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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LITTLE MISS JOY ***



"Joy, darling Joy," Patience said, "you have often said you had wished you had known your mother." Page. [167](#)

Little Miss Joy.

BY

EMMA MARSHALL,

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"LITTLE QUEENIE;" "BLUE BELL;" "ROBERT'S RACE;"
"HURLY-BURLY;" ETC.**

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LITTLE MISS JOY.

CHAPTER I.

WAITING AND WATCHING.

The sea lay calm and still under a cloudless sky. The tide was out, and there was only a faint murmur like the whisper of gentle voices, as the little waves told to the sands that they were coming back soon, for the tide had turned.

It was yet early morning, and the old town of Great Yarmouth was asleep. The fishing boats had been out all night, and were lying like so many black birds with folded wings, waiting for the flow of the water to bring them to the beach. All the blinds were down in the houses facing the level strand. There was no one moving yet, for the resonant clock of Saint Nicholas Church had

only just struck four.

The children of visitors to Yarmouth, tired with their exertions on the sand the evening before, were all wrapt in profound slumber.

Happy seaside children, who had paddled and delved on the beach to their hearts' content, who had braved all the reproaches of mothers and nurses, and had gone home with their buckets full of seaweed, pebbles, and shells, looking like the veriest little ragged waifs and strays, who were known as "the beach children," and who were an ever-moving population gathered from the depths of the town, pattering with naked feet round the boats as they came to shore, to pick up odd fish which fell from the nets as they were spread out to dry.

A great expanse of sand stretches out from Yarmouth, and over this the wind whistles through the long parched grass which grows in patches, interspersed with the little pink mallow and stunted thistles, which are not discouraged by their surroundings, and flourish in spite of difficulties. This wide expanse of sand and sand-mounds is called the Denes; and as little weary feet plod over it, it seems in its vastness a very desert of Sahara. Yet there is a charm about the Denes which the children feel. A sense of freedom, and a power to deal with the sand after their own will, were checked by repeated exhortations from governess or nurse to take care of their clothes. Yet the soft silvery sand can do no harm, and a prick from a blade of the pointed grass, or a scratch from a thistle, are the only dangers that beset it.

The town of Yarmouth lies at some distance from the sea, and possesses one feature of rather unusual interest. There is a fine quay, shaded by trees, alongside which many large ships from all countries lie. There is a wide market-place and several good streets. But the heart and core of the old town is to be found in the "rows," narrow thoroughfares with tall houses on either side, where many a competency, if not a fortune, has been made in days past.

Very little sunshine or light penetrates the rows, and some of the inhabitants have a faded, washed-out look, like that of a plant shut in a dark place, which shows but a faint colour of either leaves or blossom.

Perhaps the pale woman standing by the door of a small shop, the shutters of which were not yet taken down, was a fair specimen of her neighbours. She was tall, but drooped so much that her real height was lost. She had a sad face, where lines of care and anxiety had made a network perhaps earlier in life than wrinkles had any right to appear, if they should be traced by time rather than by sorrow. For Patience Harrison was not an old woman, and had scarcely entered her thirty-sixth year.

As she stood at the narrow entry of the shop, her hands folded, her head bent forward, she might well attract any passer-by, while she looked right and left, as if in hopes of seeing a well-known figure come into the row, from either end.

Up and down, up and down, that eager, hungry glance, with an infinite pathos in the dark eyes, scanned the narrow passage; and grew more pathetic and more hungry every moment.

At last footsteps were heard on the pavement. Patience started, and took a step forward, only to draw back again disappointed.

"The top of the morning to you, Mrs. Harrison. You are about early. It is as fine a summer morning as I ever was out in."

The speaker was a tall, well-knit young man of two or three and thirty, with a fine open countenance, and a broad square brow, round which thick light curls clustered. No contrast could be greater than between Patience Harrison and George Paterson: the man so full of life, and the enjoyment of life; the woman so languid and weary-looking. He seemed as if the world were a pleasant place to him, she as if it were a waste and a wilderness.

"You are up and about early," George repeated. "Indeed, you look as if you hadn't been to bed. I hope you haven't been up all night. Have you, now?"

"Yes. How could I sleep? How could I rest? There was a worse storm than ever last night at supper-time, and—and—Jack ran away out of the house, and has never come back."

"The young rascal!" George exclaimed. "I'd like to thrash him!"

"Oh, don't say so! Don't say so! If ever a boy is scourged by a tongue, Jack is. I mean to leave this house; I can't—I can't bear it any longer."

"Well," George said, his eyes shining with a bright light—the light of hope—"well, there's a home ready for you, you know that. The sooner you come, the better."

"You know I can't do it. Why do you ask me? I wonder you should ask me."

"I see no wonder in it," was the answer. "You've watched and waited for eleven years; sure that's long enough! He will never come back."

"Yes," she said sadly; "yes. I have waited and watched, as you say. It is the business of my

life. I shall watch and wait to the end."

George Paterson gave an impatient gesture, and settled the workman's basket on his broad shoulders, as if he were going to walk on. But after a pace or two he seemed to change his mind, and stopping, he said—

"But what about Jack? How did it happen?"

"He offended her yesterday. He brought dirty boots into the parlour; and he blew a tune on the little cornet you gave him, when she told him to be quiet. He upset a jug of water on the table, and he made a face at her, and he called her 'an old cat.' He had no business to call her names."

George laughed.

"A very fitting name, I think; he has felt her claws often enough. Well, what then?"

"Then she boxed his ears—it was at supper—and he flew into a rage, and he would not listen to me, but tore out of the room, out of the house, and has never come back. Oh, George, what if there should be two to wait and watch for, instead of one! Jack! Jack! How could he leave me?"

"He can't have gone far; and, as to being out all night, why, that won't hurt him. The young rascal, to give you all this trouble! Yes, I'll go and hunt for him; and if I catch him, won't I give it to him!"

"No, George; no. Remember his provocation. Remember he has had no father, only a mother like me to control him."

"Only a mother like you! I should like to know where a better could be found! I am sorry for the boy that he has had to live with a cross-grained old maid, but for your sake he ought to have put up with it."

"She means well. She took us in for my father's sake, and she has kept me and the boy from starving."

"You have earned your living; you have worked well for her, and she knows it. But I will go and hunt for Master Jack. See! I will leave my basket of tools here as an assurance that I am coming back. You go and lie down, and I'll have the young master back before an hour is over. Come, go indoors; you look ready to drop."

But Patience shook her head.

"I am used to waiting and watching," she said again; "it's nothing new."

Then her eyes began their search up and down the row, with the same wistful, eager gaze.

George Paterson had put the basket of tools just within the doorway, and turning to her said

"Look up at that strip of blue sky, Patience; look up, not downward so much."

As he spoke he raised his head, and pointed to the narrow bit of sky which made a deeply blue line above the tops of the tall houses.

"That tells of love," he said—"God's love which is over us. Take heart, and lift it up to Him in your trouble."

George spoke out of the fulness of his own heart: not in any way as if he set himself up to lecture his listener, but just simply to try to raise her thoughts from the gnawing anxiety which had laid hold on her.

"Yes," she said, "the bit of sky is beautiful, but it is so far off; and—don't be angry with me, George, but I wish you would go and find him. Let me come with you!" she exclaimed.

"No, no; I shall be quicker than you are. I can get over the ground in half the time."

Neither asked the other where George would look for the truant. Both had one thought—Jack had been to the quay, and was perhaps on board one of the ships lying there. He had threatened before that he would go to sea, and leave Miss Pinckney and her scoldings and fault-findings behind him.

"If it had not been for his mother he would have done so long ago," he said. "He loved the sea, and he wished to be a sailor, as his father had been before him."

As George's quick, firm steps were heard dying away in the distance, Mrs. Harrison pulled a stool towards her out of the shop, and seated herself just within the doorway.

She was scarcely conscious of anything but the fear, growing greater every moment, that Jack—the sunshine of her life, the light of her eyes—had gone from her. She leaned her head

against the door, and looked up at the sky half unconsciously. As she looked, a blind in one of the windows of the opposite house was lifted, and the window cautiously opened, while a head with a tangle of golden hair was thrust out, and a little voice—clear, like the sound of a thrush in a tree—sang in sweet dulcet tones some verses of a childish morning hymn:—

"Now the eastern sky is red,
I, too, lift my little head;
Now the lark sings loud and gay,
I, too, rise to praise and pray.

"Saviour, to Thy cottage home
Once the daylight used to come:
Thou hast often seen it break
Brightly o'er the Eastern lake.

"Blessed Jesus! Thou dost know
What of danger, joy, or woe,
Shall to-day my portion be—
Let me meet it all in Thee."

Here the sweet, clear voice broke off suddenly, for the child saw that her opposite neighbour on the doorstep was looking up at her.

"Mrs. Harrison," she said, nodding and kissing her hand. "I see you! I'm coming down when I'm dressed. Uncle Bobo isn't awake yet."

Then the head disappeared, and there was silence for a few minutes.

Presently the bolts of the opposite door were gently drawn, and out came the daintiest little figure, in a fresh blue cotton frock and white pinafore, her rosy lips parted with a smile, and her eyes dancing with the light of the morning of life. Dear unclouded child-eyes! How soon they lose that first sweet innocent gaze! How soon the cares and sins of this weary world shadow their depths, and the frank gaze which tells of faith in all that is lovely and beautiful is changed into one of distrust, and sometimes of sorrow.

"Well, little Miss Joy!" Patience Harrison said, as the child tripped across the row, and flung her arms round the waiting mother's neck.

"Well, dear Goody Patience. Why are you sitting here all alone, and looking so sad? Why, Goody, *dear* Goody, you are crying!"

For the child's loving caress had touched the fountain of tears, and, sobbing, the poor mother said—

"Oh, little Miss Joy! Jack has run away. I couldn't sleep, so I came down here."

"Run away, Jack! Oh, how naughty of him to grieve you! But he will come back—of course he will. Don't cry, my dear Goody Patience; don't cry. Of course he'll come back. What was it all about?"

"A fuss with his poor Aunt Amelia, as usual; and Jack was rude, I know, and he did not behave well; but——"

"I am afraid," Joy said thoughtfully, "Jack is not a good boy to Miss Pinckney. He is no end good to *me*, and I love him dearly, and so does Uncle Bobo. He says he is like a fine ship—all sails set and flags flying and no compass—which gets on rocks and quicksands, because there is no guide. That is what Uncle Bobo says."

"It is quite true—quite true," Patience said. "I do not excuse him, though I know he has had a great deal to try his temper in his Aunt Amelia's house."

"I dare say he will come back, and be a good boy. I'll talk to him," Joy said, with a wise nod of her golden head. "I'll talk to him, and he will never run away again."

"But, Joy, he is gone; and though Mr. Paterson thinks he knows where to find him, I don't believe he *will* find him."

"I must go indoors now; for here is Peter coming to take down our shutters, and Uncle Bobo will be wanting his breakfast, and I always help Susan to get it ready. I shall be on the watch, and the minute Jack comes back I will run over."

Then, with showers of kisses on the pale, woe-struck face, little Miss Joy was gone.

CHAPTER II.

LITTLE MISS JOY.

Little Miss Joy was the pride of the row, and always seemed to bring a ray of sunshine with her.

She lived with an old man she called "Uncle Bobo," who kept a curiously mixed assortment of wares, in the little dark shop where he had lived, man and boy, for fifty years.

He was professedly a dealer in nautical instruments, the manufacture of which was carried on in Birmingham or Sheffield. Every now and then a large packing-case would excite the inhabitants of the row, as it was borne on one of the Yarmouth carts constructed on purpose for the convenience of passing through the rows, and dropped down with a tremendous thud on the pavement opposite Mr. Boyd's door.

No wheels but the wheels of these carts were ever heard in the row, unless it were a wheelbarrow or a truck. And none of these were welcome, as it was difficult for foot-passengers to pass if one of these vehicles stopped the way.

The nautical instruments by no means represented all Mr. Boyd's stock-in-trade. Compasses and aneroids and ship's lamps were the superior articles to be sold. But there were endless odds and ends—"curiosities"—bits of carving, two or three old figure-heads of ships, little ship-lanterns, and knives of all shapes and sizes, balls of twine, rolls of cable, and all packed into the narrow limits of the tiny shop.

"Uncle Bobo" was coming home one night—a Christmas night—a few years before the time my story opens, when he heard a wailing cry as he fitted the latch-key into his own door.

The cry attracted him, and looking down on the threshold of his home he saw—a bundle, as it seemed to him, tightly tied up in a handkerchief. Stooping to pick it up, the faint wailing cry was repeated, and Uncle Bobo nearly let the bundle fall.

"It's a child—it's an infant!" he exclaimed. "Where's it dropped from? Here, Susan!" he called to his faithful old servant, "here's a Christmas-box for you; look alive!"

Susan, who had appeared with a light, groped through the various articles in the shop, and received the bundle from her master's hand.

"Dear life, Mr. Boyd, what are you going to do with it then?"

"Can't say," was the answer, as Mr. Boyd rolled into the parlour, where a bright fire was burning and the kettle singing on the hob. "Unpack the parcel, Sue, and let's have a look."

Susan untied many knots and unrolled fold after fold of the long scarf-shawl of black and white check in which the child was wrapped: and then out came, like a butterfly out of a chrysalis, a little dainty girl of about two years old, who, looking up at Mr. Boyd, said, "Dad-da!"

There was no sign of ill-usage about the child. She was neatly dressed, and round her waist a purse was tied. Mr. Boyd fitted his large black-rimmed spectacles on his nose, and while Susan sat with the child on her knee, warming her pink toes in the ruddy blaze, he untied the ribbon with which the purse was fastened to the child's waist, and opened it.

It was an ordinary purse, with pockets, and within the centre one, fastened by a little spring, was one sovereign and a bit of paper, on which was written:

"It is the last money I have in the world Take care of the bearer till you hear more. Keep her for me."

Eight years had gone by since that Christmas night, and nothing more had ever been heard about this "Christmas-box;" but Uncle Bobo never repented that he had kept the child. She had been the interest and delight of his old age, and he had fondly called her "My little Joy."

The neighbours wondered a little, and some looked severely on this deed of kindness of Mr. Boyd's.

The person who looked most severely at it was Miss Amelia Pinckney, who kept a small haberdasher's and milliner's shop opposite Mr. Boyd's. Now neighbours in the Yarmouth rows, especially opposite neighbours, are very near neighbours indeed; and if it was almost possible to shake hands over the heads of the passers-by from the upper windows, it was quite possible to hear what was said, especially in summer, when the narrow casements were thrown open to admit what air was stirring.

Thus Miss Pinckney's voice, which was neither soft nor low, reached many ears in the near vicinity, and Mr. Boyd was well aware that she had called him "a foolish old fellow," adding that

"the workhouse was the place for the child, and that she had no patience with his folly."

Truth to tell, Miss Pinckney had but little patience with any one. She had, as she conceived, done a noble deed by allowing her stepsister and her boy to take up their abode with her. But for this deed she took out very heavy interest; and poor Mrs. Harrison, who was, as her sister continually reminded her, "worse than a widow"—a deserted wife—had to pay dearly for the kindness which had been done her. Many a time she had determined to leave the uncongenial roof, and go forth to face the world alone; but then she was penniless, and although she worked, and worked hard too, to keep herself and her boy, by executing all Miss Pinckney's millinery orders, and acting also as general servant as well as shopwoman of the establishment, still she was never allowed to forget that she was under an obligation to her sister, and that she ought to be "thankful for all her mercies!"

"It is not as if it was only yourself, Patience. Think what it is to have a boy like yours! Enough to drive one mad, with his monkey tricks and his impudence. I don't say that I regret taking you in. Blood is thicker than water, and you are my poor father's child, though he had cause to rue the day he married your silly mother—he never had a day's peace after that."

Such sentiments, expressed with freedom and without intermission, were a trial in themselves; but lately things had assumed a far more serious aspect.

Jack had been a mere baby when first he and his mother had been taken in by Miss Pinckney. But eleven years had changed the baby of two years old into a strong, self-willed boy of thirteen, impatient of control, setting all his aunt's rules at defiance, and coming in from school every day, more antagonistic, and more determined, as he said, to "pay the old auntie back in her own coin."

In vain Mrs. Harrison had remonstrated; in vain she had striven to keep the peace. For ever before her eyes was the dread that Jack would carry his oft-repeated threat into execution, and go to sea. Then, indeed, the light of her stricken life would finally go from her, and she would have nothing left to live for!

Jack was a boy likely, in spite of all his faults, to fill a mother's heart with pride. He was the picture of merry, happy boyhood, with a high spirit, which was like a horse without a bridle, and carried him away beyond all bounds of tongue and temper. But to his mother he could be gentle and penitent, acknowledging his faults, and showing real sorrow at having grieved her by warfare with his aunt. There was an excellent boys' school in Yarmouth, where he made good progress with his lessons, and was a favourite with his school-fellows; and the master, though often irritated by his tricks and carelessness, found it hard to be angry with him, or to inflict the punishment he deserved.

It is possible that Jack would have been able to get on more peaceably at home, had there not been another person frequently at his aunt's home with whom he waged a perpetual warfare. This person was a tall, meagre-looking young man, a clerk in an Excise office, who made great profession of being better than his neighbours.

He was always coming into Miss Pinckney's to tea or supper, and invariably, when listening to the aunt's stories of Jack's misdemeanours, talked of the bad end to which naughty boys were brought, and of the sins of disobedience bringing their sure reward.

Mr. Skinner had the disagreeable habit of uttering truths in the most unpleasant manner. A great deal that he said was correct; but somehow his words seemed to have no effect on those whom he addressed. There was a dash of unreality about Mr. Skinner, and a certain want of candour, which Jack's eyes were quick to detect.

He suspected that Mr. Skinner came to Miss Pinckney's "for what he could get," that he liked a chair by her fire in the back parlour, and that the glass of hot gin and water, sweetened to his taste, with a bit of lemon floating on the top, was his grand attraction.

The smell of this glass of spirit and water was odious to Jack; and he naturally felt aggrieved, when on one occasion Mr. Skinner, coming in to tea, devoured the whole plate of hot buttered toast or muffins, and talked of the duty of thankfulness, and how much more any of us had than we deserved—Jack meantime having slices of very stale bread scraped with a little salt butter. The contrast between his own share of the fare and Mr. Skinner's was sufficiently provoking. Then too of late Jack had been conscious that both Mr. Skinner and his aunt had been doing their best to bring his mother round to their view—that he was "the worse-behaved and most ill-conditioned boy that ever lived."

That last great outbreak of temper, when he had rushed off, and left his mother to pass a sleepless and tearful night, had been caused not so much by the shower of reproaches heaped on him, as by his aunt's bitter words: "If you go on like this, you'll break your mother's heart. Even she is getting sick of you, and you would be a good riddance!"

He knew well enough it was not true. He knew that if all the world were against him, his mother would never give him up. But, stung to the quick, he had poured out a torrent of angry words; and addressing his aunt as "an old cat, who shouldn't have the chance of setting her claws into him again!" he had rushed off and left his mother miserable.

As soon as the house was quiet and Miss Pinckney's long tirade against "spoilt wicked boys" had ceased, Patience Harrison had crept downstairs again, and, slipping the bolt off the door, had taken up her position there. And there George Paterson had found her, pale and worn with sleepless sorrow, and with an aching sense of loss which was well-nigh hopeless.

CHAPTER III.

"AN HONEST BOY."

When little Miss Joy had tripped across the row to her own door, Mrs. Harrison had gone into the house.

The shutters were being taken down from several of the windows, blinds were drawn up, doors opened, and the row was waking to life and the business of life.

Mrs. Harrison went about her usual work of clearing up and dusting and sweeping, and about half-past six she called a boy from one of the opposite houses to take down the shutters of the little shop front.

The boy looked wistfully at her sad face, and asked, "Is Jack ill, please, ma'am?"

"No, not ill," she answered, unwilling to spread the news that he had run away; "not ill; but I am up early."

The boy asked no further question, but said to himself, "Something is up; and here comes Mr. Paterson!"

"Have you found him?" Patience asked, under her breath. "Any news? Any news?"

George passed into the house, for he did not wish to excite observation.

"No—no direct news; but I hear some ships got under weigh about three o'clock. The tide served, and it is just likely that the boy is aboard one. Don't you think me unfeeling now if I say, it is just as well he should go; he may learn a lesson you couldn't teach him."

"The same story, the same trial over again! Oh, how can I bear it?" Patience said, in a voice that filled the honest heart of George Paterson with deep pity and almost deeper pain.

"Well," he said, "this wrangling here was bad for all parties. The boy was always in hot water."

"Because she was so cross-grained—because she hated him. Oh, I cannot, cannot bear to think of it!"

"Pray," said a sharp, shrill voice from the bottom step of the very narrow staircase which led into the still narrower passage, "pray, what is all this about?"

"Jack never came home last night," Patience said in a voice of repressed emotion. "He never came home. He is gone, and I shall never see him again."

"Oh, fiddlesticks!" was the reply. "Bad pennies always turn up. I never knew one in my life that was lost. Mark my words, you have not seen the last of him—worse luck."

"That's not a very pleasant way to talk, Miss Pinckney: you'll excuse me for saying so," said Mr. Paterson. "The boy was a good boy on the whole."

"A good boy!" Miss Pinckney was screaming now. "Well, George Paterson, your ideas of goodness and mine differ. You may please to take yourself off now, for I've no time to spend in gossip;" and Miss Pinckney began her operations by flapping with a duster the counter of the shop, and taking from the drawers certain boxes of small articles in which she dealt.

While she was thus engaged, she suddenly stopped short, and uttered an exclamation of horror, turning a white face to her sister, who was listening to the few words of comfort George had to bestow. "Look here!" she exclaimed; "look here! The secret's out. The little tin cash-box is gone, and the thief is out of reach. What do you say to your good boy now, eh, George Paterson?"

George Paterson took one step into the shop, and said—

"How do you know he took it? He is the last boy I could think of as a thief."

"Of course. Oh, he is a perfect boy—a good boy! I only wish he had never darkened my doors—the young villain!"

"Hush, now Miss Pinckney. Calm yourself, and let us have a look for the box. Where was it put?"

"Why, in the drawer, to be sure, under the counter. I keep the key of the drawer in my key basket. I always locked it—always. He got the key and opened it. There was four pounds and odd money in it—close on five pounds."

"I am certain," said Patience, "Jack did not steal your money, sister Amelia." Poor Patience was calm now. "It is impossible," she continued. "He was—he was as honest as the day, and as true as gold."

"All that's very fine—very fine indeed. He stole the money, and made off. If he didn't, who did?"

Patience stood wondering for a few moments, going over all that day—that last day. Jack had been at school and out till nearly tea-time; then he had sat with his books till supper; and then came the uproar with his aunt, and he had rushed away—straight out of the house. He could not have stopped in the shop on the way; besides, a plot must have been laid to get the key. It was impossible Jack could be guilty.

She looked at George, and read in his face deep sympathy, and also read there a reassuring smile.

"No," he said. "Whoever is the thief, Jack is innocent. Circumstances may be against him—his running off to sea, and his passion-fit against you—but I believe him to be innocent. You had better leave things as you found them, and I'll call in a policeman. There'll be one on his beat at the end of the row by this time. It is right and just all proper inquiries should be made."

The policeman—a stolid, sober individual, who never wasted words—came at George Paterson's bidding, and looked with a professional eye at the drawer whence the money had been abstracted.

"Box and all gone! That's queer. Key of box fastened to it by a string. Humph! Any servant in the house?"

"No."

"Boy that cleans up and takes down the shutters, eh?"

"No—that is—my nephew was in the house, and," said Miss Pinckney with emphasis, "he ran off to sea last night."

The policeman gave a prolonged "Ah!"

Then he proceeded to examine the lock of the drawer.

"Where's the key?"

"Here, in my key basket. I lock the drawer the last thing, and lock the shop-door myself. You know that, Patience. Speak up."

"Yes, I know it—I know it."

"Well, there seems no certain clue," the policeman said, twisting the key of the drawer round and round in the lock.

"There's this clue," Miss Pinckney said; "my nephew who ran off to sea stole the box. He and I had quarrelled a bit, for he was the most impudent and trying young vagabond. If you wish to know my thoughts, policeman, they are that he took the cash-box."

"There's no proof. We must have proof. But there's suspicion. We must try to track the youngster, find out what ship he sailed in; and when she comes into port, why, we'll keep an eye on the little chap."

The policeman had no more to say just then, and departed, saying to George, who shouldered his tools and followed him, "I know the boy. A sharp one, isn't he?"

"An honest one, if ever an honest boy lived," was the rejoinder, as George Paterson strode away.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS OWN WAY.

Jack Harrison had no fixed purpose when he rushed out of his aunt's house, except to get away from the sound of her angry words, and from the sight of his mother's grieved face—that face, which bore the marks of so many storms, and which he loved better than any other in the world.

"I had better go," he reasoned with himself. "I may make a fortune. Suppose I go aboard a whaling ship, as my father did. I won't go aboard a smack or trawler; I should not care for that life—handling fish, and out all weathers, north of the Dogger trawling—no, that would not pay, but a good ship would; and I'll take a look round the quay as soon as it's light."

Jack had found the convenient shelter of an old boat on the beach, and there he curled himself up and fell asleep.

He was awake by feeling something touching his face, and starting up, just distinguished in the dim light the shape of a dog, which began to whine piteously, and licked his hands.

"What, are you lost, or run away like me?" he asked. "Have you been treated ill, eh?"

Jack was now thoroughly awake, and crept out of his shelter on to the soft sand, which almost gave way under his feet.

The dog continued whining and jumping on him, and seemed to want to show him the way to some place.

"What do ye want, eh? I can't make you out," Jack said; but in the light of the strengthening dawn which was breaking over the sea he saw a dark mass of something at some distance on the sand, and towards this the dog was evidently trying to guide him.

There was not a creature to be seen on the level strand, and no sound but the gentle murmur of the tide just turning. Presently, however, another sound made Jack pause and listen.

The dog heard it also, and grew more and more frantic in his efforts to lead Jack on.

When he got near the dark mass, Jack found it was the figure of a man, and that the sounds came from him, for he was groaning and crying as if in great pain. The dog ran to him, and leaping on his prostrate figure, and then back again to Jack, showed that the place to which he had to bring him was reached. As plainly as a dog could speak, he was saying, "Help my master."

Jack bent down over the man, and said—

"What's the matter? Are you hurt?"

"Yes, I've sprained my leg; and if I don't get to the quay by four o'clock I am ruined. I'm mate of the *Galatea*. Look alive and help me to the ship; it's all right when I'm there, for the captain is a jolly fellow—but oh, this leg!—all along of my catching my foot in a net. Toby here and I were coming along the beach from my old step-mother's, over t'other side of the Monument, and I fell, and must have twisted my foot as I fell on that big stone. Now, I say, will you help me to limp to the quay? Doubt if I can do it, but I'll try all the same."

The light was momentarily increasing now, and as Jack bent over the man to take his arm and pull him into a sitting posture, he saw a sad, pensive face turned up to him. Evidently the impression that was mentally made was a good one, for the man said—

"Where are you off to, young un?"

"To see if I can get aboard any ship, and work my passage."

"Whew!—oh!—here, wait a bit, my boy; I must ask the Lord to help me. I have been crying and groaning like a baby; that won't do. No, Dick Colley, you mustn't be a coward. Pain! well, what's pain! Toby there would bear it better!"

After a moment's silence the man said—

"Now, heave-to, my boy, and I'll put down the right leg, and make you answer for the left. Ahoy! ahoy!"

The "ahoy" was nearly a groan again, and then there was a muttered oath.

"Did ye hear that, boy? That's the hardest job a man has to do—to cure himself of cursing. It's worse than drinking. I've been hard at it for a twelvemonth now, and I'm blessed if I ain't beaten over and over again. This pain will— Don't you think, boy, I consider it a fine thing to swear, and take the Lord's name in vain. I think it is a shame to do it—and I beg Him to forgive me the next minute. It's just this—that habits, bad or good, stick like a leech. Now then, ahoy!"

This time Dick Colley was fairly on his feet, and by the support of Jack's strong shoulder progress towards the quay was made.

It was slow and difficult, and Toby followed close to his master's side with a dejected air, his stubby tail between his legs, giving every now and then a little whine of sympathy.

"I am hard put to it, lad, to get along. I am feeling faintish and bad; but I can't afford to lose this voyage; it's a long one, and good pay, and I've an old mother and a pack of children to keep."

"Rest a bit," said Jack. "Here's a post will do."

"Ay; I dare say I'm pretty near breaking your shoulder-blade. I shan't forget you, youngster. I say, what's up? mischief, eh?"

"I want to be off to sea just for a bit. Will you take me?"

"Well, I must go aboard first, before I can promise. Now then, on we go."

The quay was reached at last, and it was now broad daylight.

The stately ships were all getting under weigh, and there was no bustle or noise. The cargoes had been shipped overnight, and there was only a silent waiting for the tide.

"Here she is; here's my berth. You help me aboard, and we'll see what can be done."

"Dick Colley, the mate, as sure as I'm alive!" said one of the crew, who was turning a loose cable round and round into a coil of many circles. "Why, old chappie, what's amiss with 'ee?"

"Give us a hand aboard. I've been and sprained my ankle. This youngster helped me along, or I'd never have got here."

"You are just in time, mate; for we are off to the river's mouth in a twinkling. Here, why, look alive! he's awful bad."

With Jack's help they got Dick Colley on board and down below, where the ship's surgeon bandaged the swollen ankle, and Jack stood by with Toby.

In the general hurry of departure, when the captain gave the word, no one noticed Jack, or if they noticed him, concluded that he was aboard the *Galatea* as a passenger, of which there were a few.

It was not till they were well out to sea that the captain, coming down into the mate's berth, said—

"Hallo, Colley! who's the youngster aboard with the curly hair? What's he about?"

"He wants to work his way out, captain; set him to it. I promised I'd say a word for him. He just helped me across the sand, when I was pretty near dying of the pain. You'll let him stay?"

The captain turned on his heel, somewhat sulkily.

"Do you suppose he's to do the work of your lame foot, eh? Well, he hasn't come here to eat the bread of idleness. I'll soon show him that."

And the captain kept his word.

Long before the sun—which had risen in a cloudless sky that morning—had set behind a bank of clouds, Jack was put to work.

Washing the decks and performing other like offices fell to his share on that first bright day, when to sail over the blue calm sea, with the crisp air blowing from the great German Ocean, was a pleasant sensation in itself.

But night came on, and the stars looked down from their immeasurable depths; and Jack, lying on a bench, with his arms folded, and his face resting on them, had time to think.

He had done it now. Often, when in a storm of passion he had said he would leave his aunt's roof for ever, he had relented, and even at his mother's instigation and entreaty had expressed sorrow for his burst of anger, and asked to be forgiven.

He had done this only a fortnight before, and his aunt had received his apology with a short—

"It's all very well to think by saying you are sorry you make it all right. It's deeds not words, for me."

This ungracious manner of receiving an expression of contrition had often hardened the boy's heart against his aunt. Still more so when, from the other side of the parlour, Mr. Skinner would say, in a nasal, squeaky voice—

"It's a wonder to me how your kind, generous aunt puts up with you for a single hour. Only a good woman like her would give you house room at all."

"What business is it of yours, I should like to know?" had been Jack's retort; and all the real sorrow he had felt, awakened by his mother's gentle words, had vanished.

That Skinner! How he hated him; how instinctively he turned from him with positive dislike and loathing.

Now, as he lay alone and unnoticed beneath the star-strewn sky of the summer night, it was not of Skinner that he thought, not of his aunt, not of anything he had suffered—but of his mother.

And he had left her without a word—without a kiss! Many and many a time had he felt her kiss upon his forehead as he was sinking off into the sound sleep of childhood. Many a time he had heard her whispered prayer as she knelt by his side; and now he had left her desolate!

"Joy will be there," Jack thought—"little Miss Joy, and she will comfort her—dear little Joy!"

And somehow, as all these memories of those he had left behind him came before him, tears rose all unbidden, and chased each other down his cheeks.

Presently a rough kick from a man's boot made him start.

"The mate is singing out for you, youngster," he said; "get along with you and go where you are wanted, for you ain't wanted here."

"Where's the mate?"

"Where, stupid? In his berth, a groaning and sighing. There ain't much the matter with him, that's my belief; only some folks can afford to make a fuss."

Jack drew himself together and walked towards the companion ladder. As he was putting his foot on it with the cautious air of the uninitiated, a rude push from behind, followed by a derisive laugh, sent him down to the bottom with a heavy thud.

"Shame!" cried a voice, "to treat the boy like that."

"Oh, he will be one of Colley's lambs, canting no end, you'll see! For my own part, I'd soon chuck him overboard."

"I know you are spiteful enough for anything," was the reply; "and I pity that boy if he's in your clutches."

Another laugh, and Jack, now on his feet, turned round with a defiant air, and, half-stunned and bewildered, was climbing up the stairs again, to give his adversary a blow with his fist, when a voice called—

"Stop, lad! don't go and give evil for evil."

Colley from his berth had seen Jack fall, and had heard the mocking laugh.

"Come here, lad. I'm a bit easier now, and I want to talk to you. There, sit down on my locker, and we'll spin a yarn. You've run away, haven't you? I was so mad with pain, or I should have talked to you before. Come, you've run away now?"

"Yes," the boy said.

"Then you've been and acted very foolish, let me tell you. I did the same, boy, and I've repented it all my life. I grieved the best of old fathers by my wild career, and then I ran off; and when we put into port after the first voyage, I went to the old place to find him dead. Now, how do you think I felt? Why, ready to kill myself with remorse. What if you find your mother dead, when we put into port again? Now look here, boy. You've done me a good turn, and I'll do you one. I'll get the captain to put you ashore, if you choose, and I'll put a few shillings in your pocket to get back home. Do you hear?"

"Yes," Jack said, "I hear; but I am in for it now, and I had better stick to it. I should only make more trouble by going back. That old aunt, who made my life miserable, would only be worse than ever. No, sir, thank you; I'll go on, and I must put up with it."

"Lie on the bed you've made for yourself, lad? Ah, that's a precious uneasy one! I'd like to tell you how I made mine, and I will some day; but now you'd better turn in, there's the watch on deck, telling midnight."

"Where am I to turn in?" Jack asked.

"There's an empty hammock close by. Climb up there, and sleep till I call you. There isn't much sleep for me. Good-night."

Jack found it no easy matter to climb into the hammock. Like everything else, it requires practice; he took off his boots and made attempts to clamber up, but failed each time.

"You young cur, what are you about?" called a gruff voice. "Can't you turn in without waking a fellow from his sleep? Get along with you;" and a leg was thrust out, which gave Jack a very emphatic kick.

At last he gave up the attempt, and taking off his jacket he made a pillow of it, and curled himself up on the deck.

The motion of the ship began to be more decided, for just at dawn a fresh breeze sprung up, and the *Galatea* curtsied on the crest of the waves, and the water made a splash against her sides. Jack was rolled against a locker, and found sleep impossible.

The sailor who had grumbled at his disturbing him by his unsuccessful attempt to get into his berth, turned out at three o'clock, to relieve the watch on deck, and stumbling over Jack exclaimed—

"You baby bunting! So you can't get to your berth! I'll teach you!" And taking Jack roughly by one arm and leg, he tossed him as if he had been a feather into the hammock, and said—

"Lie there till you are wanted, and be thankful you've got there!"

There is a certain rule which I think has seldom an exception, though I know we say that all rules *have* an exception to prove their truth. But it is seldom indeed that we see the rule departed from, that "as a man soweth so shall he reap."

We all of us prove its truth at one time or other of our lives. "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption"; and many a bitter tear of self-reproach is caused by the crop our own hands have sown, when we took *our own way*, and turned from His way, "who gave us an example that we should follow in His steps."

CHAPTER V.

A TEA-PARTY IN THE ROW.

The hot summer days passed by in the Row, and the inhabitants took advantage of the long evenings to go down to the beach and pier, and listen to the bands playing merry tunes, and watch the gaily-dressed people who frequent Yarmouth in the season.

Little Miss Joy was drooping somewhat with the heat, for the summer was one of rather unusual warmth. But though she was quieter, and her voice was not so often heard singing like a bird from her high window opposite Mrs. Harrison's, still she did not get dull or cross. "My Sunbeam!" her old friend called her; and there was nothing he liked better than to sit at his door, after business hours, while Joy talked to him or read him a story. She went to a little day-school in the market-place, and was, in old Mr. Boyd's opinion, a wonderful scholar.

Joy had many things to tell of her school-fellows, and there was one who use to excite her tender pity and her love.

Bertha Skinner was a tall, angular girl of fourteen, who was the butt of the school, often in tears, always submissive to taunts, and never resenting unkindness. That little Miss Joy should choose this untaking girl as her friend was the cause of much discontent and surprise in Miss Bayliff's little "seminary for young ladies." No one could understand it, and little Miss Joy was questioned in vain.

"Such an ugly, stupid girl, always dressed like a fright, and she can't add two and two together. I wonder you speak to her, Joy."

But Uncle Bobo, though confessing that he was surprised at Joy's taste, had a faint notion of the reason she had for her preference.

"It's like my little Joy," he said; "it's just out of the kindness of her heart. She thinks the girl neglected, and so she takes her up, bless her!"

"May I ask poor Bet to spend Thursday afternoon with me, Uncle Bobo?" Joy asked one hot August morning as she was ready for school. "May I, please? It's early closing day, and we have a half-holiday. Dear Goody Patience says she will take us to the sands, and perhaps Jim Curtis may give us a row. I *should* like that."

"Well, I have no objection, my pretty one; the poor thing has no treats!"

"Treats! Oh, Uncle Bobo, she is miserable! Her grandmother is so sharp, and tells her she is a useless fright, and things like that. And then there's her Uncle Joe, he is horrid!"

Mr. Boyd laughed.

"Ah, ah! Miss Pinckney's suitor; he isn't very nice, I must say."

"Suitor, Uncle Bobo; what's a suitor?"

"You'll know time enough, my dear, time enough. You'll have a score of them, I dare say; and I hope not one of them will be like Master Skinner, that's all. He's like one of the lean kine you read to me about last Sunday in the Bible. But leanness is no sin; p'r'aps he'll get fatter by-and-by."

Little Miss Joy was mystified, and repeated to herself, and then aloud:

"Does suitor mean the same as 'young man' and 'lover,' I wonder?"

"Bless the child's innocence! Yes, my dear, you've got it now."

"But, Uncle Bobo, could an old, old lady like Miss Pinckney have a suitor?"

"Oh, yes, my dear, yes! She set her cap at me once. She is—well—not much short of fifty; that's a girl, you know. All are girls till they marry; old girls, we call them!"

"But my dear Goody Patience is ever so much younger, and oh! she said last night, 'I don't feel as if I was ever young, or a girl,' and then she looked so sad."

"Ah! my dear, she has had a sight of trouble, has poor Mrs. Harrison. First, her husband making off, leaving a good business—a very good business here, as a master of a lot of herring boats, with a share in one of the big curing houses where the bloaters are the best to be had in the trade. But my young man must needs be off whaling, and never came back again. Poor Patience! It's a sad story. For my part, I wish she would call herself a widow and have done with it. There's some one ready enough to make her a happy wife."

"Really, Mr. Boyd, if I was you I would not put such nonsense into the child's head," said the good old servant. She had lived behind the little dark shop for some thirty years, and now came forward into the light, blinking as an owl might blink in the bright rays of the August sun, which at this time of day at this time of year penetrates the narrow row and shines right down into it.

"Yes, I say it's nonsense to put into the child's head. Run off, my dear; run off."

"And I may ask Bet Skinner to come to tea, and dear Goody too; and you'll buy a plum-roll and cheese-cakes for a treat. Will you, Uncle Bobo?"

"Yes, my dear; I'll make a feast, see if I don't; and we'll have a good time."

"Tea on the leads, tea upstairs, Uncle Bobo."

Uncle Bobo nodded; and Joy ran off gaily with her invitation ready for poor Bertha.

Uncle Bobo was as good as his word, and on Thursday morning sallied forth early to the confectioner's shop at the end of the row, and returned with a variety of paper bags stuffed full of cakes, and chucking them across the counter to Susan, said—

"Spread the tea up aloft, as the child wishes it; it's cool up there, and plenty of air."

Tea on the leads may not seem to many who read my story a very enchanting prospect, but to little Joy it was like tea in Paradise!

The houses of the rows had many of them flat roofs behind the gables, which faced those opposite, and here flowers were cultivated by those who cared to do so, linen was hung out to dry, and in one or two instances pet doves cooed, or poor caged thrushes sang their prison song.

Susan grumbled not a little at carrying up the provisions; but the boy Peter was pressed into the service, and Uncle Bobo brought up an old flag, which Peter tied to a pole, and set up to wave its rather faded colours over the feast.

While these preparations were being made, Mrs. Harrison, and little Joy, and Bertha Skinner were on their way to the beach to watch the pleasure-boats pulling off with the visitors, and the children making their sand-castles and houses, and paddling in the pools the sea had left. The tide was ebbing, and wide patches of yellow sand were separated from the beach by streams of water; sea-weeds threw out their pink feathery fronds, and shells of many varied colours lay beneath.

Mrs. Harrison sat down, leaning her back against a boat, and the children ran down to the water's edge.

The wife and mother was sad at heart; not one word from Jack—not one word. She looked

across the boundless sea, and thought how it had taken from her the husband of her youth, and the boy who was the light of her eyes. Why was she so tried? Why was her trouble always to be, as it were, in one direction, her position always suspense, always uncertainty, always waiting and watching, and dreading what news might come at last?

George Paterson was a ship's carpenter, and well known along the coast and on the quay. He had made every inquiry, but could not get any direct tidings of Jack.

Several ships had sailed early that fine morning—the *Galatea*, for Constantinople; the *Siren*, for a Norwegian port; the *Mermaid*, for Genoa; but no one had any recollection of noticing a boy go aboard. Indeed, there were but few people who could have seen him, for few were stirring at that early hour, except those who were obliged to be at their post at sea or on shore, and they were probably too much engrossed with their own concerns to heed him, even if he had been seen.

Patience had borne up bravely under this last sorrow. In some ways Jack's absence was a relief—she had been always treading, as it were, on the edge of a volcano, that might send up fire and smoke at any time.

We all know what a strain it is upon body and mind to be always seeking for peace, while those around us make themselves ready for battle; and the terror at every meal that there would be a scene between Jack and his aunt, with the effort to prevent it, had been a perpetual strain upon Mrs. Harrison. At least that fear and dread were taken from her, and her heart said—

"If only I knew he was well and happy I should be glad to know that he was gone away from so much that jarred and fretted him; but it is the silence and the terrible suspicion they raise that he was a thief that overwhelms me sometimes."

As these thoughts were passing through Mrs. Harrison's mind George Paterson came up; he had been watching her and the children for some minutes, and the sympathy for the poor deserted wife and mother filled his honest blue eyes with tears.

All the gay people about her—the singing of a large party which filled one of the pleasure-boats, the bustle and activity everywhere—seemed to force upon George Paterson the painful contrast between the glad and happy and the sad and deeply-tried woman, whom he loved better than anything in the wide world. Oh that she would let him comfort her, take her to a pleasant home on the Gorlestone Road, with a garden full of flowers, and where peace and plenty reigned!

But George loved Patience too well to weary her with importunity. He would never add a straw's weight to her care by undue persistence in urging his suit.

"Well," he said, pointing to Joy and her companion, "they seem happy enough. It's odd that little Miss Joy should choose for her friend that untaking niece of Joe Skinner's. She is very like him—just as unwholesome-looking and sly too."

"Poor girl! She has a melancholy time of it at home, so Joy tells me. It is just like her to take pity on one who is not cared for."

"I dare say. She is a little darling, and no mistake!"

"This is early-closing day, and a half-holiday at Joy's school—that is why we are out pleasuring. We are to have tea on the leads at Mr. Boyd's. Will you come with us? for we ought to be getting back. I promised Amelia I would be in at six o'clock, as she wants to go walking with Mr. Skinner."

"Well, she had better stay at home, that's certain. That fellow is a rogue, if ever there was one!"

Mrs. Harrison was silent for a moment; then she said quietly, "I have no reason to love him, for he helped to drive my boy out of the house."

"No doubt he did; and—I hardly like to say what I think—but I believe he made a plot about that money-box."

"Oh! I have often thought so, and put away the thought as wrong and wicked."

"We'll speak plain English for once," George Paterson said. "That man means to marry your sister, and get hold of all she possesses."

"Oh, George! Amelia is close on fifty, and Mr. Skinner can't be much over thirty."

"That does not matter; the same thing is done every day. Don't we see great folks setting the example, and ladies of any age marrying young fellows who want their money? You may depend upon it, Skinner has this in his little sly eye. Well, I shan't do him any good by abusing him, nor myself neither; so I'll have done."

"Not a word from Jack," Mrs. Harrison sighed out—"not a word."

"If he is off on a long voyage, as he may be, I never thought you would have a word. You must wait till Christmas for news."

"Till Christmas! Ah! those were his father's last words—'I'll be back by Christmas;' and how many Christmases have come and gone since that day, and never a word—never a sign."

"The dead cannot give either words or signs," George said; and then, as he saw Patience cover her face with her hands, he was sorry that he had uttered what was an obvious truth, and added gently—

"If your husband had been alive he would come or write, for he loved you; and how can any man who loved *you* forget or change?"

Patience did not reply, and little Miss Joy, having caught sight of George Paterson, came springing towards him.

"Oh! I have got some beautiful shells," she said—"such a big one. Put it to your ear, and listen to the sound of the sea. And Bet has got one too. Come, Bet, and show it."

Bet advanced slowly and awkwardly, her angular shoulders nearly touching her ears, her rough sandy hair gathered into a little knot at the back of her head, on which a very shabby brown hat was set on one side.

Bertha had the cringing, deprecating manner of an ill-used dog. No one liked her, no one cared for her, and she was fully alive to the fact. Only sweet little Miss Joy ever said a kind and pleasant word to her, and her devotion to this merry child filled her whole soul. She dare not show it; she dare not lavish any of the ordinary endearments upon her. She saw the other girls at Miss Bayliff's kiss and fondle her; she heard her praised and admired; she saw little gifts showered upon her—but she did none of these things. Poor Bertha's was a blind and dumb worship for one who smiled at her when others frowned, who could seek her society when others shunned it, and could encourage her with her tasks—so far below her age—when others called her a dunce and an idiot.

The tea on the leads was a great success; although, to be sure, a few black tokens from a neighbouring chimney peppered the cakes, and one or two danced into Mr. Boyd's large breakfast-cup full of tea. Before tea was over, however, the shop-door bell was heard to ring furiously, and Susan, who had been invited to her share of the feast, trudged down, to trudge back, breathless and indignant, after a few minutes' absence, saying—

"Miss Pinckney can't give no one any rest. She is wanting you, Mrs. Harrison, to go and keep the house, as she is off with Mr. Skinner. I shouldn't hurry now if I was you. Let her wait, Mrs. Harrison."

"No; I promised to go back by six o'clock."

"Saint Nicholas clock has not struck yet," said Uncle Bobo. "Don't you hurry, Mrs. Harrison, for we must have a song before we part—eh, my Joy?"

"If you please, Uncle Bobo, let it be 'Tom Bowling.'"

Whereupon Mr. Boyd began to groan forth in not very dulcet tones the familiar song and strain, beginning—

"Here, a sheer-hulk, lies poor Tom Bowling."

Mr. Boyd's voice had not been very musical in youth, and now the sounds seemed to come more from his boots than from his lips. But Joy was a delighted listener. Then she followed with one of Mrs. Alexander's "hymns for little children," and as she sang, in her sweet childish treble, the words seemed to speak peace.

"On the dark hill's western side
The last purple gleam has died;
Twilight to one solemn hue
Changes all, both green and blue.

"In the fold and in the nest,
Birds and lambs are gone to rest;
Labour's weary task is o'er,
Closely shut the cottage door.

"Saviour, now in sweet repose
I my weary eyelids close,
While my mother through the gloom
Singeth from the outer room."

Joy paused, and putting her little hand in Mrs. Harrison's, said—

"I have never any mother but you, dear Goody; and I know she must be glad I've got you, as God took her away from me."

It was very seldom that Joy referred to her position in Uncle Bobo's house, and indeed very seldom that she thought of it. She had been told that she had been laid at Uncle Bobo's door as a Christmas gift, and that had been enough for her. But since she had been to Miss Bayliff's school there had arisen a question in her little mind as to why she had never known either father or mother—a question no one could answer.

The bell ringing again more violently than before made Mrs. Harrison hasten away, and she had just gone when the clock struck six.

"I should like to take Bet home, Uncle Bobo. That will be such a nice end to our feast. Will you come?"

Uncle Bobo was not fond of walking, but he never liked to refuse Joy anything, and very soon he might be seen toddling along the row, with his short, stout legs, and rosy apple face, singing out a cheery "Good-evening" to such neighbours as were about, and taking Joy's little hand in his, while she danced at his side. Presently she let go her hold on Uncle Bobo's hand, and said in a low voice—

"I think I'd better walk with poor Bet, Uncle Bobo. She looks so sad walking behind us."

"So do, my Joy, so do. You've a kind little heart, and may no one ever say a cross word to you, or do an unkind action."

Joy fell back with a radiant smile, and, putting her hand into Bet's arm, drew her on in front.

CHAPTER VI.

A VISIT TO THE SKINNERS.

Mr. Skinner was very like his mother. No one could mistake that they bore this relationship.

Some old age is lovely—radiant with the chastened light of eventide. Mrs. Skinner's was certainly unlovely. Tall and spare, with sharp pinched features, and thin pitiless lips, from which very few kindly words had ever fallen, and where a smile was almost unknown—she was an almost friendless woman. She who had never rendered a neighbour a kindly service neither expected nor received any from others. She had the reputation of being a cross-grained old woman, who had driven her only daughter away by her unkindness, and had spent what love she had upon her two sons, who suited her in many ways far better than her daughter. The youngest of these—Bertha's father—had married a woman much older than himself, and Bertha was his orphan child, her mother having died at her birth. She had been taken to live with her grandmother, at the dying wish of her father: what maternal affection she possessed responded to this last request of her youngest son, and Bertha had known no other home.

It was a home, as far as the shelter of a roof and food and clothing went; and the education of Miss Bayliff's school, given somewhat grudgingly, was to be granted till Bertha was fifteen.

"*Then* she must work for her living," Mrs. Skinner had said; "and," she added, "few people would have done what *I* have done."

"A great deal too much!" Joe would say when his mother indulged in this self-congratulation—"a great deal too much; and I, for one, don't approve of this girl being nursed in idleness; it was the ruin of Maggie."

Mrs. Skinner winced a little at the name; for Maggie had disappeared, and no trace could be found of her.

She had been, so those who remembered her said, of a very different type to her family, as if she had dropped down from the clouds into it.

That was long ago now, but the people who could look back some years in the neighbourhood where Mrs. Skinner lived could remember this bright, gay girl disappearing, and the mother's reply to any inquiry—

"I know nothing about her, nor do I wish to know. She has been and made her bed, and she must lie on it."

Report said that Maggie had married against her mother's wish, and that she had literally turned her out of her house. This was about all that was ever heard, and nothing was really known. Any attempt to question Mrs. Skinner was met by a sharp rebuff, and very few people, even the boldest, dare approach her even with an attempt to find out what she chose to keep secret.

Mrs. Skinner and her son Joe lived in a detached red brick house, built long before villas with bay windows and gabled roofs, and little dormer windows in them, were thought of. It was a straight little house, with a window on each side of the door, and three above it, a lean-to at the back, and a square of garden in front. The path to the door was of pebbles, and they always made a disagreeable crunching sound as the feet of any comers to the house walked over them. That was not often; and the little iron gate grated on its hinges, it was so seldom opened, as Mr. Boyd pushed it back to admit the two girls.

"No, no," Uncle Bobo had said, in answer to Joy's entreaty. "I'll just walk across to that bench and wait for you, my Joy. I don't fancy the old lady, and she doesn't fancy me. So ta-ta!"

Mr. Boyd toddled across the bit of sandy road to a bank mound of sand, covered with long pointed grass, which hid the view of the sea from the lower window of Mrs. Skinner's house, and sitting down on a wooden seat, resigned himself to patient waiting.

Bertha crept slowly up to the door, and seemed half afraid to make her coming known.

She turned the bright brass handle of the door, but it was locked.

"We must go in by the back door; p'raps grandmother won't mind."

"Are you afraid to go in, Bet?"

"Well, grandmother is very particular; she isn't like Mr. Boyd."

"Do you mean," said Joy, "that you would rather I didn't come in? Oh, then I will run back to Uncle Bobo! Good-bye, Bertha."

"No, no, I didn't mean that," said Bertha, much distressed. "I—I—"

As she was hesitating the door was opened, and Mrs. Skinner's tall figure filled the narrow entrance. She stood without saying a word for a moment, and then, in a harsh, discordant voice, she asked—"Who is *that*?"

"If you please, ma'am, I am Joy. I go to school with Bertha, and she has been home to tea with me and Uncle Bobo, and I have brought her back."

"She does not want bringing," was the sharp reply; "she can bring herself, I suppose. Go round to the back door, will you?"

"I think I had better *not*," Joy said with emphasis, "because you do not wish me to come into your house."

Mrs. Skinner had been standing motionless at the door while Joy was speaking, and there was a strange expression on her sharp thin features.

"Where do you say you live, child?"

"I live with Uncle Bobo, in the row, opposite Miss Pinckney and Mrs. Harrison. Miss Pinckney keeps the milliner's shop, where the widows' caps hang up."

"I know," was the reply; "I never bought any article there, and I never mean to. Well, you may run round with Bertha for a few minutes."

"Thank you," Joy said. "I hope you'll let Bet come to tea again; and if you'd like to come too, I am sure Uncle Bobo wouldn't mind."

"I don't spend *my* time gadding about taking tea with folks. I leave that to drones, who've got nothing better to do. Did you say, child, you lived with Boyd, at the instrument shop?"

"Yes, ma'am; he's my uncle."

Mrs. Skinner turned away, and then the door was shut with a sharp bang, and the two girls were left outside.

"I don't think I'll come in, Bet," little Miss Joy said; "for your grandmother does not like me—she looks so cross."

"She always looks like that," Bertha said; and then she added, "Every one but you is cross to me; you are always kind. Oh, I do love you!"

Then Bet's cheeks, after making this declaration, were suffused with blushes, which made her poor sallow face a dark purplish-red.

"Do come in a moment—*do*," she said.

The two girls went in at the back door, and along a narrow stone passage.

The door on the right was open, and Bet said, in a low whisper—

"There's Uncle Joe's room. There's where he sits at night, and I hear people coming in, 'cause my window is one in the lean-to."

Uncle Joe's proceedings had not much interest for Joy, and she just looked round the room standing on the threshold, and said—

"What a big table for such a wee little room, covered with green cloth, and what funny little boxes! They are like the big hour-glass in Uncle Bobo's glass case. It's not a pretty room at all," she said decidedly. "Come away, Bet."

Bertha then led the way up a very narrow flight of steps, which were scarcely to be called a staircase. They creaked under her feet, and even Joy's light tread made them squeak and shake.

"Here's where I sleep;" and Joy found herself in a little room with a sloping roof and a beam. The room was in fact only a loft for storage, but it was thought good enough for Bertha.

"I wanted to show you this," Bertha said; "it's the only keepsake I've got. It was once my poor Aunt Maggie's, and she gave it to me. I can just remember her kissing me one night, and saying, 'God bless you—you poor orphan.' I must have been a little thing, perhaps four years old, for it's such a long time ago, and I am nearly fifteen."

Bertha had dived into the depths of a trunk covered with spotted lilac paper, and which contained most of her worldly goods.

From the very bottom she pulled out a square leather frame, and as she rubbed the glass, which was thick with dust, with her sleeve, she said—

"Isn't she pretty?"

It was an old faded photograph of what must have been a pretty girl, in a white dress with a band of ribbon, which a photographic artist had painted blue, and had touched the eyes with the same colour.

"I think she is beautiful," Bertha said. "I never saw any one so pretty till I saw you, and I think you are like poor Aunt Maggie."

Joy looked doubtfully at the portrait, and said—

"Yes, it's very nice. She looks so good and so sweet, as if she could never have been cross or naughty."

"That's just what *I* think," Bertha said; "and she *is* like you, for you are good, and I am sure you are never cross."

"Oh!" little Miss Joy said, "that's a mistake. I am naughty when I hate Miss Pinckney, and when I am impudent to Susan. She *says* I am impudent, and Miss Pinckney has called me a 'saucy little baggage' very often. That's why I don't go into Miss Pinckney's shop to see dear Goody Patience and Jack.

"Ah!" Joy added with a sigh, "there is no Jack to see now; he is gone, and I do miss him so. He used to be so good to me;" and her eyes grew dim, and the corners of her rosy lips turned down ominously. "But I must go to Uncle Bobo now; he must be tired of waiting, and he'll get fidgety."

"Very well," Bet said; "I don't want you to get a scolding."

"A scolding!" Joy said, recovering herself from the momentary depression which the thought of Jack's loss had caused. "Uncle Bobo never scolded me in his life."

Then Joy stepped cautiously down the narrow stairs, and turning said—

"Good-bye, Bet; good-bye."

"Good-bye," poor Bet said, as, standing at the back-door, she watched her friend skipping off across the road to the seat where Uncle Bobo sat, with his round back—very round—and his short legs tucked up, one wide-toed boot upon the other, to give support.

"I wish she'd kissed *me*," poor Bet thought, as she saw Joy throw her arms round the old man's neck, and kiss all that was visible of his rosy cheek beneath his large wide-awake. "I'd like her to kiss me like that;" and poor Bet followed the two figures with lingering, longing eyes till they were out of sight.

Other eyes were following them also. Mrs. Skinner was standing by the window of her

parlour, peering over the short white muslin blind at Uncle Bobo and Joy. What was she thinking about? For her thin lips were parted as if she were speaking to some one, and her long fingers worked convulsively with the strings of her black alpaca apron.

Presently the door opened softly, and Bet came creeping in. She never knew what reception she might get, and she had the miserable cowed manner of a beaten dog.

"Grandmother!"

Mrs. Skinner started, and said sharply—

"Well, what do you want?"

"Isn't she pretty? Isn't she a darling?"

"Stuff and nonsense! I don't care about beauty; it's only skin deep; and I dare say she's a pert little hussy. Don't go and bring her here again, I don't want her."

CHAPTER VII.

DARK DOINGS.

When Mr. Skinner had escorted Miss Pinckney home after their walk, he seated himself at supper with the air of one who was thoroughly at home and at his ease.

"He knows on which side his bread is buttered," Uncle Bobo's Susan said, as she had watched Miss Pinckney walking up the row with her tall, ungainly suitor.

For Uncle Bobo was right. Mr. Skinner had every intention of coming to the point; though, I need not say, it was not his custom to go straight to the point.

Mr. Skinner always preferred a circuitous route.

When they were seated at supper Mr. Skinner said—

"You have had no tidings of your runaway, I presume, Mrs. Harrison?"

This question was asked as Mr. Skinner looked at Jack's mother with that oblique glance Jack had boldly called a "squint."

Patience shook her head. She could not bring herself to talk of her boy to Mr. Skinner.

"Ah," he said, "what a home he has left, and what a friend! When I think of Miss Pinckney's generosity and nobility of temper, I grieve that they were expended on so unworthy an object."

The colour rose to Mrs. Harrison's cheeks.

"You will be so kind, Mr. Skinner," she said, "not to talk about my boy. It is not a matter I care to speak of to any one."

"True, true!" was the reply. "'Least said, soonest mended.' But I suppose I may be permitted to offer my humble tribute of admiration to my dear, kind friend, who always gives me a welcome to her hospitable board."

Here Mr. Skinner stretched out his long, thin fingers, and laid them gently on Miss Pinckney's, who was in the act of handing him another triangular cut from the pork pie, which had been the *pièce de résistance* of the supper-table.

"Oh! dear me, Mr. Skinner," Miss Pinckney exclaimed, "I don't look for gratitude—never! So I am not disappointed. Gratitude isn't a plant that grows in these parts. It doesn't flourish. The air doesn't suit it, I suppose."

This was said with a glance at poor Patience, who was well accustomed to such side-hits.

"It is a plant that has a deep root in my heart," said Mr. Skinner, "and I hope the flower is not unpleasing, and that the fruit will be satisfying."

This was a great flight of poetical rhetoric, and Miss Pinckney bridled and simpered like a girl of sixteen.

"You are kindly welcome surely to anything I have to give, Mr. Skinner, now and at *all* times. Those that don't care for what I provide, well, they may seek their fortune elsewhere, and the

sooner the better."

Patience Harrison had long been disciplined to self-control, or she could never have borne the "quips" and "quirks" of her sister.

Thus she kept silence, determined not to wrangle with Miss Pinckney in the presence of witnesses; above all, not in the presence of the man whom she distrusted.

So she quietly cleared away the supper when the meal was concluded, and retired to the back premises to wash up the dishes, and put everything in order for the night.

It was about ten o'clock when Mr. Skinner—having sipped his glass of hot gin and water bid his hostess an affectionate adieu, and turned his steps homewards.

When he reached his own gate he exchanged a quiet greeting with two men, who were evidently waiting for him.

Then all three went softly round to the back of the house, and entered it by the door through which Bet and little Miss Joy had gone in that afternoon.

Mr. Skinner opened the door with a latch-key, and all three men passed silently into the little room with the big table, covered with the green cloth—the table which little Joy had said looked too big for the room.

"Well," one of the men said, "'Fortune favours the brave.' I am in for luck to-night. What have you got to drink? I dare say there's a bottle of rum in the cupboard, eh?"

"Well," Mr. Skinner said, "I don't drink anything myself. So, no doubt, what you left is to be had."

"Ah, ha! ah, ha!" laughed the other man. "You don't drink at your own expense; is that it? The old lady in the row finds you in toddy."

"Shut up!" said the elder of the two men; "don't talk all night, but let us to business."

Then two packs of cards were produced with the black bottle, and very soon the game began.

Ah me! that ruinous game, which so many, I fear, play, and thereby lose all sense of honour and right. Who shall say how long is the list of broken hearts for which gambling is responsible?

And not only the sordid gambling, such as that in which Mr. Skinner and his boon companions indulged, with dirty packs of cards, in a low room where the mice scampered about behind the loose boards, and the whole aspect was uninviting; but, alas! there is the same game going on amongst those who, from education and social position, should be the first to shun this crying evil.

It matters not whether the stakes be for a pound or a penny, the danger and the sin is the same.

The winner is always the winner at the expense of the loser. The success of one is the destruction and misery of the other. Deceit and fraud, with too often strong drink to silence the cry of remorse and the voice of conscience, follow in the gambler's train. No departure from the paths of honesty is single in its consequences, and there is no sin but may be compared to the throwing of a pebble into a still lake, when the circles which follow the fall of the stone widen and widen, and that indefinitely.

Gambling in all its forms is a grievous wrong; and whether from betting on horses, or speculating in stocks and shares, or descending to a shabby little room such as that where Mr. Skinner and his friends sat on this fair summer night, shuffling their cards, for what seemed by comparison insignificant sums, we are bound to protest against it with all our might, and to guard the young under our care from the first beginnings of what is indeed the cause of untold misery to many who, in thousands of cases, suffer for the sins of others.

The stakes for which Mr. Skinner and his companions played were small; but his usual good fortune seemed to have deserted him of late, for he had lost again and again.

One of the men, as he threw down the cards, said—

"I have a score against you for last Tuesday, Skinner. Do you want to run up further?" and he pulled out a bit of dirty paper from a pocket-book, and read from it sums which amounted to several pounds.

Mr. Skinner treated the matter with lofty indifference, saying—

"You needn't fear; I am going in for a prize, and I shall win!"

"Ah, well, win or lose, I must be paid. It is rather inconvenient to be out of pocket like this."

Mr. Skinner threw down another four shillings, and said—

"Try again."

Again, the stakes being trebled on a card, he lost—though the winner this time was the third man of the company.

Then a good deal of wrangling and quarrelling in an undertone followed, and Bet, in her room above, was awoken by it. She had been awoken before from the same cause; but to-night she sat up in bed and listened.

The joists that divided the room in this lean-to of Mr. Skinner's cottage, which could hardly be called a "wing," were very thin and far apart, and a knot in one of the boards of her room had been forced out and left a hole through which it was possible to get a peep into the room below.

Presently the voices ceased, and she heard the stealthy footsteps of the men retreating across the yard, and then, as they reached the deep soft sand, they were heard no longer.

Bet got up, and standing on tip-toe tried to look out of the little attic window that lighted her room. As she did so the hole in the floor attracted her, for she could see the light through it from the room below.

She lay down on the boards, and, looking through, could see her uncle at the table.

He had a small box before him, from which he took out some coins, and then he put a key attached to the box in the lock, and fastened it. Bertha watched, she hardly knew why, with deep interest her uncle's proceedings, and saw him rise from the table with the box in his hand and go out.

She climbed on the seat to bring her face on a level with the little window, and distinctly saw her uncle, with a lantern in one hand, which he set down by his side, and in the other a spade, with which he dug a hole in the soft, sandy mould by the strip of garden, where Mrs. Skinner cultivated some straggling cabbages, which went to *stalk* with but few leaves, in the poor soil of the little enclosure.

Presently he put something from his pocket into the hole, and then covering it with the soft soil, he returned to the house.

What did it all mean? Poor Bet felt something was wrong, and yet how could she help it?

"I wish there was any one I could tell," she thought; "but there is nobody. Little Miss Joy wouldn't care to hear, and nobody else would listen to me if I did tell them. And I suppose Uncle Joe has a right to bury his things if he likes; but it's very odd."

Then she crept back to her bed, and was soon asleep.

Bet went off to school the next morning with a lighter heart than usual, for she had received a convincing proof of little Joy's friendship, by her invitation to tea at the row.

The midsummer holidays were approaching, and she was determined to bear all the rebuffs she met with from her school-fellows with fortitude. What did anything matter if Joy loved her!

When Bet reached the gates of the garden before Miss Bayliff's school, she saw a knot of girls standing there. She came slowly towards them, shuffling her feet as usual in an awkward fashion, and not daring to draw too near the charmed circle, for her defender was not there.

"Little Joy is late this morning," one of the girls said. "But we must go indoors; Miss Bayliff is in a rage if we crowd outside. Here, Bet, do you know where little Miss Joy is?"

"How should she?" said another voice. "Here comes May Owen; let us ask her: she lives in Broad Row."

May Owen was the daughter of an ironmonger, whose premises were at the corner of the row, just above Uncle Bobo's shop.

"Well," she said, "have you heard about poor little Joy?"

"No; what's the matter?" asked a chorus of voices.

"She was out last evening with Mr. Boyd, and as they were coming home a horse came galloping along the Market Place, and Joy was knocked down. She has hurt her head, they say, or her back. The doctor has been there half the night, and Mr. Boyd is mad with grief. It has made a scene, I can tell you, in the row."

"Why, Bet!" one of the girls exclaimed, "don't do that!"

For poor Bet had seized the arm of the girl nearest her to support herself. Her heart beat wildly, her face was blanched with fear, as she gasped out—

"Oh, I must go to little Miss Joy! I must, indeed I must!"

"Nonsense! Don't squeeze my arm like that; you'll pinch me black and blue. *You* can't go to little Miss Joy; she wouldn't want *you*."

"No; I should think not!" said May Owen. "The notion of a scarecrow like you being a pleasant sight to Mr. Boyd in his trouble! Mrs. Harrison is with the child."

"Tell me—tell me," poor Bertha gasped; "will she get well? will she live?"

"I don't know. Let us hope so, for she is a darling, and every one loves her," said another voice. And then a bell rang, and the girls trooped up the steps into the house, and the business of the morning began.

Who shall tell the misery of those long hours in school to Bertha? She could only gaze at the white face of the clock, and count the minutes as the long hand passed over them. As to her lessons in class, she was, as the governess who taught her said, "Hopelessly muddled."

Vain were her efforts to get through her repetition of Cowper's lines on his mother's picture. She sat with a sum before her on a slate, and blurred it with tears; and finally had a long array of bad marks, and was sent by the assistant governess to Miss Bayliff to receive a lecture, and to be given a long column of the Dictionary to write out and learn by heart in addition to her usual lessons.

It did not strike Miss Bayliff that sorrow for Joy was the cause of Bet's woe-begone face. Miss Bayliff herself was really distressed at the news which had circulated through the school of Joy's accident, but she did not think Bet could feel as she did for little Miss Joy.

The moment school was over, Bet seized her hat from the peg in the passage, and set off to the row to learn the worst.

To her great relief she saw Mrs. Harrison coming from her own door to Uncle Bobo's. She clutched her arm pretty much as she had clutched her schoolfellow's; but she was not thrust away this time. Patience Harrison said kindly,

"My dear, our little Joy seems a trifle better. She has opened her eyes and smiled at Uncle Bobo."

"Will she get well? May I see her?"

"You must not see her; she has to be kept very quiet."

"Oh! what shall I do? what shall I do?" Bet exclaimed.

"Pray for her," was the reply, "and trust in God's love whichever way it goes with her." And then, moved to deep pity for poor Bet, Mrs. Harrison stooped and kissed her, and went into the little shop.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN PERIL OF THE SEA.

The *Galatea* was a good sailing vessel, loaded with goods, and was bound for Constantinople. She was a trading vessel, with a few passengers who paid a moderate sum for their berths, and were provided with very fair accommodation on board.

Jack certainly proved himself a good sailor. As soon as the first misery of sea-sickness was over, he made himself very useful to the crew generally, and to Dick Colley in particular.

"He is worth his biscuit, captain," Colley said one day. "A sharp lad, eh?"

"Yes, and a handy one too. It's well for you that you have had that boy to help you, with your lame leg; and you are trying to make him one of your sort, I see."

"One of my sort! No. I hope a long sight better than my sort, captain. I am but a beginner, learning the alphabet late in life; but, please God, I'll stumble on following Him, and I hope I may get others to follow Him too."

"You needn't look for me in that following, Colley; but you are welcome to the boy. It is all very fine to preach about God's love and care for us when the sea is stirred by a pleasant breeze, just enough to give us a capful of wind, and we are making our proper knots an hour straight for port; but when the waves are roaring, and the timbers of the ship groaning and creaking, and we

know not but that we may go to the bottom any minute—don't tell me it is God's love then, when poor fellows are fighting the waves for life, knowing that if they are drowned they leave wife and child poor and desolate. No, no, Colley; that motion won't hold water."

"Begging your pardon, captain," said Colley, "it's better to trust in the Lord's love in a storm, than curse, and swear, and shriek as you and I have seen some of our mates take on, in mortal terror. You can't deny that."

"I deny nothing," was the reply. "I am content to let things take their course, and religion with the rest. Let them pray who like; it's no odds to me."

Jack had been near during this conversation; and as the captain turned on his heel and took up his position again at the helm, Colley called Jack.

"Were you within ear-shot just now, boy?"

"Yes," Jack said. "I heard what you and the captain were saying. My mother talks as you talk; and as to little Miss Joy, she is always singing hymns, and loves taking Uncle Bobo's hand and trotting to church with him. I wish you could see little Miss Joy; you would love her as much as I do."

"P'r'aps I may see her one day. She is a pretty little thing, you say?"

"Pretty!" Jack said; "she is a great deal more than pretty. Her eyes are like the sky; and how she can laugh, to be sure! it's like silver bells ringing. Many a time, when I have been half wild with Aunt Amelia's grating tongue, I have run over to Mr. Boyd's, and Joy has put me right. She would always be on the watch for me when I came back from school, and she calls my mother 'Goody,' and she is just like a little daughter to her. Then when there were sharp words between Mr. Boyd and his old servant, Joy made peace. She would climb on Uncle Bobo's knee, and kiss him, and put her hand before his mouth, and beg him to be quiet, and not get angry with Susan, because hard words did no good."

"That's true, boy—that's true; and now I want to know what you are going to do when we are safe in port? Go home and show you are sorry, eh?"

"Not home to my aunt's house; I'd rather break stones. Look here, she just makes me feel wretched, as little Miss Joy makes me feel good."

"Ah, boy, that's the wrong end of the stick—the feeling good and wicked, as you say. No, no; 'goodness,' as you call it, don't depend on little Miss Joy, or wickedness on sharp-tempered viragos like you say your aunt is. It is the *heart*, boy. If that is turned to God, then we may hope to keep straight, by watching and praying; but it is a fight, boy, as I find. As I told you, I find it hard enough to curb my tongue; for it is like a ship flying afore the wind, with no rudder and no pilot. Off I go, and the words drop from my lips like mad! But I pray for help to bridle my tongue, and I cry to God for pardon every time I take His blessed name in vain. Don't you learn bad ways aboard. Most of the crew are steady young fellows. One or two of 'em are on the right track; but that man who kicked you when you came aboard, you beware of him. He is more dangerous when he is friendly than when he's your enemy. So don't listen to him; it won't do you no good."

Amongst the passengers was a sweet-faced woman, with her little boy. Jack took greatly to the child. He reminded him of Miss Joy, and he would take his hand and lead him about the ship, and show off Toby's tricks for his amusement.

The woman was on her way to Cairo to join her husband, who had a place there in an English family as courier and valet. She had been sent home by the doctors for her health, and was now on her outward-bound voyage, with her little son.

She soon found that Jack was trustworthy, and she allowed her little Peter to be with him whenever Jack had time to amuse him. Old Colley, too, would set him on his knee, and tell him stories of the sea, and the names of the sea-birds, which often followed the ship, and would sometimes pounce down on any bit of biscuit or salt meat which might be on deck.

It was a pretty sight when little Peter's golden hair rested against Colley's blue jersey, and the child would put up his hand and stroke the stubby beard of his new friend, and say—

"I shall be a sailor when I grow up. I love the sea."

Then Colley would stroke his head and say—"In calm weather it's pleasant enough, boy. You wait till you have seen a storm."

The voyage out promised well till they came to the Bay of Biscay, when contrary winds and a storm drove the *Galatea* to take refuge in the port of Lisbon.

The captain was anxious to make his way to Constantinople, and against the advice of Colley and the second mate sailed out from Lisbon in rough weather.

"The storm is over," he said, "and I've no time to spend with the men kicking their heels aboard, or going ashore to get into mischief."

So the orders were given, and the *Galatea* went curtesying over the billows, under a bright sky, with all sails set.

"We are in the track of a storm, and if I'm not mistaken," Colley said, "we shall find ourselves in a worst plight before forty-eight hours have come and gone. I never saw the moon look as she did last night without a meaning."

But for that night Colley's prophecy seemed to be unfulfilled. The wind sank, the sea became like glass, and the *Galatea* made but little progress. The weather was intensely hot, and the nights scarcely cooler than the days.

It was on the evening of the second day, after sailing out of the port of Lisbon, that Colley asked Jack if he saw a dark line drawn along the horizon.

"Yes," Jack said, "I see."

"That's the storm coming, and it will be upon us fast enough."

The captain, who was standing at his post with his glass, saw it also, and very soon orders were shouted to reef sails, and "every man to his post."

Before a landsman could believe it possible, the mysterious dark line had spread over the sky, and there was a hissing sound as of coming breakers. Then a swift forked flash struck across the waters, and was followed by a peal of thunder which was deafening. In another quarter of an hour the waves were roaring, and the noise of the thunder and the gathered blackness of darkness were awful.

The *Galatea* was well manned, and every one of the crew held gallantly to their post. The captain encouraged the frightened passengers, and tried to quiet their fears.

Jack obeyed orders, and never flinched from his duty.

Presently the angry billows broke with terrific violence over the poor *Galatea*, and she bowed herself in her distress till the masts and timbers creaked, and every time she went down into the deep valleys between the mountainous waves, it seemed impossible that she should right herself again.

"We are in great peril, boy," Colley said in Jack's ear, or rather he shouted the words at the pitch of his voice. "You put your trust in God, and He will hear your cry."

Ah! in moments of dire distress and fear, the soul that has before been dumb cries unto God. Poor frail mortals think they can do very well without God, when skies are blue, and all things, golden, bright, and prosperous; but in the hour of death, and in all times of tribulation, few indeed are to be found who do not cry to God for refuge and deliverance.

Jack stood face to face with death, and he knew it. All his short life seemed to rise clearly before him, and his mother's face as he knelt to repeat his little prayer at her knee in childish days. His mother! she had been left a widow, although she could not believe it; his mother! to whom he should have been a stay and comfort, deserted, because he had been a coward, and could not meet the trials of his daily life—his aunt's sharp tongue, and Mr. Skinner's side-hits.

He had run away to sea to escape these, to please himself—and this was the end. Oh! his mother! his mother! Had he not seen her watch and wait for his father's return? and had he not seen the lines of care deeping on her sweet face? And now he had added to her sorrow, and could never hear her words of forgiveness.

All this passed through Jack's mind far more quickly than I can write it here, or you can read it; and hot tears mingled with the cold, salt spray, which drenched him through and through as he stood firm by the rope which was entrusted to him.

The storm raged with unabated fury, and the darkness was only just pierced by the rising moon, itself invisible, but which cast a strange weird whiteness athwart the gloom.

The worst had not yet come. It was about midnight that cries arose above the storm, and a violent shock told that the *Galatea* had struck on a rock. There was no hope then—the *Galatea* was doomed.

The boats had been kept in readiness, and the captain's voice was heard, shouting his orders to let them down. For the *Galatea* had parted in midships, and was settling down into those black waters where, here and there, the white surf on the wave-crests was seen with ghastly clearness in the murky gloom.

"All women and children first," the captain ordered; and Peter's mother, clasping the child close, with the few passengers, were let down into the first boat.

"Back, you coward!" the mate shouted, as the man who had been so unfeeling to Jack, on first starting, stumbled forward and tried to jump into the boat. Alas! too late was the command to stop. The boat was swamped, and smothered cries arose from the surging depths. The other

boats were lowered, and old Colley remained to the last.

"Now, captain," he said, "it's your turn. She's settling down fast." And between the roar of the storm and the more distant roll of the thunder, a swishing, gurgling noise told that the water was fast gaining ground, and the *Galatea* going down.

"I leave the ship last, or die with her. Forward, Colley! Do you hear?"

"After you, captain; after you."

"Colley, old fellow, you never disobeyed me before. You won't do it now."

Then a great shudder seemed to thrill through the ship, and she turned on her side, and with a mighty rush the waves seized their prey, and the *Galatea* went down into the stormy waters.

Jack found himself struggling in the surging waves; but a boat was near him, and a hand seized him and dragged him in.

It was old Colley's hand, and he had in his other arm little Peter, and a whine told that Toby was with his master.

It was a perilous position—the boat was tossed like a feather on those stormy billows; while above the raging of the storm could be heard cries for help from those who were clinging to broken rafts and pieces of the wreck.

"She was cracked like a walnut," Colley said; "and the captain's heart was broken—that's why he said he would die with her."

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE WIDE, WIDE SEA.

The boat was drifting off, and every minute seemed to put a further distance from the place where the *Galatea* had struck the rock and perished. At this time the fury of the storm had abated, and a rift in the clouds showed the moon in its last quarter floating like a boat on its back in a silvery sea. The pale rays shed a flickering light upon the waters, and there was a lull. Behind them rose a low black mass, with the points of the masts showing where the *Galatea*, had gone down. No other object was visible, and Colley covered his face with his hands.

"I don't believe there's one of 'em saved," he said; "I don't indeed. The boats were swamped, and this is the only one that righted. But, boy, I don't know where we are, nor where we are drifting."

"Are we going home?" said a little voice from the bottom of the boat. "I want to get home with mother."

"Ay, my lad; but I expect we must all three give up an earthly home, and turn our thoughts to a heavenly one."

When morning dawned they were far out on the trackless waters, and not a sail in eight. Jack, at Colley's bidding, tied his shirt to the oar, in the hopes that, fluttering in the breeze, it might attract the notice of some passing vessels. But although several sail were seen on the horizon, none seemed to come across the track of the little lonely boat. The scorching sun of noon beat on their unprotected heads, and poor little Peter cried and moaned with a pain in his head. Hunger too, and thirst, began to be unbearable; and Colley had some difficulty in preventing Jack from drinking the sea-water, and giving it to little Peter.

"Don't you do it, boy; it will drive you mad, and you will repent it if you touch it."

Towards evening the air became cooler, and Peter, pulling at Jack's trousers, said—

"There is something hard under my head, and Toby is sniffing at it."

Oh, how untold was the thankfulness with which Colley pulled out a canvas bag of sea biscuits, which had been stowed away under one of the seats, with a stone jar in which was a little rum!

"Thank the Lord, you won't starve, you young ones; there's enough to keep you alive."

"Enough to keep us all alive!" Jack said; "and I shan't touch a crumb unless you eat the same quantity as I do."

The boy lying at their feet had already set his teeth into a biscuit like a hungry dog, and was putting his mouth to the stone bottle.

"Gently, now, gently," Colley said, trying to take the bottle away from the child. But he did not succeed till he had swallowed a considerable quantity, and lay in a kind of stupor.

Another night closed in, and the stillness and darkness were acceptable after the burning heat of noon. At day-dawn Jack saw a ship. Surely it was coming nearer and nearer. He stood up and called "Ahoy!" with all his might, and poor Toby whined and barked. Colley, awakened from a light dose, stood up also, and joined in the cry. But, alas! there was no answer, and the white sails, glistening in the level rays of the rising sun, vanished like a bird taking flight.

"It is no use hoping for help," Jack said, sinking down. "I say, Colley, are we to go on floating over the wide sea for ever?"

"Nay, lad, nay; it won't be for ever. Please the Lord, He'll put an end to these long watches in His own time."

"Colley," Jack said, "do you think I am being punished for my sins? I ran away in a fit of temper, and I know how my mother is waiting and watching for me, as she did for my father, and she will watch and wait in vain. Oh, Colley, do you think God is very angry, and that this is my punishment—to die out here, with no one to care, no one to—" Jack broke down, and hid his face on his sleeveless arms, for his blue jersey was fluttering in the morning breeze.

"Boy," Colley said, "it is just this: You wanted your own way, and you were let to take it. You have made your own punishment; but as to God's anger—well, if you turn your heart to Him in Christ's name, He won't send you empty away. He will speak peace for His dear Son's sake, whether He lets you go back to you poor mother, or whether He takes you through the Valley of Death to His kingdom in heaven."

"Colley," Jack said vehemently, "I don't want to die. I want to live, and show my mother I am sorry."

"We can't choose, boy, we can't choose; and we are just in God's hands, and must be quiet."

But, oh! through that long day of heat and oppression it was hard to be quiet. The poor child moaned, and was rapidly becoming insensible. Jack's lips were so sore and chapped he could not bite the hard biscuit; and though Colley soaked his in a few drops of rum, he felt sick at the smell and taste of the spirits, and when offered a morsel, he turned away, saying—

"It reminds me of Skinner. I hate the smell."

The great waste of waters, of varied opal hues, in the clear depths of which the forms of many sea creatures could be seen darting hither and thither—how desolate it was!

Above, snowy gulls flew and floated now and again on the waves. One came so near that Colley seized it and took it into the boat. It looked up with wondering eyes, and Colley said—

"You poor stupid thing! You have come to your death;" and then he wrung the bird's neck, saying, "If the worst comes to the worst, we must eat it raw."

"I would sooner die," Jack said wearily. "I begin to wish to die, Colley. Yesterday I wanted to live, but I don't feel to care now, and I believe that poor little darling is going."

"Help me to lift him up—lift him up," Colley said; and between them, feeble as they both were, the old man and the boy, they managed to get the poor child's head to rest on Colley's knees.

Towards evening the child opened his eyes. "Mother," he said, "I'm coming." Then he smiled, and Jack said, "He is better."

But Colley shook his head. "No; but he will be better soon;" and then he said a few words of prayer, and bid Jack think of some hymn his mother had taught him.

Jack tried to summon a verse from his confused brain, and the one little Miss Joy had often said came to his lips, and he repeated in a low voice, quavering with weakness and emotion—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high:

"Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide,
Oh, receive my soul at last!

"Other refuge have I none,

Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, ah! leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort——"

"Oh! Colley," Jack said, breaking off, "look!" The little boy's eyes were wide open, gazing upwards. Then a smile, a sweet smile, a shudder as if in answer to a welcome, and the spirit of the child had fled!

Colley bowed his head weeping.

"A pretty little lad!" he said, "his mother's pride aboard ship. Well, well, she is waiting for him, and God's will be done."

When the shadows crept over the blue expanse that night, Colley lifted the child's body tenderly in his arms, and said to Jack—

"Kiss him for his mother, boy. He is saved from the death which, unless God send help, lies before you and me—the death of starvation. You are young, but I am an old man; for all sailors are old at fifty, and few see sixty. I shall go next."

"Oh, Colley, Colley, do not leave me all alone!"

Colley shook his head.

"Again I say, Let God's will be done. I wish—I wish I had a memory for a text of Scripture to say before I bury this child; for we must bury him, and now. You've been at school, you say, up to the time you ran away. Can't you say the words of Scripture which you have learned? You must know a lot."

Poor Jack rubbed his head and tried to collect his thoughts, but in vain.

"It's what the Lord said to Mary when her brother Lazarus died. Ah, I've got it now!"

and Colley slowly and solemnly repeated, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that liveth and believeth on Me shall never die."

Then the old sailor clasped his weather-beaten hands over the child's lifeless form, and with tears running down his rugged cheeks he said: "O heavenly Father, Thou hast called this child from pain and suffering. In Thy mercy send for me next; but let poor Jack live to go back to his mother. For Christ Jesus' sake."

Then tenderly and gently the little form slipped over the side of the boat; there was a sudden splash, a rippling sound, and all was still—so still, except for the mysterious murmur which always sounds like whispers from another world at nightfall on the sea.

Again the sun rose, and again the silent sea was flooded with the rays of the sun. The inhabitants of the little boat were too weak now to speak much. Even Toby could scarcely wag his tail, but lay with his head on his paws, gazing up to his master's face, questioning as to what it meant—this faintness and weakness which seemed to be creeping over him.

The dead gull lay untouched. There was not strength left to eat it, even if there had been inclination.

Jack still grasped the oar, and still the poor blue jersey fluttered in the breeze. But Colley lay at the bottom of the boat, breathing heavily, though his eyes were open, and his rough weather-beaten hands folded as if in prayer.

They had drifted far out in the Atlantic, but not in the direct line hitherto of the many steamers which continually cross the great dividing waters which lie between the Old World and the New.

Jack had ample time for thought, as the long weary hours went by. But a stupor was fast creeping over him, and everything became dreamlike and unreal. Even the images of his mother and Joy, which had been so vivid, grew taint and indistinct, and he was scarcely conscious, when a loud "Ahoy!" fell on his ear.

He started up, and there, at last, was a boat alongside of theirs.

"Wake up, boy!" said a cheery voice. "What's happened, eh?"

"Oh, Colley, Colley!" Jack cried, "we are saved, we are saved!" And then from excess of joy and emotion he fell prone upon the prostrate figure of the old sailor.

"A man, a boy, and a dog," said one of the boat's crew.

"Half-starved, I declare! Look alive, mates, and let's get 'em aboard our ship as quick as may

be. I told you this object we saw was a craft of some sort, though you were so slow to believe me. A happy thing for these poor creatures I got the boat lowered."

In another quarter of an hour two pairs of sturdy arms were pulling the boat and those in it to the good ship *Claudia*, bound for the islands of the Southern Seas.

CHAPTER X.

"ONLY A LITTLE BOX."

Uncle Bobo was sitting at the door of his shop one golden September day, when the atmosphere of the row was oppressive, and his heart was heavy within him.

Little Miss Joy was mending—so the doctors said; for Uncle Bobo had declared two heads were better than one, and had insisted on calling in a second opinion.

Yes; they all said little Miss Joy was better. But in what did this betterness consist? She was still lying in that upper chamber, whence she had always smiled her good-morning on Patience Harrison, and sang her hymn of thanksgiving as the little birds sing their matins to the rising sun.

Better! yes, she was better; for there was now no danger to her life. But the fall had injured her back, and she could not move without pain. The colour was gone from her rosy lips, and the light from those lovely gentian eyes was more soft and subdued. Little Miss Joy, who had been as blithe as a bird on the bough and so merry and gladsome, that she deserved her name of "Little Sunbeam," was now a patient sick child, never complaining, never fretful, and always greeting Uncle Bobo with a smile—a smile which used to go to his heart, and send him down to his little shop sighing out—as to-day—

"Better—better! I don't see it; the doctor doesn't know! What are doctors for, if they can't make a child well? I pay enough. I don't grudge them their money, but I expect to see a return for it. And here comes Patience Harrison to tell me what I don't see—that my little sunbeam is better."

Patience Harrison was crossing the row to Uncle Bobo's door as he spoke. Her face wore the same expression of waiting for something or some one that never came, as it did on the morning when we first saw her looking up and looking down the row for Jack.

It was a wonderfully warm September. No news had been brought of the wanderer: the news for which her soul thirsted. George Paterson, it is true, had heard an inkling of news, but it was not anything certain. He had heard from a sailor that Jack Harrison had been seen aboard the *Galatea* by a passenger who had been put ashore as the *Galatea* passed the Lizard; and tidings had come that the *Galatea* had been lost off the coast of Spain, and only nine of the crew or passengers aboard had survived to tell the tale! That the *Galatea* was lost seemed certain, but that Jack was aboard her was not proved. The man who reported that he had seen him could not be sure of his name. He heard him called Jack, but so were hundreds of other boys. He had understood that he was a runaway, kept on sufferance by the captain to please the second mate; but that was all, and it was not much. Certainly not enough to warrant adding to Patience Harrison's heavy burden of sorrow. So George Paterson kept the suspicion to himself, and waited for confirmation of the report before he mentioned it.

Patience Harrison had nursed and cared for Joy as if she had been her own child, and Uncle Bobo was not ungrateful.

"Well," he said, as she leaned against the door, a variety of articles making a festoon over her head, and a bunch of fishing-tackle catching a lock of her abundant hair, which was prematurely grey:—"Well, is the grand affair coming off to-morrow?"

"Yes, they are to be married to-morrow at ten o'clock; but there's to be no fuss. They are going to Cromer for a few days, and I have promised to keep shop till they come home."

"And what's Joy to do without you?"

"I shall run over early every morning and late every evening, and poor Bet Skinner is out of her wits with delight because I said I thought you would let her stay by day and take my place."

"To be sure! to be sure! Only don't expect me to hold out a hand to that old lady, Skinner's mother. Is she to be present at the wedding?"

"Yes, and so is Bet; and I have excused myself on account of looking after the shop."

"Well, your poor sister is making a pretty hard bed for herself to lie on, and I am afraid she

will live to repent it; though, to be sure, we can't call it marrying in haste. That sly fellow has been sneaking about here for a long time. What's the mother going to do?"

"She will live where she is for the present, and everything will go on the same, except that I cannot live with Skinner. I shall look out for a situation in a shop, as soon as Joy is well again, and does not want me. Or maybe I shall take one of the small houses on the Denes, and let lodgings to folks who can put up with humble accommodation."

"You oughtn't to do any such thing," said Mr. Boyd. "You have been a widow now between eleven and twelve years. A good man wants to make you his wife—and," said Uncle Bobo, slapping his knee, "and why shouldn't he?"

"Please do not speak of it, Mr. Boyd," Patience said. "Do you think that I could ever marry any man while I am waiting for my husband's return, and now, too, for my boy's? No! it is only pain to me to think that any of my friends could think I should forget."

"You'll see the boy safe and sound before long, and you'll find the salt water has washed a lot of nonsense out of him. He will come back, but the other—never!"

Mrs. Harrison said no more, but climbed up the narrow staircase to Joy's room.

"Oh, Goody dear! I *am* so glad you are come," Joy said, stretching out her little thin arms and winding them round her friend's neck. "I have been fidgeting so, hearing you talking to Uncle Bobo downstairs. And I've been very snappy to Susan, because she will have it I ought to try to stand. Goody dear, I *can't*."

"Susan knows that as well as I do, dearie. I think she tries to make you out much stronger than you are, to comfort Uncle Bobo."

"*Dear* Uncle Bobo!" the child said. "I wish he would not fret about me. Goody! I was dreaming of a horse tearing after me, just as that horse did that evening; and then it wasn't a horse at all, but it was great roaring waves, and I thought Jack was with me, and we were going to be drowned."

The lines on Mrs. Harrison's forehead deepened, and she tried to say cheerfully—

"Dreams do not mean anything, dear; and it is said they always go by contrary, you know."

Then Mrs. Harrison began to settle Joy's pillows, and put back the curtains so that she might see from her bed the strip of blue sky above the opposite roofs and through a slight aperture between the two houses, where Joy could on clear nights see two or three stars, and at certain, and what seemed to her very long intervals, the moon, on her lonely way through the heavens.

"Susan says the wedding will be to-morrow, and that you will have to stay to keep shop while Miss Pinckney is away."

"Yes, dear; and Bet is coming to be with you."

Joy sighed, and said softly—

"Poor Bet! she does love me very much; but, dear Goody, I don't love her as I love you. When Jack comes home, I shall tell him how kind you have been to me, and we shall be so happy; only I expect Jack will be vexed to see me lying here, instead of running out to meet him."

Mrs. Harrison could only turn away her head to hide her tears as Joy went on:

"Uncle Bobo said the other day, when he came up and found me crying, just a little bit, 'Why, I shall have to call you little Miss Sorrowful!' And then he seemed choked, and bustled away. I made up my mind then I would try to smile always when he came. I should not like him to call me little Miss Sorrowful, it seems to hurt him so. And then he always says he ought to have snatched hold of me when the horse came galloping after us, and that he ought to have been knocked down, not me. But that is quite a mistake. Uncle Bobo is wanted in the shop, and I don't think I could have done instead of him; and then it would have been worse for him to bear the pain than it is for me; for when he had the gout in his toe, he did shout out, and threw the things about when Susan went to bathe it. So it is best as it is," was little Miss Joy's conclusion; "isn't it Goody?"

The wedding came off the next day, and the row was greatly excited by the event.

Miss Pinckney was dressed in a cream-coloured cashmere, trimmed with lace, and she wore an apology for a bonnet, with orange blossoms, and a large square of tulle thrown over it.

Susan, who reported the appearance of the wedding party, which she watched leaning out of Joy's window, exclaimed:

"All in white, or next to white! Deary me! If I was fifty, and had a yellow skin, I wouldn't dress like a young girl. There she goes mincing down the row, and there's a coach waiting at the end with white horses. And there goes Mrs. Skinner looking like a lamp-post, dressed in a grey

alpaca; she looks as grim as ever. And there's poor Bet—well, to be sure, what a frock and bonnet! They belonged to her mother, let alone her grandmother, or p'r'aps to that pretty daughter of hers, who ran off—she was that ill-treated by her mother she couldn't bear it! Ah! they are a queer lot, those Skinners; they do say Joe Skinner is a queer customer, and that he is so hard up, that's why he's married that old lady. He will make her money spin, and there won't be much left at the end of a year. Serve her right. I've no patience with folks making themselves ridiclous at her time of life. Why, my dear!" Susan said, growing confidential, as she drew her head in from the window, when the little following of girls and boys who lived in the row had returned from seeing the last of Miss Pinckney—"Why, my dear! I could have married, last fall, the lamplighter who has looked after the lamps in the row for years. But I knew better. I told him I was forty-eight, and he was scarce thirty-eight, and I was not going to make myself a laughing-stock. And he went and married a young girl, and has made a good husband. So that's all right!"

It was the same afternoon that Mrs. Harrison, being installed in her sister's place at the shop, Bet came breathlessly up the narrow stairs to say—

"Grandmother wants to see you."

"Oh! I'd rather not, please. I feel so afraid of your grandmother. Don't, please don't let her come."

But it was too late. Mrs. Skinner's spare figure was already at the door. She was dressed in her wedding gown and bonnet, and came to Joy's bed, standing there like a grey spectre, her bonnet and face all of the same dull grey as the gown.

Joy turned up her wistful eyes to the hard, deeply-lined face, and her lips quivered.

"If you please," she said, "I am glad you will spare Bet, while Goody is so busy."

But Mrs. Skinner did not speak—not a word. "I am getting better," Joy continued; "at least the doctors say so; but—but I can't stand or walk yet, so I am glad to have Bet."

Mrs. Skinner had all this time been scanning little Miss Joy's features with a keen scrutiny. Then, after a few minutes, she jerked out:

"I hope you'll soon get about again; you are welcome to keep Bet;" and then she turned, and her footfall on the stairs was heard less and less distinct, till the sound ceased altogether.

"Your grandmother is—is not like other people," little Miss Joy ventured to say. "I don't like her; but I beg your pardon, I ought not to say so to you."

"And do you think *I* like her?" Bet exclaimed vehemently. "At first I thought I'd try, and I did try; but she was always so hard. She loves Uncle Joe, I think, though she is angry with him for marrying Miss Pinckney, and lately I have heard high words between them."

And now Bet took off her wedding bonnet, and sat down by Joy's side, perfectly content that she was thought worthy to be her companion.

"You'll tell me if you want anything," she said. "And you won't mind if I am stupid and blunder, will you?"

"No," Joy said faintly. "Have you got your work, or a book? Give me my crochet. I like to try to do something, though lying flat it is rather tiring."

Bet did as she was told, and then said humbly, "I shan't talk unless you wish me to talk;" and the poor girl settled herself by the window till a bell rang.

"That is for you to go down for my tea," Joy said. "It saves Susan's legs, you know."

Bet was only too happy to be of use, and hurried down stairs at once for the tray.

"Be careful now," Susan said; "and don't fall upstairs and break the crockery. There's a cup for yourself, and Mrs. Harrison has sent over a bit of wedding-cake. It's very black, and I don't like the looks of the sugar; but I dare say it may eat better than it looks."

The day wore on to evening, and the row was quiet, when Joy, who had been lying very still, suddenly said—

"I have been dreaming of Jack again—Jack Harrison. I think he must be coming home."

"Did you care for Jack Harrison very much?"

"Very much," said Joy; "he was always so good to me. That last day before he ran away he lent me that pretty book you were looking at, and said we would learn those verses at the beginning together, and I never saw him again. That was a dreadfully sad time; and then, not content with being very hard on Jack, Miss Pinckney and your uncle said he was a thief. Think of that! Jack a thief! Miss Pinckney said he had got the key of a drawer and taken out a little box, where she kept the money. There were four or five pounds in it."

"A box!" Bet said; "was it a big box?"

"Oh no; dear Goody says it would go into anybody's pocket. A little box with a padlock and a little key. I knew Jack did not take it, but of course as he ran away that very day it looks *like* it. Even Susan shakes her head, and I never talk of Jack to her. But," said Joy, "I am tired now, and I think I'll take what Uncle Bobo calls 'forty winks.'"

Everything was very quiet after that; and when Bet saw Joy was asleep, she crept downstairs, and in the shop saw Mrs. Harrison.

Miss Pinckney's shutters were closed, and she felt free to come over and have a last look at Joy.

"A little box! a little box!" Bet repeated to herself as she went home. "A box so small it would go into anybody's pocket." And Bet that night lay awake pondering many things, and repeating very often, "A little box!"

CHAPTER XI.

MR. SKINNER IN COMMAND.

Mrs. Skinner was more silent than ever during the next few days, and when she spoke it was to scold Bet in a rasping voice.

She was suffering from that very bad mental disease which is beyond the reach of doctors, and is a perpetual torment; and that disease is called remorse.

Of late she had been haunted by the memory of her only daughter, and of her harshness to her. The man she had chosen to marry was good, and to all appearance above the class in which Maggie was born. There was nothing against him but poverty. He had been a travelling photographer, who set up his little van with "Photographic Studio" painted on the canvas cover in large letters, and had sometimes done a brisk trade on Yarmouth sands. One of his first customers had been Maggie Skinner, then in her fresh beauty, and a tempting subject for a photographer or artist.

About the same time a wealthy grocer in Yarmouth, old enough to be her father, had offered to marry her. He had a villa at Gorlestone: possessed a pony-carriage, and was rich and prosperous. But Maggie shrank from marrying him. Mr. Plummer might be rich, and no doubt he meant well and kindly by her, but she could not marry him.

In vain she pleaded with her mother, and with her inexorable brother Joe, that to marry simply for what you were to get by it was a sin—a sin against the law of God, who meant marriage to be a sign and seal of mutual love.

Mrs. Skinner at last said that if she did not do as she bid her, and promise to marry Mr. Plummer, she might go and earn her living for she was not going to keep her in idleness. Many stormy scenes followed; and one night Maggie declared that she could not marry Mr. Plummer, for she had promised to marry Roger Chanter, the photographic artist!

"And if you do, you shall never see my face again," Mrs. Skinner declared. "I'll turn you out of the house, and you may disgrace yourself as you please. I have done with you. Your brother there knows when I say a thing I mean it."

"Oh, mother, you are very cruel!" Ah! how those words sounded sometimes in the dead of night, when Mrs. Skinner lay awake, listening for Joe's return, and to the moaning of the restless sea.

"Oh! mother, you are very cruel!" Those were the last words ever heard from Maggie, as she passed out of her mother's sight. The next morning her bed was empty, and she was gone.

From that day up to the present time not a word had been heard of her, nor had her mother or her brother troubled themselves to inquire for her. It was supposed she had married the pale, delicate-looking photographer; but her name was never mentioned, and she had passed away as if she had never been.

It was the day of the bride and bridegroom's return, and Patience Harrison had put all things in order. The business had not suffered in the absence of the head of the establishment, and Mr. Skinner expressed considerable satisfaction at this. He at once took the keys, and said he would keep the books and the money, and, in fact, rule the establishment, and transact the business.

He was fidgeting about the shop the next morning, and peering into all the boxes and

drawers, when his wife ventured to remark that perhaps he would be late at the office on the quay, as the clock had struck ten.

"My dear," was the reply, "I have resigned my post in the Excise-office, and shall henceforth devote myself to you and my aged mother. I have always been a good son, and I shall often look in on her of an evening when I have settled up matters here."

Patience Harrison heard this announcement, and saw her sister's face betray considerable surprise.

"Resign the place at the office!" she exclaimed. "Why, Joe!—"

"Why, Joe!" he repeated. "Why, my dear, you ought to be delighted; you will have so much more of my company and my help. Now you can take your ease, and sit in your parlour, while Mrs. Harrison waits in the shop, and performs household duties."

"What next, Joe! I am not going to sit with my hands before me because I am a married woman. As to a man about in a little shop like mine, with ladies trying on caps and ordering underclothing, it is not to be thought of. The customers won't like it. It is too small a place for three."

"You may be easy on that score, sister," Patience said. "I only remained while you were away. I wish to leave you, and think of taking a little house on the Denes, and taking a lodger till they come home."

"Pray may I ask who are *they*?" Mr. Skinner said.

"My husband and my son," was the reply.

"The folly of some women!" exclaimed Mr. Skinner. "No, Mrs. Harrison, you don't know when you are well off. You should recompense your sister's goodness and generosity by staying to assist her in her household cares."

"I did not ask for your advice, and I do not want it. Sister, I shall cross over to Mr. Boyd's, and take care of that dear child for the present. I have packed my boxes, and Peter will carry them over."

"My dear," Mr. Skinner said, "that being the case, we at once renounce all connection with Mrs. Harrison."

"But we shall have to keep a servant," exclaimed his wife; "and servants are such a terrible trouble, and think of the worry and the expense, and—"

Poor Mrs. Joe Skinner seemed unfeignedly sorry. She began to magnify her gentle sister's perfections now she was to lose her.

"And Patience knows all my ways, and how to use the furniture polish on the chairs and table in the parlour. And— Oh! really, Patience, I hope you will stay; especially now the boy is gone. You are welcome, I'm sure; very welcome! It was the boy made the trouble. We've gone on so pleasantly since he went."

Patience turned away to hide the tears of wounded feeling, and said no more.

As she was crossing over to Mr. Boyd's, she saw a ladylike, sweet-faced woman standing at the door of the shop.

Mr. Boyd was very busy rubbing up a chronometer, which the captain and mate of one of the small sailing vessels were bargaining for; and as it was difficult for more than three people to stand in the little shop at once, Patience paused before entering.

"I am waiting to speak to Mr. Boyd," the lady—for so she looked—said.

"I dare say he will be at liberty directly," Patience said. "It is a very small shop, and too full of goods for its size."

"Do you happen to know if Mr. Boyd has a little girl living with him? She is now just short of nine years old. She is very—"

The voice suddenly faltered, and Patience hastened to say—

"She is a darling child. Mr. Boyd has adopted her, and he calls her Joy. We all call her Joy—little Miss Joy. Do you know anything about her?"

The lady grasped Mrs. Harrison's arm.

"Let me see Mr. Boyd," she said. "Wait till I see him."

The bargain in the shop was now completed, and the captain and mate were departing with their chronometer, when Uncle Bobo sang out to Patience—

"Glad to see you; the little one aloft is just hungry for a sight of you. Bet isn't come yet. She's to help her old grannie before she starts."

A bevy of little girls on their way to school now came up with flowers, and some ripe plums in a basket.

"Please will you give these to little Miss Joy?" the eldest of the four said, "with our love. Please, Mr. Boyd, how is she? is she better?"

"So they say, my dear; so they say. I wish I could say so too. But—well—never mind. Here, Mrs. Patience, take 'em aloft to the child. And now, ma'am, what can I show you?" Mr. Boyd said, turning to the lady.

"The child—you call—little Miss Joy," was the reply, in faint tones. "Mr. Boyd, you don't know me, and Mrs. Harrison does not know me. I was once Maggie Skinner, and Little Joy is my child!"

Uncle Bobo looked with a keen glance from under his bushy grey eyebrows into the lady's face.

"You Maggie Skinner! Well, I never!"

"Yes, I have had a great deal of trouble; but it is over now."

"Sit down; sit down," Uncle Bobo said, pushing a high round stool with a slippery leather top, the only seat for which the shop could afford room. "Sit ye down; but surely you look too old to be Maggie Skinner!"

"I have had many troubles. Oh! Mr. Boyd, can you forgive me? When my darling child was a baby, I wanted bread. My husband died just when she was eighteen months old; I had not a shilling in the world; there was only the workhouse before me, and I could not—no, I could not take my precious child there. So I walked here from Ipswich. I remembered you had a kind heart—so I laid her here on your door-step and stood watching till you came and took her up, and I knew you would be good to her; but I dared not face my mother. I wandered alone all that night; and early in the morning, before any one was stirring, I came to look up at this house. As I stood listening, I heard my baby's little cough. Some one was crooning over her and playing with her."

"That was Susan. Hi, Sue! come this way," exclaimed Mr. Boyd.

Susan came blundering down the stairs, asking—

"What do you want? I was just giving the precious child her breakfast. She seems a bit brighter this morning."

"What is the matter with her?" Maggie Chanter asked. "Is she ill? is she ill?"

"She was knocked down by a runaway horse last June, and hurt her back. What do you know about the child?"

"I am her mother?" was the answer. "Oh! I thank you all for being kind to her." And then a burst of passionate tears choked the poor mother.

Patience Harrison's kind arms were round her in a moment.

"My dear," she said, "God is very good to us. Do not fret; you trusted this little one to His care, and He has not forgotten you. Little Miss Joy is loved by every one; she is the sweetest and best of little darlings."

"Ah! I am so afraid she may not love me," the poor mother said. "She may think I was cruel to desert her; but what could I do? I knew Mr. Boyd had a kind heart; but many, oh! many a time I have repented of what I did. As I wandered back to the quay that morning I saw a new registry office I had never seen before. I waited till it was open, and went in. A man-servant was waiting with me, and he went into the manager's room first. Presently the manager came out.

"What place do you want?' she asked,

"Any place,' I replied. 'A maid——'

"I think she'll do,' the man said.

"Then he told me his young mistress was married a month before, and was to sail from London Docks that night for India. The maid who was to have attended her was sickening of scarlet fever; the lady was at her wits' end; she was staying at Lord Simon's, near Yarmouth. 'Come out,' he said, 'and see her at once.'

"I went, and I was instantly engaged. I told my story in a few words, and the lady believed me. Strange to say, she had a photograph taken by my husband, with the name Ralph Chanter on the back. She remembered him and the time when he was taking portraits here. Well, I served

her till she died, dear lady, and never returned to England till last week. She has left me a legacy, which will enable me to set up a business, and make a home for my child. You'll give her back to me, Mr. Boyd?"

Uncle Bobo's face was a study as he listened to this story, told brokenly, and interrupted by many tears.

"It will be kind of hard," he said at last. "Yes, it will be *kind of hard*," with desperate emphasis. "But," he said, heavily slapping his leg, "I'll do what is just and right."

"I know you will, I know you will," Patience Harrison said; "but, oh! I am so sorry for you, dear Uncle Bobo."

"Let me see my child," Maggie Chanter said. "Let me see her; and yet, oh, how I dread it! Who will take me to her? Will you take me? Will you tell the story, Mr. Boyd?"

"No, no, my dear, don't ask me; let Patience Harrison do it; let her. I can't, and that's the truth."

Then Patience Harrison mounted the narrow stairs, and pausing at the door said, "We must be careful, she is very weak."

Maggie bowed her head in assent, and then followed Patience into the room.

"Oh, Goody, I am *so* glad you are come!" and the smile on Joy's face was indeed like a sunbeam. "Bet has not come yet. I don't like to vex her, but she does blunder so. Susan calls her Blunder-buss; isn't that funny of Susan?"

Then Joy turned her head, and caught sight of the figure on the threshold.

"Why doesn't she come in?" Joy said; "she looks very kind; and see what flowers and plums the girls have brought me as they went to school!"

"Joy, darling Joy," Patience said, "you have often said you wished you had known your mother."

"Have I? You are like my mother now."

"But what if I were to tell you your very own mother is come, Joy?" And then, pointing to Maggie, she said, "There she is!"

The excitement and agitation was all on one side. The mother tried in vain to conceal her deep emotion. Joy, on the contrary, was quite calm, and said, looking at Patience—

"Is it true? *is* this my mother?"

"Yes, yes; your poor unhappy mother. Can you love her, little Joy? Can you forgive her for leaving you to Mr. Boyd?"

"Why, yes," Joy said brightly, "of course I can; he has been ever so good to me, and I do love him so."

Then Patience Harrison slipped away, and left the mother and the child together.

"The meeting is well over," she said as she returned to the shop.

"But the parting isn't over," was poor Uncle Bobo's lament; "and I tell you what, when it comes it will break my heart. I shan't have nothing left to live for; and the sooner I cut my cable the better."

Patience Harrison felt that it was useless to offer comfort just then, and she remembered Bet had not arrived as usual, and turned out of the row. Towards the market-place, on the way to Mrs. Skinner's cottage, she met George Paterson. His face brightened, as it always did, when they met.

"Well," he said, "have the bride and bride-groom come home?"

"Yes," she replied, "and I have given notice to quit."

"You have!" he said joyfully; "then you will come to me?"

"No, George, no—not yet."

"Not *yet!* When, then?" he asked quickly. "I was reading in the paper the other day, that when a man is not heard of for seven years it is lawful to marry another. It is getting on for twice seven years since you were left desolate."

"My dear kind friend," Patience said, "I have waited so long and prayed so often to be shown the right path, that I feel sure God will not leave me without an answer; and till I am certain that

my husband is taken away by death, I could not be the wife of another man."

"Then you may wait till you are a hundred," George said impatiently. "How *can* you ever know?"

"Dear George, be patient with me. Do not be angry with me. I have asked God for guidance, and He will give it in His own time."

"I am wrong to be hard on you, I know," was the reply; "but to see you drifting alone, and with no home, is enough to madden any man when a home is ready for you."

"I have got some strange news for you," Patience said, trying to change the subject. "Our little Joy is Maggie Skinner's child. She left her when destitute on Mr. Boyd's door-step."

"How do you know?"

"Because she is here in Yarmouth, and I have just left her and her child together."

"Well, wonders never cease! and I suppose you know why Joe Skinner has left the office?"

"That he may get entire rule in my poor sister's home, and grind every penny out of her. The reason is plain enough."

"Ah! but there's another reason. He is dismissed from the office for certain irregularities in the cash. He has narrowly escaped prosecution—so I hear."

"Oh, George, then our suspicions about that little cash-box are right!"

"It looks like it," George said, as Patience's eyes shone with a wonderful light of hope. "It looks like it; and when the boy comes home, we will see his character cleared."

"*When* he comes home! Oh, another 'when,' another waiting time!" Patience sighed out, "There is a word which gives me comfort, however, and I am always hearing it, as if it were whispered to me: 'If it tarry, wait for it.'"

"You find waiting easier than I do," George said.

"Easy!" she said, clasping her hands together. "Easy! oh, only God knows how hard!"

Then she turned sorrowfully away from him, and pursued her way alone to look for Bet.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SPIRIT OF PEACE.

Bet had been sent on an errand for her grandmother, and when Patience came up to her she was laden with a heavy basket of market produce. She was bending under the weight she carried, and as Patience joined her she set down the basket and wiped her hot face with her handkerchief.

"Is little Miss Joy worse?" she asked eagerly, "I couldn't come early, for grandmother wanted me to scrub out the room Joe uses, and the passage; and then I had to change my frock and go to the market. I met the girls going to Miss Bayliff's, and they laughed at me, and said they supposed I was so clever I had left school because there was no more to learn; and they laughed and jeered at me as they daren't have done if little Miss Joy had been there. But as she loves me a little, and never laughs at me, I don't mind."

"I thought I should meet you, Bet, and I came along to tell you some news."

"Not that Jack is come? Oh my!"

"No; my wanderer is not come home; but another has—your Aunt Maggie."

Bet stared in Mrs. Harrison's face with open mouth.

"My Aunt Maggie! she that went away! I have got her picture in a box. I showed it to little Miss Joy that last evening she was ever running about, and she came home with me."

"Bet, that Aunt Maggie is Joy's mother."

"How do you know?"

"She is with Joy now. I have left them together."

"Are you come to tell grannie? She has been so mopy since the wedding. Uncle Joe had a breeze with her just before he married. She says she can't get along living in this house alone with me. Come and see her, do; and tell her about Aunt Maggie. I think you must tell her that."

"But I do not know your grandmother very well. I have scarcely spoken a dozen words to her in my life."

"I feel afraid to tell her," Bet said. "Do come along, please, Mrs. Harrison."

Patience did not like to refuse the earnest pleading of poor Bet. Just as they reached the back door—for Bet never entered at the front—she paused.

"Little Miss Joy won't care for me, or no one, now that she has got her mother. I say, is it wicked? I almost wish Aunt Maggie had never come back. Little Miss Joy will belong to her now, and—she won't care for me."

"Bet," Patience said, "all love that is very, very strong for any person is likely to lead to jealousy; take care, for jealousy would make you unhappy. True love thinks nothing of itself in comparison with the person beloved. Whatever is for the good and for the happiness of any one we love, should make us happy also. Try to see that."

"I can't," said poor Bet. "I'd like little Miss Joy to love me, that I would; and I thought she was beginning to love me, and now she'll have her mother, and never want me."

"Or *me*," Mrs. Harrison said. "I might say the same; but I think it would be a great mistake if I did, for I believe dear little Joy will love you and me and Uncle Bobo just the same as ever."

"Do you?" Bet said; "that's good to hear;" and then Bet opened the door and went up the long narrow passage to the front of the house.

Mrs. Skinner was seated by the table in the kitchen, stiff and straight; her hands were folded, and she only nodded as Bet put the basket on the table with both her tired arms.

"Grannie, Mrs. Harrison is come to see you."

"I don't want Mrs. Harrison," was the reply.

"I won't stay long, Mrs. Skinner," Patience said. Mrs. Skinner's back was turned to the door, and she never moved her position.

Patience advanced to her side and said—

"Bet thought you would like to hear some good news."

"There is never good news for me," was the answer, in a tone so hard and yet so pathetic that Patience's heart was touched.

"A wanderer has come home," Mrs. Harrison said.

"Oh! your scapegraces I suppose. My son Joe has a very bad opinion of him—I can tell you that."

Mrs. Harrison took no notice of this thrust, but said—

"No, my boy has not come home; but your daughter has returned. She is little Joy's mother."

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Skinner; "I don't believe it."

"Well, it is true; and you have only to come to Mr. Boyd's to convince yourself of the truth. If other tokens were wanting, the likeness between dear little Joy and her mother is striking; and, besides—"

"There, I don't want to hear any more," Mrs. Skinner said. "I'm a miserable woman—that's what I am; but I want no pity, and I want nobody or nothing."

Patience Harrison ventured a little nearer, and said, "Come and see our dear little Joy and her mother. You will feel happier then. God will comfort your sore heart, if you turn to Him. Do come and satisfy yourself that you have a child and a grandchild, who will love you if you will let them."

Mrs. Skinner took no further notice of what Patience Harrison said, and resolutely turned her head away. But just as Bet was leaving the kitchen with her visitor she said:

"You stay at home, and don't go gadding off where you are not wanted. Bide at home and do your duty. Do you hear?"

"You had better stay," Patience said, "and be patient. You are sure to hear something from

Aunt Maggie before the day is over."

It was not till the evening was closing in that a gentle tap was heard at the door, and Bet, opening it, saw her aunt standing there.

"You are Bet, I suppose. Little Joy sent me," she whispered. "I was afraid to come till mother wished for me; but Joy begged me to come, and tell her I am sorry I offended her. For, Bet, I ought not to have deserted her, and I see it all now. Where is your grandmother?"

"Sitting in the parlour knitting; but she won't speak, and she looks very strange. I've had such a long day, Aunt Maggie, watching the clock, and thinking it would never end. I have got your picture," she added, "and it is very like dear little Miss Joy. *You* are not like it now."

"No, no; trouble and sorrow have changed me. Poor Bet! I remember coming to kiss you that night when I went away. Poor little thing, I pitied you. But, Bet, I ought never to have acted as I did; and God has been kinder to me than I deserve; for my darling found a true friend, and if only she gets well I shall be a happy mother. I think how proud her poor father would have been of such a dear child."

"She is dear!" said Bet, in an ecstasy of delight. "But there's grannie calling; you had better come."

"Bet, who are you gossiping with out there?" cried Mrs. Skinner. "Shut the door at once, and come in, will you?"

Then Maggie Chanter, trembling and half choked with emotion, went up to the table where, by the light of a dull little paraffin lamp, Mrs. Skinner sat.

"Mother!"

Mrs. Skinner looked up over her spectacles.

"Mother, I am so sorry. Please forgive me, and let me comfort your old age, mother! My little Joy sent me. She does so want to see you, and to know you will forgive me."

"Forgive you! What do you care for my forgiveness? You chose your own way, and made your own bed, and it isn't my fault you found it hard."

"Come to Joy, mother. Hear her dear little voice asking you to—to be kind. Will you come?"

"I'll see about it."

"But come now; it is not very dark; there's a moon rising. Oh, mother, come!"

There was a pause, and then Mrs. Skinner said—

"Get me my cloak and bonnet, Bet. I suppose for peace sake I shall have to go."

But Mrs. Skinner's voice trembled, and Bet saw her hand shake so that she could hardly fasten her cloak. She followed her daughter silently out of the house, only saying to Bet, "Be sure to lock the door."

Bet was left alone, and had again nothing to do but to count the clock's chimes as it struck the quarters. At last, lulled by the sound of the in-coming tide and the low moan of the wind, she fell asleep in her grandmother's chair.

She was awakened by the sound of a laugh—a discordant laugh. It came from her Uncle Joe's old room. Presently there was the chink of money, and Bet, creeping softly to the end of the passage, listened attentively.

"Come, that's a good card," said the speaker; "you are in luck's way."

"Oh! I know what I'm about now; we'll have shilling stakes to-night."

"Won't your pretty bride wonder where you are?"

"She'll be taught *not* to wonder, that's all."

"Has that young hopeful ever turned up?" was the next question, as the cards were shuffled.

"No, and it will be the worse for him when he does."

Silence reigned after this, and it was evident that Joe Skinner thought his mother and Bet were safe in bed.

Bet crept upstairs. At last she heard the clock strike eleven, and then the three men below departed, noiselessly as they came, by the back door, of which Joe Skinner had the key.

Bet pinched herself to keep awake till she heard her grandmother's step at the front of the

house. Running down, she opened the front door before there was time to ring.

Mrs. Skinner came in as she had gone out, silent and self-restrained.

"Go back to bed, child," she said; "you'll catch your death of cold."

"But you are so cold, grannie; let me make up the fire, and get you a cup of tea; let me."

Mrs. Skinner said nothing, but she shivered, and leaned her head against the back of the chair.

Bet instantly made her preparations, and the kettle was soon boiling, and the cup of tea ready. The crackling of the wood, and the sudden blaze, seemed to thaw poor Mrs. Skinner mentally and bodily.

"You are a good girl," she said; "go to bed now."

As Bet was leaving the kitchen she looked back, and saw her grandmother with her head bowed on her hands, and heard a low, sobbing cry. The hardly-wrung tears of old age, the painful, difficult sobs of a sore and seared heart, how sad they are! Bet did not return to her grandmother, but, softly closing the door, left her, saying to herself—

"When I'm bad, and crying my heart out, I don't like to be watched. I dare say grannie is like me."

Then, faithful and loyal-hearted, she climbed the narrow stairs, and lay down this time to hear no disturbance till the morning dawned.

There are moments when the soul is brought, as it were, into the very presence of the all-loving Saviour of the lost. In the silent watches of that night the words which had been spoken by a child had a strange and unwonted power.

"Grannie," little Joy had said—"Grannie, God is Love; and as He loves us and forgives us, we'll love and forgive one another, won't we? and we'll be so happy together—you, and I, and mother, and Uncle Bobo, and dear Goody."

"Happy! No, I shall never be happy," Mrs. Skinner had replied. Little Miss Joy was disappointed; but she quietly said:

"Yes, you *will*, if you make other folks happy, grannie. *That's the secret.*"

Was it indeed the secret? Again and again, like a breath of heaven, gentle and subtle, an influence unknown before seemed to touch Mrs. Skinner's heart in those solemn, lonely hours as she sat pondering over the sad, sad past.

The Holy Spirit had convinced her of sin, and she was turning by that divine power from darkness to a glimmering of light. When the grey, cold dawn of the autumn morning crept through the chinks of the shutters, she went softly to her room, and lay down with the relief a tired labourer feels who has laid down a heavy burden he has borne through the long hot day. That burden was the burden of harsh, unforgiving judgment and remorse. It had been rolled away, like that of one of old, at the foot of the cross—the cross of Him who, in the pains of a cruel death, could pray for those who had done Him wrong, and say, "Father, forgive them."

CHAPTER XIII.

A TOKEN AT LAST.

The ship that had picked up Colley and Jack Harrison in mid-ocean, and saved them from the lingering death of starvation, was bound for the islands of the South Pacific, and the captain told them that they must be content to be absent from England till the following spring. He had to call at several of the islands, and exchange cargo, so that even with fair weather their return voyage could not be made under nine months.

Poor Colley was slow to recover; indeed, he never did recover fully from the effects of those terrible days and nights at sea. But Jack was young and strong, and he and Toby were soon, as old Colley said, "hale and hearty as ever they were."

Jack earned his biscuit and won favour as well; and the captain's kind heart was touched by Colley's history of what had happened to his old mother and his little children at home, and the fear he had that he should never see them again.

"I am cut to the heart that I can't work as a able-bodied seaman should," Colley would say. "But God will reward you for your goodness to me and the boy."

The captain puffed his short pipe, and said:

"I am an old hand now; but I say, Once get a taste of shipwreck like yours, and you are cured of your craze for the sea. Not that I am chicken-hearted, and I'd stand to my ship as your captain did—ay, and go down with her if needs must; but for all that it is a roughish life, and a terrible trial for them that love you and are left ashore."

"Ay! ay!" old Colley said, "there's the pinch. The youngster's father made off to better himself now ten years ago, and he's never been heard of from that day to this. Dead, of course; only the poor woman, his wife, won't believe it—so the lad says."

A day or two after this the captain called Jack, and said:

"The mate wants a word with you in private."

"What have I done to offend him, sir?" Jack said.

"Don't jump at conclusions, youngster. Did I say anything was wrong? Be off with you."

Jack went to the mate's berth, and found him sitting cross-legged on the edge, and looking mysterious.

"Is your name Harrison, young 'un?"

"Yes," Jack said.

"Do you hail from Yarmouth?"

"Yes," said Jack again.

"Where's your father?"

"He was lost at sea—so we think; but we never heard a word about it, and mother thinks he may be still alive."

"Did he own several small herring boats, and have a share in a curing-house, before he went a-whaling?"

"Yes," Jack said, growing more and more wondering and excited by these questions.

"Look here, youngster. When I was a boy, eleven years ago, I was working on a whaleship, and your father was aboard. His name was John Harrison, hailing from Yarmouth."

"Oh!" Jack said. "Where is he—do you know?"

"No, my lad; let us hope his soul is gone aloft, but his body is lost. We had dragged our boat across a field of ice for some miles, on the look-out for our ship, which we had left, stored with provisions, in open water. We were pretty near starving, for we had missed the track, and the men said they would not go on another step. But your father, boy, had a brave heart, such as I never saw before or since; and he said, if those that were too chicken-hearted to go on, would stay where they were for a few hours, he would go ahead and find the ship, as he knew perfectly well we were near it, and near a village of the folk they call Esquimaux. One youngster, just such another as you, said, 'I'm your man, captain'; and they set off with a good heart. We that were left turned our boat bottom upwards, and a sorry set we were, frost-bitten and starving. We huddled together to keep each other warm—warm! why, I am cold now when I think of it; and look here, I lost a finger and the end of a thumb that same time."

"How?" Jack asked.

"How? Frost-bitten, of course. Well, those two that left us never came back, and never were seen again. We waited till we were so weak we could scarce crawl, and then two of us—for three of the fellows died—made our way back, and found a ship which took us aboard; but never a word of your father and the young 'un from that day."

"My father!" said Jack. "Are you sure?"

"Well, I am as sure as I can be of anything. I was rummaging in my locker t' other day, after we had picked you and old Colley up, and I knew your name, and I found an old handkerchief that belonged to John Harrison, and I'll proceed to produce it, lad."

The mate then dragged from the depths of the locker a torn and ragged red handkerchief, with yellow spots, and in the corner in white letters was marked with thread, "J. H."

"Yes, boy, there's the article, and your father gave it to me to tie up my leg, which had a bad wound. He was uncommon loth to part with it, but there never was a man with a kinder heart, never. He was a bit fiery and off at a tangent, always thinking he was right and every one else

wrong; but he was a fine fellow, and you bid fair to be like him. Here, take the handkerchief, and you can show it to your mother. She'll know it; for John said to me, 'I'll let you have it for your poor leg; but when I come back you must give it to me again, because my wife tied it round my neck when I bid her good-bye, and I value it.' I remember he said, 'She is a right good woman is my wife, and I'll see her and the boy again, please God. I never lose heart.' Well, he may see you again in the next world, but never in this, boy, never in this; he is dead and gone long ago."

Jack folded the handkerchief, and put it in his pocket. He felt strangely affected by the sailor's story, and could only say:

"If ever I see my mother again she shall have this token. She has often prayed for a token that my father was dead, or a sign that he was living; and now she will have it."

Then Jack returned to his post on the deck, and, throwing himself down behind some loose crates, found himself sobbing bitterly.

The homeward voyage was prosperous, and it was on a bright August evening that the white cliffs of old England came in sight. In another hour Jack and his old friend found themselves dropping down with the tide to St. Catherine's Docks.

They were penniless, and how to get back to Yarmouth was a puzzle. Jack could walk, but Colley could only hobble with the help of a stick. The captain was kindly-disposed, and at parting gave Jack a few shillings, saying he had more than earned his biscuit; while the mate said he felt quite downhearted at losing him.

"Tell 'ee what, lad," Colley said, "I know there's a place where the shipwrecked fishermen's folk hang out. Let's enquire for it, and may be they'll give us a helping hand."

So the two made their way through the crowded thoroughfares to the place which has been a refuge for many in like circumstances. The kindness of their reception greatly cheered old Colley, and they were put up for the night, while inquiries were made about the *Galatea*, and the truth of their story.

"The *Galatea* had been lost, with all hands," was the answer from Lloyd's; and the captain of the *Claudia*, the ship which had picked the poor waifs up in mid-ocean, gave both man and boy an excellent character.

"The old geezer was useless, but I didn't grudge him his berth. What's the world like, if we can't hold out a helping hand to one another in trouble?"

This was all satisfactory, and money was provided to pay the railway journey to Yarmouth, while Jack's few shillings were expended in a pair of second-hand boots for himself, and a new jersey—that which had served for a flag of distress in mid-ocean being so full of holes that he presented a very ragged appearance.

Home at last! Home! Yes, where his mother was, was Home. He would not care about the cold looks of his aunt: he would bear even Mr. Skinner's gibes and scoffs: he would bear everything for his mother's sake. And then, at last he had tidings for her!

Colley was put down at a station before Yarmouth was reached, as it was nearer the home of his old mother, who looked after his little ones.

"For I married late in life, my boy," he said to Jack, "and lost my poor wife almost as soon as I'd got her. She just lived to be the mother of the youngest of the three children, and then she died. The sailor's life is a hard one, and the wives of sailors have a hard time, boy! The men grow old, like me, before their time. Why, I'm but just over fifty years old, and I feel a vast deal more like seventy. Take my advice, boy, and give up the sea. You are a good scholar, and you are the only son of your mother. Bear all your aunt's hard words, and live ashore, and be a comfort to her. You have had your lesson. God has given you a pretty hard one to learn, first page! But never mind—so much the better for you. Those days and nights were about the worst I ever went through, and I've had a taste of dangers, I can tell you. Don't you forget them, nor the Lord's mercy to you and me in delivering us from the dreadful death of starvation. Don't forget it."

"Forget it!" Jack said. "Why, I dream of it most nights, and see little Peter's dying eyes. I——"

Jack's voice was choked with tears, and old Colley wrung his hand, while Toby wriggled up to him, and licked his face with silent sympathy.

Colley stumbled out of the carriage with Toby in his arms when the station was reached, and so they parted.

In a few minutes more Jack found himself in Yarmouth, and was making his way towards the row. His only thought was of his mother and little Miss Joy. He looked up the familiar row, and then darted through it till he came to the little milliner's shop. The widow's caps still showed in the window, and there was a straw bonnet trimmed, and some artificial flowers, lying on a very dusty bit of black velvet. The window that used to be so bright looked dim, and the brass ledge before it dull and stained. Altogether there was a dejected appearance about the place. The door

was open, and Jack entered cautiously.

His aunt was sitting behind the counter waiting for customers, who were slow to come; for the business had very much declined since Mr. Skinner had taken the command and Mrs. Harrison had left the house.

Mrs. Skinner looked very different from the Miss Pinckney of scarcely a year ago. She had a dirty, faded look, and her face was pinched and miserable. When she saw a sailor boy standing by the counter, she rose and said—

"What for you? Have you brought a message from any one?"

"No, Aunt Pinckney. Don't you know me? Where's my mother?"

Mrs. Skinner was for a moment speechless. Then she raised her shrill voice—

"Joe! Joe! come here; the young thief is come back."

Mr. Skinner, who was apparently smoking in the back parlour and taking life easily, now appeared.

"What are you making such a row about? screeching like a poll-parrot!"

Days of courtship and days of matrimony are apt to differ, in cases like that of Mr. and Mrs. Skinner!

Then, having delivered himself of this polite question, Mr. Skinner caught sight of Jack.

"You! oh! it's you, is it? Well, the police have been looking for you, and I'll just give you in charge."

Jack, utterly bewildered, was for the moment speechless. Then he said—

"Hands off! What do you mean? Where's my mother?"

"She is not here; so you needn't think any of her crying and fuss will avail. I'll give you in charge unless you confess."

"Confess what?" said Jack, wriggling away from Mr. Skinner's grip. "Hands off, I say! I am not going to run away. What am I to confess?"

"Take him into the back parlour, Joe. You'll have the neighbours coming in: take him out of the shop."

"Hold your tongue!" was the rejoinder. "I shall do as I choose."

"Let me go and call Mr. Boyd," Jack said. "He will tell me where my mother is. Let him be a witness of what you say, and what charge you have against me."

Jack now looked across the row for the first time, and saw a young man standing at the door of the little stuffy shop, which, unlike its opposite neighbour, had grown smarter, and had a lot of ships' lanterns hanging over the door, and showy aneroids and compasses in the window.

"Where's Mr. Boyd? Where's little Joy's Uncle Bobo?"

"Gone! He has sold the business; he is gone right away."

"Gone! And where's Joy—little Miss Joy? I tell you I will know. And where is my mother?"

"Look here, youngster! This matter must be cleared up. You'll not be let off so easy; but if you confess, well—we shan't be hard on you."

"Confess *what?*" Jack shouted now. He was getting very angry, and repeated, "Confess *what?*"

"Oh, that's all very fine! Perhaps you've forgotten you ran away and broke your poor mother's heart, and took my little cash-box with you with four pounds odd money in it," said his aunt.

"It's convenient to forget. You'd better not try to fool *me*," said Mr. Skinner. "Your aunt's key of that drawer was in her little key-basket. You slyly took it out, and when the house was quiet, opened the drawer and put the box in your pocket I see!"

Jack's face grew crimson. He felt very much inclined to fly at Mr. Skinner's throat, and pummel him well with his strong young fist. But the vision of his mother and little Miss Joy rose before him, and with a desperate effort he controlled himself.

"Prove what you say, and don't call me a thief till you have proved me one."

"Well, it's my duty—my painful duty," said Mr. Skinner, "to lock you up till I have fetched a

policeman, and communicated with your mother."

"You needn't *lock* me up," said Jack proudly. "If I say I'll stay here, I'll stay. Indeed, I will stay till you have made it all clear. Your little cash-box! Aunt Pinckney——"

"No, no, not Aunt Pinckney; I am Mrs. Skinner now."

The tone was so sad that Jack's boyish heart was touched.

"Do you think I could steal a penny of yours, aunt, when you had kept me and mother all those years? Will you send for her? and I will stay till she comes."

But Mr. Skinner pushed Jack into the kitchen behind the parlour.

He had just turned the key in the lock, when a voice was heard in the shop—Bet's voice.

"I have brought you some fresh eggs, and half a pound of butter, Aunt Skinner," she said. "Aunt Maggie sent them with her love. What is amiss, Aunt?"

"Child," Mrs. Skinner said, "Jack is come home. Your uncle has locked him up in the kitchen. Hush! here he is."

"Well, what are you prying about here for?" Mr. Skinner said. "Oh, eggs! My dear, poach me a couple for supper; I'm fond of poached eggs."

But Bet stood on one foot speechless by the counter, where she had put the basket.

"What do you say Jack stole?"

"My little cash-box, the night he ran away; but I don't want to be hard on the boy—my only sister's child. I'll forgive him if he'll confess."

Bet stood pondering for another moment, and then she said—

"I've got another errand to do. I'll come back for the basket."

And Bet was off, as if on the wings of the wind—off to the Denes and the little lonely red-brick house, which was shut up and had a board on a pole in the front garden, with "To Let. Inquire for the key at Mr. Skinner's, Market Row," painted in white letters on it.

Bet looked right and left; there was no one in sight, and she went round to the back, and found, to her great joy, an old trowel with half the handle broken, which she seized eagerly. She went down on her hands and knees, and dug and burrowed with her fingers in the soft, sandy soil. Her heart beat wildly with hope and fear; her hat fell back, and her tawny hair fell over her shoulders. The light of the April evening was waning; she had not a moment to lose.

"It was here—it was here—it must have been just here," she cried. Some people passing on the raised path where Uncle Bobo had sat on the evening of little Miss Joy's accident turned to look at her once, and wondered what she was doing, digging there on hands and knees.

At last Bet stopped, and, raising her head and clasping her hands, said—

"Little Miss Joy would tell me to pray to God to help me to find it. He would hear *her*. Will He hear me, I wonder?"

Then poor Bet uttered a few words, calling on God, who saw everything, to show her where what she sought lay hid.

She redoubled her efforts, and moving a little further from the house, she dug another hole till she came to some bricks. She lifted them, and there was the little cash-box—empty now, but, oh! of what priceless value!

Bet gathered up her stray tools, and putting on her hat, ran off again along the sand by the sea-shore, now left hard by the retreating tide, on and on to the farther end of that part of Yarmouth where a road, then lately made, led towards Gorleston. Breathless and panting she reached the first of two pretty houses standing together, with a strip of garden in front, bright now with wallflowers and hardy hepaticas and celandines.

Under the porch of the first, smoking his pipe, sat Uncle Bobo; and warmly covered with a rug, in a reclining chair by his side, was little Miss Joy.

Maggie Chanter was sowing some seeds in the window-box of the next house, and Mrs. Harrison was standing by the porch, waiting and watching. She had her knitting in her hand, but her eyes were on the sea, with the same wistful longing in them as of old.

"Jack is come home. Jack!" gasped Bet. "They say he stole the cash-box, but—but—I've found it. Quick! take it to Uncle Joe, and say I found it in the ground at the back of grannie's old home."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WAITING IS OVER.

Sudden news, whether it be good or bad, is always a shock; and when Patience Harrison caught the cry repeated by Maggie Chanter, "Jack is come home!" and echoed by little Miss Joy's silvery voice, and old Uncle Bobo's bass, "Jack is come home!" she sank back in the porch and gasped for breath.

Presently the little gate was opened by George Paterson, who hastily asked—

"What is the matter? Jack come home? Well, that's good news."

"Yes," Maggie Chanter said; "but Bet there has some other news, which is not so good. They dare to say Jack stole the cash-box the day he ran off, and they have locked him up."

"But he didn't, he didn't," Bet said, recovering her breath at last. "Here it is; take it to Uncle Joe, and tell him where I found it."

"Yes; take it," said Uncle Bobo; "I'd go myself, only I can't stir my old stumps as fast as you can. Paterson, you are the man for the business."

George Paterson was looking at poor Patience, who seemed utterly overwhelmed with the tidings; and behind her stood old Mrs. Skinner, with her arm round her, letting her head rest against her shoulder.

"There, there," she said, as Patience began to sob convulsively; "there, there, you've naught to cry for. Your boy is come back; and if Bet is to be believed, my son is the thief, not yours. You needn't break your heart. What made you go and look for the box, Bet? What made you think of it?"

"Oh, grannie, I—I saw Uncle Joe bury it in the ground one night! I never knew what it was till I heard a talk about a little box that was lost."

"Well, well, the box is found, and now I am off to bring the boy to his mother. Bet, you come along."

"No," Bet said; "I dare not, Mr. Paterson, I dare not."

"I will come with you, Mr. Paterson," Maggie said. "I am not afraid of Joe—I never was. He ought to be ashamed of himself, and I expect there is worse behind."

"I have no doubt about it," said George Paterson, as he and Maggie set out together.

The gardens of the two pretty neat houses were divided by low iron railings. One was inhabited by Mr. Boyd, old Susan, and Mrs. Chanter and her darling Joy; the other by Mrs. Skinner and Bet and Patience Harrison.

"I can't part with the child," Uncle Bobo had said: "I'd rather cut off my right arm." And, indeed, parting from the little dark shop in the row, and the darker parlour behind it, where he had lived for so many years, had been almost like cutting off a right arm to Uncle Bobo. But when he heard the doctors say that little Miss Joy ought to have fresh air, and that the bedroom where she lay so patiently week after week, with only the occasional variety of being carried "to the leads," where the memorable tea-parties used to be held, was not healthful for her, he decided to sell the business, and remove. What a removal it was! and even now Uncle Bobo said the light was too much for his eyes, and that he liked the shade of the row better than the glare of the sea. But little Miss Joy was so dear to the old man's heart, that he gave even this great proof of his love. The two little houses, away from the bustle and noise of the busy seaport, were hired, and the sitting-room was to be let this season, with one bedroom, to any visitor to Yarmouth who would like the quiet, broken only by the distant murmur of the sea, or the voice of birds in the low copses which had been planted round a house of some pretension not far off.

As soon as George Paterson and Aunt Maggie were gone, Joy said—

"Bet, go and ask dear Goody to come here. I want her so much."

"What do you want, my lamb?" Uncle Bobo said. "Hi, Mrs. Harrison, you are wanted. Little Miss Joy wants you."

That name had always a charm about it, and Mrs. Harrison raised herself, and went slowly, and like one in a dream, down the narrow garden path, out at the little gate, and in at the next. She was met by Bet, who threw her arms round her, and said—"You go and sit with Joy while I go to poor grannie. Oh, I am sorry for grannie; but I *am* glad for you!"

"Here, Mrs. Harrison, take my chair," Uncle Bobo said, "and sit by the child. You'll feel better then. She is the peace-maker—bless her—and every one is the better for being alongside of her."

Yes; it was most true. When Susan was put out with new-fangled ways; when Mrs. Skinner relapsed into her old silence, only broken by fault-finding; when Maggie grew impatient of her mother's strange temper; when little breezes disturbed the waters of domestic life in the two homes—then it was that little Miss Joy's presence was sought, and her gentle words were truly like oil on troubled waters.

Have we not all felt the presence of such peace-makers to be as a breath from heaven? And are they not most frequently found amongst those who have had the cross of suffering laid upon them, and who are shut out from many of the pursuits and enjoyments of others?

Blessed indeed are the maintainers of peace; blessed, thrice blessed, are the child-comforters who can love and pity the erring and soothe the sorrowful, and who by their own beautifully simple child-faith encourage others to seek after a like precious gift.

Mrs. Harrison sat with Joy's hand in hers for the next hour, an hour of painful waiting and expectancy. Joy did not say much, but now and then she would put in a little word of her own thoughts.

"There is the big star! Look, Goody! isn't it beautiful? Oh, I do like to see the whole sky, and all the stars now! God seems to look at me as I look at them. It was good of Him to let me come to live here, though I loved the dear old row very much when I could run about. Then it is so nice to see mother going about making everything pretty; and doesn't she work beautifully! That last dress she made was lovely. She is teaching me to work too. Don't you care to hear my chatter, dear Goody? You are thinking Jack may come every minute," as Mrs. Harrison heaved a heavy sigh. "I talk to make the time seem shorter—that's all. Uncle Bobo is standing by the gate; he will be the first to tell us when they are coming."

It did seem a long, long time. Bet was constantly running backwards and forwards from the door of the next house to the gate; and Susan, with folded arms, was leaning against the side of the house, coming round the corner every now and then to say it was getting too cold for Miss Joy to stay in the porch.

"Oh, I am quite warm! let me wait, Susan."

"You must have your own way, I suppose, as usual," was the short reply.

Susan was fond of saying rather sharp things sometimes, to cover her real love for Joy. She had felt a natural pang of jealousy when she found the young mother had taken her place of waiting on Joy, or rather sharing the waiting with Bet and Mrs. Harrison. She was not quite kindly disposed to Maggie Chanter, and would mumble sometimes—

"It was all very well for folks to leave their children on people's doorsteps, and then when they were grown nicely, and every one loved them, it was very fine to come and claim them;" and she would say, "There's no love lost between me and Mrs. Skinner's daughter, and I don't hold with girls going off with poor sickly photographers when they might have rode in their carriage and married rich grocers."

People like Susan generally speak in the plural number when their remarks are directed to one person who is the object of their satire or reproof.

The longed-for moment came at last. As the three neared the house, George Paterson said:

"Run on and go to your mother alone, boy; she will like it best."

Jack did as he was bid, and in a few minutes he was kneeling at his mother's side, clasping her round the waist and covering her with kisses.

"Forgive me, mother dear; forgive me!"

Mrs. Harrison could only press the boy close to her heart and murmur over him tender words, while Joy's little voice said:

"Kiss me too, Jack, dear Jack. Of course every one forgives you—because God for Christ's sake has forgiven us. Oh, dear, *dear* old Jack!"

It was not till Jack was in his bed that night that his mother, kneeling by him, poured out her heart in thankfulness to God. Then he drew from under his pillow the old red and yellow handkerchief, and in a few words told the story as the sailor had told it to him.

"The token has come at last," poor Patience said. "Yes, I marked those letters on the handkerchief with my own hand. Oh, Jack! Jack! it all comes back to me, and I have had a weary time of waiting; but it is better to *know* at last."

CHAPTER XV.

THE HERITAGE OF PEACE.

The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment; and the house that is built on the sand must needs fall to ruin at last.

Mr. Skinner received the box with his accustomed composure, though he turned deadly pale. It was an *extraordinary* coincidence that the box was found in the sandy ground. How it came there he was at a loss to conjecture.

"The less said about it the better," George Paterson remarked, "and you owe this boy a full apology."

"Well, *it is* possible there is a mistake somewhere. However, we will give the youngster the benefit of the doubt, and send him home to his mother."

"Doubt!" Maggie exclaimed vehemently; "*doubt!* You stole the box, Joe, and hid it in the garden behind your house. You were *seen* to bury it; you had better make a clean breast of it."

"Oh, spare him, Maggie Chanter!" poor infatuated Mrs. Skinner said. "Joe! Joe!"

Then, with a white face and an expression on it none who saw it will ever forget, Mr. Skinner, with a wave of his long thin hand, left the house.

Nothing more was ever heard of him. The crooked paths of deceit and dishonesty can have but one end, unless by God's grace those paths are forsaken, and the strait and narrow way chosen in their place. Poor Aunt Amelia had indeed reason to rue the day when she had listened to the flattering words of the wily man. He left her with an empty purse, a ruined custom, and a sore heart. But she was now delivered from one who in her folly she had trusted, and there were many who, hearing her story, pitied her, and gave back the custom they had withdrawn.

* * * * *

Another year passed away, and it brought more peaceful times.

Perhaps Patience Paterson's life could not be called sunny or bright; but it is calm and peaceful, and she is the happy wife of a good and noble-hearted man, who had loved her faithfully for many years.

George Paterson was conscious that the deep respect he now felt for his wife would scarcely have been the same had she yielded to his wishes, and, taking it for granted that her husband was dead, had married him while his end was undecided. Patience may well set an example to others in this matter, and her evening-tide light will be clouded by no misgivings and no self reproaches.

She had asked for some token, and it was given. Through the trial of her boy's absence came the blessing of the long-looked-for tidings; and in this, as in many another step of her pilgrimage, she could feel the truth of the words, "To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness."

They took a pretty house near Gorlestone, and George became a prosperous man. Jack was taught his business as ship's carpenter, and the control exercised by his step-father was most salutary. He is likely to grow up a good and useful man.

The two houses, called by Uncle Bobo "The Home, Number One and Number Two," became popular as lodgings for single ladies and their maids, and were said to be amongst the best and most comfortable in or near Yarmouth.

Old Colley and his children were not forgotten, and were often invited to tea in the garden behind the two houses, where Uncle Bobo and Colley would exchange many stories or yarns of their early days.

Little Miss Joy did not get strong or vigorous, but she was able to walk about by the help of an arm. Uncle Bobo would sometimes hire a donkey-chair, and trudge by her side as it rolled along the esplanade, or was taken down to the edge of the water, where she loved to sit and think, and listen to the sweet music of the chime of the waves.

It was one lovely summer's evening when little Miss Joy was enjoying the air and her favourite song of the waves, that Bet, now grown a tall and less ungainly girl, came up to her with a thin, sad-looking woman dressed in black.

"I've made Aunt 'Melia come," Bet said. "I told her you wanted her, and here she is."

"I've got the camp-stool in the chair," Joy said. "Sit down, Aunt Amelia, and let us be comfortable and happy."

Mrs. Skinner shook her head.

"No, my dear, I can never be happy. I leave that to other people."

"Oh, yes, you can be happy!" little Miss Joy said.

"No, no; not with a broken heart!"

"God can mend broken hearts. Don't you know that, Aunt Amelia? 'He gives medicine to heal their sickness.'"

"Not when troubles are brought upon one's self by one's own folly and sin, my dear. No, no."

"I don't think that makes any difference," said little Miss Joy in her clear, musical voice. "He healeth those that are broken in heart; He giveth medicine to heal their sickness. He telleth the number of the stars: He calleth them all by their names. I do *love* that psalm, because it shows God cares for little things like me and my little troubles, and for great and mighty things like the stars. For, you know, I *have* my little troubles. I do long to run and skip as I used to do, and wait on Uncle Bobo and mother, when she is tired and the lodgers are rather tiresome, and poor grannie is cross, and *I* am inclined to grumble and be cross too."

"Never, never, my dear," said Mrs. Skinner.

"Well, I know I *feel* cross, and I go to God for His medicine. I wish you would go too, Aunt 'Melia."

Mrs. Skinner shook her head.

"I think grannie has gone to Him, and she is happier, I know. He will give it you if you ask Him. His medicine is love, the love He had for us when He gave us the Lord Jesus."

Mrs. Skinner still shook her head, but tears rolled down her thin, faded cheeks.

"I must be going now," she said. "Good-bye, my dear."

"Good-bye. Kiss me, Aunt 'Melia;" and then Bet, who had purposely kept apart, came up with some shells she had gathered for Joy, and said, as she had gone to fetch Aunt Amelia, she would take her home again. So they turned and left Joy, and then Uncle Bobo came down from the seat where he had been watching what passed, and, calling the donkey-boy, he told Joy it was time to be going home.

"What have you been saying to poor Mrs. Skinner?" he asked.

"Not much, dear Uncle Bobo; but, oh, I am so sorry for her, and I wish I could comfort her! I love poor Mrs. Skinner now, indeed I do."

"Love her! Well, bless your little heart, you love everybody, I think."

"Yes, I think I do, and I am so happy, Uncle Bobo. Let us go home now."

Dear little Miss Joy! Who shall say what is the guerdon she and those like her wear?

Truly those that are the maintainers of peace have a blessed heritage; for the golden fruit of righteousness is a glorious harvest for those who make peace. Yes, and for those childlike souls there is quietness and assurance for ever.

[Transcriber's note: the three illustrations between pages 53/54, 103/104, and 157/158 were missing from the source book.]

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