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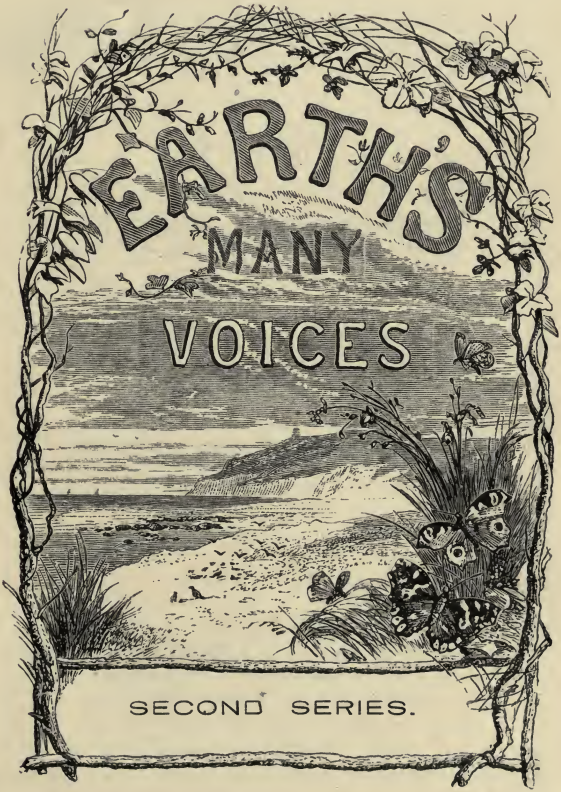
A Birthday Present
for
Dear Annie
Ina Smith
25th Nov. 68.

EARTH'S MANY VOICES.

SECOND SERIES.

Page 1.



EARTH'S MANY VOICES.

SECOND SERIES.

"There is neither speech nor language: but their voices are heard among them."—*Psalm* xix. 3.

"Every leaf in every nook,
Every wave in every brook,
Chanting with a solemn voice,
Minds us of our better choice."—*Christian Year.*

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A DREAM IN HARVEST.

"For it is beautiful only to do the thing we are meant for."

THE harvest was glorious.

"Now I shall no more hear my children cry for food, and have to chide their useless tears," said the poor man.

"We shall have such a harvest home," said the farm folk, as in merry companies they turned homewards from their work, and looked up at the broad bright harvest moon.

"It is a great thing for us," was said at every hearth in the land.

"It is an untold blessing for my people," said the Queen in her palace.

"Come and thank the Giver," said the

church bells of dear old England; and the Queen in her palace, and the dweller in every pleasant English home, and the peasant in every English hamlet, rose up at the sound of that voice and went to thank the Giver.

"I wish I were the sunshine," thought I, "to do such good; it has ripened the corn and made the land so glad."

"You are not the sunshine, you see; but you are sure to possess your own especial means of being useful," said a little invisible preacher within.

"People praise the sunshine, and no wonder. I should like to do so much good," persisted I: "not for the sake of the praise, of course."

"O no, of course," laughed the officious little voice.

I turned off from the high road into a field where the corn had not yet been reaped; and, sitting sulkily down beneath the hedge,

began to meditate, looking at the yellow wheat and the scarlet poppies waving so drowsily; and I suppose it must have been that same drowsy waving that soothed me to sleep. At first the scene on which my waking eyes had rested still hovered about my slumber.

The golden corn and the scarlet poppies waved to and fro, to and fro; bending, rising so softly, so dreamily, and then faded away dimly into indistinct likeness to living beings. No longer were there around me the corn and the poppies and the meadow flowers, but men and women gliding gradually out from the uncertain confusion of my fancy; and I was fairly in dreamland.

* * * *

It must have been old England, for her fields, and trees, and cities, and homesteads are not to be mistaken. But there seemed

to be some remarkable people in the land. There were some who wore long robes of yellow, almost like gold, and as they glided silently about I heard joyful voices welcome them, and many blessed them; and often, as the words of gratitude were uttered, the golden-robed would charge a little messenger to carry the praises to where they were most due, and he would start up and tell it all in sweet thanksgiving music at the gate of Heaven.

Then, besides the golden-robed, there were others wearing scarlet mantles of rich velvet; they swept along very proudly with a high look, heeding no sound of sorrow or of joy, but sometimes eyeing the golden-robed with a glance of envy.

"It must be nice to see people kneel to you," thought a scarlet mantle; so he went and walked beside a wearer of the yellow,

for it struck him that keeping by his neighbour's side might perhaps be a means of getting at least a show of honour; therefore, when people blessed the one, the other smiled and bowed, taking to himself a share of the distinction in virtue of companionship.

Most miserable hovels sometimes lay in their way. Still they persevered; the one slipping in, in his quiet fashion, to do his welcome errand, the other lingering a moment on the doorstep to exchange a greeting; and as the rich mantle disappeared in the gloom of the wretched home, folks said, "Dear me, how humble-minded!"

Soon they left the public track and came to a house where there were great desolation and uncleanliness and want, and the golden-robed entered as usual, but his companion turned aside to the high road again and walked alone.

By and by he met a gentle-looking being clad in blue, and saw a traveller stop to shake hands and then bless little blue-robe as he went on his way.

"Am I to be less thought of than an insignificant creature like this?" muttered scarlet-cloak; "but I will make myself a name somehow;" so walking up very civilly he asked blue-robe why the traveller blessed him.

"I only wished him God speed," he answered; so scarlet-cloak stationed himself by the roadside, and stretched out his hand officiously to every passer-by, crying in a loud tone, "I wish you God speed;" but to his surprise no one blessed him, for he did not say it at all like little blue-robe.

Then he passed on, and saw one who wore a crown of tiny white stars; and as she stood

meekly by the pathway some one going by thanked her for an act of courtesy which scarlet-cloak had not observed.

"She, too, gets praised," thought he; "but I *will* make myself a name somehow yet:" so he went up and asked, "Why did the passer-by thank you?"

"I only offered some of this fragrant perfume which I have here."

So scarlet-mantle took his post by the pathway, and to the next passenger offered some perfume in a rich ruby cup; but to his annoyance the passenger only drew back with a gesture of aversion; and scarlet-mantle found he could not pass for the lady in the ivory coronet. Then in great vexation he turned away, just in time to see an old man stretch out his hands in blessing towards his former companion the golden-robed.

"Why did that old man bless you?" asked he in an angry tone.

"I only gave him a little food," was the reply.

"I will make myself a name somehow," thought the other; so he brushed his mantle that it might look more bright and conspicuous, and arranged its folds that they might hang with more striking grace, and went to distribute food.

But he was decidedly not at his right work, for it seemed as if food from him were poison, since some who received it went off into an unnatural lethargy, and some into a state of frantic madness: still they stretched out their hands again and again, calling for more, and scarlet-mantle looked round proudly; for, although he saw that his work did evil, some men called him a benefactor; he had made himself a name, and that was enough.

There was another wearer of the scarlet.

He also saw how some were always doing good: and he looked at the want around him, and longed to do something better than walk about in velvet and self-admiration; so he went to the golden-robed, and asked, "What do you do, that you gladden human hearts?"

"I only give a little food, it is all I can," was the answer.

"But I have no wholesome food to give," sighed scarlet-mantle, and he walked on until presently he met the lady with the ivory coronet.

"How do you do people good?" he asked again.

"I can only offer this perfume to refresh them," was the answer.

"I have no costly perfume," said scarlet-cloak sorrowfully, and he went on until he met the blue-robe.

"What is your way of doing good?" he asked once more.

"I can only wish people God speed," answered blue-robe.

"Alas! I have not a sweet voice like yours," sighed poor scarlet-cloak.

"But I am sure you can do something else," said the cheerer, nodding a bright little head and smiling a pleasant smile, which sent scarlet-cloak on his way with a hope that there might be some good which he could do; and he kept a quiet look-out for a chance of being useful.

Once a hand beckoned him to a scene of festivity where his brilliant array was hailed as an ornament; and gladly he looked his brightest, since he could heighten joy.

Once the cry of agony called half hopelessly to him to come and try if he could give relief, and then to his inexpressible

delight he found that in his touch there was a magic which could soothe the most racking pain. From that time he hovered about the chambers of the sick, to see what he could do, until at last there came a drawback; for it was only by doing little that he could do good, while by doing much he was sure to do harm. So he set himself carefully to restrain his eager will, glad if unthanked and unnoticed he could lull one sufferer to sleep, or diminish the sharpness of one bitter pang. Therefore, although it seemed hard to do things on so small a scale when he had a heart longing for great things, he did his mission quietly, and was content.

The dreamland sun went down. I heard in dreamland a thanksgiving hymn fade away as I lost my friends in the darkness of night; but when the sun arose again with a new day, there burst forth such a sound of joyful

wonderful song, that I awoke from my sleep, and I found only the lark darting up to heaven, and the sunlight shining upon the golden wheat and the scarlet poppies in the farm-field, and upon the little speed-well, and the meadow-sweet in the grass beside me;—that was all.

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COVER IT UP.

WHERE do you think the greatest mischief was made? On the top of the church tower! A great company of starlings used to go thither every day for an airing, and when the little children in the parsonage close by looked up from their nursery windows, and saw the birds promenading in twos and threes and fours and fives along the coping-stones, they thought what a pleasant, well-behaved party it was, and what excellent friends they seemed to be with one another.

But if the children had asked me I could have told them,—I do not say I would, but I could, for I happened to know just that

one thing—that there were five starlings who always walked on the east face of the tower, and five who always walked on the north, just for the sake of being able to turn their backs upon each other when they met at the corner, and, oh! their tails went round with such a whisk; and there were seven who always walked on the south face from east to west, and seven who walked there from west to east, because then there was always a polite scuffle when they passed as to which seven should make way for the other. Now I am afraid that was not exactly what is meant by pleasant manners and good behaviour.

There were also a few more starlings who lived in the church porch, and they, like the rest, used occasionally to come out for a walk on the top of the tower; but they did not seem to understand all the curious little ways of their neighbours.

Thirdly, there was an old jackdaw with a very unmusical voice; he lived just within the belfry window, and you might often see his head stretched out between the bars, like poor King Charles; though not like him attempting an escape, but only listening to the talkers above him.

"I can't imagine what you can find to dispute about up there," croaked he one day in his harsh tones.

"Sir," replied one of the starlings, rather sharply, "I was observing to my friends that such manners would never be allowed in my chimney, never."

"Sorry if my manners disturb you," answered the hermit; "but I never made much pretence to elegance; yet, I don't see what I have done amiss in this instance."

"Oh! you have done nothing, I assure

you," said the other; "it is those five; if you only could see how absurd a flourish they give their tails when we meet and turn back at the corner; such manners would never be tolerated in my chimney, never!" and with that the affronted bird and her company walked on, while the old jackdaw, drawing in his head, said to himself, "Humph! much best to live alone; one soon gets tired of quarrelling with oneself."

It did not, however, seem as if he were to be left alone, for just then one of the starlings who lived in the porch, came and perched upon his window bar.

"I declare," said she, "I am quite disappointed."

"And what may be the reason?" asked the solitary from within his dark chamber; "What a set of grumblers you are!"

"No! but, Jackdaw, listen before you are cross

with me," pleaded the starling. "When I went for my walk up there an hour ago I thought to myself as I flew along, 'Ah! what a pretty earth it is; how bright the sunshine looks;' and I felt in a good temper with everybody; but now I declare I am quite out of heart."

"Humph! what has put you out of heart, I wonder?" croaked the jackdaw.

"Well, just look around for yourself," the other answered moodily; "just look around; I have learned sad truths with which I dare say you are already familiar. See the clematis, my pretty friend the clematis, on the gardener's cottage. I was so fond of her and I thought her so beautiful with her feathers of down; and now I find out that she is nothing but the most miserable hypocrite."

"Stuff and nonsense," was the only observation of the gruff old hermit, and then the starling continued,

"It is perfectly correct; a well-informed bird, one of the five who walk on the east side, has told me that the clematis, with her soft looks and her graceful beauty, is all sham and absurdity. She just wears those feathers to hide the real ugliness of her brown twisted stem, which has long ago lost the beautiful clusters of starry blossoms which once belonged to them. She pretends to be what she is not."

"Anything further?" asked the jackdaw again, in his short uncouth manner.

"O yes! oh dear! yes. There is the acacia; I used often to go and talk to her, and think her such a nice gentle creature. They say I shall soon see her in her true colours."

"And what may her true colours be?"

"Well, I mean this; that she is all very well at present; but come to know her a

little better and I shall not care so much for the acquaintance. Would you believe it, jackdaw, would you believe it?—under those fair, green, delicate leaves there are many sharp thorns; and of all trees she is the first to refuse shelter to a bird; when the earliest breath of autumn comes, away go her leaves, and her summer friends may shift for themselves."

The hermit still sat gravely in his belfry, only uttering a short sentence now and then; and he said, "Have you finished yet?"

"No; I could tell you some other things; worst of all there is the sunshine. You would not think hard things of the sunshine, would you? But I have been called a simpleton for supposing that it strove to give me any particular pleasure, when it just shines because it cannot help it; and it

shines on all alike. Oh! everything is less good than I thought it."

"Child," said the old jackdaw,—and he said it gently, for he was a good creature,—"child, I foresaw this from the time I first observed you flying up to the turret. Listen to me. Why should you be less grateful for the sunshine because it shines upon others as well as yourself? Your share of it at any rate is meant for you, so take your share and give thanks."

The little bird was for a moment silent under the rebuke, but soon broke out anew with her complaining.

"But then the acacia, good Jackdaw; the deceitful acacia."

"And what is that to you?" answered he; "why are you to find out her faults, as you think them? I can, however, tell you one thing. If you could only know how that

acacia quivers and shudders at every harsh remark, you would be too kind-hearted to speak one, I know you would;" and at that instant the tree bowed her beautiful head, trembling and shaking in every branch and leaf.

"What am I to do?" cried the starling; "I hear all these things, and must be a creature without heart not to have my feelings aroused in one way or another. What am I to do?

"Do as the snow does, the gentle snow;" answered the solitary, becoming quite enthusiastic in his manner for once; and then he drew back, and went to sleep in a corner; so the starling, after remaining some time wondering what it might be that the snow did, flew away.

* * * *

The autumn was over, and one winter's

day saw the little birds, in their parties of fives and parties of sevens, strutting along their respective promenades as usual; and on one angle, quite alone and meditating, stood our friend from the porch, looking at some skaters who were amusing themselves on the ice down below, not far from the church. Her meditations were interrupted by a salutation from that one of the five who had once before told her about the sunshine and about the acacia.

"Good morning to you: you seem amused," she said.

"O yes; look there! It is the most entertaining thing in the world to watch those skaters darting about in all directions. Away they go, ever so far; and then they turn this way, and then that, so gracefully! Then there are some—and they are the best fun of all—who are for ever getting all sorts

of grotesque tumbles. That frozen river gives an immense amount of pleasure: he must feel very glad."

"Ha!" The other looked very wise, and she gave her tail the flourish satirical, as she remarked that the river was better known by those who lived in her chimney.

"And what more do you know of him than I do? I can see he is most good-natured, and when any people come tumbling down upon him with a crash, he only laughs and breaks out into a great star for a long way round."

"I know him; *I* know him—a little, that is to say; for I have not chosen to make any particular acquaintance: oh no, indeed!" and here she gave the flourish of offended dignity. "I went one day to his brink to call upon a new comer, a sandpiper, who lived among the rushes, and as we took a

little flight together, the river thought fit to make some remarks to himself, but in my hearing, about the elegance of the sandpiper's flight, and the shape of her wings; evidently considering her my superior. So I made up my mind that the water and the water-birds might keep to themselves, for me. Such manners would never be met with in my chimney—never!"

"Still, the river may be very good-natured in general, for all that," the starling ventured to suggest.

"Oh, very, very!—you'll see soon. Treacherous creature! he will melt away beneath the feet of the skaters, and swallow them all up. I should not be surprised if he did. Wait a little, and you may see them all go in, every one, poor things!" Hereupon the younger starling shuddered a little, thinking that the river must be a dreadful monster

after all. "And as for those stars of laughter, as you please to think them," continued her informant, "they are nothing but the veriest deception;—you will see."

"Nothing seems good, nothing seems truthful, nothing seems steady," sighed the porch-bird, sentimentally. "If I might choose, I think I would rather have those hills in the distance for my friends. They look grave and sedate, and are, at all events, far enough removed from your chimney to have any of their faults and failings discovered." And if you can imagine a bird smiling, you must picture to yourself a very melancholy, romantic smile overspreading the beak of the porch-starling.

"Those hills!—dreary, prim old things!" cried the other, with the sarcastic flourish again. "There they stand day and night, looking sermons at us for our lighter hearts

and gayer lives. Miserable old creatures they are! Once they looked fine enough in their purple; but now that is gone, and they look as if, because their own heads are in heaven, none on earth are worth glancing kindly upon." With her last remark, the gossip rejoined her party; and the other, as usual with her in her disconsolate moods, betook herself to a bar of the jackdaw's window.

"Alas!" she said, "I never go up to that turret without becoming a wiser, yet a sadder bird. Dear me, how black and gloomy the very sky seems now!"

"We shall have the snow then soon," remarked the dweller in the belfry; and everywhere there was a rejoicing little murmur which sounded like a welcome for the snow.

"The snow? Ah! she is a pet of yours I remember," the starling said. "I wonder

whether there is anything to be said against her? I wonder if she is liked in the chimney?" And on hearing that, the old hermit laughed a hoarse kind of laugh, but said nothing. Just then, a white flake fell upon the window-grating, and others fluttered to the ground.

"It is the snow, the gentle snow!" cried many a voice from the trees around, and from the plants which had hidden themselves down in the earth, and even, it seemed, from the sedate old hills in the distance. "She is coming," they said; "we felt just the fringes of her long cloak touch us, so she is coming soon."

"I am curious to know what she may be like," said the starling. "She did not come last winter, so I have never seen her."

"Oh! she is very loving and gentle, that is the best we can say," was the reply in

chorus. "Very loving, and gentle, and beautiful, and clad in the purest white."

"Then she will be rather fastidious, I imagine," mused the little bird; "she will have something to say about such a wretched earth and such miserable companions." But the poor trees and flowers did not seem in the least afraid, and they every now and then renewed their rejoicings; even the bare old hills were heard again and again to murmur: "It is the gentle snow."

"I shall invite her to the chimney," ejaculated the starling on the east face.

* * * *

She came, the gentle snow. Never a hard word spoke she to the trembling acacia. She hung clusters of crystals about its branches, making it beautiful with whiteness. Never an unkind jest had she for the desolate hills; she went silently and without any fuss,

and drew her cloak around them, so that they looked as comfortable as when they wore their own purple in the summer time. She never mocked the roots and plants which had seemed to shrink so timidly into the ground; she covered them all up soft and warm, and the dismal earth brightened again, and the winter day looked glad.

The old jackdaw put his head out between the bars, and gazed quite pleasantly at the new scene. And the starling returned to her own little nook in the porch, whence all snugly she could see abroad; and in her corner there reached her a sound ringing in through the winter air, which seemed to say,

"DO THOU LIKEWISE."

IS IT MINE OWN?

"What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"
1 Cor. iv. 7.

"Caw! caw!" said the rook. "I've been thinking."

"Thinking about what?" inquired his next-door neighbour.

"Why, I've been thinking that we rooks are wonderful birds." Then, spreading his black wings, he rose from the tree and sailed off solemnly towards the forest. There he rested for a moment again upon a tree-top; but soon he descended to the ground, to look for a breakfast, I dare say, as it was early morning.

"Caw! caw!" said he, as he hopped about; "we rooks are wonderful birds!"

"So you are—not a doubt about it," answered a thistle, near which he paused to devour something which tempted him.

"You agree with me?" exclaimed our friend, with much satisfaction. "Then I believe you are the most sensible creature in the world, except, perhaps, myself, though it is not for me to say it. They all laugh at me in the rookery when I make the remark, but I am not afraid to repeat it. I say, we rooks are wonderful birds; at any rate, I am wonderful, whether the others be so or not."

"But there is not a doubt that you are wonderful," returned the thistle. "Look at your magnificent coat, look at your strong wings, look at your curious nest."

"Exactly," said the bird; and then he hopped away to other parts of the forest,

repeating, "Look at my coat! look at my wings! look at my nest in the tree!"

The next morning he returned to the same spot, and began to talk again to his new acquaintance.

"I cannot help congratulating you on your good sense," said he. "Look at my coat, indeed, and my wings, and my nest, as you remarked yesterday. Now, can you wonder at my feeling myself to be somebody? Have I not a right to be vain?" and he marched about proudly.

"Good friend," said the purple-headed thistle; "good friend, will you answer me a question, if you can?" and the bird gave his assent with an air which seemed to mean, "If I can! what is there that I cannot answer?"

The question was this: "How did you manage to make your splendid coat so black and glossy?"

"Absurd!" the rook replied. "Do you suppose I blackened my own coat? Perhaps you imagine I also made it? No, thank you. My coat was made for me—caw! caw!" and he strutted up and down in great scorn.

"Well, then, your wings," rejoined the thistle; "How did you contrive to make them so powerful?"

"I?" screamed the rook in a rage. "Do you suppose I had to set to work and make my own wings before I could fly? No, a rook is a gentleman; he has his coat and his wings made for him."

"Ah, well! but your nest?" the thistle said, coaxingly. "You did make that, as you will allow, and I always thought that a great proof of your cleverness."

"Yes, yes," said the proud bird—he was pacified now—"I did build that, and that is, as you observe, a proof of how clever I am.

You are not by any means absurd, after all."

"Do tell me who taught you how to do it," entreated the thistle, half expecting to give offence this time, yet wishing to ask the question. But no offence was taken, and the rook, after an instant of grave consideration, replied, "Why, you see, I understood it all, for I am what is called a genius."

"I dare say your cleverness came to you just as your feathers and your wings did?"

"Precisely."

"And I dare say whoever gave you your feathers and your wings gave you also your cleverness?"

But the rook suddenly seemed to remember that he had not yet breakfasted, and saying he felt faint for want of food, he hurried off with great speed, leaving the conversation unfinished.

"Ha! may I inquire what it is you are saying?" observed a young sycamore, at whose foot he now alighted. "What is that? Do tell me."

"I was merely remarking what a wonderful bird I am," the rook replied.

"So you are, undoubtedly," the sycamore said. "Often and often I have watched you at work up in yonder tree, and I have looked at your wings with their stiff fringe, and at your glossy coat, and admired you exceedingly."

"Yes, to be sure," returned our self-satisfied friend. "You are perfectly right. A sensible tree you are—a wonderful tree, too; I will say that. See how silky your pale green leaves are. See how prettily your branches spread out on every side. Think how nicely those tassels hang from them. Oh! you are a beauty, that is evident. You

are what is called a beauty, remember that."

"Very well, I shall assuredly remember." The sycamore spoke in a merry voice.

"Then, the next time a bird like me—a bird whose opinion is worth having—praises you, don't go pretending to be humble about it. A beauty ought to think something of herself, I can tell you."

* * * *

Months had passed when the rook revisited that part of the forest, and those months had wrought some surprising changes. The thistle no longer wore its purple cap, but only a few gray plumes, which looked rather scanty and old.

"My good friend," was the bird's exclamation, "what have you done to yourself? You must pardon me, but really you are a perfect fright!" There came no reply, so presently

the question was repeated—"What have you done to yourself? Where is your fine purple cap?"

"Gone," was the answer, spoken sadly enough. "My beauty is gone."

"Yes, yes, I see that, of course," said the other; "but how comes it so? What have you done with it?"

"I had no power to keep it," said the thistle; and it said no more.

"Ha! is this from you, Sycamore?" was his next exclamation, as a brown leaf came fluttering down; and, gazing up, our feathered friend saw his acquaintance of the summer left almost leafless.

Up at his curiously-woven nest, and then upon his fine plumage, glanced the rook, with a half-fearful glance, as if he feared that his own beauty and grandeur and cleverness might be about to depart in like manner.

"Is it well to be vain?" sighed the autumn wind, as it carried that last leaf away.

"Caw! caw!" said the rook, and he took his flight homeward.

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EASTER FLOWERS.

"Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase."—PROV. iii. 9.

IF you had been the moonbeam which made its way into the church on the night of Easter Even, you would have found spring-flowers clustering round every pillar, and nestling in every nook. Little witnesses they seemed, waiting to testify on the morrow to the resurrection which had come to nature, an earnest of the great and joyful resurrection, which is yet to be.

For some time the moonlight wandered about the church, up and down the aisles, and along the walls; now tracing out some name carved in memorial marble, now

mounting higher, and lighting up the "little witnesses," which seemed to say, "He is not dead, but sleepeth."

At last the moon sank, and left only the starlight; then the starlight began to grow faint, for the dawn had come.

"Alleluia," sang the voices of the dawn, the first soft breathings that came to herald the day; "Alleluia! Death hath no more dominion."

The Earth took up the hymn: "Alleluia," she sang, "alleluia! It is written in new flowers all over my hills and my valleys that Death hath no more dominion."

The young Morning, with her bright face, came hurrying from the east through the grey mists which had not yet left the ground, and she, likewise, joined in the song of rejoicing; "Alleluia! the night passeth away, and the light cometh, Death hath no more dominion.

Whither are you going?" she enquired, of the little breath of soft air that passed by her very swiftly.

"Oh, I am the first breath of the dawn," was the reply as he flitted on.

"What of that? Whither are you going?"

"Heavenward, heavenward, with a thanksgiving," was the answer; and up, up, floated the breath, towards the skies.

On went the traveller, on through the dells and the copses, over the hills, and along the lanes and the highways, wakening each thing she met. By and by she waited for a moment on the brow of a crag, and looked down into the village below.

"What are those grey mists which rise here and there among the trees?" she said. "Those grey mists which wave and curl and rise so softly among the trees?"

The voices replied that they were the first

signs of the human world stirring among the cottages.

"And the human world, like nature, sends its earliest things heavenward. What a thankful world it is!" and so saying, the young traveller sped on her way, thinking over what she had heard and seen; ejaculating every now and then, with a sort of wonderment, "What a thankful world it is!"

"Ah! where are they?" she cried, as she glided along the foot of a hill, by the borders of a coppice, and looked about her in disappointment.

"Where are what?" asked the voices of the dawn which bore her company.

"Why, those violets; the multitudes of sweet violets, which I was assured I should find here."

"Oh, they were the earliest of the year;" was the answer.

"And, I suppose, they mounted up on the wings of that self-sacrificing little breeze which I met just now. A great deal Mother Earth cares for her beautiful ones, if she gives them up, one after another, so easily!"

"Nay, mistake me not," said Earth, "think not that it was without pain that I yielded them up. Think not that for a small cause I would have given them readily. Oh! they were my fairest and my best," she murmured; but there was stedfastness in her tone, and there were even joy and triumph mingled with it as she added, "therefore were they most meet to be laid at His footstool."

"We must not tarry," said the voices, hurrying the Morning on her way, but as they went, they cried, "and, Earth, He loveth a cheerful giver."

Again the journey lay through dells and over hill-tops. When the young traveller

came to the fields, her foot no sooner touched the dewy grass, than up sprang a bird, darting away towards the sky.

"I did not mean to disturb him," she exclaimed, "I only intended to awaken. Silly little frightened thing, to fly away."

But her counsellors said, "Do you not yet understand? He is the earliest bird of the dawn, and he is gone heavenward with an Alleluia."

It was with somewhat of impatience in her manner, that the Morning now hastened on; but she could not help hearing how sweetly sounded the song of the sky-lark up among the clouds.

"Nay, but this is too much!" she exclaimed, stopping suddenly at a place where there were crowds of small pale buds, folded each in a covering of green; plenty of buds, but scarcely one opened flower. "This is too

much," she repeated: "I was told I should find hundreds of beautiful little flowers, hundreds of primroses, in this place; and see, I can barely find a handful of them."

"But were not they the earliest of the year?" suggested the voices.

"So I suppose," was the discontented reply, "so I suppose. Surely Heaven is very exacting."

"Ah no," they answered; "Heaven does not 'exact' even what is its due; 'God loveth a cheerful giver.'"

The young traveller took the rebuke in silence, and flitted on. At length, she came to a church in a valley. The small grey church looked so peaceful and so beautiful in its nest among the hills, and the Morning turned aside, and went towards it. Through the yet dim light she passed among the graves, and by the ancient cedar, and she

looked in through one of the tinted windows. There she lingered for a little time, as if trying to satisfy herself about something which she saw within.

"This is where they are," she whispered; "this is where they are; the little spring flowers. And why should Earth rob herself of her beauty, to send it hither?" she continued, turning away very slowly, unable to withdraw her gaze from what it so delighted in.

"Who gave Earth her beauty?" the voices said, "and to whom should she dedicate the first of her youth, if not to Him?"

"Ah, well!" sighed the Morning; and her words sounded as if they meant that it was very hard.

"If you could have seen the willing feet which yesterday ran hither and thither, seeking out Earth's offerings," remarked the old

cedar, "and if you could have seen the willing hands that placed them here; aye, if you could have seen the reverent thankfulness with which Earth yielded them up, you would say that the dedication was not made grudgingly, but by a 'cheerful giver.'"

The Morning thought awhile, and then said, "And the human hearts, which brought such willing hands, did they also bring offerings of their fairest and their best?"

The old cedar shook his head; "I do not know," he said, "I cannot tell. I am not scholar enough to read human hearts; yet," he continued, kindly, "although I could not see it, there *may* have been a little whim or two, or a little thought or two, or a little talent or two, brought and dedicated with the Easter flowers."

Now, the sky began to brighten, and the air to grow warm, and all things seemed

more full of life. More than once, the traveller from the east paused on her way to look back rejoicingly on the beauty and the new life which had grown up for her wherever she went.

"After all, who gave me this beauty and this life?" said she, musing over the words of the dawn.

Then the light of day shone out resplendently, robing her in brightness and glory, and, for a moment, she stopped in awe; but it was only for a moment, and then she retraced her way towards the church.

Quietly, quietly, under the dark cedar boughs again, to the east window; and there, with a reverent, yet joyous Alleluia, she laid the first golden sunbeam upon the altar of God.

THE BREEZE AND THE MILL.

A BRISK air of wind came in full career over the hill-top, and, hurrying down the hill-side, entered a chestnut wood which grew below.

"Really, I shall trouble myself no more with such work," he cried; "I shall take to an easier life;" and therewith he set himself to rock a tree, in which a wood-dove had built her nest.

"What has offended you?" asked the dove in her quiet way; "what is it you are so tired of doing? tired of shaking my nest about, I hope."

"No; the very burden of my life is the windmill just up above you; I have to

spend all my breath and my strength in making him go; and he is as crabbed and ill-natured about it as possible; as if it were any benefit he conferred upon me, indeed, by turning round!"

The wood-dove only said "coo-coo," softly; she did not scold him while he was in such a pet; and, after a little, he went on with his complaining, but in a rather more amiable voice.

"You don't know how provoking it is," he said; "I come to my work with good-will enough; I rush at the windmill with all my might—for it is rather fun, turning a mill—when it is a good-natured one; but this idle old fellow gives a creak and a groan, and throws up this arm and that as slowly as ever he can; and if I say 'Turn round,' 'Well really I can't be troubled,' answers he, and then he stops altogether, and will not move

nor stir, blow as I may; then, when I am nearly exhausted, he will toss himself about as fast as possible, just to make people believe that he would go round all rightly enough if I would but blow. He is a disagreeable creature, and I'll have nothing more to do with him."

"Nay, now, that is evil for evil," returned the dove; "besides, only think how far in your revenge you may injure those who have never done anything to vex you. The mill-owner will lose ever so much money if his mill do not go, and people will be wanting for bread, if they cannot get the corn ground into flour."

"Never mind, don't worry yourself about your neighbours," answered the other; "still, you are a good creature, and I don't mind performing a trifling service for you, at any rate, so I will stay and rock the cradle for

you, if you like, while you go and fetch your day's food;" then he began to swing the boughs backwards and forwards, so that the "cradle" seemed somewhat in peril, and the bird advised him to go and find something better to do.

"Well, what shall I do?" he said to himself, as he wandered away. "I will turn no more mills, I know; such slavery it is, and no thanks for it."

But he did not put his intention into practice, for day after day he came back to his employment; but this always ended in the mill giving a deep groan and coming to a stand-still; upon which, the breeze, in a pet, would rush off and tell his vexations to the dove in the chestnut tree.

"I don't care," he exclaimed, one afternoon, "I will not keep to such work any longer. I am a creature of spirit, and I

will not be treated like a simpleton; and, suddenly, he lowered his voice to a whisper, and softened his flight to that of the gentlest air of summer, then picking up a little flake of down from the dove's nest, he began to puff it before him, lazily. He went on like this until he reached the mill, where he sauntered up, and floated by as lightly as ever a breath of wind can go.

"What, not at work, old mill?" said he, in his changed voice; "not at work? how is this? You are growing old, and your day is past, that is it, I presume."

"Growing old? not at all! I am not old, not I," and the mill began to fidget his sails uneasily, speaking in a sharp, half-affronted manner.

"Oh, I beg pardon, I did not wish to annoy you," was the very subdued answer of the crafty little breath; "but I have seen you

turning round and round so unceasingly, that it struck me you might at length have retired from an active life, and meant to pass the remainder of your days in dignified quiet on the top of this hill."

"I am fully able to do my work, as much so as ever, and just as willing," the windmill replied; "but what I object to is, being compelled to work whenever a rude, imperious wind thinks fit to turn me round."

"Certainly, I perfectly understand," said the other; "like a person of spirit, you would work only when you choose, and for as long as you choose, and I commend your wisdom; but, if I might counsel you, if I might presume, for I am but an insignificant being compared to yourself, I should say give up work; take life easily, as I do, and you will have better times, no doubt."

"You are right," exclaimed the mill, after

a moment's reflection; "I will only work when it suits me, and if working should not suit me, why I will not work at all." On hearing this, the breath sauntered along in his new careless way, puffing the flake of down before him, and singing in a lazy voice, "Take life easily; hurrah for nothing to do!"

Then for once the windmill seemed to be roused to some degree of animation; for, with a frantic jerk, as the little wind passed him, he turned and tossed his great arms to the sky, shouting the chorus, "Hurrah for nothing to do!"

Some little time after this, the wood-dove, sitting quietly on her nest, felt herself gently waved backwards and forwards, with a touch which she knew quite well, only it was much feebler than it used to be. Still she recognised her friend, and said—

"Ah, is it you, little miller? are you getting on more pleasantly?"

"Why, yes; that is to say, I have nothing to do, which is delightful, of course; but I have some amusing intelligence for you; what do you think? They are going to pull down the windmill."

"Nonsense!" The wood-dove would not believe it. The mill was stout and strong, and stood in an excellent position, and had stood there ever since she could remember; all the birds in the wood would expect their trees to come down next, if they saw the mill taken away.

"But it is quite true," said the breeze; "and I can tell you how it is. The silly creature took my advice, and would not work, except, indeed, by fits and starts, just when he pleased; and the miller could do nothing with him, and has, at last, come to

the conclusion that there is not wind enough to be had on the top of that hill, so he is going to pull him down."

"Coo-coo, you were scarcely kind," was the only reply of the dove, who seemed sorry, and did not talk, so away went the breath, lazily of course, and puffing the little bit of down before him.

There was such a creaking and groaning as he approached the top of the hill. The poor mill was trying, with many efforts, to toss his arms with the air, and fly round and round.

"Oh!" he groaned, "oh, oh dear! oh dear! must I be pulled to pieces? must I come down off the hill-top, to go no one knows where? What will become of me?"

"Why, you will have nothing to do, that is certain," replied the little air in his slow, sleepy tones. "Hurrah for nothing to do!"

"Begone! you misled me," groaned the angry mill. "I am tired of my indolence, tired to death. Oh, for the days when I ground the corn so merrily, and my broad sweeps rustled in the wind, and I gloried in my strength and usefulness! Alas! it is all over now."

"You had better begin again," said the breeze, playing with his feather of down, and talking with perfect indifference, which was too bad, seeing his neighbour was in trouble.

The mill replied that beginning again was impossible. "I believe the winds have forsaken me," he said; "I told them I should not stir, and they have not been near me for ever so long. Gentle Sir," he continued, changing to a tone of the humblest entreaty: "Gentle Sir Breeze, I should be thankful for one puff, such as you are bestowing on that

morsel of down. It would save me from ruin, no doubt, and I should never forget the kindness."

Now the breeze, thoughtless and mischievous as he had shown himself to be, was not altogether spiteful and ill-natured; so, relinquishing the bit of down, he rose above the hill, and floated towards the mill. But the sweeps never moved.

"It is of no use, you see," observed the breath of air; "you don't turn, so what is the use of wasting one's strength and one's time?"

"If I might ask you to blow just a little harder," implored the mill; "do, I pray you; remember, it would be saving me from ruin."

Then the breeze roused himself, and tried in earnest; but no, the poor mill tried, and shook his sails, and creaked and groaned in

disappointment, for he could not stir an inch. The other drew off in real vexation, saying, "I am very sorry, but it is of no use; the fact is," added he, "you and I have both of us grown so powerless from our easy lives, you so stiff and I so feeble, that I don't see any hope;" and leaving his unhappy acquaintance to deplore his misfortune, he once more betook himself to a spot where he never failed to hear some sort of good counsel.

"I am in trouble," he said, as he moved a little more briskly than usual through the chestnuts; and the dove, looking out of her nest, asked what his trouble might be; whereupon he repeated again the story of the mill, and its impending fate, confessing that he was sorry to have brought it into such a condition; "but the worst of it is, you see," he continued, "I really have not the strength now when I have the will to help him. Why, I am

scarcely strong enough to rock your cradle. I feel as if I had scarcely breath enough to puff a little bit of down any more."

"Well, I would not despair," answered the wood-dove. "There is nothing like work for bringing out one's strength. I would try—yes, I would try from morning till night, rather than see the destruction of that poor mill; maybe you might save him after all."

Then the breeze, roused to the trial, went away, putting all his power, which however was sadly small now, into every stroke of his wing.

"Cheer up," cried he, "cheer up, mine old acquaintance. You are not pulled down yet, and no one knows what we may do between us."

And he set to work heartily, puffing and flapping, and throwing himself against the

sweeps, which strove and creaked and groaned as before, but not an arm rose yet.

"There seems life here," said the mill-owner one morning, when he came to give final orders about the pulling down; and as he heard the noise of the struggling sails, he bade a man go and set them free.

They were freed, and with one toss away they went at last! How strong the breeze had grown, and how it toiled and toiled, rejoicing in its strength! How energetically the mill worked, throwing its sweeps round one after another, listening with pride as they rustled through the air!

And the wood-dove heard the sound, and knew it was all right, and she was glad.

So the mill was not pulled down.

Sometimes the wind, released from his business, would pay a visit to the chestnut copse, rocking the nest of the wood-dove

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playfully, while she said how strong he had grown. But mostly through the day he was on the hill-top; and merrily, merrily they worked together, and gloried in their work, the Breeze and the Mill.

SINGING IN THE DARK.

You do not know what a favour certain creatures made of their existence. It chanced that the night was rather a dark one, and that was not at all to the taste of the pool, who grumbled from his very depth of depths, saying he was made for the light, to sparkle in the sun, not to lie there in the night all black and cold. The water-lily on his surface rocked uneasily, closing up her petals, as tightly as ever she could. The owl, sailing along noiselessly as a spirit, seated himself in a hollow trunk, and with a most melancholy "tu-whoo"—declared night was very

wearisome to him, and that he wished day would come, that he might cease his wanderings and rest. Then they all betook themselves each to his or her own different mode of self-consolation. The owl remarked that his wanderings must end some time or other, so he would endure until then; the pool gave a long sigh, oh! such a long one, saying he would "be resigned"; the water-lily owned that she had had bright times, to be sure, and said she would, in consideration of that, endeavour to be content. They were all martyrs—every one of them, according to their own thinking, creatures enduring hard times; and it was with a great lamenting over its misery that they settled to resign themselves, as they said, to their appointed lot.

They all gave one sigh that went up with a weary sound.

"What is this?" was the inquiry of an

old acquaintance of ours—the night-wind—as he felt himself burdened with that voice of discontent.

"It is resignation," the pool said; and the other not at all pleased bore it upward. As he left them, and their murmur died away, there burst forth a song from among the trees at the end of the avenue; a long, sweet, trilling song which echoed through all nature with a sound of rejoicing.

"Is there any creature so mad or so much of a hypocrite as to pretend to be happy in this gloom?" grumbled the pool.

It was towards midnight when the wind next came slowly sweeping by; lifting the willow boughs, and ruffling for a moment the pool, which thereupon heaved and sighed again and again.

"Heigh oh! sighing, what does it mean?" said the wind.

"Ah!" replied the pool, with another deep-drawn moan; "it means,—yes, it means resignation."

"Oh! indeed;" and the wind whistled as if it were amused, but added: "what are you so resigned about, if I may inquire?" But the pool was not sure he could make him understand; "You see you are the night-wind," said he.

"I am; but what of that?"

"Why, night is all natural to you; but if you had been a creature made for the day, made, as I was, to sparkle in the light of the sun, you would know the misery of being condemned to the gloom of night."

The wind admitted that probably he might.

"And, if so," continued the other, "what would you do, I should like to ask?"

Before the wind had time to answer, the

song broke forth again, lingering with a flood of music on the midnight air.

When at last it sank into silence, there was a hush for some time, but by and by the pool spoke.

"Folly! what do you call all that?" said he in his most contemptuous tone.

"I call it resignation," answered the night-wind quietly, and he sped away to carry the sweet notes upward.

"We are no such hypocrites, but we are resigned, you and I;" said the pool to the water-lily; "we accept our lot."

"That's because you can't help it;" remarked a voice; and a dip of the broad wing in the water told that the wind was listening yet.

"You never dreamed of this, did you, lily," continued the murmurer, "when the sunlight drew you up, up from the deeps and

wakened you into beautiful life? You never dreamed that that light was so soon to be withdrawn and you were to be left in night?"

"Don't you go to make her discontented;" interrupted the watchful wind; and then he went to the water-plant, whispering, "Never fear; there is a morning coming yet, lily."

"*I* never dreamed of it, that is certain," complained the pool; "I never dreamed when first I glittered in the light that I was ever to be left so cold and miserable. Indeed I could not endure it but for the thought that, as you have just observed, there is a morning coming yet," and then he relapsed into a melancholy silence.

Once during that night a single star, bright and beautiful, shone between the trees and down full into the water; whereupon the lily was gladdened, and whispered, "Cheer

up, friend; don't you see a little light?" But the murmurer, not to be cheered by anything so trifling, met the kind little speech with rebuke.

"How easily some folks are misled," said he; "don't allow yourself to be deluded into the notion that that is anything worth rejoicing in;—poor little paltry light that it is beside the light of day. I wait for the morning; nothing less than the morning for me."

"You are a grumbling, ungrateful fellow," exclaimed the wind; "as you did not make yourself, and made no bargain about the conditions under which you were to be created, I don't see why you are to give yourself these airs and fancy yourself too good for the darkness."

Again, while he spoke the nightingale's song was heard, and the night-wind com-

mented on the superiority of one who could take dismal times so cheerily.

"Perhaps she sees the morning coming, she is perched up so high in the tree;" the lily suggested; but the wind answered, "No such thing;—morning coming? not it! why it is only just past midnight, and the very first glimmer of dawn is yet below the horizon. No! I understand most tongues that talk in wood and wild, and I fancy the purport of that song to be that it is all right, somehow, this darkness;—I fancy, too, she does not think herself too good for the night."

"She is certainly expecting the morning," insisted the water-plant, unable to give up her favourite thought; and the wind saying "Maybe, maybe;" went on his wanderings.

All the night long the poor pool lay sighing and talking about resignation; and the

lily folding her petals waited silently for the morning; while ever through the gloom thrilled the song of one who, dearly as she loved the day, thought herself not too good for the darkness.

TEMPTED.

"I GIVE you a friendly hint, Lighthouse," said a porpoise, who came tumbling and puffing and panting along: "You have enemies at hand," he continued, when he again rose to the surface, "and you will have to make up your mind either to fight or to run away."

The anemone clinging to a rock near the foot of the lighthouse, clung more tightly than ever. "I know what that caution means," said she: "the old porpoise, with his 'friendly hints,' as he calls them, never comes this way except when there is a storm to follow."

And the sea-weed in the pool said: "To be sure, to be sure: it means a storm, not a doubt about it, so you will have to hold fast, as fast as ever you can. As for myself, I expect to be in but a sorry condition by this time to-morrow: perhaps carried off plume by plume far out to sea."

After some consultation between themselves one of the two little speakers at his foot ventured a question:

"Lighthouse, shall you really run, as the porpoise advised?"

Every stone in the tower's smooth side seemed to vibrate with laughter as he replied: "Run? Not I! I was never made for running, that is certain."

Up came a quiet breath over the sea: it hovered about the lighthouse for a minute or two, and then said in the softest, pleasantest tone:—

"I have heard the most absurd things to-day—the most absurd things."

"And what may you have heard?" returned the lighthouse.

"Why, I have been told—none but silly old gossips would invent such a thing, of course—I have been told that you mean to set up a light to-night, like some very ridiculous people on other parts of the coast."

"You only heard the simple truth," said the other, who was a new lighthouse, and was that night to be lighted for the first time.

Then the air of wind, still quite gentle, fidgeted a little, as if wondering how to say something which he wished to say; and at last he spoke:

"Now do let me entreat of you not to be so mad. Some very especial friends of mine, relations, indeed, are greatly opposed to

lighthouses in general, and, I am sorry to say, to yourself in particular. You will spoil all their plans; so I beg you to keep that light to yourself."

The lighthouse thought it over a good while before he answered; but his answer when it came was firmly given:

"Well, I really cannot; I shall have to show my lantern to-night. I am sorry I cannot oblige your friends."

"Oblige!" The voice of the air grew stronger now, and spoke rather like a stiff little breeze. "Oblige! That sounds very grand indeed; but what if you should not be able to help yourself? These relations of mine are not to be trifled with, I assure you. You may chance to have heard of the winds and the waves, I dare say?"

"Certainly. I have some small acquaintance with them too."

"And would you care to have to battle with them to-night?" was the rejoinder, made in a sharp and somewhat angry tone.

There was no reply; and the breeze gave a little shrill whistle and departed.

When he was fairly gone, the sea-anemone found courage to venture another remark.

"I really don't believe all he says; there is not a threat of any such thing in the sky, and the water is quite smooth."

Then the little ripple which broke against the walls fell back in tiny drops, laughing at the thought of the supposed danger. But the sea-weed pondered the matter over more soberly, and suggested, what would become of them, supposing the breeze and the porpoise had told the truth?

"Oh, I don't know indeed," said the poor little anemone; "I don't know at all. I shall hold fast if I can; but if the lighthouse

runs, why I shall run too;—now let me finish my dream."

Then the two were silent, the warm, pleasant wavelets passing over them all the quiet summer day.

In the meanwhile, the lighthouse stood musing over what had taken place, and trying to brace himself for the battle which, notwithstanding his careless manner, he believed would come. He looked out upon the distant sails gleaming in the sun; he saw the little fleets of boats put out for the deep-sea fishing. He watched them all, and thought how many of them would that night be dependent on him for their safety. He recalled the artful counsel of the soft persuasive voice, and then its smothered anger. It all meant something. Sometimes he looked down at the little anemone asleep, and the little ripples at play, and said to

himself he could hardly fancy mischief could be near; but again he would think upon the porpoise's warning, and the young wind's threat, and once more he acknowledged that there was danger in store.

"Oh! it is coming, after all," said a frightened whisper from under the sea. And the sea-weed moved her plumes about nervously, and the ripples began to moan and chafe uneasily: for there were frowns in the sky.

"There goes the sun behind an ugly black mass," said the same speaker again; and soon after that a shrill-voiced wind swept by the tower, saying: "So you won't oblige us? Ah! but some folks can't help themselves."

"I don't believe in 'can't help,'" answered the tower, somewhat proudly. "If I am to show my lantern, I'll show it. My light must burn to-night, whether you and your

relations are pleased or no." Nevertheless, it was not without some quakings at heart that he watched the night draw on.

By and by, through the dusk, you might have seen the glimmer of his lamp, and people on the cliff, who had come to see it on its first night, said it looked very clear and strong; but they little guessed the struggle to be brave which was going on.

"Ha! ha!"

The storm laughed wildly as it came careering by. "You would not 'oblige' us, so grand you were; see now if you can resist us!" and furiously it seized the tower, and shook and shook as if it would wrest it from its foundation. There was an instant's quiver through the stony frame; but still it remained uninjured, holding aloft with steady hand its faithful light.

"There are untold treasures almost within

my grasp," shouted the angry sea; "were it not for your lamp, they would all be mine;" and, mad with wrath, he lashed his terrible waves against the lighthouse-walls. While he spoke, there came a whisper soft and clear, which the lighthouse heard even through the tumult. "Courage!" it said; "courage, for Life or Death!"

"Do but one little act: hide but that offending light, and we leave you in peace," cried the tempest. There was no reply, and the battle grew fiercer than ever.

* * * *

Day came at last. It had been a long, weary night; but the tempest had sunk at dawn, and gently now the ripples played among the rocks. The little anemone was still clinging to her hold. "It was hard work, but I found you did not run," she said. Over the smooth water glided many a

ship which would then have been fathoms down could the winds and waves have had their way.

The morning light glistened on the bright faces of the lamp which had shone so truthfully through the darkness. The soft whisper which had spoken the words of cheer in the hardest of the fight, murmured soothingly around the tower; and the old porpoise, as he tumbled by again, said: "It was bravely fought."

DRUDGERY.

"At last I saw myself too; and I was toiling and doing ever so little a piece of the great work."—*Tom Brown's School-days.*

THE plough, laid up to rest under the farm-shed, was in a brown study. After a hard day's work he was put aside, but only for a few hours; for the ploughman, he knew, would be up betimes, and would set him to work again. But just now all was rest and quiet; for the hard-working folks went to bed early, and there were no sounds of life and toil to interrupt a meditation.

"I certainly expected it would come to something better than this," he said, half to himself. "I did not quite understand, when

I was made into a machine and called a plough, that I was to spend my life in nothing more than tearing up the ground, making straight lines over a field for ever. Well, life is very strange, very."

Then the iron which formed the ploughshare spoke up for himself, saying he never understood, when he was sought for underground with such infinite care, and dug out of the mine with so much cost and labour, and was melted and purified and beaten and shapen, that he was to do nothing but the work of a mere drudge.

After him the wood had a few words to say. It never imagined, when it was a tree in the forest, strong and stately and tall—when it was chosen out with so much consideration, and hewn down by the woodman with so much skill, and placed in a ship and carried so far across the sea, that it was to

come to little more than a pair of handles wherewith the labourer might guide the iron through the earth.

But with all these remarks, they were no grumblers; they only said what they were thinking about; they were not dreaming of making any resistance to their work.

The following morning saw the plough at its employment again very early, while the breeze was fresh and the first songs were being sung high up in the air. On it went at its monotonous toil, the earth rippling back on each side as the share made its deep furrows; the ploughman whistling to himself all the time he plodded along.

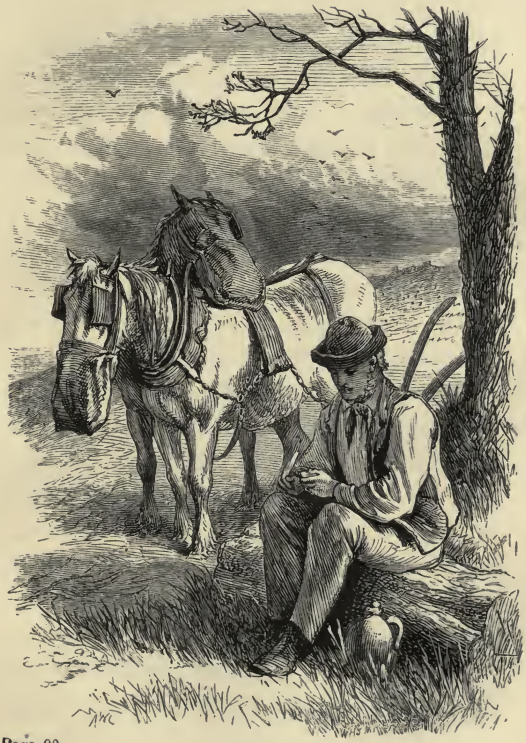
"Well, this drudgery grows more distasteful than ever to me," thought the plough. "What in the world can be the use of my doing all this? I should not have the least objection to anything useful, but is there

anything so utterly meaningless and dull as this?"

Just then his ploughing ceased for a little, whilst the man sat down under the hedge to eat his breakfast. The shadows were very long, for the sun had as yet made only a small advance towards his noonday throne. Every tree had a long black double of itself stretching far across the field; and the plough, as he rested, amused himself with watching these shadows grow slowly shorter and shift their positions a little, as shadows do.

"What sort of work is yours?" he inquired. "You are somewhat of a puzzle to me; and, if you will forgive my saying so, I cannot make out of what use you can possibly be."

"Well, it would be hard to say precisely," the shadows replied. "All we know is, that



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it is our business to attend upon the sun. Some people like us, and call us refreshing; some say we are gloomy, and rob them of their sunlight, and they wish us away; but we only know one thing, which is, that it is our business to attend upon the sun, and business has to be performed, you see."

"Yes, I do see," was the answer of the ploughshare. "I see it to my cost; for my business happens to be nothing but making straight furrows across this field, and most uninteresting work it is. Now, could I not have been made into a sickle instead? There would at least have been fun for me among the merry reapers of whom I have heard so much. Or could I not have been made into a sword—a bright, sharp, flashing sword? Oh, I would have done great things then! I would have conquered half the earth!" Then he paused, for the man came to resume

his work; and the ploughshare, recalled to the realities of his condition, said, despondingly, "I've sometimes nearly a mind to grow very blunt and jagged, and plough no more, for this is work beneath both my capacity and my inclination." But, as he left it, the shadow quietly observed, "Friend, don't be unhappy. Honest work finds its reward."

And the plough was an honest creature. It was not in him, after all, to neglect his business, or to do it badly, although he had no liking for it. So he put his whole strength into it, and went on as before.

"What pleasure do you find in tearing us up by the roots and casting us aside where we cannot grow?" cried some weeds angrily, as he dislodged them from the ground which they had no right to occupy.

"No pleasure at all," he answered. "I wish I did, because it is my duty, and my

life would be happier if my duties were pleasant to me."

"If you only knew! if you only knew!" sang a bird hovering above him. "If you only knew what I could tell—but I must not—you would work away with a lighter heart."

"There must be something in it all which I do not understand," said the plough to himself. "I fancy it cannot be so bad as I imagined. Bird, since you have said so much, say a little more. Give me a word of advice, which I may remember for my help during the remainder of the day."

The bird ceased his song for a minute, as if he were making ready for some wise speech, and then he came lower down, and sang in a softer tone. "Whatsoever you find to do, do it with all your might," he said, and the next instant he was off again with his old

notes, as joyously as ever. The plough repeated those words over and over all the day long—those and the parting observation of the morning shadow.

"Honest work finds its reward," and "Whatsoever you find to do, do it with all your might"—they clung to his memory, and he worked away patiently.

Soon the evening came, bringing the hours of rest, and the ploughman went home to his cottage, whistling as usual.

"He has earned his light heart and his night's repose," the plough said, as it listened to the last sound of his voice.

The straight lines were all done at last, and the labourers went to other occupation, and the plough was put by for a season. After that, he was taken out and set to work in other fields, where, as he was at his old employment, he would think to himself,

what a strange thing his life seemed to be, and what could be the meaning of what the bird and the shadow had said to him.

I wonder whether, when he saw the young wheat springing up in the early year, looking green and healthy, he felt his "honest work" repaid.

I wonder whether, when the reapers came in with their songs, and the carts came in so richly laden, and the poor gleaners went home with their precious sheaves, he repented having done with all his might that which his hand found to do.

REDEEMING POINTS.

"What heart is there so rough, so dark,
Whose gloom is so abiding,
That kindly eyes with kindly look
Can find therein no little nook
Where something fair is hiding?"

On a July day, when the hedges were glowing with the brightest flowers of the year, a peacock butterfly came flitting along, and presently she settled upon a leaf of hart's tongue, which hung over a ditch by the way-side.

"I am tired," she observed, and she pressed her wings tightly together above her head; "I am perfectly weary with pleasure; it is quite comfortable to stop and rest. There is

nothing more fatiguing than a day like this, when there is so much to tempt one to roam about. I am weary with pleasure." She seemed fond of hearing herself talk, for, without meeting a reply from any one, she soon resumed her speech.

"I believe I am fastidious; I believe I am very exclusive in my tastes; for I like nothing but what is beautiful."

"Nay, then, I should call you just the reverse," remarked a sunbeam, which loitered among the fern leaves on which the butterfly was resting.

"That is nonsense," answered the latter; "you only say it, because you wish to contradict me. What is so rare as beauty?" and here instinctively she opened her large wings, and their colours flashed in the light.

"Nay," again the sunbeam said, "what, on the other hand, is so universal as beauty?

Now, look around you, butterfly; say, of all the wild flowers which grow in this hedge, or of all the ferns that droop over the ditch here, which one among them is devoid of an excellent beauty?"

"Well, we will not dispute about the flowers and ferns," said the butterfly, "considering that they are the fairest things in creation. What shall we say of this ditch itself? this horrid green ditch beneath me; I think I have you now; what of the ditch?"

"What of the ditch? Why, I say it has an excellent beauty," was the reply of the sunbeam; and the peacock butterfly, with a jerk of her wings which seemed to denote excessive astonishment, rose from her leaf, and hovered about, waving her wings more daintily than ever. But the idea was so novel and amusing that she could not divest her mind of it.

"I am vastly entertained," she said; "prove to me that this ugly green ditch has anything to be admired, and I am prepared to believe to the utmost in your theory of universal beauty."

But the other was not disconcerted. "I tell you it has its own something that is beautiful," she answered, "and you would find it out if you knew how to look for it."

The light-hearted insect danced in her glee; "now, you are charming, Sunbeam; one meets with the ugliest, most repulsive thing in the world, and consoles oneself by saying it has beauty, if we could only see it. What say you, then, to yon pollard willow? Look at him now, with all his twigs standing straight up, as if he were terrified; what say you to beauty in him?"

The sunbeam only replied by moving towards the willow, where entering a hollow

in the trunk, she shewed a bird's-nest snugly built in its shelter. The butterfly agreed that that was pretty, very. "I should never have thought it," she remarked, in her airy, careless manner.

"You would never have expected a stiff old pollard to have so much kindliness about it; that is also what you are thinking;" and the sunbeam, laughing, danced back to the ferns, while the butterfly flew away, calling, as she went, "Farewell, Sunbeam, until we meet again; remember, you have but to prove to me the beauty of the green ditch, and I am your convert for ever."

But she had proceeded only a very short distance, when she exclaimed, "Ah! now, at last, I will show you something without beauty. Tell me now, what you see to enchant you in these queer little things. The spiders have had a washing-day, and have

hung all their table-cloths to dry;" for the briars were thickly hung about with little dull webs.

"What! the pretty gossamers?" The sunbeam shone upon them pleasantly, and the gossamer webs, as she drew near, glittered pearly bright, and the butterfly wondered.

"Yet, I don't count it quite fair," she said, "you light things up with a light of your own, and then you call them beautiful;" and away she flew in earnest. She roamed over hill and valley, rejoicing in the beauty of flower, and fern, and moss, and each fair thing whereon, from time to time, she rested.

"I should like to show the sunbeam my idea of beauty," said she once to herself; "this stream, with its trout playing through it, and its golden asphodel and its clusters of forget-me-nots along the margin. I should like the sunbeam to see my tastes; and she

shall see them too, if I can find her;" so she winged her way back once more.

"Come with me, friend," she cried, as with headlong haste she returned to the sunbeam; "come with me, and I will show you the trout stream, with its margin all fringed with the golden asphodel; come, come."

But her friend was intent upon something else, and the other drew near to see what might be going on. And what do you think was going on, after all? Only a few little boys with sticks, torn from the hedge, were stirring up the green ditch, seeking in vain for frogs or minnows. Tired, at last, they left their play, and ran off, tossing aside their sticks, covered with a thick coating of the surface of the stagnant water.

"Now, doubter, come, and we shall see;" and the sunbeam darted gleefully away to one of the rejected playthings; while the

butterfly followed, saying, "Ah, how cold and disagreeable!" as she unthinkingly settled upon it.

"No, no; I must have you look; look here, and look here;" the sunbeam said; then, moving around the stick, she pointed out the treasure of most delicate vegetable life which clustered upon it; multitudes of tiny plants of the duck-weed, perfect in form and colour, each with its tiny rounded leaves and its thread-like root. "Now, what say you?" she cried, triumphantly, "what do you say now to the ugly ditch, since this is the texture of his surface? Is there not here an excellent beauty?"

"Only when you bring it to the sunshine; only when you look upon it with a light of your own, as I told you before;" was the reply, made in the tone of one convinced against her will.

Then the poor old ditch, grateful for the friendly eye which had sought out his merits, spoke from under the ferns, and reeds, and grasses. I am not sure of the very words he uttered, for he spoke rather quaintly; but the purport of what he said, was very much this: "That, perhaps, if, to all we see, we, like the sunbeam, brought a 'kindly light of our own,' we, also, like her, might discover in all things, an 'excellent beauty.'"

FAIRY-RINGS.

"The Angels guard us round about,
And help us brotherly."—*Lyra Germanica.*

A COMPANY of blue-bells which grew in a field, at the foot of some tall grey crags, were one morning deliberating as to what could be the meaning of a dark green circle which had apparently been drawn round them during the night.

"Perhaps," said a lark, whose nest was on the ground close by, "it may be for the same purpose for which the woodman marked the trees the other day, with a great white mark round the trunk to show that they were to be cut down."

"Oh, then, we are to be cut down, for certain," cried one; "no doubt it is the mark of the mower, and he will soon come with his scythe. Yes; that is it, we shall be cut down. Good-bye, friends and companions; let us take leave of each other while we can. Good-bye. Alas, alas!"

"You are in a wonderful hurry," said the lark, "I only suggested; I do not pretend to know for certain. Now, I have another idea; it strikes me that little children, and not the mower, may have marked you out, for who ever heard of scythes in the fields at this time of the year? my belief is, that you have been discovered by children, and they have been running round you while you slept, until they have trampled down the grass under their feet; and they will know the spot again, and come before long, when you are all quite out in flower, and gather you."

"Yes; that is it, no doubt," cried many at once, "we are marked out by the little children, and we shall soon be gathered. Ah! it is a great pity. We had rather they should leave us alone. No more sunshine for us, no more night dews, no more sweet, fresh morning air. Ah! what a pity."

"What folks you are for jumping at conclusions," rejoined the skylark, "I never said for certain. I only made a guess, which may after all be entirely wrong."

A tiny, ivy-leaved campanula which grew so deep among the blades of grass as to be hidden from any but the most careful eye, said timidly, that, perhaps good spirits had been walking round them, watching over them all the night.

"Ah! that is it, little Campanula, you are right. Good spirits have been watching round us, and we are not to be cut down by

the mower, nor gathered by the children. No no; it is all right. We shall live a long time yet in the sunshine and the dews and the morning air. It is all right," and they bent their heads and rang sounds of glee from their hundred little merry bells.

"Well," said the lark, "you are the most extraordinary people I ever met with for making up your minds. May the little campanula be right, say I;" and the next minute he was high above their heads, singing his beautiful song.

"The lark is decidedly wrong in his guessing," said echo, "there have been no children this way, of that I am quite sure. You know I would have told you if there had, for I tell you everything; but there is something else which I must tell; it makes me very uneasy. I have heard strange noises this morning; noises like this:" and he produced a low

deep sound, which terrified his hearers not a little.

"I can explain to you what that is," said a rabbit, who, scampering across the loose ground at the foot of the crags, paused a minute on hearing what the echo said. No one paid much attention to the rabbit at any time, he was such a flighty little fellow, but now he sat erect upon a stone, looking so solemn that, with one accord, there was a cry of "What is it? tell us what it is."

"Why, listen to me, all of you, and you shall know. Have there not been torrents of rain during the past week?"

"Oh, torrents!" they answered, "it nearly beat us all down into the earth. Many of the wood-anemones did, in fact, give way under it. Numbers of them are dead, as you may see, if you only take the pains to go to the border of the wood."

"Silence! you have more than replied to my question," returned the pompous little rabbit; "I only wished to bring to your memory the heavy rains we have had. Now, that rain has filled all the streams and rivers up to the brim; it has so increased the waterfall, that it tumbles over the rocks like something frantic; there are boughs and trunks of trees whirling along, and poor little dead lambs, which have been washed away off the meadows where the waters have overflowed. I believe you may soon have the waters here; in my opinion they are sure to come, should there be another day or night of rain; and then you will all be drowned, no doubt. The noise, then, which you hear, is the noise of the frantic river." Here the rabbit paused, and looked round to see the effect of his harangue. "One thing more," observed he again, "there is yet another danger threat-

ening. Those rains have loosened the earth so much in many places, that it is slipping away. I saw a great rock, enormous, oh! quite large enough to crush a rabbit, roll down from among the crags, not many yards from this place. The noise you hear, then, may, likewise, be partly the sound of rolling rocks. Those overhanging this field will go next, probably, and then you will be crushed to death, every one of you; and now, good-day." Then, with a bound, away went the rabbit, leaving his hearers in some little consternation.

"What are we to do?" said one, after an uncomfortable silence of some minutes.

"Ah! what, indeed? we are rooted here, there is no escaping; better the mower's scythe or the children's hands, than the falling rock, or the water-flood."

"Think of the ring which is round us,"

said the little campanula down in the grass; but the others, chiding the simple thought, remarked that their doom would be certain, should there be more rain.

At noon the sky was overcast, and the blue-bells began to tremble and look about them anxiously, saying one to another that there would soon be an end to their lives. The rabbit darted by to his warren, and they called to him to stop and tell them whether the river had risen any higher; but he paid no attention, and they were left to themselves.

Down came the rain, heavily, unceasingly; and one after another, those of the anemones in the wood which had survived the previous storm were stretched upon the ground. The blue-bells strove hard to bear up on their sturdy stems, but, at every sound the echo uttered, they started and trembled, fearing he

was about to tell them of the flood or the falling crags. Only the wee campanula remained fearless, and, holding its pretty faith, nestled low down, saying, "No doubt the good spirits are keeping watch around us."

"There is no hope for us," said a blue-bell at last; and, in despair, it bent to the ground and died.

"But there is hope," sang the lark who had spoken during the morning deliberation; "there is hope, and I shall sing my song in sunshine yet before the day goes down."

And thus the time went on until evening, there were sighing, and trembling, and hoping, from the different children of the fields, while earth took her desolation patiently, and held her peace.

Suddenly there was a triumphant cry from the nest on the ground, and the lark started upwards with a song. "It is ended, it is

ended, the desolation and the gloom," he shouted, as he rose through the air, and was lost to sight. And earth echoed his joy; for, as she gazed after him, she saw stretching across her meadows, from hill to hill, the bow that bids her never more despair.

There was such rejoicing throughout all nature, that, at last, the blue-bells shook off the heavy drops and sent forth a peal of gladness.

"I have learnt it; I have learnt it up at the gate of heaven," sang the lark, sinking down to his nest. "I have learnt that the eye that looks heavenward through its tears, shall behold the bow of promise and of peace;" and he folded his wings for the night.

"Still we are not safe," said one of the blue-bells, as the darkness closed in; "the waters must have risen considerably, and may overflow at any moment, and so our rejoicing will come to nothing."

"Yet, Blue-bell," said a small voice among the blades of grass; "that rainbow shining to cheer us just when we were ready to despair, shows that there is some one watching;" and with that the little campanula lay down and slept confidingly, and I thought that I, too, would evermore remember trustfully how all our lives are circled round by the providence of God.

LOST AND FOUND.

"Those he had loved were still his own."
MADAME DE GASPARIN.

THE last wave of the flowing tide bore a tuft of the most beautiful sea-weed to the foot of the cliff; and sighing, drew back and left it there.

"Alas! I must give it up," he said.

After that the water began to sink lower, leaving a large space of shingle behind it; but during the course of its retreat it would glide a little way up the beach, depositing here and there some fresh treasure, and then shrink back, sighing as before. Yet there was a tone which had no sorrow in it that

mingled in that sigh of the sea; a voice as of hope, which seemed to rise above it and subdue it; and the wave, as it drew back, would unite with the rest of the water, sparkling as brightly as ever. You could observe how each time it made an ascent it had a shorter journey to perform; how each time its limit was farther and farther from the foot of the cliff where the first tuft of weed had been laid; and how from time to time it seemed to make a struggle to rise to its first ascent, and regain what it had left so far behind.

Once it came with a delicate pink weed whose beautiful plumes drooped and lay disordered as the wave drew off and left them.

"Oh," said he this time, "sometimes I could almost find it in my heart to wish I had never possessed aught so fair, since it must be relinquished thus;" but again the

tone of hope mastered that of regret, and hushed his sighing. Down the beach, down sank he until he had altogether quitted the shingle; until half the sand was dry; and then he went and lingered sadly about the rocks, amongst whose curtains of dark brown slippery weed the periwinkles were hiding; and where anemones were clinging; and in whose many little pools small creatures full of merry life were sporting.

Then, for certain, as the ebbing tide retreated you would hear it mourning over all it was leaving, and ever and anon you might observe even the effort it made to reach and regain the thing it had just relinquished; when, finding the attempt to be vain, it would once more draw back sorrowfully.

Finally, it came and laid upon the sand a little shell; then it sank quite low down and ceased its work.

A yellow crab, all shining with the salt water from which he had just emerged, was running nimbly across the sand from one pool among the rocks to another at a little distance; but for a moment he paused, "What can be the matter with the sea?" he said to himself; "it really makes me unhappy with its moaning. I hear even yet the sigh it gave when it cast the little shell upon the shore; oh! I should grow excessively melancholy if I remained any longer to listen." So he made rapidly for the nearest group of rocks, resolving to have a good frolic in the pools and to shake off from his mind all recollection of the troubles of others.

"Do you hear what the young crab says?" remarked a rather sullen-looking rock which stood quite out in the sea below low-water mark; "he thinks you a most miserable

creature; and for my part I consider you to be somewhat wanting in good sense. As for all these things over which you make such lamentations, you know if you must give them up you must; so my advice is forget all about them and trouble yourself no more."

But the wave was listening to another voice than that of the rock; the grand, solemn voice of the sea as it uplifted itself to overcome the counsel of a cold heart. "Surely the wave may prize its treasures," said the sea; "surely it may relinquish them with pain: only let it remember ever that the tide which ebbs shall also flow, and the lost shall be restored again."

Yet for all the sea could do, it was difficult to the wave, so it found, to shake off the rock's hard saying; and grievously arose the cry "Forget all about them and trouble

myself no more? Will they forget the wave in which they sported? Will it be nothing to them any more? Have I given them up for ever and ever? Ah! do they forget, and shall I?"

Was it nothing to them any more, indeed? nothing, when the tuft of weed far up the beach was listening for the first sound of the returning flood, and the heart of the shell was full of the last farewell of the wave? He little thought that while he was longing they were waiting; but so it was.

Again, and again, ocean spoke words of wisdom and cheer; until, I suppose the doubts were dispelled; for as the wave sank lower down the sand, it whispered to itself contentedly. "I know there shall be a limit," it said in its whisperings.

And the limit was reached at last. No more retreating as it had done, the water was

now reascending the sands; first in ripples which seemed only to die away upon the beach over which they attempted to rise.

Soon, with more volume and more strength they washed along the shore. Nearer it drew and nearer to the beautiful tufts of weed which on the shingle and at the cliff foot, patiently awaited its coming; nearer still to the little shell, within whose recesses sounded plainly and more plainly now, the tone which had lingered there so long. Higher towards the cliff; stronger and stronger it rose. It was as feebleness restored to a new and perfect strength; it was heaviness returned into rejoicing: it was an exile returning from his banishment: and the wave with a bound and a cry of gladness gathered back its treasures into its heart again.

"GOOD-WILL TOWARD MEN."

"So all God does, if rightly understood,
Shall work thy final good."—*Christian Year.*

"IF Providence were really kind, would it permit so much trouble in the world?"

This was the half-uttered soliloquy of one who sat alone by the firelight, with his face upon his hand, gazing into the fire just as one often does when one is busy thinking. Then carelessly he began to stir the coals, making them burn more quickly, until most of them were red-hot and had burnt themselves into all sorts of fantastic shapes and forms. The thinker may have been poor, or

he may have been grieved; I cannot say what it might be that troubled him; but that he was troubled was plain enough. Presently he again spoke his thoughts, saying this time,

"Does Providence really care for its creatures?"

A flame darted brightly from one large black coal which had not yet burnt; and a voice replied to him.

"You have found something which could answer that question satisfactorily," it said.

"Who are you, or what are you?" asked the thinker; "whatever you may be, I should like my doubt solved, by all means."

"I am a voice from the Past," was the reply; "that may suffice just now; I am a voice from the ages which are gone by; and I have the experience of an existence long prior to yours, or to that of any other

human being. Now, what is it you require? tell me again."

"I wish to know whether Providence really means well by us; whether it really cares for, or is indifferent to, our comfort or our misery. If it care for our comfort, why should it allow any sorrow or want to come upon us?"

"Does man ask such a question?" said the voice musingly; "man, who of all living or created things is the wisest and the most richly endowed? Ah! it is very strange."

"Man, being the wisest and the most richly endowed, is the more alive to happiness and to unhappiness. It is surely no wonder that I should be more sensitive to something which means comfort, than a dog or a thing inanimate would be; but that is not what we started with; and you have not answered my question; you have only asked one of

your own. What I want to know is simply this: Does Providence care for the comfort of its creatures?"

"I should think so, certainly," replied the voice: "it is what the ages which are gone have always held as a stedfast creed; it is the belief which the present is upholding with all its power; it is what the future will prove perfectly to the whole universe."

But the doubter did not seem any more disposed to accept the creed of ages, and only said that it was all very well, and all very easy to say that such a thing was so; but that something more than a mere declaration was required to satisfy a human soul.

"Ah, but there are proofs," was the rejoinder; "proofs plentiful enough. The ages rest their creed upon proofs innumerable, such as I can tell you, if you will listen."

There was a pause, while the thinker

continued gazing into the fire; and at last he murmured, "Tell me, then, if you can, what I wish to know. If Providence really cared so much for us, would it permit so much trouble amongst us?"

Then the voice from the past answered him:—

"Thousands of ages ago there grew in a forest a stately palm; fairer than her companions was she; she had the straightest stem and the tallest; and she had the most graceful foliage drooping on every side of her, as the water falls from the fountain. She was known by all who grew around her for the excessive pleasure she seemed to take in existence, through her belief in something which they could not understand, and for the earnest whisper which thrilled among her leaves at evening time, when, as it is said, 'Nature with folded hands stands

at her evening prayer;' 'Marvellous purposes of goodness,' the whisper always said, 'marvellous purposes which the future shall read aright.'

"'What may they be, those purposes?' her companions would ask; and her reply would always be, 'Wait and observe; we shall acknowledge it together in time to come, that marvellous are the purposes of goodness.'

"Suddenly there came a time of terror; rockings of the earth, overflowings of water, and the face of the land was changed. Where was the forest now? The queenly palm, where was she? What had become, think you, of the marvellous purposes which she had so extolled? 'Shall Thy loving-kindness be shown in the grave, or Thy faithfulness in destruction?'"

The voice stopped awhile, and the thinker

thought on; but soon the former spoke again.

"Ages passed; and there were new forests with new creatures inhabiting them; there was likewise man on the earth; restless, wonderful man, with his wiser ways and his new wants and his curious inventions. Meanwhile, the forest lay buried in darkness beneath the surface of the earth, and you would think that that meant silence and death; but no; down there in the gloom was yet heard the unconquered voice of faith lauding the 'marvellous purposes of goodness.' At last in that gloom were perceived strange sounds; not the voice of the earthquake or the flood; but of the tool of the miner: and the palm exclaimed in triumph to her companions that now they would understand; now they would learn the purposes in which she had trusted so long.

"Then man, with the wonderful ways and the curious inventions of which I have spoken, when he had made roads into the heart of the earth, carried away the stores of coal to warm a thousand hearths. The black coal,—how unlike it was to what it had once been; that beautiful, ancient forest.

"Now, doubter, do you gather a little faith?"

The fire over which the thinker had all the time been brooding in silence was still burning clearly, and changed into many shapes, until it seemed to him that he saw there the palm forest which, centuries and centuries before he had drawn breath, had been planned, and formed, and destroyed, and brought out from the depths of the earth again for the comfort of humankind. It may have been no more than fancy either which made him hear in the flicker of an occasional

flame the song which spoke of the 'marvellous purposes of goodness.' "What think you now of the hand which working invisibly and through unnumbered ages, has brought such a blessing for man?"

This was the first appeal of the voice, which seemed to grow fainter and ready to pass away.

"I do not see yet," was the reply; "that you have gone one step towards answering my doubt. I said, 'If Providence were really kind, would it permit so much trouble in the world:' or, if you like to put it another way, 'Since so much trouble is permitted in the world, can Providence be kind?'" Here the speaker gave the coals a touch, making them shrink closer together and throw out more flames, which lighted up his face and showed him busy thinking. "You have only half answered me," he said; "Providence allows

trouble and want to exist amongst us; I wish to know how that can be compatible with kindness towards us. You have given me only half an answer."

"More than half," replied the other; "a little more than half, I fancy. My story shows that Providence is kind, and yet does permit a good deal of trouble, as you say, to exist."

"And that amounts to what?"

"Why to this, to be sure; that if a kind Providence permits it, it is all in kindness, we may take it on trust."

Only another question and answer passed between the two speakers, and then there was silence.

"Are you quite sure the story is a true one?

"Quite; I was a tree in that old forest.'

THE END.