



"For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not."
"In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth
upon men; in slumberings upon the bed; then He openeth the
ears of men, and sealeth their instruction."

LONDON:
JAMES CLARKE & CO., 13, FLEET ST.

Rights reserved.

LONDON :
BARRETT, SONS AND CO., PRINTERS
SEETHING LANE, E.C.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
Childhood	I
CHAPTER II.	
Bob's Father and Mine	10
CHAPTER III.	
My Dream	19
CHAPTER IV.	
"By the sad sea waves"	33
CHAPTER V.	
Afloat	53
CHAPTER VI.	
"Be of good cheer"	66
CHAPTER VII.	
"He shall give His angels charge over thee"	79
CHAPTER VIII.	
"They trusted in Thee, and were not confounded"	87

CHAPTER IX.

"There is no death! What seems so is transition"	98
--	----

CHAPTER X.

"He giveth His beloved,—Sleep"!	105
--	-----

CHAPTER XI.

A Ghost Story	114
----------------------	-----

CHAPTER XII.

Aunt Editha	125
--------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

"I am found of them that sought Me not"	137
--	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

"Unprofitable Servants"	147
--------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XV.

"Home! sweet Home!"	155
----------------------------	-----





BOB AND I;

OR,

FORGET-ME-NOTS FROM GOD'S GARDEN.



CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD.

I CANNOT remember the time when Bob and I did not love each other. I know it was a case of love at first sight, and that "first sight" took place at so very early an age that I feel as if I had never lived at all without Bob; and he says that is just as he feels: and so, no doubt, we are what is called by some folks "*true affinities*." I cannot understand how our lives could have gone on separately; for I have always told Bob all my thoughts, my joys, and my sorrows; and he has done the same with me.

We were born in the same town, and within three months of each other, Bob being the elder, which is just as it should be. He was not so much older as to be bumptious on that account

B

and I was not so much the younger as to feel very much inferior to him.

We went to the same school, and were in the infants' class together. It was then that our life-long love commenced, and the germs of this so-called "*affinity*" began to quicken into life. What mites we must have been; for I've heard mother say often that she "packed me off to school, out of her way, as soon as they would take me;" and I know children from three years old were admitted.

What a comfort that Bob's parents sent him too, at about the same time! He was my little champion from the first, and was always ready to punch anybody's head who dared to tease or "put upon" me in any way. The days of our infancy were in no way remarkable; we went through most of the ailments incident to that period of our existence in a truly exemplary manner, judging from mother's remarks to that effect rather than from the distinctness of my own memory. Bob and I did not meet at each other's houses, I know, because our parents were of different religious persuasions; so that our friendship was entirely carried on through our school life.

Only two events of any mark rise up before my mind's eye as I recall those days; neither of

them of much importance, but I will note them down.

The first occurred in the schoolroom one bright summer morning. Our school was on the outskirts of the town, and open to the lovely country that surrounded it on every side. On this especial morning it seemed more trying than usual for us small creatures to be shut in (and to lessons, too—adding insult to injury), whilst the bright sunbeams and sweet perfume of the flowers stealing in at the open door and windows seemed to call us out to play.

Bob had committed some misdemeanour, for which he was punished by being seated upon the stool of penitence, with a high fool's-cap upon his little head. The stool was placed behind the capacious arm-chair in which sat the kind old schoolmistress, netting away vigorously, as was her custom, whilst listening to the lessons of the elder children. The other classes were conducted by her two daughters in different parts of the room, but the old lady was seated at the head of the centre table. As I was sitting on the other side of the room, I could just see the point of the fool's-cap (made of stiff white paper) rising above the shoulder of the schoolmistress, and was feeling very indignant at my Bob being placed in such an undignified position, when suddenly—as if by magic—the fool's-cap rose gradually higher and

higher, until it at last perched itself upon the high turban-like crown of the old lady's cap! The next instant, Bob, who had so cleverly slipped his badge of disgrace from his own head on to the top of the turban, silently, but swiftly, flew past me, out of the door and into the open fields, where he rapidly disappeared in the distance. The fool's-cap, being very light, did not give the slightest token of its presence on the turban, and the old lady continued netting away, quite unconscious of the additional ornament she had just obtained, when a slight titter ran round the room. She looked up, and then the titter became a roar of laughter, in which she joined as heartily as any when she came to know the reason of it. She was a dear old lady, full of love and sympathy for all juveniles; so, when poor Bob was brought back to school in the afternoon by his father—for the little fellow was afraid to come alone, feeling he had been a double culprit—she very wisely dismissed the subject with a loving admonition to be a good boy in future, which had a far better effect upon him than any amount of scolding would have had.

think it was in that same summer that the second event took place, and we—Bob and I—were both involved in it.

We played truant!

It was such a glorious morning! The sky so intensely blue, with a few feathery white clouds, like down, high up. The clear soft air was quivering in the sunbeams, and gently fanning the leaves on the trees, which stood out grandly against the horizon. The haymakers were busy tossing the freshly-mown grass, talking and laughing merrily together, as we poor children were trudging along the dusty road which led to our school.

As I turned the corner of the lane leading from our house, I met Bob, who, with his books slung over his shoulder, was just then looking wistfully at the pleasant meadows, and hedges bright with the lovely wild flowers so dear to all, and especially to school children.

"Hooray, Jenny!" he shouted. "Come along to Love Lane. Such a jolly lot of flowers! We shall have plenty of time to gather a large bundle, and then we'll make up a nosegay to give to Mother Trainer" (that was our schoolmistress's name, and all the children called her "Mother Trainer" when she was not within hearing!).

"Bob," I said, "we have no time before the bell rings; let us go as soon as school is over."

But no, he would not be put off. All nature called us joyfully, and with a schoolboy's recklessness he took no note of time. I was very easily persuaded, and off we ran.

I must say we both intended just to gather our flowers very quickly, and then run back to be in time for lessons. Alas! we learnt that day the evil of turning aside from the right path. The path of duty led to school, with its bare boards, bare seats, and prosy lessons. The path of pleasure, seductive, with its flowers, bright sunshine, and mossy banks, lured us on. We reached Love Lane, we gathered heaps of flowers, we sat under the hedge and arranged them into knots, and were just thinking we would turn towards school, when, alas! to our dismay we heard distinctly over the meadows the clear chime of the church bell as it struck eleven o'clock! We were terrified. Then we became indignant, and felt we were being ill-used. No doubt thieves, burglars, and pick-pockets feel ill-used when their sin is discovered, and they suffer at the hands of the law. We had done wrong, had got into disgrace, and accordingly became very angry.

"It's that old Muff been up to his tricks again," Bob said at last, referring to poor old Jones, whose office it was to see to the church repairs, including the clock. He had been suspected of putting it on to cut short the sermon, when he wanted to get away from his duties in the church for the benefit of his own private arrangements. Bob did not so much mind *that*, but when it came to *this*—making it eleven o'clock when we knew it *could not be* so

late. Well, we felt something must be done to serve him out.

Says Bob, "I wish I could set his best wig on fire; an old sneak! or put some pepper in his hat; wouldn't it set the old chap off sneezing and swearing? I wish I could manage it."

Now Jones was often very kind to me, and would give me a big bull's-eye almost always when I went to buy anything for mother at his little shop, So I did not feel quite so sure that our sin was to be laid at his door.

Having exhausted our anger sufficiently to face our difficulties (which, after all, is better than sitting down to lament or scold over them), Bob and I consulted what would be the best to do.

I am thankful to say that we had both been brought up to abhor deceit, or lying in any form, therefore we neither of us wished to do otherwise than to tell the truth, and as we did not start off to Love Lane with the wilful intention of playing truant, our sin was not so black as it might have been. We consoled ourselves with this one small ray of comfort, and at length made up our minds to stay away now until all the children had gone home to dinner; we knew we should then find "Mother Trainer" alone, and out of the immediate influence of her daughters, who were apt to be much sterner in discipline than their dear old mother.

We watched our opportunity from behind the hedge of the field opposite, and, when all had gone, crossed the road, passed in at the door, and seeing Mother Trainer sitting in her usual arm-chair alone, we walked in hand-in-hand and stood before her. She looked up at us; all our courage gave way. We hid our faces in our little hands and wept aloud. In a short time, however, she had helped us to tell her all our difficulties, and we earnestly expressed our sorrow and begged forgiveness.

Of course we were punished. The rule was established that for the especial sin of playing truant the culprit was to be kept in solitary confinement during the time between morning and afternoon school. Also, he was to be regaled upon bread and water for his dinner, and wear the dunce's cap for the space of half-an-hour during the afternoon.

As we had voluntarily acknowledged our sin the ordeal of the dunce's cap was remitted, but we were each to do a long-division sum during our solitary confinement.

"Hang the sum," whispered Bob to me, as we walked away to our respective prisons, "I wish the old girl had given me a page of poetry to learn instead." Now I did not like poetry at all, but was rather fond of arithmetic, and quick at it. So I set to work directly to finish my own task, and then I contrived, during the clatter of the dinner things

going on in the upstairs dining-room, to make a rush into Bob's room, and putting my own slate with its finished sum into his hand, I started back to my room, and had finished his sum as well as my own by the time my bread and water came in. Upon the whole we both decided that the sweets of forbidden pleasure had turned to the gall of bitterness, and resolved in future to shun any such temptations.

When we were ten years old, having passed through the highest class in Mrs. Trainer's school, we left. Bob was promoted to the Proprietary School in High Street, and went in for Greek, Latin, &c. Also, to my great delight and somewhat to his disgust, he had to wear a square cap, irreverently called a mortar-board by the vulgar boys in the streets.

I went also to the best school the little town afforded. It was kept by a Miss Stiffbach. Father and mother both wished to give me a good education. To help to meet the expenses entailed thereby, my mother was compelled to give up the one small servant she had hitherto kept, and to manage by what little help I could give in the early morning, before school time, and the occasional help of a woman.



CHAPTER II.

BOB'S FATHER AND MINE.

BOB'S father—Mr. Rivers—was a very intelligent man ; he kept the large Book shop in the town, to which was attached the only Circulating Library the little place afforded. Besides which he was sub-editor of the local paper. Bob was his youngest child. He had lost three or four children in succession before Bob was born, so that the youngest came to them as a very precious gift, and was a great pet with his grown-up sisters, as well as his parents. In this way it happened that, being brought up amongst those who were so much older than himself, he was constantly present during discussions upon all kinds of matters of interest going on in the town. His father was a sort of literary star in the small place, and drew into his sphere the most intelligent people in the neighbourhood.

My father was not in so good a position in the eyes of the world as Bob's father. But he was,

indeed, "One of the excellent of the earth." He was a clerk in the county bank, and had been in the same small cottage ever since he first came to the town, when he was only nineteen years old.

He and mother were very active members at the little chapel, built in an out-of-the-way part of the town, and frequented almost exclusively by the poorer, less educated class—the "lower orders," as I heard some one say one day. Mr. Rivers and his family went to *the church*—there was only one in the town of any note; one or two small churches, resorted to by the "Low Evangelical" parties, might be found in some of the small streets, but *the church* of the place was a grand building, with coloured windows, very high spire, and very loud and almost incessantly tolling bell. To this church all the grandees of the place went. You never saw poor people in shabby clothes there, it was no place for the publican or sinner who could not afford to dress in rich attire.

My father's name was Greatheart; he inherited it from his Puritan ancestors. I think—especially now I have got to understand the beauty of his character as a *Christ-like man*—that a more suitable name could not have been given to him.

It always rather puzzled me, even as a child, how it was that he chose my mother for his wife; but no doubt his great heart led him to detect in her the germs of goodness that were choked to a great

extent by the stern dogmas—falsely called religious—which influenced her daily life so thoroughly that to an ordinary observer she gave the idea of being a cold, hard woman. My father had been married in early life to one whom he had loved from boyhood. She was taken from him after they had lived happily together for twelve years. By her he had had two sons. When he married my mother these boys had grown up to be old enough to get their own living, and soon after left their home, one for Australia, to be a farmer, the other for the South Sea Islands, where he had gone to labour as a missionary. I have but a faint recollection of them.

I was the only child by his second marriage.

Father went to the same chapel as mother, although he would have preferred to sit under Mr. Goodman, who was the minister at the Congregational Chapel. Mother did not think Mr. Goodman quite so sound in doctrine as Mr. Howler, who officiated at the Little Bethel, in Close Lane. Father said it did not greatly matter to him where he went; he could listen to the Gospel of Peace anywhere, and as to the Gospel (?) of damnation, he did not take it in anywhere. It did not distress him, because he simply disbelieved it, and failed to see any *Gospel* in it, as that word means *good tidings*, not dreadful news.

I got into trouble with mother almost the first time I went to chapel. She did not let me go until I was six years old. I was sent to the Sunday-school and its service, so was not left without spiritual teaching, but until I could sit "*quite quietly*" I was not to go to the grown-up service.

At last, when I was six years old, I went. I was very much astonished to find how few did sit quiet, for as the service proceeded groans and cries of "Amen" filled the place. Mother's groans and "Amens" were as loud as any, and even father, at one part of the service, gave what seemed to me an involuntary "Hear, hear!" I heard the words; but mother nudged him, and he altered it into "Hallelujah—Amen!"

When I got home I said, "Mother, what a number of people seemed ill at chapel."

"Ill, child, what do you mean?"

"Why," said I, "people groaned so, just as I do when I feel sick. I think God must have thought them ill, if He could hear them."

Mother boxed my ears, and, telling me not to say such wicked things, sent me out into the field while she got dinner ready.

There I met Bob, walking home from church, and consoled myself by telling him all about it. He was as puzzled as I was, why people should groan unless they were ill, or in some great trouble.

I must have been a great trouble to mother,

with my questions, although I became more careful what I did ask at last, preferring to go to father.

It was when I was about twelve years old that one day I said to her, "Which church or chapel would Christ be a member of, mother, if He came to earth again, and lived in this town?"

"Good gracious, child, what put such an odd idea into your head? Christ a member of a church or chapel! Why, Christ is the Head of all Christians; but He is in heaven."

"Well, if Christ is the Head of all Christians, I expect He'd like to go sometimes to one, and sometimes to another, and be a member of all. But you don't like me to go to any other place but our chapel; and Bob says his sisters were very much shocked one day when he asked one of them to go to Little Bethel with him. He said he wanted to sit in our pew beside me. And I heard you tell father one day that you would not go into that High church upon any consideration. So I'm thinking Christ would find a great muddle in the world if He came to see us again."

I could not get any more out of mother. I think she was much shocked at my remark, and have no doubt she told father of me; because when I came in that evening from my walk with Bob in the meadows, during which I had, of course, told him of my talk with mother, I heard father say to mother, "The child's question involves many other

questions, and strikes a blow at the sectarian spirit that seems to be gaining ground on every side; more's the pity."

"It's a great pity all don't think alike," said mother, shaking her head, and speaking sadly.

"I don't think so," said father. "All minds are not made alike, any more than are all faces. Thoughts must differ. A great deal depends upon education and circumstances in life. If you had been born in Spain, probably you would have been a Roman Catholic——"

"How shocking!" exclaimed mother, interrupting father, who continued,

"And I was going to add, you might have been just as good a woman as I believe you are now."

"What! pray to the Virgin Mary, and kneel to images, and confess to a priest, and say masses for the dead! Oh, never!"

"God," said father, "is a loving Father over all. He makes no distinction between races; He sees every heart, and does not require any child of His to do more than act up to the right, according to the light that is in him. There are many roads to heaven, and He made them all; each child is led by the way best fitted to his especial spiritual needs. I often feel sorry that Christians are so interfering one with another; why cannot they see that Truth is a great gem, a rare jewel, set in different ways, and brought to some special type of

perfection in each mind. And, even as the crystal reflects the varied hues and rays from the same sun, so will truth—the sun of men’s minds—be reflected in a variety of ways through each mind. You see, my dear, diversities of opinion are inevitable; I believe they exist in heaven——”

Here mother could contain herself no longer.

“Sects in heaven, James! how can that be? Surely *there* we shall be all of one mind, standing round the great White Throne we are told about in the Revelation, and singing the Song of the Lamb continually. Ah! that will be a happy time!”

(I, an unobserved listener, thought differently. In the wickedness of my heart I hoped it would be a very long time indeed before I got there, and also that mother’s voice for singing would become more musical, if I had to stand near her.) However, father continued:

“I did not say sects, my dear. Sectarianism, as it exists now on earth, is evil; but the time will come, according to the Bible teaching, when ‘every man will be a priest unto himself’—when each soul will commune with its Father, no one daring to stand between. Then, whilst diversity of opinion will be as great as ever, *bigotry* will be unknown. There will be no bitterness of feeling, no judging one another with harsh judgment—for all shall know the Lord, from the least even unto the greatest.”

The last few sentences father had spoken like one in a reverie, and the expression of his countenance was, I thought, angelic. He paused for a few minutes; then, as if rousing himself, he looked up at mother, and said,

"I fear, if Christ should come into our midst in the flesh, as He did nearly nineteen hundred years ago, few in this town would recognise Him; and I think that He would find it even more difficult to recognise those who call themselves Christians as His followers. *He* taught simply 'God is love,' and 'Love one another.' But from how many pulpits we still hear the loving Father spoken of as a 'god of wrath—an angry judge.' In fact, He is held up before the people as such a cruel tyrant, that any man holding such a character would be deservedly regarded as an impersonation of wickedness. Well might Christ lament over His people, and say, as He did of old, 'Ye are making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do.' "

"Ah, James," sighed mother, "I'm sorry you've got such notions. But it's bedtime; let's lock up and go to bed."

And I, not wishing mother to know I had been sitting behind the window curtain, and hearing all the conversation, took the opportunity, whilst she and father were locking the back doors and windows,

to slip up to my room and get to bed in the dark. I thought, if Jesus came to see us, He'd love father as He did His disciple John. I felt very happy at what I had heard father say, and yet a great deal of it puzzled me. "I'll talk to Bob about it all," I said to myself as I laid my head upon the pillow. In two minutes I was fast asleep and dreaming; what about no one but Bob knew for a long time—it was such a strangely happy dream.





CHAPTER III.

MY DREAM.

I DID not see Bob, to have a long talk with him, for more than a week. He was so much taken up with a succession of cricket matches that were coming off, that the few glimpses we got of each other were too hurried for anything like serious conversation.

- At last a good opportunity presented itself one Sunday afternoon. Mother went to the Sunday School as usual. Father seated himself in his easy chair in the best parlour, and, taking his book to read, was naturally soon fast asleep. It always did happen so on Sunday afternoons, and so it was that Bob and I could often on those days have a good time together in the meadow, without any one knowing anything about it. Mother had been making remarks of late that led me to fear she would try to separate us. I had heard her say to father, "I don't like our Jenny gallivanting off so much with young Rivers. She's getting a big girl now, and must be discreet in her conduct."

“Don’t you distress yourself, my dear, about the young ones,” father said; “and on no account talk to her about being discreet! The child will only be set thinking about matters that are not likely to enter her innocent little head for a long time to come, if she’s let alone. She could not have a better companion than young Bob Rivers, and they are as like brother and sister as if they had had the same parents.”

I wished I had not heard the remarks, because it made me unhappy, and determined to be discreet, so far as to keep mother in ignorance of our frequent meetings, as far as I possibly could.

It was a lovely day, early in September. Many of the trees, still thick in foliage, were resplendent with the rich hues of autumnal glory. The birds were singing merrily, and all nature seemed to rejoice.

As soon as I could get out I ran down the garden, jumped over the low hedge which separated it from the lane, and in a very few minutes had crossed the stile leading into the meadow; and there sat Bob, under the old tree by the stream, watching for me.

“Oh, you dear old Bob!” I exclaimed, breathless with running. “I have something to tell you that will, I believe, make you very happy, as it has made me.”

"That's right, Jenny ; sit down here on my cap ; the grass is rather damp, and you've got your best dress on."

" I have had such a lovely dream, Bob ! I do think it's *true*, at least I want to think so. I must tell you what father and mother were talking about first, all that evening, before I went to bed." And then, as nearly as I could remember, I told him what I have already written down.

" Well," I continued, " I fell asleep, thinking how I did wish Jesus would come again on earth, so that we could talk to Him, and have Him come to see us, just as we read in the Bible He did with His disciples, when I fell fast asleep. I dreamed that I was standing on the top of a very high hill ; it was covered with most exquisite grass, which was studded over with flowers of the richest hues, and which filled the air with such delicious perfume that I cannot compare it to any we have on earth. I felt as if it made me strong, and gave me power. I could see an immense distance on every side, and plainly distinguish small objects a very long way off, just as if they were close by me. I saw scattered about, over the hill, very beautiful houses. They looked as if they were built of precious stones and gems of every colour, for as the sun's rays shone upon them the brilliance was so dazzling that I was obliged to turn away my eyes and look into the gardens with which each house was sur-

rounded. Oh, Bob! how can I tell you properly all I saw? I thought, as I looked in great wonder, how I wished you were with me."

"I do wish I had been, Jenny," said he; "but go on, I want to hear all."

"I saw," I continued, "a great many people; but I noticed especially the most lovely children, who were playing about. They looked like fairies, dressed in loose little robes of different colours: some pale blue, some pink, or red. And then the flowers, Bob! why they had beautiful wreaths twined all about them from head to foot—light and graceful, not heavy." I paused for breath.

"Could you see what they were doing?" said Bob, deeply interested in the narration.

"They were playing about. Some were in groups, dancing and singing as if they could not express their joy enough; some were sitting in lovely arbours, reading; others were floating about the air, sitting in the flowers as if they were cradles. Oh, Bob, surely it was fairy-land; perhaps it was heaven!"

"They must have been very tiny to sit in flowers!" said Bob; "but fairies are of all sizes, I suppose."

"They were tiny, Bob, like babies only a few weeks old. But the flowers were not like those we see here; those that were like cradles were very

large, and waving about two or three feet high from the ground."

"Did you see any animals, Jenny?"

"Of course I did. I was going to tell you there were a great many white lambs. The children were playing with them, and making garlands of flowers to deck them with. Then there were such very beautiful dogs, with long silky hair and such kind eyes! But what I should have chosen would have been one of the most lovely little ponies or horses. A great many of the children were on their backs racing about. The saddles were made of fine silk, with a deep fringe of jewels of many different colours. And one thing I noticed which made all the animals so very wonderful and beautiful was a large star in the centre of their foreheads."

"How jolly!" exclaimed Bob. "Perhaps it really was fairy-land. Come to think of it, I'm afraid it was *not* heaven, or anything like it; there are no animals there, every one knows."

"I'm not so sure, Bob, because *horses* are spoken of in the Revelation, and Elijah went to heaven in a 'chariot and horses,' so *that* seems as if there were carriages too; but I did not see a great white throne; and one thing must make us certain it was not heaven—it was not *Sunday*, or the children would not have been playing about as they were."

"Perhaps after all the 'everlasting Sabbath' people say we must spend when we get to heaven

is a Continental Sabbath. Shouldn't wonder at all," said Bob, jumping up as if he felt he had got hold of a very bright thought. "That would not be half so bad to bear, you know, Jenny. It's only our English Sundays that are so gloomy and miserable."

"That's a very good idea of yours, Bob," I replied. "We know God means all good people to go to heaven, to be very happy, and He'll be quite sure no one, however good, would enjoy perpetual Sabbaths, such as we have in England."

"Oh, it would be shocking!" said Bob. "No, it must mean the Continental Sundays, because half those days, at least, are spent as real happy holidays, and every one is jolly. Why, I have read that Luther, the Reformer, called one Sunday afternoon to see Calvin (he's an old chap I should not have liked at all from what I have heard about him), and, finding him playing at bowls in his back garden, he joined him."

"By the way, Bob," I said, "talking of Luther, I must show you a little book I have at home, with such a very pretty letter he wrote to his little boy once, describing heaven. Why, it seems as if my dream was just a little like it. But we must not lose time; we can talk about Luther some other day. Now I have to tell you my dream; I do think the best part is to come."

"All right, Jenny; go on! I want to know every word; don't forget any part."

“ Well, I have told you about the lovely sights ; now I'll tell you the best of all. As I was standing looking at these beautiful things, I gradually became conscious of the presence all around me of most exquisite music. It filled the air ; the rustling leaves of the trees and shrubs, the rippling of the streamlet, the gentle summer breeze, seemed to join in some mysterious way and become part of the sweet music. As I listened, the music in the air grew more and more distinct, and the sound of many voices singing together in chorus came to me from beneath a grove of trees, the entrance to which stood on my right hand. I turned to see from whence the singing came, and through the long vista beheld, coming towards me, a group of men and women. They were all dressed in the same style as the children, only their robes were long, sweeping gracefully from their shoulders to the ground, and confined round the waist by a loose girdle. There were many robed in pure white : they had wreaths of flowers entwined in their hair, and girdles of very bright sparkling jewels strung together. Others wore robes of different colours, and were bespangled with diamonds, so that bright rays shot out from them in all directions, making the shady grove sparkle as if lighted up with hundreds of tiny suns. As they drew near, I noticed that each figure was enveloped in a bright cloud of some delicate hue, and that most of them

had broad girdles of some silken material, in the centre of which were mottoes or single words, apparently woven into the silk with tiny gems like beads, but all most costly precious stones. I stood riveted to the spot, spellbound, but not at all frightened. I felt they brought an atmosphere of love, and the text we learned together at school came into my mind—‘*Perfect love casteth out fear.*’ As the words came to me, almost as if breathed into my soul from the outer air, one of these beautiful men came towards me——”

“They were angels, Jenny,” whispered Bob, quietly.

“I call them men and women, Bob,” I said, “because they felt to me to *be* so, although they were so angelic. I was not afraid to go to them, and should like to have joined them. I should have been afraid, even in my dream, if I had thought I was so near to angels. Besides, I saw no wings, such as I suppose angels have. Well, I tell you, one of them came away from the throng, and as he came the voices sang loudly—‘Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.’ When He came quite close to me, He said, ‘Jenny, you were wishing to talk to Me, so I have come to see you.’ The music in His voice and loving look in His eyes drew me to Him; and as He stood in a cloud of dazzling whiteness, filled with many-coloured brilliant stars of glory, shabby

as I was—for I only had my school frock on, Bob ; but I did not think of that—I ran up to Him and threw myself at His feet, crying for joy. Bob, I *knew* it was Jesus ; something in me told me so.”

“ Oh, Jenny, if I had but been with you ! ” said Bob.

“ It was only a dream, Bob—at least, so I suppose ; but I wish we could live in such dreams, and never wake up to disagreeable things.”

“ Go on, Jenny. What did Jesus do ? ”

“ He stooped down, and lifting me right up in His arms, He held me close to Him as if I was a very little child. Soon I said to Him, ‘ Dear Jesus, how did you know I wanted so much to see and talk with you ? ’

“ ‘ I heard your cry, my child, and I saw the desire in your heart,’ He answered. •

“ ‘ Mother said you were in heaven, dear Lord,’ I said—for I had no fear, any more than if I had been talking with you, Bob—‘ and I did not think you would know anything about my thoughts—I am such a little girl ; and, besides, I am not a member at Little Bethel yet.’

“ ‘ You are one of My children. I love *all* ; but those who in their hearts cry out for Me must draw Me directly quite to them. Don’t you know, little Jenny,’ He went on, ‘ that when you wish for a thing—that is, praying for it—whether you are kneeling down to say your prayers or not——’

“ ‘How can we pray,’ I said, ‘if we don’t kneel down and say the prayers we have been taught? I always *do* repeat mine when I go to bed and when I get up in the morning, but I am often so sleepy, and wish I might say them another time; and then, dear Jesus, mother says I’m a wicked child.’

“ ‘God does not say so, my little one. He is as a father, and pities your weakness. He does not require you to keep to any set form of words; that does not express all you want to ask Him. You must *talk* to God, and ask Him everything. Remember, He is always so close to you that you can speak to Him wherever you may be, and whatever you may be doing.’

“ ‘I can talk to you, dear Lord, because I see and feel you, and hear your voice; but how can I talk with God?’

“ ‘*I and My Father are one,*’ He answered, so lovingly; and, as He said it, He began to walk slowly down the hill, still carrying me in His arms. Then soon afterwards He looked at me and went on, saying, ‘My children on earth cannot understand the Mystery of the Godhead. How can the Finite mind grasp the Infinite! Do not trouble your little head with things so hard to be understood. Remember always—*God is Love*. Never believe any one who tries to make you think differently.’

“ ‘ Brother Howler tells us God is angry with us every day, and that we shall all be cast into hell if we do not love God. Dear Jesus, I can love you, but I should not love God if He is like that.’

“ ‘ No, my child, God is never angry. He is sorry for His children when they do wrong, and knows what misery it brings.’

“ ‘ Why doesn’t He take the misery away then, dear Jesus?’ I said; ‘ if He is all love, and all powerful, why is not all the world good and happy?’

“ ‘ My little one, this is a mystery which few can solve, in any degree. But the time will come, even to you, dear child, when you will understand the spirit of the word, whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.’

“ The air grew chill and damp, and all around was so gloomy. I looked up and found we were nearly at the bottom of the hill, and not far from home. The church bells were ringing for evening service, and I remembered what I had asked mother. Jesus had put me down out of His arms, but I was running by His side as I held His hand. I looked up to Him, and asked, ‘ Dear Jesus, if you are coming to stay with us a little while, what church or chapel would you become a member of? Mother says you are the Head of the Church, but that you live in heaven.’

“ ‘ Your mother said truly, dear little one,’ He

answered, drawing me yet closer to Him, 'I am the Head of the Church; but I dwell not in temples made with hands. My Temple is the loving heart in man. Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in their midst, whether they are in the fields or streets, or whether they have assembled in any room or chapel; it matters not to Me.'

"I was thinking to myself as we walked on, how I wished I could always see and talk to Jesus like this, when, as if He saw my thoughts, He said,

" 'Dear child, I am always by your side, even when you cannot see Me. If I, eighteen hundred years ago, could walk, talk, and eat with My disciples, why should I not still come and hold close communion with My children on earth? I am the same, yesterday, to-day, and *for ever*; unchangeable, and always loving.'

"As He said this I felt the grasp of His Hand loosen, and saw Him gradually pass away out of my sight. When I woke up, Bob, I felt so happy, and as if I could always be good."

"No wonder," replied Bob; "it does me good to listen to the account of the dream. Oh, Jenny, let's make believe it's true, and try to be always good."

"There's one text in the Bible, Bob, where it says that God sends dreams. Father read it at prayer time this morning. It is, 'In a dream, in

a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man, in slumberings upon the bed, then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.'"

"Then what lots of dreams we read of in the Bible, and they all came to be true, so why not mine?"

"You see, Jenny," said Bob, "those people told about in the Bible lived such ages ago, perhaps they were different to us."

"I don't think that, Bob. Of course their fashions were different, and they did not live in England; but, as father says, they were all God's children, just as we are; besides, would the Bible be of much use to us now, as we know it is to be, if all those people were so different to us? We must be much the same, and want the same kind of help. So, I don't see why we should not expect God to teach us by dreams now, as then. Not stupid dreams, you know; they are no good, as far as I see. But this dream of mine, Bob, will make us both happier for a very long time. I think I shall ask God to let me have some more like it."

Just as I said this, the chime of the distant bell reminded us that it was time to be returning home.

The children were flocking out of the Sunday-

schools, sauntering along the lanes, and across the meadows.

Bob and I ran off together as far as the stile, when he turned towards the town.

When I got in I found the kitchen fire nearly out, but by using an extravagant quantity of wood it soon burned up. Putting the kettle on, I made great haste to spread the table, and was just ready to set the tea brewing when mother came in from the Sunday-school.

She looked very pleased. Said she was very glad I was growing so useful, and had not forgotten to look after the fire in the kitchen, as she half feared I should.

I didn't think I need say anything about the wood I had used.





CHAPTER IV.

“BY THE SAD SEA WAVES.”

TWO or three weeks after Bob and I had had our pleasant talk in the meadow about my dream, he went away to spend his holidays at Hastings. Mrs. Rivers was always very delicate in health, and had during this summer been so much worse that it was decided to try the effect of sea-air for her.

My holidays came at the same time. I felt grievously disappointed to find I should thus be left alone, for so I felt it. I had several friends at school, and was getting to know two or three of the boys who went to school with Bob. We often on half-holidays used to go out in a large party, nutting, or blackberrying, in the lovely summer months. During frosty weather, our gambols on the ice, skating, sliding, and, of course, often tumbling down, formed a pleasant feature in our lives. Certainly childhood has a great many happy days. To them “the admirable drama

of small things " fills up the sum of their young existence; and for myself I can truly say, that whilst the bright warm days of summer were an especial joy, when Bob and I could live out of doors, and sit in shady nooks by the stream, or in the woods, talking freely, and often reading aloud to each other; still, as the gloomier days of the fading autumn, and the chill drear winter came, they brought with them many pleasures upon which we look back gladly. Coleridge says,—

"In nature there is nothing melancholy."

I have no doubt he is right. But if ever I did happen to walk out on a drear dull day alone, or in the companionship of any of the school-girls, with whose ideas I had but little in common, I used to think nature *did* look melancholy; whereas if we—Bob and I—were but together, the leafless hedges and bleak bare fields would ring with our merry laughter as much as in the bright sunny days.

"Dear old Bob," I said, "what can I do all my holidays without you? I shall hate the days."

"Why, Jenny," said he, "I don't much like going without you. I don't know any one at Hastings to have any games with. My mamma and sisters don't care for the beach; they go for drives, or sit on the Parade, and such things. But I want you to have fun with. I mean to get mamma to send for you."

“Oh, Bob, how delightful! I have never seen the sea. I hope it can be managed.”

And so Bob and I bade each other goodbye, hoping that by some means we might meet before the holidays were quite over.

I dreamed about Bob that night, and about the sea; but as it was only a magnified pond, grown all around with rushes, very much like that in Love Lane, I could not boast of having had at all a true vision, when I really did first behold the grand wide ocean.

Of course Bob promised to write to me, and about a week after we parted I received by post what I now call my first love letter. I felt very important when the old postman brought it. “For Miss Jenny Greatheart,” the old fellow called out, at the gate. He saw me weeding the flower bed by the side of the house, and so waited for me to run and fetch the letters from him. Highly delighted I was to see Bob’s big school-boy handwriting, with a great blot on one corner.

He wrote on a sheet of paper with a picture of the Marina on the top, and the sea in front. This is his letter. I’ll copy it, for I have it now before me. There are no stops, and some words are spelt very incorrectly.

"MY DEAR OLD JENNY,—We got hear all serene in time for tea on Tuesday afternoon why didn't you see me of at the trane I looked out for you as I had a bit of plum cake to give you I eat it myself on the journey as you didn't get it I hope you'll come soon wen mama is a littel stronger and we will have such jolly fun! It's rather slow for me now but I have made one or two frends on the beech. So no more but do rite very quick to me

"Your affectionate

" BOB.

"P.S.—Please direct to me 'Mr. Robert Rivers' it looks grand and that's how I'm put in the visitors' list."

I showed my letter to father and mother. Father laughed at the scrawling writing, and said he hoped Bob would soon learn to spell better; and then he showed me the mistakes, so that I might not fall into them myself, as he said. Bob was never so good a speller at school as I was, but I didn't care how the words were written or spelt so long as I could understand all he wanted to say. I was so glad he seemed to think I should go to stay with them. Directly after breakfast I sat down and wrote to him; I took great pains, lest his sisters or mamma should see the letter. This was *my* letter, as far as I remember it. He burnt the real one :—

“DEAR OLD BOB,—I could not get to the train to see you off, as mother wanted me to do some work for her, and then it was too late to come. I dreamed of you the night you left, and I dreamed that I saw the sea, and it was like the Pond in Love Lane, only very big indeed, but as your picture shows the sea, that could not be at all true, like my dream about Jesus. I hope your mamma will soon be well, and let me come and have some fun with you, it's very dull blackberrying without you, and I scratched my arms and tore my dress, and made mother very cross and I said it was all because you were not there to get the high branches for me and I could not reach properly, and then she said you'll have to do without Bob Rivers some day, and then I was very unhappy, and had a good cry. Brother Howler came to tea last night, and father and he had a long talk. I'll try to remember and tell you all about it when I see you.

“My love, your affectionate,

“JENNY GREATHEART.

“P.S.—I find you have not put your address, so I must take this letter to your father and ask him for it. I have put Mr. Robert Rivers as you wanted me, but I like Bob a deal better, much prettier name.”

I ran into High Street to Bob's father, showed him my letter to be sent to Bob, and asked for the address, as I wanted to do it all and post it

myself. He laughed when he saw "Mr. Robert Rivers," but I said I wanted it like that, and so it went. A great blot in the corner, like Bob's letter, only I had tried to scratch it out, which had not at all improved the general appearance.

On the following Wednesday Mr. Rivers called to see mother, and ask if she would be so kind as to let me go to spend a week or two at Hastings.

"You see, Mrs. Greatheart," he said, in his genial way, "our Bob and your Jenny are inseparable; Bob has no one to play with by the sea, away from his schoolfellows. I dare say Jenny won't object to go, will you?"

"Oh," I said, "I shall be so glad; I have never seen the sea, and I do miss Bob so."

Mother made a slight objection, because she said I had no suitable dress; but Mr. Rivers did not think that of any importance. It would be better, he said, to go in an old one, as I should be sure to spoil whatever I wore on the beach.

In the end it was decided that I was to be at the station by three o'clock on Saturday afternoon, to accompany Mr. Rivers, who always went to stay with his family over Sunday.

Mother went out to the nearest draper's shop, bought some neat material to make me a best dress, and as she found Miss Sharp, the dressmaker, was

not too busy, she brought her back with her, to help make it. To my intense delight they worked so well that by Friday morning it was finished.

"Now Jenny, you must not have any of your frolics when you wear this," said mother, as she was fitting it on; "you can travel in your Sunday frock, and take it for afternoons, as *this* is now your best dress. Your school frock will do for the beach, and so will your school hat."

I promised to do all mother bid me.

Saturday came at last! Of course I dreamed that I reached the station just in time to see the train rushing away; and Mr. Rivers (who had *Bob's* face on his shoulders) waving his hand to me as I frantically rushed after it, calling it to stop. I awoke, glad to find it only a dream, and not a true one. It was bright daylight. I got up directly, and hastened to get dressed.

"Jenny," called out mother from her room, "what in the world are you getting up for at this time?"

"I want to be ready, mother," I replied.

"Ready, child! it's barely five o'clock, and you don't leave this house until half-past two. Well," she added, "put on your old dress; and, when you go down, you'd better water the garden. Don't

make such a noise ; I want your father to have two hours' sleep yet."

Oh, dear ! it *was* a long, long morning. Surely the clocks have all stopped, I thought ; and two or three times mother caught me standing near the mantle-piece listening.

"What are you doing, Jenny ?"

"I thought the clock had stopped, mother. It must be nearly dinner-time ; isn't it ?"

"Bless the child ! dinner, indeed ! it's only half-past eleven. Go and get some lunch, you had no breakfast."

At last the hour arrived. Father took me to the station, where we met Mr. Rivers, and I was handed over to his care. When the train really started, and I, looking from the carriage-window, saw father walk slowly away, waving his hand to me, a terrible revulsion took place in my little heart. I was on my way to dear old Bob, *but*—I should not see my dear father for more than a week. Never before had I been parted from him for so long, and, as I took my seat by Mr. Rivers, my eyes were filled with tears, and, but for pride, I should have burst into a fit of crying. Mr. Rivers saw and understood my feelings.

"Ah, Jenny, you'll soon be back," he said. "Shall I bring you home on Monday ? What would Bob say to that ?"

His cheery tone brightened me up directly, and the delight of swiftly rushing along—past hedges, ditches, trees, all of which looked as if they were running away from us, instead of our running away past them—soon dispelled all sadness. It was but the April shower of childhood, quickly come up and as quickly gone.

Bob and his sisters were at the station to meet us. Leaving my little box to be sent after us, we all walked down the steep little hill towards the Marina. It is simply impossible to describe my thoughts and feelings when I first looked upon the wide expanse of the sea. A feeling of bewilderment, a sense of my own extreme insignificance, combined with a sensation of boundless freedom, rushed over and, for a few moments, overwhelmed me. Bob was just telling me one of his adventures, but I neither saw nor heard him. I stood like a statue; gazing, gazing, as if I would drink in with my eyes the grand scene. It was rather rough, and the tide was nearly at the full. The small white breakers, rippling in the far distance—the bold, dashing wave as it rushed up the beach, with what seemed to me a shout of triumph, and then the quieter hush and moan as it receded to join the next onward wave. Oh! it was grand!—indescribable!

“What’s the matter, Jenny?” said Bob; “what’s the matter?”

"Hush, Bob! Listen to the sea—how it sighs and dashes! And oh! where does it reach to? Let me stand and look, Bob; but please don't speak."

He stood by me, silent. He had forgotten his own feelings on first seeing this splendid scene, for it was not *his* first visit; he had been several times during his short life, and was, on his first visit, too young to be so overpowered by it. Otherwise he would have told me, I know. Besides, I sometimes wonder whether boys really feel *quite* so strongly or deeply in some ways as girls do. I cannot tell, as I never was a boy, and can only judge of them by my knowledge of Bob. It often seemed as if my thoughts aroused his, for he never failed to sympathise with me in everything.

As we were standing thus together, Mr. Rivers and his daughter came up.

"Jenny is looking at the sea, father," said Bob.

"So I suppose," he replied, looking rather amused at my very serious face.

"Oh, dear!" I sighed, looking up at them all, "I never thought the sea was like this. There's nothing beyond but sky."

"How do you enjoy it, little one?" said Mr. Rivers.

"I don't know yet," I replied. "I feel as if I had no thought big enough for it, and it almost takes my breath away."

All laughed, and it was quite as well for me to be thus roused up, and hastened off to enter into the stern but most necessary realities of life; for with my day's excitement I had scarcely taken a mouthful of food, and began to feel very sick and faint, although I did not know what was the matter with me.

We soon reached the house where Mrs. Rivers was lodging, and were all very glad to see a substantial meat tea awaiting our arrival. I felt better by the time I had had a good meal; but, much as I longed for a run on the beach opposite, I felt really so tired that I was very glad to go to bed at the usual hour—eight o'clock.

I had a pretty little bed-room to myself. It led out of the larger room occupied by Bob's sisters. On the opposite side of the landing was Bob's room, which was his mamma's dressing-room. So we were within easy call of each other as I soon found, for just as I was dropping off to sleep, almost as soon as my head touched the pillow, I heard Bob, in a loud whisper, call from his bed, "I say, Jenny, we'll get up early and get some shells before breakfast, won't we?"

I managed to call back my willing assent, and remembered no more, for I fell into a dreamless sleep until morning.

Hardly had I opened my eyes, and become conscious that I was not in my little room at home,

with its pretty window shaded by a fringe of wisteria ; but really by the sea, listening to its ceaseless murmur, instead of the rustling of trees and the song of the birds,—when in popped Bob's curly wig and rosy laughing face at the half-open door. He was not dressed.

“Get up, Jenny,” he said, in a subdued tone. “We shall have time to run across to the beach and get our shells before breakfast ; only be quiet, because we mustn't wake anybody up.”

“All right, Bob.” He vanished, and I hastened to dress. Putting on my hat, I was running down stairs as his door opened and he joined me. The tide had but just turned, and, the beach being too wet for our Sunday shoes, we sat down on the dry shingle, watching the waves dashing nearly to our feet, and glorying in the fresh sea-breeze.

“Bob,” said I, “My dream about the sea was a long way from true, wasn't it ?”

“Yes, indeed ; this is not much like Love Lane Pond.”

“I told father my dream of Jesus, Bob, and he looked so happy. I asked him if he didn't think it was really *true*, and that Jesus *did* talk to me.”

“What did he say ? ” said Bob.

“Why, he said that our Father, in Heaven, teaches us by night, as well as by day ; when we are asleep, as well as when we are awake. And

how he hoped I would never forget all that Jesus had then taught me."

"But did he think it was fairy-land, you saw, Jenny?"

"I asked him that, and after being very quiet a little time, he said, 'Jenny, Christ told His disciples that in His Father's home were "many mansions," and St. John, in his wonderful vision, saw beautiful things; he tells us of a city, with streets and walls of jasper, gates of pearl, and of many precious stones, as used in the architecture. May we not reverently imply from these words, and from the few references made in the Bible to the spirit world, that this beautiful vision given to you may have been a slight glimpse of the home where the little ones live whose angels do always behold the face of the Father?' Mother said she thought I had better not think so much of these matters that we shall never understand. But father said, 'If the child thinks of good things, there is less room for evil. Leave her to God, may be our little ones can be taught of matters that we elder ones fear to approach.'"

He said, everything that helped us to be good, and to overcome evil, was from God.

Bob had listened very quietly. When I left off talking, he asked, "Was that all he said, Jenny?"

"No, Bob, but I can't remember any more."

Just then the servant ran across the Parade, and beckoned us in to breakfast. We were both ready for it.

At half-past ten, Bob and I went with his sisters to church. Mr. Rivers remained at home with Mrs. Rivers, who was not able to get out yet. We went to one of the High churches. It was a great event for me, as I had never before been anywhere but to Little Bethel.

As we entered the beautiful building, out of the bright sunlight, into its sombre shade, with the painted windows, carved pillars along the aisles, lined with luxurious-looking carpeted pews, I felt greatly impressed. Soon the slow solemn tones of the organ struck up, in the gentlest pianissimo, and gradually grew louder, until the church re-echoed with chords of grand majestic harmony. I was delighted, breathless with wonder. But when the music once more sank, and the congregation, rising *en masse*, joined as with one voice in singing that glorious anthem—"O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever"—I sat down upon the hassock and cried. No one saw me, and I was very glad, for I thought it very naughty, but I could not help it. To this day grand music fills my whole soul with an intense melancholy, born of gladness. Strange, but true,

as most lovers of music will understand. The whole service filled me with joy. It did not seem at all long, as the service at Little Bethel did.

Our saunter home along the Parade, crowded as it was with such grandly-dressed ladies and gentlemen, and numbers of the prettiest children I had ever seen, was full of novelty to me. We dined early always, and so had very little time to stay out after church.

As soon as dinner and dessert were over, Bob and I ran across the road, and down the steps on to the beach. The tide was low : we found a shady nook under one of the larger pieces of rock, where we sat down, glad of the shelter from the hot sun, which flung fierce rays from the western sky.

Oh, how exquisite was the scene before me ! Behind us a long row of grand white houses, and the broad Parade with its different seats. Some covered and sheltered from the wind by thick glass partitions. A very few square, little enclosures of grass. Very paltry they looked to my eyes, accustomed to the wealth of foliage and broad meadows which surrounded our home. But, paltry as they were, the speck of green was comforting to the eye to rest upon, in the midst of the glare of brightness around. But we—Bob and I—sat facing the glorious sea. The tide was low, the waves were rippling gently up the shore, with the soft, low murmur, which has never ceased through countless ages, except to

exchange the low murmur for the fierce, wild, dashing waves, the sight and sound of which had so overpowered me on the previous day. A few small boats were lazily floating in the smooth water at a short distance from the beach. A delicious sense of freedom and joy filled my being.

"Wasn't the music grand at church, Bob?" I asked, "Is it like that in all churches?"

"Not always quite so good as they have it at St. Joseph's, but we always have organs."

"I wish we had one at Little Bethel," I said, "I don't like the singing there. It's all in a muddle; some sing quicker than others, and they seldom begin all at once, as they did at church. Then a great many voices near our pew are so ugly. I said so to father one day, and he said if people made music and sang praises from their hearts God was better pleased than when folks sang only because they enjoyed the music, and without thinking of the words. But I said that I thought the angels, not being so good as God, *must* prefer pretty voices to cracked ones."

"I should think so, Jenny," said Bob.

"Mother said I really must not talk so freely about angels and all these things that I could not understand; but father said he thought it was much better to say all I thought about to them, and of course, Bob, I must tell you my thoughts."

"Of course," he replied.

We stooped down to gather some pretty little stones that were near us ; we could never find many shells, but somehow we never tired of looking for them.

"Jenny," said Bob, "I want you to learn such a jolly tune Lilly plays ; she promised to teach you, if you liked."

"Ah, Bob," I said, sadly, "it's no use, mother won't like me to learn to sing any but what she thinks is sacred music ; and, oh ! dear, our piano is so jingley. I think when father can afford to buy a new one for me I shall like to practise. I hate it now."

"When I'm a man," said Bob, "I'll buy you a grand one, and you shall play any music you like. I mean to have a large house, and keep a carriage, and we shall live together, Jenny, and do just as we like, and have lots of bull's-eyes."

Just as we were building our castle in the air, we were called in to tea.

Mrs. Rivers was in the drawing-room, lying on the sofa. She was too weak to come from her own room until the bustle of the early part of the day and the dinner was over.

Mrs. Rivers was a gentle motherly woman ; I loved her very much, and Bob and I were always glad to be allowed to sit by her side. She always seemed to enjoy hearing all we had to tell her. This afternoon she asked me what I thought of the

sea. (She had not been with us the previous day at all, not being well enough to join the circle, as usual.) I told her how wonderful it seemed to me; and then Mr. Rivers and the sister told her of the state of excitement that was over me when they overtook us on our way from the station. She was amused, like the others, but seemed to enter into my feelings rather more.

I said to her, "I wonder Bob didn't tell me more about it; he has been here three or four times, hasn't he?"

"Why, Jenny," she answered, "he was but four years old when we first brought him here: too young to be much astonished at anything, or at any rate to have any very deep thought about matters."

"I think little children have very deep thought sometimes," said Lilly. "I remember very well walking by the shore one morning with Bob, during that first visit here when he was with us. He was a tiresome little fellow for asking questions, and *would* have an answer. I used to have to invent all kinds of replies to remarks of his that I *could* not answer properly."

"Yes," said Mr. Rivers, "I know that from experience. One day, when you were playing the piano, I came in, and there was the little fellow peering round it, peeping in at the keys, listening all about, and looking a picture of curiosity. As

soon as he saw me, he ran up, took my hand, and dragged me across the room. 'What's the matter, Bob?' I asked. 'Where does pretty music tum from, papa? Tum 'ook. I tant find out. Where is de soul of him?' . 'Him' being the piano. He could not understand music apart from the soul or life."

"What did he say of the sea? do you remember, Lilly?" said Mrs. Rivers.

"Yes, indeed," she replied. "It was a rough morning; the sea roared up the beach, and the noise was so deafening that I felt very disinclined to try to speak. I wished I had left the young Turk at home, with his very inquiring mind. I thought of little Paul in 'Dombey and Son'; for, as we were walking along, suddenly he looked up into my face, and said, 'Lilly, Lilly, what does the sea keep saying?' I couldn't think all at once what to say; but, as usual, he *would* have an answer; so I had to invent a speech for the waves. Unfortunately I happened to remark soon after, 'The tide has turned—it's going down.' 'Where to? where to?' said little Bob. 'Oh! to France,' I replied, breathless with shouting; for he would hear, and only a shout could be heard. 'Where's France?' said he. 'Over there,' I said, in despair, pointing vaguely towards the horizon. 'That's sky! is the sky France?' 'Oh, dear Bob,' I said, 'come along quickly; it's dinner-time, and there's

milky rice-pudding and baked apples; no time to talk.' So my difficulty was got over."

Of course we all were very much amused, and many other little details of Bob's childish ideas came up. After tea Bob asked his mamma if we might not one day have a picnic together at the Smuggler's Cave. She rather demurred at first; but Mr. Rivers and all said it would be quite safe,—it was not so very far along the beach. There could be no danger attending it really, any more than there was every day when we were wandering and slipping about on the rocks in front of the house at low tide. So the promise was made.

We went to church after tea. I was longing to hear some more of the grand music. When we returned, being Sunday evening, we were allowed to stay up until nine o'clock. Lilly played some very pretty tunes to us, and Bob and I joined with the rest in singing the hymn—"Abide with me, fast falls the eventide." After that, at Bob's request, we had the children's sweet song—"I think when I read that sweet story of old." Bob and I sang it together; and then we had supper, and went to bed.

In this way passed my first day "by the sad sea waves;" and I may truly add that it was the happiest Sunday I had yet spent in my little life of twelve summers.



CHAPTER V.

AFLOAT.

OF course we were most anxious to set off upon our promised picnic to the cave. Monday proved somewhat cloudy, and Mrs. Rivers thought it might turn out wet in the evening. But, to our delight, we awoke on Tuesday morning to find a brilliant sun. All clouds dispersed, Beachy Head and Bexhill both invisible, that being considered an almost infallible sign of fine weather at Hastings. We spent the morning on the shingles opposite the house. Came in to an early dinner; after which I practised my music with Lilly for an hour. Mrs. Rivers wished us not to start upon our hot walk along the beach until the heat of the day was well over. Bob could not find anything to do, so he fidgetted about, just as boys will, whistling scraps of tunes, playing marbles in impossible corners, or rushing after the cat, if the poor thing happened to put in an appearance.

At three o'clock we got ready for starting.

Lilly, who made as great a pet of me as she did of her young brother, packed up for us a basket of provisions.

"Put them in plenty of plum cake," said kind Mrs. Rivers; "they'll be as hungry as little hunters."

"Oh, yes, mamma," replied Lilly, "they shall have 'sugar and spice, and all that's nice, for that's what they are made of.' Now Jenny," she went on, turning to me, "I have wrapped up the jam sandwiches in lots of white paper, so that you can use some of it as a table-cloth over a rock which you'll find just inside the cave; and on each side of it there's a little low stone, just the thing for you small mites to sit upon. Then I have put in some slices of plum cake, some delicious pears, and just on one side, in this corner, I've poked in a bottle of lemonade. You must drink it out of these scallop shells, which I shall put on the top of the basket, and you can throw them away when you've done with them, if you like."

"Won't you give them a little tumbler, Lilly?" asked Mrs. Rivers.

"A tumbler for such wee picnickers! I should think not; they'll break it before they get to their journey's end, and have to drink out of the bottle! I can't have such low tricks, even in the smuggler's cave."

We laughed joyously, and declared that the

lemonade would, we thought, taste nicer out of scallop shells than any tumbler.

Just as we were running down stairs, Lilly called out, "Children, have you any money? Mamma thinks, if you are very tired when you come back you'd better take a carriage in Robertson Street, or the omnibus if you prefer."

"By jingo! what a jolly game!" cried Bob. "We'll have a carriage to ourselves of course,—a big one! I've got two shillings and a tanner, that's enough; you must pay me back what I spend."

"Naughty boy to talk slang to your big sister," cried out merry Lilly, running after us as we rushed away. "I'll make you an apple-pie bed," were the last words we heard, and looking back, there she stood watching us with loving eyes, and shaking her pretty fist at us.

Well for us all that the near future was hidden from our view. When the cloud gathers over us, the silvery lining will still show itself; and though the rifts be ever so small they are cheering. The heaviest sorrows are those we make for ourselves *by anticipation*. Strength equal to each day is promised, but the strength in these cases does not come *before* the day. In this way does the Great Father endeavour to make His children perfectly

trustful. The absence of this perfect trust brings sadness into the earthly life.

Bob and I sauntered along that lovely afternoon. We had plenty of time—were not expected home before seven or even eight o'clock. When overheated we sat down beneath the shade of one of the boats that were lying about the shingle and rested. I suspect we did not reach the cave much before five o'clock.

We found the rock and stones that Lilly had described. We spread our provisions in order upon Nature's table, decorated it with the shells, stones, and scraps of sea-weed we had picked up on our way. We then sat down, feeling that the Queen herself would have rejoiced to join us in so sumptuous a meal, and one so elegantly spread! Anyhow, we were sure the young princes and princesses would have liked it, and I have no doubt we were so far right.

What a merry meal we had. We agreed that nothing could have been more delightful than Robinson Crusoe's life on the desert island; but thought we should have liked to go home, say, once a week, to see them all, and have all the news.

By the time we had finished our meal we thought it would be well to move slowly homewards.

As we played about over the rocks, which were as yet uncovered by the advancing tide, we

came across a pretty little boat. It was unusually clean looking, and had a seat at one end, just large enough for us to sit, or rather recline, side by side. The temptation was too great to resist. We climbed up into it at once, and seated ourselves comfortably.

"What a game!" said Bob, "this is real fun! And awfully jolly! We'll have a good rest, Jenny, before we go any further."

"Do you think we'll have time, Bob?" I asked. "I think it's getting a little late. Look at the sun, it's going down."

"Lots of time, old girl. We shan't be ten minutes going quickly from here to the Market-place, and then we'll have a carriage, and I'll get the man to let *me* drive, and won't we spin along! We can get home by eight o'clock, I'm sure."

Of course this argument was conclusive. We settled down and chatted quietly. It was intensely enjoyable. We were sufficiently tired out to be very glad of the comfortable rest the seat afforded. The sea was calm. The tide gently rising, with the soft rippling sound, so musical, and restful, like a quiet lullaby. The glaring light of the morning was exchanged for the softer shade that precedes the gloaming twilight hour. We sat facing the western horizon. The sun, veiled in gorgeous clouds of richest hue, was slowly sinking behind the cliffs of Beachy Head. Bob and I loved to watch the

twilight fade into night, as the sun sinks over the hills beyond Love Lane ; but this sunset seemed to us even grander, because we had a full, uninterrupted view.

I cannot tell how it happened, but we both dropped off into a sound sleep. How long we had lain thus, side by side, we may never know. Suddenly I opened my eyes, and, starting up, found the sun had quite gone down, and the clear sky was "clothed in the beauty of a million stars."

My sudden movement aroused Bob.

"Jenny," he exclaimed, in a startled tone, "we're afloat."

True enough we were. On the impulse of the moment I prepared to jump out, thinking to reach a small rock. Bob seized hold of me.

"What are you going to do, Jenny?" he said, "we are in deep water, you'll be drowned."

"Oh no, Bob," I said, "I'm sure we can jump on to that rock, it's so close."

"Don't try, Jenny, it's too far for a flying leap, I know, and we should never do it from here."

"Keep still, Jenny, dear," he added ; "I'll soon row back. Why, it's just a jolly game ; I've often got old Sharp to let me have an oar when we've been out boating, and he has taught me all about it."

"I'm afraid we shall be very late before we reach home," I said. "It must be so late."

"Yes," he said, "It is a pity, for mamma's sake. But I expect Lilly won't let her know we are not in. I hope so."

All the time we were thus talking we were groping about under the seats for the oars. I fully believed in Bob's power of getting us to land, and so my first terror was subdued, and I began to think that, after all, it was a very pleasant adventure to be afloat together under such a lovely star-lit sky.

Alas! No oars could we find. In the meantime it was very evident that every wave gently but surely carried us farther from the shore, and that we were hopelessly adrift.

So silently had the tide risen, and so gently had our small lightly-freighted boat been borne upon the waves, that we had slept on undisturbed. How it could have so easily slipped from its moorings we never knew. We did not at once lose all courage. Bob was far too boy-like to show any signs of fear, even if he felt them; and I,—well, I felt safe with him. In fact we neither of us fully realised the difficulty and danger of our position. Side by side we sat. My head was leaning upon Bob's shoulder, his right arm was around my waist, and so we gently drifted away with the tide.

Just as we neared the Pier, a burst of music from the band floated across the still water, and we could discern the crowd of people streaming out of the brilliantly-lighted room, and move towards the Parade.

"Oh, dear," I cried, "Lilly is on the Pier to-night, I believe. How I do wish we could make her hear us."

And loudly we shouted "Lilly! Lilly!" but in vain. Our voices could not reach nearly so far, and as we watched the last small dark moving object walk slowly away, and the gaslights in the room vanish one by one, an intense sense of utter loneliness crept over us. Closer did I creep to Bob, and felt that he was quietly crying.

Just at this time, slowly, majestically, from over the distant hill, rose the pale full moon. It shed its gentle radiance over the town, and the white irregular rows of houses along the front stood out, clearly defined, against the deep shadows on every side.

We could see the Archway, through which we had passed so joyously. How long ago? It might have been days—for it seemed so very long since we left all our loved ones. The reflection of the unclouded moon upon the silent sea formed a silvery line direct from our boat to the Marina, where we could discern, by its clear light, the very

house they were in, watching for us, doubtless, and wondering where we could be.

We had not spoken to each other for some time, but at last Bob said, sobbing "Oh, Jenny, this fright about us will kill mamma, I'm sure it will."

"Don't you think Lilly will prevent her knowing we are not at home, somehow, Bob?" said I.

"She can't do it, Jenny. The Pier closes at ten o'clock, it must be nearly eleven now. Mamma never goes to sleep without my kissing her, and I say my prayers by her bed-side. Oh, Jenny, what can we do?"

For some minutes we could not speak for crying. Then again, Bob spoke.

"Jenny, Jesus said if we thought of Him, and wished to see Him, He would always come. Shall we shut our eyes and talk to Him?"

"Yes, Bob; we know He can find help somehow. Let us ask Him to take us home quickly. He told me, you know, He would give us what we asked, if good for us, and of course it would be good for us to be at home in bed, and not all alone out here."

"*You* talk to Jesus, Jenny. I can't think what to say, I feel so very unhappy."

I dared not move, or I would have knelt down

in the boat. But, shutting my eyes, I tried to recall the vision of Jesus that had come to me so vividly on the night of my dream.

Was it fancy? or did I really once again see that heavenly face, and hear that loving voice? I spoke aloud :

“ Dear Jesus, Bob and I want help. Come to us ; take us very quickly home.”

“ Jenny,” whispered Bob, as I paused, “ ask Jesus to make mamma quite happy about us, and not let her get ill.”

“ Bob,” I said, in an undertone, “ I see Him ! He’s walking in the silvery path that the moon’s rays have made, and which leads straight home.”

“ Oh, Jenny, listen ! Will He speak once more ? ”

In the deep, solemn stillness that surrounded us, clearly I heard, in a soft whisper close to my ear, these words :

“ Little ones, it is I ; fear not. God’s ministering spirits are bringing you help.”

“ It’s all right, dear Bob ! ” I exclaimed, joyfully ; “ we shall soon have help. Jesus says so.”

“ What about mamma ? ” said Bob.

“ I see Jesus on the pathway ; He’s walking towards the house. Listen ! ”

Again came the whisper close by me.

“ Many prayers are ascending to My Father on your behalf. I go to comfort the sorrowful, and bid them also be of good cheer.”

“ Bob,” I said, as I repeated to him these words, that had come to me so clearly, “ surely you heard the voice of Jesus, as He spoke close to me ? ”

“ No,” said Bob, “ I could not hear any words ; but I thought I heard sweet music, and I know I saw close before us a large bright star, like fire, only of such a soft, rosy colour. Look ! ” he exclaimed ; “ it is fixed at the end of the boat. It’s like a signal.”

What a glorious, heaven-born gift imagination must be—if this was really nothing else ! Certainly children are very credulous. I can only say that after this circumstance took place, on that never-to-be-forgotten night, all our sorrow and anxiety went, and we sat up watching the beautiful scene around us, no longer feeling forsaken or lonely.

Soon Bob said, “ I begin to feel so hungry, Jenny ; don’t you ? ”

“ I’d forgotten all about that,” I said ; “ but now I feel so happy I *do* find that I want my supper. We shan’t get it yet though, so we need not think about it.”

“ I’ve got some bull’s-eyes in my pocket,” said Bob, bringing out a packet.

"Why, I quite forget," I said; "here I have ever so many chocolates, that I'm sure Lilly put in for me."

And so we ate our little stock of sweets, and felt very thankful for them. It certainly was very singular how Bob and I were continually finding little mysterious packets of bull's-eyes or some such delectable food for our childish palate. We told Lilly one day that we believed *she* put them there. She laughed gaily, and replied:

"You don't think *I* should encourage you in such babyish ways! Of course not! But you see you have pockets made just suitable to hold the sweets, and I quite expect they grow there."

It was a happy thing for us this night that we found our pockets so well supplied. We ate the sweets happily, chattering away about Jesus and what He said to us. We were drifting about a long way from land, but the clear moonlight brought everything so near (or seemed to do so) that we could watch the gas-lights as they vanished from the lower rooms in the houses to reappear in the bedrooms, and finally even these were put out, and all was wrapped in utter stillness—all but the house we knew to be that in which our loved ones waited on, hour after hour. Lights were shining from every window there, and continually did we see a white-robed figure come from the drawing-room

window into the balcony, and look around—for us, we knew. It was dear Lilly, we felt sure.

But such a peaceful calm had come over us, that at last our eyes closed against our will, and once more, locked in each other's arms, we slept—as soundly as if we really were in our little bed at home.





CHAPTER VI.

“BE OF GOOD CHEER.”

IN the meantime, let me record some of the incidents that took place at home on that eventful evening. Lilly and Maggie have so often told us about them that I am sure I can describe everything as if I had been really present.

Lilly was, as I thought, on the Pier with a young friend. Maggie—the eldest sister—stayed with her mamma.

Just as the sun went down Mrs. Rivers roused out of a doze into which she had fallen, calling out, “The children! the children! will no one save them?”

“Dear mamma,” said Maggie, hastening to her side, “what is distressing you?”

“Oh, Maggie, I suppose I’ve been asleep and dreaming; but I saw Bob and Jenny sitting together in a little boat, a long way out to sea, and a great fear took hold of me. Did I call out?”

“Yes, mamma, you called something about ‘the

children'; but now you are awake, and it's all right. I should think they will soon be coming home now."

"What is the time, dear Maggie?"

"Nearly eight o'clock; but you know you gave them leave to stay out until eight or a little after. 'Tis such a lovely warm evening."

"Watch for the omnibus, Maggie. I hope they'll come in it, and not get fagged out."

"I'll sing to you, mamma, dear, for a little while. It's useless watching for the omnibus until a quarter past eight. It leaves the 'Memorial' about eight."

So Maggie sat down to the piano, and sang, in her sweet voice, Mendelssohn's lovely contralto song "Oh rest in the Lord. Wait patiently for Him."

When she had finished, Mrs. Rivers said, "Go on, Maggie, I love music just at this quiet hour. It is so soothing; and I feel sadly depressed and anxious. I think some great trouble hangs over us."

"Dear mamma," answered Maggie, "don't give way to this sadness. Try to 'rest in the Lord.'"

"I do try; but yet, when these forebodings come over me, I feel utterly crushed. I cannot resist the depression," said Mrs. Rivers.

"Anticipation is always worse than reality. We work ourselves up sadly, thinking of what may perhaps happen some day. What we most fear,

probably, never comes ; or, if it does, strength sufficient for the day is always given. You are weak, mamma, dear ; we must try to get you stronger, then your spirits will be brighter."

Maggie sat by the window. The omnibus passed, but did not stop. She hoped her mamma had not noticed it. It was generally easy to distinguish the heavy lumbering sound of the omnibus from that of the lighter carriages, with horses of nobler step. Maggie got up as soon as it had passed quite out of sight, and prepared for her mamma an egg beaten up in milk, which she usually took during the evening.

Mrs. Rivers drank it quietly, and then said, "You can't deceive me, dear. The omnibus has passed, and they have not come. Do put on your hat and go down towards the Pier ; see if they are loitering about. This suspense is terrible."

"Children take no note of time, mamma ; don't trouble about them. I'll get Mary to come and look after you, and help you to bed, whilst I go out and hunt them up."

Mary was the housemaid, a pleasant girl, superior to her position. Mrs. Rivers was glad to accept her services, always so cheerfully offered, if, as sometimes happened, the two sisters required to be away at the same time. This evening Maggie was glad to find her mamma willing to let Mary take her place for a little time. She really began

to feel very uneasy indeed at our prolonged absence. By the time she had arranged little matters with Mary, it was nearly nine o'clock.

She walked quickly along the Parade, looking well on all the covered seats and along the beach. No signs could she see of us, or of any children unaccompanied by their parents or nursemaids. She reached the Pier breathless with rapid walking and an undefined dread of evil; and sat down on one of the Parade seats to think over what would be the best course to take.

Anxious as she was at leaving her mamma so long, it was clearly undesirable for her to return without having set some means to work to bring their great anxiety to an end.

Maggie was of a different type of character to Lilly. Always more thoughtful and more fit to act in such an emergency as the present.

Lilly, wildly impulsive and loving, was quickly subdued, and almost helpless in cases requiring presence of mind, and prompt action.

In five minutes Maggie had decided what steps to take. It was half-past nine o'clock. In a few minutes the last omnibus would pass on its way westward, she would go and meet it. There was at least a hope that we might be in it. Running down to White Rock she just met it, slowly coming

along. No creature was in it, so far as she could see, but she hailed the conductor and asked him if he had not seen two children about anywhere, describing our appearance. No; he could give her no information. Then she had a remote hope that we had met Lilly, and been taken on to the Pier to hear the band play. So she ran to the entrance gate, paid the 2d., and hurried up to the end just as the people were crowding out of the room, and dispersing in groups along the Pier homewards. She met Lilly and her friends, and hurriedly asked her if she had seen us. Great, indeed, was her consternation when told of our continued absence.

"Send a telegram to Papa and Mr. Great-heart, Maggie, directly," said she, walking rapidly on.

"Useless Lilly," replied Maggie; "even if it was not too late to do so, it would be very unwise. They could not get here till the morning, their anxiety would be terrible, and, in the meantime, we *must* find them."

Suddenly Lilly stopped, turned round, looking out towards the sea southward. She stood—finger up—intently listening. They stopped, looking at her in wonder.

"Hush," she said breathlessly, "Hush, some one called me."

"It couldn't be, Lilly, the Pier is empty, the gas is being put out."

"There it is again," she said, "a distant wail—Lilly! Lilly!"

And she began to retrace her steps.

"Come away, Lilly," said Maggie, "we are losing time. Don't give way so foolishly"—for Lilly was trembling from head to foot, and could scarcely stand. "We must both be strong and act. Can't you, dear Lilly, be sure that the Heavenly Father is watching over them? God grant that we may be led into the right way to find them, but we *must* act."

"What can we do, Maggie?"

"You and Miss Freund must go straight to the police station at the top of the Norman Road. Take a carriage, so as to lose no time. Give a full description of the children, and tell the inspector to save no expense in sending out in the direction of the Smuggler's Cave, and the country around there, to seek for them. Then you must go home to mamma. *Be brave* for her sake. I will go to Hastings' police station with the same instructions, and shall get some strong sailor to go with me at once to the cave. I will hunt for them myself all about the beach in that part."

Hours passed on. Policemen and sailors were sent in all directions, but no intelligence could be gained. Maggie picked up the little basket which

we had taken with us. It was thrown up high on the beach, and had evidently been in the water. The shells and seaweed we had collected were safely stowed away in it. A little further on she picked up Bob's cap. And these were the only signs of our having reached the cave. The provisions were gone, so it seemed evident that whatever accident had occurred must have been on our homeward walk.

Maggie now sadly retraced her steps, feeling utterly bewildered. As she walked up Castle Street, the Memorial clock pointed to the hour—half-past twelve. The almost deserted street re-echoed the church chimes, as they, in all directions, struck the half-hour. Wearied out, physically and mentally, she called a carriage that was just passing slowly along, looking out for a chance passenger before it ceased running for the night. Directing the driver to go to the police station, she went in to report all she had to say, and beg them to lose no time in letting her know of any intelligence they might gather. Then she was driven rapidly along the front, home. It is only those who have passed through similar vigils, who can in the least enter into the feelings of Mrs. Rivers and her daughters this evening.

The landlady and servants were on the alert, full of sympathy, and earnest to do all in their power to alleviate the sufferings of their lodgers ;

but, as midnight passed, they, one by one, reluctantly retired to their beds. Watching fruitlessly would but unfit them for their duties on the morrow. Mary alone refused absolutely to leave, and, having spread the table in the drawing-room with refreshments—which remained untouched—she took her station by the window in Mrs. Rivers' bedroom, so that she could watch everything that occurred on the Parade, and be at hand to assist the poor anxious invalid when necessary.

Maggie and Lilly sat almost silently, hour after hour, listening to every sound, and frequently creeping upstairs to see how their mamma was going on.

Mrs. Rivers seldom spoke. She remained quietly resting, in a half-sitting position, against the pillows. Her long black hair fell over them negligently; her face was deadly white, as she laid, looking out unceasingly over the sea. The window was thrown wide open, and the room was almost as light as by day, with the silvery brightness from the moon, which shone in so calmly from over the silent ocean. There were a few fishing-smacks about in the distance. In the bright path made by the reflection of the moonbeams, direct from the beach in front of the house across the sea, she saw one little black speck, too small for a boat, but what was it? Dreamily, half-unconsciously, did she

watch the little speck as it drifted about, scarcely moving, on the calm, smooth water. With a strange fascination her eyes fixed themselves upon it, and gradually her thoughts became so centred upon this tiny distant object that she began to lose the consciousness of the intense misery and utter desolation that had filled her being for hours past.

Yes—the time seemed almost indefinite now, since the truth had forced itself upon her that the two little ones who had so joyously kissed her, and bid her good-bye—how long ago?—were really lost. In speechless misery had she been lying—how long? No prayer could she utter, but deep in her heart it rested—“Father, if it be possible, let this dread trial pass over!” Gradually, as the tiny speck had risen before her on the bright pathway in the calm waters, came the still unuttered prayer—“Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done.” And then came a great calm over her troubled spirit, as if the Father Himself had said, “Peace, be still!”

“Mary,” she said at last, “do you see that little speck in the distance, just in the bright moonbeams?”

Mary looked, at first in vain, but then she saw it clearly.

"Yes, ma'am," she answered, "I see something; perhaps it's a buoy floating about."

"Can it be a boat, Mary?"

"Surely no, ma'am; it's far too small."

A few silent minutes passed. Maggie came into the room, and joined Mary at the window. She saw the speck, but could not distinguish what it was. Just then Mrs. Rivers sat quite up in bed.

"The speck has vanished," she said, in a strangely-excited tone, "but in its place I see a cloudy pillar of a rosy hue. 'Tis lovely; what can it be?"

Neither Maggie nor Mary could see any change; Mrs. Rivers watched. A strange light shone in her eye, a faint colour tinged the death-like pallor of her cheeks.

Soon again she spoke, in a clear undertone, but with no sound of sadness in her voice—

"The cloud has passed away, and in its place I see again the tiny speck, with a large red star fixed over it! It is a signal, but what of?"

She laid back upon her pillows, still looking out at the moonlit sea, with the bright red star centred over the silvery path. Lilly had joined the other two at the window, and they all began to think Mrs. Rivers had at length fallen asleep; for some time passed and she did not speak.

Then came the words from the bed on which she lay, "Be of good cheer, all is well!"

"Was it you who spoke, mamma?" said Lilly, for it scarcely sounded like her mamma's voice.

"I do not quite know, dear Lilly," she replied, in a strangely calm and happy tone; "I heard the words, 'Be of good cheer, all is well.' In a clear voice they were spoken to me, perhaps I repeated them."

In a few minutes Mrs. Rivers said, "You may all leave me now, I can sleep quite happily. I know our little ones are in safe keeping, and will soon be back. Mary, do go to bed; you'll be so tired in the morning. Lilly and Maggie rest on the sofa in the drawing room, some one must be ready to receive them. Have some milk ready for them."

At first they all thought she had become delirious, but so calm and composed did she seem that at length they yielded to her desire to be left, and went downstairs, cheered themselves—they hardly knew why.

They made the kind Mary have a glass of wine and a biscuit, and took a little themselves. Then, having looked out from the balcony three or four times to see if there was any sign of the policemen or sailors coming with the looked-for news, they took off their dresses, put on their dressing-gowns, laid down upon the sofas, and, wearied out, fell fast asleep. Just then the Memorial clock struck

three. The moonlight had gone, and the stillest, darkest time of the night watches passed away, as they lay thus, happily for a time unconscious of all sorrow.

The first faint rays of the sun, as they burst through the grey clouds of the early morning direct into the room where they were sleeping, aroused them both somewhat suddenly. At the same moment a slight tapping on the floor above gave them notice that Mrs. Rivers was awake, and wanting some one to go to her. Maggie and Lilly both ran up anxiously, and with—oh, such heavy hearts, as the realisation of their terrible sorrow burst fully upon them.

Mrs. Rivers was sitting up in bed. She said she had had a refreshing sleep, and asked if they knew any more about the children. She was not surprised to receive the negative reply; but seemed in no way distressed, as they naturally feared she must.

"They are safe, dears," she said. "I feel strangely composed because of this assurance, which is as strong within me as was the great dread of coming evil during the early part of last evening."

A grating sound as if some heavy boat was being landed came in at the still open window, and the shouts of sailors were heard.

"There they are! run quickly, both of you!" and falling back upon the pillows she burst into a flood of tears, crying out, "My children! my children!"

Lillie stayed with her mamma to give her all help. From the window she could see the boat that had just come ashore. She could scarcely believe her eyes, for she at once recognised Bob, without a cap, with his curly dark hair; and me, as she says, with my long flaxen curls, and holding in my hand my old hat, with its blue ribbons hanging over the brown holland dress I had left home in on the previous afternoon. We were in the boat, just about to be lifted ashore.

"Here they are!" screamed Lilly, and at that moment in came Mary, who had overheard the talking, and, half-dressed, had run down to learn the news. "Oh, Mary, stay with mamma! I must run across the road to fetch them in;" and throwing a waterproof over her shoulder, without waiting for her hat, which was not at hand, she ran over to the beach, joining Maggie just as Bob and I were wearily, stiffly, but oh, so joyously! climbing over the boulders and shingles from the boat, to run into their arms. Whenever I hear the words, "*Sorrow may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning!*" this scene rises up before my mind's eye, vividly, as if it had happened but an hour before.



CHAPTER VII.

“HE SHALL GIVE HIS ANGELS CHARGE OVER THEE.”

I WAS sitting on the grass, in the sloping meadow beyond Love Lane. Mother and father stood near, watching the setting sun, and speaking together in a low voice. I could not hear what they were saying; they looked rather anxious, I thought. Bob was turning somersaults down the hill, and I longed to do likewise, but could not stir. Some dread was over me; I knew not what. The air grew chill, and grey clouds suddenly obscured the brightness. A storm seemed rising, for I heard a low rumbling sound, like distant thunder. Sliding, sliding down, I knew not where, I opened my eyes.

I was not in Love Lane. No sweet birds were singing joyously to the gentle rustle of the waving foliage, which grows so luxuriantly there. No fragrance of wild flowers, such as filled the air in the meadows that surrounded my home.

A fresh salt breeze fanned my brow, and I heard on every side the low monotonous tone of the ever-murmuring sea. The low rush of advancing waves, in alternation with the moaning sigh, as they retreated, had lulled us to sleep—how long ago! The same wild low tones greeted my ear, as consciousness slowly returned.

I was not in my soft bed at home, for I felt I was lying on something very hard, and was also being shaken about, so that I was slipping down—somewhere. I opened my eyes, and tried to sit up. All around was a vast expanse of darkness; the moon had gone; a few stars only, besprinkled the cold dark sky.

A black object rose on one side, and by grating against my hard couch was producing the sound of thunder, and the sense of falling, which had awoken me from my sleep. It was not my father's quiet tones I had heard, but a strong harsh voice broke the silence. The words, though roughly spoken, were pleasant, and as at last I awoke to a full sense of our position, I knew also that the promised help had come.

"Yes, mate, 'ere they lie! The two wee lambies as t' Lord telled me on!"

"Lambies, indeed!" said another harsh voice, "I see none o' them. But, Lor a mussy—however did t' bairns come to be afloat like this! and in such a cockle-shell of a boat?"

"Ye see, mate," replied the first speaker, "t' Lord looks arter His children sharp like! I know'd as how He'd got work for me to do for Him; and didn't I say, mate, when we see te lovely star a shinin' in te moonlight, over t' sea, as how t' wer 'is signal fer us te bear down upon?"

"Mate, you're right fer once! Ay—sure enough we're but in the nick o' time; t' frail craft 'll flounder as t' squall come up wi' te tide."

Bob and I were now fully awake. A fishing yacht was alongside of us. Two sailors in it began to discuss as to the best way of getting us safely transferred from our tiny boat into their own.

One of the men proved to be Bob's friend, Jim Sharp, of whom he had spoken to me on the previous evening.

With strong arms were we soon hoisted out of our perilous position, and placed side by side in the warmest corner of the large boat. The night air had chilled us, and we were glad to be covered over with the heavy rough coats belonging to the fishermen. They fastened our small boat to their own by means of a rope, and thus prepared to tow it ashore.

Bob told Jim where we were living, and he decided to sail at once for the landing-place, by Dorman's, which was nearly opposite our house. We rested so happily, with a sense of relief and safety, under the warm coverings, that we very nearly dozed

off again, when Jim's voice, and the purport of the conversation completely roused us both.

"Won't ye see *now*, mate," said Jim, "as how t' Lord's hand guides us allus in t' right way. It wor jest as I wer a'taken' a snatch o' sleep yester e'en, t' Lord spoke to me in my dream, as ofen happens t' me, ay, and as I b'lieve to all them as is on t' watch fur such like tokens. Ses 'e, 'Jim, look ye out fur two o' my wee lambies as a'got astray.' Ses I, 'Lord, aint I allus glad for to work in Thy service? Where's them lambies to be found?' Ses t' Lord to me, 'Yer bus'ness lies on t' great waters, look out fur t' star as 'll hover o'er my little 'uns.' And then I woke up, and ses to my missus, 'T' Lord has work fur me to do to-night; Bill and me must push off quick.'"

"Well, mate," answered Bill, in a subdued but gruff voice, "why can't t' Lord a' spoken to me? I never gets no dreams as cums true like yourn, mate, if so be the Lord meant childer fur t' wee lambies."

"Ye don't listen fur t' voice, mate, or t' would come to ye. T' Lord speaks in parables now as He did to His disciples on earth; fishermen, mate, like we. So when He telled me o' lambies, I know'd as how He meant some child o' His'n as wanted some help as I could giv un, by t' Lord's will."

He ceased speaking for a few minutes, and I

could just whisper to Bob, "Do you hear, Jesus told Jim to come to us?"

Then Jim began again—

"D' ye mind t' night as our boy Jack was took, mate? If t' Lord hadn't a spoke to me just afore, lor' we must a' sunk under such a shock T' missus and I was so set on t' lad, and then to hev 'im brought to us, stone dead, wen we was a' thinking on 'im as on'y up to 'is larks, and lookin' for 'im to be 'ome to breakfast."

"Ay, ay, mate," replied Bill, "I mind me well, o' that night. But what did t' Lord say to ye then?"

"I was in my sleep, mate, agin. T' Lord comed, a lookin', well,—like a angel. I dunno 'ow to 'scribe 'im. Oh! so butiful! I was jest 'appy! Ses he to me, 'Jim, don't go fur to be grieved very bad, but t' Lord wants yer bonny boy in 'is mansions in the skies.' Ses I, 'T' Lord doeth all things well. Missus and I will miss t' lad; mayhap t' Lord knows how our hearts are set on our wee laddie, like as Abram was, and will let us have a sign or token of 'im at times, e'en if he is so far away.' Then t' Lord ses to me, 'T' lovin' Father knows all, Jim. Isn't He t' great Father over all. And doesn't He send 'is angels as ministering spirits, just as He's sent me?' Ses I to t' Lord, 'Ain't you t' Lord hissels?' 'No, Jim,' says he, 'I'm one of His messengers; and, b'lieve me,

t' lad will come t' ye as a messenger o' love from t' courts o' Heaven.' Then ses I—'My boy isn't lost a'ter all, on'y gone afore! and missus an' I 'll soon be wi' 'im.' 'Jes so,' ses t' Lord, 'so jes' you and yer missus rejoice allus, and when yer sing agen that hymn, "Safe in t' arms of Jesus," remember that means t' bonny laddie as God has took home this very night.' Lor, Bill, it wer all so plain. Wen I woke up I telled it t' missus, who was awake, a worryin' about t' boy, and it made her happy. On'y she did say, I 'ope as t' lad 'll soon come in."

Jim paused for a few minutes, then quietly said, "As t' sun rose over t' sea that morn, our laddie was brought home, dead and cold. He fell overboard te smack an' got drowned."

A long, long pause followed. The rough Bill rubbed his jacket sleeve across his eyes two or three times. Jim hummed the tune of the hymn, "Safe in the arms of Jesus."

Bob and I began to feel very drowsy, under the weight and warmth of the rough sea jackets. The tide was carrying us rapidly towards home, for a strong wind had set up in our favour. The sea was no longer so calm as it had been during the hours we were afloat. An occasional sea gull dipped its wings on the crested wave, and then,

screaming, rose and flew away. The sun was rising in the east, and the stars were hidden in the grey cold dawn. Clouds were gathering, a squall was at hand; *but we were close to home.*

Suddenly the little boat, drawn after us with the rope, gave a heave, was completely upset, and was thus dragged to land.

"Sure Jim," said Bill, "as I was a sayin', we was jest in t' nick o' time to save t' bairns from certain death."

"Jes' so," answered Jim. "T' Lord has need o' them a wee longer, so He ses '*Peace, be still!*' to t' waves, until t' lambies as He sent us a'ter were safe from danger. It's allus so; He watches o'er us by night an' by day, by land an' by sea, an' is a Everlasting Refuge."

"I've learnt summut t' night, mate," said Bill, as the boat grated over the shingle; and after two or three strong pulls, in unison with the strong waves of the fast rising tide, we at last were safely landed.

To our intense joy, there stood Maggie and Lilly, ready to seize hold of us, and carry us across home without loss of time. A few words only could they stay to say to the brave sailors who had given their time to bring us ashore, before casting their nets for the fish they hoped to catch

for the early market. They promised to come to see us, and tell the particulars of our rescue, some time during the day, and then pushed off once more to the open sea.





CHAPTER VIII.

**"THEY TRUSTED IN THEE AND WERE NOT
CONFOUNDED."**

HOW can I describe our joy upon finding ourselves once more in safety at home !

So varied had been our thoughts and feelings since we left the previous afternoon, that we felt as if weeks had passed, instead of a few hours only.

In this short space of time one life-long lesson had been indelibly fixed in our minds.

Adrift, helpless, away from all human aid, the Father, who neither slumbers nor sleeps, had heard our childish cry for help. We fully believed that Jesus Himself had spoken to us, and that He, by placing the bright glorious star at the helm of our tiny boat, had raised the signal by means of which the faithful Jim had known where to find us. He had sent His messenger to Jim to tell him to come to our aid. Also, when we heard the account from Mrs. Rivers of the comfort and joy that came over her spirit when she first saw the star in the distance ; and then

heard the words (re-echoed, as we thought, from Christ's words to me), "Be of good cheer," we found that Bob's prayer that Jesus would help, comfort, and sustain his mamma during the hours of such terrible anxiety, was literally answered. So had we learnt the real truth of the words, "He giveth His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

As soon as we reached the house we all went up to Mrs. Rivers' room. Mary had been watching us from the window, and beckoning us impatiently. As if we were not just as anxious to get home as they all were to welcome us! Of course she had kept telling Mrs. Rivers of our every movement.

"Bring my darlings to me," she said, "let me kiss them, and hear them speak. Then I shall be fully sure that I am not dreaming, but that they are safely restored to us."

Both Bob and I were far too much excited to give anything like a clear account of our adventures. Besides, anxiety being over, it was advisable for all of us to get what rest we could before the household should be stirring. So after having very gladly partaken of some milk and bread, we soon found ourselves safely stowed away in our warm snug beds. How different to the hard couch on which we had for so many hours been lying! It was not possible, however, for any of us to rest very quietly.

Bob and I had, in spite of every obstacle, slept soundly in the boat, and by the time we were in bed were so thoroughly aroused by the excitement of seeing all our dear ones again, and feeling secure from all danger, that, for myself, I could only lie in a dreamy, half-conscious state, during which the incidents of the last few hours rose before me, one after the other, so vividly, that it was only by sitting up occasionally and looking well at the familiar objects around me that I could keep myself assured that I was really in my own bed.

Bob told me he felt very much the same for a long time, but then he slept, until the postman's tumultuous ring at the front door completely woke him up. He dressed himself and went downstairs. On the breakfast table were several letters, and one addressed to me—"Miss Jenny Greatheart."

Lilly made him have his breakfast before rushing up to me with it, as he was most anxious to do.

"No," she said, "I believe Jenny is asleep, and we must not disturb her. When you have had your own breakfast, you shall go up softly and peep in at the door. If she's awake, you shall take up a tray with her breakfast on it, and the letter shall lie on the plate. That's what's we do for mamma."

So Bob was satisfied. As he looked in upon me about half an hour later he found me just sitting up in bed, ready to get up.

"Lie still, Jenny," he said, "I'm to bring your breakfast to you, just as Mary takes mamma's and I've got such a surprise for you."

"What is it?" said I.

"Ah! wait and see! How many eggs shall I bring you? I've had two, and a sausage, and two mugs of milk."

"Oh, dear!" I said, "I don't want anything; my head aches. Ask Lilly if I may have a little toast and some weak tea; that's what mother gives me if I feel poorly."

"You ain't ill, Jenny, are you?" asked Bob, anxiously.

"Oh, dear no," I said, "only I feel rather tired and headachy, and can't eat much yet."

So off he ran, saying, contemptuously, "What a muffish breakfast!"

In a few minutes he came up with the tray and my dear father's letter. Of course I opened it directly, and read it aloud for Bob to hear. It was written in a large, clear hand, that I might easily make it out, and was as follows:—

"MY DEAR LITTLE DAUGHTER,—I must write you one letter before you return home. Your mother and I miss your little face very much, especially when we sit down to meals. But we are very glad to know you are so happy with your kind friends. I am sure you will enjoy seeing the sea, and playing

on the beach with your friend Bob. Mother is sorry you forgot your text-book. She found it in your morning-dress pocket. I now enclose it. You know, my darling, I never wish you to read the Bible or learn a single text as a task, but I am glad for you to store your memory, whilst you are so young, with many of the precious words, which will in future years rise up to your mind as occasion requires, and prove a stronghold of comfort and admonition. By learning one little text each day you can easily gain much future as well as present help. As I was going home after seeing you off by the train on Saturday, I called in to see how your dear old friend and schoolmistress was. You know she has for some weeks been failing in health. I found her very ill, but gladly awaiting her Father's summons to His home. She desired her kind love to you and Bob, and asked me to tell you she hoped you would never forget that every small action and thought in your daily life will influence, not only yourself, but all around you, and that it is according to your life on earth whether or no your death-bed will be joyous or sad."

"She told me how happy her life had been ever since she was enabled to feel the constant presence of her Saviour, and she added, so fervently, 'My dear Mr. Greatheart, *He is close by me now, He Himself will take my spirit to its home, and knowing this I fear no evil.*' Remember these words, dear

Jenny, and give my love to Bob, and tell him also to bear them in mind always.

“Do not forget, my dear child, to talk to your Heavenly Father every night and morning. Tell Him all your little wants, and remember He is more able, and even more willing, to help you in every way than I am; and you know how very dearly I love you, my little Jenny! We shall gladly welcome you home. Present your mother’s and my kind regards to your friends, especially to Mrs. Rivers, who I trust is receiving benefit from the sea air.

“I am, your loving father,

“JAMES GREATHEART.

“P.S.—Mr. Rivers kindly wishes me to come to see you, from Saturday to Monday, whilst you are with them. Perhaps I shall come.”

Oh! how delighted I was. I hastily finished my tea and toast, and had forgotten all about my headache. So I got up at once in a great hurry, to read my letter to dear Mrs. Rivers, and then to write my reply. Bob went in to talk with his mamma, and there I found him telling her all about our adventures since we had left home for the Smuggler’s Cave the afternoon before. Maggy and Lilly were with them. When we told of our crying out, “Lilly! Lilly!” as we drifted past the Pier, and then about my seeing Jesus, and all that

He said, especially the words, "Be of good cheer," they were most deeply interested, and astonished to find how entirely their experiences coincided with ours.

It was such a bright clear day; not so warm as it had been the last week or so. Mrs. Rivers decided that we should all drive out to Hollington Church, and home by the pretty green lanes; for she declared that she did not like to lose sight of us yet. And certainly I had no inclination to make much exertion, for I felt stiff and tired. It was only a slight cold, which went off very quickly. Bob was not any the worse for our long exposure and fatigue; and Mrs. Rivers said she was very thankful we escaped so easily, as we both got thoroughly chilled through during our sleep in the boat.

We much enjoyed our quiet drive, and the lovely views of the country, which was richly clothed in the early autumnal glory.

In the evening Bob and I went to the Pier with Maggie, whilst Lilly stayed with Mrs. Rivers. So the day passed very quietly. I wrote a long rambling letter to dear father, in the afternoon. Years after, I found it carefully folded away, amongst some of his letters and papers, and as I read it over, and looked at the cramped childish handwriting, with an occasional smudge, I could have wept at the visions that it recalled, so graphi-

cally had I told him of our perilous adventure, and so strongly did I then feel how the influence of that whole visit—my first visit to the sea — had gone on through so many of the subsequent years of my life. Father had written in pencil on the envelope, “Truly doth our Father give His angels charge over His children ! May my precious little Jenny, thus so mercifully spared to us, grow up to be a burning and a shining light, so that all may take knowledge of her that she walks with God ! ”

On Friday morning we felt more settled, and able to resume our usual occupations. Bob and I went on to the beach soon after breakfast, with instructions, however, to remain within sight from the windows. After climbing about the slippery rocks for an hour or so, we sat down to rest. For some minutes we were quite still, then Bob said, “Jenny, I wonder how dear old Mrs. Trainer is. Ain’t you glad she thought of us, and sent us such a nice message ? ”

“Yes, Bob,” I answered. “I’ve got father’s letter in my pocket, let’s read it over again.”

Having done so, Bob said, “Well, she’s right about small actions influencing ourselves and others. Who would have thought that such a very small thing as our sitting to rest in the little boat, as we did on Tuesday evening, would

have ended in such great things? Because you know they were all very great things, weren't they?"

"Yes, indeed, Bob!" I said. For one thing, we now know that my dream was true. You see when we talked to Jesus, He came and spoke to us, and we were quite wide awake. So if one part of my dream was true, why not *all*? Yes, I *will* believe I saw real angels. I am sure all those beautiful children were real and living, in such a lovely place. Do you think, Bob, if we had died that night, as we must have done if Jim hadn't come just in time to save us, we should have gone to that same place? If so, it must be very beautiful to die; what do you think?"

"Well, said Bob, "I like to think that Heaven is such a real lovely place, and that we shan't have wings, and float on clouds, blowing trumpets, and lead such a slow life after all. I should like uncommonly to go sometimes to have a visit there; but *I don't want to die yet*, I want to grow up to be a man; and I like to be with them all at home. No, *I don't want to die yet*."

"I don't, *exactly*," I said; "but I often rather dread living a long time here. Perhaps we shall do naughty things, and when we die *not go to Heaven after all*! Oh, dear! it's so very hard to be always good, isn't it? Then, if it's true, as Mrs. Trainer says, that *every* action influences our whole life,

and we do naughty actions, it is so terrible to thin of the muddle our lives will get into ! ”

Here I put my two hands up, each side of my head, and springing up, rushed away—over the rocks, anywhere. Bob ran after me.

“What’s the matter, Jenny,” he shouted.

Coming to a clean, dry stone I sat down, and as Bob came up, I said, “Don’t let’s talk any more about these things.”

“Why not ? ” asked Bob.

“I can’t bear to think to-day,” I replied. “I want to forget all thoughts. I do so wish it were possible to leave off thinking! I get so confused sometimes that I feel I must start up and rush off, like that.”

“I know all about it, Jenny, because I do feel a little like it myself sometimes—not often ! ”

“Oh, Bob,” I said suddenly, “look at those beautiful sea anemones, let us get as many as we can ; mamma will like to have them on her table.”

Having collected all we could get at, we sat down to arrange them.

“If father comes to-morrow, Bob,” said I, “we’ll ask him about all these things. He always helps me when I get in such muddles, and he says I must not trouble about anything I can’t understand, because God teaches us all that is good for us, gradually. So I think it was very stupid of me, Bob, to run away from you as I did.”

“And besides, Jenny,” replied Bob, “Jesus told you very nearly the same thing in your dream, don’t you remember?”

“I remember now you remind me, Bob;” said I, “and, indeed, it’s only when I get thinking about living on for ever and ever, and such things, that I cannot bear myself, and am obliged to try and run away from my thoughts. Mother says it’s all from want of faith.”

Just then we heard Lilly’s voice calling to us, and looking up saw her coming towards us as fast as she could over the rough shingle. She admired the lovely sea anemones, and helped us to gather some more, and we also collected a heap of periwinkles. (Cook was always very kind and willing to boil them for us to have at tea time.) Then Lilly hurried us off home, declaring it would take her two or three hours to wash and brush us up, so as to be at all “presentable, or fit for civilised society!”





CHAPTER IX.

“THERE IS NO DEATH! WHAT SEEMS SO, IS
TRANSITION.”

FATHER did not come the next day, as I was hoping. Mother was not very well, and father was unwilling to leave her. Mr. Rivers wished her to accompany father, and said the sea-breeze would do her good after the hot August weather; but she did not like to leave her Sunday-school class. On the following Saturday business detained father; but it was finally arranged that he would, unless unavoidably prevented, come with Mr. Rivers on the next Saturday and take me home on the Monday. That would extend my visit to three weeks. I was so very much enjoying myself that, although I did often long to see father and mother (and especially at night, if I did not go to sleep as soon as I got into bed), I was very willing to stay on. It was my first separation from my parents for so long a time. Once or twice I had stayed for two or three days with some old

friends of my father's, who had a large farm-house a few miles in the country, away from home. But I became daily more and more attached to Mrs. Rivers, and all of them, so that it was *almost* like being at home.

On Sunday evening Bob and I did not go to church; the weather was rather unsettled, and we were both glad to be left "to take care" of his mamma. Lilly showed me how I was to beat up and mix the egg ready for her, and we were instructed not to make too much noise, or weary her with too many questions.

For the first half-hour we were as quiet as little mice, reading our books. Then I got Mrs. Rivers' egg. As I gave it to her it struck me that she looked very white and ill, so almost involuntarily I said—

"Shall you ever get well again, dear Mrs. Rivers?"

"Why do you ask, Jenny, dear," she said, in rather a startled tone; "Has any one said I should not?"

I was very sorry, now, I had asked the question, but it did not occur to me to evade her; so I replied,—"Father said to mother one day when he had been to call on you, that you reminded him of his sister who died of consumption. He said you had just the same kind of look."

She did not make any reply, but I thought she looked very sad. At last she said—"Did you know your aunt, Jenny? Was she ill very long?"

"I never saw her," I answered; "but father has so often told me about her that I seem to know her quite well. She was never strong, but only very ill about six months. Father says she was always so happy, and used to say it would be so delightful to get home, and be quite well."

"Didn't she live at home, Jenny?"

"Oh, yes! she meant Heaven. She said Jesus came and talked to her sometimes; and that she knew He had prepared a home for her, for He told her so."

"What else does your father tell you, Jenny—I like to hear?"

"Father says that aunt knows and loves me just as much or better than if she was on earth, and that it is so beautiful to think we have so many we love in the spirit land waiting for us. And if we live a pure good life on earth we shall, when we go, find a beautiful home all ready."

"Does your father mean Heaven when he says spirit land, Jenny?"

"It's on the road to Heaven."

"On the road to Heaven! dear child, what does that mean?"

"Ask father, dear Mrs. Rivers; he'll tell you better than I can."

Bob had been very quiet all this time, listening, and now he said, "Jenny had a true dream about Heaven, mamma; you tell it, Jenny." So Bob and I, between us, told her all about it, and she listened, looking so happy. When we had finished our narration, Mrs. Rivers said,—

"'Tis very beautiful, dears, very! But it's only a dream."

"But, mamma!" exclaimed Bob, loudly, and jumping up from the stool on which he was sitting, "some dreams *are* true—the Bible tells us that; and Jenny and I know this is true, *quite true*. I'll tell you why. You know Jesus told Jenny that He came to her because she was thinking about Him, and wishing He would come; and when we were so frightened in the boat on Tuesday night we spoke to Jesus, and He *did* come. Jenny saw Him, and heard Him speak, and I heard beautiful music at the same time. And then you know about its all turning out just as He said it would, and we were wide awake."

"And father thinks I did really see a little glimpse of the spirit land when I saw all those lovely children, and flowers, and houses, and all that, that I've told you I saw in my dream," I said.

"Ah, dear children! if I could but know all this is really true, and not a dream, or imagination, I don't think I should feel so unwilling to die," said Mrs. Rivers.

“ Father says, ‘ passed away,’ not ‘ *die*,’ because it is not sad to get out of our body and live in a beautiful home, and go on learning always. He taught me such a pretty verse once about death. May I tell it to you ? ”

“ Yes, dear child, do please.”

So I repeated the following sweet lines ; I do not know who wrote them, but I learnt them as a child, and shall never forget them :—

“ What is death ? ’Tis a delicate cloud,
Concealing a beautiful sky.
’Tis mournfully clad in a shroud,
And we view it with sorrowful eye.
But the zephyr that wafted it near
Will sink in the stillness of even ;
Then the delicate cloud will appear,
Like death, but the portal of Heaven.”

When I had finished I thought Mrs. Rivers looked tired, so I said to Bob, “ Lilly said we were not to tire your mamma, Bob, and I am afraid we have done so ; we must be quiet now.”

“ I am not tired, dears,” she said ; “ I should like you to sing me one of your pretty little songs. Sing me ‘ Shall we gather at the river ? ’ ”

Just as we finished, Lilly and Maggie came in from church. Mrs. Rivers told them of our conversation, and we went on talking of these matters for some time longer. Mrs. Rivers seemed really better, and said it did her good ; because Lilly,

as soon as she came in, declared we were such chatterboxes we must march off to bed at once. I told them about father's sister, and that he said she came and spoke to him one night, very soon after she had passed away, and told him never to think or speak of her as one who was *dead*, as she was living, in a beautiful place, and was with her father and mother, and a great many whom she loved when on earth. And she told father, also, that God permitted her to come and see him and others, sometimes, to help them, and that she was my guardian spirit."

"Did your father say how she looked, Jenny?" asked Maggie.

"He said she looked just as she did on earth, before she got so ill, only very much more beautiful; and she had a long robe, shining like satin. Indeed when I told father about my dream, and described the dresses I saw the beautiful angels wearing, he said most likely his sister was among them."

"Well mamma," said Lilly, "Don't you remember Mr. Rish telling us about his vision, or dream? (He said he didn't know what to call it.) It was about his little girl."

"I don't remember, Lilly dear. What was it?" said Mrs. Rivers.

"Why you know how very unhappy he was about her, mamma, and especially as he could not

be sure she had gone to heaven because she was not baptised,—or something of the kind ; and at last he prayed very earnestly that God would, if it was His will, relieve his mind on this point. And soon after he woke up in the night, and found his bedroom filled with a bright light, like a dazzling cloud of light, and as he looked up he saw his child ; she was radiantly beautiful, and said, quite in her natural voice : ‘ *Papa, I am so happy.* ’ He says he has never felt uneasy about her since.”

It was now getting on for nine o'clock ; Mary came in to lay the supper-cloth, and Mrs. Rivers went up to her room, as she seldom stayed up so late, and was not able to remain any longer. As we kissed her, she said to me : “ You have a dear good father, Jenny. I should like to ask him several things. He'll be here soon now.”





CHAPTER X.

“HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED SLEEP.”

AT last the wished-for day arrived. Father was coming with Mr. Rivers by the afternoon train. Bob and I went to the station to meet them. Of course we were there fully half an hour before the train was due, but found plenty to amuse us. Besides, Bob always kept a supply of marbles of all kinds in his pockets, which were brought out on favourable occasions, and games were extemporised as the need arose. I caught him counting them over at church, one Sunday, during the Litany, and gave him a nudge and a frown, whereupon he pocketed them quickly. On coming out, I said, “You *were* a naughty boy, Bob, to be thinking of your marbles in church !”

“Well, you see, Jenny,” said he, “the service is so long, and I don’t know how to amuse myself, or get through anyhow, some days.”

I felt “shut up,” because similar sensations often had affected me—especially at Little Bethel.

And if I didn't break out in the way of marbles, I was glad, surreptitiously,—when mother's face was hidden behind her large white pocket-handkerchief, during the dreadfully long prayer,—to pass a bull's-eye into my mouth ; and so—by exciting pleasant sensations, physically and otherwise—I was able to bear up better against the mental depression, or vacuum, that bored me. I only said, in reply, “No doubt, Bob, if we were as good as we ought to be, we should never find such services long. But mother says, ‘The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ;’ and I think sometimes I feel wickeder at chapel than anywhere else. But then I don't feel so bad at church, Bob, with the lovely music and pretty pictures.”

I was as clever at marbles as Bob, so, until the train arrived, joined him in a game.

Father was a fine tall man ; his head always rose above the majority in a crowd ; so we instantly saw him as he emerged from the platform, with the crowd of other passengers. I rushed at him, kissed him, and should like to have given him a good hug, but was compelled by surrounding circumstances to adjourn that mode of welcome to a more convenient season. We all walked down to the sea at once, and lingered along slowly until we reached our lodgings. By that time the dinner-tea being ready, we went in to partake of it, by no means unwillingly.

It was splendid weather, and most of our time was spent out of doors.

As we were sitting over the dessert on Sunday afternoon, father told us that the dear old lady, Mrs. Trainer, had passed away on the previous Wednesday. He spoke of her happiness in the prospect of death, and how she had so calmly watched in herself the gradual decay of her physical powers, rejoicing in the near approach of the time when she was to exchange the "corruptible for an incorruptible body." Father said that when he went in to see her on the Monday evening she welcomed him so gladly; and, after asking about us all, said to him, "How can I dread death, knowing it to be but the 'portal of heaven'? My body is now all but useless—it is a prison! When I am released from it I shall '*begin to live*' once more. I want to learn so much. God has said, 'What thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter,' and that 'hereafter' is now very near."

"She passed away so quietly," added my father, "like a child falling asleep."

"And so He giveth His beloved sleep."

After a pause, Mrs. Rivers, who had been especially attentive as father spoke, said, "How I do envy anyone who can face death so fearlessly. I dread it so much. When I think about it at all I find all my ideas of a future life so vague, so very

indefinite, that I am glad to turn my thoughts from the subject altogether."

"Christ said, 'In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare *a place* for you.' Can you not believe in the full truth of these words?" said father, "and that these habitations promised are as real as the houses we live in on this earth?"

"Ah! if I could *but feel that*; but I never think of heaven except as a wide space, with a great white throne, and innumerable angels all singing; so *very* different to anything that we can picture with any pleasure;"—here she looked half frightened, and added hurriedly, "Oh, I didn't mean that word, exactly, Mr. Greatheart; I mean—well—the idea fills me so with *awe* that I am overpowered, and do all I can to avoid dwelling upon the subject of death. And yet with my weak health I know I ought to be ready."

"This awe would give place to delight only," said father, "if you could but grasp the fact that our spirit life on leaving the body is as tangible, as real, *as full of human interests*, as is our life on earth. We are promised that a 'place shall be prepared for us;' that 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,' the wonderful things that God has prepared for His children."

After a few minutes' silence, Mrs. Rivers said, "Your little girl interested me very much; telling

me of her aunt,—of her delight at the thought of ‘going home.’ ”

“Yes,” said father, “it was a help to us all to see how thoroughly our dear Editha realised that death was but a transition to a higher state of *life*, to those who, by living in communion with Christ, and the higher spheres of spirit life, were prepared to go. We almost lost all dread of the separation, feeling so assured that our loss was her gain. And I now feel more and more convinced that the spirit life commenced on earth progresses always, and enjoys a life of activity in this progression.”

“Then,” said Mr. Rivers, “you would agree with Swedenborg. And to any thoughtful mind, I believe the orthodox teaching—that everybody who dies becomes at once an angel in Heaven, or a devil in Hell,—is repellent, and contrary to all reason. God’s *laws* are unchangeable, and one of His greatest laws is that of *progression*. The orthodox teaching ignores that.”

“Exactly so,” said father. “It is to me one of the strongest proofs of the power of *education* upon some folks to see that the most unreasonable and unlikely notions, if fixed in the groove of their minds when young, can seldom be entirely eradicated. It shows how important it is to instil *truth only*. Then comes the question, *What is truth?* But with regard to spirit progress, we all know that at the moment of death, no creature is

either so perfectly holy as to be fitted for Heaven—which is a state of perfection—nor yet so utterly wicked as to be only worthy of a place in Hell,—I mean according to our orthodox ideas of a material Hell ;—our reason, if nothing else, must tell us that the mere casting aside of the body in no way changes the spirit ; any more than the changing of our dress alters the body. The body is but the case or dress of the immortal spirit.”

“What about the thief on the cross, Mr. Great-heart?” said Maggie. “Did not Christ’s words, ‘This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise,’ imply that he would, in spite of his character as a thief,—be in Heaven at once, because of his belief in Christ.”

“By no means, dear Maggie,” replied father, “but rather do we find, in them, confirmation of the truth of the belief—now gaining ground very much in some quarters—that there is an intermediate state. The word ‘Paradise’ is the same in the Greek language as is usually translated ‘Hades.’ The word Hell, also, is the same as Hades. The Jews, to whom Christ spoke, understood this word to mean the place to which the spirits of the dead went immediately on leaving the body. The ‘Purgatory’ of the Roman Catholics corresponds, in a slight degree, to the Jewish Hades. And I think we may conclude—as I was saying—that Christ’s use of this word, implies the

fact that there is an intermediate state, now often called the spirit land."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Rivers, "Jenny said you called the spirit land the road to Heaven. I see now what you mean by that expression, and spirits, I suppose, pass on from a low state to a higher, as they become purer. How I wish I may be ready to go on to the higher spirit home. But I feel that I know, oh! so little, and must be so unworthy in the sight of God. I fear, if you are correct in all you say, that I should be a long time in the intermediate state."

"Dear Mrs. Rivers," replied father, "it is an unspeakable comfort to remember that God is a loving Father, and that He judges every one of us by our *motives*. We may be very sure that all who endeavour and *wish* to lead a pure and holy life, and who, by a prayerful spirit, hold close communion with Christ, will, on passing out of the body, go at once to the sphere with which the spirit is in harmony. How true are the words, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is *within* you!' Whilst on earth, each one lives in the spirit sphere to which he is drawn by his inclination. Hence the immense importance of leading a pure life on earth, not merely externally, but in the very soul. Those who have passed through life thoughtlessly, *without* this communion with God and good, will, on reaching their spirit land, find themselves *in*

their own low sphere, and being separated from the earthly circumstances that overpowered their weak will, will be left in their own *selfhood* until they voluntarily turn towards the good spirits who are always at hand to aid and teach them. Thus we are never mere *tools*, even in God's hands; but compelled by Him, in His All Wisdom and love, to 'work out our own salvation.' As the love of good and communion with God establishes the kingdom of Heaven within us; in the same way, where there is the love of, and yielding to, evil, is the *kingdom of Hell within*."

"You don't think it wrong for us to speculate in this way about our future life, Mr. Greatheart?" said Mrs. Rivers. "Our clergyman told me once, when I made some remark about longing to know more of Heaven, and all my loved ones who have gone before,—that I must not dive into God's secrets."

"Our Father, who has said 'Come, let us reason together,' and who has implanted within us an insatiable desire to learn," said father, "certainly does not wish us to believe anything against our own reason, even if it were possible to do so; or to reject any means of attaining every kind of knowledge that comes within our reach. Be very sure God can preserve His own secrets. Let us reverently seek into all knowledge, and accept proofs of any description, that will help us to

know more of the mysteries of the spirit life here and hereafter."

"I hope, Mr. Greatheart," said Mrs. Rivers, "that you will tell me more of your thoughts another time, for there is much I long to know. The tea is just coming in; but perhaps after you have had a walk this evening we may have a little further conversation. I want to know if you really believe your sister came and spoke to you after she died; Jenny says you say so."

"I will gladly tell you all I believe in these matters, Mrs. Rivers. I am very sure if you can but agree with me, your life will be far happier, and, I may perhaps add, your motives and actions in life become ennobled, and free from slavish dread of the future."





CHAPTER XI.

A GHOST STORY.

THE evening was so very inviting that it was arranged for us all to go for a walk over the cliffs to the Castle Hill. Maggie wished to remain with her mamma, but Mrs. Rivers would not hear of it. "I cannot go with you, dears," she said, "but I should feel it most selfish to keep any one in, such a lovely evening, on my account. I shall not mind being alone. If I want anything before your return, our kind Mary will see to me." So, having drawn the sofa close to the open windows, and placed everything Mrs. Rivers was likely to want within easy reach, we all set off in high spirits.

The Parade was crowded with company of all descriptions. Many, with prayer-book in hand, *en route* for church; many more—evidently excursionists—were wending their way towards the station, returning to the weary work of daily life,—let us hope and believe, much invigorated by the beautiful sea air, especially precious to those who

have so little opportunity of enjoying it, except by means of the cheap excursions. Maggie made some remark about excursion trains on Sunday, thinking it encouraged people to break the Sabbath. Mr. Rivers laughed at her, saying that he thought, with that idea in her head, she had no business to be walking out instead of going to church.

Father said it was a pleasure to him to see so many happy-looking faces; and he quite believed that the fresh air, and view of the splendid sea, or lovely country, were more conducive to the spiritual growth of the masses (who could only obtain such pleasure on a Sunday, and by means of these cheap excursions), than for them to go, from a sense of duty merely, to some hot, crowded place of worship.

Mr. Rivers quite agreed with him. He said:—
“It is so impossible for us, who are able to enjoy such luxuries daily and hourly, to comprehend the longing many of our poorer neighbours have for a little glimpse of the country, and a few hours of enjoyment in the pure air. In truth, we accept so many blessings just as a matter of course, and cease to realise their true value until we are by some means deprived of them.”

After a little pause my father said, “I often think that God’s universal law of Trinity in Unity should be more thought of and understood. What innumerable blunders are committed hourly through ignorance of it. Now, in every man we see the

Trinity—three in one—the body, the soul, and the spirit. For the healthy development of the perfect man—I mean, of course, so far as it is possible for us to *aim* at such a condition—*each* of these different *entities* need their appropriate training.”

Maggie looked up at my father with a puzzled expression, and said,

“ I can scarcely understand you, Mr. Greatheart. Let us sit down on this quiet seat for a few minutes, and please try to explain what you mean.”

“ Yes, dear Maggie,” said father, “ I will do my best. At the same time, I must say that there are many kinds of knowledge that can only come to each individual as a sort of *revelation*. A germ will be implanted in a child’s mind, for instance, and lie there latent for years; when gradually the truth contained within that germ will expand, and some deep truth be revealed which, in its turn, will throw a strangely new light upon many other ideas. With regard to the Trinity in man, the physical or social qualities which belong to the outer—*i.e.*, the *body*—require good food, pure air, congenial companionship, and many other things belonging, we will say, to a high state of civilisation, in contradistinction to semi-barbarism (in which, unhappily, a vast number of our poor, ignorant people are living), and are really of the greatest importance. Then the soul,—or mind,—for its development, needs food of an intel-

lectual order. The system of compulsory education is a step in the right direction for supplying *this* great need. I am sure that the more one knows the greater is the desire for knowledge. Compulsory education amongst the lower classes must help to develop the latent germ of intellect in many a poor child who otherwise might pass through life in utter ignorance of the powers—shall we say the fruits of the *tree of knowledge*?—within his easy grasp. After this we come to the essence of life itself—the very spirit of man. This can only be nourished and expanded by such spiritual food as is best adapted, in each separate individual, to develop in the highest degree possible the emotion or feeling of veneration or reverence for the Divine. This is the religious side of man's character, and doubtless of the *very highest import*. But with these ideas in my mind, you will see a little why I cannot help believing that many of our Christian brethren make a very great and mischievous mistake, when they endeavour to *force* certain dogmas and rules upon people without any regard to the peculiar circumstances of their lives, without for a moment remembering or recognising the fact that physical comfort and bodily needs ought to be attended to quite as much as the teaching of set religious ideas. It is something like giving a Bible to a starving man instead of a loaf of bread. Perhaps then, in time, another truth

would be recognised, and that is that there are various aspects of the same central truth—that each individual mind can only assimilate to itself the one particular element which is responsive to its nature.”

“ Ah, Mr. Greatheart,” said Mr. Rivers, “ if *that* truth could but be universally acted upon we should do away with all bigotry, and the bitter spirit of persecution which prevails among the various sects of religion would be replaced by a spirit of love, and real anxiety to spread the *Christ spirit*, as distinct from the *unchristian Christianity* of the present day.”

“ Yes, indeed,” replied father. “ And we should then find (to return to the origin of our conversation) that the man who prefers to spend his Sunday occasionally in invigorating his bodily health, either by taking an excursion train to some quiet country nook or sea side, and imbibing the “sweet breath of heaven ;” or, if over-fatigued, staying in bed for a few extra hours, will not be branded as irreligious or infidel. It is this harsh spirit of bigotry which drives people away from, instead of drawing them to, religious services. It developes a spirit of defiance, which leads thousands to reject the religious teachings of the day, and throws them out of sympathy with the outward expression of that which, in their inmost soul, they are seeking after, and longing for.”

The increasing twilight here warned us that it was time we began to retrace our steps. We had been sitting on the top of the cliff, which commanded a glorious view of the town of Hastings, with the wide expanse of ocean, now bathed on the western horizon with the deep crimson clouds which veiled the setting sun. Slowly we commenced our homeward walk. As we passed along one quiet part of the road, where there was a lovely winding path embowered in evergreens and flowers, leading direct down to the beach, Mr. Rivers said to father, "I believe this is about the spot where my man Lambert saw a ghost once."

"A ghost, father!" exclaimed Lilly. "Pray let us run off; I should be frightened if it came out upon us."

We all laughed, and Maggie said, "I have heard Lambert say something about it; but I do not like to encourage superstitious notions, so never asked him the particulars."

"I should like to know them," said father, "for well authenticated accounts of ghosts and haunted houses are very interesting to me."

"George Combe would declare that your organ of wonder was in rather a diseased condition," said Mr. Rivers, laughing. "I can tell you all Lambert has told me, and he is a truthful man. He says that one evening, about nine o'clock, he was coming up this path, from the beach,

carrying a basket of grocery. When he reached the seat near the top he sat down to rest. As he was looking out towards the sea, he heard footsteps on the gravel-walk, and turning in the direction of the sound, saw a woman slowly coming towards him. He thought at first that it was a nun, as he saw a large white something thrown over her head. When nearer to him he noticed that she had on a pair of side-laced boots, such as were worn some years ago, and a print-dress. She walked slowly past him, and turning her face, fixed her large dark eyes fully upon him. He said he felt very queer, but did not at all think but what she was really a woman. He watched her until she reached the turning which led direct on to the road along which we have just been walking, then suddenly took it into his head to run after and see where she went to. He was puzzled, on reaching the top—certainly in less than a minute—to find there was no trace of the figure, or of any human being, near. Neither was there—as we know—any nook where she could have gone down, or concealed herself so quickly,—had she wished to do so.”

“Do you know whether he is the only one who has seen this figure?” asked father.

Mr. Rivers could not say, but Lilly said, she knew that the old man who kept a goat-chaise declared he had seen her two or three times. He had an

outhouse near, where he put up his little carriage and kept his goats. One evening, when the old man was rubbing them down and cleaning them, on looking up he saw this same figure standing by watching him. He was rather surprised, because, as he said, he thought he was quite alone, but did not think the woman was a ghost! He spoke to her, and went on with his work. In a few minutes on looking up again,—finding she did not speak,—he says he did feel startled to see no trace left of the woman.

“Is there any explanation of the circumstance?” said father. “I do believe in hauntings, but there is generally a reason for them.”

“Well,” said Mr. Rivers, “it is thought to be the ghost of a young servant-girl who was murdered close by that spot some dozen years ago. The murderer was never discovered, although suspicion was strongly attached to one man, who kept company with her. It is mysterious to me why—if true that ghosts *do* come—they should *like* to frequent a place connected with anything so horrible as murder.”

By this time we had reached the Parade. Joining the crowd of people just issuing out of church, we were unable to carry on any further conversation upon these matters. Bob and I ran on in front,

and reached home rather before the others. As we stood in the balcony watching for them, Bob said,

"I don't like the idea of ghosts, Jenny; do you?"

"No," I said, "not ghosts that haunt, or have to do with evil. But I don't think I should mind seeing *good ghosts*."

"But I always fancy ghosts are horrid things," said Bob.

"So do I," I replied; "but, after all, it was Aunt Editha's ghost that came to father; only, as she is good and beautiful, father speaks of her as a spirit—it's all the same."

"What *are* you children talking of?" said Mrs. Rivers, from the sofa.

"Only the ghost story that Lambert told father of, mamma," said Bob. And then we went in and began to tell her all about our walk, and as much of the talk as we could understand sufficiently to repeat. Very shortly the rest of the party came in. It was nearly nine o'clock, and Mrs. Rivers reluctantly prepared to go to her room.

"I shall not see you in the morning I'm afraid, Mr. Greatheart," she said, "and I wanted so much to have further talk with you."

"We shall have many opportunities when you return," said father. "It is not as if we lived miles apart from each other. I sincerely hope that you may come home much stronger for your long stay in this lovely place."

Lilly thought that we—Bob and I—had better go to bed at once, for we could not deny the fact of being very tired; but most stoutly did we claim our usual Sunday evening privilege of remaining up to supper. We always did this, even if we had to pinch our arms to keep ourselves awake. One evening Bob did go fast asleep, on his knees during family prayer; fell down, and was most ignominiously carried right up and put into bed. He did not wake up till the next morning. He was almost inclined to be offended with me because I had not run a pin into his arm, or by some means managed to save him from such an indignity; but was appeased when I told him that it was his groan and fall that awoke, and, in all probability, saved me from a similar fate.

As soon as Maggie came down from her mamma, she and Lilly sang some duets. Then we all joined in singing several hymns. Father's fine bass harmonised well with Mr. Rivers' tenor, and, joining our united soprano voices, formed very sweet harmony. Bob and I kept wide awake, and finished up the musical programme by singing our favourite song: "Oh! call my brother back to me, I cannot play alone." It was arranged as a duet, and Lilly had taken great pains to teach it to us.

"Well Jenny" said father, as we bid them good-

night, "are you ready to go home with me in the morning?" "Oh, father" I said, "how I wish I could be in two places at once! I want to be here, by the sea, with Bob and dear Mrs. Rivers, and all of them; and I want to come home to you and mother." They all laughed, and Mrs. Rivers said it would be a very convenient arrangement, often, if we could manage to be in two places at once. And I dreamed that night, that I went home with father, but found that I had left my heart behind me, in Bob's care, and should be obliged to travel back directly to fetch it, as I could not get on without it.





CHAPTER XII.

AUNT EDITHA.

THE morning's post brought charming news—a letter from the manager of the Bank, wishing father to remain a few days longer if he would like to do so. Mr. Blake was much attached to him, as the oldest clerk in the Bank, and thoroughly trustworthy in all his actions. He was away on Saturday, and did not know of father's proposed visit to Hastings; but hearing of it during the day, wrote to him at once to suggest his taking a few days further holiday, as they were not very busy, just then. A letter also from mother, to me, wherein she said she was very well, and hoped father would not hurry back on her account. A cousin was coming to see her, and would, she was sure, gladly stay with her to keep her company until our return.

In a postscript she said—"I expect your everyday dress is nearly done for by now, so you'd better travel home in your waterproof, as it will

cover it. You must not wear your best dress on any account. An excellent discourse from Brother Howler to-day, from the words—‘Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ Very edifying and encouraging to the elect.”

When Bob read that part he said, “I’m jolly glad I didn’t hear it; it would have made me miserable, however much I might have tried not to listen.”

“Well, Bob,” I said, “I am glad I was at church with you, instead of at Little Bethel. I did like *our* text very much.”

“What was it?” said Bob; “I forget.”

“‘Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and *I will give you rest.*’ Christ says *all*, so of course He means even the unprofitable servant, as well as the elect.”

Mr. Rivers was obliged to return to business. Maggie and Lilly were to accompany Mrs. Rivers in a drive, but to my great delight father declared his desire to go for a long walk with Bob and me. He said he wished especially to see the Smuggler’s Cave, and, if possible, to find the good old fisherman who had so providentially come to our rescue on the night of our adventure. Oh, the delight it was to us both, Bob and I, to start off with him.

Of course we could not walk steadily by his side for long together, but varied the scene by an occasional race, or a rush down on to the beach, where we dragged father also, to show him our especial nooks among the rocks. We had our drawing-room, dining-room, and kitchen, ready for our daily entertainment, where we were never tired of spreading shells and seaweed, or arranging our different toys, quite regardless of the fact that all would be soon swept away by the advancing tide. Father was greatly pleased with the cave. We sat down there and ate our lunch of cake which Mrs. Rivers had made us each put in our pockets.

As we were coming home we found Jim—preparing his boat for the night's fishing. He and father had a very interesting conversation, to which Bob and I both listened attentively. It was a reiteration of his dream on the night when, as he said, the Lord had sent him out to find us. Many more remarkable details of his life did he relate to father similar in character. At last, being obliged to move homewards, we all shook hands with Jim, and father told him if ever he was in need of any help, to write, or, if he could, come to him. Of course they exchanged addresses, and parted, evidently mutually pleased with each other.

"That good old man might use as his motto," said father, as we walked away, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.' How I wish all would

listen as he does for the Lord's voice, and watch in such beautiful simplicity for His guidance."

In the afternoon we went on to the Parade, and sat on one of the sheltered seats nearly opposite our house. Even Mrs. Rivers was able to join us, propped up with the sofa cushion, and a campstool for her feet. Lilly and Maggie took their fancy-work. Bob and I had our marbles, and, by way of variety, my large ball; but we did not play much with them, for I soon heard that father was telling Mrs. Rivers about Aunt Editha. I was never tired of hearing about her; so Bob and I sat down on the raised step just at their feet, and, whilst looking over the bright sea and deserted beach, listened to the conversation.

"And you really do think it was your dear sister herself you saw, Mr. Greatheart?" said Mrs. Rivers, as we quietly took our seats.

"I could as soon doubt my own existence," said father. "I can never forget the heavenly expression of her face as she stood by my side, dressed in a long loose robe like delicate white satin. A crimson girdle was around her waist, and on it, worked apparently in precious stones, I saw the words, 'PERFECT LOVE CASTETH OUT FEAR.'"

"Jenny says she spoke to you, Mr. Greatheart. Would you mind telling me what she said?"

"She said to me once, '*Never think of me as dead. My life here is, I find, the completion of life, commenced on earth, fuller and more glorious, being freed from my suffering body. But, dear James, I am your own loving sister now as always, and may often be by you as a ministering spirit.*'"

"How natural it sounds," said Mrs. Rivers; "no wonder you were not afraid. I have always felt that *I* should be if I saw a spirit."

"Dear mamma," said Lilly, "I thought you had no belief in such things. And, if so, why have you ever thought it *possible* to see one?"

"Well, dear Lilly," said Mrs. Rivers, "I think I *do* believe in my heart, but am afraid to acknowledge it, even to myself. The fact is, I have been bewildered about it all; but I think Mr. Greatheart is making many things clear, so that what has hitherto been awful, will even come to be natural and beautiful."

"Not only that, mamma, dear," said Maggie, "but what a great spiritual help it would prove in so many ways, to be *quite sure* that the ministering spirits God sends are those we knew and loved on earth."

"Yes, dear," replied Mrs. Rivers, "it would be of incalculable comfort to me; for then I might hope when I die to be able to come and see you all sometimes. The sting of death would be almost

removed. But is it right for me to think so much of all I love on earth? Ought I not to be quite satisfied with the assurance of Christ's presence only? Oh! how I wish I knew what I might believe, without being wrong!"

"One thing, dear Mrs. Rivers," said father, "you may be quite sure of,—that God, who has given us so many dear ones, and has implanted in our natures a yearning for love, will never allow these yearnings to go unsatisfied; or to be rudely dispelled in any way. The more we love, the greater becomes our power of loving. The absorbing love of God, as the Giver of all good gifts, is not at all likely to be lessened, but rather increased, by any deep attachment we feel towards our dear ones on earth. Love is the electric chain that unites one soul to another, and draws humanity, individually and collectively, ever towards the centre of all good—the universal Father and God. If death is, as I believe, an evolution, and not a transformation,—a change in the *condition* of spirit-life, wrought merely by the removal of the body, and in no way likely to affect the character of the spirit immediately, we may be sure that the affection of the spirit for those whom they loved on earth, and who still remain in the body will be unaltered."

Father paused. In a few minutes Lilly said,—

"It is delightful to think we shall know each other again. And really, a most *natural* idea.

Have you seen your sister more than once, Mr. Greatheart?"

"Oh, yes," said father, "Many times has she been with me, so that I could see her as distinctly as when she was here on earth. Often, when I cannot *see* her, I feel her presence; she speaks to and greatly comforts me. The electric chain acts as a telegraph between us, so that our thoughts can be interchanged without words."

"Has she told you about heaven?—what she does? and what sort of place she lives in?" asked Mrs. Rivers.

"She has, from time to time, during the years since she left me behind, and went to her home above, told me so much that I feel almost as if I had been with her, and knew just what sort of a place she lives in."

"No wonder you are always so happy and so good, Mr. Greatheart," said Maggie. "But do tell us all you can."

"I could fill volumes," said father, "if I were to write down even part of what I have learnt in this way. I will tell you just a few details of her entrance upon spirit life. She said that she did not remember the act of dying, or leaving the body, but that when first awaking out of what seemed a refreshing sleep, she was amazed to find herself lying on a couch of exquisite flowers, in a very lovely garden. That she put

out her hand to gather some lilies close by her side, when she was still more astonished to feel that the touch of the flowers gave her strength. She raised herself to look around. The surrounding scenery was exquisite. The air laden with perfume, and filled with a low harmonious sound, as if from the echoings of distant music. Suddenly she became aware of the presence of our mother and father. She asked them where she was, although she began to feel sure it was only a dream, from which she would soon awake to find herself lying on her bed of sickness in the old earthly home. Father spoke first, and said they were there to welcome her to the land of peace, joy, and love. Then mother stooped down, and, kissing her, said: 'Dear Editha, our Lord has brought you to your home of rest. You have passed through the gates of death. Safe in His arms you felt no evil.' 'Dear mother,' she exclaimed, 'Am I really freed from my weary, weak body?' 'Stand up,' was the reply, 'and in the strength of your God walk out to meet the Heavenly Hosts, who have been watching your sleeping spirit, and now long to join their welcome to ours.' Editha told me much more than I can relate to you now, even of that first awakening to life."

"Oh how exquisite," said Mrs. Rivers. "Do go on; I feel as if it gave me strength to hear you talk!"

"Did your sister come to you very soon after she had gone?" asked Lilly.

"Editha first returned about a month after she passed away. But my mother came to us all the very night my sister went. She said she wished us to check our grief as much as we could, or our dear Editha would be disturbed in spirit by the atmosphere of sorrow. We asked mother how that could be; that surely sorrow would not be felt by a pure good spirit. But mother told us about the intimate connection between the spheres, and that any great grief felt or yielded to on earth, upon the departure of a loved one, did, in a way that we could not understand, affect them. She said if we would but pray to be kept calm, God would send us help; and that what was to us for the moment a deep, dark cloud of sorrow, would surely prove ere long one of the richest blessings that had yet come to us."

"Has that proved true, Mr. Greatheart?" said Mrs. Rivers.

"Indeed it has," replied father, his face brightening up; "for we now realise, as we never did before, that we have a group of loved ones awaiting us in their spirit home, and permitted by God to come and help us during our earthly sojourn. I feel always that our life on earth is but the first stage of a journey; that the child of God, on passing through the gates of death, will find 'a home

of rest' prepared for him ; that, in the fuller expansion of our spirit life, the work so incompletely done on earth—because of the hindrances of the frail body, and the hourly fight with evil influences—will be brought to perfection. I am sure also that every trial we have here is needful for our spiritual growth ; and, although to our imperfect vision it may seem mysterious, and to our faithless hearts even hard and unnecessary, we shall, when we get to the 'other side,' see the infinite love that guided and brought us through darkness into light, —through sorrow into joy. Dear Editha once said to me, with reference to the bitter sorrow that came to us in the loss of four of our brothers and sisters in swift succession, and by the same fell disease—consumption, 'I found how greatly I had cause to rejoice even in the deep affliction of our youth, when our beloved ones were one after the other taken from our midst. Be quite sure,' she said, 'that every sorrow is sent for some specific purpose, to cleanse us from some secret faults, and purify us for our spirit home. God's *love* lies over all—*trust* in it ; then you will know from experience that he shall be kept in *perfect* peace whose mind is stayed on Him.' "

Father ceased speaking. Mrs. Rivers looked so much better ; her pale cheeks were slightly tinged

with pink, her eyes were bright and smiling. I said to her,

“Dear Mrs. Rivers, you’ll soon be quite well, I’m sure.”

“Yes, darling,” she replied, “your good father has given me fresh strength through the comfort and joy of his teachings. The cloud over all my earthly life has been a dread of death. Now I begin to see a way of escape and a fresh source of happiness! I am most thankful.”

“You had better not stay much longer, mamma dear,” said Maggie, “you’ll get over-tired.”

“I’ll go in, dear, now,” she replied; “the children might stay out until tea-time, if they like.”

Father helped Mrs. Rivers to walk across the road to our house; Maggie and Lilly followed with the cushions and other paraphernalia; Bob and I scampered off down to the rocks to collect some seaweed, which we expected to find in a certain nook just left uncovered by the waves, and to pick some periwinkles off the rocks for tea.

In the evening father took Bob and me to the Pier. The music was delicious. The grand, triumphant notes of Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata*—which floated over the sea and swept the breeze as we turned out of the brightly-lighted room and

sauntered slowly homewards—will ever dwell in my memory, recalling the happy hours Bob and I spent with dear father on that occasion. Some years passed away, and many changes occurred, before we again saw Hastings Pier.





CHAPTER XIII.

"I AM FOUND OF THEM THAT SOUGHT ME NOT."

DURING the few days that followed before father was obliged to return to the Bank, he had many interesting conversations with Mrs. Rivers and her daughters. Bob and I were not usually present, as our time was taken up on the beach, or over the cliffs.

One morning, at breakfast time, Maggie said to father, "The account your dear sister gives of her first awakening to spirit life is very sweet. But she had, as you say, led a life of prayer, and was so pure and good that she was ready to go. How would it be with those who have not led a religious life on earth, or belonged to any Church?"

"Dear Maggie," replied father, "how many there are who make loud professions of Christianity, and hold high positions in the so-called religious world, whilst they are truly devoid of the spirit of Christ. On the contrary, I am happy in believing that others who belong to no especial sect, and are

not members of any Body of Christians, still are Christ-like in their lives, and truly His followers. At death, truth will reign supreme. The spirit, divested of the falsities inseparable from life whilst in the body, will stand in its simple, unmasked character, and at once be attracted to the sphere with which it is in sympathy. The selfish man will be surrounded by selfish spirits ; cruel grasping characters will find themselves where all the hideousness of this form of vice lies bare before them. All kinds of evil will now sink to its own level. Each spirit is compelled to remain in this sphere—(i.e., the Hades of the Bible)—for a longer or shorter period ; in fact, until, satiated by and wearied with his own evil, he *voluntarily* turns from it, and longs for the higher sphere, which he finds can alone satisfy the immortal spirit. In this way do we find the words verified, ye must ‘ *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* ’ ”

“ Then you do not believe in eternal punishment,” said Maggie, “ or that the fate of the sinner is sealed at the death of the body ? ”

“ If I thought that,” said father, “ I could not avoid questioning or doubting the infinite love and mercy of our universal Father. Think of the mere speck of time, spent in even the longest life on earth, compared with the ceaseless ages of eternity. Remember the fact that the number of those born

on this earth who ever know of Christ and His power to save to the uttermost, is extremely small in comparison with the millions who pass away without any knowledge of the Bible, or of any of these dogmas, the belief in which is considered by a small Body of Christians as necessary to salvation. We know quite well that the vast majority of the inhabitants of this world are surrounded from birth by circumstances over which they have had no control, but by means of which they pass their days in utter ignorance of spiritual matters, and the great need of cultivating their spiritual, as well as physical powers."

"But, Mr. Greatheart," said Maggie, "doesn't the Bible tell us that at death we shall either go to Heaven or Hell, according to our actions on earth?"

"The Bible," said father, "can be so quoted as to sanction any belief under the sun. Even the infidel may say that his views are Scriptural, for does not Solomon, the wisest of men, write, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die'? We are told to search the Scriptures, for therein shall we find eternal life. By God's help I have done so, and find that the law of the Trinity runs throughout, and it is only by reading them in the threefold light, as revealed by the Spirit of God and Wisdom, that we can reconcile the very conflicting evidence contained therein."

“What do you mean by ‘conflicting evidence,’ Mr. Greatheart?” said Maggie, in an agitated tone.

“Do not be alarmed, dear Maggie,” said father, “the conflicting evidence lies only in the minds of the multitude who keep to the letter—or *body*—of the word, and shut their eyes—or perhaps have never had them opened—to the spirit of it. The study of the Scriptures is of endless interest, whilst they are a source of illimitable knowledge. I could not, now, enter upon any of the details I should like to draw your attention to. One thing let me say. In believing that the fate of the spirit is finally sealed at the death of the body, it appears to me that we are limiting God’s power, and yielding to the most unchristian ideas, that evil, after all, will gain the mastery over good. ‘God wills not the death of the sinner.’ Christ came to draw all men to God. He is ‘Willing and able to save to the uttermost.’ I believe in the literal truth of these words. And if it is possible for one soul to be finally lost, then they are not true. Perhaps you have not read William White’s book on ‘Eternal Punishment’? in it he says :—‘What, too, renders us doubly suspicious about these sayings concerning eternal, or everlasting punishment, is the silence of the apostles in their epistles. If our Lord had thought that certain courses of conduct and belief would terminate in perpetual and irretrievable disaster the lesson was one of such overwhelming impor-

tance, that it would have been the first of apostolic duties to warn and threaten their fellow-creatures on the subject. But Paul, Peter, James, and John, give not a hint that they had ever heard of such a frightful possibility ; and I cannot help thinking they never did hear of it, and that we owe the "Gospel of Damnation," as Canon Kingsley termed it, to a subservient generation,—to fanaticism engendered by persecution.' "

"These thoughts are indeed most comforting," said Maggie, as father paused ; "but would not evil spread even more widely if the check to it supposed to be given by the dread of future misery were removed ?"

"No good end can ever be gained by propagating error for truth. If we once believe such doctrines to be erroneous they should not be taught from *any motive*. But I am quite sure that any conversion, or supposed reformation of character brought about by the fear of punishment *only* is futile, and in the sight of God,—who *searches* the heart, and knows the secret motives of each of His children,—no reformation at all. Evil must be shunned because it *is* evil ; not only because it is not convenient to follow, or that the practice of it lowers us in the eyes of our fellow-creatures. Besides, we should *not* remove any true fear of misery by believing that there is not to be everlasting punishment. William White says elsewhere, on the same subject, 'The punish-

ment for sin *is everlasting, never ending*. But sin itself is not unconquerable by God. Sin *must be* vanquished in the end, and until it is the punishment for it will remain. When it has ceased, then, in the natural order of events, punishment for it ceases also.' God, in His perfect purity, love, and infinite goodness, 'cannot look upon evil even in the remotest degree.' He cleanses us from *secret* faults. We are warned to avoid '*every* appearance or form of evil.' God in His mercy provides that every wrong-doing brings its own sorrow. We must be purified and saved—yea, 'so as by fire,' for the furnace of affliction, the *fire* of purification, must be passed through ere the spirit of man can be again restored—perfect, in the image of his maker, God; at one with Christ, the Saviour and Elder Brother, to live for ever in the kingdom of Heaven."

A long pause was broken at length by Lilly, who had been listening quietly, but hitherto had not joined in the conversation.

"Whenever I read the words, so often repeated by the Psalmist, 'for His mercy endureth for ever,' I think that many of the harsh dogmas taught by some Christians are quite out of harmony with them. They represent God as a cruel judge, instead of a loving Father."

"Yes," said father, "how many seem to forget that He *is* a true Father, and that, 'Even as a

father *pitieth* his children, so the Lord *pitieth* those that fear Him.' What infinite pains does He take to draw us to Him, and how we do resolutely turn aside, and refuse to listen to His voice, if it comes in any unlooked-for manner. We forget that He speaks to us, not only by day, but by night. We read in Job, 'God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man, in slumberings upon the bed, then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.' "

"It was only yesterday," said Lilly, "that I was reading in Rahel's life, how fully she believed in dreams. She says, 'In real deep sleep the soul returns home for strength, otherwise it would not endure; it is a promised refuge, a bathing in the sea of God.' "

"That is very beautifully expressed," said father, and for a few minutes we all sat silently,—but thinking.

Bob whispered to me, "Jenny, you remember your dream! All true, we may be sure."

Then father again spoke: "A friend of mine," said he, "very orthodox in his views, lost one who was very dear to him, but who had been a source of intense sorrow during the last few years of her

life. According to the teachings of the sect to which he belonged, he was bound to believe she was condemned to everlasting punishment. Hitherto he had passively accepted the dogma; but now that it was brought home to him thus forcibly, he was frightened to feel how his whole soul rose in rebellion against it. He was fully aware of the depth of evil into which his loved one had fallen; but was also aware that, in spite of all, there was yet much to admire and love in her character. One night, after retiring to rest, his distress of mind was great. He grieved for his bereavement, but above all was he distressed to find it impossible to avoid questioning the wisdom and justice of God in condemning his lost one to eternal misery. Most earnestly did he pray for help. Suddenly, in the silence around him, he says—like Eliphaz—he heard, as if softly whispered in his ear, the words, ‘Shall mortal man be more just than God?’ No more was said; but it soothed his troubled spirit, and ere long he supposes he slept. Anyhow, the following dream or vision came to him. He found himself in a large open space. Before him stood an immense throne, upon which sat our Saviour as the embodiment of Deity. He felt that he was in the presence of One all powerful and all loving. Our Saviour’s hand pointed towards a Cross, surmounted by a glorious Crown bespangled with precious stones of

white and red. ("Colours," said father, in parenthesis, "are symbolical of states or conditions—red denotes love.") From the Cross was suspended a gigantic chain of solid gold, but intertwined with a crimson cord of silk. He was impressed to fix his eyes upon the chain, and found that, by following its course, he could see far, far down into the abyss to which it led. Whilst thus intently gazing downward, the increasing gloom hid the chain from view, but he still saw shining brightly the streak of crimson cord. At length he noticed that the end of the cord was firmly attached to the arm of some poor spirit, who, in the attitude of prayer, was looking upward, and apparently being led on by the light proceeding from the cord, out of the darkness into a higher condition. He recognised in this poor creature the spirit of the one whom he had loved on earth. Gradually the vision faded from before him; but, whilst arousing out of the trance-like condition in which he had been, he heard the words, clearly uttered, 'I am found of them that sought Me not.'

"This symbolic teaching is indeed most delightful and truly helpful," said Lilly. "Surely it must have proved a most efficient source of comfort to your friend?"

"Yes," said father, "it gave him a lesson which he cannot forget. Like many others, he is afraid to speak of his beautiful experience; but I can see

L

that it has softened his heart; he is far more sympathetic with his fellow-creatures than he was at one time, and has become——”

At this moment Mary came in to know if there were any orders for Elliot—(the chair man who took Mrs. Rivers out when she was able to go). Lilly ran up to ask her mamma; Maggie was obliged to see cook, to discuss dinner business; and so our conversation was interrupted, and we dispersed.





CHAPTER XIV.

"UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS."

SATURDAY'S post brought letters for father which decided him to remain until Monday morning. Everyone rejoiced as I did, that we should spend one more day together.

"Mr. Greatheart," said Mr. Rivers, as we sat at breakfast on Sunday morning, "I think you would enjoy hearing Mr. Gladman. He preaches at the Congregational Church down at Hastings. Shall we walk down together this morning?"

"Yes, Mr. Rivers," replied father, "it will be a great pleasure to do so. I expect Bob and Jenny would like to join us."

Of course we were delighted, and hastened to get ready. We started quite early, that we might enjoy the saunter along the sea-wall before it became crowded with church-goers and excursionists.

It was a grand morning. The heat would have been overpowering, but that it was tempered by a

deliciously soft breeze from the east. How peaceful everything seemed. I had that morning, before breakfast, been learning a few verses of a sweet poem. Father asked me if I could repeat them. They were as follows, upon the subject of

SABBATH DAYS.

“Types of eternal rest—fair buds of bliss,
In heavenly flowers unfolding, week by week.
The next world's gladness, imaged forth in this,
Days of whose worth, the Christian's heart can speak.

“Eternity in time,—the steps by which
We climb to future ages. Lamps that light
Man through his darkest days,—and thought enrich.
Yielding redemption for the week's dull flight.

“Wakeners of prayer in man. His resting bowers,
As on he journeys in his narrow way,
Where, Eden-like, Jehovah's walking hours
Are waited for, as in the cool of day.

“Days fixed by God, for intercourse with us,
To raise our thoughts, and purify our powers.
Periods appointed to renew our trust.
A gleam of glory, after six days' showers.”

We all sat down to rest for a few minutes on the covered, shady seat just beyond the Pier.

“I can fancy,” said father, “that it was just such a day as this when Jesus walked through the cornfields with His disciples.”

“I wish He was sitting with us now,” I whispered to father. For I recalled my dream and the vision

I had of Jesus on the sea—it was so real to me, and always made me happy to think of it.

“Ah, my child,” answered father, “*He is here.* He has promised to be with us always, even to the end of the world. The more we desire His presence, the closer can He draw near.”

We were all very silent for some minutes, then said father,—

“Surely if we *realised* this truth we should become more loving. The bitter persecuting spirit so prevalent amongst the different sects would be overcome, and differences of opinion would cause no angry feeling, but, in fact, be expected.”

“Why,” said Mr. Rivers, “even the disciples did not fully agree in all their ideas. They had their doubts as to the Deity of Christ.”

“Yes,” answered father, “and Christ did not love them any the less for such doubts. He made them love Him; and was content to let the final proof of His Deity come to them all, by His triumph over death and the grave in His resurrection. Then how loving and patient He showed Himself towards their fearfulness and doubt; what pains He took to remove them; dismissing the unbelieving Thomas only with the words, ‘Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.’”

It was now nearly chapel time, and we walked on. Bob and I went first.

"I feel as if I could never be naughty when your father is near," remarked Bob.

"I am quite sure," I said, "that Christ loves him just as He did the beloved disciple John. I wish we could grow up just like him, don't you?"

We reached the chapel in good time to get seated and comfortably cool before Mr. Gladman went into the pulpit. Bob whispered to me,—

"I like his face; shouldn't wonder if we shall be able to understand some of what he says."

"Let's listen," I answered.

The introductory part being over, Mr. Gladman arose, and gave out his text. Bob and I exchanged looks of disappointment. He put his hands into his pocket, suggestively, and I heard a faint chink of marbles. I drew close up to father, and, putting my little hand into his large one, felt comforted as far as I could under the circumstances.

By a strange coincidence the text announced was the same that mother had told me Brother Howler had preached his sermon from on the preceding Sunday, and which she said was so very edifying for "the elect"! I thought, as I drew close to father, "Well, I'll try not to listen; he'll talk about hell-fire, and I shall have such frightening dreams to-night if I hear what he says." In a few minutes, however, something in the minister's

manner attracted me, and, looking towards Bob, I saw it was the same with him; for his hands were lying on his lap, his bright face was turned towards the pulpit, and, marbleless, he sat, evidently listening.

After reading the words from Matt. xxv. 30, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Mr. Gladman went on to show that all who yielded to evil were "unprofitable servants." Not only those who committed great sins against the laws of society, such as stealing, getting drunk, murdering, &c.; but also those who were hourly sinning against God's first great law of love, thereby bringing around them an unholy sphere, not only hurtful to their own spirits, but to the souls of all who live with them.

Masters and mistresses who were unjust and ungenial, or proud in behaviour to their servants; servants who were idle and unmindful of their duty to those whom they had engaged to serve; children who were quarrelsome with each other in their play hours, disobedient to their parents or guardians, and unkind to those who waited upon them in any way;—all were, in various degrees, "unprofitable servants," and would surely find that, by yielding to evil, they were "cast into outer darkness," spiritually, and compelled to reap the misery of their ways by what is in the text

symbolised in the words, "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

He then told us not to be discouraged at the difficulties in the path of all who desired to overcome their various temptations; that the struggle against evil would be life long; but we must cling to the Bible as our guide, and pray without ceasing.

He finished by quoting the words from Isaiah lv. 7:—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for *He will abundantly pardon.*"

After the service Mr. Rivers and father went to call upon the good old Jim, but they thought Bob and I had better walk slowly homewards. As we turned out of Robertson Street and got on to the Parade, Bob said, "I was afraid it would be an awful sermon, about Hell and dreadful things."

"Yes," I replied, "so was I, and I did not mean to listen; but I found he was speaking so nicely, and in such easy language, that I don't feel at all unhappy. You see, Bob, all he said made us want to love God more, and try to be always good, because He is so sorry for us to be made so miserable by being naughty. But when Mr. Howler preaches about how angry God is with us all, and going to

send us to Hell for ever if we are wicked—well, I *feel* wicked, and I think I can't *love* God if He gets into such tempers as all that ; just like that wicked old man who lived in Close Lane, and who used to rush out and frighten us so if we trundled our hoops too near his door. I told father once how I felt, and he said 'Don't believe anything any one says about God that makes you think of comparing Him to *any bad or angry man*. He is all love, and when we are punished for doing evil, that is God's love, which *makes* us learn the result of being wicked.' ”

“Oh dear,” said Bob, “I get so wicked sometimes, at school especially. Don't you remember how waxy I got one day last half with that muff Fred Phule? There he was imposing upon the little chaps, and trying it on with them, just as he used with me, until one day I flung off my jacket, rushed at him, and punched his head. Then he turned round and gave me a black eye. I felt very unhappy, and yet nothing could make me feel as if I had done anything very bad. That was because I was so naughty, I expect.”

“I remember, of course,” I said. “Your eye was black for a week, and mother said it looked very disreputable. I told them all about it, and father said you fought against the *sin of injustice*, and not against Fred Phule himself, and he thought, all things considered, you were a very brave boy ; that it was quite possible to ‘be angry and sin not.’ ”

"I am glad your father said that."

We ran down on the beach just for a little time before we went in to dinner.

"Bob, I am sorry to go away; haven't we been happy together?"

"Yes, Jenny," he said, "it's a horrid bore for you to have to go back just because school begins on Tuesday. Why couldn't the silly governess give the holidays as long as ours, it would have been so jolly? I shall hate it all when you've gone."

"I shall cry all day, I'm sure," I replied, "and be wretched until you are back. You see father and mother don't like me to lose my place in class, and if I don't go the very first day I shall. Besides, I want to get a prize."

Just as we got back to the Parade we saw father and Mr. Rivers coming along quickly; joining them we soon reached home, and were quite ready for our dinner. We did not go to church in the evening; Mrs. Rivers was glad to get father to talk to her once more. And on bidding him goodbye when she went to bed, she thanked him much for the happiness he had brought into her life by his spiritual teaching.



CHAPTER XV.

“HOME ! SWEET HOME !”

FATHER and I had to leave home by an early train on Monday morning. We were to breakfast by seven o'clock. Bob and I were up and on the beach by sunrise, to pay my farewell visit to our dear old haunts on the rocks. I filled my pocket to a ruinous extent with shells and stones, which were nearly all lost before I reached home, because they tore holes in it ; but I had on my old dress, so it did not much matter.

We were rather behindhand at breakfast, and obliged to start for the Station as soon as ever we could get it over. Mr. Rivers and Bob went with us. I did not feel my usual anxiety to be punctual, and Bob took no pains to conceal his desire that we might by some means lose the train altogether, so as to be obliged to wait two hours for the next one. Very unphilosophical of him, father said, as it would only be putting off the evil hour, and not escaping it. Of course we did not miss it. Just as we walked on to the platform the black smoky

monster came puffing into the Station, and, having swallowed us up, rushed off again into the darkness of the tunnel that separated us from the country beyond.

Mother met us at the Station. Father went direct to the Bank, and mother and I walked home, leaving my little box to be sent on by the carrier. Considering my expectations of misery and weeping, I felt quite surprised to find how glad I was to see the dear old home once more. It seemed a very long time since I had left. How beautiful the country looked! The fields and lanes were so peaceful. The quiet air was filled with the soft glad songs of birds, and the gentle rustling of the trees as they waved to and fro in the autumnal breeze scattering the dead leaves around. And surely our little garden, with its wealth of richly-coloured flower-beds, and well-kept little grass lawn in front, must be the very prettiest in the lane! Never before did my own bedroom look such a charming nook. The wisteria had grown in wild profusion around the window, shading it pleasantly from the sunbeams, which glinted through the leaves as they danced about, as if in welcome to me. My little favourite pictures stuck about the room, and my books placed in order on the small book-shelf which father had given me on my last birthday, looked so home-like. Then mother seemed so glad to see me, and did not

scold me for my torn pocket, and the generally dilapidated condition of my dress. In fact, I felt so happy that I began to think myself faithless to Bob, so in the evening, when fairly tired out with my explorations, I sat down and wrote to him. This is the copy of my letter :—

“DEAR OLD BOB,—I wonder how you are getting on without me on the rocks. I suppose you play marbles by yourself, but you can’t have any play unless you get Lilly to take my place sometimes. I felt very unhappy at first in the train coming home, but mother met us, and, as I walked home with her, the country looked so beautiful and the flowers in the garden smelt so sweet; and it was so very nice to see a lot of old faces, that I felt very happy. And you will soon be back; your school opens the end of next week, so I expect you’ll come then, and not be a whole fortnight longer. Give my very dear love and a lot of kisses to all.

“I am, your loving

“JENNY.

“P.S.—I found my pocket torn and my prettiest shells gone; please bring me a few more.”

The next morning I had a shocking scrawl from Bob; but I was delighted with it, and kept it. It lies before me now :—

“MY DEAR JENNY,—Mind you write soon. As soon as your trane had got out of sight, father and

I went off for a walk to the Dripping Well, that took us all the morning, and was very jolly. We had lots of ginger beer and seed cake for lunch; then, as we found an empty carriage on the road, we took it and rode back and I got the man to let me drive some of the way. I went to our rocks after dinner, but it was awful slow without you to have fun with, no more; love from us all.

“Your affectionate

“BOB.

“Please let me know how my rabbits look? and let them have lots of grene food.”

Months passed away. Nothing of importance arose to disturb the ordinary but happy routine of our daily duties. Then came, in rapid succession, circumstances which changed the current of our lives; but the detailed record of which I cannot now enter upon.

One event I will just name. About Christmas father was “READ OUT” from the community of holy men assembling at “Little Bethel,” as one who was “unworthy of sitting at the Lord’s table.” The reason given—and which was sent to each of the assemblies, in their different rooms throughout the kingdom, without any further particulars—was that “James Greatheart had fallen away from the right path,” and had “given himself up to the doctrine of devils.”

The first remark father made on being told of the decision among the brethren was, "I thank God nothing can separate me from the love of Christ—my Saviour and my Elder Brother." And I remember one day, about that time, I said to Brother Howler, in reference to father's dismissal, whilst he was speaking to mother about it,

"Is it the Lord's table you have turned father from?"

"Yes, my child," he said.

"But," I replied, looking up greatly astonished, as I felt, "you *can't* turn him from the Lord's table; only the Lord could do that, and I'm sure He never will, for father loves Him so, and is one of His disciples."

How good it is for us all to rest awhile, when possible, and calmly review the varied incidents of our life. Weary and footsore as we often are in the battle of life, we can then clearly see that the darkest night of sorrow has often preceded the bright dawn of joy and gladness. We can recognise the loving Hand that has unerringly led us by the right path. That although thorns have pierced our feet, and tears of sorrow have fallen from our eyes, the sweet flowers of hope and trust have shed their glory over our path, and brought help and consolation when all around was dark.

It has been pleasant and helpful thus to record

some of the events of our bright and happy childish days. I should be reluctant to break off the thread thus abruptly, but for the hope that ere long I may again re-unite it, and recall the Lord's dealings with us as we together trod the path of life through youth up to the mature age at which we have now arrived. So surely do we now see how unerringly our loving Father has led us, that we feel our trust is strengthened, and that we can leave all we love and all our future in His hands, knowing that He doeth all things well. Truly can we re-echo the beautiful words of the poet, as we look forward to the closing years of life, and say—

“ Oh blessed, happy ignorance !
’Tis better not to know.
It keeps me so still in the tender arms
That will not let me go.
It hushes my soul to rest
On the bosom that loves me so.

“ And so I go on, not knowing ;
I would not if I might.
I’d rather walk in the dark with God
Than go alone in the light.
I’d rather walk with Him by faith
Than go alone by sight.”

