WONDERFUL BUT TRUE

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OR,

TALKS WITH THE WEE ONES.

Ruth Hardy bringing Flowers. (*See p.* 26.)

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Talks with the Wee Ones.

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WONDERFUL BUT TRUE,

OR

Talks with the Wee Ones.

CHAPTER I.

SNOWFLAKES.

"CLAP your hands, baby dear. You can't say, 'Pretty, pretty,' yet; but I am sure you would if you could, for when your blue eyes first opened, green leaves and spring flowers were round us everywhere, and this is the first snow you have seen.

"But I wonder what sister Bessie is

thinking of, mother's little girl is not often so quiet." And Mrs. Brown turned to the window at which her six year old Bessie had been standing quite still for some minutes, with her nose pressed almost flat against one of the panes.

"Looking at the snow, mamma," Bessie answered, as she turned to Mrs. Brown. "O mamma, I have thought of something so nice. Please will you play at keeping school? You are to be teacher, and Daisy and I will be scholars, and then you can give us a lesson all about the snow. I want to know how the snow is made, and where it comes from."

Mrs. Brown loved her little girls dearly, and was seldom too busy to tell Bessie anything it might be of use for her to know; so she sat down and drawing Bessie to her side, said, "Listen, Bessie darling, and mamma will try to tell the story of the snowflakes in such easy

LOOKING OUT OF THE WINDOW.

words that one at least of her little scholars may be able to understand and remember it.

"Look at the snowflakes again, Bessie dear. How fast they are falling. Try to count them. One, two, three. Ah! you cannot, there are so many. Not very long ago every flake of snow was a little drop of rain water. But as the air through which it had to pass was very, very cold, the rain-drop became frozen and fell to the earth, not as a drop of water, but as a flake of fine snow."

"Do you think the snowflakes are having a game of play, mamma? They seem to be trying to catch each other."

"They look very much like it, Bessie; but even the flakes of snow have some real work to do. You remember how one fine day, not very long ago, we sowed some seeds in the garden. In many gardens besides ours, and in the fields too, a great number of seeds are at work

sending tiny roots down into the earth, and pushing small blades upward, ready to peep above ground as soon as the cold, dark days of winter are past. Now many of the snowflakes will help to cover up the seeds, and so keep them warm and safe till the frosts are over. In a country called Lapland, where it is very cold in the winter, so that even the boys and girls cannot go out of doors to play, without being wrapped up in cloaks or dresses made of fur, the flakes of snow are so small that they look just like white dust or the powdered sugar you see on cakes sometimes.

"But baby seems to think our lesson is a very long one, so mother will only tell her little Bessie one thing more about the snow.

"King David, about whom you are always so pleased to hear, once said to God, 'Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.' (Ps. li. 7.)

"I think the king must have been in sad trouble when he prayed that prayer, for he had done something very wrong; but he was sorry, and though he knew the sin was like a black mark on his soul, he asked God to wash it all away. And the prayer of David was one that God loves to hear, and is always ready to answer.

"The precious blood of the Lord Jesus can make our souls pure and clean, whiter than even the new fallen snow."

CHAPTER II.

DROPS OF WATER.

"RAIN, rain, go away, come again another day." A child's voice so full of trouble that it sounded almost like a cry, half singing, half saying the words with which my story opens reached the ear of Alfred Mayfield, as he crossed his father's hall one rainy day last February. He stood for a few moments with one hand on the handle of the street door, as if about to open it, then said, almost in a whisper, as if speaking to himself, "Poor little Amy,

it must have been quite a disappointment for her not being able to go to M—— to-day. I wonder if I could cheer her up." In less time than it takes to write it, his waterproof and umbrella were returned to their places, and recrossing the hall he entered the family sitting-room in search of his little sister.

He had not far to seek, for Amy stood at the window looking out with a very blank face into the damp, cheerless street.

So absorbed indeed the child had been, that she did not seem to hear the approach of her brother. Bending over the little girl, he lifted her gently down from the high stool on which she had perched herself, then drawing a cosy arm-chair up to the fire, seated himself with Amy on his knee.

Amy smiled through tears into her brother's face, then laying her small, thin hand on his arm, said softly, "Oh,

Bertie, this is nice; but I thought you wanted to go out?"

"So I did, little sister," Alfred answered in a very cheerful tone; "I wanted to go and see a poor sick boy, who is in my Sunday-school class, but I think I wanted still more to stay at home and comfort a lonely little girl."

"Yes, Bertie, I am lonely. You don't know how dull it is, now dear mamma is in heaven. Papa has to stay so late at the office, and Mrs. Green is always busy, and says I must amuse myself and not worry her; and you know I must not talk to you when you are at your books. Oh, dear, how I wish the doctor would say I was strong, and let me go to school again. And, please Bertie, if it is not very naughty to ask, why do you think God let rain come to-day, so that I can't even go into the garden?"

"Because He loves you, little sister. He knows how glad you are to welcome

the spring flowers. You cannot see them yet; though, perhaps, after the rain is over we may find a few snowdrops in the garden border, just like messengers sent to tell us that the spring is coming; that crocuses, violets, and primroses will soon be here, but the rain drops are needed.

"A very long time ago God said to Noah, 'Seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.' (Gen. viii. 22.) And resting on His word we know that sunshine and showers, bright days and dark ones alike tell us of the wisdom and the love of our heavenly Father.

"You have often heard about the Lord Jesus and His love to little children; but have you trusted in Him as your very own Saviour? Do you know Him as your Friend? One who loves you? Yes, dear Amy, His love can comfort a lonely girl, and turn even

a dull and rainy day into a bright and happy time. Shall we kneel down together and speak to the Lord in prayer?"

Amy knelt by her brother's side, and I am sure her heart went with her brother's words, as he prayed that the Good Shepherd Jesus might bless and keep His little lamb.

CHAPTER III.

MABEL'S LESSON.

"ONLY two verses to learn, see, mother! Miss Linwood marked them in my own little Bible, so that I might not forget. Shall I read them to you? So Mabel Evans read in a clear, distinct voice, "Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours, stormy wind fulfilling his word." (Psa. cxlviii. 7, 8.)

Mabel gave quite a deep sigh as she stopped reading; then said, "I can learn my verses, but I think they are very hard to understand. I would much rather learn easy verses in the Gospel

of John, all about the kind things the Lord Jesus used to do. Don't you think they are the best, mother?"

Mrs. Evans smiled, as she answered, "My little girl must not expect to have easy lessons always, but must just learn to trust her teachers, and believe they know what is really best.

"Still I think mother can help to make your hard lesson more easy to you. Tell me what you cannot understand."

"Oh, the last part, 'Stormy wind fulfilling his word.' Can you think of a true story about the wind, please mamma?"

"Yes, darling. You have often heard the wind blow round the house when you lie at night, warm and snug in your little bed. Sometimes the wind shakes the doors and windows, as if it wanted to say, 'Please let me come in.' One day last week you laughed very much when you came in from school, and said Louie and you had run all the way down

the road after her straw hat which had been blown off by the wind.

"Do you remember one day when we were at Brighton last year, the sea was so rough that the small boats could not go out?"

"Oh yes, mamma; and you were talking to one of the boatmen, and he told you he thought they were having very bad weather out at sea. He said he had been a sailor, and knew what it was to be on the sea in storms. I think he said, too, God had been very good to him, and since he had known the Lord Jesus as his own Saviour, he knew that he was as safe on the sea in a storm, as on the land in the sunshine."

"Yes, Mabel, you have remembered the words of our sailor friend very well indeed. Now I am going to tell you about a storm at sea that took place many, many years ago.

"All through the busy day the Lord

Jesus had been making poor sick people well, saying kind words to those who were in any trouble! not one who really wanted His help had been sent away. At last the time came when the Lord wanted to sail across the Sea of Galilee. Shall we look for it on the map? Yes, there it is, a piece of water, with hills all round it. The Lord and His disciples got into a fishing boat, and very soon sailed away from the shore.

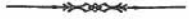
"I think the Lord Jesus must have been very tired, for we read in the gospels that He went to sleep, and while he slept, a great storm arose. The wind blew, and large waves began to dash over the ship, almost filling it with water. The poor disciples were in sad trouble; in their fear they forgot One who was with them was quite able to take care of them, so they awoke Him, saying, 'Master, master, we perish.' (Luke viii. 24.)

"But Jesus spoke to the wind and waves, saying, 'Peace be still,' just telling them to be quiet, and they knew His voice, the voice of the Son of God, and they obeyed Him, and in a moment they were calm and still."

"Oh, mamma, how glad the poor disciples must have been, don't you think they were?"

"Yes, Mabel, I have no doubt of it. But I think the Lord would have been more pleased with them if they had quietly trusted Him, feeling sure they could not perish as long as He was with them.

"Some day, God willing, I will tell you another true story about the wind; but you may run and play now, as I have some letters to write, and shall be glad to be alone till I have finished them."



CHAPTER IV.

BUTTERCUPS AND DAISIES.

"OOK, mother, look at these pretty flowers; Ruth Hardy gave them all to me. Some of the schoolgirls gathered them last evening, and when Ruth told them I had been ill a very long time, and could not run about and gather flowers for myself, they asked her if I would like to have some of theirs, and when she told them how fond of flowers I am, they sent me this nice bunch."

And as Lily King held up the flowers for mother to see, Mrs. King thought

the face of her sick child looked brighter than it had done for many weeks ; for all through the cold dark days of winter, Lily had been very ill, often in great pain, and though the kind doctor, whom Lily had learnt to think of quite as a friend, said, "He thought, with God's blessing, she would get well again:" getting strong seemed very slow work to Lily.

"And now, mother dear, will you please put my flowers in water? for it is almost time for Dr. Cole to be here, and I want to show them to him."

Mrs. King placed the flowers in a large, old-fashioned glass, half filled with water, on a small table that stood near Lily's bed, then hastened to the door in answer to Dr. Cole's knock.

After a short talk about his little patient with her mother, the doctor turned to Lily and said to her in his bright, cheerful way, "All the sick boys

and girls and most of the grown-up people too, liked so much,

"'Buttercups and daisies,
Oh, the pretty flowers!'

"Do you know, Lily, they are very old friends of mine? I have known and loved them ever since I was a very little boy, more than twenty years ago. I used to gather them in fields and hedgerows many, many miles from here. I am glad they have come to talk to you while mother is busy about the house."

"Oh, doctor, flowers cannot talk, and I am sure you know that as well as I do. I love them, and it makes me feel glad just to look at them, but they never say one word to me. How could they?"

"I am not so sure as you seem to be that flowers never speak, Lily; indeed, I think that they have told me many things. I do not mean that they have

a real voice, or can say words as you and I can, yet the spring flowers often seem to whisper sweet thoughts to my heart of the goodness and the love of God.

"Shall I tell you what I think even one small flower may say to us?" And as the doctor spoke he took a very fine long-stalked daisy out of the glass.

Lily clapped her hands with delight. "Oh yes, if you please, doctor."

"Very well, Lily; then the daisy shall begin at once by telling us about its name. Daisy, or as I believe it used to be spelt a long time ago, 'day's eye,' got its pretty name because it always seems to be looking up with a smile of welcome for the sun. But if you go in the evening to look for daisies it is not very easy to find them, though the field may be almost covered with them; for every tiny flower is closed up and its head hangs down just as if it were asleep.

"But when the sun rises it will un-

close its golden cup set round with white petals, and look up.

"French children are all very fond of the daisy; but they call it '*la marguerite*,' after a queen of France whose name was Marguerite, and who loved the little, modest flower so well, that she chose to have some always near her.

"But I think the very prettiest name the daisy bears is its German one, which means 'Child of light.'"

"Oh, how pretty! I think there is a text in the Bible very much like that."

"Yes, Lily; in the fifth chapter of a letter written by the apostle Paul to the Christians who lived at a place called Ephesus, and the eighth verse, we read: 'For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.'

"But other sick people will be looking out for me, so all I shall have time to tell you about the buttercup is, that

although it has no clock or watch, its yellow cup always opens at six o'clock in the morning." The doctor then rose and said good-bye to his little patient.

CHAPTER V.

CROWNS AND CROWN WEARERS.

"PLEASE look at my primroses, Harold; I think they are just lovely, and I have thought of a new game. It is too hot to run races, so let us make some of my pretty flowers into crowns, and play I am a queen; you can be a king too, if you like." And as May Cooper held up her pinafore half filled with the sweet pale blossoms, she looked pleadingly at her brother Harold who was lounging, book in hand, under a hawthorn tree, already white with flowers.

But Harold, who was two years older than May, and had just begun to attend a boy's school, thought himself much wiser than his little sister, answered in no very gentle tone, "Girls are so stupid, they never do understand things. I suppose you think Queen Victoria's crown is one of flowers, but it is not. Don't you remember how last year, when I was in London with Uncle Charles, he took me into the Tower, and I saw what he told me are called the crown jewels? And the crown and sceptre are made of gold, inlaid with diamonds and precious stones, and they cost, I don't know how much money."

Tears were filling the eyes of the little girl as she said, "I don't think crowns are always made of gold, Harold. You know we read in the Bible of one that was made of thorns; I mean the one that wicked men put on the head of the Lord Jesus, just before He was nailed

to the cross. I am sure the sharp thorns must have hurt Him very much. Mother says it was because He loved us that He was willing to wear it, and I think I have heard or read something about crowns made of leaves; but here is mother, she will tell us all she knows about crowns, won't you, please, mother dear?"

Mrs. Cooper smiled. "Ah, little May, you do not know how long a story you have asked for, but mother will tell you a few things about crowns and those who wear them.

"Many, many years ago, the people in Greece and Rome were very fond of playing at games. Indeed, I think the grown-up men took more interest than the boys in the games of which I am going to tell you.

"Sometimes the most learned men of a city would decide in public, who among them could write the best composition,

or compose the most beautiful verses. At other times the games were only trials of strength or swiftness. In one of these games a number of young men, sons of rich and noble families, were chosen to run a race, and the swiftest runner received a prize, one that I do not think Harold would very highly value, as it was a crown, or wreath, made of grass or parsley. The poets' crown was one made of bay leaves, yet it was thought a very great honour to obtain one of these wreaths, and kings are said to have placed them in golden boxes, and to have counted them among their greatest treasures."

"I don't think such crowns were worth taking so much trouble, either to win or to keep, do you mother?" asked Harold, who had become as much interested as May.

"Perhaps not, my son, for we know that all that would remain of these crowns

even in a few days, would be dried grass or faded leaves. But we are told by the apostle Paul, how we may learn a lesson even from those quickly fading crowns.

"In one of his letters written to Christians living at a place called Corinth, he reminds them of the earnest effort put forth by the men who took part in these race to obtain one of these crowns; and then reminds them of the fadeless crowns the Lord Jesus will one day give to those who love Him."

"Please, mamma, may Harold and I look out all the verses about crowns we can find in our Bibles; and will you talk to us about them on Sunday evening?"

"Yes, May, I think your choice of a Bible lesson will prove a very interesting one."

"Can you tell us when kings first began to wear crowns?"

"No, Harold, I am not able to give you the date, but the custom is a very old

one. The crown at first was only a sign, or mark by which the king was to be known. The Chinese are fond of saying that Noah was the first king of China, so we may be sure that soon after, if not before the Flood, there were kings, and I have no doubt crowns were worn by them."

"Thank you, mother, for telling us about crowns; and now I am going to help May to twine some of the primroses into a wreath. I am sorry I spoke so crossly to her just now. I said girls were stupid, but I forgot that boys are sometimes rude and unkind."

CHAPTER VI.

A PRETTY BUTTERFLY.

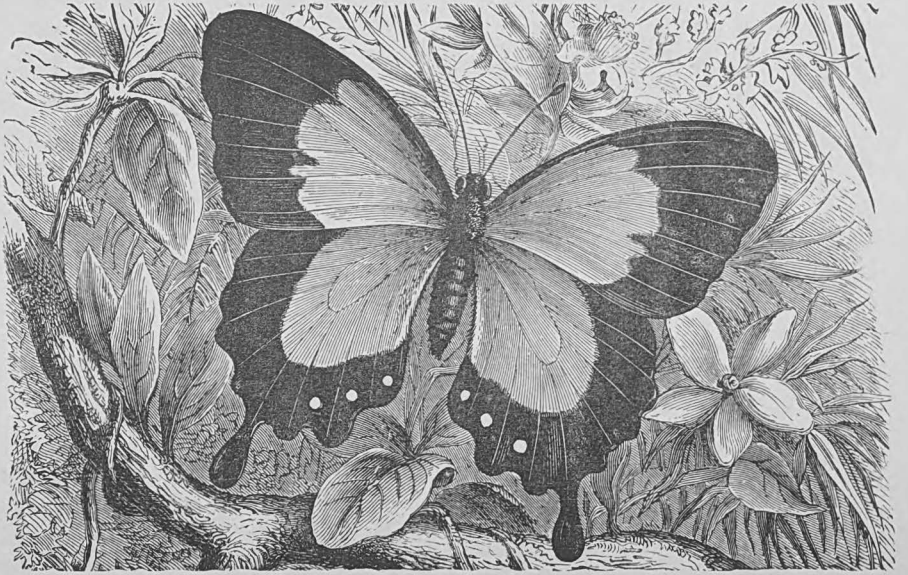
"WHAT a splendid butterfly Oh, Elsie, I really must catch it. It is a prize not to be had every day, I can tell you." And, cap in hand, Arnold Wood set off running towards the rose-bush on which a fine large butterfly had just alighted, when a hand was laid on his shoulder and a gentle voice pleaded, "Please don't catch the pretty butterfly, Arnold; you don't really want it, why not let it enjoy its short life?"

Arnold did not try to free himself from

the hand of his sister ; but only said in a half-vexed tone, as he saw the butterfly flutter off to a honeysuckle in a neighbour's garden, "I never saw such a girl as you are, Elsie ; a month ago you made me promise I would not take birds' nests, and now I must not catch even a butterfly."

Elsie smiled and said, "Did you ever hear of a butterfly telling its own story ?"

"Now, Elsie, you are only laughing at me. How could a butterfly speak, or anybody understand even if it could ? But as you are so fond of reading natural history, I have no doubt you know all about it. Now as I gave up my chance of making it a prisoner to please you, I think it is only fair you should tell me all about it. But as it is holiday time and I am not inclined for lessons, you are to tell the story just as if you were a butterfly."



THE BUTTERFLY.

STORY OF A BUTTERFLY, SUPPOSED TO BE TOLD BY ITSELF.

The first thing I can remember about myself is being a very tiny caterpillar, so small indeed that your eyes, Master Arnold, quick and bright as they are, might very easily have overlooked me. I had a great many brothers and sisters; each of us had just crept out from an egg not larger than a grain of sand, which the butterfly who was our mother, had gummed with great care on the under side of the leaves of a very fine nettle.

We were all very hungry, so tasted one of the leaves and finding it good to eat soon made a hearty meal.

Mothers and nurses, I am told, say that babies grow fast, and if they mean caterpillar babies I am sure the remark is a true one, for I throve so fast that in

a few days my skin was too small for me. Rather uncomfortable you may be sure, but one day I had no appetite for my dinner, all I cared for was to be quiet, and after resting for some time I found I was able to slip my body out of my skin.

I soon felt quite well again, and began to eat faster than before, as if to make up for lost time; in about a week I again required a change of skin, so made myself as comfortable as I could on the under side of a leaf and waited for my new coat—only in a short time to be cast off like my old one. Five times the change of which I have told you took place, and as my appetite increased with my size, I was soon a very fine caterpillar and quite ready to pass into what is called the pupa or chrysalis state.

I now found out that I was able to spin, not a web like the spider's, but

a silken thread strong enough to bear the weight of my body, and with this I made myself fast, head downwards, to a twig not far from the nettle bed that had been my nursery.

I don't think I was at all pretty to look at, for my skin was all dried up and soon began to crack. Getting out of it was very hard work, I can assure you, but I took "Try, try again" for my motto, and at last I was free from the now useless skin. My old stomach was gone too, I had no longer any desire to feed on nettles; I was now a winged creature, but my wings were too small and weak to be of any use to me, and while I wondered what was going to happen next, a sticky fluid that covered my whole body became dry and hard enough to form a kind of case or shell, and I fell asleep.

How long the sleep lasted I really cannot tell you, but when I awoke the

sun was shining brightly. I burst the walls of my prison and came forth as you see a gorgeous butterfly, my wings covered with a great number of tiny feathers. They carry me lightly from flower to flower. My tongue is long and, being formed something like a corkscrew, is just suited for dipping in search of the honey that is now my food. I do not lay up a store for winter use, like the industrious bees. But as few of my race will survive the first frosts, I do not expect to need any. Now my story is told; but before I say Good-bye, let me remind you that you, little boy, have a soul that will live for ever, and you have a Book too, the Holy Bible, in which you are told how by faith in the Lord Jesus, you may receive a new and everlasting life.

CHAPTER VII.

HAYMAKING.

A MERRY party was gathered in Farmer Gilpin's hay-field on the bright July afternoon, about which I am going to write. Indeed, so many little children were having a real good time, that I hardly know where my story ought to begin; but perhaps you will understand it best if I tell you that Farmer Gilpin, who was a great favourite with all the boys and girls who knew him, had told his youngest daughter, Alice, who was the much-loved teacher of the infant class in the Sunday

school at Ferndale, to invite all her little scholars to meet in his green field at two o'clock on Wednesday, when, he said, he would be glad of their help in haymaking.

I believe the children thought *that* Wednesday a very long time coming; but it came at last, and almost before the hands of the village clock pointed to the hour of two, Miss Alice, as the children called her, had welcomed nearly all her expected guests.

"Stand in a row just for a minute," she said pleasantly; "I want to count you, for I miss somebody, and I want to find out who it is.

"All here but Maggie and Lizzie Brown," the teacher continued. "Can any one tell me why they are not here?"

But the cottage in which the Browns lived with their widowed mother, was almost two miles out of the village, so Miss Alice did not get any answer to her question, and the young haymakers were

soon at work or play, for I think as much of one as the other was going on. It was great fun to toss handfuls of the sweet-scented hay at each other. Two or three of the very little ones were quite covered up, but as they knew it was all done in play of course they did not cry.

As soon as Miss Alice could get away from the small hands that held her, she returned to the gate, and, shading her eyes with her hand, looked down the road. Three children were coming towards her, she felt sure, as far off as she could see them, that the two girls were her scholars, Maggie and Lizzie Brown; but the third, a boy, who looked very pale, and walked on crutches, was a stranger to her.

As soon as they came near enough to speak, Maggie drew him forward, and, giving her teacher a very earnest look, said, "Please, Miss Alice, may George Day come too? We could not ask you

when we were at school, because we did not know him then. He lives in London; but he had a bad fall and broke his leg, so he had to go to a hospital, and when he got better, a kind lady, who knows mother, sent him to stay at our cottage. So you see, teacher, he is a stranger, and we did not mean to be late, only George cannot walk fast, and we had to stop and let him rest, oh, I do not know how many times."

"Poor boy," Miss Alice said with a smile, "I am sure he cannot be expected to work after such a long walk, so he must come in and rest." And very soon "the stranger," as Maggie had called him, was comfortably seated on a heap of hay, feeling that he had quite a number of very kind friends.

At four o'clock, Farmer Gilpin told his young friends to take their seats, as tea was quite ready. When all were seated, he asked the blessing of the

Lord on the food they were about to have. Then Miss Alice and her sisters carried round baskets of bread and butter, followed by a large tray filled with slices of cake; while Mr. and Mrs. Gilpin gave every child a large mug full of sweet fresh milk.

When all had been cleared away, Mr. Gilpin told them he should only ask them to sit still for a very little while, for he could remember that, when he was a little boy, he liked short addresses much better than long ones. He was only going to read one short verse from the Gospel by John. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." (John iii. 14.) Then he told them how the Lord Jesus, whose love for little children was so great that when He was a man on earth, He used to take them up in His arms and bless them, was lifted up upon the cross that He

might be a Saviour, able to save not only grown-up men and women, but little boys and girls who trust in Him. To trust in Him is just to believe in Him. The Bible says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and not even a little child can truly say, "I am always good;" though a little girl once got very angry on being told she was a sinner, and began to kick her sister who had told her so.

But the Lord Jesus loves to save, He wants to save every little child old enough to read or hear of the love of Him who was once lifted up upon the cross, but is now a living Saviour at the right hand of God.

CHAPTER VIII.

MILLIE'S FRIGHT.

"OH, Mamma, I have had such a fright! What do you think it was? As Walter and I were playing in the summer-house, a horrid spider crawled over my hand, and Walter laughed at me, and said I was a baby, because I was frightened and ran away."

Mrs. Hall stroked Millie's curly hair as she answered, "Poor little girl. It was not very polite of Walter to tease his sister; but I quite agree with him that a sensible little girl would not have run away from a spider."

"Oh, mamma, how can any one like spiders? I am sure they are ugly creatures. Sarah says so, and she always sweeps down their webs when she sees one on the wall or ceiling, And they are so cruel too, they catch and eat the poor little flies."

"I do not wish you to number tame spiders among your pets, Millie; but I have read a very interesting account of a gentleman who, during a long and weary imprisonment in a gloomy French prison, called the Bastille, made friends with a large spider, which became so tame that at his call it would go to him and eat out of his hand. Still I think a little knowledge about spiders and their ways will help you to overcome your fear of them.

"The spider family is a large one, nearly a hundred different kinds being found in England; but it would take too long to get acquainted with all of them. They are divided into five classes: hunt-

ing, wandering, prowling, solitary, and water spiders. These are known from each other by the shape of their webs, and also by the way in which they take their prey. But all spiders have eight long, thin legs, which, as each one has seven joints, can be bent any way without danger of breaking. Eight bright eyes, placed in two rows on the top of its head, enable the spider, even when itself hidden from sight, to see when a fly or small insects get caught in its web. But I have not told you yet of the wonderful way in which this web is made.

"On the under side of the spiders are several very small bags called spinnerets; from these a great number of very fine threads can be sent out by the spider. These are twisted together by the help of a very fine comb with which each leg is furnished, so as to form one thread, in much the same way in which the threads of hemp are twisted into a rope.

"The threads of the web are placed at regular distances, and if any part of it gets broken or injured, the spider will repair it with great care and patience. Never was a soldier more fully armed than the spider, as it has two pairs of strong jaws, in each of which are a number of sharp, saw-like teeth.

"Sometimes a spider will hide itself among the leaves of a bush some distance from its web, out of sight, but still quite ready to pounce upon its prey. If we look closely at the web we shall see two threads, stronger than those of which the web is formed, are fixed firmly down near the spider's hiding-place.

"Of what use do you think they are? You will smile when I tell you that we may call these threads the spider's telegraph, as when a fly gets into the web, of course, it wants to get out again, and in its efforts to free itself shakes the web very much; the movement passing

along these threads gives notice to the spider of what is going on.

"The Bible has something to tell us about spiders and their ways. In Proverbs xxx. 28, we read, 'The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in king's palaces.'

"King Solomon, by whom the words were written, must often have watched spiders busy at their work, and I have no doubt that, as he observed their curious ways, he learnt fresh lessons of the wisdom and goodness of God in His care that even the poor despised spider should be fitted for the work it has to do, as well as the place in which it lives.

"Do you think of running away from the next spider you see, Millie?"

"No, mamma; I think I shall be brave enough to watch it at its work. I am so glad we have had this nice talk. I did not think there was so much to be learnt about spiders."

CHAPTER IX.

HERMIT CRABS.

"COME here, mamma, please do come this very minute. I never saw a shell-fish run so fast before. It came out of a hole in the rock and crossed over the patch of yellow sand where Nellie and I were digging, and now I think it is hiding away under that heap of seaweed."

And as Bertie Smith, who, with his mother and sister Nellie, was enjoying an autumn holiday at the seaside, was, like many of my young friends, anxious to learn, not only the names, but the life histories of many curious and interesting

objects to be found on the sea-shore, Mrs. Smith closed the book she had been reading, and, after stooping for a few minutes over the heap of seaweed that Bertie had pointed out as the retreat of what I have no doubt some of my little readers have already guessed to be a hermit crab, she said :

"Sit down by my side on this piece of rock, Bertie ; and if we wait patiently a little while, perhaps we may see the hermit crab (for that is the name by which the little creature is best known), come out again."

"Oh, please will you tell me why it is called a hermit crab ? It seems such a strange name. Grandpa once shewed me a picture of an old man with long white hair, and told me that many years ago the old man, who was called a hermit, used to live all alone in a little hut he had built for himself of the boughs of trees."

"I think the hermit crab, like the man in the picture, generally chooses to live alone. French children call it Bernard, the hermit, while the fishermen in some parts of England and along the Irish coast, speak of it as the soldier crab. In shape, it is something like a lobster, its claws are cased in a covering of shell, but its soft body is covered only by a skin, and would often get badly hurt if God had not given it the kind of instinct that leads it to seek a home just suited to its wants.

"It is very amusing to watch one of these little crabs busily engaged in the search for a house. It crawls quickly over the beach, and when it finds an empty shell, turns it over and seems to say, 'How will this house suit me?' One shell may be too large, another too small, but at last one just right as to size and shape is found. It very often happens that two crabs fix upon the same shell,

and when this is the case they fight till one is killed, or so seriously wounded it is obliged to crawl away, leaving the victor to take possession of the shell, which it does by walking backwards until it has twisted its soft body into the folds of the shell, and taken hold of it by means of a strong hook at the end of its tail. It is then able to walk about carrying its house upon its back.

"But as the tenant grows very quickly it has soon to look for a larger dwelling, and sometimes lives in quite a number of shells before it gets its full growth. The right claw is larger than the left. You had better not put your fingers too near it, for, like others of its kind, it knows how to punish an intruder, and will allow itself to be killed rather than give up its shell."

"I think we are having such a good time at the seaside, mamma; and yet it is almost like being at school, for Nellie

and I are learning something new every day, and I shall know a hermit crab now; and perhaps, if I watch, I may even see one take possession of a new house. Do you think there are many of them on the beach?"

"Do not forget that the great whale and the small crab alike, tell us of the wisdom and goodness of God. But it is in the Bible we read of His love in the gift of His own Son, Jesus Christ. I often hear Nellie and yourself singing, 'Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.'

"But can you say, 'The Lord Jesus is my very own Saviour? I know He died to save me?' and He has promised that I shall go to dwell with Himself."

CHAPTER X.

GRANDMA BURNS.

"I WONDER what grandma can be thinking about. Her knitting has fallen on to the hearthrug, and her eyes seem to be looking at something a long way off. I will run and pick up her sock, for if Carlo gets it to play with, all the stitches will be down."

And Helen Lee, suiting the action to the word, picked up the knitting and laid it on a table near her grandma. Her light step roused the old lady, for turning to the little girl she said, "It is more than sixty years since I was your age, Helen, and yet I remember many things about

my childhood as well as if they had happened only a few weeks ago."

"Please tell me all about the time when you were a little girl, grandma. It will be almost like reading a story, only better, because I shall know all you are telling me is true. But please tell me first something about the house you lived in."

"Perhaps you would think, Helen, the Highland cottage in which I spent some of my early years only a poor place, but to me it was a very happy home, though it was little more than one large room with openings in its walls, something like cupboards, that served for bedrooms. A few outbuildings were at the back, while from the door we could see for miles over the moors, while in the distance a range of hills often looked in the sunset as if their tops were crowned with purple and gold. I was a very wee lassie when I used to go with my mother to fill her pail

with water, at a little brook, or as we called it a burn, not far from our cottage. One day my father, who had been to a town several miles off, brought home a small pail for me, and I cannot tell you what a proud and happy child I was, as walking very carefully by my mother's side I carried home my tiny pailful of water. My grandfather was a shepherd; he was very kind to me; and I am sure you will like to hear about a present I once received from him. It was the evening of a bright May day, when he came to pay us a visit, carrying a lamb in his arms. Its fleece was quite white, and my aunt Agnes had tied a blue ribbon round its neck. I thought I had never seen anything so pretty; but when grandfather told me he was going to give it to me for my very own, I was almost wild with delight, and kissed and thanked him over and over again.

"'Be kind to the wee lambie, Maggie,

my lass,' he said, with a nod and a smile, as he bade me Good-bye; and I, holding my new pet in my arms, stood to watch him cross the moor till he was lost to sight among the hills.

"All the candles we burnt were home made, and I used to quite enjoy what we called the dipping, and thought it was great fun. I must tell you how it was done.

"Mother always told us, that if we wanted our candles to burn well, they should be made when the snow was on the ground.

"When all was ready a large iron pot, half filled with tallow, was set over the fire. Into it the long cotton wicks, o which quite a number had been prepared the day before, were dipped. As each was lifted out of the boiling fat it had to be taken out of doors to harden in the clear frosty air, and as each wick had to be dipped several times before the candle

was large enough to read or work by its light, you may be sure candle making in those days was quite a busy time.

"But when the work of the day was over, and while a bright fire burnt on the hearth, my mother, as she sat busy with her knitting or sewing, would often tell me stories of martyr times in Scotland, and in just such simple words as I could understand, explain to me how men and women too, had found such precious treasure in the Bible, that they were made willing to be sent to prison, or even to be put to death, rather than give up that blessed book; and then father would take down our dear old family Bible from the high shelf, where it lay, and read to us from its pages the glad tidings and good news of how by faith in the precious blood and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, sin is put away for all who really believe on Him."

CHAPTER XI.

FALLING LEAVES

"NOW I wish the sun would shine again. I don't like these dull, dark days, and oh, the leaves are falling fast. I am getting tired of trying to keep even my own little garden tidy."

And with the complaint with which my story opens, Rose Howard, who, though she liked to see everything kept in order, had a habit of looking on the dark side of things, turned a very sad face to her mother.

Mrs. Howard was busy, and like most busy people, had no time to be unhappy. Looking up from her work for a moment,

she said brightly, "Run into the garden, Rose, and pick up two or three fallen leaves. I think we will keep school and use them for our lesson book."

Rose gladly obeyed; though she wondered very much what her mamma could be going to say about dead leaves, she felt sure it would be interesting.

She was soon at her mother's side again, and holding up an oak leaf, asked, "Why do the leaves come off the trees at all, mother? and I think the trees would look so much prettier if they were green all the year round, like your ivy, or the holly-bush in uncle Frank's garden."

"Do you remember, Rose, how pleased you were when, after the cold, dark days of last winter, the trees seemed in the early spring to wear dresses of soft pale green? I thought the beauty of the sight was worth waiting for. But I have not told you yet why the leaves fall.

"Partly because the work given them

to do for the tree is done, and partly because they are pushed off."

"How strange; but I can't understand at all how they get pushed off."

"Look closely at the leaves in your hand, and at the end of the stalk you will see a tiny hollow. While the leaf was still on the tree a very small leaf-bud formed behind the stem, and as it needed room to grow it gave a gentle push to the old leaf till it became loose, then the wind shook the branch on which it grew, and the loose leaf fluttered down to the ground, where, with many others, it helped to form a soft carpet till, changed by rain and frost into mould, it becomes in another way of use to the tree."

"But you said, I think, that the leaves had work to do. Please tell me about it; I never thought leaves were of any use, except perhaps to look pretty."

"Tell me, Rose, how it is that we have had no grapes on the vine this year?"

"Oh mamma, what a strange question, you know it is dead. Father said he thought the long frost we had last winter got to its roots and killed it. The stems are all dry and withered, and there was not a leaf on it in the spring."

"Now I shall be able to explain some of the uses of leaves. When you prick your finger a drop of bright red blood is often seen to follow. You know that blood is always moving to or from your heart through your whole body. If you cut the outer covering, or as it is called the bark of a tree, a fluid called sap will be seen on the surface. Now this sap rises from the roots of trees and flows upwards; it moves more quickly in the early spring than at other times. When the sap is doing its work properly, new wood is formed and green leaves appear.

"The leaves help to supply the tree with food by taking in air and moisture from the drops of rain that fall, or from

dews that fall during the night. They are also of great use in throwing off gases which, if allowed to remain, would make the tree sickly and ruin its growth."

"Is there not a verse in the Bible, mamma, about fading leaves? I am sure I have read it, but cannot remember the exact words."

"Yes, Rose, it is in the sixty-fourth chapter of Isaiah and part of the sixth verse, 'We all do fade as a leaf.'

"The falling leaves have a message for us. They seem to tell us that 'the time is short,' that we, too, are passing away. But if we know that our sins have all been washed away by the Lord Jesus we can look up in gladness and thank God that this world is not our home. For we are going to see the face of the Saviour who loved us, and gave Himself for us."

CHAPTER XII.

UNCLE DAVIS.

SNOW had fallen thickly during the night, and a cold north wind blew keenly in the faces of Harold and Walter Moore, who, well wrapped in great coats and comforters, were carrying a large basket down the lane that lay between their home and the cottage where a sailor, who was an old friend of theirs, lived.

They had gone on for some time without a word, but as they set down their basket for a short rest, Walter said,

"I say, Harold, won't Uncle Davis

have a real good time to-morrow? Mother said she wanted to send him over some things if we would run down the lane with them, so I went out to the wood-shed to look for you. Father was there, and when I told him where we were going he said we might take the poor old man as much wood as we could carry.

"I asked Mary to let us have her large basket, and we were soon off."

"I think Uncle Davis has lots of good times," Harold answered in a thoughtful manner. "He seems so happy, and I think he must know nearly all there is in the Bible, for he never seems to get tired of reading it. I like his stories too, all about ships and sailors. Shall we ask him to tell us that one you like so much, about the time when the ship he was in got among the icebergs, and they were obliged to spend a whole winter on the ice?"

"First rate; and Uncle Davis could

not tell it at a better time. The snow is now so deep that he will almost think he is there again. But we had better take up our basket and be off."

When they reached the cottage, the old sailor, who was called Uncle by everybody who knew him, was, as Harold expected, reading his well-worn Bible. A stick of wood from the basket soon made his small fire give out a cheerful light and warmth. He thanked his young friends warmly for their kindness, then said, "When you came in I was just reading a verse in the blessed book, and thinking how true I have found it. Here it is, 'They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.'" (Ps. cvii. 23, 24.)

"Tell us about the time when you were obliged to winter on the ice, please do, Uncle Davis," Walter, who always

enjoyed reading or hearing of adventures by sea or on land, said, getting close to the old sailor as he spoke.

"That I will, my lad. It is a story I never get tired of telling. More than fifty years have passed since I first sailed over the Polar seas. Ships are built larger now-a-days than they were when I was a young man, and more is done for the comfort of the crews. Still our ship, 'The Lady Alice,' was a tight, trim little craft, and our captain a kind, God-fearing man, and never a better sailor trod a ship's deck.

"We had a pretty good season in the whale fisheries, but being under orders to sail as far north as we could, lost sight of all the other whalers, and were just about to set sail for home when we caught sight of an iceberg coming down upon us. It was like a mountain of ice, and we noticed that our captain looked very grave and shook his head.

"The first iceberg was quickly followed by others, and though, for a few days, we tried to run the ship clear of the icebergs, so as to get into the open water beyond, we had to give it up and steer for a small inlet on the coast. We were often in danger of having 'The Lady Alice' crushed by an iceberg, and very glad and thankful we were when she was at anchor.

"Very soon the cold became so severe that we were obliged to leave the ship and build snow huts on the land. We were not very badly off for food, and were able to get water for drinking by melting the snow in an iron pot over the fire. Sometimes a party of us would go for some distance along the shore to pick up drift wood.

"White bears and foxes we saw in plenty, and once a party of Eskimos came to visit us in their strange-looking sledges drawn by dogs. We could not

understand a word they said, but we bought some dried reindeer from them, for which we paid in knives, beads, &c.

"I think the most trying part of the time was when the long night of an Arctic winter set in, and for many weeks together we never saw the sun, though even then the sky was often crimson with a beautiful light called the Aurora.

"We were often very sad when we thought of our loved ones at home, and remembered how much sorrow our long absence must give them; and I need hardly tell you it was a happy day for us when, through the mercy of God, we were able to leave our winter quarters and get out to sea."