think she was crying. I did not look at her much, for it made me feel sad; but I thought so."

"Yes, love," said her mother. "I saw her. How good God has been to me, that it is not my little daughter who is sitting there."

"O mamma!"

Fanny walked on in silence for a few yards—then she spoke again.

"Mamma—I'm afraid a great many poor children want things more than I want my beads."

"I am afraid they do, Fanny."

"Mamma, will you please to go back with me, and let me give that little girl my penny? would she not be pleased, mamma? would she know how to spend it?"

"Suppose you spend it for her, Fanny. People that are cold are very often hungry, too—shall we go to the baker's and buy her something to eat?"

"Oh, yes!" said Fanny. "Will you buy it, mamma, or shall I?"

"You, darling."

And when they reached the shop, Fanny looked round once more at her mother, and opening the shop-door with

a pleased and excited little face, she marched up to the counter.

"If you please, sir," she said, laying me down on the counter, "I want something for a very poor little girl."

The baker was a large fat man, in the whitest of shirt-sleeves and apron, and the blackest pantaloons and vest, over which hung down a heavy gold watch-chain. He put his hands on his sides, and looked at Fanny, and then at me, and then at Fanny again.

"*What* do you want, my dear?" said he.

Fanny looked round to her mother to reassure herself, and repeated her request.

"I want something for a very poor little girl, if you please, sir. She is sitting out in the street all alone." And Fanny's lips were trembling at the remembrance. Her mother's eyes were full, too.

"What will you have, my dear?" said the baker.

Fanny looked up at her mother.

"What would you like if you were hungry?" replied her mother.

"Oh, I should like some bread," said Fanny, "and I am sure the little girl would, too. But all those loaves are too big."

"How would these do?" said the baker, taking some rolls out of a drawer.

"Oh, they are just the thing!" said Fanny, "and I like rolls so much. May I take one, sir? and is a penny enough to pay for it?"

The baker gave a queer little shake of his head, and searching below the counter for a bit of wrapping paper, he laid the two largest rolls upon it.

"A penny is enough to pay for two," he said. "Shall I tie them up for you?"

"No, thank you, sir, you need not tie it—if you will only wrap them up a little. Mamma," said Fanny, turning again to her mother, "I am afraid that poor little girl does not know that 'the silver and gold are the Lord's,' and she will only think that I gave it to her."

"You can tell her, Fanny, that everything we have comes from God," said her mother; and they left the shop.

"What a nice little girl!" said Carl. "I think I should like to marry that little girl when I grow up—if I was good enough."

The baker went into the back room, continued the penny, to tell the story to his wife, and I was left to my own reflections on the counter; but I had reason to be well satisfied, for it was certainly the largest pennyworth I had ever bought in my life. But while I lay there thinking about it, a boy came into the shop; and seeing me, he caught me up and ran out again. At least, he was running out, when he tripped and fell; and as I am noted for slipping through people's fingers, I slipped through his, and rolled to the furthest corner of the shop. There I lay all night; and in the morning, when the baker's boy was sweeping the floor, he found me and put me in the till, for he was honest. But just then, Mr Krinken came in with a string of fish, and the careless creature gave me, with some other change, for a parcel of miserable flounders. That is the way I came here.

"Why was he a careless boy?" said Carl. "I think he was very careful, to find you at all."

"Oh, because I did not want to quit the baker, I suppose," said the penny. "And I don't like the smell of fish,—it does not agree with me."

"You won't smell much of it when I've kept you a little while in my purse," said Carl. "I'll take good care of you, penny, and I won't spend you till I want something."

The next day Carl had tired himself with a run on the sands. He used to tuck up his trousers as high as they would go, and wade slowly in through the deepening water, to pick up stones and shells, and feel the little waves splash about his legs. Then, when a larger wave than usual came rolling in, black and high, to break further up on the shore than the other great waves did, Carl would run for it, shouting and trampling through the water, to see if he could not get to land before the breaker which came rolling and curling

so fast after him. Sometimes he did ; and sometimes the billow would curl over and break just a little behind him, and a great sea of white foam would rush on over his shoulders and perhaps half hide his own curly head. Then Carl laughed louder than ever. He did not mind the wetting with salt water. And there was no danger, for the shore was very gently shelving and the sand was white and hard ; and even if a large wave caught him up off his feet and cradled him in towards the shore, which sometimes happened, it would just leave him there, and never think of taking him back again ; which the waves on some beaches would certainly do.

All this used to occur in the summer weather ; at Christmas it was rather too cold to play with the breakers in any fashion. But Carl liked their company, and amused himself in front of them, this sunny December day, for a long time. He got tired at last ; and then sat himself down on the sand, out of reach of the water, to rest and think what he should do next. There he sat, his trousers still tucked up as far as they would go, his little bare legs stretched out towards the water, his curls crisped and wetted with a dash or two of the salt wave, and his little ruddy face sober and thoughtful,—pleasantly resting, and gravely thinking what should be the next play. Suddenly he jumped up, and the two little bare feet pattered over the sand and up on the bank, till he reached the hut.

“What ails the child ?” exclaimed Mrs Krinken.

But Carl did not stop to tell what. He ran to the cupboard ; and climbed up on a chair, and drew forth with some trouble, from behind everything, a clumsy wooden box. This box held nobody’s treasures but his own. A curious boxful it was. Carl soon picked out his Christmas purse ; and without looking at another thing shut the box, pushed it back, closed the cupboard door, and getting down from his chair, ran back, purse in hand, the way he came ; the little bare feet pattering over the sand, till he reached the place where he had been sitting ; and then down he sat again just as he was before, stretched out his legs towards

the sea, and put the purse down upon the sand between them.

"Now, purse," said he, "I'll hear your story. Come,—begin."

"I don't feel inclined for story-telling," said the purse. "I have been opening and shutting my mouth all my life, and I am tired of it."

The purse looked very snappish.

"Why, you wouldn't be a purse if you could not open and shut your mouth," said Carl.

"Very true," said the other; "but one may be tired of being a purse. I am."

"Why?" said Carl.

"My life is a failure."

"I don't know what that means," said Carl.

"It means that I never have been able to do what I was meant to do, and what I have all my life been trying to do."

"What is that?" said Carl.

"To keep money."

"You shall keep my penny for me," said Carl.

"Think of that! A penny! anything might hold a penny. I am of no use in the world."

"Yes, you are," said Carl,— "to carry my penny."

"You might carry it yourself," said the purse.

"No, I couldn't," said Carl. "My pockets are full."

"You might lose it, then. It is of no use to keep one penny. You might as well have none."

"No I mightn't," said Carl; "and you must keep it; and you must tell me your story, too."

"You may lose me," said the purse. "I wish your mother had."

"No, I shan't lose you," said Carl; and he lifted up his two legs on each side of the purse, and slapped them down in the sand again; "I shan't lose you."

"It would not be the first time," said the purse.

"Were you ever lost?" said Carl.

"Certainly I was."

"Then how did you get here?"

"That is the end of my story—not the beginning."

"Well make haste and begin," said Carl.

"The first place in which I was settled was a large fancy shop in London," the purse began.

"Where were you before that?" said Carl.

"I was in one or two rooms where such things are made, and where I was made."

"Where were you before that?"

"I was not a purse before that. I was not anywhere."

"What are you made of?" said Carl, shortly.

"My sides are made of sealskin, and my studs and clasp are silver."

"Where did the sides and the clasp come from?"

"How should I know?" said the purse.

"I thought you knew," said Carl.

"No, I don't," said the purse.

"Well, go on," said Carl. "What did you do in that large shop?"

"I did nothing. I lay in a drawer, shut up with a parcel of other purses."

"Were they all sealskin with silver clasps?"

"Some of them; and some were morocco leather with steel clasps."

"I'm glad you have got silver clasps," said Carl,—“you look very bright.”

For Mrs Kringen had polished up the silver of the clasp and of every stud along the seams, till they shone again.

"I feel very dull now," said the purse; "but in those days I was as bright as a butterfly, and as handsome. My sides were a beautiful bright red."

"I don't believe it," said Carl; "they are not red a bit now."

"That is because I have been rubbed about in the world till all my first freshness is worn off. I am an old purse, and have seen a great deal of wear and tear."

"You are not torn a bit," said Carl.

"If you don't shut your mouth, I will," said the purse.

"I will," said Carl; "but you must go on."

"My next place was in a gentleman's pocket."

"How did you get there?"

"He came to buy a purse, and so a number of us were thrown out upon the counter, and he looked at us and tried us, and bought me and put me in his pocket."

"What did you do there?"

"There my business was to hold guineas and half guineas, and crowns and half crowns, and all sorts of beautiful pieces of silver and gold."

"And pence?" said Carl.

"No, not one. My master had not any. He threw all his pennies away as fast as he got them."

"Threw them away! where?" said Carl.

"Anywhere—to little boys, and beggars, and poor people, and gate-openers, and such like."

"Why did he not keep them?"

"He had enough besides—gold and silver. He did not want pennies and halfpennies."

"I wish you had kept some of them," said Carl.

"I never had them to keep. I could only keep what he gave me, and not even that. He was always taking out and putting in."

"Did he wear the red off?" said Carl.

No; I did not stay long enough with him. He was travelling in some part of England, with a friend, riding over a wide lonely plain one day; and they saw at a little distance before them a cow in the road, lying down, across their path. "Stapleton," said my master, "let us clear that cow." "Can't your servant do that?" said Mr Stapleton. "Do what?" said my master. "Clear that beast from the road," said his friend. "Pshaw!" said my master,—"I mean, let us clear her at a bound. Leave her in quiet possession of the road, and let us take a jump over her back." "Suppose she took a stupid notion to get out of our way just as we are in hers," said Mr Stapleton. "I don't suppose anything of the sort," said my master; "we shall be too quick for her." With that they put spurs to their horses, but it happened that Mr Stapleton's horse got the start and was a little

forward. *He* cleared the cow well enough, but unluckily it gave her an impression that just where she lay was a dangerous place to be in; and she was throwing up her hind legs at the very minute my master came to take the leap. He was flung over and over, he and his horse, over and under each other—I don't know how. I only know my master was killed.

His friend and his servant picked him up and laid him by the road-side; and while Mr Stapleton went full speed to the nearest town to get help, the other stayed behind to take care of his master and do what could be done for him. But he very soon found that nothing could be done for him; and then, as nobody was in sight, he took the opportunity to do what he could for himself, by rifling his master's pockets. He pulled out several things which I suppose he did not dare to keep, for he put them back again after a careful look at them, and after carefully taking off some seals from the watch chain. I did not fare so well. He had me in his hands a long time, taking out and putting in silver and gold pieces; afraid to keep too much, and not willing to leave a crown that might be kept safely; when a sudden step was heard near, and the bursting out of a loud whistle startled him. He jumped as if he had been shot, which was natural enough, as he was running a pretty good chance of being hanged. I was dropped, or thrown behind him in the grass; and before the countryman who came up, had done asking questions, the horses of Mr Stapleton and his assistants were seen over the rising ground. They carried away my unfortunate master, and left me in the grass.

I knew I should not stay there long, but I was picked up sooner than I hoped. Before the evening had closed in, while the sun was yet shining, I heard the tread of light feet,—somebody coming near the road and then crossing it. In crossing, this somebody came just upon me; and a kind sunbeam touching one of my silver points, I embraced the opportunity to shine as brightly as I could. People say it is dangerous to have bright parts; I am sure I never found it out. I shone so she could not help seeing me. It was a

girl about fifteen or sixteen years old ; very tidy in her dress, with a thin figure, and light brown hair nicely put back from her face, and that face a very quiet sweet one. She looked at me, inside and out, looked up and down the road, as if to see where I had come from, and finally put me in her pocket. I was very glad nobody was in sight anywhere, for I knew by her face she would have given me up directly. She left the road then, and went forward over the common, which was a wide, lonely, barren plain, grass-grown, with here and there a branch of bushes or a low stunted tree. She was going after her cows, to bring them home ; and presently seeing them in the distance, she stood still and began to call them.

“How did she call them ?” said Carl.

“‘Cuff, Cuff, Cuff!’—That was while they were a long way off ; when they came near,—‘Sukey,’ and ‘Bessie,’ and ‘Jenny.’”

“And did they come when she called ?”

“They left off eating as soon as they heard her ; and then, after they had looked a little while, to make sure it was she, they set off slowly to come up to her.”

“How many cows were there ?” said Carl.

Sukey was a great black cow, and always marched first. Dolly was a beautiful red cow, and always came second. Three more followed in a line, and when they got up to their little mistress she set off to go home, and the whole five of them followed gravely in order.

The common was smooth and wide, and much broken with ups and downs, and little foot paths—or cow-paths—tracking it in all directions. We wound along, my mistress and the cows, and I in my mistress’s pocket, through one and another of these ; passing nothing in the shape of a house, but a large gloomy-looking building at some distance, which I afterwards found was a factory. A little way beyond this, not more than a quarter of a mile, we came to a small brown house, with one or two out-buildings. The house stood in a little field and the out-buildings in another little field, close beside it. Everything was small ; house

and barn, and shed, and cow-field, and garden-field ; but it was all snug and neat, too.

“My little mistress—for she was slender, fair, and good, and such people we always call little”——

“But she wasn’t large, was she ?” said Carl.

She was not as large as if she had been grown up, neither was she little for fifteen or sixteen. She was just right. She opened a gate of the barn yard, and held it, while all the five cows marched slowly in, looking around them as if they expected to see some change made in the arrangements since they had gone out in the morning. But the old shed and manger stood just where they had left them, and Sukey stopped quietly in the middle of the barn-yard, and began to chew the cud, and Dolly, and Bessie, and Beauty took their stand in different places after her example ; while Whiteface went off to see if she could find something in the mangers. She was an old cow that never seemed to have had enough.”

“Was Beauty a handsome cow ?” said Carl.

“No ; she was the ugliest of the whole set ; one of her horns was broken, and the other lopped down directly over her left eye.”

“What was she called Beauty for, then ?”

“Why, I heard that she had been a very pretty calf, and was named Beauty in her youth ; but when she grew older, she took to fighting, and broke one of her horns ; and the other horn bent itself down just in the wrong place. There is no knowing, while they are little, how calves or children will turn out.”

When their mistress had shut the gate upon the five cows, she opened another small gate in the fence of the field where the house stood ; and there she went in, through two beds of roses and sweet herbs that were on each side of the narrow walk, up to the door. That stood open to let her in.

It was the nicest place you ever saw. A clean-scrubbed floor, with a thick coarse piece of carpet covering the middle of it : a dark wooden table and wooden chairs, neat and in their places ; only one chair stood on the hearth as if somebody had just left it. There was a large, wide, comfortable

fireplace, with a fire burning in it, and over the fire hung a large iron tea-kettle, in the very midst of the flames, and singing already. On each side of the chimney, brown wooden cupboards filled up the whole space from the floor to the ceiling. All tidy and clean. The hearth looked as if you might have baked cakes on it.

The girl stood a minute before the fire, and then went to the inner door and called, "Mother!"

A pleasant voice from somewhere said,— "Here!"

"In the milk room?"

"Yes."

And my little mistress went along a short passage,—brown it was also, walls and floor, and all, even the beams overhead, to the milk room; and that was brown too,—as sweet as a rose.

"Mother, why did you put on the tea-kettle?"

"Because I wanted to have some tea, dear."

"But I would have done it."

"Yes, honey, I know. You've quite enough to do."

"Look here, what I've found, mother."

"Can't look at anything, daughter. Go along and milk, and I will hear you at tea-time."

Then my little mistress took up her pails and went out by another way, through another gate that opened directly into the cows' yard; and there she milked the yellow sweet milk into the pails, from every one of the five cows she had driven home. All of them loved to be milked by her hand; they enjoyed it, every cow of them; standing quietly and sleepily munching the cud, excepting when now and then one of them would throw back her head furiously at some fly on her side, and then my mistress's soft voice would say—

"So, Beauty."

And Beauty was as good as possible to her, though I have heard that other people did not find her so.

Mrs Meadows took the milk pails at the dairy door, and my mistress came back into the kitchen to get tea. She put up a leaf of the brown table, and set a tray on it, and out of one of the cupboards she fetched two tea-cups and sau-

cers ; so I knew there were no more in the family. Then two little blue-edged plates and horn-handled knives, and the rest of the things ; and when the tea was made, she made up the fire, and stood looking at it and the tea-table by turns, till her mother showed herself at the door, and came in taking off her apron. She was the nicest looking woman you ever saw.

"She wasn't as nice as my mother," said Carl.

"Mrs Krinken was never half so nice. She was the best-natured, most cheerful, pleasant-faced woman you could find, as bright as one of her own red apples."

"Mine are bright," said Carl.

"Yours are bright for Christmas, but hers were bright for every day. Everything about her was bright. Her spoons, and the apples, and the brass candlesticks, and the milk pans, and the glass in the window, and her own kind heart. The mother and daughter had a very cosy tea ; and I was laid upon the table, and my story told, or rather the story of my being found ; and it was decided that I should remain in the keeping of the finder, whom her mother, by some freak of habit, rarely called anything but 'Silky.'"

"What for?" said Carl.

"You may find out, if you don't ask so many questions," said the purse, snappishly. "It is yours, Silky," Mrs Meadows said, after looking at me, and rubbing the silver mountings. "How odd such a handsome purse should have no money in it!"

"I am not going to put it away out of sight, mother," said Silky ; "I am going to have the good of it. I'll keep it to hold my milk-money."

"Well, dear, this is the first," said Mrs Meadows ;—"here is a silver penny I took for milk while you were gone after the cows."

"Who came for it, mother?"

"I don't know—a lady riding by—and she gave me this."

So a little silver coin was slipped into my emptiness, and my little mistress laid me on a shelf of the other cupboard, alongside of an old Bible. But she left the door a little way

open ; and I could see them at work, washing up the tea-things, and then knitting and sewing upon the hearth, both of them by a little round table. By and by Mrs Meadows took the Bible out and read, and then she and Silky knelt down, close together, to pray. They covered up the fire after that, and shut the cupboard door, and went off to bed ; and I was left to think what a new place I had come to, and how I liked it.

It was a very great change. In my old master's pocket I had kept company with wealth and elegance,—the tick of his superb watch was always in my ear ; now, on Mrs Meadows' cupboard shelf, I had round me a few old books, beside the Bible ; an hour-glass ; Mrs Meadows' tin knitting-needle case ; a very illiterate inkstand, and stumpy clownish old pen ; and some other things that I forget. There I lay, day and night ; from thence I watched my two mistresses at their work and their meals ; from thence I saw them, every night and morning, kneel together to pray ; and there I learned to have a great respect for my neighbour the Bible. I always can tell now what sort of people I have got amongst by the respect they have for it.

"My mother has one," said Carl.

"Her great chest knows that," said the purse. "I have been a tolerably near neighbour of that Bible for ten years ; and it rarely gets leave to come out but on Sundays."

"She reads it on Sunday," said Carl.

"Yes, and puts it back before Monday. Mrs Krinken *means* to be a good woman, but these other people *were* good ; there is all the difference."

My business was to lie there on the shelf, and keep the milk pennies, and see all that was going on. Silky sold the milk. The people that came for it were mostly poor people from the neighbouring village, or their children going home from the factory ; people that lived in poor little dwellings in the town, without gardens or fields, or a cow to themselves, and just bought a penny or a halfpenny worth at a time—as little as they could do with. There were a great many of these families, and among them they took a pretty

good share of the milk ; the rest Mrs Meadows made up into sweet butter—*honest* sweet butter, she called it, with her bright face and dancing eye ; and everything was honest that came out of her dairy.

The children always stopped for milk at night, when they were going home ; the grown people, for the most part, came in the morning. After I had been on the cupboard shelf a while, however, and got to know the faces, I saw there was one little boy who came morning and evening, too. In the morning he fetched a halfpennyworth, and in the evening a pennyworth of milk, in a stout little brown jug ; always the same brown jug, and always in the morning he wanted a halfpennyworth, and in the evening a pennyworth. He was a small fellow, with a quantity of red hair, and his face all marked with the small-pox. He was one of the poorest looking that came. He was always without a hat on his head ; his trousers were fringed with rags ; his feet bare of shoes or stockings. His jacket was fastened close up, either to keep him warm, or to hide how very little there was under it. Poor little Norman Finch ! That was his name.

He had come for several mornings. One day early, just as Mrs Meadows and Silky were getting breakfast, his little red head poked itself in again at the door with his little brown jug, and "Please, ma'am,—a hap'orth."

"Why don't you get all you want at once, Norman?" said Silky, when she brought the milk.

"I only a want a hap'orth," said Norman.

"But you will want a pennyworth to-night again, won't you?"

"I'll wait for it till then," said Norman, casting his eyes down into the brown jug, and looking more dull than usual.

"Why don't you take it all at once, then?"

"I don't want it."

"Have you got to go home with this before you go to work?"

"No—I must go," said Norman, taking hold of the door.

"Are you going to the factory?"

"Yes, I be."

"How will your mother get her milk?"

"She will get it when I go home."

"But not this, Norman. What do you want this for?"

"I want it—she don't want it," said the boy, looking troubled,—“I must go.”

"Do you want it to drink at the factory?"

"No. It is to drink at the factory. She don't want it," said Norman.

He went off. But as Silky set the breakfast on the table she said—

"Mother, I don't understand,—I'm afraid there is something wrong about this morning milk."

"There is nothing wrong about it, honey," said Mrs Meadows, who had been out of the room. "It is as sweet as a cloverhead. What is the matter?"

"Oh not the milk, mother; but Norman Finch's coming after it in the morning. He won't tell me what it is for; and they never used to take but a pennyworth a day, and his jug is always empty now at night; and he said it *was* to drink at the factory; and that his mother didn't want it; and I don't know what to think."

"Don't think anything, dear," said Mrs Meadows, "till we know something more. We'll get the child to tell us, poor little creature! I wish I could keep him out of that place."

"What place, mother?"

"I meant the factory."

"I don't think he can have a good home, mother, in his father's house. I am sure he can't. That Finch is a bad man."

"Poor child," said Mrs Meadows, "he sees very little of it. It's too much for such a morsel of a creature to work all day long."

"But they are kind at the pin factory, mother. People say they are."

"Mr Carroll is a kind man," said her mother. "But nine hours is nine hours. Poor little creature!"

"He looks thinner and paler now than he did six months ago."

"Yes, and then it was winter and now it is summer," said Mrs Meadows.

"I wish I knew what he wants to do with that milk," said Silky.

The next morning Norman was there again. He put himself and his jug only half in at the door, and said somewhat doubtfully—

"Please, ma'am,—a hap'orth."

"Come in, Norman," said Silky.

He hesitated.

"Come!—come in,—come into the fire ; it is chilly out of doors. You are in good time, aren't you ?"

"Yes—but I can't stay," said the boy, coming in, however, and coming slowly up to the fire. But he came close, and his two hands spread themselves to the blaze as if they liked it, and the poor little bare feet shone in the firelight on the hearth. It was early, very cool and damp abroad.

"I'll get you the milk," said Silky, taking the jug ; "you stand and warm yourself. You have plenty of time."

She came back with the jug in one hand and a piece of cold bacon in the other, which she offered to Norman. He looked at it, and then caught it, and began to eat immediately. Silky stood opposite to him with the jug.

"What is this milk for, Norman ?" she said, pleasantly.

He stopped eating and looked troubled directly.

"What are you going to do with it ?"

"Carry it—home," he said slowly.

"Now ?—home now ? Are you going back home with it now ?"

"I am going to take it to the factory."

"What do you do with it there ?"

"Nothing," said Norman, looking at his piece of bacon and seeming almost ready to cry ;—"I don't do nothing with it."

"You need not be afraid to tell me, dear," Silky said gently. "I'm not going to do you any harm. Does your mother know you get it ?"

He waited a good while, and then when she repeated the

question, taking another look at Silky's kind quiet face, he said half under his breath—"No."

"What do you want it for then, dear? I would rather give it to you than have you take it in a wrong way. Do you want it to drink?"

Norman dropped his piece of bacon.

"No," he said, beginning to cry, "I don't want it—I don't want it at all!"

Silky picked up the bacon, and she looked troubled in her turn.

"Don't cry, Norman,—don't be afraid of me. Who does want it?"

"Oh, don't tell!" sobbed the child; "my little dog."

"Now don't cry!" said Silky. "Your little dog?"

"Yes!—my little dog." And he sighed deeply between the words.

"Where is your little dog?"

"He's up yonder—up to the factory."

"Who gave him to you?"

"Nobody didn't give him to me. I found him."

"And this milk is for him?"

"He wants it to drink."

"Does your mother know you get it?"

Norman didn't answer.

"She don't?" said Silky. "Then where does the money come from, Norman?" She spoke very gently.

"It's mine," said Norman.

"Yes, but where do you get it?"

"Mr Swift gives it to me.

"Is it out of your wages?"

Norman hesitated, and then said "Yes," and began to cry again.

"What is the matter?" said Silky. "Sit down and eat your bacon. I'm not going to get you into trouble."

He looked at her again and took the bacon, but said he wanted to go.

"What for?—it isn't time yet."

"Yes—I want to see my little dog."

"And feed him? Stop and tell me about him. What colour is he?"

"He's white all over."

"What's his name?"

"Little Curly Long-Ears."

"What do you call him?—all that?"

"I call him Long-Ears."

"But why don't you feed him at home, Norman?"

"He lives up there."

"And doesn't he go home with you?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Father wouldn't let him. He would take him away, or do something to him."

Norman looked dismal.

"But where does he live?"

"He lives up at the factory."

"But you can't have him in the factory?"

"Yes I have," said Norman, "because Mr Carroll said he was to come in because he was so handsome."

"But he will get killed in the machinery, Norman, and then you will be very sorry."

"No, he won't get killed; he takes care; he knows he mustn't go near the machinery, and he doesn't; he just comes and lies down where I be."

"And does Mr Swift let him?"

"He does let him, because Mr Carroll said he was to."

"But your money—where does it come from, Norman?"

"Mr Swift," said Norman, very dismally.

"Then doesn't your mother miss it, when you carry home your wages to her?"

"No."

"She *must*, my child."

"She doesn't, because I carry her just the same as I did before."

"How can you, and keep out a ha'penny a day?"

"Because I get more now—I used to have fourpence ha'penny, and now they give me fi'pence."

And Norman burst into a terrible fit of crying, as if his secret was out, and it was all up with him and his dog too.

"Give me the milk, and let me go!" he exclaimed through his tears. "Poor Curly!—poor Curly!"

"Here it is," said Silky, very kindly. "Don't cry—I'm not going to hurt you or Curly either. Won't he eat anything but milk? Won't he eat meat?"

"No—he can't."

"Why can't he?"

"He doesn't like it."

"Well; you run off to the factory now, and give Curly his milk, and stop again to-morrow."

"And won't you tell?" said Norman, looking up.

"I shall not tell anybody that will get you into trouble. Run, now!"

He dried his tears and ran, fast enough; holding the little brown jug carefully at half-arm's length, and his bare feet pattering over the ground as fast as his short legs could make them.

Silky stood looking gravely after him.

"I'm so sorry for him, mother!" she said. "This won't do; it is very wrong, and he will get himself into dreadful trouble besides."

"Poor fellow! we shall see, honey;—we will try what we can do," said Mrs Meadows.

The next morning Norman came again, and Mrs Meadows was there.

"How is Long-Ears, Norman, and how are you?" she said, cheerfully; but she did everything cheerfully.

"He's well," said Norman, looking a little doubtfully at these civilities.

"And you are not well?" said Mrs Meadows, kindly. "Suppose you come and see me to-morrow?—it is Sunday you know, and you have no work—will you? Come bright and early, and we will have a nice breakfast, and you shall go to church with me if you like."

Norman shook his head. "Curly will want to see me," he said.

"Well, about that do just as you like. Come here to breakfast—*that* you can do. Mother will let you."

"Yes, she'll let me," said Norman, "and I can go to see Long-Ears afterwards. You won't tell?" he added, with a glance of some fear.

"Tell what?"

"About *him*," said Norman, nodding his head in the direction of the factory.

"Long-Ears?—Not I! not a word."

So he set off, with a glance of pleasure lighting up his little face and making his feet patter more quickly over the ground.

"Poor little creature!" Mrs Meadows said again most heartily, and this time the tear was standing in her eye.

The next morning it rained,—steadily, constantly. But at the usual time Mrs Meadows and Silky were getting their breakfast.

"How it does pour down!" said Mrs Meadows.

"I'm so sorry, mother," said Silky; "he won't come."

She had hardly turned her back to see to something at the fire, when there he was behind her, standing in the middle of the floor; in no Sunday dress, but in his every-day rags, and those wet through and dripping. How glad and how sorry both mother and daughter looked. They brought him to the fire and wiped his feet, and wrung the water from his clothes as well as they could; but they did not know what to do; for the fire would not have dried him in all the day; and to sit down to breakfast dry, with him soaking wet at her side, Mrs Meadows could not. What to put on him was the trouble; she had no children's clothes at all in the house. But she managed. She stripped off his rags, and tacked two or three towels about him; and then over them wound a large old shawl, in some mysterious way, fastening it over the shoulders in such a manner that it fell round him like a loose straight frock, leaving his arms quite free. Then when his jacket and trousers had been put to dry, they sat down to breakfast.

In his old shawl wrapper dry and warm, little Norman

enjoyed himself, and liked very much his cup of weak coffee, and bread and butter, and the nice egg which Mrs Meadows boiled for him. But he did not eat like a child whose appetite knew what to do with good things; he had soon finished; though after it his face looked brighter and more cheery than it had ever done before in that house.

Mrs Meadows left Silky to take care of the breakfast things, and drawing her chair up on the hearth, she took the little boy on her lap and wound her arms about him.

"Little Norman," said she, kindly, "you won't see Long-Ears to-day."

"No," said Norman, with a sigh, in spite of breakfast and fire; "he will have to do without me."

"Isn't it good that there is one day in the week when the poor little tired pin-boy can rest?"

"Yes—it is good," said Norman, quietly, but as if he were too much accustomed to being tired to feel any rest from it.

"This is God's day. Do you know who God is, Norman?"

"He made me," said Norman,—“and everybody.”

"Yes, and everything. He is the great King over all the earth; and He is good; and He has given us this day to rest and to learn to be good and please Him. Can you read the Bible, Norman?"

"No, I can't read," said Norman. "Mother can."

"You know the Bible is God's book, written to tell us how to be good, and whatever the Bible says we must mind, or God will be angry with us. Now the Bible says, '*Thou shalt not steal.*' Do you know what that means?"

Mrs Meadows spoke very softly.

"Yes," said Norman, swinging one little foot backward and forward in the warm light of the fire; "I've heard it."

"What does it mean?"

"I know," said Norman.

"It is to take what does not belong to us. Now, since God has said that, is it quite right for you to take that money of your mother's to buy milk for Long-Ears?"

"It isn't her money!" said Norman, his face changing; "and Long-Ears mustn't starve!"

"It is her money, Norman; all the money you earn belongs to her or to your father, which is the same thing. You know it does."

"But Curly must have something to eat," said Norman, bursting into tears. "Oh, don't tell! oh, don't tell!"

"Hush, dear," said Mrs Meadows' kind voice, and she laid her kind hand on his head; "I am not going to tell; but I want you to be a good boy and do what will please God, that you may be one of the lambs of the Good Shepherd's flock. Do you know what I am talking about?"

"Yes—no; I don't know about the lambs," said Norman.

"Do you know who Jesus Christ is?"

"No."

"Poor little thing!" said Silky, and the tears fell from her face, as she went from the fire to the table. Norman looked at her, and so did her mother, and then they looked at each other.

"Jesus Christ is your best friend, little Norman."

"Is He?" said Norman, looking surprised.

"Do you know what He has done for you, little pin-boy?"

Norman looked, and no wonder; for Mrs Meadows' eyes were running over, and he did not know what to make of the dropping tears; but he shook his head.

"It is all in God's book, dear. Little Norman Finch, like everybody else, has not loved God, nor minded His commandments as he ought to do; and God would have punished us all, if Jesus Christ hadn't come down from heaven on purpose to take our punishment on Himself, so that we might be saved."

"How would He have punished us?" said Norman.

"He would have sent us away from Him for ever, to be in a miserable place, with devils and bad people, where we should see nothing good nor happy, and we should not be good nor happy ourselves; it is a place so dreadful, it is called in the Bible *the lake that burns with fire*; and He would never let us come into His heaven, where God is, and Jesus Christ is, and the good angels, and all God's people are, who are all as good and happy as they can be."

"And should I have been punished so?" said Norman.

"Yes, the Bible says so; and every one will now, who won't believe and love Jesus Christ."

"And did He go there?"

"Where?"

"To that place—that bad place; did He go there?"

"What, the Lord Jesus?"

Norman nodded.

"Not there. He is God, and He is called the Son of God; He could not do that, but He did this: He came to this world, and was born into the world a little child; and when He grew up to be a man, He died a cruel death for you and me—for you and me, little Norman."

"And then will God not punish me now?" said Norman.

"No, not a bit, if you will love the Lord Jesus, and be His child."

"What did He do that for?" said Norman.

"Because He is so good that He loved us, and wanted to save us and bring us back to be His children, and to be good and happy."

"Does He love me?" said Norman.

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs Meadows; "do you think He came to die for you and does not love you? If you will love and obey Him, He will love you for ever, and take care of you, better care than any one else can."

"There isn't any one else to take care of me," said Norman. "Mother can't, and father don't much. I wish I knew about that."

With a look of wonder and interest at her daughter, Mrs Meadows reached her Bible without letting Norman down from her lap; and turning from place to place, read to him the story of Christ's death, and various parts of His life and teaching. He listened gravely, and constantly, and intently, and seemed not to weary of it at all, till she was tired and obliged to stop. He made no remark then, but sat a little while with a sober face, till the fatigue of days past came over him, and his eye-lids drooped, and slipping from Mrs Meadows' lap, he laid himself down on the hearth to sleep.

They put something under his head, and sat watching him, the eyes of both every now and then running over.

"How much do you think he understood, mother?" said Silky.

"I don't know," said Mrs Meadows, shaking her head.

"He listened, mother," said Silky.

"Yes. I won't say anything more to him to-day. He has had enough."

And when the little sleeper awoke they lent all their attention to give him a pleasant day. He had a good dinner and a nice supper. His clothes were thoroughly dried; and Mrs Meadows said, when she put them on, that if she could only get an opportunity on a week-day, she would patch them up comfortably for him. Towards nightfall the rain stopped, and he went home dry and warm, and with a good piece of cheese, and a loaf of plain gingerbread under his arm. When he was all ready to set out, he paused at the door, and looking up at Mrs Meadows, said—

"Does He say we mustn't do that?"

"Who, dear?"

"Does Jesus Christ say we mustn't do that?"

"Do what?"

"Steal," said Norman, softly.

"Yes, to be sure. The Bible says it, and the Bible is God's Word; and Jesus said it over again, when He was on the earth."

Norman stood a quarter of a minute, and then went out and closed the door.

The next morning they looked eagerly for him; but he did not come. He stopped in the evening as usual, but Silky was just then busy, and did not speak to him beyond a word. On Tuesday morning he did not come. At night he was there again with his jug.

"How do you do, Norman?" said Mrs Meadows, when she filled it, "and how is Long-Ears?"

But Norman did not answer, and turned to go.

"Come here in the morning, Norman," Mrs Meadows called after him.

Whether he heard her or not, he did not show himself on his way to the factory next morning. That was Wednesday.

"Norman hasn't been here these three days, mother," said Silky. "Can it be that he has made up his mind to do without his halfpennyworth of milk for the dog?"

"Poor little fellow!" said Mrs Meadows; "I meant to have given it to him; skim milk would do, I dare say; but I forgot to tell him on Sunday, and I told him last night to stop, but he hasn't done so. We'll go up there, Silky, and see how he is, after dinner."

"To the factory, mother?"

"Yes."

"And I'll carry a little pail of milk, mother."

"Well, honey, do."

After dinner they went, and I went in Silky's pocket. The factory was not a great distance from Mrs Meadows' house, which stood about half-way between that and the town. Mrs Meadows asked for Mr Swift, and presently he came. Mrs Meadows was a general favourite, I had found that out; everybody spoke to her civilly; certainly she did the same to everybody.

"Is little Norman at work to-day, Mr Swift?"

"Norman Finch?—yes, ma'am, he is at work," said the overseer;—"he has not done much work, this day or so."

"He's not quite well, Mr Swift?"

"Well, no, I suppose he isn't. He has not hard work neither; but he's a poor little mortal of a boy."

"Is he a good boy, sir?"

"Average," said Mr Swift,— "as good as the average. What, are you going to adopt him?"

"No, sir," said Mrs Meadows;—"I wanted to ask a few questions about him."

"I don't know any harm of him," said Mr Swift. "He's about like the common. Not particularly strong in the head, nor anywhere else, for that matter; but he is a good-feeling child. Yes—now I remember. It is as much as a year ago, that I was angry with him one day, and was going to give

the careless little rascal a strapping for something,—I forget what ; we must keep them in order, Mrs Meadows, let them be what they will ;—I was going to give it to him, for something, and a bold brave fellow in the same room, about six times as big, and six times as strong as Norman, offered to take it, and spare him. *I* didn't care ; it answered my purpose of keeping order just as well that Bill Bollings should have it, as Norman Finch, if he had a mind :—and ever since that time Finch has been ready to lay down his body and soul for Bollings if it would do him any service. He's a good-hearted boy, I do believe."

Mrs Meadows and Silky looked at each other.

"That's it, mother !" said Silky. "That is why he understood and took it so quickly."

"What a grand boy, the other must be !" said Mrs Meadows.

"Ah, well—*that* was noble enough," said Mr Swift,—“but he's a kind of harum-scarum fellow—just as likely to get himself into a scrape to-morrow as to get somebody else out of one to-day.”

"That was noble," repeated Mrs Meadows.

"Norman has never forgotten it. As I said, he would lay down body and soul for him. There's a little pet dog he has too," Mr Swift went on, "that I believe he would do as much for. A pretty creature ! I would have bought it of him, and given a good price for it, but he seemed frightened at the proposal. I believe he keeps the creature here partly for fear he should lose him if he took him home."

"Is it against the rules, sir, to have a dog in the factory ?"

"Entirely !—of course !" said Mr Swift ; "but Mr Carroll has said it, and so a new rule is made for the occasion. Mr Carroll was willing to let such a pretty creature be anywhere, I believe."

"I should be afraid he would get hurt."

"So I was, but the dog has sense enough ; he gets into no danger, and keeps out of the way like a Christian."

"May we go in, sir, and see Norman for a moment ?"

"Certainly," Mr Swift said ; and himself led the way.

Through long rooms and rows of workers went Mr Swift, and Mrs Meadows and Silky after him, to the one where they found little Norman. He was standing before some sort of a machine, folding papers and pressing them against rows of pins, that were held all in order and with their points ready, by two pieces of iron in the machine. Norman was not working briskly, and he looked already jaded, though it was early in the afternoon. Close at his feet, almost touching him, lay the little white dog—a very little, and a most beautiful creature. Soft white curling hair, and large silky ears that drooped to the floor, as he lay with his head upon his paws ; and the two gentle brown eyes looked almost pitifully up at the strangers. He did not get up ; nor did Norman look round till Mrs Meadows spoke to him.

"Hey, my boy, how are you getting on?" Mr Swift said first, with a somewhat rough but not unkind slap across the shoulders. Norman shrugged his shoulders, and said, "Pretty well, thank you, sir,"—when he heard Mrs Meadows' soft "Norman, how do you do?"

His fingers fell from the row of pin points, and he turned towards her, looking a great deal surprised and a little pleased, but with a very sober face.

"Where have you been these two or three days?"

"I've been here," said Norman, gravely.

"How comes it you have not been for Long-Ears' milk these three days?"

"I—I couldn't," said Norman.

"Why?"

"I hadn't any money—I gave it to mother."

He spoke low and with some difficulty.

"What made you do that, Norman?"

He looked up at her.

"Because—you know—Jesus said so."

Mrs Meadows had been stooping down to speak to him, but now she stood up straight and for a minute she said nothing.

"And what has Long-Ears done, dear, without his milk?"

Norman was silent and his mouth twitched. Mrs Meadows looked at the little dog, which lay still in the same place, his gentle eyes having, she thought, a curious sort of wistfulness in their look.

"Won't he eat meat?"

Norman shook his head and said "No," under his breath.

"He's a dainty little rascal," said the overseer; "he was made to live on sweetmeats and sugarplums."—And Mr Swift walked on.

"I've brought him some milk," whispered Silky; and softly stooping down she uncovered her little tin pail and tried to coax the dog to come to it. But Norman no sooner caught the words of her whisper and saw the pail, than his spirit gave way; he burst into a bitter fit of crying, and threw himself down on the floor and hid his face.

Mr Swift came back to see what was the matter. Mrs Meadows explained part to him, without telling of Norman's keeping the money.

"Oh well," said Mr Swift,—“but he mustn't make such a disturbance about it!—it is against all order; and feeding the dog too, Lois!—but it is a pretty creature. He's hungry, he is! It's well we don't have ladies come to the factory every day.”

Silky's other name was Lois.

"I will never do so again, Mr Swift," said she, gently.

"Oh, I don't say that," said he. "I don't dislike the sight of you, Miss Lois; but I must have you searched at the door. Keep this boy quiet, now, Mrs Meadows; and don't stay too long; or take him with you."

The boy was quiet enough now. While Mr Swift had been speaking he had raised himself from the floor, half up, and had stopped sobbing, and was looking at Long-Ears and gently touching his curly head; who on his part was lapping the milk with such eagerness as if he had wanted it for some time. Norman's tears still fell, but they fell quietly. By the time the little dog had finished the milk they did not fall at all. Till then nobody said anything.

"Come for it every morning again, my child," said Mrs

Meadows, softly ;—"I'll give it to you. What a dear little fellow he is ! I don't wonder you love him. He shall have milk enough."

Norman looked up gratefully and with a little bit of a smile.

"You don't look very strong, my boy," said Mrs Meadows. "You don't feel quite well, do you ?"

He shook his head, as if it was a matter beyond his understanding.

"Are you tired ?"

His eyes gave token of understanding that. "Yes, I'm tired. People are not tired up there, are they ?"

"Where, dear ?"

"Up there—in heaven ?"

"No, dear," said Mrs Meadows.

"I shall go there, won't I ?"

"If you love Jesus and serve Him, He will take good care of you and bring you there safely."

"He will," said Norman.

"But you are not going yet, I hope, dear," said Mrs Meadows, kissing him. "Good-bye. Come to-morrow, and you shall have the milk."

"Will you read to me that again, some day ?" he inquired wistfully.

Mrs Meadows could hardly answer. She and Silky walked back without saying three words to each other ; and I never saw Mrs Meadows cry so much as she did that afternoon and evening.

Norman came after that every morning for the dog's milk ; and many a Sunday he and Long-Ears passed part of the time with Mrs Meadows ; and many a reading he listened to there, as he had listened to the first one.

He didn't talk much. He was always near his little dog, and he seemed quietly to enjoy everything at those times.

As the summer changed into autumn, and autumn gave way to winter, Norman's little face seemed to grow better looking, all the while it was growing more pale and his little body more slim. It grew to be a contented, very quiet, and

patient face, and his eye acquired an unusual clearness and openness ; though he never was a bad-looking child. "He won't live long," Mrs Meadows said, after every Sunday.

The little white dog all this while grew more white, and curly, and bright-eyed every day ; or they at least all thought so.

It was not till some time in January that at last Norman stopped coming for milk, and did not go by to the factory any more. The weather was severe. Mrs Meadows was shut up in the house with a bad cold ; and some days were gone before she or Silky could get any news of him. Then, one cold evening, his mother came for the milk, and to say that Norman was very ill and would like to see Lois and Mrs Meadows. She was a miserable-looking woman, wretchedly dressed, and with a jaded spiritless air, that seemed as if everything she cared for in life was gone, or she too poor to care for it. I thought Norman must have a sad home where she was. And his father must be much worse in another way, or his mother would not have such a look.

Silky and Mrs Meadows got ready directly. Silky put her purse in her pocket, as she generally did when she was going to see poor people, and wrapping themselves up warm with cloaks, and shawls, and hoods, she and her mother set out. It was past sunset on a winter's day ; clear enough, but uncommonly cold.

"It will be dark by the time we come home, mother," said Silky.

"Yes, honey, but we can find the way," came from under Mrs Meadows' hood ; and after that neither of them spoke a word.

It was not a long way ; they soon came to the town, and entered a poor straggling street in which no good and comfortable buildings showed themselves, or at least no good and comfortable homes. Some of the houses were decently well built, but several families lived in each of them, and comfort seemed to be unknown. At least after Mrs Meadows' nice kitchen, with the thick carpet, and blazing fire, and dark cupboard doors, these all looked so. The light

grew dimmer, and the air grew cooler, as Mrs Meadows and Silky went down the street ; and Silky was trembling all over by the time they stopped at one of these brick dwelling-houses and went in.

The front door stood open ; nobody minded that ; it was nobody's business to shut it. They went in, through a dirty passage and up-stairs that nobody ever thought of cleaning, to the third story. There Mrs Meadows first knocked, and then gently opened the door. A man was there, sitting over the fire ; a wretched tallow candle on the table hardly showed what he looked like. Mrs Meadows spoke with her usual pleasantness.

" Good evening, Mr Finch ;—can I see little Norman ? "

" Yes,—I suppose so," the man said in a gruff voice, and pointing to another door ; " they're in yonder."

" How is he ? "

" I don't know ! Going, I expect." He spoke in a tone that might have been half heartless, half heartfelt. Mrs Meadows stayed for no further questions. She left him there and went on to the inner room.

It was so dark that hardly anything could be seen. A woman rose up from some corner—it proved to be Mrs Finch—and went for the light. Her husband's voice could be heard gruffly asking her what she wanted with it, and her muttered words of reply ; and then she came back with it in her hand.

The room was ill lighted, even when the candle was in it ; but there could be seen two beds ; one raised on some sort of a bedstead, the other on the floor in a corner. No fire was in this room, and the bed was covered with all sorts of coverings ; a torn quilt, an old great coat, a small ragged worsted shawl, and Norman's own poor little jacket and trousers. But on these, close within reach of the boy's hand, lay curled the little dog ; his glossy hair and soft outlines making a strange contrast with the rags and poverty and ugliness of the place.

Norman did not look much changed, except that his face was so very pale it seemed as if he had no more blood to

leave it. Mrs Meadows and Silky came near, and neither of them at first seemed able to speak. Mrs Finch stood holding the light. Then Mrs Meadows stooped down by the bed's head.

"Little Norman," she said, and you could tell her heart was full of tears,— "do you know me?"

"I know you," he said, in a weak voice, and with a little smile.

"How do you do?"

"Very well," he said in the same manner.

"Are you very well?" said Mrs Meadows.

"Yes," he said. "I'm going now."

"Where, dear?"

"You know—to that good place. Jesus will take me, won't He?"

"If you love and trust Him, dear."

"He will take me," said Norman.

"What makes you think you are going, dear?" said Mrs Meadows.

"I can't stay," said Norman shutting his eyes. He opened them again immediately. "I'm going," he said. "I'm so tired. I shan't be tired there, shall I?"

"No, dear," said Mrs Meadows, whose power of speech was likely to fail her. She kept wiping her face with her pocket-handkerchief. Norman stroked and stroked his little dog's head.

"Poor Long-Ears," said he, faintly,— "poor Long-Ears!— I can't take care of you now. Poor Long-Ears! you are hungry. He hasn't had anything to eat since—since—mother?"

"He doesn't know how time goes," said Mrs Finch, who had not before spoken. "The dog hasn't had a sup of anything since the day before yesterday. He must be hungry. I don't know what he lives on. My husband don't care whether anything lives or not."

Silky had not said a word, and she did not now, but she brought out that same little tin pail from under her cloak and set it down on the floor. Norman's eye brightened.

But the dog could not be coaxed to quit the bed ; he would set only his two fore feet on the floor, and so drank the milk out of the pail. Norman watched him, almost with a smile. And when the dog, having left the milk, curled himself down again in his old place, and looked into his master's face, Norman quite smiled.

"Poor Long-Ears!" he said, patting him again with a feeble hand; "I'm going to leave you,—what will you do?"

"I'll take care of him, Norman," said Mrs Meadows.

"Will you?" said Norman.

"As long as he lives, if you wish."

Norman signed for her to put her ear down to him, and said earnestly.

"I give him to you—you keep him. Will you?"

"Yes, indeed, I will," said Mrs Meadows.

"Then you will have milk enough, dear little Long-Ears," said Norman. "But," he said eagerly to Mrs Meadows, "you must take him home with you to-night—I'm afraid father will do something with him if you don't."

"But you will want him," said Mrs Meadows.

"No, I won't. Father will do something with him."

"Indeed he will, sure enough," said Mrs Finch.

"Then I'll take him, and keep him, dear, as if he were yourself," said Mrs Meadows.

"I shan't want him," said Norman, shutting his eyes again;—"I'm going."

"And you are not sorry, dear?" said Mrs Meadows.

"No!" he said.

"I wonder why he should," said Mrs Finch, wiping her eyes.

"And you know Jesus will take you?"

"Because I love Him," said Norman, without opening his eyes.

"What makes you love Him so, dear?"

"Because He did that for me," said Norman, opening his eyes once more to look at her, and then shutting them again. And he never opened them any more. It seemed that having his mind easy about his pet, and having seen his friends,

he wanted nothing more on this earth. He just slumbered away a few hours, and died so, as quietly as he had slept. His little pale meek face looked as if, as he said, he was glad to go.

Nothing but a degree of force that no one cared to use, could have moved Long-Ears from the body of his master till it was laid in the grave. Then, with some difficulty, Mrs Meadows gained possession of him and brought him home.

"Is that all?" said Carl, when the story stopped.

"All"

"What more of Mrs Meadows and Silky?"

"Nothing more. They lived there, and took care of Long-Ears, and were kind to everybody, and sold milk, just as they used to do."

"And what about Long-Ears?"

"Nothing about him. He lived there with Mrs Meadows and Silky, and was as well off as a little dog could be."

"And is that all?"

"That is all."

"And how did you get here?"

"I've told you enough for this time."

"I'll hear the rest another time," said Carl, as he grasped the purse and ran off towards home; for it was nearly noon, and his mother had called to him that dinner was ready.

"Mother," said Carl, "I have heard the stories of my purse, and of my penny, and of my three apples; and they're splendid!"

"What a child!" said Mrs Krinken. "Are the stories not finished yet?"

"No," said Carl; "and I don't know which to hear next. There is the boat, and the pine cone, and the shoes, and the book, and the old stocking—all of them; and I don't know which to hear first. Which would you, mother?"

"What is all that?" said John Krinken.

"He says his things tell him stories," said Mrs Krinken;

"and he has told over one or two to me, and it is as good as a book. I can't think where the child got hold of them."

"Why, they *told* them to me, mother," said Carl.

"Yes," said Mrs Krinken ; "something told it to thee, child."

"Who told them, Carl?" said his father.

"My penny, and my purse, and my three apples,—or only one of the apples," said Carl ;—"that was Beachamwell."

"Beach 'em *what*?" said his father.

"Beachamwell—that is the biggest of my three apples," said Carl.

At which John and Mrs Krinken looked at each other, and laughed till their eyes ran down with tears.

"Let us hear about Beachamwell," said John, when he could speak.

"I've told it," said Carl, a little put out.

"Yes, and it was as pretty a story as ever I heard, or wish to hear," said Mrs Krinken, soothingly.

"Let us hear the story of the shoes, then," said John.

"I haven't heard it yet," said Carl.

"Oh, you can't tell it till you have heard it?" said his father.

"I have only heard three of them," said Carl, "and I don't know which to hear next."

"The old stocking would tell you a rare story if it knew how," said his father ; "it could spin you a yarn as long as its own."

"I would rather hear the old pine cone, John," said his wife. "Ask the pine cone, Carl. I wish it could tell the story, and I could hear it."

"Which first?" said Carl, looking from one to the other.

But John and Mrs Krinken were too busy thinking of the story-teller, to help him out with his question about the stories.

"Then I am going to keep the stocking for the very last one," said Carl.

"Why?" said his mother.

"Because it is ugly. And I intend to make the shoes

tell me their story next. I might want to put them on, you know."

And Carl looked down at two sets of fresh-coloured toes which looked out at him through the cracks of his old half-boots.

Mr and Mrs Krinken got up laughing, to attend to their business; and Carl, indignantly seizing his shoes, ran off with them out of hearing to the sunny side of the house; where he plumped himself down on the ground with them in front of him, and commanded them to speak.

THE STORY OF THE TWO SHOES.

"I BELIEVE," said the right shoe, "that I am the first individual of my race whose history has ever been thought worth asking for. I hope to improve my opportunity. I consider it to be a duty, in all classes, for each member of the class"—

"You may skip that," said Carl. "I don't care about it."

"I am afraid," said the right shoe, "I am uninteresting. My excuse is that I never was fitted to be anything else. Not to press ourselves upon people's notice is the very lesson we are especially taught; we were never intended to occupy a high position in society, and it is reckoned an unbearable fault in us to make much noise in the world."

"I say," said Carl, "you may skip that."

"I beg pardon," said the shoe, "I was coming to the point. 'Step by step' is our family motto. However, I know young people like to get over the ground at a leap. I will do it at once.

My brother and I are twins, and as much alike as it is possible perhaps for twins to be. Mr Peg, the cobbler, thought we were exactly alike; and our upper leathers did indeed run about on the same calf (as perchance they may another time,) but our soles were once further apart than they are ever likely to be for the future; one having roamed

the green fields of Ohio on the back of a sturdy ox, while the other came from Vermont. However, we are mates now, and having been as they say "cut out for each other," I have no doubt we shall jog on together perfectly well.

We are rather an old pair of shoes. In fact, we have been on hand almost a year. I should judge from the remarks of our friend Mr Peg, when he was beginning upon us, that he was quite unaccustomed to the trade of *shoe-making*—shoe-mending was what he had before lived by; or, perhaps, I should rather say, tried to live by; I am afraid it was hard work; and I suppose Mr Peg acted upon the excellent saying, which is also a motto in our family, that "it is good to have two or three strings to one's bow." It was in a little light front room, looking upon the street, which was Mr Peg's parlour, and shop, and workroom, that he cut out the leather and prepared the soles for this his first manufacture. I think he had only stuff enough for one pair, for I heard him sigh once or twice as he was fidgeting with his pattern over my brother's upper leather till it was made out. Mr Peg was a little elderly man, with a crown of gray hair all round the back part of his head; and he sat at work in his shirt sleeves, and with a thick, short leather apron before him. There was a little fire-place in the room, with sometimes fire in it, and sometimes not; and the only furniture was Mr Peg's small counter, the low, rush-bottomed chair in which he sat to work, and a better one for a customer; his tools, and his chips; by which I mean the scraps of leather which he scattered about.

Hardly had Mr Peg got the soles and the upper leathers and the vamps to his mind, and sat down on his chair to begin work, when a little girl came in. She came from a door that opened upon a staircase leading to the upper rooms, and walked up to the cobbler. She was a little brown-haired girl, about nine or ten years old, in an old cotton frock; she was not becomingly dressed, and she did not look very well.

"Father," she said, "mother's head aches again."

The cobbler paused in his work, and looked up at her.

"And she wants you to come up and rub it—she says I can't do it hard enough."

Rather slowly Mr Peg laid his upper leather and tools down.

"Will you close this shoe for me, Sue, while I am gone?"

He spoke half pleasantly, and to judge by his tone and manner, with some half-sorrowful meaning. So the little girl took it, for she answered a little sadly—

"I wish I could, father."

"I'm glad you can't, my dear."

He laid his work down and mounted the stairs. She went to the window, and stood with her elbows leaning on the sill, looking into the street.

Beachhead is only a small town; but still, being a sea-coast town, there is a great deal of bustle about it. The fishermen from the one side, and the farmers from the other, with their various merchandise; the active, strange-looking boys and women, for ever bustling up and down, make it quite a lively place. There is always a good deal to see in the street. Yet the little girl stood very still and quiet by the window; her head did not turn this way or that; she stood like a stupid person, who did not care what was going on. A woman passing up the street stopped a moment at the window.

"How is your mother to-day, Sue?"

"She's getting on slowly, Mrs Binch."

"Does the doctor say she is in danger?"

"The doctor is not coming any more."

"Has he given her up?"

"Yes; he says there is nothing to do but to let her get well."

"Oh!—she is so brisk, is she?"

"No, ma'am—she's not brisk at all; she says"—

But Mrs Binch had passed on and was out of hearing, and the little brown head stood still at the window again, leaning now on one hand. It was a smooth-brushed, round little head, seen against the open windows. By and by another stopped, a lady this time; a lady dressed in black, with a sweet, delicate face.

"How is your mother, Sue?"

"She's just the same, Mrs Lucy."

"No better?"

"Not much, ma'am. It will take a long time the doctor says."

"And are you, poor little tot, all alone in the house to do everything?"

"No, ma'am—there's father."

The sweet face gave her a sort of long, wistful look, and passed on. She stood there still at the open window, with her head leaning on her hand; and whatever was the reason, so dull of hearing, that her father had come down, seated himself in his chair, and taking up his shoe, several minutes before she found it out. Then she left the window and came to him.

"What shall I do, father?"

"She will want you directly," said the cobbler. "She's asleep now."

Sue stood still.

"Don't you want some dinner, Sue?"

She hesitated a little, and then said "Yes."

"Well see, dear, and make some more of that porridge. Can you?"

"Yes, father, there is some meal. And there is a little bread, too?"

"You may have that," said the cobbler. "And I'll go out by and by and see if I can get a little money. Mr Shipham had a pair of boots new soled a month ago, and Mr Binch owes me for some jobs—if I only could get the money for them."

And the cobbler sighed.

"If people only knew, they would pay you, father, wouldn't they?"

"There is One that knows," said the cobbler. "And why they don't pay me He knows. Maybe it is to teach you and me, Sue, that 'man does not live by bread alone.'"

"But by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live," his little daughter went on, softly, as if she were filling up the words for her own satisfaction.

"But we knew that before, father?"

"Perhaps we didn't know it enough," said the cobbler. "I'm afraid I don't now"——

And as her back was turned, he hastily brought his hand to his eyes.

"But, father, can one help feeling a little sorrowful, when——when things are so bad?"

"A little sorry?—perhaps one might feel *a little* sorry," said the cobbler; "but if I believe all that I know, I don't see how I could feel *very* unhappy. I don't see how I could; and I ought not."

His little daughter had been raking the fire together and setting on the coals a little iron sauce-pan of water. She turned and looked at him when he said this, as if she had not known before that he did feel "very unhappy." He did not see the look, which was a startled and sorrowful one; he was bending over his shoe-leather. She then left the room and went after the meal, which she brought in a yellow earthen dish, and began silently to mix for the porridge.

"The Bible says, father"—she began, stirring away.

"Yes, dear—what does it say?" said Mr Peg.

"It says, 'Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and—verily'——"

Susan's voice broke. She stirred her porridge vehemently, and turned her back to her father.

"'Verily thou shalt be fed,'" said the cobbler. "Yes—I know it. The thing is to believe it."

"You do believe it, father," Susan said, softly.

"Ay, but I haven't trusted in the Lord, nor done any good to speak of. It will stand good for you, daughter, if it doesn't for me."

She had stirred her meal into the sauce-pan; and now setting down her dish she came to his side, and putting her two arms round his neck, she kissed him all over his face. The cobbler let fall leather and ends and hugged her to his breast.

"That has done me more good than dinner, now," said he, when he had, albeit tearfully, given her two or three sound

kisses by way of finishing. "You may have all the porridge, Susie."

"There is enough, father, and there's some bread too."

"Eat it all up," said the cobbler, turning to his work again; perhaps to hide his eyes. She stood leaning on his shoulder, so as not to hinder the play of his arm.

"Shall I keep the bread for supper, father?"

"No, dear; I may get some money before that."

"Whose shoes are those, father?"

"They are not anybody's yet."

"Whose are they going to be?"

"I don't know. The first pair of feet that will fit them. If I sell them, I can get some leather and make more."

"Is that the last of your leather, father?"

"Ay—the last that is large enough; the rest is all pieces."

She stood a little while longer, laying her head on his shoulder; then there came a knocking up-stairs, and she ran away. The cobbler worked at his shoe for a while, then turning his head, he dropped everything to go and see after the porridge; and he sat over the fire, stirring it, till he thought it was done, and then he drew back the sauce-pan. He went to the foot of the stairs and looked up and listened for a minute, and then left it and came back without calling anybody. It was plain that he must eat his dinner alone.

His dinner was nothing but porridge and salt, eaten with what would have been a good appetite if it had had good thoughts to back it. And the cobbler did not seem uncheerful; only once or twice he stopped and looked with a grave face into the fire on the hearth. But a porridge dinner after all could not last long; Mr Peg put away his plate and spoon, placed the sauce-pan carefully in the corner of the fireplace, took off his leather apron, put on his coat, and taking his hat from the counter he went out.

There were no more stitches set in the shoe that afternoon, for Mr Peg did not get home till dark. The first thing that happened after he went away, a gust of wind blew round

the house and came down the chimney bringing with it a shower of soot which must have sprinkled the open saucepan rather thickly. Then the wind seemed to go up the chimney again, and could be heard whistling off among the neighbouring housetops. After a while little Susie came down and looked for her saucepan. She pulled it out, and fetched her plate and spoon and began to skim out the soot; but I suppose she found it rather indifferent, or else that she would lose a good deal of her porridge; for at one time she set her plate and spoon down upon the hearth beside her, and laid her face in her apron. She soon took it up again, but she did not make a large meal of the porridge.

She then went up-stairs, and when she came down the second time it was nearly evening. She stood and looked about, to see that her father was not come in; then she made up the fire, and when it was burning she stood and looked into it just in the same way that she had stood and looked out of the window. Suddenly she wheeled about, and coming behind the counter took her father's Bible from a heap of bits of leather on which it lay, and went and sat down on the hearth with it; and as long as there was light she was bending over it. Then, when the light faded, she clasped her hands upon the closed Bible, and leaning back against the jamb fell fast asleep in an instant, with her head against the stone.

There she was when her father came home; her feet were stretched out upon the hearth and he stumbled over them. That waked her. By the glimmering light of the fire something could be seen hanging from Mr Peg's hand.

"Have you got home, father?—I believe I have been to sleep instead of waiting for you. What have you got in your hand?—Fish!—O father!"

You should have heard the change of little Sue's voice when she said that. Generally her way of speaking was low and gentle like the twilight, but those two words were like a burst of sunshine.

"Yes, dear. Blow up the fire so that you may see them. I've been to Mrs Binch's—I've been all over town, almst #

—and Mrs Binch's boy had just come in with some, and she gave me a fine string of them—nice blue fish—there.”

Susan had made a blaze, and then she and the cobbler admired and turned and almost *smelt* the fish, for joy.

“And shall we have one for supper, father?”

“Yes, dear. You put on some coals, and I'll get the fish ready directly. Has mother had all she wanted to-day?”

“Yes, father. Mrs Lucy sent her some soup and she had plenty. And I saved the bread from dinner, father, isn't it a good thing? and there is some more porridge, too.”

What a fire Sue had made by the time her father came back with the fish, nicely cleaned and washed. She put it down, and then the two sat over it in the fire-light and watched it broil. It was done as nicely as a fish could be done; and Susan fetched the plates and the salt and the bread; and then the cobbler gave thanks to God for their supper. And then the two made such a meal! there was not a bone of that fish but was picked clean, nor a grain of salt, nor a scrap of bread left from that supper; and I was as glad as anything of my tough nature can be, to know that there were several more fish besides the one eaten. Sue cleared away the things when they had done; ran up to see if her mother was comfortable; and soon ran down again. Her step had changed too.

“Now, darling,” said her father, “come and let us have our talk by this good fire-light.”

Susan came to his arms and kissed him; and his arms were wrapped round her as she sat on his knee.

“It is one good thing, you have no lights to work by, so we can talk,” said Sue, stroking his face. “If you had, we couldn't.”

“Well,” said the cobbler. “Let us talk to-night of the things we have to be thankful for.”

“There are a great many of them, father,” said Sue, with her twilight voice.

“The first thing is, that we know we have a Friend in heaven, and that we do love and trust Him.”

"O father!" said Sue, "if you begin with that, all the other things will not seem anything at all."

"That is true," said Mr Peg. "Well, Sue, let us have them all. You begin."

"I don't know what to begin with," said Sue, looking into the fire.

"I have you," said her father, softly kissing her.

"O father!—and I have you; but now you are taking the next best things."

"I should not care for all the rest without this one," said the cobbler;—"nor should I mind anything but for this," he added, in a somewhat changed tone.

"But, father, you must not talk of that to-night; we are only going to talk of the things we have to be thankful for."

"Well, we can take the others to-morrow night maybe, and see what we can make of them. Go on, Susie," said the cobbler, putting his head down to her cheek,—“I have my dear little child, and she has her father. That is something to thank God, and to be glad for,—every day.”

"So I do, every day, father," said Susan, very softly.

"And so do I," said the cobbler; "and while I can take care of thee, my dearest, I will trouble myself about nothing else."

"Now you are getting upon the other things, father," said Sue. "Father, it is something to be thankful for, that we can have such a nice fire every night,—and every day, if we want it."

"You don't know what a blessing that is, Sue," said her father. "If we lived where we couldn't get drift wood—if we lived as some of the poor people do in the great cities—without anything but a few handfuls of dry sticks to burn in the hardest weather, and what wretched stuff for making a fire—I am glad you don't know how different it is, Sue!" said he, putting his arms round her. "There is not a morning of my life but I thank God for giving us wood, when I set about lighting it."

"How do they do in those places without wood?" said Sue, sticking out her feet toward the warm ruddy blaze.

"He who knows all only knows," said the cobbler, gravely. "They do without. It seems to me I would rather go without eating, and have a fire."

"I don't know," said Sue, thoughtfully, "which I would rather do. But those poor people haven't food either, have they?"

"Not enough," said the cobbler. "They manage to pick up enough to keep them alive, somehow." And he sighed, for the subject came near home.

"Father," said Sue, "I do not believe God will let us starve."

"I do not think He will, my dear," said the cobbler.

"Then why do you sigh?"

"Because I deserve that He should, I believe," said the cobbler, hanging his head. "I deserve it, for not trusting Him better. 'Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you.' Ah, my dear, we can't get on without running to our upper storehouse, very often."

"Father, I believe God doesn't mean that we should."

"That's just it!" said the cobbler. "That is, no doubt, what He means. Well, dear, let us learn the lesson He sets us."

"Then, father," said Sue, "don't you think we have a nice little house? It is large enough, and it's warm."

"Yes, dear," said the cobbler; "some of those poor people we were talking about would think themselves as well off as kings if they had such a house as this."

"And it is in a pleasant place, father, where there are a great many kind people."

"I hope there are," said the cobbler, who was thinking at the moment how Mr Shipham had put him off, and Mr Dill had avoided him, and Mr Binch had objected to every one of his moderate charges.

"Why, father," said Sue, "Mrs Lucy every day sends things to mother, and Mrs Binch gave you the fish, and Mrs Jackson came and washed ever so many times, and—and Mrs Galatin sent the pudding and other things for mother, you know."

"Well, dear," said the cobbler, "yes,—it seems that womankind is more plenty here at any rate than mankind."

"Why, father?" said Sue.

"I hope you will never know, dear," he answered. "It was a foolish speech of mine."

"And I'm sure it is a blessing, father, that we have so many things sent us for my mother,—she has almost as much as she wants; and things we couldn't get. Now, Mrs Lucy's soup—you don't know how nice it was. I tasted just the least drop in the spoon; and mother had enough of it for to-day and to-morrow. And then the doctor says she will get well by and by; and that will be a blessing."

It was a blessing so far off that both the cobbler and his little daughter looked grave as they thought about it.

"And I'm well, father, and you are well," said Sue, pleasantly.

"Thank God!" said the cobbler.

"And, father, don't you think it is a little blessing to live near the sea; and to have the beautiful beach to walk upon, and see the waves come tumbling in, and smell the fresh air? We used to go so often, and by and by we may again. Don't you think it is a great deal pleasanter than it would be if Beachhead was a long way off in the country, out of sight of the ocean?"

"Ah, Sue," said her father, "I don't know;—I have lived a great part of my life in one of those inland places, and I didn't want to hear the sea roar then, and I could get on without the smell of salt water. No,—you don't know what you are talking about exactly; every sort of place that the Lord has made, has its own pleasantness; and so has the sea; but I love the green pasture-fields as well as I do the green field of water, to this day."

"But one might be in a place where there was not the sea nor the pasture-fields either, father."

"So one might," said the cobbler. "Yes, there are plenty of such places. The sea is a blessing. I was thinking of my old home in Connecticut; but the world is not all green

hills and sea shore,—there is something else in it—something else. Yes, dear, I love those large waves too.”

“And then, father,” said Sue, laying her head on his breast, “we can come back to the best things,—that you were beginning with.”

“Ay,” said the cobbler, casting his arm round her. And for a little space they sat silent and looked into the fire, and then he went on.

“Poor as we sit here, and weak and dying as we know we are, we know that we have a tabernacle on high—a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. It won’t matter much, Sue, when we get there”——

What would not matter, the cobbler did not say; something came in his throat that stopped him.

“It won’t matter, father,” said Sue, softly.

They sat still a little while; the flame of the bits of wood in the chimney leaped up and down, burned strongly and then fell; and the red coals glowed and glimmered in place of it, but with less and less power.

“Now, Sue, let us read,” said the cobbler on a sudden.

She got up, and he put on the coals two or three pieces of light wood, which soon blazed up. While he was doing this, Sue brought the Bible. Then she took her former place in her father’s arms; and he opened the book and read by the firelight, pausing at almost every sentence. “‘*Praise ye the Lord.*’—We will do that, Sue,” said the cobbler, “for ever.”

“‘*Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.*’”

“You do that, father,” said Sue, softly.

“I do fear Him;—I do delight in His commandments,” said the poor cobbler. “I might do so a great deal more. But see how it goes on:—

“‘*His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed.*’ No doubt of it;—only let us see that we are upright, my child.

“‘*Wealth and riches shall be in his house.*’ So they are, Sue; are we not rich?”

"Yes, father. But don't you think that means the other kind of riches too?"

"I don't know," said the cobbler; "if it does, we shall have them. But I don't know, daughter; see—

"*Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever.*' It seems as if that riches had to do with that righteousness. You know what Jesus says,—'*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.*' I think it is the kind of riches of that man who is described 'as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.'"

"Well, so we do, father, don't we?"

"Let us praise Him," said the cobbler.

"*'Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.'* What a promise!"

"Unto the upright, again," said Sue.

"Mind it, dear Sue," said her father, "for we may see darker times than we have seen yet."

Sue looked up at him gravely, but did not speak.

"*'Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteousness.'*"

"That is, the upright man," said Sue.

"*'A good man showeth favour and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.'* You remember who says,—'I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me?'"

"That is Zion, father, isn't it?" said Sue.

"And just before that,—'*Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.'*"

"We oughtn't to be afraid, father," said Sue, softly.

"I am not afraid," said the cobbler.

"*'The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.'* There it is, Sue.

"*'His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies. He hath dispersed, he hath given*

to the poor, his righteousness endureth for ever ; his horn shall be exalted with honour. The wicked shall see it, and be grieved ; he shall gnash with his teeth and melt away, the desire of the wicked shall perish.'"

The cobbler closed the book ; and he and his little daughter knelt down, and he prayed for a few minutes ; then they covered up the fire, and they went up-stairs together. And the night was as quiet in that house as in any house in the land.

The next morning the cobbler and his daughter broiled another fish ; but the breakfast was a shorter and less talkative affair than the supper had been. After breakfast the cobbler sat down to his work, but before the shoe was half an hour nearer to being done, Sue appeared at the bottom of the stairs saying, "Father, mother says she wants a piece of one of those fish."

The cobbler's needle stood still. "I don't believe it is good for her," said he.

"She says she wants it."

"Well, can't you put it down, my daughter?"

"Yes, father ; but she says she wants me to do her room up ; and she's in a great hurry for the fish."

Mr Peg slowly laid his work down. Sue ran up-stairs again, and the cobbler spent another half-hour over the coals and a quarter of a fish. Sue came for it, and the cobbler went to his work again.

It was a cold day ; the wind whistled about and brought the cold in ; and every now and then Sue came down and stood at the fire a minute to warm herself. Every time she came, the cobbler stayed his hand and looked up, and looked wistfully at her.

"Never mind father," said Sue. "I'm only a little cold."

"You are blue," said he.

And at last Mr Peg couldn't stand it. Down went the leather on one side of him and the tools on the other ; and he went and lugged an armful or two of sticks up-stairs and made a fire there, in spite of Sue's begging him to keep on with his work and not mind her.

"But we shan't have wood enough, father," she said at last, gently.

"I'll go at night to the beach, and fetch a double quantity," said the cobbler, "till your mother is able to come down stairs. *That* I can do. I can't bear to see you cold, if you can."

And Sue stayed up-stairs, and the cobbler worked after that, pretty steadily, for some hours. But in the middle of the afternoon came a new interruption. Two men came into the shop and gave an order or two to the cobbler, who served them with unusual gravity.

"When is court day, sheriff?" he asked in the course of business.

"To-morrow, Mr Peg."

"To-morrow?" said the cobbler.

"What is the matter? has it come on the wrong day? It always does."

"I had forgotten all about it," said the cobbler. "Can't I be let off, sir?"

"From what?" said the other man.

"Why, it is rather an ugly job, some think," returned the Sheriff. "He has got to be one of the jury that is to try Simon Ruffin."

"I must beg to be let off," said the cobbler. "I am not at all able to leave home."

"You must tell the court, then," said he who was called the Sheriff; "but it would not do any good, I believe. Everybody says much the same thing, nobody likes the job; but you see, this is a very difficult and important case; a great many have been thrown out; it is hard to get just the right men, those that are altogether unobjectionable; and every one knows you, Mr Peg."

"But my family want me," said the cobbler: "they can't do without me. Can't you let me go, Mr Packum?"

"Not I," said the Sheriff; "that is no part of my duty; you must ask the court, Mr Peg."

"To-morrow?" said the cobbler.

"Yes, to-morrow; but I tell you beforehand it won't do any good. What excuse can you make?"

"My family want my care," said the poor cobbler.

"So does every man's family," said the Sheriff, with a laugh; "he is a happy man that does not find it so. You have not much of a family, Mr Peg, have you?—if you had my seven daughters to look after now. Well, Mr Jibbs,—shall we go?"

They went; and sitting down again in his chair the poor cobbler neglected his work and bent over it with his head in his hand. At length he got up, put his work away, and left the room. For a while his saw might be heard going at the back of the house; then it ceased, and nothing at all was to be heard for a long time; only a light footstep overhead now and then. The afternoon passed, and the evening came.

The cobbler was the first to make his appearance. He came in, lighted the fire which had quite died out, and sat down as he had sat before, with his head in his hand. So his little daughter found him. She stepped lightly, and he did not hear her till her hand was on his shoulder. Then she asked him, "What was the matter?"

"Oh, nothing that should make me sit so," said the cobbler, rousing himself.

"We have got more fish left yet," said Sue.

"Yes, dear,—it isn't that; but I have to go away to-morrow."

"Away?" said Sue.

"Yes, away to court."

"What for, father?"

"Why they have put me down for a juryman, and I'm afraid there will be no getting off. The Sheriff says there won't."

"What have you to do, father?"

"Sit on the jury, dear, to decide whether Simon Ruffin is guilty or no?"

"Simon Ruffin?—that shot that man! O father!"

"It is very sad," said the cobbler.

"How long will you be gone?"

"I can't tell at all," said the cobbler. "A day!—No. They

can't take the evidence in two days ; I don't know whether it will be two or three days, or a week, dear."

"A week ! And what shall we do ?" Sue could not help saying.

"If I can get off, I will," said the cobbler ; "but in case I can't, I have, or at least I will have by the morning, as much wood as will do till I come back. I have two and sixpence besides, which I can leave you, darling ; and I can do nothing more but trust."

"Father, isn't it hard to trust, sometimes ?" Sue said, with her eyes full of tears. The poor cobbler wrapped her in his arms and kissed them away, but he did not try to answer.

"It may not do us any harm, after all," said Sue, more brightly ; "or you may be able to come back, father. Father, you know we are to talk over to-night the things that we have that we cannot be thankful for."

"In everything give thanks," said the cobbler.

"Yes, father, but it doesn't say *for* everything !"

"Perhaps not," said the cobbler. "Well, darling, we shall see. Let us have our supper first."

"We'll have the largest fish to-night, father."

The fish was not just out of the water as the one they had eaten the night before, but it was eaten with a good will. Sue sighed once or twice as she was putting the dishes away, and did not step quite so lightly. Then she came to her former place in her father's arms ; and her head rested upon his shoulder, and his cheek was laid to her forehead, and so they sat some minutes without speaking.

"Come, father," said Sue, "will you talk ?"

"Yes, dear. Let us tell over what we have to bear, and see how we can bear it."

"We must go to our 'upper storehouse again for that, father."

"Ay, dear ; always."

"The first thing, I suppose," said Sue, "is that we have not quite money enough."

"We have just what God gives us," said the cobbler. "I will never complain of that."

"Why, you never complain of anything, father. But it isn't pleasant."

"No, dear," said the cobbler; "and yet if we had money enough, could we trust God as we do? It is a sweet thing to live by His hand only; to feel that it is feeding us to-day, and to know that it will to-morrow, for 'was He ever a wilderness to Israel?' No, dear; I don't mean to say that poverty is not hard to bear sometimes; nor that I wouldn't give you plenty of everything if I had it to give; but I do say that there is a sweet side even to this."

"Father, our fish would not have tasted so good if we had always had plenty of them."

"I suppose not," said the cobbler, with a little bit of a stifled sigh, "and maybe we shouldn't know how to love each other quite so well, Sue."

"Oh, yes, we should!" said Sue.

"I don't know," said the cobbler. "I should not know what my little daughter can do and bear, if she had not had a chance to show me."

"Why, I have not much to bear, father," said Sue.

"Mother wouldn't know what a good nurse you can be."

"I wish she hadn't a chance to know that, father."

"Yes," said the cobbler, "your mother's sickness; that seems the hardest evil we have had to do with. It is not easy to find any present comfort in that, nor any present good; for I am afraid it makes me more impatient than patient. Perhaps that is why this is sent to me. But if we can't see the reason of a great many things now, we shall by and by. We shall know, Sue, what the reason was. *'Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no.'*"

Sue lifted up her head, and her little face was beautiful for the strong patience, and bright trust and love, that was

in it. Her eyes were swimming ; and her lips were speaking, though they only moved to tremble.

"We can't wait, Sue," said the cobbler, gently. Sue laid down her head again.

"So it seems we have got the reason of it, already," Mr Peg went on—"if not the good."

"We may have got some of the good too, without knowing it," said his little daughter.

"Still we shall be very glad to have mother well again."

"Oh, won't we !" said Sue.

"And it will teach us how to be thankful for the common things we forget."

There was a little pause.

"Then you would like me to go to school," said Sue ; "and I can't."

"And if you could, I should not have the pleasure of teaching you myself," said the cobbler. "I can bear that."

"But then I can't learn so many things," said Sue.

"Of one kind you can't, and of another kind you can," said her father. "I don't believe there is a school-girl in Beachhead that can broil a fish as you can."

"O father ! but then you showed me how."

"Do you think broiling fish comes by nature?" said the cobbler. "I can tell you there are many people that can't learn it at all. And that is only one of your accomplishments."

"O father !" said Sue again, smiling a little.

"You can nurse a sick mother, and mend a hole in your father's coat, and clean a room, and make a bed, with anybody."

"Still, father, you would like me to go to school."

"Yes, I would," said the cobbler. "Maybe I shall not be sorry, by and by, that I couldn't."

"And then, father," said Sue, "you can't get work enough."

"Yes !" said the cobbler. "If I could do that, it would be all smooth. But God would give it to me if it pleased Him, and if it does not please Him, there must be some reason ; can't we trust Him and wait ?"

Sue looked up again, not so brightly as before; meekly and rather tearfully.

"And then I must leave you to-morrow," said her father, kissing her brow—"that seems just now the worst of all."

"Perhaps you will come back again, father," said Sue.

"I am afraid I shall not—till this trial is over."

"It is a disagreeable business, isn't it, father?"

"Very disagreeable—as frightful as can be, to look at." They were silent a while.

"There may some good come of it, after all," said Sue, in her twilight voice.

"Good will be the end of it," said the cobbler. "There is a kind hand doing it, and an almighty arm upholding us in it; 'we shall not be utterly cast down;' so we must bear to be poor, and to be sick, and to be separated; and just leave it all with God."

"Father, it is pleasant to do that," said Sue; but you could tell by the tone of her words that she was crying a little.

"Why, darling, if we *are* poor, and sick, and in trouble, we have our dear Saviour, and we know that the Lord is our God. We are not poor people—not we. 'Having nothing, and yet possessing all things.' Who would we change with, Sue?"

Sue had to wait a little while before she spoke, but then she said—"I wouldn't change with anybody."

"No more would I," said the cobbler, giving her another kiss.

And so they went to bed, a couple of very rich poor people.

But the house looked poor the next day—empty and cold. The cobbler was off betimes; the little breakfast fire died out; dust lay on the counter; the tools and the unfinished work were here and there; the wind slipped in and slipped out again; and nothing else paid us a visit, except Sue, who once or twice looked in and looked round as if to see whether her father were there. Once she came into the room and stood a few minutes, with her little brown head and quiet grave face, looking at the ashes in the fireplace, and

the neglected work, and her father's chair, with a wistful sort of eye. It said, or seemed to say, that however she might have felt last night, she would be very glad to-day if they were not poor, nor sick, nor separated. She looked pale and weary too; but she did not stay long to rest or think. Her feet could be heard now and then up-stairs. The cobbler did not come home; the night darkened upon just such an afternoon as the morning had been.

The next day began in the same manner. Towards noon, however, the outer door opened, and in came a puff of fresh cold air, and another visitor, who looked fresh, but not cold at all. It was a boy about thirteen or fourteen; healthy, ruddy, bright-eyed, well-dressed, and exceedingly neat in his dress. He came in like one familiar with the place, and took note of all the unusual tokens about as if he knew well what was usual and what was unusual. He looked at the cold chimney and scattered work; he went to the foot of the stairs and stood listening a moment; and then coming away from there, he loitered about the room, now going to the window and now to the chimney, evidently waiting. He had to wait a good while; but he waited. At last he got what he wanted, for, tired with being up-stairs, or wanting to gather some news from the outer world, Sue slowly came down the stairs, and showed her little face at the staircase door. And almost before it had time to change, the new comer had called out—"Sue!"

And with an unknown light breaking all over her face, Sue exclaimed joyously, "Roland!"—and springing across to him, put her sweet lips to his with right good will.

"Oh, you have got back," said Sue, with a gladness it did, or would have done, any one's heart good to hear.

"Here I am. Haven't I been a long while away?"

"Oh, so long!" said Sue.

"But what is the matter here, Sue; what's become of you all?"

"Why, mother is sick, you know—she hasn't got well yet; and father is away."

"Where is he?"

"He had to go to the court—he had to be a juryman to try Simon Ruffin."

"When?"

"Yesterday morning. And we hoped he would be able to get leave to come away—we wanted him so much; but he hasn't been able to come."

"Has he been away since yesterday morning? Who is taking care of you?"

"Why, nobody," said Sue.

"So there is nobody in the house with you?"

"Nobody but mother. Father left wood enough all ready."

"Wood enough for how long?"

"Oh, for a good many days."

"Are you not afraid?"

"Why, no, Roland!"

"Who goes to market for you, Sue?"

"Nobody."

"What do you live on?"

"Oh, people send mother nice things: Mrs Lucy sent her a whole pail full of soup the other day."

"How big a pail?"

"Why, Roland!—I mean a nice little tin pail: so big."

"And do you live on soup too?"

"No," said Sue.

"On what then?"

"Oh, on what there is."

"Exactly. And what is there?"

"Mrs Binch gave father a string of fish the other night; and since then I have made porridge."

"What sort of porridge?"

"Corn-meal porridge."

"Why, Sue!—do you live on that?"

"Why, porridge is very good," said Sue, looking at him. But there was a change in his eye, and there came a glistening in hers; and then she threw suddenly her two arms round his neck and burst into a great fit of crying.

If Roland had been a man, his arm would not have been

put round her with an air of more manly and grave support and protection; and there were even one or two furtive kisses, as if between boyish pride and affection; but affection carried it.

"I don't know what made me cry," said Sue, rousing herself after she had had her cry out.

"Don't you?" said Roland.

"No. It couldn't have been these things; because father and I were talking about them the other night, and we agreed that we did not feel poor at all; at least, of course, we felt poor, but we felt rich too."

"How long have you been living on porridge?"

"I don't know. Have you had a pleasant time, Roland?"

"Yes, very. I'll tell you all about it some day, but not now."

"Is Merrytown as pleasant as Beachhead?"

"It is more pleasant."

"More pleasant!" said Sue. "Without the beach, and the waves, Roland?"

"Yes it is; and you would say so too. You would like it better than anybody. There are other things there instead of beach and waves. You shall go there some day, Sue, and see it."

"I can't go," said Sue, meekly.

"Not now, but some day. Sue, have you not any money?"

"I have two and sixpence, that father gave me; but I was afraid to spend any of it for fear he or mother might want it for something. I must though, for I have got but a very little Indian meal."

"Sue, have you had any dinner to-day?"

"Not yet. I was just coming down to see about it."

"Your mother does not eat porridge, does she?"

"Oh, no. She has had her dinner."

"Well, will you let me come and have dinner with you?"

She brought her hands together, with again a flush of great joy upon her face; and then put them in both his.

"How pleasant it is that you have come back!" she said.

"It will take a little while to get the porridge ready, won't

it?" said he, beating her hands gently together and looking as bright as a button.

"Oh, yes—it will take a little while," said Sue. "I haven't got the water boiling yet."

"Have you got meal enough for both of us?"

"Yes, I believe so;—plenty."

Just then Mrs Lucy opened the front door and brought her sweet face into the room. She looked a little hard at the two children, and asked Sue how her mother was. Roland bowed, and Sue answered.

"May I go up and see her?"

Sue gave permission. Mrs Lucy went up the stairs. Roland stopped Sue as she was following.

"Sue, I'll go to market for you to-day. Give me two-pence of your money, and I'll get the meal you want."

"Oh, thank you, Roland!" said Sue;—"that will be such a help to me;"—and she ran for the pennies and gave them into his hand.

"I'll be back presently," said he; "and then I'll tell you about my journey. Run up now after Mrs Lucy."

"I don't think I need go," said Sue; "they don't want anything with me."

"Run up, though," said Roland; "maybe Mrs Lucy will ask your mother too many questions."

"Why, that won't hurt her," said Sue, laughing; but Roland seemed in earnest, and she went up.

Immediately Roland set to work to light a fire. He knew where to go for wood, and he knew how to manage it; he soon had the hearth in order and a fine fire made ready; and it was done without a soil on his nice clothes and white linen. He was gone before Mrs Lucy and Sue came down; but the snapping and the sparkling in the chimney told tales of him.

"Why he has lit the fire for me!" cried Sue, with a very pleased face.

"Who has?" said the lady.

"Roland."

"That boy who was here when I came?"

"Yes, ma'am ; he has made it for me."

"Who is he ?"

"He is Roland Halifax," said Sue.

"What, the son of the widow, Mrs Halifax ?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And how came you to know him so well ?"

"Why, I have always known him," said Sue ; "that is, almost always. I used to know him a great many years ago, when I went to school ; and he always used to take care of me, and give me rides on his sleigh, and go on the beach with me ; and he always comes here."

"Is he a good boy ?"

"Yes, ma'am ; he is the best boy in the whole place," Sue answered, with kindling eyes.

"I hope he is," said Mrs Lucy, "for he has nobody to manage him but his mother. I fancy he has very much his own way."

"It is a good way," said Sue, decidedly. "He is good, Mrs Lucy."

"Does your mother want anything in particular, Sue ?"

Sue hesitated, and looked a little troubled.

"Tell me, dear ; now while your father is away you have no one to manage for you. Let me know what I can do."

"Oh, Roland would manage for us," said Sue,—“but”——

"But what ?"

The lady's manner and tone were very kind. Sue looked up.

"She has nothing to eat, ma'am."

"Nothing to eat !"

"No, ma'am ; and I have only two shillings and sixpence—two shillings and fourpence, I mean,—to get anything with ; and I don't know what to get. She can't eat what we can."

"And what have you in the house besides ?—tell me, dear. We are all only stewards of what God gives us ; and what you want perhaps I can supply."

Sue hesitated again.

"We haven't anything, Mrs Lucy, but a little Indian meal. Roland is going to buy me some more."

"Are your father's affairs in so bad a condition, my child?"

"He can't get work, ma'am; if he could there would be no trouble. And what he does get he can't always get paid for."

"And how long has this been the case, dear?"

"A long time," said Sue, her tears starting again; "ever since a good while before mother fell sick—a good while before; and then that made it worse."

Mrs Lucy looked at Sue a minute, and then stooped forward and kissed the little meek forehead that was raised to her; and without another word quitted the house.

Sue, with a very much brightened face, set about getting her porridge ready; evidently enjoying the fire that had been made for her. She set on her saucepan, and stirred in her meal; and when it was bubbling up properly, Sue turned her back to the fire, and stood looking and meditating about something. Presently away she went, as if she had made up her mind. There was soon a great scraping and shuffling in the back room, and then in came Sue, pulling after her, with much ado, a large empty chest, large enough to give her some trouble. With an air of business she dragged it into the middle of the room, where it was established solid and square, after the fashion of a table. Sue next dusted it carefully, and after it the counter and chairs and mantel-shelf; the floor was clean swept always; and Sue herself, though in a faded cotton frock, was as nice in her ways as her friend Roland. Never was her little brown head anything but smoothly brushed; her frock clean; her hands and face as fair and pure as nature had meant them to be. Roland looked as if dust could not stick to him.

When the room was in a due state of order, Sue brought out and placed the two plates, the salt cellar, with a little wooden spoon in it, the tumblers of blown glass, a pitcher of water, and the spoons. She had then done all she could; and she turned to watch her porridge and the front door both at once; for she did not forget to keep the porridge from burning, while her eye was upon the great brown door every other minute.

The porridge had been ready some time before the door at last opened, and in came Roland, bearing a large market basket on his arm.

"It is astonishing," said he, as he set it down, "what a heavy thing Indian meal is!"

"Why, Roland," said Sue, "did you get all that with twopence?"

"No," said Roland; "the basket I borrowed. It is my mother's."

"But have you got it full?" said Sue.

"Nearly full," said Roland complacently.

"I never thought that twopence would buy so much!" said Sue.

"Didn't you," said Roland. "Ah, you are not much of a market woman yet, Sue. My arm is tired."

"I'm sorry," said Sue. "But I'm so glad you have got it for me."

"So am I. Now is that porridge ready?"

"Ready this long while," said the little housekeeper, carefully pouring it out. "It has been only waiting for you."

Roland looked at her with a curious, gentle, sorrowful expression, which was as becoming as it was rare in a boy of his years.

"Are you hungry, Sue?"

"Yes," said Sue, looking up from her dish with a face that showed her to be perfectly satisfied with the dinner and the company. "Are not you?"

"Why, I ought to be. The air is sharp enough to give one an appetite, Sue!"

"What!"

"Do you eat your porridge alone?"

"Not to-day," said Sue smiling, while an arch look came across her gentle eye.

"Does that mean that you are going to eat me with it? I shall beg leave to interpose a stay of proceedings upon that."

And sitting down, with an air of determination, he drew

the porridge-dish quite to his end of the chest-table, and looked at Sue as much as to say, "You don't touch it."

"What does that mean? Are you not going to let me have any?" said Sue, laughing.

"No."

"Why not?"

"I shall want all the porridge myself. You will have to take something else, Sue."

"But I haven't got anything else," said Sue, looking puzzled and amused.

"Well, if you give me my dinner, it is fair I should give you yours," said Roland; and rising, he brought his market-basket to the side of the table, and sat down again.

"It is a pity I can't serve things in their right order," he said, as he pulled out a quantity of apples from one end of the basket; "but you see the dinner has gone in here head foremost. I never saw anything so troublesome to pack. There is a loaf of bread now, that has no business to show itself so forward in the world; but here it comes. Sue, you will want a knife and fork."

And he placed a deep, long dish, with a cover, on the table, and then a flat round dish with a cover. Sue looked stupefied. Roland glanced at her.

"Your appetite has not gone, Sue, has it?"

But Sue got up and came round to him, and put her face in her two hands down on his shoulder, and cried very hard indeed.

"Why, Sue!" said Roland, gently, "I never expected to see you cry for your dinner."

But Sue's tears didn't stop.

"I will put all the things back into the basket, if you say so," said Roland, smiling.

"I don't say any such thing," said Sue, lifting up her tearful face and kissing his cheek, and then she went round to her seat and sat down with her head in her hands. Roland in his turn got up and went to her, and took hold of her hands.

"Come, Sue, what is the matter? that isn't fair. Look here, my porridge is growing cold."

And Sue laughed and cried together.

"Dear Roland! what made you do so?"

"Do what?"

"Why, do so. You shouldn't. It was too good of you."

Roland gave a merry little bit of a laugh, and began to take off the covers, and put them on the counter.

"Come, Sue, look up; I want my porridge, and I am waiting for you. Where shall I get a knife and fork? in the pantry in the back room?"

Sue jumped up, wiping away her tears, and ran for the knife and fork; and from that time throughout the rest of the meal, her face was a constant region of smiles.

"A roast chicken!—O Roland! how mother will like a piece of that! How nice it smells!"

"She has had her dinner," said Roland, who was carving; "you must take a piece of it first. I ought in conscience to have had a separate dish for the potatoes; but my market-basket was resolved not to take it. Some salt, Sue?"

Sue ran for another knife and fork, and then began upon her piece of chicken; and Roland helped himself out of his dish and ate, glancing over now and then at her.

"You cannot think how good it is, Roland, after eating porridge so long," said Sue, with a perfect new colour of pleasure in her face.

"This is capital porridge!" said Roland. "I will trouble you for a piece of bread, Sue."

"Why, Roland, are you eating nothing but porridge?"

"Yes, and I tell you I should like a piece of bread with it."

"Ah, do take something else!" said Sue, giving him the bread. "The porridge will keep till another time."

"I don't mean it shall, much of it," said Roland. "It is the best dinner I have had for a great while."

Sue laid down her knife and fork to laugh at him, though the doing so had very nearly made her cry again.

"Please take some chicken, Roland."

"I would rather not. I'll take a piece of pie with you presently."

"I should think chicken was enough," said Sue; "you need not have brought me pie."

"I wanted some. It is a mince pie, Sue. Do you remember that the day after to-morrow is Christmas?"

"Christmas the day after to-morrow?" said Sue. "No, I had forgotten all about Christmas."

"What shall we do to keep it?"

"Why, nothing, I shan't," said Sue, meekly. "I shall not eat porridge, Roland. Oh, if father could only come home: that would be enough keeping of Christmas. We should not want anything else."

"I'll tell you how it is going to be kept out of doors," said Roland. "It is setting in for a fine fall of snow. The air is beginning to soften and grow hazy already. I like a snowy Christmas."

"With snow on the ground; but not snowing?" said Sue.

"Yes, both ways. Now, Sue, have you another plate; or will you take it in your fingers?"

Sue ran off for plates.

"How I wish I could give some of this to father!" she said, as she tasted her first bit of the pie. "How will he get anything to eat, Roland?"

"They will take care of that," said Roland. "He will have a good dinner, Sue; you need not be concerned about it. If they did not feed their jurymen, you know, they might have no jury by the time the cause was got through; and that would be inconvenient. Has he not been at home at all?"

"No."

"They do sometimes let them come home," said Roland; "but in this case I suppose they are keeping everybody tight to the mark."

"Why should they not let them come home at night?" said Sue; "what would be the harm? They must sleep somewhere."

"They are afraid, Sue, that if they let them out of sight,

somebody may talk to them about the cause, and put wrong notions into their heads; so that they won't give a true verdict."

"What is a verdict?" said Sue.

"It's the jury's decision. You see, Sue, all the people—all the lawyers, on both sides, will bring all the proof they can to show whether Simon Ruffin did or did not shoot Mr Bonnycastle. One side will try to prove that he did, and the other side will try to prove that he did not. The jury will hear all that is to be said, and then they will make up their minds which is the truth. When they are read, the judge will ask them, 'Gentlemen, are you agreed upon the verdict?' and the foreman will say 'Yes.' Then, the judge will ask, 'Is the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?' and the foreman will say according as they have decided, 'Guilty,' or 'Not Guilty;' and that answer is the verdict."

"And then he will be hanged," said Sue.

"If they find he is guilty, he will; but they don't condemn him; that is the judge's business. The jury only decide what is the truth."

"Why must they have so many men to do that? Why would not one do as well?"

"It would, if they could be always sure of having a man who could not and would not make a mistake. It is not likely that twelve men will all make the same mistake."

"And must they all be agreed?" said Sue.

"They must all be agreed?"

"And if they are not, the man can't be hanged."

"No, nor set free."

"I'm glad of that," said Sue.

"Why, Sue?"

"Because, if father isn't sure that he shot Mr Bonnycastle, he won't let them hang him."

"It is well you can't be a juryman, Sue; you would never let any rogue have his rights."

"Yes, I would," said Sue, gravely; "if I thought he deserved them."

"I would not trust you," said Roland. "I should like

to have you on the jury if I were standing a trial for my life. You would be challenged, though."

"Challenged!" said Sue.

"Yes."

"What is that?"

"Why, Simon Ruffin, for instance, might say, 'Mr Peg is an old enemy of mine; he has a grudge against me; he would not be a fair judge in my case.' That would be challenging your father as an improper jurymen; and he would be put out of the jury."

"But father is not anybody's enemy," said Sue.

"No, I know he isn't," said Roland, smiling; "but that is an instance. Will you have some more pie, Sue?"

"No, thank you. I'll put these things away, and see if mother wants anything; and then if she doesn't I'll come down and we can talk."

While Sue cleared away the dishes, Roland mended the fire.

"You may as well let the table stand, Sue," said he, "we shall want it again."

"Why, are you coming to dinner with me again?" said Sue.

"I dare say I shall; if your father does not come home," said Roland.

Sue soon came down, for her mother luckily did not want her; and the two drew their chairs together and had a very long conversation, in the course of which Roland gave many details of his stay at Merrytown, and enlightened Sue as to the charms and beauties of a country village. Sue looked and listened, and questioned and laughed, till there was a knocking up-stairs, and then they separated. Sue went up to her mother again, and Roland left the house.

The room did not look desolate any more, though it was left without anybody in it. There were the chest-table, and the contented-looking fire, and the two chairs. All this time, we shoes lay in the corner and nobody looked at us. It seemed as if we were never to get done.

The fire had died out, the afternoon had not quite passed,

when Mrs Lucy came again. Her knock brought Sue down. She had come to bring another little pail of soup, and a basket with some bread and tea and sugar.

"Don't spend your money, my child," she said: "keep it till you want it more. This will last your mother to-morrow, and I will see that you have something stronger than porridge."

"Oh, I have, Mrs Lucy," said Sue, with a grateful little face which thanked the lady better than words; "I have got plenty for I don't know how long."

"You do not look as if you were out of heart," said Mrs Lucy. "You know who can send better times."

"Oh yes, ma'am," said Sue. "He has already."

"Trust Him, dear; and let me know all you want."

Sue stood, sober and silent, while Mrs Lucy went out at the door; and then she fell down on her knees before one of the chairs and sunk her head on her hands; and was quite still a minute or two, till the knocking sounded again. It was not a gentle tap on the floor just to let her know she was wanted; it was an impatient, quarrelsome, vexatious, "rat, tat, tat, tat, tat, *tat!*—*rat-tat!*—*rat-tat!*" Sue ran up.

The cobbler did not come home that night, and Roland would stay in the house. Sue did all she could to hinder him; for indeed there was nothing for him to sleep on but the pile of leather scraps; but he would not be hindered.

"But your mother, Roland?" she gently asked.

"What of my mother?"

"She will want you."

"How do you know that?"

"I should think she would," said Sue.

"Should you? Well, she thinks, and so do I, that you want me more."

"How good you are, dear Roland!"

"Not very, Sue," said Roland, calmly.

"Do you know what Mrs Lucy says?" said Sue. "She says that you have your own way in everything."

"Mrs Lucy might have gone wider from the mark, I suppose," said Roland, blowing the fire.

"Mrs Lucy is very good," said Sue. "She brought us some tea and sugar this afternoon."

"Did she!" said Roland. "Then what will you do with what Mrs Halifax sent?"

"Did *she* send us some?" said Sue. "O Roland!"

Roland laughed at her, and Sue did not know what to do with herself; she went and fetched down a quantity of coverlets and things for Roland to wrap himself up and be warm through the night; and begged him to keep a good fire.

The next day the cobbler did not come home. It passed with no visitors except Roland and Mrs Lucy, who stepped in for a minute. Sue's mother wanted her up-stairs nearly the whole day; so there could be little amusement going. On Christmas eve Roland stayed in the house again. But he went off very early in the morning, without seeing Sue, after he had lit the fire.

The snow had not come so soon as Roland thought it would. There was none on the ground on Christmas eve. But when Christmas morning rose, the whole of Beachhead was softly and smoothly covered with white. It had fallen very fast and quietly during the night; the window-sills were piled up, the door-knob was six inches high, the snow hung like a thatch over the eaves of the houses. The streets were a soft, pure, printless cover of white when Roland first went out; and whatever kept people's feet within doors, whether the dark morning—for the snow still fell—or happy Christmas delays, there was yet hardly a footprint but his to be seen in that part of the street where, some hours later, a sleigh drawn by a horse, and carrying two men and a barrel, drew up before Mr Peg's door. Sue had heard the tinkle of the bells which the horse bore on his neck; and as it told of the first sleighing that year, she went to the window to look out. There was the sleigh, and one man, and the barrel; the other man had jumped off and was knocking at the front door.

"Very odd!" thought Sue; "what can they want here?"—but she ran down stairs and opened the door. The barrel

was rolling over the snow to the house, and the two men were behind pushing it. The cold air, and the yet falling snow, and the white street, the men, and the barrel rolling on towards Sue! Sue was bewildered. But that barrel must go somewhere, and she held the door open.

"What is it?" said Sue. "It does not belong here, does it?"

"Here's 'Mr Peg' on it," said one of the men; "and this is Mr Peg's house, ain't it?"

"What is it?" said Sue, in astonishment, as the barrel now stood up on end by the side of her chest.

"It is a barrel of flour, I guess," said the man. "Looks like it, and it comes from Mr Hoonyman's."

"Flour!" said Sue.

But the men with their heavy snow-shoes clumped out again, and shut the door behind them with a bang. Sue stood and looked.

There was the barrel, full sized, standing on end, one side of it still lightly coated with snow; and there were the snow-marks on the floor of the feet that had been there. It was not a dream. It was a real barrel, and even the snow was not in a hurry to melt away.

Suddenly it flashed into Sue's little mind that it might be a Christmas gift,—and then whoever sent it ought to have been there—when the unwonted rosy colour sprang to her cheeks, and made her for a minute look like a happy child. And whoever sent it ought to have seen, a minute after, the bended head, and heard the thanksgiving that was not spoken, and the prayer, earnest and deep, for a blessing on the friend that had sent it.

Sue had lifted her head, but had not moved, when Roland opened the door,

"O Roland! do you see this?"

"Merry Christmas, Sue," said Roland, gaily.

"O Roland! do you know what this is?"

"It is very like a barrel of flour," said Roland. "I should be surprised if it was anything else."

"But, Roland, who sent it?"

"Why, Sue!—Santa Claus, to be sure. Don't you know what day it is?"

"It did not come down the chimney," said Sue, "*that* I know."

"If Santa Claus had taken me into his confidence, you know, Sue, it would not be honest to betray him. I wonder what you can do with a barrel of flour, now you have got it."

"Do?" said Sue;—but just then there was another knock at the door. Roland opened it. In came a boy with a long string of fine fish, which Mrs Binch had sent to Sue.

"Beachhead is waking up," said Roland.

"O Roland!" said Sue, beginning to get into the spirit of the thing—"did you ever see anything like those fish? Oh, tell Mrs Binch, I thank her a great many times, please—a great many times; I am *very* much obliged to her, and so is father. O Roland!—do see!"—

"There is your mother knocking, Sue," said Roland. "Run off, and I'll take care of these fish. You get ready for breakfast."

Sue went off in one direction and Roland in another. He was the first to come back, with a beautifully cleaned fish, which he soon placed upon the coals. He then set the table and got the bread and the tea; and by that time Sue came, as happy and as humble as possible, to enjoy her breakfast. Whether or not Roland had had another breakfast before, he at any rate kept her company in hers, both talking and eating. The fish was declared to be the finest that could come out of the sea, and Roland was probably adjudged to be the best cook on land; if he had been, his work could not have given better satisfaction.

Roland had to go away after breakfast, and told Sue his mother would want him at dinner, and he could not be there again before evening, but then he would come. Sue was satisfied with everything.

Her day was spent for the most part up-stairs. But there were some breaks to it. A servant came in the course of the morning, bringing some bottles of wine for her mother, from

Mrs Halifax. Sue was already in a state of happiness that could hardly be heightened, and was in fact endeavouring to bear it with the help of her Bible, for it was in her hand whenever she came down stairs. But her eyes sparkled afresh at this gift, because it came from Mrs Halifax, and because it was what her mother wanted. Sue could not wait. She begged the man to open one of the bottles for her ; which with no little difficulty was done, without a corkscrew ; and then, when he had gone, Sue poured a little into a teacup, and went up-stairs with such a face—joy and love were dancing a waltz in it.

A little before noon, there came another knock at the door. A modest knock this was, so gentle that Sue probably did not hear it. The knocker had not patience, or was not scrupulous ; he opened the door half way and pushed in a square wooden box, nailed up, and directed ; after which he went away again, leaving it there to tell its own tale.

It seemed to tell nothing that Sue could understand. She looked at it, when she next came down, with all her eyes and on all sides ; but it was fast nailed up ; she could not by any means open it, and she could not tell what was inside. She easily guessed that it was another "Christmas," but in what form ? She sat and looked at it with a face of infinite delight. She walked round it. Nothing was to be made of it but a pine box, tolerably heavy, with her own name and her father's in large black letters on the upper side. Those letters did look lovely. Sue read them a great many times that day, and sat and gazed at the wooden box ; but she could do nothing with it till Roland came. He came at last, towards evening. Sue was watching for him.

"O Roland, there you are !—here 's another !"

"Another what ?" said Roland, gravely.

"Another Christmas gift—look here !"

"Looks very like Christmas," said Roland.

"Dear Roland, won't you get a hammer ?"

"A hammer," said Roland. "I suppose Mr Joist will lend me one."

He went to borrow it, and opened the box. Sue watched

with breathless interest while the hammer did its work, and pieces of the cover came up one by one.

"Now, Sue!" said Roland, as he stepped back, and began to draw the nails out of the wood.

Sue drew the things out of the box with slow and cautious fingers, that seemed almost afraid of what they found. She did not say a word, but one or two half-breathed "oh's!" There was a nice and complete outfit of clothes for her. On the top lay a paper on which was written

"For little Susan Peg, from some friends that love her."

When she got to the bottom, Sue looked up.

"O Roland! Who sent me these?"

"Some friends of little Susan Peg, that love her," said Roland.

"Did you know about it?"

"I heard my mother speak about it, Sue."

"Did *she* do it?"

"Not she alone. Mrs Lucy, and some other ladies, all had a hand in it."

"Oh, how good they are!"

It was long before Sue could get up from the floor. Roland stood hammer in hand, looking at her, and smiling. At last Sue packed the box again.

"I don't deserve it all," she said; "but then, I don't deserve anything. Now, I think we will have some tea."

"I shall go and carry back this hammer," said Roland, "and then I'm ready. I'm very thirsty."

"Oh, dear Roland!" said Sue, "won't you just open that barrel of flour first?—it will save going for the hammer again, and mother thinks she wants some Pop-robin."

"But what is Pob-robin good for, without milk?" said Roland, as they went to the barrel, which he had rolled into the pantry.

"Oh, now I might get a halfpennyworth of milk," said Sue;—"it is for mother; and now we have so many things we might afford it."

"No, don't you," said Roland. "Mother sends you word—there are enough nails in this barrel—that you may have

as much milk as you want from her cow, whenever you will come for it, or I will bring it; so between us I think it will be safe to count upon it."

He was hammering at the barrel-head, and Sue standing by, looking very pleased; her little hand gratefully resting on his shoulder; when a hand was suddenly laid on hers. Sue turned.

"Father!" she exclaimed—"O father!—are you come home?—Oh, I am so glad!"

The cobbler's gray head was stopped almost to the barrel-top, and Sue's arms were round his neck; and how many times they kissed each other I don't believe either of them knew. It seemed impossible for Sue to loose her hold.

"And *you* are here, my boy," said the cobbler, turning to Roland, "doing my work."

"No, sir, I have been doing *mine*," said Roland.

"O father, he has taken such care of me!" said Sue.

"I warrant him," said the cobbler. "If I had known that Roland Halifax was in town, I could have minded my business with more quietness."

"And is it done, father?" said Sue.

"It is done, my child."

"And what have you done with that man?"

"We have declared him upon our judgment, *not guilty*."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" said Sue.

They came back to their tea, all three; and more fish were broiled; and all the Christmas was told over; and nearly all the trial. The jury had been kept in all Christmas-day to agree upon their verdict.

From that day the cobbler's affairs improved. Whether his friends exerted themselves to better his condition, now that they knew it, or whether Mr Ruffin's friends did, or whether other causes came into work, certain it is, that from that time the cobbler's hands had something to do; and more and more till they had plenty. So it came to pass that this poor pair of shoes did not get finished till about a month ago; and then Mr Krinken must take it into his head that we would fit his little boy, and brought us here—for which

we owe him a grudge, as we wanted decidedly to spend our lives with Mr Peg and his little brown-headed daughter.

"Did Mrs Peg get well?" said Carl.

"Yes, long ago, and came down-stairs; but she was no improvement to the family, though her getting well was."

"I am very sorry that story is done," said Carl. "I want to hear some more about Roland Halifax."

"There is no more to tell," said the shoe.

If Carl had been puzzled on Friday as to what story he would hear, he was yet more doubtful on Saturday. There lay the pine-cone, the hymn-book, and the stocking, on the old chest, and there sat Carl on the floor beside them,—sometimes pulling his fingers and sometimes turning over the three remaining story-tellers, by way of helping him to make up his mind. As a last resort he was taking a meditative survey of the ends of his toes, when a little shrill voice from the chest startled him; and the pine-cone began with out more ado.

THE STORY OF THE PINE-CONE.

"Whew!" said the North wind—"Whew—r—r—r—r!"

The fir-trees heard him coming, and bowed their tall heads very gracefully, as if to tell the wind he could not do much with them. Only some of the little cones who had never been blown about a great deal, felt frightened, and said the wind made their teeth chatter.

"Do you think we can stay on?" asked one little cone; and the others would have said they did not know, but the wind gave the tree such another shake that their words were lost.

"Whew—r—r—r—r!" said the wind.

And again the fir-trees bowed to let him pass, and swayed from side to side, and the great branches creaked and moaned, and flung themselves about in a desperate kind of way; but the leaves played sweet music. It was their fashion whenever the wind blew.

"I think we shall have snow," said the tallest of the fir-trees, looking over the heads of his companions.

"The sky is very clear," remarked a very small and inexperienced fir, who was so short he could not see much of anything.

"Yes," said the tall one, "so you think; but there is a great deal of sky besides that which is over our heads; and I can see the wind gathering handfuls of snow-clouds which he will fling about us presently."

"Yes," repeated the tall fir, with another graceful bend, "I see them—they are coming."

The evergreens were all sorry to hear this, for nothing depressed them so much as snow; the rain they could generally shake off—at least if it did not freeze too hard.

As for the beeches, they said if that was the case they must put off their summer clothes directly. And one little beech, with a great effort, did succeed in shaking off half a dozen green leaves the next time the wind came that way.

"You need not hurry yourselves," said the tall fir—"this is only an early storm—the winter will not come yet. I can still see the sun for a few minutes every day."

And that was true. For a few minutes the sun showed himself above the horizon, and then after making a very small arch in the sky, down he went again. Then came the long afternoon of clear twilight: and the longer night, when the stars threw soft shadows like a young moon, and looked down to see their bright eyes in the deep fiord that lay at the foot of the fir-trees. For this was on the north-west side of Norway; and the fir-trees grew by one of the many inlets of the sea which run far away for miles into the country, and are called fiords.

At the mouth the fiord was so narrow, and the overhanging trees so thick, that you might have coasted along, backwards and forwards, without perceiving the entrance; but to the country people it was well known and unmistakably marked out by one particular hemlock. Pushing your little boat through its green branches that dipped their fingers in the water, the fiord opened before you. The banks on each

side were for the most part very steep, and often wooded to the water's edge ; while sometimes a pitch of bare rocks and a noisy cataract came roughly tumbling down together, pouring disturbance into the smooth waters of the fiord.

The fiord itself was too beautiful to be described. It wound about from rock to rock, now washing gently at the base of a high mountain, and then turning and spreading out, bay-like, where the shore was lower and the hills stood aloof ; but everywhere overhung or nodded to by the great trees that looked as if they had known it since it was a mere rill—the beeches and oaks and hemlocks, the tall pines like a ship's mainmast ; and most of all, by that glory of those forests—the Norway spruce fir. These watched the fiord everywhere—in the regions of solitude, and in the spots where a little clearing—a waft of blue smoke—the plaintive bleat of a goat mounting up in the world, or the hearty bow-wow! of some hardy little dog that was minding everybody's business as well as his own, told of a human habitation. Behind all—beyond cliff and wood and everything but the blue sky, towered up the peaks of perpetual snow—whose bare heads no man had ever seen.

The fiord could not point heavenward after that fashion. But it reflected every bit of blue that came over it, and even when the skies were dark, and the snow-peaks hid their heads in a cloud, the fiord's reflections were only grave and thoughtful—never gloomy.

And the water was so clear !

Sailing along in a little boat you could look down, down, for twenty fathoms, and see the smooth white sand ; with little shells and star-fish, and then the bottom of the fiord rose suddenly up like a rocky mountain—over which the boat passed into a deep gulf on the other side. Then came a plain, and great forests, far down in the water ; through which large fishes swam softly about ; and then another mountain.

In one of the narrowest parts of the fiord a little spot of cleared and cultivated land lay like a smile between it and the rough mountain. A mere point of land—a little valley

wedged in among the heights that rose cliff beyond cliff towards the blue sky, fringed here and there with fir-trees. The valley smiled none the less for all this roughness ; and the little dwelling that there found a foothold seemed rather to court the protection of the cliffs, and to nestle under their shelter. It was such a one as best suited the place.

It was built of great pine logs, roughly squared and laid one upon another, with layers of moss between ; while every crevice and crack was well stuffed with the same. The roof was of boards, covered with strips of birch bark ; and over all a coating of earth two or three inches deep in which a fine crop of moss had taken root. The windows were large, and well glazed with coarse glass, while very white curtains hung within ; and the door was painted in gay colours. Other little huts or houses stood round, forming a sort of square ; and furnishing apartments for the pig, the cows, and their winter provision ; while one more carefully built than the rest, held all manner of stores for the family. Raised upon posts, that the rats might not enter, the little alpebod kept safe the fish, the venison, the vegetables—even the cloth, yarn, and sometimes clothing, of its humble owners.

In sight of the house, a little way down the fiord, was a wild ravine, skirted on one side with a height of thick woods and rocks ; while on the other the rocks stood alone—the sharp ridge rising up hundreds of feet to a ledge in some places not a foot wide. On either side the ridge the declivity was very precipitous, the one depth being filled with forest trees which led on to the wooded hill beyond ; while the ravine on the left echoed to the voice of a water-fall, that pouring down over a pile of rocks perhaps two hundred feet high, foamed into the fiord ; and then came eddying past the little hut, still bearing the white flakes on its blue waters.

This was all one could see in the valley ; but the tall fir-trees looked at long ranges of wooded hills and rocky cliffs, with the fiord in its further windings, and beyond all the snow mountains.

“How cold you must be up there !” said a little pine, who was nearly as high as the tall fir’s lower branches. But the

fir did not hear him, or perhaps did not take notice, for he was looking off at the fine prospect.

"Yes, it is cold up here," answered one of the fir-cones—"and windy—and there is a great deal of sameness about it. It is just snow and rain, and wind and sunshine, and then snow again."

"That is what it is everywhere," said the wind, as he swept by.

"I cannot help it," said the cone—"I am tired of it. I want to travel, and see the world, and be of some use to society. What can one do in the top of a fir-tree?"

"Why, what can a pine-cone do anywhere?" said some of the beechmast.

"The end of a pine-cone's existence is not to be eaten up, however," retorted the cone sharply. "Neither am I a pine-cone—though people will call me so. We firs hold our heads pretty high, I can tell you. But I will throw myself into the fiord some day, and go to sea. I have no doubt I could sail as well as a boat. It would be a fine thing to discover new islands, and take possession."

"It would be very lonely," said a squirrel, who was gathering beechmast.

"Royally so," said the pine-cone. "There one would be king of all the trees."

"The trees never had but one king, and that was a bramble," said a reed at the water's edge who was well versed in history.

"What nonsense you are all talking!" said the tall fir-tree at length. "My top leaf is at this moment loaded with a snow-flake—there is something sensible for you to think of."

At this moment the hut door opened and a woman came out.

She wore a dark stuff petticoat made very short, with warm stockings and thick shoes; a yellow close-fitting bodice was girdled round her waist, and from under it came out a white kerchief and very full white sleeves. On her head she wore a high white cap.

She looked first at the weather, and then turning towards

the fall, she watched or listened for a few minutes—but water, and rocks, and firs were all that eye or ear could find out. Then going up to a line stretched between two of the fir-trees, she felt at some things that hung there to dry.

“I suppose that was her clothes line,” said Carl.

“No, it was not,” replied the cone—“I might rather call it her *bread* line. The things that hung there were great pieces of the inner bark of the pine-tree, and looked very much like sheets of foolscap paper.”

“She did not make bread out of *them*, I should think,” said Carl.

“Yes she did,” replied the cone. “She made many a loaf of bark bread, by pounding the dry bark and mixing it with flour. It was not particularly bad bread either. So people say—I never tasted it. But the country folks in Norway use it a great deal in hard seasons; and in those woods you often meet great pine-trees that have been stripped of their bark, and that have dried and bleached in the weather till they look as if made of bone or marble.”

“Well—the pieces of bark were dry, and Norrska began to take them off the line, for of course the snow would not improve them.”

“Who was Norrska?” interrupted Carl.

“The good woman that came out of the house. She took them down, and when they were all in a heap at the foot of the tree she began to carry them off to the alpebod—that is the little storehouse I spoke of. Then she went back into the hut for a minute, and when she came out again she had on a long-sleeved gray woollen jacket, and her *lur* in her hand.”

“What’s that?” said Carl.

“The *lur* is a long trumpet-shaped thing, made of hollow pieces of wood, or pieces of birch bark, tied together, and four or five feet long.”

“What was it for?” said Carl.

“Why you shall hear, if you will have patience,” said the cone. “Norrska raised the *lur* with one hand, and putting her mouth to the little end there came forth from the other

sundry sweet and loud sounds, which echoed back among the rocks till they died away far up the mountain."

"But I say," said Carl, "what for?" And he took hold of the pine-cone and gave it a little pinch; but it was pretty sharp, and he let it go again.

The pine-cone settled himself down on the chest, looking just as stiff as ever, and then went on with his story.

Norraska sounded her lueur twice or thrice, and presently the head and horns of a red cow showed themselves high up among the rocks. Then came in sight her shoulders and fore feet, and her hind feet and tail, and the whole cow began to descend into the valley; while a dun cow's head showed itself in just the same place and fashion. But when Norraska had once seen that they were coming, she ceased to watch them, and turned to the fall again.

Its white foam looked whiter than ever in the gathering dusk. The gray clouds which were fast closing in overhead sent down a cold gray light, and the water no longer sparkled with the sun's gay beams, but looked leaden, and cold, and deep. Then breasted with snow like the stormy petrel, it came flying down the precipice, to plunge into the deep fiord below. Its very voice seemed changed; for the wind had died away, and the steady roar of the water was the only sound that broke the silence.

There was no living creature in sight,—excepting when a little lemming peeped out of his hole, or an eagle soared across the sky, a mere speck upon its clouds. The cows had reached the valley and now stood quietly chewing the cud, having had the precaution to turn their backs to the wind; and now Norraska fetched the milk pails and drove the red cow up to the milking corner. And as she went, a snow flake fell on her forehead, and another fell on the top of her head; and the fir-trees sighed and bowed their heads to what they could not help. Norraska sighed too.

"The winter is coming," she said, "and the snow; and truly the alpebod is but poorly filled. And Sneeflocken sick—and Laaft not come home from Lofoden!—And Kline—what can keep him?" And again she looked towards the fall.

Kline was there now—she could see him plainly enough, though he was but a little spot on that sharp ridge by the waterfall. The path itself was hard to find, as it wound about over and under and around the points of rock that met on the ledge. A stranger could scarcely have climbed it but on hands and knees. Yet down there came Kline, sure-footed as a chamois—swiftly down; and singing praises of the rocks, and streams, and woods, and snow as he came. But before he reached the foot of the hill Kline's song stopped,—with the first look at the hut his thoughts had outrun his feet; and with a quieter step now, he came down into the valley and up to where his mother sat milking the red cow. In one hand was a gun, in the other a string of golden plovers.

“How late, Kline, you are!” said Norrska.

“Yes, mother—I tried to get a shot at a rein-deer. How is she?”

Norrska silently pointed to a snowflake, which falling on her hand as she talked, had lain for a moment in all its pure beauty, but was now melting fast away. She watched till it disappeared, and then bending her head lower than ever, she resumed her work.

Kline stood silent and thoughtful.

“Perhaps not, mother,” he said at length. “Her appetite has been better lately. See—I have these plovers for her to-night, and to-morrow I will have the deer. Think of my finding one in these parts!”

But his mother said no more, and when the pails were full Kline took them from her and carried them into one of the little huts; and then returning, he drove the cows into their little log dwelling, and taking up his birds and gun he walked slowly to the house. But the gaily-painted door was out of tune with his mood, and he turned and went round the back way.

Leaving both gun and birds in the kitchen, Kline opened softly the door leading to one of the bedrooms and went in.

The corner of this room and the sides of the windows

were boarded, and the floor was strewed with fresh twigs of the juniper tree; which gave a sweet smell through the room, and made it look pretty too. Of the three windows, two looked towards the fiord and one to the mountain and over the little valley. The bed stood in a recess that had doors like one of your cupboards; but these now were open, and by the bedside was a little white pine-table, and upon it a wooden bowl and spoon—all prettily carved.

“How were they carved?” said Carl.

“The bowl had carved upon it a spray of the wild bramble—twining round with its leaves and berries; and the handle of the spoon was like a wild-duck’s head; and the feet of the table were like bears’ feet. Kline had done it all, for in Norway the men and boys carve a great deal, and very beautifully; and this bowl and spoon had been made for his little sister as he sat by her bedside, and Kline was very proud of them. The feathers on the duck’s head were beautifully done, and the bramble-berries looked pretty enough to eat. But Kline did not once look at them now, for something far prettier lay on the bed, and that was little Sneeflocken.”

“What did they call her that for?” said Carl.

“Because that is the name of the snowflakes. And she was just as pure and fresh as they, and had never had the least bit of colour in her cheeks from the time she was a baby. You could scarcely have distinguished them from the pillow but for the fair hair that came between. She was covered with a quilt made of down; for Kline had risked his life almost in climbing to the high difficult places where the eider-ducks build their nests, that he might get the soft down which the mother duck plucks from her own breast to keep her eggs and nestlings warm. And Norrska had made it into a quilt, the warmest thing that could be—while the weight of it was almost nothing.”

And beneath this soft quilt Sneeflocken lay, with her eyes closed, and singing softly to herself in the Norse language a hymn, which was something like this:—

- "O little child, lie still and sleep !
 Jesus is near.
 Thou need'st not fear ;—
 No one need fear, whom God doth keep,
 By day or night.
 Then lay thee down in slumber deep
 Till morning light.
- "O little child, thou need'st not wake ;
 Though bears should prowl,
 And wolfish howl,
 And watch-dog's bark, the silence break.
 Jesus is strong.
 And angels watch thee for His sake,
 The whole night long.
- "O little child, lie still and rest,—
 He sweetly sleeps
 Whom Jesus keeps,—
 And in the morning wake, so blest,
 His child to be,
 Love every one, but love Him best,—
 He first loved thee.
- "O little child, when thou must die,
 Fear nothing then,—
 But say amen !
 To God's command ; and quiet lie
 In His kind hand,
 Till he shall say, ' Dear child, come fly
 To heaven's bright land.'
- "Then with thy angel-wings quick grown
 Shalt thou ascend,
 To meet thy Friend,—
 Jesus the little child will own—
 Safe, at His side !
 And thou shalt live before the throne
 Because He died ! "

Kline had to step back into the shadow of the door of the recess, to wipe the tears off his face, before he could venture to speak to his little sister. But she spoke first.

" Kline ! "

"What, dear?" said her brother coming forward.

"I thought I heard your step," said Sneeflocken, with a smile, and putting up her lips to kiss him. "Where have you been all day?"

"Oh, over the mountains—hunting," said Kline, as cheerfully as he could. "I saw a great reindeer, Flocken; and I mean to go and find him to-morrow. That would fill the alpebod finely, and you would like some venison—wouldn't you, dear?"

"Oh, yes," said Flocken, with a little smile; "but I wouldn't kill the deer for that."

"I would," said Kline. "And it would help mother, too."

"I should like to help mother, if I could," said Sneeflocken, putting her little thin hands together. "But Jesus will—I have asked Him."

"Why, you help us all," said Kline; "just as the birds do when they sing, or the sun when it shines."

"Perhaps I shall by and by," said the child, smiling again in that grave, quiet way.

"Yes, by and by, when you grow up to be a strong woman," said Kline.

"No, Kline," said Sneeflocken, stroking his face. "No, dear Kline—but by and by when I go to heaven. Perhaps God will let me help to take care of her then, and of you, too, Kline. But you will not know that it is your little Sneeflocken."

And Kline could only sit and hold her in his arms, and say nothing. The snow fell all that night, and the winter set in early; and the waterfall scattered icicles upon every branch and rock in its way, and then built for itself an ice-trough through which it poured down as noisily as ever. Then the sun never showed his face but for a few minutes, and the rest of the day was twilight. And at night the moon shone splendidly, and the northern lights showed peaks of fire in the heavens; or some times there were only the stars, burning clearly in the sky, and twinkling down in the dark fiord between the shadows of the fir-trees. Now and then

a bear would come out and prowl about the little dwelling, or a wolf gave a concert with the waterfall; but cows and pigs were safely shut up; and Foss, the little dog, showed so much disapprobation at the concert, that often the wolves had not one for nights together. Laaft, the father of Kline, got home from Lofoden with his stock of dried fish; and Kline himself had shot his reindeer; and both meat and fish were safely stowed in the alpebod. The wolves knew that; and did not their mouths water sometimes at night till they were fringed with icicles! But they never tried to break in, for the alpebod was strong; and little Foss knew as well as the wolves what good things were there; and scolded terribly if everybody and everything did not keep at a respectful distance. And besides all that, the wolves were afraid of the light that always shone from one room of the little cottage.

"This is a very quiet way of life—ours," said the fir-trees, nodding to each other.

"I am very tired of it," said one of the cones. "It is very cold up here; and really in the dark one cannot see to do much."

"Afir glories in the frost and the cold and the snow," said the tall tree, proudly. "We are not called upon to do any thing but to make sweet music to the wind, and to keep it from blowing too fiercely upon the little hut, and to show our fine heads against the sky. The snow-birds are warm in our arms during the long night, for we have plenty of good clothes all the year round."

The beeches heard this speech, but were too frost-bound to make any answer.

"What became of the discontented pine-cone?" said Carl. "Did he throw himself into the fiord?"

"Yes," said the cone, "at least one night he tried to do so. But he fell on the shore instead—just dropped down at the foot of the fir-tree; and there Kline found him one day, and picked him up and carried him into the house to show Flokken—he was such a large one."

Every night through the winter was that light burning in

the same room of the hut; and every day did Kline come out with his gun and spend what daylight there was in hunting. Sometimes he brought home a hare or a ptarmigan, or a partridge that he had snared, or a wild-duck; while his father was cutting wood, or away in his boat to catch fish.

"I could get only one partridge to-day, dear Flocken," Kline would say upon his return home; "but perhaps I shall find something better to-morrow."

"Oh, Kline," said his little sister, "how good you are to take so much trouble for me! But it is a pity to kill the birds; they can't make me live, so we might let them live."

"Was not that a fine bird you had yesterday?" said Kline.

"Oh, yes," said Flocken; "it was delicious. I think everything is good that you get for me, and that my mother cooks. But then you know I can't eat much."

If you had seen her as she lay there—so thin, so white—you might as soon as suspected a very snowflake of eating much.

"So it does not make much difference," repeated little Sneefloeken, "what I have; only I do believe Kline, that I like to have you take so much trouble, and go away in the snow to get things for me. And she put her arms round his neck, and laid her white face against his coarse gray jacket, she stroked and caressed him until Kline thought his heart would burst beneath the weight of that little snow-flake.

"When the spring comes," he said, "we will go up the mountain and look for flowers; and I will make you a wreath of violets and fringed pinks, little Flocken."

Sneefloeken stroked his face and smiled, and then she looked grave again.

"And forget-me-nots, Kline," she said, softly, "you will want them, too. The little blue forget-me-nots, they are so like the sky colour. You will think about me, Kline, whenever you see them; for I shall know what the sky is made of then. Where is mother?"

"She is cooking your partridge," said Kline, "Don't you smell it?"

"Oh, yes," said the child, smiling, "and I think the wolves smell it too. How loud they howl!"

"You are not afraid of them?" said her brother, tenderly.

"No," said Sneeflocken, with a strange look of weakness and trust upon her little face. "No, I am not afraid of them; for the Good Shepherd is very strong. I should be afraid if it was not for that. How kind He is, Kline, to think about such poor little children as we are! And it is kind of Him to take me away, too, for I am not very strong—I don't think I could ever be of much use."

"You are of too much use, my little Sneeflocken," said Kline, sadly, "because we should not know what to do without you."

"Why, you will have me, then," said the child, looking up in his face. "Just as you have the flowers now, Kline. And you can think about me, and say that some day you will go up and up to find me."

"Up to find you!" said Laaft, who with Norrska had just entered the room. "Are you going to play hide-and-seek with Kline upon the mountains, my little dear?"

But Norrska asked no such question, for she knew what Sneeflocken meant, well enough; but she brought the roast partridge to the bedside, on a little wooden plate that had a row of pine-cones carved all round the edge; and sitting down on the bed she watched the child eat her scanty supper, when Kline had lifted her up and wrapped an old cloak about her.

Little Foss had followed them in, and now he sat wagging his tail and beating the floor with it, just because he felt uncomfortable, and didn't know what to do with himself—not at all because he smelt the partridge. For he knew perfectly well that Sneeflocken was sick; and when she had finished her supper, and called "Foss! Foss!" the little dog ran to the bed, and standing as high as he could on his hind legs thrust his cold nose into her hand, and whined and whimpered with joy and sorrow. Then in a tumult of excitement, he dashed out of the house to bark at the wolves again.

Thus they watched her, by day and by night, through the

long winter; but before the first spring days came, the little snowflake had melted away and sunk down into the brown earth.

They made her grave within the little grounds, just between the house windows and the mountain; where the fir shadows could touch it sometimes, but where the sunlight came as well. And within the little white railing that enclosed the grave, they placed an upright slab of wood, upon which Kline had carved these words, as Norrska desired him:—

“Say unto her,—Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, ‘It is well.’”

The grass grew green and fresh there, and the little blue forget-me-nots that Kline had planted about the grave soon covered it with their flowers. And sometimes when Kline stood there leaning over the pailing, he almost fancied that it was as she said,—that God had sent her to take care of them; and that it was not the soft spring wind which stroked his face, but the hand of his little Sneeflocken.

“Were you that discontented pine-cone?” said Carl, when he had sat for some time thinking over the story.

“Yes,” said the cone, “and I was carried into the house as I told you. And then because Sneeflocken had once held me in her little hand, Kline said he would keep me always.”

“But I say!” said Carl, knitting his brows and looking very eager; “how did you get here?”

“Because other people were as foolish as I was, and did not know when they were well off,” said the cone. “For Kline was your mother’s grandfather; and when he died, and she left her home to follow the fortunes of John Krinken, she brought the old pine-cone with her; to remember the tall fir-trees that waved above the old hut in Norway, and to remind her of little Foss, and Kline, and Sneeflocken.”

THE STORY OF THE HYMN-BOOK.

"CLARY! Clary!—wake up! you will be late. See how light it is getting."

"Well, mother—but I am so tired! What is the good of living so, mother?"

"One must live somehow, child, till one's time comes to die."

Clary did not say, but she thought, as she raised herself slowly from the hard little straw bed, that it did not matter how soon that time came for her. Work! work!—living to work, and working to live! Working hard too, and for what a pittance of life! Was it living to sleep half as much as she wanted, and then to get up in the cold gray dawn of a winter's morning, get three or four dirty children out of bed and dress them in such clothes as they had; and then, after as much breakfast as she had had sleep, to take that long cold walk in her old straw bonnet and thin cotton shawl to the printing-office,—there to stand all day supplying the busy iron fingers of the press? How thin and blue her own were!

Poor Clary! In truth she did not know what it was to live, in the real sense of the word; her mind looked back to no happier time than the present; for though she could well remember being a dirty little child like her brothers and sisters, with nothing to do but play or quarrel as she felt inclined, yet she by no means wished the time back again. The death of her father, and the consequent absence of his bottle and his wild fits of intoxication, had left the family in a peaceful state compared with those days; and since Clary had been at the printing-office she had learned to love the sight of decently dressed people—had begun to take more pains to look nice herself; and above all, had begun to feel that she would like to be happy, and well-dressed, and respectable, if she only knew how. But they were very, very poor, and there were a cluster of little mouths to fill, as clamorous and wide open as a nest of young swallows, and never saying "enough." And though she kept her face

cleaner and her hair smoother, and when she could get them sewed hooks and eyes on her dress, the march of improvement rested there; and her face was as hopeless, her eye as dull, as ever. For nobody had ever taught Clary about that "one thing needful" which can make up for the want of all others. She had never been to church, she had never read the Bible—and indeed had none to read. She thought that nothing but money could make them happy; she thought nobody could want anything but money; and was really not much surprised that people were so loath to part with it. They must be so, she thought, or the poor press-tenders could not be so very far removed from the heads of the concern in comfortable appearance.

There were many of the women indeed that spent more upon their dress than she did. A tawdry silk jacket worked all day at her right hand, and a pair of earrings dangled all day before her; while her own dress was but the coarsest cotton; but Clary had somehow or other begun to wish for neatness and comfort—of course finery was forgotten.

Never had she been much inclined to envy anybody, till one day the head printer brought his two little children to the office; and Clary's heart beat in quick time to her sorrowful thoughts all the hours after. Oh, to see those children at home, with clean faces, and smooth hair, and whole frocks and trousers! And now there were rags and dirt and tangled locks; and no time to mend matters, and small stock of soap and combs, or needles to mend with. Clary went straight to bed when she got home that night; and it was on the next morning that she awoke with the question—

"Mother, what is the use of living so?"

But as her mother had said, she must live somehow; and getting wearily out of bed, hastily too, for it was indeed late, Clary easily dressed herself in such clothes as she had; and then, having with some difficulty fastened the children into theirs, she seated them at the table where her mother had by this time placed the breakfast; and herself stood by, drinking a cup of the miserable coffee and tying on her bonnet at the same time.

"Going to wash to-day, mother?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll take some bread, and not try to come home to dinner."

This was the ordinary course of things. Clary at the printing-press, and her mother doing a day's work for people well off in the world; while the younger children were locked in or locked out, as the case might be.

It was a foggy December morning,—not very cold, but with a drizzling mist that was more chilling than snow; and by the time Clary reached the office she felt as moody and uncomfortable as the weather. It was warm enough in the office, but not very cheerful, she thought; though some of the men looked as if they enjoyed life sufficiently well, as with sleeves rolled up they whistled softly over their work, keeping time with their heads if the tune were a particularly lively one.

Clary put her bonnet and shawl in their place, and went to the press she always tended. It was motionless now, and a man was just putting in a new set of plates. Clary hardly noticed what he was doing—it mattered so little to her what words were printed on those great sheets of paper that she handled every day; though she could read very well; but she stood listlessly.

"What is the matter, Clary?" said the man. "You look dumpish this morning. I've given you a new piece of work here that will be good for that—they say poetry is excellent for the spirits."

Something good for her! She knew the man spoke jestingly, and yet as he walked off Clary thought she would look and see what it was that he had been talking about. She had seen type enough to be able to spell it backwards, and bending over the plates she read at the corner next her—

"Oh, how happy!"—

And then the machine was suddenly put in motion; and not faster could she supply the sheets, than the press drew them in, printed them, and tossed them out in a nice pile at

one end. Clary could not stop for one instant. But she had something to think about. Again and again she repeated those three words to herself, and wondered of whom they spoke, and what could be the rest of the sentence. She could guess; it must mean the people who were rich, and had plenty of clothes, and plenty to eat, and time to sleep, and to walk about in the sunshine. The people who bought the meat that she saw hanging up in the butchers' shops, which she hardly knew by name, and much less by taste; the beautiful ladies that she sometimes saw in Broadway—when she happened to get through work a little earlier than usual—wrapped up in furs and velvets, and looking as if they would not know cotton print when they saw it,—the children that she had seen looking out of carriage windows with little white lap-dogs: the curling ears on the heads of the dogs, and the curling feathers on the heads of the children, seeming to Clary almost equally beautiful. Yes, those must be the happy people; but then she would very much like to know more about them,—to read all those stories which the press was no doubt printing off, of these same happy people, who never were poor, and who had no little ragged brothers and sisters. For the first time in her life Clary wished the press would get out of order, for some other reason than because she was tired. Her mind worked and worked upon those three words till she was almost wild with the desire to read more. Perhaps it told the way to be rich and happy,—and that cruel press kept moving just as fast as possible. Not till twelve o'clock did it make a pause. But at twelve o'clock there was a sudden hush; and hardly had the rollers stopped their rolling, before Clary had left her place and gone to that corner of the pile of printed sheets where she knew the words must be. Yes, they were there—she found them easy enough; but what were they?

“ Oh how happy are they
 Who the Saviour obey,
 And have laid up their treasure above.”

Poor Clary! she could almost have cried over her disappointment; for if the words had been Greek she could

hardly have been more puzzled as to their meaning. As I have said, she had never been to church—she had never read the Bible; and if she had ever heard the Saviour's name, it was from those who spoke it with neither love nor reverence. Her father had been a drunkard,—her mother was a hard-working, well-meaning woman, but as ignorant as Clary herself. No preacher of the gospel had ever set foot in their house,—and “how should they believe on Him of whom they had not heard?”

So Clary puzzled over the lines and could make nothing of them. The word *treasure* she did indeed understand; but where it was to be laid up, and how, were as far from her as ever. And constantly her mind went back to that second line—“*Who the Saviour obey.*”

“I wonder if I could do that?” she thought to herself, “if I only knew how. Mother always said I was good about obeying. It must be so pleasant to be happy. It does not say that nobody can do it but rich people,”—and again she read the words. They were at the bottom of the sheet, and the next might not come to her press at all, or not for some days. She looked over the rest of the sheet. A great many of the hymns she could make nothing of at all; the very words—“missionary,” and “convert,” and “ransom,” were strange to her. Then this hymn caught her eye, and she read—

“Come to the mercy-seat—
Come to the place of prayer;
Come, little children, to His feet,
In whom ye live and are.

“Come to your God in prayer;
Come to your Saviour now—
While youthful skies are bright and fair,
And health is on your brow.”

Clary read no further. That did not suit her, she thought—there was nothing bright about her way of life or herself. It seemed the old thing again—the happy rich people. She went back and read the first one over, and then she sought further; wearily glancing from hymn to hymn, but with a

longing that not even the hard words could check. At last she saw one verse, the first word of which she knew well enough—

“Poor, weak, and worthless, though I am,
I have a rich Almighty Friend,—
Jesus the Saviour is His name—
He freely loves, and without end.”

The words went right to the sore spot in Clary's heart—the spot which had ached for many a long day. Somebody to love her—a rich friend. If she had written down her own wishes, they could hardly have been more perfectly expressed; and the tears came so fast, that she had to move away lest they should blot the paper. Bitter tears they were, yet not such as she had often shed; for, she knew not how, those words seemed to carry a possible hope of fulfilment—a half promise—which her own imaginations had never done. And the first line suited her so exactly—

“Poor, weak, and worthless”——

“I am all that,” thought Clary; “but if this rich Friend loved one poor person, he might another. ‘Jesus, the Saviour’—that must be the same that the other verse speaks of. ‘*How happy are they who the Saviour obey*’—Oh, I wish I knew how—I would do anything in the world to be happy! And I suppose all these rich people know all about Him, and obey Him, and that makes them so happy; for if He loves poor people, He must love the rich a great deal more.”

One o'clock!

The great clock struck, and the people came tramping back to their work, or rose up from the corners where they had been eating such dinner as they had brought. Clary had forgotten all about hers—certainly it was an easy dinner to forget—but all the afternoon as the press kept on its busy way, she lived upon these two verses which she had learned by heart.

She had no chance to read more when they left off work at night; but all the way home she scarce saw either rich or poor, for the intentness with which her mind studied those

words, and the hope and determination with which she resolved to find out of whom they spoke. She almost felt as if she had found Him already—it seemed as if she was less friendless than she had been in the morning; and though once or twice the remembered words filled her eyes with tears, any one who knew Clary would have wondered at the step with which she went home.

“Where did she read those words?” said Carl, who had listened with deep attention.

“On my 272d page,” replied the hymn-book. “For it so happened that I was printing that very day.”

Carl turned to the 272d page and read the words, and then shutting the hymn-book desired him to go on with his story.

“What made you so early, Clary?” said her mother, who had got home first.

“Early is it?” said Clary, when she could get breath to speak—for she had run up all the three pair of stairs to their little room. “It is the same time as it always is, mother—only maybe I walked fast. Oh, mother! I have had such a happy day!”

“A happy day!” said her mother, looking up in amazement at the life of her voice and face, that were wont to be so dull and listless. “Well, child, I’m glad of it,—you never had many.”

“Such a happy day!” repeated Clary. “Oh, mother—I read such beautiful words at the printing-office!”

“Did you fetch the soap I wanted?” inquired her mother.

No—Clary had forgotten it.

“Well, don’t be so happy to-morrow as to make you forget it,” said her mother. “Every living child here is as dirty as a pig, and no way of making them cleaner. Tidy up the room a little, can’t you, Clary? I have stood upon my two feet all day.”

So had Clary, and some nights she would have said as much; but now that new half hope of being happy—that new desire of doing all that anybody could want her to do,

(she didn't know why,) gave her two feet new strength ; and she not only "tidied up" the room, but even found a little piece of soap to wash the children with ; and then gave them their supper and put them to bed with far less noise and confusion than usual.

Her mother was already seated by the one tallow candle, making coarse shirts and overalls for a wholesale dealer ; and Clary, having at last found her thimble in the pocket of the smallest pair of trousers, sat down to work too. Never had her fingers moved so fast.

"Mother," she said, after a while, "did you ever hear anybody talk about the Saviour ?"

Her mother stared.

"What on earth, child !" she said. "Where have you been, and who has been putting such notions in your head ?"

"Nobody," said Clary, "and I've been nowhere—only to the office, the same as usual. But I read some beautiful verses there, mother, at dinner time, that they were printing off on my press ; and they made me feel so—I can't tell you how. But oh, mother, they told about some great rich Friend of poor people—poor people like us, mother—worth nothing at all, they said ; and that everybody who obeyed Him was happy."

"You had better not plague your head with such stuff," said her mother. "Nobody cares about poor folks like us. Why, child, rich people wouldn't touch us with a pair of tongs. Haven't I seen them draw up their dresses as I went by, because mine was cotton, and maybe not over clean, because I couldn't buy soap and bread both ? I tell you, Clary, rich folks think the poor has no right to breathe in the same world with them. I don't want to breathe in it long for one."

"It didn't say rich *people*," said Clary, thoughtfully, "but only this one—

'Poor, weak, and worthless though I am,
I have a rich, Almighty Friend.'

Oh, mother ! I wish I had !"

"Come, child, hold your tongue !" said her mother, but

not unkindly, for something in Clary's look and tone had stirred the long deadened feeling within her. "I tell you, child, we must eat; and how is your work to get done if you sit there crying in that fashion? The candle is almost burnt out, too, and not another scrap in the house."

Clary dried her tears, and went on with the overalls until the candle had flickered its last; and then groped her way in the dark to the little bed she and her mother occupied by that of the five children. For sleeping altogether thus, the coverings went further. Dark and miserable it was; and yet when Clary laid herself down, overtaken at last by the sleep which had pursued her all the evening, the last thought in the poor child's mind was of those hymns—the word on which her heart went to sleep was that "Name which is above every name."

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!"

To Clary's great sorrow and disappointment, when she went next day to the printing-office, the pile of printed paper had been removed; and not only so, but a new set of plates given her instead of those of the hymn-book. Clary's only comfort was to repeat over and over to herself the words she had already learned, and to try to get at their meaning. Sometimes she thought she would ask the foreman, who was very pleasant and good-natured, but that was only while he was at some other press; whenever he came near hers, Clary was frightened, and held her head down lest he should guess what she was thinking of. And as week after week passed on, she grew very weary and discouraged; yet still clinging to those words as the last hope she had. If she could possibly have forgotten them, she would have been almost desperate.

The winter passed, and the spring came; and it was pleasanter now to go down to the printing-office in the early morning and to walk home at night; and she could hear other people's canaries sing, and see the green grass and flowers in other people's courtyards; and on Sunday, as she had no work, she could sit out on the doorstep, if there

were not too many children about, or walk away from that miserable street into some pleasanter one.

She had walked about for a long time one Sunday, watching the people that were coming from afternoon church; and when the sun was leaving the street she turned to leave it too, taking a little cross street which she had never been in before.

It hardly deserved the name of street, for it was not many yards in length. The houses were not of the largest, but they looked neat and comfortable, with thin green blinds and gay curtains; and spring was there in her earliest dress—a green ground, well spotted with hyacinths, snowdrops, and crocuses. It was very quiet, too, cut short as it was at both ends; and the Sabbath of the great city seemed to have quitted Broadway and established itself here.

Upon one of the low flights of steps, Clary saw as she approached it a little girl seated, with a book in her hand. Wearing a dress after the very pattern of spring, a little warm shawl over her shoulders, and in a little chair that was just big enough, she sat there in the warm sunshine which streamed down through an opening between the houses, turning over the leaves of the book. If you had guessed the child's name from her looks, you would have called her 'Sweet Content.'

Clary stopped a little way off to look at her, thinking bitterly of the five children she had left playing in the dirt at home; and as she stopped, the little girl began to sing—

“ Oh, how happy are they
Who the Saviour obey,
And have laid up their treasure above.”

The little voice had only brought these words to Clary's ear, when a carriage came rolling by, and the rest of the verse was lost; but in an instant Clary was at the house, and feeling that this was the only chance she ever should have, she opened the little gate and went in.

The child ceased singing, and looked up at her in some surprise.

"I want to know"—said Clary—and then suddenly re-collecting her own poor dress, and comparing it with the little picture before her, she stopped short. But the words must come—they were spoken almost before Clary herself was aware.

"Will you please to tell me who the Saviour is?"

And then blushing and frightened, she could almost have run away, but something held her fast.

The child's eyes grew more and more wondering.

"Come in," she said, gravely, getting up from her chair, and with some difficulty keeping the book and the little shawl in their places.

But Clary drew back.

"Oh yes—come in," said the child, tucking the little book under her arm, and holding out her hand to Clary.

"Please come in—mother will tell you."

And following her little conductor, Clary found herself the next minute in a pleasant, plain, and very neat room.

"Mother," said the child, opening a door into the next room, but still keeping her eye upon Clary lest she should run away "Mother, here is a girl who never heard about Jesus."

"I don't understand thee, Eunice," said a pleasant voice, "but I will come." And a most pleasant face and figure followed the voice.

"What did thee say, child?" she inquired, with only a glance towards Clary.

"Tell mother what you want," said the child, encouragingly.

"Mother, she never heard about Jesus."

Thee never heard about Him, poor child," said the lady, approaching Clary. "And how dost thou live in this world of troubles, without such a Friend?"

"I don't know, ma'am," said Clary, weeping. "We are very poor, and we never had any friends; and a long time ago in the winter I read a verse at the printing-office about some one who loved poor people, and I thought perhaps He would help us if He knew about us."

"He knows all about thee now," said the good Mrs Allen, with a look of strange wonder and pity on her pleasant face.

“Sit down here, child, I will tell thee. Didst thou never hear about God?”

“Yes, ma’am,” said Clary, hesitatingly, “I believe I have. Mother says, ‘God help us!’ sometimes. But we are very poor, nobody thinks much about us.”

“God is the helper of the poor, and the Father of the fatherless,” said Mrs Allen, with a grave but gentle voice, “thee must not doubt that. Listen. We had all sinned against God, and His justice said that we must all be punished, that we must be miserable in this world, and when we die must go where no one can ever be happy. But though we were all so bad, God pitied us, and loved us still; yet He could not forgive us, for He is perfectly just. It was as if we owed Him a great debt, and until that debt was paid we could not be His children. But we had nothing to pay. Then the Son of God came down to earth, and bore all our sins and sorrows, and died for us, and paid our great debt with His own most precious blood. This is Jesus, the Saviour.”

“Yes, ma’am,” said Clary, whose heart had followed every word, “that is what the verse said—

‘Jesus the Saviour is His name,
He freely loves, and without end.’”

She stood as if forgetting there was any one in the room; her eyes fixed on the ground, and the quiet tears running down from them, her hands clasped with an earnestness that showed how eagerly her mind was taking in that “good news”—“peace on earth and good-will toward men,” which was now preached to her for the first time.

Little Eunice looked wistfully at her mother, but neither of them spoke.

At length Mrs Allen came softly to Clary, and laying her hand on the bowed head she said, “Jesus is the friend of sinners; but then they must strive to sin no more. Wilt thou do it? wilt thou love and obey the Saviour who has done so much for thee?”

A sunbeam shot across the girl’s face, as she looked up for

one moment, and then bursting into tears, she said, "Oh, if I knew how!"

"Ask Him, and He will teach thee. Pray to Jesus whenever thou art in trouble; when thy sins are too strong for thee, and thy love to Him too faint, when thou art tired, or sick, or discouraged. Ask Him to love thee, and make thee His child, ask Him to prepare a place for thee in heaven. For He hath said, 'If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.'"

Little Eunice had gone softly out of the room while her mother spoke, and now returned with a little book, which was quietly placed in Clary's hand after a look of assent from her mother.

"That is a Bible," said Eunice, with a face of great pleasure. "And you may have it and keep it always. I wish I had a hymn-book for you, too; but I have only got this one, and my Sunday-school teacher gave it to me last Sunday. But the Bible is the word of God, and it will tell you all about Jesus; and every bit of it is perfectly true. Oh, you will love it so much! everybody does who loves Jesus. And won't you come and read in my hymn-book sometimes?"

"Yes; come very often," said Mrs Allen, "and we will talk of these things."

And with a heart too full to speak, Clary left the house.

But oh, what a different walk home!

"How happy are they
Who the Saviour obey."

She could understand that now, for with the simple faith of a child she believed what had been told her, and with her whole heart received the Friend of sinners to be her Friend. Her earnest prayer that night, her one desire, was to be His child and servant; to obey Him then became sweet work; and thenceforth, through all Clary's life, if any one had called her poor, she would have answered out of the little hymn-book that Eunice gave her for a Christmas present—

“Who made my heaven secure,
Will here all good provide:
Whilst Christ is rich, can I be poor?
What can I want beside?”

“Is that all?” said Carl, when he had waited about two minutes for more.

“That is the story of one of my leaves,” said the hymn-book.

“Well, I want to hear about all the others,” said Carl; “so tell me.”

“I can’t,” said the hymn-book; “it would take me six weeks.”

“Were you Clary’s hymn-book?” said Carl.

“No, I was the other; that belonged to little Eunice. But years after that, several of us met in an old auction-room, there I learned some of the particulars that I have told you.”

“What is an auction-room?” said Carl.

“It is a sort of intelligence-office for books,” replied the collection. “There I got the situation of ‘companion to a lady,’ and went on a long sea voyage. I had nothing to do but to comfort her, however.”

“And did you do it?” said Carl.

“Yes; very often,” said the hymn-book. “Perhaps as much as anything else, except her Bible.”

THE STORY OF THE CORK BOAT.

“Now, my pretty little boat,” said Carl, the next day, “you shall tell me your story. I will hear you before that ugly old stocking.”

Carl was lying flat on his back on the floor, holding the boat up at arm’s length, over his head, looking at it and turning it about. It was a very complete little boat.

“I shall teach you not to trust to appearances,” said the boat.

“What do you mean?” said Carl.

"I mean, that when you have looked at me, you have got the best of me."

"That is very apt to be the way with pretty things," said the stocking.

"No it isn't!" said Carl. For he had more than once known his mother call him a "pretty boy."

"However that may be," said the boat, "I can't tell a story."

"Can't tell a story! yes, you can," said Carl. "Do it at once."

"I have not any to tell," said the boat. "I was once of some use in the world, but now I am of none, except to be looked at."

"Yes; you are of use," said Carl, "for I like you; and you can tell a story too, if you have a mind, as well as the pine cone."

"The pine cone has had better experience," said the boat, "and has kept good society. For me, I have always lived on the outside of things, ever since I can remember, and never knew what was going on in the world, any more than I knew what was going on inside of my old tree. All I knew was, that I carried up sap for its branches; when it came down again, or what became of it, I never saw."

"Where were you then?" said Carl.

"On the outside of a great evergreen oak, in a forest of Valencia. I was a piece of its bark. I wish I was there now. But the outer bark of those trees gets dead after a while—and then the country people come and cut it off and sell it out of the land."

"And were you dead and sold off?" said Carl.

"To be sure I was. As fine a piece of cork as ever grew. I had been growing nine years since the tree was cut before."

"Well, but tell me your story!" said Carl.

"I tell you," said the little boat, "I have not any story. There was nothing to be seen in the forest but the great shades of the kingly oaks, and the birds that revelled in the solitude of their thick branches, and the martens, and such animals. It was fine there, though. The north winds, which the pine cone says so shake the heads of the fir-trees in his country,

never trouble anything in mine. The snow never lay on the glossy leaves of my parent oak. But no Norrska lived there, or if she did, I never knew her. Nobody came near us, unless a stray peasant now and then passed through. And when I was cut down, I was packed up and shipped off to England, and shifted from hand to hand, till John Krinken took it into his head, years ago, to make a sort of cork jacket of me, with one or two of my companions ; and I have been tumbling about in his possession ever since. He has done for me now. I am prettier than I ever was before, but I shall never be of any use again. I shall try the water, I suppose, again a few times for your pleasure, and then probably I shall try the fire, for the same."

"The fire! No, indeed," said Carl, "I'm not going to burn you up. I am going to see you sail this minute, since you won't do anything else. You old stocking, you may wait till I come back—I don't believe *you have* got much of a story."

And Carl sprang up and went forthwith to the beach to find a quiet bit of shallow water in some nook where it would be safe to float his cork boat. But the waves were beating pretty high that day, and the tide coming in, and altogether there was too much commotion on the beach to suit the little *Santa Claus*, as he had named her. So Carl discontentedly came back, and set up the little boat to dry, and turned to the old stocking.

THE STORY OF THE STOCKING.

"It is too bad!" said Carl. "I have heard six stories and a little piece of one, and now there is nothing left but this old stocking!"

"I believe I will not tell you my story at all," said the stocking.

"But you shall," said Carl, "or else I will cut you all up into little pieces."

"Then you certainly will never hear it," said the stocking.

"Well, now," said Carl, "what a disagreeable old stocking you are. Why don't you begin at once?"

"I am tired of always being at the foot," said the stocking; "as one may say, at the fag end. And besides, your way of speaking is not proper. I suppose you have been told as much before. This is not the way little boys use to speak when *I* was knit."

"You are only a stocking," said Carl.

"Everything that is worth speaking to at all, is worth speaking to politely," replied the stocking.

"I can't help it," said Carl, "you might tell me your story, then. I am sure one of my own red stockings would tell its story in a minute."

"Yes," said the gray stocking; "and the story would be 'Lived on little Carl's foot all my life, and never saw anything.'"

"It would not be true, then," said Carl, "for I never wear them except on Sundays. Mother says she can't afford it."

"Nobody afforded it once," said the stocking. "My ancestors were not heard of until ten or eleven hundred years ago, and then they were made of leather or linen. And then people wore cloth hose; and then, some time in the sixteenth century, silk stockings made their appearance in England. But there was never a pair of knit woollen stockings until the year 1564."

"I say," said Carl, "do stop, will you, and go on with your story." And putting his hand down into the old stocking, he stretched it out as far as he could on his little fingers.

"You had better amuse yourself in some other way," said the stocking. "If my yarn should break, it will be the worse for your story."

"Well, why don't you begin, then?" said Carl, laying him down again.

"It is not always pleasant to recount one's misfortunes," said the stocking, "and I have come down in the world sadly. You would hardly think it, I dare say, but I did once belong to a very good family."

“So you do now,” said Carl. “There never was anybody in the world better than my mother; and father is very good too.”

“Yes,” said the stocking again, “Mrs Kringen does seem to be quite a respectable woman for her station in life, very neat about her house, and I presume makes most excellent porridge. But you see, where I used to live, porridge had never even been heard of. I declare,” said the stocking, “I can hardly believe it myself, I think my senses are getting blunted. I have lain in that chest so long with a string of read onions, that I have really almost forgotten what musk smells like! But my lady Darlington always fainted away if anybody mentioned onions, so of course the old squire never had them on the dinner table even. A fine old gentleman he was; not very tall, but as straight almost as ever; and with ruddy cheeks, and hair that was not white but silver colour. His hand shook a little sometimes, but his heart never—and his voice was as clear as a whistle. His step went cheerfully about the house and grounds, although it was only to the music of his walking-stick; and that was music truly, to all the poor of the neighbourhood. His stick was like him. He would have neither gold nor silver head to it, but it was all of good English oak, the top finely carved into a supposed likeness of Edward the Confessor.

“As for my lady, she was all stateliness, very beautiful too, or had been; and the sound of her dress was like the wings of a wild bird.”

“I think I shall like to hear this story,” said Carl, seating himself on his box and clapping his hands together once or twice.

“I dare say you will,” said the stocking, “when I tell it to you. Well—

“A great many years ago it was Christmas Eve at Squire Darlington’s, and the squire sat alone in his wide hall. Every window was festooned with ivy leaves and holly, which twisted about the old carving, and drooped, and hung round the silver sconces, and thence downward towards the

floor. The silver hands of the sconces held tall wax candles, but they were not lit. The picture frames wore wreaths, from which the old portraits looked out gloomily enough, not finding the adornment so becoming as they had done a century or so before; and even the squire's high-backed chair was crowned with a bunch of holly-berry. There was no danger of their being in his way, for he rarely leaned back in his chair, but sat up quite straight, with one hand on his knee and the other on the arm of his chair. On that particular evening his hand rested on me; for I and my companion stocking had been put on for the first time."

"I don't see how he could get his hand on his stocking," said Carl, "if he sat up. Look—I couldn't touch mine."

"You need not try to tell me anything about stockings," replied that article of dress, somewhat contemptuously. "I know their limits as well as most people. But in those days, Master Carl, gentlemen wore what they called small-clothes,—very different from your new-fangled pantaloons."

"I don't wear pantaloons," said Carl; "I wear trousers." But the stocking did not heed the interruption.

"The small-clothes reached only to the knee—a little above or a little below—and so met the long stockings half-way. Some people wore very fanciful stockings, of different colours and embroidered; but Squire Darlington's were always of gray woollen yarn, very fine and soft, as you see I am, and tied above the knee with black ribbons; and his shoes were always black, with large black bows and silver buckles.

"He sat there alone in the wide hall, with one hand on me, and his eyes fixed upon the fire, waiting for the arrival of the Yule Log. For in those days the night before Yule or Christmas the chief fire in the house was piled up with an immense log, which was cut and brought in with great rejoicing and ceremony, and lighted with a brand saved from the log of last year. All the servants in the house had gone out to help to roll the log and increase the noise, and the fire of the day had burnt down to a mere heap of red coals; and the hall was so still you could almost hear the ivy leaves

rustle on the old wall outside. I have no doubt the squire did hear them."

"What did he stay there for?" said Carl. "Was he thinking?"

"He might have been," said the stocking—"indeed I rather think he was, for he stroked and patted me two or three times. Or he might have been listening to the wind singing its Christmas song."

"Can the wind sing?" said Carl.

"Ay, and sigh too. Most of all about the time of other people's holidays. It is a wild, sighing kind of a song at best—whistled, and sung, and sighed together—sometimes round the house, and sometimes through a keyhole. I heard what it said that night, well enough. You won't understand it, but this was it :—

" "Christmas again!—Christmas again!
With its holly-berries so bright and red;
They gleam in the wood, they grow by the lane;
Oh, hath not Christmas a joyful tread?"

" "Christmas again!—Christmas again!
What does it find? and what does it bring?
And what does it miss, that should remain?
Oh! Christmas time is a wonderful thing.

" "Christmas again! Christmas again!
There are bright green leaves on the holly tree;
But wither'd leaves fly over the plain,
And the forests are brown and bare to see.

" "Christmas again! Christmas again!
The snow lies light, and the wind is cold;
But the wind—it reacheth some hearts of pain,
And the snow—it falleth on heads grown old.

" "Christmas again! Christmas again!
What kindling fires flash through the hall!
The flames may flash, but the shadows remain;
And where do the shadows this night fall?"

" "Christmas again! Christmas again!
It looks through the windows—it treads the floor;
Seeking for what earth could not retain—
Watching for those who will come no more.

“ ‘Christmas again ! Christmas again !
 Why doth not the pride of the house appear ?
 Where is the sound of her silken train ?
 And that empty chair—what doeth it here ?

“ ‘Christmas again ! Christmas again !
 With hearts as light as ever did bound ;
 And feet as pretty as ever were fain
 To tread a measure the hall around.

“ ‘Christmas again ! Christmas again !
 O thoughts, be silent ! who call'd for ye ?
 Must Christmas time be a time of pain,
 Because of the loved from pain set free ?

“ ‘Christmas again ! Christmas again !
 Once Christmas and joy came hand in hand ;
 The hall may its holiday look regain,—
 But the empty chairs must empty stand.’

“The wind took much less time to sing the song than I have taken to tell it,” said the stocking ; “a low sigh round the house, and a whistle or two, told all. Then suddenly a door at the lower end of the hall flew open, and a boy sprang in, exclaiming — ‘Grandfather, it is coming !’”

He was dressed just after the fashion of the old squire, only with delicate white stockings and black velvet small-clothes ; something like the knickerbockers little boys wear now, while his long flapped waistcoat was gaily flowered, and his shoes had crimson rosettes. And almost as he spoke, a side door opened, and my lady glided in, her dress rustling softly as she came ; while the wind rushed in after her, and tossed and waved the feathers in her tall head-dress.

There was heard a distant murmur of shouts and laughter, and young Edric clapped his hands and then stood still to listen ; and presently, the whole troop of servants poured into the hall, from that same door at the lower end. All were dressed in the best and gayest clothes they had ; the women wore ivy wreaths, and the men carried sprigs of holly at their button-holes. First came a number bearing torches ; then many others, rolling, and pulling, and pushing the great

log, on which one of the men-servants, whimsically dressed, was endeavouring to keep his seat ; while every other man, woman, and child about the place, crowded in after.

Then the log was rolled into the great fireplace, and duly lighted ; and everybody clapped hands and rejoiced in its red glow, and Master Edric shouted as loud as the rest.

“Edric,” said my lady, when the hall was quiet once more though not empty, for all the household were to spend Christmas eve there together—“Edric, go take a partner, and dance us a minuet.”

And Edric walked round the hall till he came to little May Underwood, the forester’s daughter ; and then bringing the white stockings and the crimson rosettes close side by side together, and making her a low bow, he took her hand and led her out upon the polished floor.

The Yule Log was in a full blaze now, and the light shone from end to end of the hall ; falling upon the bright floor and the long row of servants and retainers that were arranged around, and glossily reflected from the sharp holly leaves and its bright red berries. The old portraits did not light up much, and looked very nearly as gloomy as ever ; but a full halo of the firelight was about the squire’s chair, and upon my lady as she stood beside him. Two or three of the serving-men played a strange old tune upon as strange old instruments ; and the forester now and then threw in a few wild notes of his bugle, that sounded through the house and aroused all the echoes ; but the wind sighed outside still.

And all this while the little dancers were going through the slow, graceful steps of their pretty dance ; with the most respectful bows and courtesies, the most ceremonious presenting of hands and acceptance of the same, the most graceful and complicated turns and bends ; till at last when the music suddenly struck into a quick measure, Edric presented his right hand to little May, and they danced gaily forward to where my lady stood near the squire and made their low reverence—first to her, and then to each other. Then Edric led his little partner back to her seat, and returned to his

grandmother. For my lady was his grandmother, and he had no parents.

As the Yule Log snapped and crackled and blazed higher and higher, even so did the mirth of all in the great hall. They talked, and laughed, and sang, and played games, and not an echo in the house could get leave to be silent.

All of a sudden, in the midst of the fun, a little boy, dressed like Robin Redbreast in a dark coat and bright red waistcoat, opened one of the hall doors; and just showing himself for a moment, he flung the door back and an old man entered. His hair was perfectly white, and so was his beard, which reached down to his waist. On his head was a crown of yew and ivy, and in his hand a long staff topped with holly-berries; his dress was a long brown robe which fell down about his feet, and on it were sewed little spots of white cloth to represent snow. He made a low bow to the squire and my lady, and when Robin Redbreast had discreetly closed the door so that nothing could come in but a little wind, he began to sing in a queer little cracked voice—

“ Oh! here come I, old Father Christmas, welcome or not.
I hope old Father Christmas will never be forgot.
Make room, room, I say,
That I may lead Mince Pye this way,
Walk in, Mince Pye, and act thy part,
And show the gentles thy valiant heart.”

With that Robin opened the door again, and another figure came in, dressed like a woman in a dark purple gown bordered with a light brownish yellow. A large apple was fastened on the top of her head, and she wore bunches of raisins at her ears instead of earrings; while her necklace was of large pieces of citron strung together, and her bracelets of cloves, and alspice, and cinnamon. In her hand she carried a large wooden sword.

“What was that for?” said Carl, who had listened with the most intense interest.

“Why to fight off the people that wanted to make her up into a real mince pie, I suppose,” said the stocking. “She came into the room singing—

“Room, room, you gallant souls, give me room to rhyme,
 I will show you some festivity this Christmas time.
 Bring me the man that bids me stand,
 Who says he'll cut me down with an audacious hand.
 I'll cut him and hew him as small as a fly,
 And see what he'll do then to make his mince-pye.
 Walk in, St George.’

“Oh! in come I St George, the man of courage bold,
 With my sword and buckler I have won three crowns of gold;
 I fought the fiery Dragon, and brought him to the slaughter,
 I saved a beauteous Queen and a King of England's daughter.
 If thy mind is high, my mind is bold;
 If thy blood is hot, I will make it cold.’”

“What did he want to do that for?” said Carl.

“Oh, in the days when St George lived,” replied the stocking, “the more men a man killed the more people thought of him; and this man was trying to make himself like St George. He had a great pasteboard helmet on his head with a long peacock's feather streaming from the top of it, and a wooden sword, and a tin-covered shield on which were nailed clusters of holly-berries in the figure of a cross. His shoes were of wood too, and his jacket and small-clothes of buckskin, with sprigs of yew fastened upon all the seams, and great knots of green and red ribbons at the knees. As soon as he had sung his song he began his fight with Mince Pyc, and a dreadful fight it was, if one might judge by the noise; also Mince Pye's sword became quite red with the holly-berries. But St George let his shield take all the blows; and when Mince Pye had spent all her strength upon it, he thrust at her with his sword, and down she came.”

“Who? Mince Pye?” said Carl. “Oh, that is too bad!”

“Mince Pye thought so too,” said the stocking, “for she cried out—

“‘O St George, spare my life!’”

Then said old Father Christmas—

“Is no Doctor to be found
 To cure Mince Pye who is bleeding on the ground?”

“Was there any?” said Carl.

"There was somebody who called himself one. He came running into the hall the moment old Father Christmas called for him, and you never saw such a queer little figure. He had an old black robe, and a black cap on his head, and a black patch over one eye."

"What was that for?" said Carl.

"He had been curing himself, I suppose," said the stocking. "And it would seem that he was not satisfied with any of his features, for he had put on a long pasteboard nose painted red, and a pasteboard chin. In his hand he carried a great basket of bottles. If one might believe his own account, he was a doctor worth having."

"Oh yes, there is a doctor to be found
To cure Mince Pye, who is bleeding on the ground.
I cure the sick of every pain,
And none of them ever are sick again."

Father Christmas thought it must cost a great deal to be cured after that fashion, so like a prudent man he said—

"Doctor, what is thy fee?"

And the Doctor probably did not like to be questioned, for he answered—

"Ten pounds is my fee;
But fifteen I must take of thee
Before I set this gallant free."

But as it was necessary that Mince Pye should be cured Father Christmas only said—

"Work thy will, Doctor."

Then the doctor took a bottle out of his basket, and began to dance and sing round Mince Pye.

"I have a little bottle by my side,
The fame of which spreads far and wide;
Drop a drop on this poor man's nose."

And with that Mince Pye jumped up as well as ever.

"But that was not all," said Carl. "What else?"

"That was not quite all," said the stocking, "for another

man came in, with a great basket of dolls at his back and a tall red cap on his head. And he sang too—

“ ‘Oh! in come I, little saucy Jack,
 With all my family at my back ;
 Christmas comes but once a year,
 And when it does it brings good cheer,
 Boast-beef, plum-pudding, and mince-pye,
 Who likes that any better than I ;
 Christmas makes us dance and sing ;
 Money in the purse is a very fine thing,
 Ladies and gentlemen, give us what you please.’ ”

Then Squire Darlington and my lady each took out some money, and Edric carried it to the masquers, and as he had not any money himself he told them that he was very much obliged to them ; and then they went off.

“What did they give them money for?” said Carl.

“Oh, they expected it—that was what they came for. People used to go about in that way to the rich houses at Christmas time, to get a little money by amusing the gentle-folks.”

“I suppose they were very much amused,” said Carl with a little sigh.

“Very much—especially Edric. And after they were gone he came and stood before the great fire and thought it all over, smiling to himself with pleasure.”

“Edric,” said my lady, “it is time for you to go to bed.”

“Yes, grandmother—but I am afraid I can’t go to sleep.”

“Why not?” said Squire Darlington. “What are you smiling at?”

“Oh, we have had such a splendid night, grandfather!—the people were dressed so finely—and did not Mince Pye fight well? and was not the Doctor queer? and I am sure my stocking will be as full as *anything!*”

Squire Darlington drew the boy towards him and seated him on his knee while he spoke thus ; and passing his hand caressingly over the young joyous head, and smoothing the brown hair that was parted—child-fashion—in the middle of the forehead, and came curling down upon the lace frill ;

he looked into Edric's face with a world of pleasure and interest.

"And so you have enjoyed the evening, dear boy?" he said.

"Oh yes! grandfather—so much! I am sure Christmas is the very happiest time of the whole year!"

Squire Darlington stroked down the hair again, and looked in the bright eyes, but with something of wistfulness now; and without stirring his hand from the boy's head, his look went towards the fire.

The Yule Log was blazing there steadily, although it now showed a great front of glowing coals that had not yet fallen from their place. A clear red heat was all that part of the log, and hardly to be distinguished from the pile of coal below; while bright points of flame curled and danced and ran scampering up the chimney, as if they too were playing Christmas games. But each end of the log still held out against the fire, and had not even lost its native brown.

The Squire looked with an earnest gaze that was not daunted by the glowing light; but his brows were slightly raised, and though the caressing movement of his hand was repeated, it seemed now to keep time to sorrowful music; and his lips had met on that boundary line between smiles and tears. Presently a little hand was laid against his cheek, and a little lace ruffle brushed lightly over its furrows.

"Grandfather, what is the matter? What makes you look grave?"

The Squire looked at him, and taking his hand in his own patted it softly against his face.

"The matter, my dear?" he said. "Why the matter is that Christmas has come and gone a great many times."

"But that is good, grandfather," said Edric, clapping his hands together. "Just think! there will be another Christmas in a year. Only a year. And we had one only a year ago—and such a pleasant Christmas!"

"Only a year," repeated the old man, slowly. "No, Edric, it is only sixty years."

"What do you mean, grandfather?" said the boy softly.

"Sixty years ago, my dear," said Squire Darlington, "there was just such a Yule Log as that, burning in this very fire-place. And the windows, and the picture-frames—there were not quite so many then—were trimmed with holly-berries and yew from the same trees from which these wreaths have come to-day. And this old chair stood here, and everything in this old hall looked just as it does now."

"Well, grandfather?" said Edric, catching his breath a little,—and the wind gave one of its low sighs through the keyhole.

"Well, my dear—instead of one dear little couple on the floor"—and the old man drew the boy closer to him, "there were six,—as merry-eyed and light-footed little beings as ever trod this green earth. At the head I stood with your grandmother, Edric—a dear little thing she was!" said Squire Darlington with a kindly look towards my lady, whose eyes were cast down now, for a wonder, and her lips trembling a little. "Her two brothers, and my two, and the orphan boy that we loved like a brother; his sister, and my four little sisters—precious children! that they were—made up the rest. Light feet, and soft voices, and sweet laughter—they went through this old hall—like a troop of fairies, I was going to say,—more like a ray of pure human happiness.

"My father sat here, and my mother opposite; her picture watches the very spot now; and of these good friends at the other end of the hall—ay, old Cuthbert remembers it—there were two or three; but many others that bore their names.

"My child—that is sixty years ago!"

"And where are they now, grandfather?" said Edric, under his breath.

"In heaven—the most of them," said the old man, solemnly. "But one couple remains of the six. Of those other dear children not one is left—and not one but gave good hope in his death that he was going to be with Jesus. They still remember that He came to earth, but they sing another song from ours—their hearts danced with a different joy. We shall know, one day, if we are faithful. They are exceedingly fair to my remembrance, they are fairer now in reality."

The old squire was silent for a few minutes, with his eyes again turned towards the fire, while Edric looked up at the sweet portrait to which his grandfather had referred, and wondered how it was that those eyes always met his. Then Squire Darlington spoke again, and with a different manner.

"Everybody that has money makes Christmas a time of feasting and rejoicing, Edric," he said. "What does Christmas-day celebrate?"

"The birth of Christ," said Edric, gravely.

"Yes!" said Squire Darlington. "The birth of Christ. 'Who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor; that we through his poverty might be made rich.' There is a motto for Christmas-day: ay, for one's whole life."

"Grandfather," said Edric, "does everybody that loves Christ love all the poor disagreeable people?"

"This is what the Bible says, Edric. 'For if any man seeth that his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of Christ in him?'"

"Grandfather," said Edric, thoughtfully, "when I am a man, I will take a great deal of care of poor people."

It was rather a sad smile that the old Squire gave him, and yet it was very tender.

"My dear Edric," he said, "never say *when I am a man* I will do good. There is hardly any good work that a child may not help forward or help to keep back. Will you wait till you are a man, Edric, before you begin to love Christ?"

"I think I do love Him now, grandfather," said Edric. "I should think everybody would; He has done so much for us."

There was the same look of love and sadness for a moment in the old man's face before he answered—

"My motto has another bearing, dear boy, which should be first in the heart of every man and every child, in this world, which Christ died to save—'*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*'"

And when the Christmas Eve was almost ended, Squire

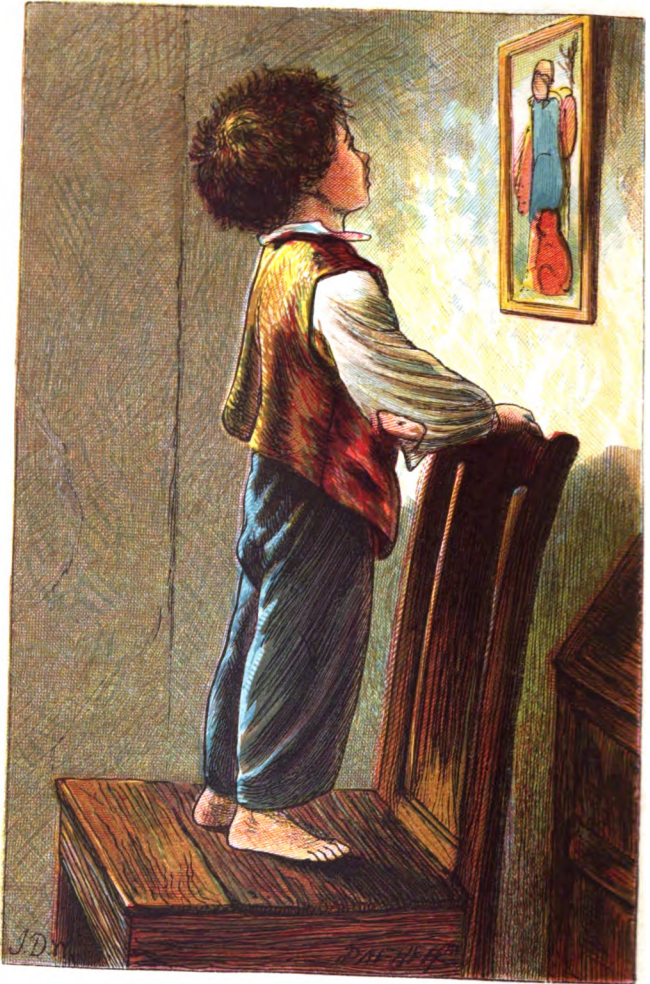
Darlington kissed and blessed his little grandson, and Edric went up-stairs to bed.

And the wind sighed no more that night.

"And did he do as he said he would, when he got to be a man?" inquired Carl.

"I don't know," said the stocking—"I never heard."

CASPER.



Caspar looking at the Portrait.

C A S P E R.

CHAPTER I.

“I AM very miserable !” said Casper.

Other people would have thought so too.

He sat alone in the dusty highway ; the dust making no great change in the colour of his clothes, which were old and ragged. Feet and face and hands were disfigured with dirt ; and only the tear channels on his cheeks declared the fact that Casper was originally a white boy. At present, he was a dark picture in a very bright setting.

For it was as fair a summer's day as often rises upon this world of sin and sorrow ; with birds twittering out their heart's delight in the sunshine, and flowers that bloomed and scented the soft breeze ; Sunday morning too, of all days in the week ; and from the little village that lay scattered like a flock of sheep on the hill-side, went up a slender spire, and rang forth the Sabbath bells. Oh, how musical they were ! Not the iron things themselves particularly ; they were old and toil-worn like many of the villagers. But old as they looked, and silent as they hung all the week, it was given to them on Sunday morning to speak sweet things—sweet, comforting, and peaceful. And now, whenever Casper heard them, his tears overflowed their former channels, and made strange devastation beyond.

“Yes, I am very miserable !” he said, after one of these bursts. And as he said so, he sat up and looked round him.

He was tired out now, and his eyes wandered about from

one thing to another till they had seen whatever there was in sight. The handful of village houses, the green slope, the trees in their full leaf, and the birds in their full joy. The road, the little pond, then the blue sky. How blue it was! There was nothing to break the blue but a speck or two of white clouds; and they sailed so softly and looked so fair that Casper's eyes were fixed, and he gazed till his neck ached so that he could bear it no longer; then his head came down again.

There was something new to be seen on earth now—a young lady; and she stood close at his side. Her dress was so white and floating, that Casper straightway looked up at the two white clouds overhead, to see if one of them had not come down, bringing with it enough blue sky for a good large pair of eyes; but they were there still. Then Casper looked again at the lady.

"Little boy," she said, "will you show me the way to Mrs Cheerful's cottage?"

Casper looked at her without speaking.

"You know the way all about the village, don't you?"

"Yes," said Casper.

"Then will you show me?"

"Are you going to church?" said Casper.

"No."

"Where then?"

"To Mrs Cheerful's."

"Did you ever go there before?"

"Yes, often."

"Then you know the way," said Casper, relapsing.

"No, I do not—not by this road; and if I go back, and go round by the other road, I shall be very late. Won't you show me?"

"No, I can't," said Casper, his breast heaving anew as he caught sight of his dusty little feet so near that white dress.

"I can't, I'm miserable!"

"Miserable!" said the lady. "But if you will not help other people, you will always be miserable as long as you live."

"Shall I?" said Casper. "I suppose I shall, too."

"Then begin to help now; jump up and show me the way to Mrs Cheerful's."

"What for?" said Casper.

"What for!" said the young lady. "Why, because I wish you to. Do you never try to please other people?"

"I don't know," said Casper, "father don't. He always did what mother *didn't* want him to. That's why I'm here; mother is dead and he drives me out. I'm her little boy, and I'm *so* miserable!"

"Oh, don't cry!" said the young lady, stooping over him, "it will not do any good. What is your name? Johnny, or Tommy, or Willy?"

"My name's Casper—brother's name was Johnny, but *he's* dead."

"Well, I would not cry about it. I dare say you are miserable down there in the dust. Why don't you get up and wash your face, and make yourself look like a Christian?"

"What is a Christian?"

"One would think the child had never lived in a civilised country!" said the young lady. "Casper, do you not think it would be very nice if somebody would come and try to keep you from being miserable?"

"Yes," said Casper.

"Then I think it would be nice if you would do as much for somebody else. I am not miserable certainly, but this old Mrs Cheerful that I am going to see is blind, Casper; think of that! and very poor, and she lives all alone. Would you not like to do something for her?"

"I can't," said Casper.

"Yes, you can; I am going to read to her, and you can show me the way."

It was such a new and striking idea to Casper—that of trying to comfort somebody else—that he got up at once, without saying another word, and began to patter along in the dust towards Mrs Cheerful's. So fast indeed did he go, that his companion more than once called out—

"Stop, Casper! if you walk so fast you will make me miserable." Which remark always brought him to a stand.

"Is *she* miserable?" he said, stopping short as they approached the cottage.

"Who? Mrs Cheerful? Don't you think it is enough to make her miserable when she is blind and so poor?"

"Is anybody else?" said Casper.

"Why, yes, child; a great many people; almost everybody in the village, I suppose, in one way or another. Did you never see anybody miserable but yourself?"

"Only mother."

"Well, she is not the only one, Casper. And now good-bye, and there is sixpence for you. You will forget all about crying to-morrow, I hope."

Casper stood and looked after her as she floated into the cottage, and then, with a sudden desire to see how so miserable a person as Mrs Cheerful must look, he went softly up to the hut, and searched until he found a loophole. It was not hard to find, the hut was built of logs, and the covering of moss was in many places loosened or blown in by the wind; but when Casper peeped through he did not see what he expected.

The hut was as rough within as it was without, with its log sides and old worn-out floor, and its little bit of a window. There was a bed, so worn that you could almost see through it, and the sheets and quilt were old and threadbare, though very clean. He could see a little three-legged table, on which lay a large book; two wooden stools; and one chair with a back and seat of old carpet; a tea-kettle, a frying-pan, and a flat iron, were on the hearth; and two cups and saucers, three plates, a tin pan, a yellow earthen dish, and a brown earthen pitcher, were neatly arranged upon the shelves of a little corner cupboard. But the room was so clean, and the dishes and pans so bright, and the sun came in with such a broad stream through the open door, that the room looked well in spite of its poverty. Upon the threshold and door-step two or three little sparrows were hopping about, and one had even ventured in, and stood chirping,

and turning his pretty head, as if he expected crumbs, and was in the habit of getting them.

There were two people in the room. Close in one corner of the fireplace, though there was no fire, sat a girl, rough and coarse-looking like the hut itself.

The young lady in the white frock sat on one of the stools, her bonnet hanging on her arm, and opposite to her sat Mrs Cheerful, in the carpet chair. Casper's eyes had been roaming all round the hut, but when they reached her they never stirred again.

She was dressed in a dark gray gown of some coarse stuff, with a brown apron and very black shoes; her hair was neatly put up, and round her head, across her eyes, went a broad brown ribbon, which was tied in a knot behind. Her hands lay quietly in her lap, and the smile upon her face was so peaceful and bright that Casper wondered. He looked and looked, never moving his eye from the chink in the wall, until one eye got tired and then he changed it for the other. He saw the young lady take the large book and read; saw that the girl in the corner looked very sleepy, and that Mrs Cheerful interrupted the reader now and then, to say something herself; but he could not hear a word. At last the young lady shut the book, and began to tie on her bonnet, and then Casper jumped up and ran away.

There were woods at the back of the house, and through the woods ran a brook, and by the side of the brook Casper sat down. He had forgotten his misery while peeping into the hut, but now it began to come back again. He looked down into the little pools made by the brook behind the large stones in its way, and there were whole shoals of tiny fish, whisking about in every direction; but when they saw Casper they darted off and hid under the great stone. Then by and by, when he was quiet, they came stealing out again.

He looked up into the great trees that waved over his head, and there were birds, as playful as the fish and more busy. Some of them were little green warblers, that put their heads on one side and said "Ba-bee!" so pitifully that Casper felt sure they did not feel very happy; and then there were

great blue jays, that took no notice of anybody, unless to scold. Then Casper saw little brown sparrows, just like those on Mrs Cheerful's door-step.

One of these came down and perched on an old branch of a tree that lay in the brook, and bobbed his head to Casper two or three times, and then began to sing—

“Pretty! Pretty!
Little boy, look!

Why don't you wash your face in the brook?”

And souse he went in himself to set the example. Casper thought he would surely be drowned; but no—up he came again, all dripping and fresh—shook his feathers, and went in for another plunge.

Casper wondered whether he had learned to wash at that rate from going so often to Mrs Cheerful's clean hut, or whether he washed because he was going there. Then the bird took one more dip, and flying up into the tree sang again—

“Pretty! Pretty!
Little boy, look!

Why don't you wash your face in the brook?”

He looked so fresh and comfortable after his bath, that Casper felt half inclined to try what effect the brook would have on himself; and by way of experiment he had just dipped in one of his dusty little toes, when he heard a voice behind him.

“Little boy,” it said.

Casper looked round, expecting to see another sparrow who was come to give him another lecture on bathing, but it was only a little girl. Casper could not imagine why she looked so pretty, but she did: yet her dress was of no better stuff than his own. She had a blue check frock—just like his mother's aprons, Casper remembered—with thick black shoes and white knitted cotton stockings and no pantalettes, and her little flat straw hat was the coarsest, Casper thought, that he had ever seen. It was tied under her chin and round the crown with black ribbon, but there were no long ends.

Casper looked at her from head to foot, and she looked at Casper.

"Little boy," she said, "have you been to church?"

"No," said Casper, "have you?"

"Yes," said the child. "Why didn't you go?"

"I don't ever go," said Casper.

The little girl looked surprised, and still more grieved.

"I always go," she said, simply, "and mother used to. Why don't you?"

"I can't," said Casper. "I haven't got any clothes, and nobody wants me to, and I'm all dusty—and—and—because I'm miserable!"

"Oh!" said the little girl, opening her eyes very wide and looking graver than before. "But why don't you wash the dust off?"

It was one thing he could do, certainly; but Casper did not want to be told, just then, what he could do—he liked better to think of the things that he could not. So he only answered—

"I don't care!"

"What made you cry?" said the little girl, when she had stood silent for a minute.

"Because I'm miserable," said Casper, the tears rushing out again. "Mother is dead, and there isn't any one else!"

"Oh!" said the little girl again. And she stood still as before. Then she said—

"Would you like to come and see my mother?"

"Where does she live?" said Casper, looking up.

"Close by, in the cottage."

"Is Mrs Cheerful your mother?" said Casper.

"Yes," said the child.

"She isn't miserable a bit!" said Casper—"and they said she was!"

"Oh no," said the child earnestly—"my mother isn't miserable! She couldn't be, because God loves her so much."

"How do you know He does!" said Casper, quite interested in such a new set of ideas.

"Because she loves Him more than everything else in the

world," said the child; "and God says in the Bible, '*I love them that love me.*'"

"What made Him let her be blind, then?" said Casper.

"I don't know," said the child, her lip quivering—"He knows, mother says." But she covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

"I didn't mean to make you cry," said Casper. "I'm sorry."

"It was so pleasant," said the little girl, looking up and speaking as if her tears needed some excuse—"It was so pleasant before mother was sick, when she could go about with me, and look at the flowers and birds and beautiful things; she loves them so much."

"Can't she go about now?" said Casper.

"No," said the child, with a heavy sigh—"she isn't often strong enough to walk far. And she couldn't see the beautiful things. I must go home now or she'll be frightened. Don't you want to see her?"

"I have seen her," said Casper.

"Have you?" said the child. "Did she talk to you?"

"No," said Casper. "And I only saw her through the logs."

The little girl looked as if she thought that a very funny way of seeing people.

"Well, come now, then," she repeated.

"No, I won't," said Casper,—"I'll go to the door—I won't go in—I'm too dusty."

And he got up and walked along by his new friend, wondering if the dust ever got hold of her.

"Where did you get your hat?" he said, suddenly.

"I made it."

"You didn't *braid* it?" said Casper.

"Yes, I did," said the child. "Mother taught me how to braid, and Farmer Sickles let me come and cut off oat straws in his barn, till I had enough."

"Well, what do you wear a black ribbon on it for?" said Casper.

"Because it was the only one mother had," said the child,

simply. "It isn't so pretty as blue, I suppose, but it's a nice broad ribbon to tie, and my hat never blows off. What is your name?"

"Casper Knight."

"Well, mine is Ruth Cheerful; and I know mother will be glad to see you, any time you'll come. Good-bye."

Casper stood still till the little blue check dress had all gone through the doorway, and then he started off and ran as fast as he could along the road—perhaps, for fear that Mrs Cheerful would come out after him.

CHAPTER II.

FOR several days Casper kept away from Mrs Cheerful's cottage most carefully. Not that it was pleasanter than usual at home—everything there was as dirty and noisy and disagreeable as it could be; and Casper spent the most of his time out of doors, and was miserable enough.

But he could not make up his mind to go to the cottage—nor give any reason for going. If the young lady who asked him to show her the way would come again, how gladly he would go with her! and he sat and stood and lay about in the road where he had first seen her, hoping that she might come and send him on some errand to Mrs Cheerful. But nothing came by, except waggons to raise a great cloud of dust, or some of the village boys to get him to play with them, or their fathers and mothers to call him idle and good for nothing.

Casper began to long to see Ruth's kind little face, and her clean frock; and he wondered if the sparrow still kept up his bathing habits. Suddenly he remembered that Ruth had said her mother loved flowers, and that the young lady had told him he would always be miserable if he did not try to please other people. Casper jumped up out of the dust, and ran off as fast as he could to a meadow where he thought he

had seen some flowers. There they were still—in great yellow tufts.

Now the meadow was very wet, but that did not signify, —Casper rolled up his trousers and plunged into the mud; wading about, and jumping from bog to bog, never thinking of the mud, until he had his hands full of the yellow flowers. But when he came out Casper looked at himself in dismay. The dust had been bad enough—the mud was worse; and both together made him a sight to be seen. Could such a little figure carry yellow flowers to Mrs Cheerful, and walk about over her clean floor?

“*I am* so miserable!” he cried, throwing down the flowers and putting his hands on his eyes—and the eyes looked none the cleaner for such attention. Then came to him little Ruth’s gentle words—

“Why don’t you wash it off?”

Casper took down his hands and looked at them—water would take it off, no doubt; and he scampered away to the little stream that came out of the meadow and ran across the road. There was plenty of pure water rippling on over the pebbles, and the mud was very good-natured and came off with no trouble at all, and the dust after it. Casper did not know his hands again, and would not have known his face, had he seen it. He thought it was a great pity that he could not wash his jacket, but that would take so long to dry; so he took it off and gave it a good shaking and put it on again. Then he smoothed down his hair with his little wet hands, as he had seen the labourers do when they came home to dinner, and, pulling up a tuft of grass, he tried to rub off the spots of mud with which his trousers were spattered. The last thing was to dip his flowers in the brook, that they might look quite fresh, and then Casper was ready.

It would have amused any one to see him on his way to the cottage, as he bounded from tuft to tuft of the grass that was springing by the wayside; or walked along a piece of stick, or picked his way by the help of little stones; and all to keep his feet clean. But as he came near the cottage he remembered Ruth’s little black shoes; and his breast heaved,

for he had not a pair in the world. He stood still for a long time, almost afraid to go forward. A pretty little curl of smoke went up from the hut, but everything else was still : only Casper saw the birds flying off to the brook, and supposed they had gone to bathe. Presently he heard some one singing in the woods, and as the little voice came nearer it sang these words :—

“ Jesus, listen now to me—
I thy little child would be.
Hear my prayer, and grant it too,
Make my heart entirely new.”

And little Ruth Cheerful came tripping out of the wood, with a great basket of chips on her head. Casper looked down for the black shoes, but they were gone ; and only Ruth's little bare feet stood on the moss.

“ Oh, good morning,” she said. “ Why didn't you come before ? Oh, what beautiful flowers !”

“ You may have them,” said Casper, holding out his great bunch of cowslips.

Ruth set down her basket and took the flowers.

“ How pretty they are !” she said, “ I'm very much obliged to you ! Did you bring them for me ?”

“ Yes,” said Casper. “ No, not for you—you said your mother liked flowers.”

“ Oh well, that's quite as good,” said little Ruth, smelling the cowslips,—“ better too, I think. You'll come in and see her to-day, won't you ?”

“ No, I can't,” said Casper, whose boldness seemed to have left his hand with the flowers.

“ Oh, yes, you will,” said Ruth, “ come !” and she took up her basket again and marched on ; while Casper followed with doubtful steps.

“ Ruth !” he said, “ stop !”

And Ruth stopped and set down her basket.

“ What's the matter ?”

“ I'm not going in,” said Casper. “ Let us go down to the brook and play.”

"I can't," said Ruth. "Mother wouldn't like it. I must go now."

And she turned and walked on.

Casper walked after her, thinking to himself that he *might* offer to carry that heavy basket of chips—that perhaps it would not feel so heavy on his head as on hers—but then why should he plague himself with it? "Do you never try to please other people?" the young lady had said to him. "Would you not like to have somebody try to please you?"

"Ruth," said Casper, "is your basket heavy?"

"Rather heavy," said Ruth, as her little bare feet went somewhat unsteadily over the rocks.

"Well, give it to me, and I'll carry it."

"Oh, thank you!" said Ruth, stopping short with a very bright face,—“that would rest me nicely. But I don't believe you can.”

"A boy can do as much as a girl," said Casper. "Boys are a *great deal* stronger. What have you done with your other straw hat?"

"Oh, that is for Sundays," said Ruth, whose week-day hat was tied with strings of red flannel. "Will you carry the basket in your hand?"

"On my head," said Casper. "You do."

"Yes, but I thought as you were so strong," said Ruth, "it's hard to hold it in your hand, unless you *are* strong. Stoop down then, Casper, and I'll put it on your head."

So Casper stooped down, and when the basket was on his head, he took hold with both hands to keep it there. Then he remembered that Ruth never touched it with her hands, and he took his down at once. And the basket followed. Down, down,—a perfect shower of chips, all over Casper's head and shoulders, the moment he let go. The chips lodged on his shoulders, and stuck in his hair, and fell into his pockets; while the basket bounded away and went rolling down the hill.

"What a dreadful basket!" said Casper, angrily.

"Oh no," said Ruth—"don't say so! Mother always says we shouldn't call things names when they don't please us."

"Well, why wouldn't it stay on my head, then?" said Casper.

Ruth might have answered that it was because he did not know how to carry it; but she was very good-natured and did not say anything of the kind, nor even laugh.

"Never mind," she said, "perhaps it will stay on next time. And away she ran down the hill after the ill-behaved basket. Casper did not offer to help her again, but stood still and looked as she came running with the basket in her hand; and though he did pick up a few of the chips, it was with no very good will, and he still had a great inclination to kick the basket.

"What do you pick up chips for?" he said.

"To burn," said Ruth.

"We don't," said Casper.

"I suppose you're not so poor as we are," said Ruth, gently.

Casper stood up and watched her, as she crowded the chips into the basket.

"Well," he said at last, "if God loves your mother as you say He does, why don't He give her big sticks to burn?"

"I don't know," said Ruth, going on with her work.

"No, I suppose you don't," said Casper.

Ruth looked up with a very grieved little face.

"O Casper! that isn't right!"

"Why not?" said Casper.

"I don't know exactly," said Ruth. "I'm *sure* it isn't. I don't believe we deserve to have chips."

"Why not?" said Casper again; for he felt cross with the overthrow of the basket.

Ruth was laying the last few long chips on the top of her load, pressing them down and tucking small ones in every little corner, and she made no reply.

"Where is my great piece of bark?" she said, looking round. "Oh, here it is! that goes on the top of all—see, Casper, it is like a cover. These are oak chips—don't they smell sweet?"

"No," said Casper "I don't think they do. Where did you get them?"

"Oh, in the woods," said Ruth,— "where Mr Broadaxe is cutting trees. He gives them to me."

"Do you go every day?" said Casper.

"Yes, when it doesn't rain," said Ruth. "Sometimes twice a day. We don't burn them all at once, though. I'll show you where we put them." And, lifting the basket on her head again, she went on; and Casper followed.

There was a little shed at the back of Mrs Cheerful's cottage, made with some old boards which stood with their heads leaning against the cottage and their feet on the ground. Into this dark place Ruth crept, and Casper after her; and then Ruth began to take the chips out of her basket, and to pile them up nicely at one end. There were a great many chips there already, and the shed was full of the pleasant smell of the oak bark.

"What is that shining over there?" said Casper, suddenly. "See!—it's something bright, like fire! It's moving about, too, Ruth."

"Why, it's only our cat's eyes," said little Ruth, laughing. "Pussy! kitty!"

"Ma-ow!" said the cat, in a very melancholy tone of voice, which made both the children laugh.

"What makes you come into this dark place, Ruth?" said Casper. "Are you not afraid?"

"Why, no!" said Ruth,— "what should I be afraid of?"

"I don't know," said Casper. "Are you not?"

"Why, no!" said Ruth again. "It's just as safe here as it is in the light, Casper. We're not safe *anywhere* if God doesn't take care of us."

"But it's so dark!" said Casper.

"Mother taught me a verse out of the Bible once," said little Ruth, as she went on piling her chips; "and it said about God, '*Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.*' That is pleasant, isn't it, Casper?"

But Casper was silent a little.

"Why didn't you talk to me a little while ago?" he said. "You wouldn't answer."

"Because you asked naughty questions," said Ruth. "Mother told me I might tell people what the Bible said, but I mustn't answer if they didn't believe it. Now I have done—come, we'll go in. See how nicely the flowers have kept,—I haven't lost one."

"Mother," said Ruth, as she entered the hut, "here's Casper. You know he wouldn't come in on Sunday because he was dusty, but he has come to-day, and brought you a great bunch of flowers. And he tried to carry my basket because it was heavy; and it fell down off his head and spilt all the chips—wasn't it good of him, mother?"

And Ruth stroked her mother's face, and softly kissed it, and then went behind her and arranged the bows of the broad ribbon that covered her eyes. But her own little face looked very grave then.

"They are beautiful, mother!" she said, touching the hand into which she had put the cowslips. "I mean they are sweet."

"Both, dear child," said her mother. "But how long you were gone, Ruth—and where is Casper?"

"Oh, I had to pick up the chips twice, you know, mother—and then pile them up. Here's Casper—he brought the flowers, because I told him you loved flowers."

"He is a very kind little boy," said Mrs Cheerful, keeping hold of the hand Ruth put in hers, and drawing Casper close to her—he was not very willing to come, however.

"Where did you find them, Casper?"

"Down in the meadow."

"Well, what made you bring them to me? do you like to please other people?"

"I never did but twice," said Casper. "The young lady said I should always be miserable if I didn't."

"Always be miserable!" said Mrs Cheerful, smiling. "Why, are you miserable now?"

"Yes," said Casper.

"O Casper! I'm very sorry!" said little Ruth.

"How does it happen?" said Mrs Cheerful. "Is your father poor?"

"I don't know," said Casper,— "mother's dead, and nobody wants me."

Little Ruth quite sobbed at that, as if it was a degree of poverty she had never imagined; and though she ran away to get some water to put the cowslips in, her blue apron was wet with nothing but tears when she came back.

As for Mrs Cheerful, she said nothing for a while, but sat there with her arm round Casper and her hand stroking his head, until by and by the head came down on her shoulder.

"Poor child!" she said,— "poor little boy! And so there is no one but God to take care of you. But He would have to do it, Casper, even if your dear mother were alive,—don't you think He can do it without her?"

"I suppose He can," said Casper, with a long sigh,—his heart was wonderfully softened by his present resting place.

"I will ask Him every day to take care of you, and make you happy," said Mrs Cheerful. "Will you ask Him too?"

"Yes," said Casper, with another deep breath.

Mrs Cheerful did not say any more to him then, but sat silent for a while; and Casper never moved. And then little Ruth whispered to her mother, and went off and began to set the table for dinner.

It was a very little table, and the cloth that Ruth put on it was very coarse, though as white as it could be; and the dinner was only a brown loaf, and a little bit of cold pork, and a pitcher of water. Yet Mrs Cheerful gave thanks for it before they began, and Casper relished it better than any dinner he had eaten for a great while. So much did he enjoy it, that he never found out that little Ruth had given him her cup, and that she drank with her mother.

After dinner, Ruth washed all the dishes and put them away, and then she and Casper wound a large skein of yarn for Mrs Cheerful's knitting; and by that time Casper thought he ought to be going home.

"Ruth!" he called, when he had got outside the door. Ruth ran out.

"I think God does love your mother," he said—"I do."

And then he ran away as fast as he could.

CHAPTER III.

THERE grew a great oak in the forest. Its roots were deep down in the earth, but nobody could tell where its top was—the leaves were so thick. Moreover, its neighbour trees—the elms, and maples, and ashes—were tall like itself; and their leaves mingled with those of the oak. Unlike most neighbours, they were for ever kissing each other. Early in the spring the maples put forth bright red flowers, when there was not a leaf to be seen; and the elms showed their blossoms, which were, however, hardly worth the trouble. But the oak kept his back; until softly there came out little tufts of young leaves, and then the long brownish-green flowers came and hung down between them. After that the maples had bunches of flat green seeds, with wings to them, that fluttered about in the summer wind, but the oak had little acorns with brown cups.

Now it was true, though nobody knew it, that up in the oak tree a bird had built her nest; and deep in a hole in one side of the oak there lived a large family of squirrels. Nobody knew it, and yet anybody might have guessed it; for the birds were constantly fluttering and singing among the branches, and the old squirrels ran up and down the tree a great many times a day. To be sure, if anybody looked at them they were just as likely to run up another tree as up their own; and then to jump from branch to branch till they reached the oak, and so down to their nest. The young birds had many a rocking when the wind arose while they slept, and swayed and bent the branches from side to side; but the squirrels never minded the wind—they could not fall unless the tree fell, and of course *that* could never happen. The young birds cried out a little sometimes, when their cradle rocked too hard; but nothing kept them awake long—it was all so nice and dark under their mother's wings; with her warm-feathered breast keeping the wind off, and her little heart beating a lullaby. Whether the wind frightened her or not, nobody ever knew, and nobody ever inquired. If it

did, she never told her young ones. But certain it is, that after a long rainy night, if the sun chanced to come out in the morning, the mother bird always jumped up on the edge of the nest, and twittered and stirred her wings, as if she felt very glad the storm was over. And well she might be. It was wet work to fly about in the rain after food for her young ones; and the little bird had no umbrella.

One morning, when the sun had got up very early and the birds were all astir, the mother bird flew up to the very top branch of the tree, and perched herself there in the sunshine to get a billful of fresh air, and sing her morning song. But before she was well through the first verse, the tree trembled so, with a sudden shock, that the little bird nearly fell off the twig; and instantly she spread her wings, and flew up into the air. There, hovering over the oak tree, she saw it shake again, and a third time, more severely than at first.

"It is, without doubt, an earthquake!" thought the little bird; not noticing, in the agitation of her mind, that the neighbouring trees were quite still. But if it *was* an earthquake, clearly everybody would be safest in the air!

So with some fear and trembling she lit on the trembling tree, and made her way down to her nest, feeling very glad that her young ones were duly provided with feather coats and could fly almost as well as herself. They were in a great state of fright when she reached the nest; for though the other old bird was there, trying his best to keep them quiet and not to be frightened himself, still it mattered very little what anybody said so long as their mother was away; and they gladly obeyed her when she bade them jump out of the nest and follow her up into the air. The little ones' wings soon grew tired, and they perched on a maple tree, and sat feeling very cold and disconsolate in the morning wind, without their breakfast; but the old birds continued to fly backwards and forwards over the tree and the tree continued to shake.

Now the cause of all this commotion was Mr Broadaxe.

So one of the young squirrels said, when he had put his whiskers cautiously out of the mouth of the hole, and looked

carefully about. And he went on to remark, that as it was Mr Broadaxe, who was such a good man and never did harm to anybody, they might as well all go to sleep again. And immediately all the squirrels curled their tails over their noses, and went to sleep.

Mr Broadaxe, meanwhile, was intent upon cutting down the tree ; his blows fell sharp and quick upon its great trunk, and the white chips flew hither and thither till the grass was quite spotted with them. And the sound of his axe went through the forest, chop, chop, till you might have known half a mile off what was going on.

But about the time that the little birds got tired of flying over the tree, and went off in full pursuit of their breakfast, Mr Broadaxe thought of his own ; so he stopped his work, set his axe down on one side of the tree and himself on the other, and took up his little basket.

"Chip !" said Mr Broadaxe. "Chip !"

A little dog came dashing out of the underwood at the sound, running along as if he were dreadfully afraid of being late, and had not the least excuse to give for it.

"Chip !" said Mr Broadaxe. "Poor fellow !"

Chip thrust his nose into his master's face in a very gratified manner ; then laid himself down a few feet off ; his paws stretched out before him ; his head up, his ears further yet ; and his eyes shining like black beads.

"Chip !" said Mr Broadaxe again. "There, sir."

"There," meant a piece of bread, which Mr Broadaxe cut off and threw to Chip, and which Chip caught at one snap without moving anything but his head, swallowed it down whole, and was ready for the next piece, which his eyes had watched for all the time. Indeed, if those eyes told the truth, the pieces of bread which his master ate were matters of great interest to him. But as the basket was but small, the breakfast could not be large, and Mr Broadaxe had soon drunk his last drop of coffee, and eaten his last bit of bread. No—that he gave to Chip. For Chip sat there with his head on one side and his mouth watering for more breakfast ; and when his master tossed the last bit of bread to

him, Chip caught it with one snap as before, and then threw his head back to assist him in mastication.

But as he ate, Chip pricked up his ears; and as soon as his mouth was empty Chip barked—and then immediately wagged his tail. It was the best thing he could do under the circumstances, for little Ruth Cheerful was coming through the wood; and clearly she was not a thing to bark at.

“Good morning, Mr Broadaxe,” she said. “Good morning, poor little doggie. Why, what a parcel of chips you’ve got for me already!”

“Yes,” said Mr Broadaxe. “That one will fill your basket of itself.”

“What, the little dog?” said Ruth. “Oh, yes; but I don’t want to carry him off. Now, little dog, be good and quiet.” I suppose the little dog was good, but certainly he was not quiet. He frisked about Ruth, caught hold of her apron and shook it, pulled the chips out of her basket, and put his feet on those she was going to pick up. He even went so far once as to take the handle of the basket in his teeth and run off with it; and when Ruth said, “O Chip! Chip!—put that down, sir!” he turned round and looked at her, with one ear turned back and the other hanging over his eye, as if it really was too bad, but he couldn’t for the life of him help it. Meanwhile, Mr Broadaxe was chopping away at the great tree, till every leaf shook and trembled.

“What makes you cut down such a beautiful tree, Mr Broadaxe?” said Ruth.

“Because it ain’t mine,” said Mr Broadaxe, with another chop.

“Well, then, why do you?” said Ruth.

“It is somebody’s,” said the woodcutter, pausing in his work, “and he wants it down,—so down it must come. I make money out of the cutting it, and he’ll make money out of the selling it.”

“And we make wood out of the chips,” said little Ruth, with a laugh. “So everybody gets something.”

As Ruth turned round for another chip she saw Casper standing there.

"You don't make wood out of the chips," said he. "They're wood already."

"Well, but I mean firewood," said Ruth. "How do you do, Casper?"

"I'm very well," said Casper, who was watching the sharp tool do its work upon the tree. "How fast he strikes!"

"Doesn't he!" said Ruth. "I wonder if anybody else chops so fast."

"I could, if I was a man," said Casper.

"You're not a man, though," said Ruth. "Don't you want to help me to put all the chips in a pile?"

"Yes," said Casper. "No—I'll hold the dog and you can do the chips. He would pull your pile to pieces."

"That will be some help," said Ruth, a little doubtfully. "But I don't believe you can hold him."

Chip, however, submitted to be caught, and then sat very still with Casper's arms round him, and watched Ruth with the utmost gravity. But when her pile was about a foot high, and she had just laid a long piece of wood and bark on the top, Chip made one spring out of Casper's arms, overturning him, and then, rushing suddenly upon Ruth, he seized hold of the long slice of wood and began to pull.

"Naughty little dog!" said Ruth,—“let go, and behave yourself.”

But at that moment Mr Broadaxe called out—

“Now then, children, get out of the way of the tree!” and Casper, and Ruth, and the dog ran off as fast as they could to a safe distance.

Mr Broadaxe, however, kept on with his chopping, and the great tree shook and swayed about and bent its tall head, and then went slowly down,—the limbs creaking, and the leaves fluttering far and wide. There it lay on the ground.

The moment it was down little Ruth came running up, and jumped upon the trunk, and danced backwards and forwards from the root to the head. Presently she stopped short.

“O Mr Broadaxe! there are squirrels up here among the leaves!”

"So, so?" said the woodcutter. "Ay, I dare say. And here has been their nest, in this hole."

"Then we can catch them and take them home," said Casper.

"Oh no, we can't," said Ruth. "That would be cruel."

"Why, no, it wouldn't," said Casper. "We'd shut them up and feed them."

"Then they would be miserable, as you said you were," said Ruth.

Casper stopped at this, and looked doubtful.

"No, we won't take them home," said the woodcutter, "because they love their own home best. I'm sorry I had to cut it down for them. But I won't cut the branches off the tree just yet, and the young ones may have a chance to grow a little bigger before they go off to seek their fortune."

So Mr Broadaxe walked away to another tree and began to cut that down, and Casper and Ruth stood still and looked at the squirrels.

CHAPTER IV.

"RUTH," said Casper, "I like those squirrels." And as he spoke he picked up a big chip and threw it at a squirrel's tail that appeared among the branches of the fallen tree.

"Well, what do you throw things at them for, then?" said Ruth, as the little red bushy tail whisked off out of sight. "We shan't see a bit of them if you frighten them so."

"I like to throw things," said Casper.

"That isn't much reason," said Ruth.

"Ruth," said Casper, "what do you suppose squirrels have to eat?"

"Oh, all sorts of nice things," said Ruth. "Corn, and nuts, and apples, and seeds, and acorns."

"Yes, I know they eat corn," said Casper. "What

do you suppose they have to eat away in the woods, where there's nobody to grow corn for them?"

"Why, then, God feeds them—just as He does here," said Ruth.

"But here the farmers sow the corn," said Casper.

"Yes, but who makes it grow?" said Ruth. "And besides, they eat a great many things that nobody plants."

"If I was a squirrel," said Casper, "I should always have plenty to eat."

"And nice clothes, too," said Ruth. "But everybody can have plenty to eat—no, not plenty, but something. Mother's tried it."

"Well, how did she try?" said Casper.

"In the first place," said Ruth, "she always worked as hard as she could: and, in the second place, she always prayed God to take care of her, and believed that He would. Mother says it never fails."

"I can't work," said Casper, "so that wouldn't do for me."

"Well, then, you can be good," said Ruth, "and that will do just as well, if you *can't* work."

"I can't be good," said Casper. "I don't know how. And I don't believe I could either."

"Don't you!" said Ruth. "Well, you know how to be naughty?"

"Yes," said Casper. "I suppose I do."

"Well, its just the other way," said Ruth. "When you want to be cross you must be good-natured, and when you want to be idle you must go to work, and when you don't want to pray you must kneel down and pray all the more. So mother says. Because nobody can be *really* good, Casper, unless God helps them. And if they never ask Him, it looks as if they didn't want His help."

Casper shook his head and looked at the squirrels. Ruth looked too, and was silent a few minutes. Then suddenly she broke forth—

"Why, Casper, you *must* know how to be good, if you read the Bible."

"I don't read it," said Casper.

"Then you ought to," said Ruth.

"Haven't got one," said Casper.

"Haven't you," said Ruth, "but your father has?"

"I don't think so," said Casper, taking aim at the squirrels with another chip. "If he has I don't know it."

"Why, you poor little boy!" said Ruth, looking at him with unfeigned compassion.

"I'm bigger than you are," said Casper,—“ever so much.”

"Well, I'm a girl," said Ruth, "so it doesn't signify."

"Yes, it does," said Casper,—“I would rather be a boy.”

"Well, but I mean," said Ruth, "boys always are bigger, aren't they?"

"I don't know," said Casper. "I suppose so. They're bigger when they grow up. I want to be a man!"

"I don't," said little Ruth, thoughtfully. "I want to be an angel."

"Do you?" said Casper.

"Yes, I do," said Ruth. And joining her hands together, she sang—

"I want to be an angel,
And with the angels stand:
A crown of gold upon my head,
A harp within my hand."

"But you would have to die to be an angel," said Casper, who had listened very attentively.

"Oh, well," said little Ruth, "everybody will die some day. I don't mean that I want to die now, but when I do die, I want to be an angel."

"Do you think you will be?" said Casper, looking at her with a very interested face.

"Mother says," answered little Ruth, "that when people really want to be angels in heaven, they should try to be angels on earth."

"I don't know how," said Casper; "and I'm too ragged."

"O Casper," said Ruth, and then her voice was choked, and she burst into tears. "It doesn't make a bit of difference to Jesus what clothes children wear if they'll only love Him. Mother says a great many angels in this world are

very poor ; but in heaven they shall have enough of every thing."

"I don't know how," repeated Casper, his own lip beginning to tremble. Ruth sat looking at him, and stroked his face once or twice, as if she didn't know what to say.

"Casper, I learn a little verse in the Bible every morning before I come out, and if you will be here in the wood I'll come and teach it to you. And so you could learn a great deal ; and, maybe, when you're a man, you can buy a whole Bible for yourself."

"What did you learn this morning ?" said Casper, without looking up.

"It was this," said Ruth—" *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.*"

Casper made no reply, and Ruth sat silent as before.

"Shall I say it for you again, Casper ?" she asked, softly.

"No," said Casper, "I know it now."

"Do you ?" said Ruth. "Why, how quick you are. It took me longer than that."

The sun had mounted high into the heavens, but the trees were so thick that his rays scarcely found their way down to the ground, and in the wood it was cool and pleasant. Mr Broadaxe had stopped chopping, and was shouldering his axe to go home to dinner, and the squirrels were playing hide and seek among the withering leaves of the fallen oak. A sweet breeze wandered along through the forest, and said that there were a great many flowers out in different places.

"I must go home, too," said Ruth, jumping up and taking her basket of chips. "Good-bye, Casper—will you come to-morrow ?"

"Yes," he said. And then as she trudged off with her basket on her head, he looked up again and called out—"Ruth !"

"What, Casper ?" said Ruth, stopping and turning round.

"What did you learn yesterday ?"

"Oh, such a pretty one !" said Ruth, her eyes brightening. "About the children that were brought to Jesus when He

was in the world—*‘And he took them up in his arms, and put his hands upon them and blessed them.’*”

Casper turned away again, and so did Ruth on her way home, and soon her little figure was quite out of sight among the trees. The heavy steps of Mr Broadaxe had died away too, and Chip’s frolics could be seen no longer. Casper looked about to be sure that they were gone, and then he threw himself down on the soft green moss and cried. I don’t think he could have told why, if anybody had asked him; but there was nobody to ask: and so he cried, and cried, till he was tired. *He* wasn’t going home to dinner,—his father had told him not to show his face in the house till night; and Casper thought of Ruth’s verse, and longed for some one to lay hands on him and bless him.

CHAPTER V.

CASPER cried himself tired, and then went to sleep, his bare feet curled up and resting on the soft moss, his head resting—or not resting—on a great tree root, which in the course of time had twisted and thrust itself out of the soil. The sun passed on from the mid-heaven, and soft flickering shadows fell over his face, as the broad leaves

“Clapped their little hands in glee,”

and waved to and fro above his head.

But Casper saw and heard none of it; nor even dreamed that there were angels about him, and that the little ragged boy had heavenly watchers. When at last he did wake up, he saw only Mr Broadaxe standing before him, his sharp tool resting on the ground; while by his side sat Chip, his head particularly on one side, his black eyes sparkling with eagerness, his paws ready to pounce upon Casper at the slightest invitation. It was Chip, indeed, who had found the little sleeper, and had barked at him and pranced about him until Mr Broadaxe came to see, and Casper awoke.

"Child, you will catch your death," said the old woodman.

"Well—I don't know," said Casper, raising himself on one elbow, and rubbing his eyes.

"What made you come back after dinner?" said the woodman.

"I didn't," said Casper. "I haven't been home."

"Why not?" said Mr Broadaxe.

"There wasn't any," said Casper. "Father took *his* with him. There's nobody else there."

"You don't care about dinner, I suppose?" said the woodman.

"I can do without it," said Casper, picking up bits of the moss and throwing them at Chip, who caught them as if they had been pieces of bread and butter, and tried to keep them all in his mouth at once.

"That's a great mistake, little boy," said Mr Broadaxe, gravely, "and you must go home this minute and get your dinner."

"I say there isn't any there," said Casper.

"Not in your home?" said Mr Broadaxe. "There is in mine. Lots of bread and milk, and such trash. What do you think of that?"

Casper's eyes sparkled a little, as if they had caught a reflection of Chip's, but he said not a word.

"Look here," said the woodman, lifting his axe and setting it down again, till all the moss trembled; "how do you suppose you will ever work such a tool as that when you come to be a man, if you do nothing but sleep when you're a boy? Why, you'll never be a man!"

"Ruth says *she* wants to be an angel," said Casper, thoughtfully.

"Well, they are a better sort of creature, I'll not deny," said the woodman; "but starvation ain't exactly the gate that leads to that road. Come, jump up—you shan't be one of the babes in the wood *this* time. Now, do you know where I live?"

"The other end of the brook, by the chestnut trees," said Casper.

"That's it," said the woodman, who was writing on a leaf of his pocket-book, which he presently tore out and gave to Casper. "There's a message, child, for my wife. You take it, and wait for an answer, and when you come back I'll give you sixpence."

Casper looked up doubtfully.

"Did you never hear anybody speak the truth?" said the woodman. "Now go, or I shan't have an answer till sunset." And Casper went.

He didn't walk very steadily at first, between shame at having no dinner of his own, and desire to have dinner of some sort, even though it should come from other people. So when he looked at the bit of paper in his hand he went very slowly; and then again when he listened to his keen little appetite he went fast. But even this irregular way of getting along in the world brought him at last to the woodcutter's door. There Casper stopped. The door stood wide open.

All signs of dinner were long ago cleared away, the floor was swept up, and Mrs Broadaxe had brought out her big wheel and begun to spin. But her back was towards the door, and Casper could watch her unobserved. She was quite as cleanly dressed as Mrs Cheerful, but her dress was a great deal more fresh and new; and on her head, instead of a ribbon, there was a very white cap. A little black silk apron—or rather a large one—fluttered about as she stepped to and fro before the wheel, and her shoes creaked with smartness and new leather. She was as big as two or three of Mrs Cheerful—stout and hearty, and just the sort of a woman in whose lap little boys like to curl down and go to sleep. She was whirling the wheel swiftly round with one hand, while the other drew out a long blue thread of yarn from the spindle's point, in a manner that seemed quite wonderful. Casper forgot both his message and his appetite, and stood still to see; and there is no telling how long he might have stood, if a large white cat had not suddenly come round the corner of the house and cried out, "Meow!"

"Winkie! Winkie!" said Mrs Broadaxe, turning the wheel, but not her head.

"Meow!" replied Winkie, with the tone of a deeply-injured cat.

"Well, it serves you right," said Mrs Broadaxe, walking straight off to the pantry and talking all the time; "you should have come home before, Winkie—of course dinner is done, and if this was like some houses you wouldn't have a mouthful. Some of these days I shall not save you any either—I've no doubt."

"Some of these days" had not come yet, however, for Mrs Broadaxe presently appeared with a large plate of chicken bones, which Winkie waited for at the door. But when Mrs Broadaxe had set the plate down, and had straightened herself up again, then she beheld Casper.

"Well, little dear," she said, "how do you like my cat? Should you like to come and sit on the door-step and see her eat her dinner? And if the chickens come up, you can drive them away for me, will you? Because they help themselves out of Winkie's plate."

"Why, mayn't they?" said Casper.

"Because they've had their dinner, long ago," said Mrs Broadaxe.

"Oh!" said Casper. He did not say that he was worse off than the chickens, but he came and sat down on the doorstep, and gave Mrs Broadaxe the little paper message the woodcutter had sent.

Mrs Broadaxe stood still to read.

"My! my!" she said, "who ever heard of such a thing? What's come over the world? And Winkie, too! What is your name, child?"

"My name's Casper."

"Are you going to take a basket to Mr Broadaxe?" said the woodcutter's wife, looking at him as if she felt perfectly puzzled.

"I don't know," said Casper. "He said I was to come, and get an answer."

"Well, I'll put the answer in a basket," said Mrs Broadaxe. "I think that will be the easiest way. But haven't you—what could he mean by telling me—let me see—

Oh yes! Little boy, don't you feel thirsty after your walk?"

"Not much," said Casper.

"But couldn't you drink a little milk—just a cupful?" said the good woman, bending down to look at him.

Casper looked up at her and said, "Yes, ma'am," immediately.

"Ah, well, that will do," said Mrs Broadaxe, bustling away in a great hurry; "I knew you must be thirsty, if you only thought about it."

She went off into the pantry again, and Casper sat still on the doorstep and looked at Winkie; who, cracking the chicken bones in her white teeth, seemed well satisfied with the world in general.

Mrs Broadaxe presently came back, and stooping down by Casper, she held a cup of sweet milk to his lips, and watched to see him drink it every drop. Then she put into one of his hands a tiny basket, and into the other a huge piece of gingerbread. She bade him take the basket to Mr Broadaxe, and added that he might either eat the gingerbread at once, or wait till he got into the wood again.

Casper, however, waited for nothing—not even to make up his mind, for no sooner had he turned his back upon Mrs Broadaxe than his teeth met in the gingerbread; and met so often, and to such good purpose, that the large piece presently became a very small one. As for the few yellow crumbs that fell by the wayside, Casper almost wished himself a bird that he might pick them up. The real little sparrows did it for him, however, and looked out of their bright eyes very joyfully the while; and then when they flew away he ran on.

One bit of the gingerbread yet remained in Casper's hand; and as he went, another little boy, somewhat smaller than himself, came trotting along the road in front of him, from behind the trees.

It would be hard to tell why the sight of this little boy made Casper uncomfortable—at least, it would have been very hard for him to tell; but certain it is, that as the boy

came on, Casper began to wish that he would run the other way—or that he himself had taken some other road; and more than that, the bit of gingerbread went up to his mouth, and he began to eat it as fast as he could.

The boy was undoubtedly poor, but so was Casper; and while the little stranger had on trousers that were worn through on both knees, Casper had a jacket that was out at the elbows. There was not a pin to choose between the cleanness of their faces, and neither of them, to judge by their looks, had ever seen a hairbrush in the course of his life. The only real difference seemed to be, that while the one had a piece of gingerbread, the other had none.

The new little boy found this out at once, and began to look so eagerly at Casper's handful of good things, that as he came on he stumbled over stones, ran out of the road, and finally ran plump up against Casper.

"What are you about?" said Casper, in a high state of indignation.

"I didn't mean to," said the boy.

"Well, get out of my way now, then," said Casper.

"Have you had any more than that?" said the little boy.

"Yes," said Casper, "it was so big—at first."

"Have you had enough?" said the little boy again.

"No," said Casper.

"I didn't mean to run against you," said the little boy quietly, and he turned away and went on; but Casper thought he heard a little bit of a sigh, though he didn't stop to ask what it was for.

He went on, filling his mouth with gingerbread the while, till only one mouthful was left—then he turned and looked back. But the little boy was nowhere to be seen; and Casper having disposed of the last mouthful of gingerbread, set off and ran as fast as his feet could carry him towards the forest.

The sun was low and the shadows were long when he reached it. Yet not longer than the sunbeams: which streamed in between the tall trees, and lay on the patches of moss and tufted grass, with all the warmth of a last em-

brace. But the little moss cups were all unconscious that it was the last—they held up their little dry heads as straight as ever, unwet with even a dew drop; and the shadows crept on unseen.

The birds were fluttering homeward, picking up what supper they could by the way; the squirrels ran up to the tree tops to take an observation; and the bats began to stretch themselves and rub their eyes after their long day's sleep.

Casper's bare feet went pattering on through the wood until every gleam of sunshine faded, and there was nothing but shadow. Then he began to feel a little afraid—it was so dark in the woods, and so still; and then he thought, what if Mr Broadaxe should have gone home without waiting for him!

"It's a pity Ruth isn't here," he said to himself, "she knows all the paths;" and as soon as he remembered Ruth, he remembered the verse she had told him one day in the dark woodhouse—"The darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the night are both alike to thee."

"Then God can see me now," he thought,—and straightway Casper wondered whether that all-seeing Eye had looked at him a little while ago, when he did not give the other little boy a piece of his gingerbread. Casper began to feel uncomfortable now, because it was so light; and he stood quite still, and swung his basket backwards and forwards without once thinking what there might be in it. And as he stood, he heard the steady "chop," "chop," of the woodcutter's axe, from far off in the forest where he was at work.

"It won't take me long to get there," said Casper; and he ran so fast that when he reached Mr Broadaxe he was quite out of breath.

"Hallo!" said the woodman, good-humouredly, as Casper came scampering up. "I suppose you thought you were late."

"It is," said Casper,—"it's as dark as anything in the woods."

"In the woods!" said Mr Broadaxe. "Why, we're in the woods now, child, and it's by no means as dark as anything."

"It's a great deal lighter here than it was yonder," explained Casper.

"This is the first time I was ever set up for a tallow candle," said Mr Broadaxe. "However, child, it's light enough, so sit down and eat your supper."

Casper looked up at him wistfully.

"It is in that basket," said the woodcutter, smiling,— "good too, I guess. My woman never gives the cat anything else."

"She gave the cat chicken bones," said Casper.

"I'll warrant her," said Mr Broadaxe,— "I daresay she has given you chicken. Come, child, make haste and eat your supper—I'm in a hurry. Open the basket."

Casper obeyed, and took out a little white cloth; which, being unfolded, there appeared sundry cold chicken legs and wings, nicely laid upon a little table of bread and butter. Casper handed it up to the woodman.

"It's for you, child," said his friend, smiling,— "do you think I'm going to eat my supper before I get home? Eat it up, and much good may it do you."

"I've had supper," said Casper, whose face was working strangely. "I had a big piece of gingerbread."

"That may stand for dinner, then," said the woodman.

"But I ate it all up," said Casper, dropping his head and two tears at the same time.

"So much the better," said Mr Broadaxe. "I eat my dinner, too, and want my supper. What's the matter with the child? Is that the way you give thanks at meal time?"

"Oh please, Mr Broadaxe," said Casper, "please give it to the other little boy! I'm sure he was hungry, and he wanted some of my gingerbread, and I wouldn't give him a bit! And now I'm sure God saw me, and didn't like it!"

And Casper threw himself down on the moss in a great fit of tears.

Mr Broadaxe stood quite still for a minute or two, and

then he stooped down and lifted up Casper and set him on a high stump; remarking that the moss was damp, or would be, if he went on at that rate.

"Now, Casper," he said, "do you take this pile of bread and butter, and make away with it as fast as you can—Chip! get out of the way!—and if I meet the other little boy going home I'll attend to him. There—it is not bad, is it? And you come here bright and early in the morning, and I'll take a half-holiday and talk to you."

"What about?" said Casper, looking up, with a drumstick in one hand and bread and butter in the other.

"Little boys," said the woodman, "and gingerbread. And if Ruth Cheerful comes we'll go off into the wood and enjoy ourselves."

"I like Ruth!" said Casper. "She's so good."

"Well, why shouldn't Casper be so good too?" said the woodman.

"I can't," said Casper, "I'm bad."

Mr Broadaxe made no reply to that, but as the chicken and bread and butter had all disappeared, he went through the wood with Casper, until he could see the village lights; and then bade him good night, and told him to find some better reason for not being good than the one he had just given.

CHAPTER VI.

NEVER had Casper's home looked so disagreeable to him as it did that night. There was not generally much about it that could be called inviting. A dirty floor; chairs and tables also in much need of scouring, and that needed mending as well; a window where an old hat took the place of one pane of glass, and where other panes were gone, leaving their place empty,—such was the home where Casper had learned to be miserable. Poor child—it was nearly all he had learned.

Through the day the house had nobody in it—unless when

Casper chose to stay there alone : for, sometimes, he got tired of going out to play with the village boys, who teased him because they were strong. Every morning his father went off, taking his dinner with him, and leaving Casper to make *his* dinner on the remains of the breakfast, if there were any. After an hour or so, during which Casper killed flies on the window, or made ash heaps on the hearth, one of the old neighbours came in to wash the dishes and put the house in order—as she called it. As soon as her sunbonnet came in Casper went out,—he could not bear this woman, and often told her so. Then he played with the boys and made believe to feel happy—or he sat in the road and felt miserable,—as when the lady found him that Sunday morning. At dinner time, if there was anything to eat at home he went and ate it, and found the house just as dirty and out of order as it had been in the morning. If the cupboard was quite empty, Casper did as he best could till supper time. There was sure to be something to eat then, for his father always came home, and always brought his appetite with him ; and what he wanted he must have. But sometimes he had been drinking, and sometimes he brought home two or three other men, and they all drank and smoked together.

Now, Casper did not know that all this was so wrong, nobody had ever told him that it was a sin in the eye of God to drink as these men did, or to speak such words as came from their mouths ; but he used to get very tired of being pushed about, and having tobacco smoke blown in his eyes, and bad words spoken to him if he even said a good one. And then he would creep away to bed, and wish that his mother would come back again, and cry softly to himself—and then the poor little ragged boy fell asleep. And in this way had Casper spent his days, from the time of his mother's death until he met with little Ruth Cheerful ; since then he had been almost every day to the forest.

On that particular evening, after his remarkable chicken supper, everything at home looked worse than usual, and Casper got to bed as fast as he could. But he could not get

to sleep. The loud talk of the men frightened him, and when he heard them call upon the name of that great Being, whom little Ruth and her mother loved and worshipped as their best Friend in such a way, Casper put his fingers in his ears and tried to shut out the words. And as he lay there with his ears stopped up, and his elbows raising up the bed-clothes, he thought to himself, "What *would* Ruth do if she lived here!" And directly his conscience answered, "Ruth would say her prayers."

Casper thought that he did not know how—he had never said a prayer in his whole life; but he felt afraid and lonely, and he remembered that Mrs Cheerful had said, God could take care of him. And getting softly on his knees in the bed, he whispered out these words—

"O God, please take care of me, and make me good, like Ruth."

And then he lay down and went to sleep.

The sleep lasted later than usual the next morning, perhaps because the good food Casper had eaten put him in nice sleeping condition; and when he awoke he was quite startled to see how high the sun was. Nothing else was up, that he could see; for the men had gone to sleep last night on the floor about the hearth, and not one of them had yet arisen.

So Casper jumped down very softly from his bed, and scampered out of the house as fast as he could, for fear he should be told to make the fire or fetch water; and once outside the door, away he ran.

The grass was all wet with the dew, but Casper had on no shoes or stockings to be spoiled, and his trousers' legs had long ago hung in rags about his ankles, and now some of the rags had dropped off; so that even they were beyond the reach of the short grass. The dewdrops sparkled like so many clear diamonds on the blades of grass and clover leaves, and Casper thought what a pity it was that they could not be kept. But whenever he gathered a clover leaf, and tried to carry it very carefully, that minute the bright little dewdrop would roll out, and leave only a little wet

spot on Casper's fingers. Casper rubbed his fingers, and looked at the wet spot, but he could not bring the diamond back again; and then it suddenly came into his mind, that before he could meet little Ruth's clean hands and face, it might be as well to wash his own.

He had to cross two or three brooks in his way to the forest, and of these he chose the clearest for a wash-hand-basin; but he found that his hands did not dry quite so fast in the damp morning air as they had done at midday, and he had to swing them backwards and forwards for some time. Then he ran on faster than ever for fear of being late, feeling very sure all the time that he had had no breakfast.

By the wayside grew a great many bushes,—some wild rose-bushes, that bore sweet red flowers, and some brambles, that seemed to bear nothing but thorns. But as Casper ran on, he saw that one of these brambles was spotted with bunches of berries—they were large, and black, and very sweet. Casper ate several, pulling them off as fast as he could, for he was hungry; and then he began to think how he should like to give Ruth some.

He might pick off some of the bunches and take to her,—but then he had had no breakfast, which was, doubtless, not the case with Ruth; but then she had had no blackberries. So, on the whole, Casper thought that he would take just three bunches to Ruth—and then he saw another fine bunch; and picked it, and then another, till he had six bunches of the sweet berries held fast in one hand. With the other hand he gathered every stray berry that he could reach, and ate them, and went on as before to the forest.

How it was, I need not say—everybody must guess for himself—but when Casper came in sight of Mr Broadaxe, his hand held but one bunch of blackberries.

The woodcutter sat on the trunk of a fallen tree, with Chip at his feet and a basket by his side, which Casper at once guessed might contain dinner. On the other side of him sat Ruth, perched up on the old tree, her little feet dangling quite far from the ground; but as soon as she saw Casper she jumped down and ran forward.

"O Casper, I'm glad you are come! we've been waiting only a little while. Have you had any breakfast?"

Casper hesitated a moment and then said—

"They were all asleep when I came away."

"Well, I thought may be you wouldn't have any," said Ruth—"so I brought mine out into the forest to eat with you. Mother said I might."

And producing a tiny basket from the leaves and moss where it had lain hid, Ruth opened it, and took out two slices of bread and butter and a cup of milk, which she arranged on the old tree with the utmost particularity. The cup of milk stood in the middle, with a slice of bread and butter at each end.

"I might have brought two cups," said Ruth, who was in a great state of excitement, "but I didn't think of it. Mr Broadaxe was waiting, and I was in a hurry. I know what will do almost as well!"—and she ran off, and after looking about among the fallen leaves for a few minutes came back with two large acorn cups. "There, Casper! won't that do finely?"

"We don't want them," said Casper, who had stood all this time twirling his bunch of blackberries. "I'm not going to drink your milk."

"Not all of it," said little Ruth—"I'm going to drink part. But that is your bread and butter, and you must dip your little cup into the big cup."

"No," said Casper.

Ruth stood disappointed.

"There is a bunch of blackberries you may have if you like," said Casper, "but I don't want your breakfast."

"Only part," urged Ruth. "And if you don't eat part I shan't want any." And she looked at Casper with her eyes full of tears.

Casper on his part stood still, but when Ruth came and took his hand and led him close to the old tree, and then putting herself on the other side began to eat her share of the bread and butter, to set him a good example,—somehow or other he began to eat his too, and even dipped his little

cup into the big one as Ruth had bade him. But once or twice after these little drinks of milk, Casper's throat felt as if he had swallowed the acorn cup too.

Mr Broadaxe sat by without saying a word,—sometimes watching the children for a minute, and then generally looking away to whistle; and Chip had gone fast asleep, well knowing that there was no bread and butter to spare for him.

“And did you really pick the blackberries for me?” said Ruth, when the breakfast had all disappeared, mouthful by mouthful. “That was very good! How sweet they are!”

“Yes, I picked them,” said Casper, “but you needn't thank me, I wonder I didn't eat them up.”

Ruth laughed and said she did thank him very much; and now as there were no dishes to wash, they at once began their walk into the forest. How pretty it was!

Over head the green treetops mingled their leaves together and shut out the blue sky completely; and under foot the brown earth was as little to be seen, thanks to the moss and the fern, and to the leaves of last year and a great many other years, which had fallen and dried and made a thick brown carpet. Over this carpet—or rather through it—Casper and Ruth went bounding on all sides, and finding all sorts of treasures. Sometimes it was an old empty snail-shell from the root of a tree, or a tuft of red-headed moss from the top of a rock, or an old bird's nest which the wind had blown down. Ruth's basket grew so heavy under the collection that at last Casper, with a great effort at being good-natured, offered to carry it. And the pleasure of taking trouble for other people was so new to him, that he felt quite delighted, and really enjoyed the weight of the basket.

Great was the excitement when Chip, who was running about quite as much as they were, chanced to start a partridge; and when the pretty bird flew whirring up from the dry leaves and bushes, both the children clapped their hands and wished very much that Chip would find another. And when Mr Broadaxe showed them a bird's nest full of eggs, in a little bramble bush, their pleasure knew no bounds. They could not be satisfied with looking; so Mr Broadaxe.

proposed that they should sit down there on the moss and rest awhile.

"I wonder where the bird is?" said Ruth; and as she spoke, back came the little feathered thing and lit on her nest, and then, after a look or two at the strangers, she nestled down upon her eggs, and covered them all up.

"You said you would talk to us, Mr Broadaxe," said Casper.

"Yes, please do, Mr Broadaxe," said Ruth.

Mr Broadaxe said not a word. He sat looking at the bird for some little time, and then told the children that they might go and play till dinner—he was not ready to talk.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE was no want of things to play with, nor of playhouses—the thing was to choose.

"Ruth," said Casper, "let us get stones and build a house."

"A real house to live in?" asked Ruth.

"No, a little one to make believe," said Casper.

"Who will live there?" said Ruth.

"Squirrels," said Casper.

"I don't believe they will," said Ruth,— "it won't be soft and warm like their nests."

"Well, they needn't live in it unless they like," said Casper, "but we can build it. And I'll tell you what will make them like to come, Ruth—when it's done, we'll put plenty of acorns inside."

So the house was begun at once. Casper found a flat stone and laid it down for the floor, and then round this he laid smaller stones one upon another, for the sides. A great rock made the back of the house, and the front was left open. Casper said he could build it up and leave a doorway, but then they couldn't see in. As for Ruth, she sought for a large piece of green soft moss, and laid it down on the floor for a carpet; and it looked so pretty that she went for

more, and carpeted the whole outside of the house : for the walls were so rough that the moss held fast with no trouble at all, and the roof was but another flat stone. Then they emptied the basket of all its treasures, and went off after scorns.

“Ruth,” said Casper, “did you learn your verse to-day?”

“Yes, I did,” said Ruth. “It was this : ‘In my Father’s house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.’”

“I don’t know what that means,” said Casper ; “it isn’t so pretty as the other ones.”

“Oh yes, indeed, it is!” said Ruth earnestly. “Mother told me all about it.”

“Well, you tell me, then,” said Casper.

“The Lord Jesus said those words to the people that loved Him, when He was here in this world,” said Ruth, speaking slowly, as if she were trying to be very exact. “They were troubled because He was going away to leave them, and they thought they should be all alone and have nobody to help and comfort them. So then the Lord Jesus told them not to be troubled—that He was going to prepare a place for them in His Father’s house in heaven ; and that some day He would take them all there, to live with Him for ever.”

“What sort of a place?” said Casper.

“Nobody knows yet,” said Ruth, “except that it is all beautiful and glorious, and every person that lives there will be perfectly good and happy. One part of the Bible calls it a great city, built of gold and precious stones, and where the glory of God makes it so bright that they have no need of the sun. But I’ll tell you what mother loves best about it—she made me learn the verses, so that I could say them to her any time.”

“Doesn’t she like the beautiful city?” said Casper.

“Oh yes!” said Ruth, “but then she loves these words better : ‘And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.’ ‘And there shall be no more curse : but the throne of God and of the Lamb

shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.' Mother says that is the best—then we shall see the Lord Jesus, and never sin against Him any more."

Little Ruth sat quite silent at the end of her long speech and Casper was silent too, and very sober. Up in the trees whole troops of little birds were singing out their gladness—the best praise they knew how to give, and the summer wind blew softly and sweetly through the many leaves of the forest.

"Ruth," said Casper, "I wish I was there now."

Ruth looked as if she felt quite puzzled by this speech, and did not know what to say.

"Mother says we can live with Jesus in a way, even here," she answered at length, "if we love to think of Him and to do His will."

"I don't know anything about that," said Casper; "but I mean I wish I was anywhere else."

"Why, Casper?" said little Ruth.

"I do," said Casper, knitting his brows,—“there's nobody at home—nor nothing, either; and it's miserable, and so am I."

"Not now, Casper?" said Ruth, gently.

"Well, I can't be here in the woods all the time," said Casper.

"Casper," said Ruth, when she had been thinking quietly for some time, "do you ever do all sorts of things for your father to try to make him love you?"

"No," said Casper, shortly, "and he isn't my real father, besides."

"But he might love you if he isn't," said Ruth.

"Nobody does," said Casper, as if that settled the question.

"O Casper!" said Ruth. "I do, and so does mother."

"Do you think *she* does?" said Casper.

"Yes, indeed," said Ruth, "and she prays for you every day."

Casper burst into tears.

"O Ruth," he said, "why doesn't God love me and put me somewhere where I needn't be miserable?"

Ruth got down by him and stroked his face, and said—
“Poor Casper !” several times, but she did not say anything else.

“I think you don’t know,” said Casper, rather crossly, as he sat up again and wiped the tears off his face.

“Maybe you haven’t asked Him often enough,” said Ruth, timidly, for Casper’s manner was not encouraging.

“I never did once,” said Casper.

“Well, why don’t you, then ?” said Ruth, looking very much astonished.

“I don’t know,” said Casper—“I never thought of it. People never do things when I ask them.”

“No, not people,” said Ruth, reverently, “but God. He likes to have us ask for what we want. And if you want to go to heaven, Casper, you will have to ask Him to take you.”

Casper made no answer, but he presently got up from the stone where he had been sitting, and began again to look for acorns, and they were soon as busy as ever.

In the heat of their search, as they went diving into a heap of brush and leaves, up started a little brown and white hare. It looked at them for a second, and then jumped away so queerly as to make them both laugh, for its hind legs were very long and its fore legs very short. Then they found its bed in the brush heap, soft and warm and round ; and Ruth crouched down in it, and made believe she was a hare ; and then Casper made believe he was another, and tried to run away as the real hare had done, but he could not make his arms short enough. In the midst of it all, Mr Broadaxe called them back to dinner, and then they both ran as fast as they could, carrying the basket between them.

How many dinners were eaten in the forest at the same time ! Mr Broadaxe and his little companions had theirs spread on a flat stone that came up out of the moss as if on purpose, and before they began to eat they asked God’s blessing on what He had given them. All about on the trees were little birds hopping up and down, some of them getting a dinner of insects from among the leaves, while others who liked bread crumbs came to pick up those which the chil-

dren scattered. Bones, and such larger mouthfuls, were thrown to Chip, who lay waiting; and not far off among the trees the very little hare that Ruth and Casper had seen, was gnawing the bark of a young tree and nibbling a very small tuft of clover for its dinner. If the truth must be told, a little farther off yet was a sparrow hawk, making a good meal of the last little bird that he had caught; and a toad had just swallowed a fly, and a snake had just swallowed the toad.

"Mr Broadaxe," said Casper, "what makes the sun shine?"

"Ask Ruth," said the woodman.

"I don't know," said Ruth, "only what it says in the first chapter of Genesis—

"And God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also."

"That is all you can understand about it at present," said the woodman,—“God made the sun, and set it in the sky to give light upon the earth.”

"Are you going to talk now, Mr Broadaxe?" said Ruth.

"Are you going to tell the story you promised?" said Casper.

"I am going to tell Casper a story which Ruth has heard before," said the woodcutter, "but it won't hurt her to hear it again."

"Is it about little boys?" said Casper.

"It is about the Friend of little boys," answered the woodcutter. "What were you saying to Ruth this morning about being miserable?"

"I said I was," replied Casper.

"Why?" asked Mr Broadaxe.

"You would be," said Casper, "if you had to live at home and nobody loved you!"

"Then I would try to please the people that I loved," said the woodcutter.

"But there *isn't* anybody!" said Casper; "there's never anybody there all day but old Mrs Clamp—and I hate her!"

“That is wrong,” said Mr Broadaxe, gravely—“that is a great deal worse than the other. If everybody loved you, you wouldn’t be happy unless you loved somebody.”

“Everybody don’t,” said Casper. “Nobody does.”

“*Nobody?*” said Mr Broadaxe, more gravely than before.

“No,” said Casper.

Mr Broadaxe was silent for a minute or two, and then he spoke again.

“A great many years ago, in a country called Judea, there were shepherds in the fields by night, taking care of their sheep. And suddenly there came to them an angel and said to them, ‘Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.’ And then there came about the angel a whole multitude of shining ones from heaven, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’”

“I don’t know what a Saviour means,” said Casper.

“If you should fall into the pond at the end of the village, and I should pull you out, then I should save you from being drowned,” replied the woodcutter; “and if you had lost some of your father’s money, and I should go to him and pay it, I should save you from being punished.”

“As soon as the angels were gone, the shepherds said to each other that they would go to the city, and see the Saviour who was come into the world.”

“And did they find Him?” said Casper.

“They found Him, a very little child, lying in a manger; but the shepherds fell down and worshipped Him, and returned home, giving thanks to God, for they believed what the angels had said. And the child was called Jesus, because He should save His people from their sins.”

“How could He?” said Casper.

“You shall hear,” said the woodman. “For thirty years the Lord Jesus lived in this world, teaching the people how to serve Him, healing their sicknesses, and forbidding them to sin. And a few of the people followed Him. But many

would not believe that He was the Son of God, and would not love and obey Him ; because He told them to do what was right, and they loved to do what was evil. And at last they took Him and put Him to death, nailing Him to the cross. And three days after, He rose from the dead, and went up into heaven, where He ever liveth."

"What did He let them kill Him for?" said Casper.

"Why, He came for that!" said Ruth. "Everybody had sinned against God, and somebody must be punished ; and then Jesus came and died for us, that if we will love Him and follow Him, we might live and not die. And if we really trust to Him with our hearts, God will forgive us all our sins for His sake—because He took our punishment."

"What do you think, Casper?" said the woodman ; "does no one love you ? 'God so loved the world, that he sent his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life ;' and the Lord Jesus came from all His heavenly glory, and lived, and suffered, and died, that just such poor sinners as you and I, Casper, might live for ever in heaven and not in hell."

"Then He isn't here now," said Casper. "I wish He was!"

"He is near you all the time, little Casper," said the woodman ; "He can hear every word you say, and knows every thought you think. And if you will pray to Him, and try to be His little child, you will never be miserable any more. 'When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.'"

Casper made no answer. He had dropped his head upon his hand, and so he sat for sometime without speaking or moving. And when at last the woodcutter said it was time to go, and they all got up and began to walk through the forest, Casper walked along just as silent as ever ; only once when he saw Ruth looking at him, there came a little gush of tears from his eyes, and he put up his hand quick to wipe them away.

Mr Broadaxe took them both home with him to supper, and when the two children were coming away together, Casper looked up, and said—

"Mr Broadaxe, when will you talk again?"

"I don't know," said the woodcutter, smiling kindly. "I must work to-morrow, but we'll see."

Ruth and Casper walked quietly on till they were near Mrs Cheerful's cottage, when Ruth suddenly exclaimed—

"Casper! mother will talk to you whenever you'll come? Will you come to-morrow?"

"I can't," said Casper; "father said I was to go to the mill."

"Well, on Sunday then—you can come after church."

"Well, maybe I will," said Casper; and bidding Ruth good night, he ran home, for it was quite late, and every little bird in the forest had its head under its wing.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE forest in which Mr Broadaxe pursued his business of woodcutting, and where little Ruth came to pick up chips, and Casper to see them both, was very large. The trees of it rose up like a great wall very near the village where Casper lived, and from thence it stretched away into the mountains, and ran up their sides, sometimes even to the very top. Near the village, and for some miles, the woods were a good deal cleared away; the underwood cut out, and the trees were thinned, and you could find no wild animals but squirrels and rabbits, and now and then a woodchuck or a racoon. But going towards the mountains the woods grew thicker. The trees stood close together, and wild vines crept up their trunks, and twined about their branches, and low bushes grew about their roots—huckleberry, and sweetbriar, and dogwood. The moss grew thick and rank in the shade, and whole beds of fern sent up their beautiful leaves to which the wind could hardly get near enough to stir. Over the ground in some places the little partridge-berry spread itself—a mere mat of leaves and white flowers; and the wintergreens clustered together in large

patches, hanging full of their pretty red fruit, which no one ever found but the wild birds.

There were plenty of birds—and of squirrels too, for that matter; and now and then a snake went softly along, and frightened them both. The woodpecker hammered all day upon the hollow trees, and picked out the insects from under the bark with his sharp bill, and the oriole swung her hammock of a nest from the branch of some weeping elm, and then bade defiance to the black snake and all his advances.

But other sounds were heard besides the “tap, tap,” of the woodpecker, or the sharp little “chip” of the hackee, for so the Indians called the little striped squirrel. Sometimes a wolf would stroll through the forest, with two or three after him for company; and when they all cried out together, any little animal that had stayed out too late trembled and shook all over. And if the pretty deer that were lying down among the fern leaves heard the soft bounds of a panther coming along, they took to their heels as fast as fear could make them.

An old gray wolf had her den just at the foot of the mountains; indeed there was quite a settlement in that place, though one could hardly call it a neighbourhood.

The wolf had made her home in a cave-like sort of a place, where great rocks lay piled together, leaving a dry rock house within, that was wolfish and wild enough; and there the old wolf lived and amused herself with her eight cubs, for whose comfort she had lined the nest with moss and her own hair. They were soft little things, with eyes as tight shut as if they had been kittens; and their mother probably thought they were perfect, and looked forward with pleasure to the six or eight months during which she must mount guard over them, and never let them go out alone. And, as soon as they were old enough to eat meat, the two old wolves went out and caught sheep, and deer, and all sorts of dainties; and having first chewed the meat, and swallowed it to make it tender, they brought it up again, and fed the young ones out of their own mouths. And so well did the cubs thrive with all this care and attention, that in a short time they were

able to chew for themselves, and could even tear a lamb to pieces if it was young and tender ; while for growling and fighting there was not a more promising set of young wolves in the whole country. They could amuse themselves so by the hour together.

In the same line of life—although great enemies to the wolves—were a family of foxes, that lived half-way up the mountain, in the thickest of the wood. Anybody who had gone in among the trees and looked carefully enough, would have seen a dark hole, going into the very hill side. This was the foxes' front-door, and led to a long burrow or passage-way cut in the earth ; and at the further end of the burrow the foxes lived. There were but seven of them altogether—the two old ones and five cubs ; but that was seven too many, considering what wicked little things they were. The old fox would steal out at night and go to the barns and chicken-houses that were a long way off, and if there was one chicken straying out where he ought not to be, or roosting on too low a branch, the old fox was sure to have him, and would go back to her cubs with the chicken in her mouth. Sometimes if the duck-house had been left open she went in there, and killed more than she could carry away ; or, if there was nothing to be got in the barnyard, the fox would, very probably, surprise a partridge on her way home, and then the cubs had a dainty supper. To pay for this, however, there were times when the partridge managed to hide all her brood, when the chickens were shut up, and the rabbits invisible ; and then the foxes took what they could get—lizards and frogs, a snake, or a family of field-mice. Such were busy times for the old foxes ; mice were small, and the cubs hungry. They growled and grumbled a great deal sometimes, because they could not reach the wild grapes that hung about the trees at the mouth of their hole—these grapes would have made such a nice dessert after a chicken dinner.

On one of the same trees, where the grape vines clambered about, an oriole had built her nest—built it, too, on a branch that stretched far beyond the others, quite over the foxes'

front-door. It was a queer nest, hung upon several strong threads, and these were made fast to the very end of the branch. The nest itself was made of wool and flax and threads of hemp, which the bird had woven neatly together into a rough sort of cloth, and sewed through and through with long horse-hairs. The bottom was made of tufts of cow's hair, sewed like the rest ; and within, the lining was thick and soft. Little tufts of wool and of moss were laid in first, and then a thick layer of horse-hair, smoothly woven and twisted round. The whole nest was seven inches long and five across, and was narrowed up to a small hole at the top, over which hung a great bunch of elm leaves, and helped to keep off the rain.

The birds were as pretty as their nest, for they were dressed in bright orange and black feathers, and flew about among the green leaves like gleams of fire. They were very merry too, and whistled all the while the nest was building ; but when it was done, and the little mother bird had laid in it five little white eggs, all streaked and spotted with purple, then she began to sit on them all day, and let the other bird whistle for her.

After a time, five little orioles broke the eggshells and came out, having on little downy coats—very thin ones too ; and then the two old birds were busier than ever. As soon as it grew light in the morning they flew off, and now and then one or the other would come back to the nest with a worm or a bug or a beetle for the young ones : there was a kind of little green beetle that they all loved particularly. And there were always five little mouths wide open at the bottom of the nest, the moment the old bird was seen at the top. They all opened their mouths every time, though they were fed only in turn ; but they never could remember that, or perhaps they hoped that their mother would not.

When the little ones grew older, and had eaten a great many green beetles, their feathers began to appear, and they looked a great deal prettier, and the nest became almost too small to hold them. But the top of it was so far off that

they could not get there, do what they would, for their wings were not strong yet.

"If we could only climb up to the top we could look out so nicely," said one of the brood.

And forthwith he tried, but only succeeded in tumbling down upon the heads of the others. And as they felt themselves deeply injured thereby, there is no telling what might have followed, had not the mother bird at that moment come in with a green beetle.

"Mother!" screamed all the young ones at once, "why can't we go up to the top of the nest?"

"Because it is too high for you," said the old bird as she flew off. The young ones were quiet till she came back, and then they screamed out again—

"Well, why don't you take us up there?"

"I have something else to do," said Mrs Oriole, putting a little brown worm into the mouth of the noisiest, and going off again.

"I tell you what," said that little fellow as soon as he had swallowed the worm, "wait till to-night, and then we'll ask her. I can keep awake now, sometimes, if I try hard."

So all the rest of the day they were perfectly quiet; but when the sun set, and the old bird came back and covered them up with her wings, they pushed their heads out through the feathers and began to talk.

"Mother, what is there outside of the nest?"

"Great trees," said the mother bird, sleepily, for she was tired after her day's work.

"And what else?" said the youngsters.

"Foxes," replied Mrs Oriole.

"Foxes!" cried all the young ones, opening their eyes very wide. "Oh, what are foxes?"

"Great beasts, that like little birds and eat them up whenever they can find them."

All the young heads went back under Mrs Oriole's wings at that, and for a while there was so little said, that the young ones fell asleep before they knew it. But when the

daylight came they felt very brave again, and began as before.

"Mother, why are you not afraid of the foxes?"

"I can fly." And away she flew.

"Then the foxes can't, I suppose," said one of the young ones, "and if they can't fly, they can't get up here. I should like to see them so much."

Carefully he began to climb again, sticking his claws into the sides of the nest and working his way up, till he really arrived at the top and could stick his head out of the hole. How splendid it was!

There were great trees, just as the old bird had said, but where were the foxes? The little bird looked and looked but could see none. His feet began to feel very tired, but still he held on and looked about him, till far down, down near the ground, he saw something moving; and a large black snake began to climb a little tree that was there. Up it came, almost to the very top, and then darting out upon one of the branches, stuck its head into a nest of young sparrows, and ate them all up, one by one!

The young oriole was so frightened that he forgot all about holding on, and if he had been on the edge of the nest he would most certainly have fallen over to the black snake; as it was, he only fell down to the bottom of the nest, fully believing that he was dead; and nothing could convince him of the contrary, till his mother came in and presented him with a green beetle.

But after that, the young orioles were content to stay where their mother bade them, until their wings were grown, and they also could fly.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next morning after the day spent in the woods, Casper was sent off very early to the mill, as he had expected. Mrs. Clamp had declared that there was no more flour in the

house to make bread, and therefore Casper and a little sack were sent for more. Trudging along the dusty road, his sack flung over his shoulder, Casper paid small heed to the dust, and only enough to the sack to keep it in its place. If he had not been so tired the night before, he would have thought a great deal of all Mr Broadaxe and Ruth had said : as it was, he went to sleep and dreamed about it : and now this morning his thoughts were very busy. Two new ideas had come into his head ; first, that he could not be happy without loving somebody, and then that God really loved him. It puzzled Casper especially why, in that case, his mother should have died—and why he himself should have been such a miserable little boy ever since ; only, as he could not forget that he had not been a very good little boy, the wonder seemed less. And what should he do to be good, and how should he learn the way. “ Pray to Jesus, and try,” the woodcutter had said. Casper thought he did not know how to do either. But he did go and kneel down by the hedge, and say a poor little prayer—a few words begging that the Lord Jesus would love him, and take care of him, and take him to heaven—and then he went on his way. And everything looked brighter and sweeter, as if the morning had changed ; but it was only Casper’s heart that felt lighter.

The flour mill stood about two miles off, over a stream that came rushing down from the hills, and then flowed gently through a broad meadow. Outside, the water and the wind kept things fresh enough, but within everything was dusty with white dust ; tall flour bags stood about the floor, and between them lay the flour which had been spilled, and the miller and all his men looked very much like other flour bags moving about.

There was a great whirring to be heard when Casper got there, for the mill was heard at work. The water went tumbling and foaming along, turning the great wheels in its way ; and as the wheels went round and round outside the mill, they turned the huge grindstones within. Casper saw how the grains of wheat were put into a vessel above the

stones, which was called the hopper, and how from the hopper they fell slowly down between the stones; and then, as the upper stone went round upon the under one, the wheat was crushed, and ground, and came out in soft flour beneath.

Then the miller put the flour through a sieve, which he called bolting it; and some he bolted two or three times; but that for Casper was bolted only once. And when the sack was filled and tied up, and Casper had paid for it, the miller told him he had better sit down and rest. So laying his own little sack on the floor, Casper climbed up to the top of a high flour bag, and looked about him. He was very glad not to go home just then, there was no chance of anything pleasant there, and it might be too late to find Ruth in the woods. And besides, he was really tired, for his little feet made a great many steps out of the two miles. Nobody took any notice of him; the miller and his men went tramping about, busy and in haste; the mill kept on its whirring, and the splash of the water on the great wheels outside could be distinctly heard. Casper could hear little else. Through the open mill-door he saw the birds fly to and fro; he saw the mill stream, which, having got away from the wheels, turned into a little brook, and ran away as fast as it could; he saw the steeple of the village church just peeping over the hill; and on one side began the forest, and stretched away into the blue distance. Casper fixed his eyes on those tall trees, and thought of Ruth, and of Mr Broadaxe, and Chip, and wondered what they were all doing. And then he wondered if he ever should be good—like Ruth; and if so, what things he should do and what things he should not do; whether he should have to walk so far with a great bag of flour on his back, and whether his father would make him fetch all the water, and whether it would be any pleasanter to do it then than now. And as he thought of these things Casper laid his head down on the flour bag next to him, and went to sleep.

“What shall we do with this boy?” said the miller, when dinner-time came.

“Lock him up and leave him,” said one of the men ; and they locked the mill door, and went off to dinner.

At that time the mice usually came out to get their dinners ; for though they managed to pick up a few grains of wheat or a little flour between the sacks, while the men were about, yet they dared not venture out on the open floor. Now, however, they came forth, ran back when they saw Casper, and ran out again when they found he did not stir, and then went on just as if he had not been there.

Poor little Casper !

His feet hung dangling down the sides of one great sack, and his head nestled down on the top of another, and his coat and hair were already much whiter than when he entered the mill ; for the flour had dusted them in all directions. Once or twice he twisted about as if his bed were far from comfortable, and then for a long time he lay perfectly still ; only smiling now and then in a way that would have made Ruth quite happy.

What do you suppose made him smile ? He was dreaming. When he first went to sleep he was tired and hungry, and this made him turn about so ; but after a while he fell into a sweet dream, and then lay quiet.

He thought he was in the beautiful city, the city of which Ruth had told him ; that the streets were all made of gold, and the light so bright as he had never seen. And suddenly Casper thought to himself that he had no business there, with his dusty little feet and ragged clothes ; what should he do in such a glorious place ? But when he looked at himself all was changed. His clothes were whole and white, more beautiful than any he had ever seen ; he had clean hands, there was not a particle of soil to be found upon him. He felt, too, that he was rested ; instead of being weary and ready to cry, it seemed as if he had no more tears to shed.

And while Casper was wondering at all this, he saw little Ruth Cheerful ; who came running up to him in clothes as beautiful as his own. But when she was going to speak, Casper prevented her, and asked how he got there. And Ruth said—

“O Casper, the Lord Jesus has loved you, and died that you might come here, and now you have come; and we will love and serve Him for ever!”

Casper thought he could have cried then for joy, he was so happy; he even thought that the tears did come into his eyes; but as he put up his hand to rub them away, the bright city faded out of his sight, little Ruth changed and changed till she looked like only a stick of wood, and Casper was sitting up on the flour bag, rubbing his eyes very hard to know whether he were still in a dream or no. There was the old mill, the heavy stones, the sacks, the little mice; there was even the miller unlocking the door on his return from dinner!

“Well, sleepy child,” said the miller, “you have had a fine sleep.”

“Yes,” said Casper. “I wish I had never woke up.”

The men all laughed at that; and Casper, feeling much more ready to cry, jumped down from the flour bag, took up his own little sack, and marched out of the mill door without another word.

With what disgust he looked at his clothes, thinking of those so white and new which he had worn in his dream! Casper felt tired and downhearted. For a while he walked fast, as if to get away from his bad feelings; then his feet went slower and slower; then he stopped and sat down under the hedge. He sat there after his old fashion, sticking out his feet into the dust, and feeling miserable; and there is no telling when he would have stirred, if he had not heard the wheels of a waggon coming along. Then Casper got up, and having with some trouble got the sack of flour on his back again, he walked on. But he saw now that there was a little hole in the sack—the mice might have gnawed it while he was asleep—and through that hole the flour came dropping out, and left a little white streak on the ground as he went along. The waggon came on and stopped just by him. It was a great farm waggon, full of sheaves of wheat: two fat brown horses drew it along, and a pleasant-looking man sat between them and the wheat.

"Look here, my boy!" he called to Casper. Casper looked, but said nothing.

"Who lives in that red house next the orchard, yonder?" said the man.

"Farmer Pippin," said Casper.

"Well, now, my child, run over there, will you?—I can't leave my horses—and ask him for a white sheepskin that belongs to Mr Sickles—you fetch it for me, will you?"

Casper opened his eyes very wide, and did not feel at all disposed to go.

"You're spilling your flour," said the man, smiling.

I ain't," said Casper; "it's the bag."

"Well, it is the bag's fault," said the man with another smile. "Come, run, will you?"

Casper was just going to say no. He was tired, it was rather late; the bag was easily put down, indeed, but it was hard to get it up to his shoulder again; and, moreover, Mr Pippin's red house was beyond a broad meadow and two fences. But, as he looked up to speak, the face of little Ruth Cheerful came to his mind—so bright, so unselfish; and instead of no, Casper said "yes."

He put down the bag and climbed the fence, and had begun to walk over the meadow, when Mr Sickles called him.

"Look here, my boy!"

Casper looked once more, and then as he saw the man beckon, he came back and climbed over the fence again. Mr Sickles opened his pocket-book and took out some money.

"There are two shillings owing them," he said; "and if you carry the cash there will be no fear of your getting the skin. Now, go."

"What did you make me come back for?" said Casper, not very well pleased.

"To get this money for Mr Pippin," said the man with another smile. "Ah, you don't like to be called back, hey? Never mind, my boy—don't ever refuse to help other people, because some day you may want help yourself. You needn't hurry; but the quicker you're back, the better I shall like it."

And Casper once more set forth, nor was it long before he came back again with the pretty white sheepskin in his hand.

"There's a good boy," said Mr Sickles; "first-rate. Where are you going?"

"Home," said Casper.

"Where's that?"

"In the village."

"Do you think you will ever get there on those two little feet?" said Mr Sickles, with a very beaming face.

Casper couldn't help smiling a little too, as he said, "He hoped he should."

"You like walking better than riding?" said Mr Sickles.

"No," said Casper.

"Then jump up here and sit in the wheat," said the waggoner, "and there will be some chance of the flour getting home too—you can hold the bag with one hand, and the hole with the other. Jump up!"

Casper jumped up, in high spirits; Mr Sickles pushed him down into a little nest among the wheat-sheaves, where he was as comfortable as could be; and the two brown horses moved on. Casper was so glad they had a heavy load and could not go faster!

Jog, jog, went the horses, and the waggon rolled after them, and jolted over the stones in the most slow and comfortable manner. The sharp, bearded ears of wheat hung down from the sheaves and scratched Casper's legs, and tickled his neck, and dressed off his hair after a most curious fashion; but it was so delightful to ride, and the soft straw on which he sat rested him so nicely, that he minded not the scratching a whit.

"What sort of a place is the village?" said Mr Sickles. "Pleasant?"

"No," said Casper.

"Ah, that's a pity," said his friend, "people ought to live in a pleasant place. Why isn't the village pleasant?"

"I don't know," said Casper, "maybe it is, but our house isn't."

"Why not?" said Mr Sickles, looking round at him.

"Mother's dead," said Casper, as if that told everything.

Mr Sickles looked away again, and said, "Get up!" to the horses in a very imperative way.

"Do you know where I live?" he said, after a pause.

"No," said Casper.

"Do you see that hill yonder, with a white house and a red barn just at the top?"

Casper said "Yes."

"That's the place," said Mr Sickles, "nice place too, and pleasant. I don't care who says it ain't. Now, do think you could walk so far?"

Casper wondered whether Mr Sickles was going to ask him to carry the sheepskin up there, because the waggon had to go somewhere else; but he only said "yes," again.

"Well, come and spend the day, will you?" said Mr Sickles. "Come to-morrow."

"Spend the *whole* day?" said Casper.

"Why, yes," said his friend. "Got anything to do at home?"

"Oh no!" said Casper. "I should like to come very much."

"Well, there is nothing to hinder, that I can see," replied Mr Sickles. And he was silent again till they reached the village. There he stopped for Casper to get out. Casper could not shake hands with him, for it was all both hands could do to manage the flour bag; but he said, "Thank you, sir."

"Look here!" said Mr Sickles, as he turned away, "what's your name? If the wrong boy comes to-morrow I should like to know it."

"My name's Casper."

"Well," continued Mr Sickles, "do you always carry that face with you?"

"I haven't got any other face," said Casper.

"Well, do you always cry every day? or do you laugh some times?"

"I don't cry when I'm out in the woods with Ruth," replied Casper.

"Don't bring any tears to-morrow," said Mr Sickles,—“my wife is always scared when she sees a child cry—it frightens her almost to death, and you would be sorry to do that, I'm sure.”

He nodded his head and told the brown horses to go on, and Casper turned into the village, thinking what a very queer woman Mrs Sickles must be!

CHAPTER X.

THE house where Mr Sickles lived was near the very top of a high hill that rose up behind the village. Pretty meadows and corn-fields, and pieces of woodland, made the side of the hill a mere piece of patchwork; and winding among the patches went the road. At the back of the house was a dark green spot of forest trees, and in front and at the sides were garden beds—in front full of gay flowers, at the sides full of vegetables. There were also, near by, a large red barn, and a cow-house, and a chicken-roost, and a pigeon-house, and further off a sty for the pigs. And everything was in perfect order.

It was a morning late in the summer. The sun had shone for some time on the hill top, with its white house and red barn, and was now diving down into the valley and searching about there. Little clouds of fog hung about the hill, and floated softly away before the morning wind, and Mr Sickles' black cock was crowing very heartily, as if he felt in good spirits. And why should he not? for there came Mrs Sickles with a whole dishful of eatables, intended expressly for the chickens. With one hand she held the dish, and with the other she scattered the breakfast, while cock and hen and chick fluttered round her and ate as fast as they could. Then Mrs Sickles shaded her eyes with one hand from the bright sunbeams, and looked across the fields.

There were some black specks in a distant meadow, which might be Mr Sickles and his men at work, but they were too far off for her to see much of them.

A little red dog who sat by her, his tail curled up out of the dew, now gave a sharp little bark, and Mrs Sickles turned and looked down the road.

The sunbeams lay very bright there, with only a tree shadow now and then, and in the very midst of sunshine and shadow, toiling along through both, was a little figure that caught Mrs Sickles' eye at once. She looked more intently than before. The little red dog jumped up, and said with a growl that he would go and see who it was.

"Sit down, Gruff!" said Mrs Sickles. And Gruff sat down, and curled up his tail as before.

"Don't you stir, Gruff!" said Mrs Sickles; and she went back to the house, and put her dish away, and came out again, while Gruff whined, and seemed to feel very unhappy. But when his mistress came out, she walked straight down to the garden gate that opened upon the road, and there she stood, looking very hard at the little figure, and the little figure looked just as hard at her.

She was a pretty young woman, with gentle eyes and smooth shining hair, and a fair sweet face; her dark dress as neat as wax, with an immense check apron, that nearly covered her up. She did not move till the little figure was very near the gate, then she opened it and stepped out.

"Is that Casper?" she said.

"Yes, ma'am," said Casper.

"I'm so glad you have come!" said Mrs Sickles; "I was afraid you wouldn't." And she stooped down to Casper, and laying her hands on his shoulders, looked at him for a moment and then kissed him.

Casper was very much surprised, and the tears started into his eyes—it was not often that anybody gave him a kiss nowadays. But remembering what Mr Sickles had said, he turned his face away as quick as he could, and rubbed his eyes very hard with his hands. He hoped Mrs Sickles did not see the tears; but he was not quite sure; he thought he saw her rub

her own eyes with her apron. But she did not look frightened, she only took his hand, and led him on to the house.

"Mr Sickles has gone to the field," she said, "and won't be back till dinner, and I am to take care of you in the meantime. Did you walk all the way from the village?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Casper. "Oh, how sweet the flowers are!"

Mrs Sickles looked pleased at that, and she stooped down, and picked a red rose for him, and stuck it into the button-hole of his jacket.

"Why, what time do you have breakfast at home?" she said. "How could you get here so early, and walk all the way?"

"We have breakfast when father gets up," said Casper; for he did not like to say that he had caught up a piece of bread, and ran off with it while everybody else was asleep.

"What do you think you will do here, all the long day?" said Mrs Sickles.

"I don't know," said Casper. "What are you going to do?" So he felt quite at home already,—the way Mrs Sickles had hold of his hand, made him forget that he had never seen her before in his life. So he looked up, and smiled in her face, and asked her what she was going to do.

She said she must wash the breakfast things, and that he should feed the chickens for her in the meanwhile.

"I thought you were feeding them when I came," said Casper.

"Yes, I fed the cocks and hens," said Mrs Sickles, "but there are some little chicks in a coop."

She mixed a saucer of food for them, and showed him where the coop was, and then went into the house again to her dishes; and for half an hour Casper quite forgot that he had ever been miserable. There he sat before the coop, throwing down the wetted meal by spoonfuls, and watching the soft little white and brown chickens as they came out and picked it up. They enjoyed it very much, but there was not a chick of them all so pleased as Casper. There were large daisies and clover heads growing about in the grass, and Cas-

per picked some of them, and laid them over the coop till it looked quite flowery. He had seen daisies and clover often enough before, but none that he ever thought half so pretty.

Suddenly a voice called him.

"Casper!" it said.

And Casper started, for he feared that some one had come for him; but when he looked round, there was only Mrs Sickles standing in the cottage door with a basket in her hand. Casper ran to her.

"I am going into the garden to pick some beans for dinner," she said, "and you can help me."

Casper never had picked any beans in his life, but he soon learned which were fit to pick, and which must be left to grow a little while longer. And when the basket was full, Mrs Sickles picked two or three large yellow squashes, with green stripes, and carried them into the house along with the beans. Then, while she pared the squashes, Casper shelled the beans; and then Mrs Sickles told him to amuse himself as he liked, in the house or out of the house, till dinner.

Casper went to the door and looked out, then he came back into the kitchen.

"Mrs Sickles, may I go all over your house?"

"Yes, to be sure," she said, with a smile. "I am certain you won't touch anything that ought not to be touched."

"I won't touch anything at all," said Casper. "I'll only just look at everything." And off he went.

First into the parlour, which opened out of the kitchen, but it was so dark there that he could not see much; though after a while he counted six chairs and two rocking chairs, and a table full of books, and a looking-glass, and two white muslin curtains. Casper came out, and shut the door, and went softly up-stairs.

There were a great many little rooms there, but most of them looked as if nobody slept in them. Some had beds, but the beds were not made up; and some had pans of currants drying in the window, and strings of dried apples, and of red peppers, hanging about the wall. Bunches of dried herbs, too, were there; and in one room was a quantity of

white wool, and a spinning-wheel. Casper shut that door, and opened another. Somebody slept in that room, for the bed was made up with very white sheets and a checked woollen quilt, and the pitcher was full of clean water, and clean towels hung by it. A looking-glass was there too, with a little white-covered table beneath, and a pincushion on the table; and there were four chairs and three windows. Between the windows hung a little picture. Casper got up in a chair so see it better.

It was a picture of a pretty-faced, rosy-cheeked little boy, with a blue check pinafore that came up close round his neck, and a little old straw-hat in his hand. In the front of the picture sat a little red dog, that looked very much like Gruff—his tail was curled up after just the same fashion.

Casper stood and looked at it for a long time. He had never seen a pretty picture of any pretty thing in his life before; and this little boy was most pleasant to look at. The little face made Casper think of Ruth, and he did not like it the less for that. But he wondered so much who the boy could be, and where he was. Casper thought he would go and ask Mrs Sickles; she must know; and he jumped from his chair, and ran down stairs to the kitchen to find her, but she was not there. And then seeing a large door stand open into the shed outside, he thought he might as well go out and see what was to be seen in that direction. The shed was very full of all sorts of things, and Casper had his hands full of business at once. Over the beams hung calf-skins and one sheepskin—Casper remembered *that*—and against the wall hung a saddle and a bridle, and a string of red onions, and an old pan, and two horseshoes. There was a pail in one corner, and a broom, a wire sieve, a hoe, and a sledge-hammer stood round the sides. Two or three barrels and boxes filled the end of the shed; but when Casper began to explore them, a white hen, with a very red comb and very yellow legs, flew out of one of the barrels, and began to cackle as if she was astonished clean out of her wits. Casper felt quite

frightened, and afraid he had done mischief; but he could not take his eyes off the hen, and as he walked backwards to the kitchen door he ran right against Mrs Sickles.

"I didn't mean to frighten the hen," said Casper, looking up at her. "I just went over there, and she flew out."

"She's not much frightened," said Mrs Sickles; "she cackles because she has laid an egg. Come, we will go and get it."

The barrel was so high that Casper could not see over it, but Mrs Sickles held him up, and he looked down to the very bottom of the barrel, and there lay a large white egg, and another one not so white.

Mrs Sickles stooped over into the barrel and got the white egg, and she let Casper carry it into the house and into the pantry, and lay it on a dish that was covered with eggs—large eggs and small, some brown and some white.

"Mrs Sickles," said Casper suddenly, "where's that little boy up-stairs. Does he live here?"

Mrs Sickles had followed him out of the pantry, and they both stood before the kitchen fire on the broad hearthstone. She had been smiling a minute before, but when Casper spoke to her she started and looked quite pale.

"No," she said, in a low voice.

"Well, where does he live, then?" said Casper.

She didn't answer at first, and then she said, with just the same low voice—

"In heaven."

And went away.

Casper looked after her, but she was gone so quickly that he could not tell where she went; so he looked back at the fire again. He felt very much astonished.

He had been dreaming of heaven and Ruth, and Mr Broad-axe had told him about it; and now here was the picture of a little boy who really lived there—lived there always. Casper wondered if the little boy was very happy—and if he had ever been miserable; and whether he wore that same little blue pinafore now, or the white clothes of his dream.

And then he went up-stairs to look at the child again—and thought he must have been very good—he looked so like Ruth!

Mr Sickles came home to dinner, and they had a very merry time; and the dinner was very good too, and much more substantial than Casper's breakfast. And as for Casper himself, you would hardly have known him. He was very quiet, to be sure, and did not say much, but he laughed more than he had done for a great while before, and his little face looked quite unlike itself, it was so bright.

After dinner Mr Sickles went back to the field and took Casper with him, and instead of walking they rode in the ox-cart.

"Look here," said Mr Sickles, as they rode along, "how did you scare my wife this morning?"

"Why, I haven't, have I?" said Casper.

"Oh," said Mr Sickles, "I thought maybe you had;" after which he said not a word till they reached the field.

Three or four men were there making hay. Some were heaping it up in large hay-cocks, and some were raking it together, and when the cart arrived they began to throw the hay into it with their long pitchforks. Casper found a rake which had lost part of its handle, and so was short enough for him to manage, and then he helped the men to rake the hay. When the cart was loaded, it went off to the barn, and the men threw the hay into the barn and came back with the empty cart. And Mr Sickles put Casper down on the ground and covered him up with the hay, and made him run races with Gruff, and made Gruff chase him.

The hay was very sweet, and the sun was very bright, and the field crickets sang away at the top of their voices.

When it grew late, and the cart went home for the last time, Mr Sickles and Casper climbed up to the very top of the great load of hay and sat there. And when they got to the barn Mrs Sickles was standing in the great doorway, ready to take Casper down. Tea was ready too; and as soon as tea was over Casper went home.

But when he was just going, and Mrs Sickles had stooped

down to kiss him as she did in the morning, Casper put his face close to hers and said softly,

“How did the little boy get to heaven?”

And she answered,

“The Lord Jesus took him.”

CHAPTER XI.

“MOTHER,” said little Ruth, “isn’t it a great while since Casper was here?”

“When was the last time, Ruth?”

“Why, he hasn’t been here—I mean I haven’t seen him—since the day Mr Broadaxe took us into the forest.”

“That is only four days ago, my child,” said her mother.

“To be sure it isn’t,” said Ruth; “and Casper said he had to go to the mill next day. But why didn’t he come on Friday or Saturday?”

“It rained on Saturday.”

“But it didn’t rain on Friday, nor on Sunday,” said Ruth; “it was beautiful all day. And I asked him to come on Sunday.”

Ruth went to the door and stood still, thinking over the matter very gravely, when suddenly she heard quick footsteps running round the house, and Casper himself appeared. Ruth was full of questions and exclamations of delight; but the little boy was so out of breath that he did not answer for a minute, and then he only said—

“I’ve come—I’ve got here at last.”

“Well, why didn’t you come before?” said Ruth.

“I couldn’t,” said Casper, still panting.

“Not on Sunday?” said Ruth. “O Casper! you didn’t have to go to the mill on Sunday?”

“No,” said Casper: “but father staid at home all day and kept me. O Ruth, I’m never coming any more!” And Casper sat down on the doorstep and cried.

“Why, what *can* you mean?” said Ruth, who would have

cried too, only that she couldn't believe such bad news at once hearing. "What's the reason, Casper? won't you tell me?"

"Father says I shan't," said Casper; and then he felt vexed and stopped crying. "He says I shan't—but I will, too! I ran away now, and I will again!"

"Oh, don't talk so! please don't!" said little Ruth. "Don't talk about your father, but just tell me what's the matter—won't you, Casper?"

"I can't tell you what's the matter without talking about him," said Casper.

"Well, don't be vexed with me," said Ruth, gently, "only tell me."

"I'm cross, I know I am, Ruth," said Casper, looking up at her sorrowfully, "but it's so hard! You see, I went up the mountain on Friday to see Mr Sickles—and oh, Ruth, such a splendid place! Great loads of hay bigger than your house; and ever so many chickens, and hundreds of flowers. And Mrs Sickles was as good as she could be. And she let me feed the chickens, and then I went out into the fields and helped them to rake the hay, and I didn't get home till it was quite dark."

"How happy you must have been!" said Ruth, looking as pleased as if it had all happened to herself. "But what made you go?"

"He asked me to," said Casper. "I met him the other day when I came from the mill. Oh, it's a splendid place!"

"Well, you'll go there again, won't you?" said Ruth.

"Oh, I'm never going anywhere again," said Casper, his tone changing, and the cloud coming over his face. "You see, Ruth, I didn't get home till after dark, as I told you; and the day I was in the woods with you and Mr Broadaxe I didn't get home till dark either. So father was angry because I wasn't there to make up the fire, and because I went off in the morning when he wasn't up. And he said I shouldn't go off again till he said I might—not anywhere—not out of the village. And yesterday he was at home all day, so I couldn't, but to-day he's gone to work."

And Casper sat still on the doorstep and looked up at Ruth, and Ruth stood and looked down at Casper—too much dismayed to speak. When she did move, she came and laid her hand on his shoulder.

“Come in, Casper—come in, and tell mother—that’s the best thing.”

Casper came in, and the story was told to Mrs Cheerful; and then Ruth watched her mother’s face, and waited anxiously for her to speak. But rather a sad smile came with the words,

“Little Casper, do you know what the Bible says?—‘Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.’”

“Don’t *you* like me to come?” said Casper, his eyes getting very full.

“O mother,” said little Ruth, “say yes—quick!”

“Yes, indeed, I do,” said Mrs Cheerful; “but, Casper, your father says you must not come.”

“I don’t care, then,” said Casper. “If you like me to come, I’ll come.”

“Then you wouldn’t obey your father.”

“I don’t care,” said Casper.

“Then you would not obey God.”

Casper was silent at that. He stood twisting one of the buttons of his jacket round and round, as if he meant to twist it off, but he said never a word. As for Ruth, her fortitude quite gave way, now the case seemed hopeless.

Mrs Cheerful was silent, too, for a while; then she said—
“Sit down, Casper;—come here and sit down by me. I want to tell you a story.” And when she had one of his hands fast in hers—as he sat by Ruth at her feet—Mrs Cheerful went on.

“In some countries where the people keep a great many sheep, and the flocks stay out by night and by day in the fields and on the hills, there are men who have nothing to do but take care of them; and those men are called shepherds. In stormy weather the shepherd brings his flock home at night, to a warm, dry house, called the sheep-fold;

but in fine summer nights the sheep never go home at all, and the shepherd stays with them. When the flock move about from one hill to another, if the shepherd sees any weak little lamb that cannot go so fast as the rest, he takes it up in his arms and carries it to the pasture; and if any are sick, he nurses and takes care of them. If one of the sheep wanders away and gets lost, the shepherd goes up and down the hills till he finds it; and if a wolf or any other wild beast comes out to kill the sheep, the shepherd will fight with him and drive him away. He leads the flock to the best pastures, where the grass is fresh and the water sweet; and when he goes on before, the sheep all follow him, for they know his voice. Often too, he knows them by name, and each sheep knows its own name, and will run when it is called. Should you think any of those sheep need ever be afraid, little Casper?"

"Why, no," said Casper,—“what should they for?"

"Not of the fierce wolves?" said Mrs Cheerful,—“nor of the cold and storms?"

"Why the shepherd will take care of that," said Casper.

"And suppose the sheep were to trouble themselves because the grass was all eaten up in one field?"

"Then he would take them to another," said Casper,—“they might know that." The story had almost made him forget his own troubles.

"And what should you think," continued Mrs Cheerful, "of any lamb who wouldn't follow the shepherd into another field, because it didn't look pleasant?"

"I should say he was foolish," replied Casper—"and naughty too."

Mrs Cheerful smiled—a little sorrowfully as before, and stroked her hand kindly over his head.

"Now," she said, "I am going to tell you a story out of the Bible. Shall I tell it, or shall Ruth read it?"

"Ruth may," said Casper.

Ruth jumped up and got the Bible, and then found the chapter her mother told her—the tenth chapter of John.

"Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say

unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers : but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door : by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy : I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth ; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father : and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold : them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice ; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me : and I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all ; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.”

Little Ruth was quite silent when she had finished these words, but she leaned her head down against her mother's knee, and seemed to be reading them over again to herself. Casper was silent, too, and as Mrs Cheerful could not see his face she did not feel sure whether he had understood the two stories.

“Casper,” she said, “what does that last story mean ?”

“It means,” said Casper, “that the Good Shepherd takes care of His flock just as the men do of theirs. It sounds so.”

“Yes, that is it. And who is the Good Shepherd ?”

Casper hesitated a little, and Ruth said—

“The Lord Jesus.”

“Yes,” said Casper,—“Mr Broadaxe told about Him. How He came and died.”

“‘The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep,’” repeated Mrs Cheerful.

“And what kind of sheep do you think He has in His fold?”

“People,” said Casper.

“Everybody?” said Mrs Cheerful.

Casper thought a little, but didn't speak.

“See, Casper,” said his friend, “He tells us Himself who they are—‘My sheep *hear my voice*, and I know them, and *they follow me*.’ The people who follow Jesus—who try to obey Him, are in His fold. My child, will you follow the Good Shepherd, and keep all His commandments?”

“I will try,” said Casper.

It was spoken very softly, and in rather a broken voice, for Casper thought directly of one command he must obey, and that was—

“Honour thy father.”

Mrs Cheerful stroked his head in the same kind way that she had done before.

“Then you will be safe, my dear boy,” she said, “and happy too. The Lord Jesus will gather the lambs in His arms, and carry them on His bosom—there shall not one of them be lost. Pray to Him every day, dear Casper, and tell Him all that you want and everything that troubles you. ‘The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.’ Think of that.”

Casper did think, but his heart was very full. For, besides all that Mrs Cheerful had said, he knew that now he must go home—and he couldn't bear to say good-bye. So, after a little while, he suddenly jumped up and ran out of the door, and then home as fast as he could, without another word.

CHAPTER XII.

THAT night, being very tired and weary, Casper fell into even a deeper sleep than usual, and did not awake until the sun was well up in the sky, and pouring his full light in at the

dusty window. Casper sat up in bed and looked round. There was nobody in the room.

There stood the breakfast-table, with pieces of bread and meat, and plates that had not long ago been used : the sticks of wood in the fireplace had without doubt been burning that morning, but were now burnt in two, and fallen into the corners ; and the tea-kettle stood, all black and desolate, upon the hearth. Flies buzzed about the window-panes, and several spiders were busy catching them, in webs new spun for the occasion. Nothing looked very bright except the sunbeams, and for once they made everything else look darker. Casper rubbed his eyes in great dissatisfaction. Then he lay down again, then sat up and took another look round the room, and finally jumped out of bed and put on his clothes. That was soon done, so was breakfast. There was not much to eat, the whole variety being large pieces of bread and small pieces ; for on examination the scraps of meat turned out to be bones. Casper ate what bread he wanted, and then went to the window ; he never thought of clearing the table and making things look comfortable ; and there he stood, watching the flies. They buzzed about, and got caught in the webs, and the spiders sprung upon them and ate them up. It was very curious, but not very interesting to Casper—he had seen it so often before ; and he yawned two or three times, and rubbed his eyes, as if he was going to sleep again. He thought he heard the door open and shut, but as he did not want to see Mrs Clump, he did not look round—nobody but Mrs Clump ever came there at that time of the day. But while he listened, expecting to hear the clatter of the dishes as she cleared them away, he heard instead a firm, loud step upon the floor, and then Casper turned his head and saw Mr Broadaxe.

“Well,” said the woodcutter, kindly, “so you’ve got the house all to yourself this morning ? A fine chance to do what you like !”

“No, it isn’t,” said Casper. “I can’t do anything I like.”

“That always means that you don’t like anything you can

do," said the woodcutter. "But what's the matter? let me look at you. Has the well dried up this morning?"

"No," said Casper. But he coloured up very red and looked down; he had not washed his face since yesterday, and his hands were a match for the dusty windows.

"Now there's one thing that can be mended," said the woodcutter. "Your father will let you go to the well, won't he?"

Casper said yes, and looked more ashamed than ever.

"Then if you will get a basin full of cold water, and make good use of it," said Mr Broadaxe, "I think you'll feel better; I'm certain I shall."

Casper didn't wait to be told twice. He ran off, only too glad to get a clean face before he came back.

"Ah, now you look like somebody," said the woodcutter; "a great deal more like the little boy I used to see in the woods. But how did it happen that you always had a clean face there?"

"Ruth was there," said Casper.

"Oh—Ruth was—to be sure," said the woodcutter. "Well, suppose Ruth had come with me this morning? And suppose when I go back she should ask me how you looked?"

"You mustn't tell her, Mr Broadaxe!" said Casper.

"I don't mean to," said the woodman. "But now, Casper, I think there is something else you have forgotten this morning. Can you guess what it is?"

Casper didn't try,—he stood silent.

"What do you suppose Ruth does every morning *before* she eats her breakfast?" said Mr Broadaxe.

Casper's lips began to tremble a little, and he said softly—

"She says her prayers."

"No doubt she does," said the woodman. "Come, Casper, let us kneel down here together, and ask the Good Shepherd to take care of this little child who has such a mind to take care of himself."

Mr Broadaxe prayed for just what he had said, and Casper understood every word of the prayer; but it made

him feel glad and sorry too,—he could not help crying a little.

“Now I feel better still,” said the woodcutter, when the prayer was ended. “It’s not so much matter whether you’ve had any breakfast, but it’s a great deal of matter that you should have a blessing.”

“But Mr Broadaxe,” said Casper, “what made you think that I wanted to take care of myself?”

“Because you had not asked God to take care of you,” said the woodman.

“Well, what made you think I hadn’t done *that*?” said Casper.

“I never heard of a little boy in my life,” said Mr Broadaxe, “who, if he said his prayers as he ought to say them, did not wash his face too.”

“Mr Broadaxe,” said Casper, after a little pause, “do you think I shall ever see Ruth again?”

“See her?—dozens of times,” said the woodcutter. “It may not be for a week or so,—but what then? Be as good as you can in the meantime, and she’ll be all the more glad to see you.”

“I can’t be good,” said Casper, sorrowfully. “I’ve got nothing to do.”

“Then you must be good doing nothing,” said Mr Broadaxe. “Good, and patient, and gentle. Besides, as to having nothing to do, that is all nonsense.”

“Why, what can I do?” said Casper.

“Find something,” said the woodcutter. “If I were a little boy living all by myself, I should keep my house in better order; I should carry the dishes out into the kitchen, and set up the chairs, and dust them.”

“Mrs Clamp does that,” said Casper.

“She hasn’t done it this morning,” said Mr Broadaxe. “And if you do it you’ll save her the trouble.”

“I don’t want to save her the trouble,” said Casper, flushing up. “She’s cross; I don’t like her.”

“Then be very kind to her,” said Mr Broadaxe, gravely. “People that are cross need a great deal of pity. I so often

do wrong things myself, that I feel sorry for other people that do."

Casper looked a little ashamed.

"I know I'm not good," he said.

"Well," said Mr Broadaxe, kindly, "I've told you to find something to do; now I tell you to find something to love."

Casper looked up as if that was a harder task than the other.

"Why, do all the little kind things you can for other people," said the woodcutter; "help them in every way."

"I don't like to," said Casper.

"Ah!" said Mr Broadaxe, "then it will do you good. I guess you haven't had much practice. Now I must be off. Here's a whole package of seedcakes my wife has sent you, and Ruth sent a couple of apples and an ear of roasted corn. So you won't starve still supper time. Good-bye."

And the woodcutter's long steps soon took him far from the door, while Casper stood and looked after him.

"Mr Broadaxe!" Casper called out.

"Well?" said his friend, coming back a step or two.

Casper went a few steps to meet him.

"Will you come again, Mr Broadaxe?"

"Maybe so," said the woodcutter, smiling. "Will you never forget again what you forgot this morning?"

"I didn't forget it," said Casper, for he was a sturdy little truth teller.

"What, then?" said Mr Broadaxe.

"I felt cross," said Casper.

"Oh!" said the woodcutter, "a worse reason couldn't be." And he once more nodded and smiled, and went on his way. Slowly Casper came back into the house, and looked about him.

The sun shone strongly in at the windows, pointing out with a bright finger the dust, the spiders, and the flies; and lay in long warm streaks across the dingy wooden chairs. Casper thought of the cool forest, the clear soft moss, and sparkling brooks, and almost cried to be out there and at play. What was he to do here all by himself?—he did not

want to touch the chairs, nor the dishes. Moved by some remembrance of the woodcutter's words, however, he began to push the chairs back to the wall, scraping them over the floor and making a great noise. But this lazy fashion of finding something to do did not work well. The first chair let itself be pushed back to its place, and so did the second—the third tumbled over, and Casper with it. The chair received several scratches, and Casper scraped the skin off his knee in a very uncomfortable manner. He did not cry, however—it made him feel rather angry, and he was very nearly saying that he would not do another thing all day ; but just then his eye fell on the package of seed-cakes and Ruth's two little apples and ear of corn, which stood all untasted on the table. It was as good as a scolding—yes, much better. Casper's good-nature came back at once, and a little shame with it. He put the chairs carefully back against the wall, carried all the dishes into the kitchen, and brought back some old cloth with which he wiped the chairs. Then he got a broom and swept up the crumbs, set the tea-kettle in the fireplace, set himself down on the door-step, and felt pleased.

“ I've done a great deal ! ” he said to himself. “ I wonder if there is anything more to do ? ”

Yes—there was wood and water ; so Casper went to the well once more and got a pailful, and brought in no less than four sticks of wood, which made quite a pile on the hearth ; and by that time he had to go to the well again to wash his hands. Clearly, after that he must sit down and eat a seed-cake—they looked so good : and besides it was really dinner time.

He took his pile of cakes, the two apples, and the ear of corn to the door-step, and there sat down again with his treasures beside him. How nice they looked ! how good they tasted ! Casper looked anything but miserable, as he sat there at his ease, munching a cake, with a few grains of the roast corn for variety.

All of a sudden a little noise made him look round, and there was the cat approaching her nose much too near the

pile of cakes. Up jumped Casper and away ran the cat, but after a hot chase Casper drove her out of the back door and shut it fast. Then he came back to the front door just in time to see a large white chicken, who had daringly walked in and ventured a peck at the ear of corn. If the chicken was not immediately frightened out of his wits, it certainly was no fault of Casper's, for he ran and shouted till he was out of breath ; but the chicken jumped up on the fence and crowed defiance.

Casper came back in a fright lest something else should have attacked the apples, but they were there all safe ; and the only living thing in sight was a tiny little girl standing just outside the door. Casper hastened to count the remaining cakes, (he had been chasing the chicken with one in his mouth all the while,) for he did not feel sure what the little child might have taken. Not a cake was missing, and Casper sat down and began to eat the one he had held in his mouth so long, with much relish.

The little girl came a step or two nearer.

Casper carefully put his hand over the cakes and apples to guard them.

The child held out her hand and said, "Please !"

Casper felt very much tired. If she had snatched one of the cakes he would have taken it from her without the smallest scruple ; but when she asked so meekly and properly, he did not know what to say. He had such a vision of bright little Ruth Cheerful giving him half her breakfast.

"Please !" repeated the child. "One !"

Casper took a cake and held it out to the dirty little fingers so eager to get it. They closed upon the cake, and putting it at once to her mouth, the little girl, queer and as little as she was, dropped a courtesy.

"Now, don't you ask for any more !" said Casper. "Go away !"

The child looked at him, courtesied again, and trotted off round the corner of the house out of sight.

But when another half-hour had passed, and Casper had

done his dinner, he almost wished that his little visitor would come back again, he felt so lonely.

"There's nothing more to do," he said to himself, as he looked into the house, and saw that not a chair had stirred since he set their backs up against the wall.

And Mr Broadaxe said, "I must try and find something to love; but there's nobody here—nor nothing."

He got up and went out into the garden and thought he would try to make friends with the cat. In general Casper did not like this cat, and the cat did not like him—she scratched him, and he pulled her tail. But now he thought it would be better than nothing, even to stroke her head or run races with her. No—puss had had one race lately, and that was enough. There she sat up in the old pear tree, curling her tail and her whiskers, and looking much too wise to come down. Over her head the swallows flew twittering to their nests in the chimney, and a full chorus of grasshoppers sang out that they were at play; but Casper felt sad. He was not at work, but neither was he at play. Why could he not have a playfellow—some one to love? He sat down at the foot of the old tree and thought over every day that he had spent in the forest with Ruth—thought of the Bible verses she had told him, the hymns he had heard her sing. Then he recollected the woodcutter's talk, and Mrs Cheerful's stories. He thought how happy the sheep must be, feeding on the green hills and so well taken care of, and how much they must love the shepherd. And then—why did he not love that Great Shepherd of the sheep, who, as the Bible said, loved him?

"I don't know how," Casper repeated to himself. "I'm not good, and I don't know how." But even as he said the words, he seemed to hear Ruth's little voice repeating one of her verses—

"If ye love Me, keep My commandments."

Some tears came into Casper's eyes—partly at the words—partly at the thought of Ruth. But he said as he had already—

"I will try! I'll mind father, and not go to the forest;

and maybe next week, or the week after, he'll let me go, and then we shall all be so happy."

And Casper curled himself down against the old tree and went to sleep, and the old cat looked down at him with a singularly grave countenance.

CHAPTER XIII.

BUT Casper did not see Ruth next week, nor the week after. She could not come to the village alone, and he could not go to see her,—his father would not let him. Casper's patience was almost tired out. He thought it was—and yet he was really growing more patient, more gentle and obedient, than ever he had been in his life before. Even Mrs Clamp found it out, and on her part could not help being a little more good-natured. Nevertheless, Casper grew more and more tired of living alone; and he could not amuse himself now as he used to with the village boys: the good ones went to school or to work, and the bad ones he could not bear to be with—their words fairly frightened him.

Meantime he had found nothing to love.

"I don't believe I ever shall, Mr Broadaxe," he said one day when his friend had paid him a long visit. "Nothing but you, and Ruth, and Mrs Cheerful, and Mr and Mrs Sickles."

"Well, there are five people," said the woodcutter. "That's not a bad beginning. Five people to love and that love you."

Casper smiled:

"I didn't know there were so many," he said. "But then I can't see them."

"Can't you see me?" said Mr Broadaxe. "Open your eyes."

"Why, yes," said Casper, laughing; "but I mean you're not here all the time."

"No one can be everywhere all at once," said the woodcutter. "And so you sit here all day and wish for some one to come and make you happy?"

"Yes," said Casper.

"Does your father let you go about the village?" said the woodcutter.

Casper said "Yes."

"Well," said Mr Broadaxe, "the next time you want something done for you, just run out of the door and do something for somebody. See how many people you can make happy."

"Why, how?" said Casper, opening his eyes very wide.

"Find out," said the woodman. "If people have fallen down, pick them up,—if they hunger, feed them,—if they thirst, give them drink. Don't go near the people that speak bad words—there are plenty of others that would be glad enough to have a little kindness done for them."

"I wish I was a little piece of kindness," said Casper. "Like Ruth."

"Where did Ruth get her goodness?" said the woodcutter.

Casper looked up and smiled—a very bright smile—but he did not speak.

"Ask, and ye shall receive," little boy," said Mr Broadaxe, as he rose up to go away. And Casper answered—

"Mr Broadaxe, I do try."

He stood as usual in the doorway, watching his friend as he went down the road; and when that pleasant sight was no more to be seen, Casper looked round upon the village. He could see a great deal of that. The road wound away up the hill towards the church, softening off in the distance; and the little village houses were grouped and scattered by the wayside, now thickly and now far apart. Everything looked very quiet. The men were out at work, the women at work within; the children at school or at play on the hillside. Down the road a flock of white geese came waddling along, plucking the grass and talking to each other in very harsh tones, and otherwise the road seemed deserted; unless

when a stray cat came softly out from one house and crossed over to another.

"I suppose Mr Broadaxe wouldn't find anything to love *there*," Casper thought, as he looked about. "Ruth would love the cat—I don't—I don't like cats. And the geese are as ugly as they can be. Nobody wants anything either, that I can see, but me,—they've got grass enough."

A few months ago these thoughts would have made Casper fretful, and he would have called himself miserable. He did not feel very bright now—it was rather lonely to stand there looking over the quiet village. But as his eye went from one thing to another, suddenly it found a flock of sheep feeding on the distant hill-side; and the sight of them brought back all the sweet Bible words that Mrs Cheerful had told him. Casper stood looking down now, thinking strangely and yet pleasantly, how wonderful it was that the Good Shepherd should care about him!

"I wish I was a good child!" he thought, "and then I would never do anything more to displease Him."

"Look! look!" cried a little voice close by.

Casper turned, and there stood the tiny little girl who had asked him for a cake.

"Look!" she repeated.

"Well, I am looking," said Casper, "and I don't see anything but you, and you're not very big."

"Cat in de well," said the child, taking her finger out of her mouth to speak and then putting it back again.

"I don't care," said Casper. "I think I'm glad. I don't like cats."

"My cat," said the child.

But to that Casper made no reply.

"My cat," she repeated, trotting off to the corner of the house. "Come—look." And at the corner she stopped and waited with her finger in her mouth.

"I tell you I don't care," said Casper.

The child's face wrinkled and screwed up in a most remarkable style, and two or three tears ran slowly down.

"What are you crying for?" said Casper.

"My cat," repeated the child. "Come."

Casper stood still yet a minute longer; but the child looked very miserable, he knew what that meant, and two or three better thoughts of doing as he would be done by, came into his head. So he jumped down from the door-step, and followed the queer little thing who stood waiting for him. She trotted round Casper's house, and along the back of the next one to it, and into a large yard which belonged to the next one still. There, to be sure, was a well, and down in the well was the cat: Casper could see her plain enough. She was not in the water, having got out of that upon the rough stone side of the well; but the well was so deep, and the sides so straight, that how to get further the cat was in doubt. She clung to the wet stones, and looked up at Casper while he looked down at her, her eyes shining like two coals of fire in the darkness of the well.

"I don't see what I can do, little thing," said Casper. This was addressed to the owner of the cat, not to pussy herself.

"My cat," the child said again.

It was clear that she looked to him to get the cat out; and it was so pleasant to have anybody look up to him for any reason, that Casper at once smiled, and said he would try. But how to try was the question.

Casper had heard, that when people fall into the water, the people on shore sometimes throw them a rope, which the drowning men catch hold of, and so are drawn to land; and he thought if he could throw a rope to pussy, and she would catch it in her teeth, it would be the best possible way to get her up to the top of the well. He had no rope, however, only a long piece of string in his pocket; but that must be strong enough to hold a cat. Casper unrolled the string, and looking carefully over the top of the well, he threw down one end of the string, keeping the other in his hand. He could not lean over, for the well was high, and built up.

Down went the string, but either it was too short, or else the cat despised it—that she did not lay hold, Casper could feel well enough.

"What shall I do, little thing?" he said.

"Little thing," however, made no answer. Having given the matter into Casper's hands, she troubled herself no further, but stood there with her finger in her mouth, as though her cat had been up a tree instead of down a well.

Casper looked about. There were the old apple-trees, where puss ought to be; there were great sticks of wood, which he could not lift; there was a great well-stick, which held the bucket, now high in air. Why should he not turn the stick and let down the bucket?

It was all he could do. Casper tried and tried before he could move it at all, but at last up went the other end of the great stick into the air, and down went the bucket slowly into the well. It must not go into the water. But as it took all his strength to keep it from going too far, he could not look over to watch the cat; he could only leave the bucket down for a while, and then again draw it up. And as it came slowly to the top of the well, two black furry ears appeared, and the frightened cat made one jump from the bucket to the curb stone, and then scampered away just as fast as she could.

Casper let go the big stick, and clapping his hands together, gave a great shout, which made puss run all the faster.

As for the little girl, she didn't say anything for some time, only she trotted after Casper as he walked home, even to the corner of his own house. There she stopped, and Casper felt her little claw-fingers take hold of him.

"What do you want now, little thing?" he said.

"You're good," said the child. "I like you."

"I'm glad you like me, little thing," said Casper. "I'm not good."

"You're good," said the child again, just as gravely as before. And looking up at him, she dropped her queer little courtesy, and went away.

Casper clapped his hands, and laughed again when she was out of sight, and then he looked sober.

"I wish I was good," he said to himself. "And there's nobody to teach me now, or tell me Bible verses."

Yes, there was some one to teach him—he remembered that, and went into the house and prayed that God would teach him,—there was no one else. And then he sat down on the door-step again, and said over to himself all the verses that Ruth had ever taught him.

He was so busy with this work, and was trying so hard to remember one verse which he had forgotten, leaning his head down on his hands as if to help out the matter, that he did not hear a little light foot come running down the road, nor see the little face that bent over him, while somebody took hold of his shoulder and cried—

“Casper! Casper! Oh, I’m so glad to see you!”

But when he did look, it was Ruth.

Casper was in amaze at first, and neither moved nor spoke; and then his head went down on his hands again, and he fairly sobbed. But it was only for gladness, not for sorrow.

They sat there side by side on the door-step—the two children—and talked and rejoiced as though they had not seen each other for three months instead of three weeks.

“It’s very lonely in the forest now, Casper,” said Ruth. “I never go there to play, I just get my chips and come home. And, O Casper! Mr Broadaxe says he thinks those squirrels like the tree now it’s down, just as well as they did when it was up; and he says he shall have to cut up the tree and drive them away, for they will never go if he waits for them.”

“And how’s Chip?” said Casper.

“Chip’s just as well as he can be,” said Ruth, “and his tail is so curly! He runs and barks at me every day, when I go to the forest; but only for fun, you know. And mother wants to see you so much!”

Casper drew a long breath at that, and was silent.

“She prays for you every day,” said little Ruth, more sadly; “and so do I, and, maybe, very soon you can come again. Don’t you think so?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said Casper, “don’t talk about it.”

“Well, what do you do here all day?” said Ruth. “You can’t sew.”

"Sew!" said Casper, "no, I should think I couldn't. Oh, I don't do much, Ruth, I haven't much to do. To-day I've been busy, though." And he gave Ruth an account of his exertions in behalf of the cat.

Ruth looked pleased.

"I think it was good," she said, "very. Let us go take a walk, shall we? round the village, you know; we needn't go out of it. Mr Broadaxe was going to the blacksmith's, and he said he would stop for me, but I can stop for him just as well. Mr Broadaxe came with me to the end of the street, and then he went to do some business. He said there wouldn't be anybody here this time of day."

"Mr Broadaxe came to see me this morning," said Casper.

"Yes, I know he did," said Ruth; "and before he got home his horse lost a shoe, so he had to come back again."

"Well, we shan't lose any shoes," said Casper, "so let us go on." And the two children got up and began to walk along the village street.

It was just the pretty time of the afternoon, when the shadows of the houses were so long that they stretched across the road, and between them the sun shone in bright and cheerful. You could see that the chickens were getting sleepy, for they came home from their wanderings, and began to draw near the roost; while the cows wound slowly down the hill from the distant pasture, ringing their bells all the way to call out the dairymaids.

Ruth and Casper walked along hand in hand, through the broad shadows and the warm sunlight, leaving the track of little feet and toes in the dust at every step. But they did not kick up a bit of dust—they walked too softly. And they did not say much; it seemed enough pleasure to walk on together just so.

"Casper," said Ruth at last, when they had reached the end of the street, "I don't think I like your village much."

"I'm sure I don't," said Casper.

"Well, where do the nice people live?" said Ruth.

"I don't know," said Casper; "I don't believe there are any. They don't live near *our* house."

"Oh, yes, there must be some," said little Ruth. "There's the minister for one."

"He doesn't live in the village," said Casper; "he lives in the white house up by the church."

"So he does," said Ruth; "I forgot that."

"The blacksmith's rather a nice man," said Casper. "He gave me an old iron hoop once. Only one of the boys broke it."

"Why!" exclaimed Ruth. "What did he do that for?"

"It ran against him one day," said Casper. "He was a big boy; if I'd been big, too, he wouldn't have done it."

"Would he have been afraid to do it?" asked Ruth.

"Indeed he would!" said Casper, with sparkling eyes. "I'd have made him afraid and sorry too."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't," said Ruth. "I'm glad you were not a big boy, then."

"Why not?" said Casper. "He'd no business to break my hoop—I'd knock him down now for it, if I could."

"O Casper! no you wouldn't!" said little Ruth again.

"Well, I say why *not*?" said Casper.

"It wouldn't be right," said Ruth. "Only think, Casper, the Lord Jesus prayed for the people that mocked Him and killed Him. It can't please Him to have little children hurt and trouble each other."

"Well, I won't do anything to that boy," said Casper, drawing a long breath. "I mean I won't if I could."

"Where does the blacksmith live?" said Ruth.

"Down the other road, by the brook. See, you can tell which way the brook is, for all the geese go down there to paddle about and wet their feet."

The geese were stalking down the green slope to take one dip more before night, and the children went running after them, for to walk down such a pretty slope was impossible. They could soon see the blacksmith's shop, and hear the clang of his hammer; and then Ruth cried out—

"Mr Broadaxe hasn't gone! I see his horse!" And Casper presently added—

"There's Mr Sickles too! I'm sure that's his waggon."

And they went bounding into the shop.

The blacksmith, standing there in a shower of sparks that flew out against his leather apron, stayed his hammer for a minute and smiled at the children. Mr Broadaxe said—

“Where do these chips come from?” and then went on fastening the harness about his horse’s head; while Mr Sickles, who stood at the other side of the anvil, called out—

“Look here, little boy;” and then when Casper looked he said not another word, only nodded to him.

But when the horses were shod, and they were all going away, Mr Sickles said—

“See here, little boy—why haven’t you been up my way again?”

“Father won’t let me,” said Casper. “He won’t let me go out of the village.”

“What?” said Mr Sickles.

Casper repeated.

“Hem,” said Mr Sickles. “Well, if you meet my wife anywhere, don’t tell her that—will you?”

CHAPTER XIV.

“MRS CLAMP,” said Casper, “if you will mend my jacket I’ll give you sixpence.”

It was a fine Saturday morning, in the early fall of the year, cool and fresh and bright. Casper sat in his old place on the door step, and Mrs Clamp stood by the table and washed the breakfast things. She had come in early that day.

“I say, Mrs Clamp!” repeated Casper, “if you’ll mend my jacket, I’ll give you sixpence.”

“What will you give me to find the sixpence for you?” said Mrs Clamp.

“Nothing at all,” said Casper. “I’ll find it myself—in my pocket.”

“Well, find it first, and I’ll see,” replied Mrs Clamp, going on with her dishes.

"There it is," said Casper, drawing forth sixpence and holding it up. "Look—you never saw a prettier one, and I don't want to give it to you at all; but I will, if you'll mend my jacket."

"What's the matter with your jacket?" said Mrs Clamp.

"There are four buttons off," said Casper; "and the elbows are all torn, and there's a great rip in the back. I don't think it looks nice."

"You are mighty particular all of a sudden," said Mrs Clamp. "I didn't know your jacket ever had elbows to it at all."

"Well, won't you mend it for me?" said Casper.

"What for?" said Mrs Clamp,—“your elbows look just as well out as in.”

"They don't!" said Casper, reddening and speaking very quickly. Then he recollected himself and stopped, and sat still for a minute.

"Mrs Clamp," he said, gently, "if you will please mend it for me, I'll give you my sixpence that Mr Broadaxe gave me—I haven't got any more."

"Very well," said Mrs Clamp, as she wiped the table. "But you needn't think I'll stay here to do it—bring it down to my house this afternoon and I'll see."

And with that she went away.

The afternoon had hardly begun when Casper knocked at Mrs Clamp's door, jacket in hand; for lest any time should be lost, he thought the safest way was to pull it off at home before he set out. And as Mrs Clamp was fortunately in a good humour, and her baby asleep, she set Casper to rocking the cradle, and she herself sat down to sew.

"I suppose you'll be off to the forest again when this is done," said Mrs Clamp, as she stitched away.

"No, I shan't," said Casper. "Father says I mustn't."

"Oh dear!" said Mrs Clamp. "You are a very obedient little boy, to be sure! Always were."

Casper felt angry for a minute, and he was so afraid he should speak, that he took his tongue fast between his teeth

and held it. But when he looked up again he did speak—cried out quite loud,

“Oh, Mrs Clamp! you’re putting blue elbows to my jacket!”

“Blue or green—what’s the odds?” said Mrs Clamp.

“But they shouldn’t be blue, nor green either!” said Casper,—“they ought to be black.”

“I haven’t got any black cloth to spare,” said Mrs Clamp, stitching on.

“Well, then, please don’t put any in,” said Casper. “I would rather have it just as it was.”

“You should have been contented then,” said Mrs Clamp. “I can’t take the patches off now. If you don’t like them I can put some yellow patches on over the blue. Maybe you would like that better.”

Casper did not say any more. He turned towards the cradle again, and whenever there came a tear into his eyes he rubbed it off, lest Mrs Clamp should see it and put on red patches. And when at last she told him the jacket was done, and bade him take it and be off, still he did not speak; only took out his sixpence and gave it to her, and then ran home. But when he got home he sat down and cried away all his sorrow and vexation. Not quite all his sorrow—and his disappointment seemed to increase. He thought the jacket looked less respectable than ever, and he had wanted it to look smart for a particular purpose,—he wanted to go to church. Often as Ruth had begged him to go, yet he had never been; and now that the wish had really grown up in his own heart, it was hard to be disappointed. But when the tears were all spent, and Casper had thought over the matter in his mind, and turned over the jacket before his eyes, he concluded that if his shirt sleeves were clean, he might hang the jacket over his arm and go to church dressed for hot weather. And he tried putting the jacket in all sorts of positions, so as best to hide the unfortunate blue patches. Then he felt comforted, and went to bed quite happy, meaning to get up with the first ray of sunlight on Sunday morning.

But the first ray of sunlight did not come. On its way from the sun to the earth, it fell in with a thick curtain of cloud and mist, and the most it could do was to send a part of its light through the curtain, and tarry behind, itself. And the cloud was not the worst ; for there came big rain-drops heavily down, and then a steady, pouring shower. The chickens came from their roosting-places in the trees, looking wet and miserable, and as they sought about for breakfast, the rain came pattering upon their backs and dripped off their tail feathers—the cats put their noses out of doors, or just stepped out, to see the weather, and as quickly stepped in again—shaking their ears and fore-feet with every symptom of disgust. Only the ducks were quite at home in the rain, and the muddier it grew, the more they paddled about.

As for the people in the village, the rain and dark weather made them lie in bed the longer : they opened their eyes and looked out, then turned and went to sleep again. Casper's father among the rest had done this.

Casper himself had no mind to believe that it did rain—he covered his head up in the bed clothes, and tried to think that he had only dreamed of bad weather ; but after a little while he found himself listening again, and there could be no mistake—patter, patter—drip, drip—if that was not rain, then Casper had never heard rain in all his life. He got up very softly, and put on his clothes, and went and stood at the window. Leaning his elbows on the window sill, and looking very hard at the clouds—as if that could do any good. And presently—just as if the weather was too dry out of doors—there came a little shower of tears from Casper's eyes. He was so disappointed ! Last Sunday it had been fine, and the Sunday before—why must it rain to-day ? Now, too, that his jacket was mended. He could walk to church in the rain, and not mind it a bit ; but then his clothes were none too nice when they were dry, and Casper did not think that to be dripping with rain would improve their appearance. And besides, if it rained very hard, Ruth would not be there, and then he should not know where to

go nor what to do. No, he must stay at home ; and Sunday would not come again for a whole long week, and at this thought Casper's tears rained down the faster. He wanted to be good, and he had tried to be good, and now, just when he wanted to go to church, the rain came. He might as well not try to be anything but the idle, disobedient little boy he had been before.

But the moment this thought came into his head, Casper felt sorry and ashamed. Ruth had read to him once out of the Bible, that God sent the rain, as well as the sunshine—then it was God who kept him from going to church to-day—and he had nothing to do but be patient, and try how good he could be at home. Casper turned from the window and wiped off his tears ; and though the sight of his jacket hanging across a chair, with its blue elbows full in view, made them run down again, yet the impatience was gone, and that was half the battle.

Casper had need of all his patience that morning. His father—kept at home like himself by the rain—sat down by the fire as soon as he got up from his bed, and did not move therefrom except for breakfast. Whatever was wanting, Casper must get—water from the well, and wood from the yard—and the wood was wet, and the yard muddy, and the rain poured steadily down. Casper would go out for wood, and then when he came in all sprinkled with raindrops, his father would suddenly want fresh water for his face, or fresh water for the teakettle, or chips to make the wood burn. Or the back gate had been left open, and Casper must go and shut it—or Mrs Clamp had not come, and Casper must go and fetch her. By the time breakfast was over, and the dishes put away, Casper was so wet that the rain had little effect on him.

It was rather late in the morning now, and his father had settled himself in the chimney corner and gone to sleep, and Mrs Clamp had gone home. There was wood enough in to keep the fire alive till dinner time, and all the pails were full of water, so Casper sat down on the hearth opposite his father, and fell to thinking instead of to sleep. He stuck

out his bare feet on the warm hearthstones, and felt very comfortable, though a little tired. He was wet, to be sure, but by that fire he could soon get dry; his father was likely to be asleep for the rest of the day—he had just now moved from his chair to the bed—and Casper was alone by himself in the warm kitchen. Somehow or other the morning had been a pleasant one, the disagreeable work had seemed easier than usual, the rain and the heavy pails of water had not made him cross; and to all the impatient words of his father and Mrs Clamp, Casper had not given one impatient answer—he didn't know why. God knew. The Good Shepherd had not forgotten His little child. Casper had prayed that morning that he might not be cross any more, and the prayer was heard and answered.

And now, as he sat there by the fire, getting warm and dry, and saying over to himself the verses he had learned in the forest, softly his eyelids closed, and he went to sleep—nor even dreamed of the pleasure that was preparing.

The wind had changed—that was the beginning of pleasure. And now it came sweeping down from the north-west, sweeping away the clouds as if it had been Mrs Clamp's broom, and they but a parcel of cobwebs. The sky came out fair and blue, and every little pool of water changed from a mudpuddle to a looking-glass—wherein lay spots of the blue, and of the drifting clouds, and the tree branches, and your own face. How the sun shone! and the sun and the wind between them soon began to dry the grass, and the roads, and the tops of the village houses. The vane on the church steeple was quite dazzling in the sunlight, and the birds fluttered about it, and sang better than the people. But it was not till the first bell rang for afternoon church that Casper awoke and saw what had been going on in the world. When he went to sleep, the whitewashed walls of the kitchen looked gray with the cloudy light, and now they were streaked with sunbeams. Casper started up and went to the window—yes, it had cleared off—there was no doubt of it. He looked round at the clock—half-past two—he could get to church before Ruth now, if he should run all the way. Then

another thought came over him, and he looked for his father. But he had gone out, hat, and coat, and all, so Casper felt free to do what he liked; and putting on his little old hat, and hanging his coat on his arm, he set out. He could not take time to look about him, and see how beautiful everything was after the rain—the very thought of Ruth getting there first would not let him stop an instant; but when at last he ran up the green slope to the church door, it was not even open—and Casper knew he was in time. Then he took breath and looked about him. For a short time nobody was in sight, and then the people began to wind slowly up the different paths, one and two and three at a time.

First came the old sexton, to open the doors; and then came a woman and then a man, and then two little girls. Neither of them was Ruth—Casper would not have known her, and Ruth would not have known herself in such white bonnets and pink strings; and their green slippers were very unlike the neat little black shoes which used to make Casper ashamed of his bare feet. And Ruth would have been overjoyed to see him there; but these little girls only pointed, and whispered, and laughed. Casper thought he could stand that; but when another little girl did the same thing, and several boys followed her example, he began to feel rather sad. And when at last a whole string of children began to come up the slope from the little school-house at the foot, Casper ran away from the church door and stood behind one of the tall grave-stones until they had passed. It was the Sunday school. First went one of the teachers, and then all the children, two and two. Some were laughing and talking, and some were singing softly the hymn that had just been sung at the school, and some were looking into their lesson books. Last of all came little Ruth Cheerful, with her sweet, serious little face. She was not talking, nor reading, nor singing, but seemed to be learning something by heart from a paper which she held in her hand.

Casper had let all the others go by, lest they should laugh at him, but when she came he said softly—

“Ruth!”



The Blue Patches

Ruth stopped and looked bewildered.

"Here I am," said Casper, "behind this grave-stone."

"O Casper!" said Ruth; and she sprang right into the wet grass and took hold of him. "How glad I am! But what makes you stay here? Did you wait for me? Will you come and sit where I do?"

"No," said Casper.

"Why not?" said Ruth. "Are you not going to church?"

"No," said Casper; "I was going, but they laughed at me. I know I don't look very nice."

Ruth looked grieved.

"Who laughed, Casper?—it's no matter if they did. We're poor children, but that's no matter either. Come, we shall be late. But why don't you put your coat on? Are you not cold?"

"Not very," said Casper; "and my coat don't look nice. It's got blue elbows."

"Blue elbows!" repeated Ruth.

"Yes," said Casper. "There were no elbows to it, and I got Mrs Clamp to mend them, and she put in blue ones. That wasn't what they laughed at, but I'm afraid they would if they saw it."

"I'll tell you what *I'd* do, Casper," said little Ruth, who had been turning over the coat and taking a careful look at the blue elbows. "I should put the coat on, and go to church. Black would have been prettier, to be sure, but anything is better than holes, mother says; and it's nicely mended, at any rate."

"You'll be ashamed of me when I get in," said Casper, hanging back.

"No, indeed; I won't!" said Ruth. "Why, I wore a blue cotton frock with a black patch once myself. I think you were very wise to have it mended. Come!"

Casper let her take hold of his hand and lead him into the church, even with his coat on. She whispered to him at the door—

"Take off your hat, Casper, all the boys do—and don't look at any of them."

And Casper did as she told him. Therefore, if anybody laughed he did not see it—he only saw Ruth, walking softly and quickly to her place, keeping fast hold of his hand, and looking as pleased as if she had brought a little prince to church, instead of a little boy with blue elbows. She put him on a bench next the wall, and sat between him and the other children; and when the minister got up and read the hymn, Casper forgot everything else—he was so interested and happy. And when they began to sing, and Ruth sang too, he turned round and listened to her, and thought she sang better than the choir.

“Casper,” said Ruth when they came out of church, “you ’ll come every Sunday, won’t you?”

“Yes,” said Casper, “I ’ll try.”

“Well, don’t go home yet,” said Ruth,—“see how pretty the sunshine is. Come over here under the trees, and let us sit down and talk.”

So they went to the back of the church, and sat down in the shade on the grass. Overhead the trees blew softly about, and all around them the white and gray and brown stones rose up out of the green grass, and the birds perched on them and sang.

“It’s pretty here,” said Ruth, when they had sat still a minute.

“Yes,” said Casper. Then, after another minute, he added, “My mother’s here.”

Ruth looked at him, but she did not speak.

“She’s here,” Casper repeated—“over there, behind the trees. Why can’t she live down in the village with me?”

Ruth made no answer to that, but she looked away now, and the little kerchief that was round her neck fluttered quickly up and down. The children sat without moving or speaking for some time. Ruth spoke first.

“My father isn’t here,” she said, softly, “he’s very far away; and I don’t remember him a bit. But mother says, if I’m a good child I shall see him in heaven.”

“Oh, you are good,” said Casper, as if that did not comfort him much.

Little Ruth shook her head.

"You wouldn't think so sometimes, Casper."

"But I tell you I do—always," said Casper.

"Oh, well, you don't know much about it," said Ruth, decidedly. "Now, Casper, my teacher gave me a hymn printed on a little piece of paper, and I want you to take it, because you've got nothing to read. You carry it home."

And she took out of her pocket a folded bit of paper and put it into his hand.

"But you will want it," said Casper.

"No, I shan't," said Ruth. "I know most of it now, and when I want the rest I'll come and borrow it. It's so pretty—I'm sure you will like it."

Casper did not say much, except with his eyes, but they looked very bright and a little glistening; he put the paper in his pocket, and taking Ruth's hand, they went slowly down the green slope together.

CHAPTER XV.

YES, they went slowly down the slope; but as soon as they came to the place where Ruth's road branched off, and Casper had let her hand go, and watched her till she was out of sight behind the dark forest, then he began to run: for he wanted to get home and read his hymn. The little paper was safe in his pocket—he felt it there; but as he went jumping first on one foot and then on the other, past Mrs Clamp's door, she came out and spoke to him.

"Casper, where have you been?"

"I haven't been a step out of the village," said Casper, when he had thought for a minute.

"Quite sure?" said Mrs Clamp.

"Yes," said Casper.

"Did you meet my cow anywhere?"

"There wasn't anybody's cow on the road I went," said Casper.

"Did you see her *before* you went out then? you're always staring out of the windows."

"Well, I haven't been near the window since the morning, Mrs Clamp," said Casper.

"Haven't you seen my cow?"

"No, I haven't," said Casper.

"Well, you do tell the truth; that's one thing about you," said Mrs Clamp. "I suppose I must believe you now. But what I'm to do I don't know. There's the cow off, and the baby screaming itself to death in the cradle."

She went back into the house again, and Casper ran on; but by the time he was fairly seated in his old place in the doorway, and had taken out his hymn, then a disagreeable thought came into his head.

"Casper," it said, "why don't you go and find Mrs Clamp's cow?"

Casper had plenty of reasons ready. He did not want to go, and Mrs Clamp was never very good to him, and she had put blue elbows to his coat; and besides, there was the hymn, he must read that.

Casper unfolded the paper. But the first words were, "Little children," and with that the verses which Ruth had taught him came into his head.

"Little children, love one another."

"If you love Me, keep My commandments."

"Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil."

Casper folded up his paper and put it in his pocket, and then, drawing a sigh or two, he jumped off the step, and scampered away over the common, in search of the cow.

The cow was easy to find, in one respect—you could not mistake her for any other cow, nor any other cow for her. Her sides were black and her ears were white, and her back and face were grizzled and spotted. One horn crooked down

quite over her eyes, and the other had been broken short off in the middle, in a fight with some other cow. Her tail was perfectly black, and swept the ground with its black tassel. Moreover, the cow had the credit of not being very good-natured; Casper thought she was much like her mistress.

There were a great many paths over the common, and many a clump of bushes where the cow might hide. Casper thought there was no end to them—either the cows or the bushes—as he went from one clump to another, starting up red cows, and white cows, and frosted cows, with little red calves; and looking in vain for the black sides of the short and long-horned cow. But at last, far off, beyond the furthest house of the village, he saw something that looked like her gray back; and when a run had brought him there, there she was. And there she meant to stay. At first she would not get up. Her place in the grass was very comfortable, and she had no mind to leave it; and when she was really on her feet, she stood switching her long tail about, as if that was the only thing in the world she had to do, and nothing else could be expected of her.

Casper got a little stick, and struck her gently with it; the cow flung her tail about his ears, by way of answer. Then he shouted to her; then he took hold of the black tassel, and gave the cow a few more soft blows with the stick. The cow flirted her tail away, and set off at full gallop across the common, but in the wrong direction. Casper's patience was nearly worn out. But as the cow had now found out the use of her feet, he thought if he could but turn her head towards home she would perhaps ran thither. And so it proved. Casper made a great exertion, and got ahead of the cow, the cow turned round, and then never stopped till she reached Mrs Clamp's door.

Casper followed more slowly, for he was tired. He felt a little sorrowful, too; the shadow of the cow, as she ran over the green, was very long, and the sunbeams came straight across from the top of the forest. He feared his father would get home before him, or it might be too dark to read. Well, he knew what Ruth would say—

"Never mind, Casper; it does not matter, so long as we only do right."

Mrs Clamp was just coming out with her milkpail as he drew near the house.

"Who fetched this cow?" she said.

"I did," said Casper.

"What did you do it for?" said Mrs Clamp.

"I thought I would," said Casper.

"Why, I wonder if you are growing goodnatured?" said the mistress of the cow, looking at him.

"I'm afraid not," said Casper. "I wish I was." And he went on to his own home, feeling very glad that he had found the cow, though he got no thanks for it.

His father sat near the open door. That was unfortunate; Casper thought to himself that he should have water to bring and wood to kindle. But he went quietly in and up to the window, got on the table to see the better, and once more took the little paper out of his pocket. He could hardly read at first, for the mere dread of being called off, and kept looking towards his father between every two words, but his father never moved. And at last Casper forgot him and read on, in peace, the hymn demanding all his attention. And there was light enough—the lines were in such large print. Casper read them over twice, and then began to learn them by heart.

Little children, come and hear,
 Jesus speaks—you need not fear.
 Sweeter words there cannot be;—
 "Let little children come to Me."

Jesus came to earth and died,
 Full salvation to provide.
 Jesus died that we might live,—
 He alone can heaven give.

Ask of Him to make your heart
 Pure and clean in every part.
 Pray that He your soul would keep,—
 He's the Shepherd of the sheep.

He's the Shepherd, and He knows
All their wants and all their woes.
Not a lamb can suffer harm,
Guarded by the Saviour's arm.

Little children, now obey,
Hear His voice and learn His way.
True and kind and humble be;—
“Let little children come to Me.”

By the time that Casper could say the first verse over to himself without missing a word, the sun had gone far down behind the forest, and not a beam came through the dusty window where Casper sat. It was really dark in the room, but he got down from the table and went to the fire, and by laying the brands together with a fresh stick or two, Casper soon coaxed up a pretty little blaze which was at least as good as a candle. The light glimmered and shone on the ceiling and walls, and made Casper himself, as he sat there in the corner, look quite rosy. He did not feel rosy—he felt tired and pale; but the little folded paper in his pocket was one comfort, and the single verse which he kept saying over to himself was another.

“I'll try to follow Him,” Casper thought. “I don't know how—maybe He'll teach me. There is something about that in the last verse—‘Ask of Him’—Oh, I wish I could see!”

Casper bent down by the fire, and tried to read; but though the flame flashed out now and then, it died away between whiles; and all he could do was to get his head very hot and his eyes very tired. The hymn must go back to his pocket again.

“Casper!” said his father, shutting the door and coming forward into the kitchen.

“Yes, sir,” said Casper, starting.

“Where did you first see Mr Sickles?”

“I met him on the road one day when I came from the mill,” said Casper, “and then he asked me to come up to his house once, and I went.”

“I'm going away to-morrow, to get work somewhere else.”

said his father. "If I find a place that I like, I shall come back for the furniture and you. While I'm gone, don't stir out of the village unless Mr Sickles comes and asks you,—if he does you can go. Mrs Clamp will get your meals, just as usual."

And off he walked, out of the kitchen and out of the house, shutting all the doors behind him. Casper sat still in some astonishment.

It was bad news, he thought ; but perhaps his father would not be able to find work anywhere else, and then they would have to stay where they were ; so it would be all right again.

Casper hunted about in the cupboard for some bits of bread, and tried to eat them, but they did not taste good—he was not hungry ; and then feeling very tired and chilly, he knelt down in the firelight and said his prayer and went to bed.

Next morning Casper woke up late. He did not feel well. Whether he had been out too much in the rain the day before, or whatever the reason might be, his head ached and he felt cold. Therefore when he first turned over and saw the bright sun streaming into the kitchen, he lay quite still and wondered what made him feel so bad. Then he remembered what his father had said last night, and Casper rose up on his elbow to look about the better.

His father had gone—that was plain ; for the table was covered with odds and ends of breakfast, and there was a heap of red coals under the tea-kettle. Moreover, his father's best was coat gone from its peg on the wall, and the kitchen door stood half open ; while the cool morning wind came sweeping in, fluttering the tablecloth and giving a shake to the quilt which covered Casper. He thought perhaps it was the wind that made him feel so cold, and he got up and shut the door ; but as he dressed himself the fire did not seem to warm him, and he stood shivering over the hot coals. Mrs Clamp came bustling in as usual to put away the dishes, and Casper had to eat his breakfast in a hurry ; but as he was not hungry, that mattered the less. Mrs Clamp was par-

ticularly cross, too, for the cow had strayed away again, but Casper did not offer to go after her this time—he felt too sick. He sat quietly in the chimney corner, till Mrs Clamp had finished her scolding and her dishes, and gone home. And he sat quiet then too—only a few tears came trickling down his cheeks now and then ; for he felt very lonely.

Not because his father was away—Casper never saw much of him ; but the little boy felt ill, and longed to go to his friends in the forest and have them to talk to him.

Why should he not go?—his father was away, and there was nothing but his father's command to keep Casper at home. How many times did that question come into Casper's mind as he sat there shivering over the fire! how many times he said, "Why shouldn't I?—I will!" But whenever he turned towards the door, just ready to get up and go, he always thought of Mrs Cheerful's words—

"Then you would not obey God."

And Casper turned his head away again and looked into the fire. He tried to read his hymn, but reading made his head ache, and he could only sit still and say over the verse which he had learned.

Towards the middle of the day there came a gentle knock at the door.

"Come in!" said Casper.

"Does a little boy named Casper live here?" said a pleasant voice. And Mrs Broadaxe pushed open the door, and walked in.

"Oh yes! I live here, and I'm at home, Mrs Broadaxe," said Casper, jumping up. "I'm very glad you have come to see me. There's nobody here—father's gone away, and I'm all alone. But it's very cold here—I don't know what you will do."

"Cold?" said good Mrs Broadaxe, as she met Casper and took hold of his hands. "Why it is warm here, child, very, but you are cold."

"Yes, I am," said Casper. "I haven't been warm to-day."

"Why, I'm afraid you are ill," said Mrs Broadaxe. And she sat down by the fire and took Casper on her lap.

"You are just the colour of Winkie's nose in a cold morning. What ails you, child?"

"I did feel sick a little while ago," said Casper. "I don't now."

He was much too happy to know whether he was sick or not. Curled up there in the lap of his kind friend while she rubbed his little cold hands in her large warm ones, Casper shut his eyes and looked as if he should go right off to sleep. And Mrs Broadaxe did not disturb him—not by a word or a question. Only once, when two or three little tears of comfort and pleasure made their way out from Casper's eyelids, then a large drop from her eyes did come down with quite a splash upon his forehead. But Mrs Broadaxe quickly wiped it off, and kept on rubbing his hands, and drew her blue apron over him like a coverlid. And when he really slept, she softly undressed him and put him to bed, and then sat watching the little red spot that began to burn in each cheek. Casper had a fever.

CHAPTER XVI.

IF I were to give a history of the next two weeks, it would be only about Mrs Broadaxe : Casper was very ill—too ill to know much of anything, and his kind friend never left him. The very first thing she did after undressing him that day, was to take off her own bonnet and shawl and put them away in the closet, and there they stayed until Casper got well. While he was very sick she watched over him day and night—making for him gruel with her own Indian meal, and apple-water from large roast apples which Mr Broadaxe brought down from home for that very purpose. When he grew better she told him long stories, that sometimes made him laugh and sometimes put him to sleep ; and now on the first day when Casper could be up and dressed, Mrs Broadaxe sat by the fire and held him on her lap, all wrapped up in her great shawl, which was as large as a blanket. Casper did

not say much about it all, but whenever he looked up at her the good woman's apron went up to her eyes as quickly as if there had been a puff of smoke down the chimney.

The morning had been a busy one. First came Mr Broadaxe with a partridge for Casper's dinner, and Chip came and licked his hands. Then Ruth entered softly on tiptoe, with a little bunch of wild flowers and a pocketful of butternuts—which Casper "mustn't eat till he was quite well;" and Ruth was so glad to see him in such a fair way to be well, that she stood and looked at him.

"Why, it hardly seems as if he had been ill, Mrs Broadaxe," she said, "he looks so much better. He's a little paler than he used to be, that's all."

"And a good deal thinner," said Mrs Broadaxe.

"Yes, he *is* thinner," said Ruth. "How strong is he?"

"Strong enough to hold the posy," said Mrs Broadaxe, smiling. "I don't think he could do much more."

"Oh yes, I could," said Casper, "only Mrs Broadaxe won't let me try. But I did walk from the bed to the fireplace this morning, Ruth."

"Well, I'm sure, that was a great deal," said Ruth. "How many times would you have to go across the room to make it as far as from here to the forest?"

Casper said he didn't know, and Mrs Broadaxe sat smiling, and did not tell him. Indeed, she did not know herself; only she knew that the way to the forest was hardly begun when you had walked a dozen times the breadth of that little room. Then Ruth got up to go home, and Casper said she should stay and have dinner with him. So while Mrs Broadaxe broiled the partridge, Ruth set the table, and talked to Casper; and then she ate a wing, and he ate a piece of the breast, and enjoyed it very much.

It was afternoon now, and Ruth had gone, and Casper sat quietly in his nurse's lap by the fire, wondering what made everybody so good to him. If he had asked Mrs Cheerful, she would have told him—"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," and something of that sort did come into Casper's heart, though not quite in those words.

Now, the sun went down very fast, and Casper began to feel sleepy, when just as the last beam left the window (it was not a dusty window now, Mrs Broadaxe had washed it,) the door opened, and in walked Mr Sickles.

Casper started up, and was wide awake in an instant, but he said not a word.

"Well, little boy," said Mr Sickles, "where did you come from?"

Casper replied that he had not been anywhere.

"Oh!" said Mr Sickles. "I thought you had been amusing yourself in bed for the last two weeks. I didn't tell Mrs Sickles, I was afraid she mightn't approve of it."

Casper laughed a little, but he was too anxious to hear what Mr Sickles would say, to say much himself; his eyes sparkled with eagerness, and his little face flushed up.

"Why, this is quite a pleasant house of yours," said Mr Sickles, looking about. "I thought you said it wasn't."

"I don't think it is," said Casper. "Oh yes, it is *now*, because there's nobody here but Mrs Broadaxe, and she's cleaned the window."

"Ah!" said Mr Sickles. "Well, I suppose that does make a difference. I don't like dusty windows myself. How do you like Mrs Cheerful's house?"

"Oh, very much!" said Casper.

"You don't like Ruth at all, I suppose?" said Mr Sickles.

Casper shook his head and laughed, in a way which said *that was quite a mistake.*

"Well, what do you think of my place?" said Mr Sickles.

"I think it's *beautiful*," said Casper, "and so is Mrs Sickles."

Mr Sickles smiled a little at that, as if he thought so himself.

"Why, you like her, do you?" he said.

"Yes, indeed," said Casper. "I like her ever so much. And the picture too."

Mr Sickles kicked the fire, and laid on another stick of wood before he spoke.

"You had better like my wife," he said. "I think on the

whole it's best you should. You'll see her to-morrow at Mrs Cheerful's. She's going there to dinner."

Casper wondered how he was to see her; whether she meant to stop and see him by the way; but his father had bid him ask Mr Sickles no questions, and none he asked.

"Mr Broadaxe is going," said Mr Sickles, "and so am I; and as Mrs Broadaxe must go, I don't see but we must take you with us. I suppose it wouldn't do to put you in bed here, and lock up the house."

Casper laughed again, but he did not say anything.

"I'll be down in the morning," continued the farmer, putting his hand under Casper's chin, and looking him in the face. "I'll be down in the morning with my ox-cart, and if you're ready we'll take you in, and if you're not, why, I suppose, we must wait for you." And away he went, and shut the door after him.

Casper could hardly sleep that night for thinking of the next day. He kept talking and asking questions, till Mrs Broadaxe was afraid he would be tired out, but it only did him good. The next morning he was a great deal stronger, and as bright as the sunshine. But he could not eat much breakfast; and while Mrs Broadaxe was putting away the dishes, Casper sat bolstered up in the rocking chair, and watched the door every moment, listening, too, with all his might; and when he heard the slow rolling of wheels, and Mr Sickles' loud "Whoa!" he could hardly sit still.

As soon as the cart stopped, Mrs Sickles came running in, and she stooped down by Casper, and kissed him, and took hold of his hands, and said how sorry she was he had been ill, and how glad that he was better. And then she and Mrs Broadaxe wrapped him up in a great shawl, and Mr Sickles carried him out and put him in the cart, and when they were all in, the oxen set off and jogged on to Mrs Cheerful's.

Casper could hardly contain himself for pleasure. He had not been out of the house for more than a fortnight, and everything seemed perfectly delightful. The sky could not have been bluer, nor the sunshine clearer; and if the birds

could have sung louder no doubt they would. First a robin came down on the road with a troop of his friends, all hopping about and bobbing their heads and whistling; and a half-dozen meadow larks perched on the fence, and then sped away over the green pastures. Quails ran in and out of the hedges, and a string of black crows sailed slowly overhead, and "cawed" out their approbation of the weather. On another fence sat a striped squirrel, and large butterflies flapped and fluttered about the road, and the chickens tried to catch them.

Casper had been seated on the floor of the cart, in such a heap of shawls and cloaks that he was half covered up, for they sank beneath him and rose up on all sides, like a feather-bed. Mrs Broadaxe and Mrs Sickles sat behind him, and made him lean against them when he was tired of sitting up; and Mr Sickles went on foot and guided the oxen.

Casper saw Mrs Clamp at her door as they went by, and he felt so happy that he even called out to her, and said—

"Good morning, Mrs Clamp; and good-bye, too. I shan't be home to-day."

But Mrs Clamp answered not a word, only stared at the cart and oxen.

Mr Broadaxe met them at the edge of the forest, with a great basket in his hand, almost as large as the one Mrs Sickles had brought in the cart; and then they were soon at Mrs Cheerful's.

How glad everybody was! Ruth ran out and clapped her hands, and danced from one foot to the other on the door step; and Casper could scarcely sit still for impatience; the sight of Mrs Cheerful's brown ribbon almost made him cry. As for Chip, he seemed to have lost his senses, and went scampering about in a way that no reasonable dog would.

Casper was carried into the house again, and put in the carpet chair in the very warmest corner, and Ruth sat down by him. They did not know what the rest were talking about; but for them, they told all manner of things that had happened, and laid plans for all manner of things that

should happen. The play they would have in the snow next winter, and the walks in the forest next summer. Casper said if he only had a sled he could draw Ruth down to the village in no time; and then Mr Sickles put in a word, and said they could have his old ox sled; and then both the children laughed, and Ruth said she thought in *that* case she should have to get off the sled and help to pull. But suddenly Casper stopped laughing, and his face grew very grave.

"What's the matter?" said Ruth, anxiously. "You don't feel sick, do you?"

"No," said Casper. "But, oh, Ruth, father's gone away somewhere else to get work, and if he can he won't come back to live in the village ever again. So, perhaps, I shan't be here next winter."

"Oh, I think you will," said little Ruth; and first she smiled, and then she looked grave. "I hope so, Casper. Wasn't Mrs Clamp very sorry to have you come away?"

"I don't know," said Casper. "She didn't say she was. She didn't even say good-bye. Perhaps she thought it wasn't worth while for only one day."

"Maybe not," said Ruth, smiling again.

"Well, what makes you smile?" said Casper, who had felt rather sober himself at the thought of Mrs Clamp and his father.

"Oh, I feel happy," said little Ruth. "I suppose that's one reason. Did Mrs Clamp come often to see you when you were sick?"

"Once she came," said Casper, "and I shut up my eyes tight, for fear I should see her. Oh, Ruth, I had *such* a chase after her old cow one day! She didn't even thank me, then. I had such work to find the cow; and oh, she is so ugly!"

"Mrs Clamp is?" said Ruth.

"I didn't mean her," said Casper; "I meant the cow. The cow is just as ugly as"—

"Well, as ugly as what?" said Ruth.

"I *used* to say she was just as ugly as Mrs Clamp," re-

plied Casper, "but I don't say so now. She's as ugly as she can be, any way."

"Ruth," said Mrs Cheerful, "it's time to set the table."

"Yes," said Mr Sickles; "if you don't take those chickens out of my wife's basket, they will let themselves out, I shouldn't wonder."

Ruth laughed—she felt very merry that day—and was soon very busy about the table, and covering it with dishes. Casper looked on from his corner

Now it was well that Mrs Sickles and Mrs Broadaxe had brought plates and knives as well as chickens; for Mrs Cheerful's cupboard could furnish but three; and when Ruth had put those on the table, and had counted the seven people twice over, to be sure she made no mistake, then she stopped short and looked puzzled. But Mrs Sickles said—

"Look in my basket, Ruth, among the legs of the chickens"—and there was a bundle of knives and forks wrapped up in white paper. And Mrs Broadaxe said there were plates in her basket, under the pies, and wanted to get up and look for them. But Ruth said, "Oh, please let me!" and began to unpack both baskets directly.

There were the chickens; but as they were roasted they were in no danger of getting away; and there were bread and butter, and two large pies, and a loaf of cake. Mrs Sickles had also brought potatoes, and they were boiling merrily over the fire while Ruth set the table; so there was quite a dinner.

Casper thought it was pleasure enough to sit and look at his friends and hear them talk; but they made him eat too. One of the wishing-bones was unfortunately broken in the carving, but the other was laid up to dry; and when it was dry enough Casper and Ruth took hold of it.

"Now, Casper, what do you wish?" said Ruth.

"We'll wait and see who gets the wish," said Casper.

They pulled the bone—it broke, and the longest piece was in Ruth's hand.

"Now tell, Ruth," said Casper.

"Oh, I wished to be very good," said little Ruth. "Mother says that is almost the only wish that never makes a mistake."

"I wonder if my wish made a mistake," said Casper. "I wanted to live somewhere else, only not in another village."

By this time Mr Broadaxe had brought to view a large bag of chestnuts, and they all gathered round the fire.

"Now, Mr Broadaxe," said Mr Sickles, "you will please to tell us a story."

"A story!" said Mr Broadaxe. "Why I couldn't tell about anything but squirrels, if I tried."

"Oh, that would be capital!" said Ruth and Casper, both at once.

"Well," said Mr Broadaxe, "when I was out in the woods getting these nuts, I saw a red squirrel. I had been up in the tree, beating off the nuts, and when I came down I threw the burrs into a heap and began to get out the chestnuts. Then came up my red squirrel."

"To get your nuts, Mr Broadaxe?" said Casper.

"For nothing else," said the woodcutter. "I sat on one side of the heap and he stood on the other, but he was a little afraid to come too close,—so I threw a chestnut every now and then over to where he stood."

"And did he eat them as fast as you threw them, Mr Broadaxe?" said Ruth.

"Didn't eat one of them," said the woodcutter. "He picked them up fast enough, and then off he jumped, over the dry leaves and stones, to an old tree about twenty feet off. Then up the tree as quick as thought, and down into his hole; and then back for another chestnut almost before it was ready for him."

"But why didn't he eat them at first?" said Casper. "What made him take them all up into the tree?"

"Why he wanted to put them away for the winter," said Mr Broadaxe,— "just as Ruth here will store that other bag of nuts in her garret."

"O Mr Broadaxe! you're too good!" put in Ruth,— "is all that bag of nuts for me?"

"I cut down an old tree once," said the woodman, smiling

"and there was a squirrel's nest in it; but I didn't know that till I came to split up the tree. The tree was hollow, and far down towards the root two red squirrels had made a storehouse. There was a bushel of hickory nuts, half a bushel of chestnuts, and some handfuls of corn and pine cones."

"Did you take them away, Mr Broadaxe?" said Casper.

"No indeed," said Mr Broadaxe, "I felt almost like a thief for having cut the tree down. So I did what I could, and let it lie there till the squirrels had carried off their property. Next day there was not a nut left. Mr Sickles, you may tell a better story than that, but you can't tell a truer."

"It's your turn, ma'am," said Mr Sickles to Mrs Broadaxe.

"Mine!" said Mrs Broadaxe. "Dear me, Mr Sickles, I've no story to tell,—only that I caught five mice in my trap the last day I was at home, and Winkie got into the dairy. I found her out by the cream on her whiskers."

Casper and Ruth laughed very much at that, and Mr Sickles said the cat ought to shave before she went thieving. And then the idea of Winkie's shaving was so very funny, that the children laughed again, till the tears came into their eyes.

"Now, Mrs Sickles," said the farmer, "tell us a merry story."

"Why I haven't any story to tell, either, I'm sure," said Mrs Sickles. "There is a whole brood of little chickens at home, that have got no mother—but that's not worth telling about."

"Oh yes, Mrs Sickles! Please do!" said Casper and Ruth, both together.

"It's such a funny story," added Mr Sickles.

"Why, my dears," said Mrs Sickles, leaving her chair and taking one by Casper and Ruth, "this old hen stole her nest"——

"But if it was hers, how could she steal it?" said Casper.

"I mean," said Mrs Sickles, "she stole away into the grass and made her nest; and laid ten eggs, and sat upon them for three weeks. And one morning when I was sweeping

the door-step, there came up this old hen, and nine little chickens after her."

"What became of the other egg?" said Casper.

"I don't know," said Mrs Sickles, "but the nine chicks grew nicely; and then yesterday a little red weasel came out of the woods, and chased the old hen, and caught her by the neck and killed her. And now the little chickens have no mother. But I put them in a large basket in the kitchen, and I feed them there, and sometimes I take them out into the sunshine."

"Do you think they haven't got any mother?" said Mr Sickles, with a shake of his head. "Now, Mrs Cheerful."

Mrs Cheerful smiled.

"I saw a little boy once," she said, "that was left like those little chickens; but there seemed to be nobody to take care of him, and this made him feel very miserable. Yet all the while God remembered him, and watched over him, and never let anything happen but for his good. And God gave him friends; and still He watches the little boy every day, to see when he does right, and when he does wrong, and still the Good Shepherd leads him and takes care of him, though the little boy does not always know it."

"O Mrs Cheerful!" said Casper: and he got up from the little carpet chair, and came and knelt down by her and stroked her hand.

"Well," said Mr Sickles, "*my* story is, that it is time to go home."

Casper started, and looked up for a minute—then he looked down again to Mrs Cheerful's hand. He could not help feeling a little miserable—he had been so happy that day, and before that so long alone—and now to go back and be alone again!—for of course Mrs Broadaxe could not stay with him much longer.

"What do you say, Casper?" said Mr Sickles. "Are you ready?"

"Yes, sir," said Casper, standing up. "At least I'll go if Mrs Broadaxe is ready?"

"Mrs Broadaxe has nothing to do with it," said Mr

Sickles. "She is going back into the forest. I'll take you home."

Casper said nothing, but his eyes went down again and his lips trembled.

"O Mr Sickles!" said his wife.

"Please!" said little Ruth, entreatingly.

"Well, well!" said Mr Sickles, "do be easy, all of you. I told your father, Casper, that I wanted an idle-good-for-nothing little boy, to live with me up yonder on the mountain—to feed the chickens, and run after the dog, eat pumpkin pies, and such light work. And he said I couldn't find a better boy in those respects than yourself. What do you say to it?"

"May I live with you?" said Casper, his face very grave and trembling. "Did father say I might?"

"Did I not say I was going to take you home?" said Mr Sickles. "I am, anyway. Only if you don't want to go I would rather not tell Mrs Sickles."

And Casper fairly sat down and cried—he was so happy.

THE END.



