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WINNIE AND MAY

OR THE
BEAUTIFUL
GARMENTS
OF SALVATION

BY L. J.



ON THE SANDS.

WINNIE AND MAY:

OR, THE

Beautiful Garments of Salvation.

By A. Y.



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INTRODUCTION.

THE lady who has written this book has sent it in writing all the way to the United States for me to read before it is printed. I have done so with much pleasure. I think all the children who read it will be interested, and trust it will do them good. I hope that many will be led by it to see how the Saviour "loved us and gave himself for us," and that they will thus be led to LOVE HIM, and give themselves to Him, and then live to win others to Him.

If you were going into a room where you were told there were many beautiful things, you would be surprised, if it were a bright sunny day, to find it quite dark. Your first question would be, "cannot we open these shutters and let the light in?" Now, as you read this book you must ask God to let a light from Heaven

shine upon it, so that you can understand the great truths in it. I trust that many will be made happy through the teaching of this book.

Praying that you may be one of this number,

I am, your Friend,

E. P. HAMMOND.

Connecticut,
U.S.A.





WINNIE AND MAY :

OR,

The Beautiful Garments of Salvation.



CHAPTER I.

"PLEASE, Miss Chester, will you tell me a nice long story?" asked Winnie Graham. "You know it is my turn to-night; you told May such a long one last night."

"You forget, Winnie," answered her governess, "that it is Sunday evening."

"Oh! so it is," exclaimed Winnie with a little bit of a sigh. "Well, anyhow, you can tell me a Sunday story can't you?"

"It must be a short one then, for it is getting late, and May will soon be coming up. So come! get into bed quickly, or we

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shall not have much time. Shall it be the story of a little girl who died to save her father, or of a boy who was punished for his brother?"

"Oh about the little girl, please," said Winnie, as she hurried into bed. "Now, Miss Chester, please sit down close beside me, and begin."

"Marie, for such was the little girl's name," began Miss Chester, "lived in a little cottage beside a great ravine in Switzerland. At some distance from her father's cottage, a large stone had fallen down from some high rocks, and lodged across the ravine, making a natural bridge. Her father and mother generally used this bridge to cross the chasm by ; but there was another way of getting to the other side, by climbing down the steep rocks, and crossing the ravine at the bottom. Marie's mother was a true christian woman, and had taught her little girl to love and trust the Saviour ; her father, however, was not a Christian ; and little Marie often prayed to God to bring her dear father to Jesus. One day, Marie's mother told her that she had noticed the bridge had become loosened ; and that the next person who

crossed by it would certainly be dashed to the bottom of the ravine and be killed.

“ ‘Be sure, Marie dear, and tell your father when he comes home, not to cross by it again.’

“ ‘Where is your mother, Marie?’ asked her father on his return.

“ ‘Then Marie told him that her mother had gone to the other side by the longer way, as the bridge was no longer safe.

“ ‘What nonsense, Marie!’ said her father, ‘that bridge was there long before you were born. I have crossed it hundreds of times, and I am going over now, for I want to meet your mother.’

“ Marie begged and implored him not to cross by it; but it was all of no use. At last a thought came into her mind; should she cross the bridge instead of her father? She was not afraid to die, for she knew that her sins were washed away by her Saviour’s blood, and that when she died He would take her to live with Him for ever. But her father was not ready to die, he had not come to Jesus; his sins were not washed away; if he died now, he would be lost for ever. She quickly made up her mind, she

would die for her father ; so slipping her hand into his, she walked beside him towards the bridge.

“‘Father,’ said she, ‘I think I may die to-day. Will you promise me that you will ask God to save you and make you love Jesus, so that you would meet me up in heaven?’

“‘What are you thinking about, Marie?’ asked her father. ‘You are not going to die to-day. I hope you will grow up to be a good woman like your mother.’

“‘Yes, but father, if I *should* die, will you promise?’

“The man wondered at his little girl’s earnestness ; but at last gave the promise. As soon as he had done so, Marie bounded forward to the bridge ; scarcely had her feet touched the rock, when a loud cracking was heard, and down went the monster stone, hurling little Marie to the bottom of the abyss.

“The poor father stood, stunned on the brink ; then came the thought of his child’s parting words, and kneeling on the ground, he cried to the Lord to save him, and to wash his guilty soul in the blood of Jesus.

"God answered that prayer ; Marie's father became an earnest Christian. But he never passed by that fatal spot without thinking of his little girl's love for him ; and he often would say to himself, ' She died to save me.' "

Winnie had been listening breathlessly, and now heaved a deep sigh.

" Well, Winnie, does that story remind you of some One who has done more for you than Marie did for her father ? " asked Miss Chester.

Winnie's eager eyes were fixed inquiringly on her governess, as she asked, " Whom do you mean, Miss Chester ? "

" I mean, dear, the Lord Jesus, who died to save you. He has done far more for you than that little girl did for her father ; her sufferings were over in a minute, but the dear Saviour hung for six long hours on the cross, bearing the punishment due to sinners. Have you ever thanked Him, Winnie ? or have you lived seven years without loving and thanking Him ? "

" I never thought it was for me, " whispered Winnie.

" Then let us thank Him now. Will you close your eyes and say after me

this little prayer, if you can do so truthfully : 'I thank Thee, Lord Jesus, for dying for a sinner like me, and ask Thee, Lord Jesus, to be my Saviour. Save me, and forgive me now. Wash me, and make me whiter than snow. Take all my sins away, and make me Thine own child ' "

" May," said Winnie, next morning, as lessons being over, the two children made their way to a favourite garden seat, " have you ever thanked Jesus?"

" Thanked Him! no, I don't think so."

" I have. I did last night and I am sorry I have not loved Him always, aren't you?"

" Yes, I suppose so ; but what makes you talk so, Winnie?"

" It was the story Miss Chester told me last night."

" Tell it me, Winnie."

" Oh! I could not remember it all. Perhaps Miss Chester will tell it to you. I'll ask her, there she is."

" What do you want to ask me?" said Miss Chester, with a smile, as she joined the children.

" The story, please," exclaimed both children.

“What! the story I told Winnie? Oh no, she must tell you that herself. But I will tell you another about two little boys, twins, named Walter and Willie.

“Their mother told them one day that she would take them to spend the day with their cousins. So she dressed them in their best clothes, and desired them to wait in the verandah till she was ready, and on no account to go into the garden to play, and that if they disobeyed her she could not take them with her.

“Presently Willie began to get tired of waiting, and ran off into the garden to play; and on his mother coming out to tell them she was ready, she found him quite unfit to be seen, with his nice clothes all covered with mud.

“‘Willie,’ said she, ‘I cannot take you with me to-day, because you have disobeyed me; you must go up to your room, and stay there till we come back.’

“Willie began to sob and to cry, but it was of no use; his mother could not pass over his disobedience; he must stay at home.

“‘Mamma,’ said little Walter, ‘Will you let me be punished instead of Willie?’

Take him with you, and let me stay at home.'

" 'But, my dear,' said his mother, 'Willie's clothes are not fit for him to go in.'

" 'He can have my nice clean ones,' said Walter. And so it was settled. Walter gave Willie his clothes, and remained at home, shut up in his room ; and Willie went for the visit wearing Walter's clothes.

" I have told you this story, children, because I want you to think of One who bore your punishment instead of you, and who is now offering you the robe of righteousness. Jesus is more willing to give you the beautiful garments of salvation, than Walter was to give Willie his clean clothes ; but unless Willie had accepted Walter's offer, he could not have gone out with his mother ; just so with you, Jesus has offered to clothe you with a beautiful robe. Have you accepted it, are you clothed with it ?"

" Miss Chester," said May, shyly, "will you tell us how ?"

" How to get the robe ? Just accept it from Jesus. But see here, May, I have brought out a little book for you, it is

called 'The Wedding Garment,' it is about this same robe; and here is one for Winnie. Do you want a robe too, Winnie?"

"Yes, Miss Chester."

"Let us not be satisfied until we can truthfully say,

"We are healed by His stripes. Wouldst thou add to the word?

And He is our righteousness made.

The best robe of heaven He bids us put on,

Oh, couldst thou be better arrayed?"

"And now I shall leave you to read your books; and don't forget the promise of Jesus, 'Ask, and it shall be given you.'"

"Oh, your book is called 'The Best Robe,'" said May, as Miss Chester entered the house. "Shall I read it to you, Winnie?"

"Yes, please, and then read yours."

"Now listen, Winnie!

"THE BEST ROBE, OR THE PRODIGAL SON. (LUKE XV. 11.)

"This parable is a picture of God's love. Just as the father of that wicked prodigal son forgave him all the wrong

things he had done, and ran to meet him and welcome him home ; so God loves every poor sinner, whatever he has done, and is waiting to forgive every one who believes in Jesus. The prodigal son came home just as he was ; if he had waited till he could buy new clothes he would never have come at all ; because he had not money even to buy food. He came just as he was to his father ; so we must come to Jesus just as we are ; it is of no good waiting till we are a little better. If we do that, we shall never come at all ; we cannot make ourselves better, we cannot make our hearts clean ; nothing we can do can take away one single stain. But if we come to Jesus just as we are, and tell him all our sins, He will receive us ; for he has said, ‘ Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.’

“ The poor prodigal son exchanged his rags for the ‘ best robe,’ and a ring was put on his finger, and shoes on his feet. He came to his father clothed in rags, but the first thing his father said was, ‘ Bring forth the best robe and put it on him.’ So when we come to Jesus we are all covered with rags ; for God

says that even our best deeds are in His sight but as filthy rags. (Is. lxiv. 6.) And we want the 'best robe' instead of these rags—will God give it to us? Yes, He is only waiting for us to return to Him and say, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' And then, 'Bring forth the best robe and put it on him,' will be said of us.

"Do you know what the 'best robe' is? It is the covering with which God clothes us when we come to Him. For the Bible says of them who believe, 'He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' (2 Cor. v. 21.) Now have you got on the robe of righteousness? If you have come to Jesus you have it. The prodigal had the best robe directly he came back. Jesus wants to tell us by this, that as soon as we come to Him, He will give us the robe of righteousness instead of our own righteousness.



"Let us haste! let us haste
 While the morning sun is bright.
 Jesus calls! Jesus calls!
 To a land of love and light!

We will journey on till our pilgrim feet
Shall be found at last in the golden street ;
Our glorious Saviour will smile to greet,
And bid us welcome home."

May's voice faltered as she read the last line.

"I am afraid, Winnie, that we have not the 'best robe.'"

"No," said Winnie, sadly.

"Do you think that Jesus will smile and bid us welcome when we die?"

"Perhaps He will, May, because you know we are going to ask Him for the beautiful robe."

"Shall we ask Him as soon as I have read my book?"

"Yes," said Winnie, "as soon as ever you have finished."

"THE WEDDING GARMENT.

"(Matt. xxii. 11.)

"'And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment.'

"The king here represents God, the feast is the gospel, and the servants are those who seek to lead us to God. We read that the people invited to the feast

would not come ; so the servants were sent out into the highways to bring in all they could find. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment. How was this ? The king had provided for each guest a beautiful white robe to wear, but this man had not put one on.

“No wonder the king was angry that one whom He had invited should so spurn His kindness as to refuse to wear what had been put ready for him. The man perhaps thought that his own clothes were good enough ; so he would not put on the wedding garment. Perhaps some of the other people’s clothes were old and dirty, and torn, so they were glad to put on the beautiful garments instead of their rags. But this man may have thought, ‘My clothes are so respectable, I don’t want to take them off, as if they were not fit to be seen.’ There are a great many like him now, who think that their own righteousness will fit them for heaven.

“Jesus has a wedding garment ready to give to every one who will take it ; it is the robe of righteousness. But some will not take it ; they like to be dressed

in their own righteousness best. Instead of believing that Jesus died for them, and trusting their souls to Him, they trust in their own goodness, and think that they are sure to be saved because they are better than other people.

“What order did the king give his servants ?

“ ‘ Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness.’ ”

“ Dear little reader, when Jesus comes, if you have not on the wedding garment, if your sin-stained soul is not covered by the robe of righteousness, these dreadful words will be said of you. But it will be your own fault if you are cast out, for there is a wedding garment ready for you to put on. You know how to get it. It is just to accept it from Him. As soon as you believe that Jesus bore your sins Himself, you will have it. But when once the King has come, it will be too late to ask for a wedding garment. *Now* it is not too late. Jesus wants to give it you, dear little reader ; will you accept it ? I want you to be able to say, ‘ I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul

shall be joyful in my God, for He *hath* clothed me with the garment of salvation, He *hath* covered me with the robe of righteousness.'"

On entering the house, Miss Chester had gone to the schoolroom, and had taken her seat at the window, where she could watch the children. "Bless, O Lord, Thy word to these little ones," she prayed, as she sat listening to the low murmur of May's voice, "and make them Thine own children. Wash them in Thy precious blood, and clothe them with divine righteousness."

Presently May ceased reading; looking up from her work, Miss Chester saw two little figures kneeling on the grass with closed eyes and clasped hands. Falling on her knees by the open window she listened to May's simple prayer.

"Lord Jesus, give to Winnie and me the beautiful robe; we want it so much, and we are afraid we shall be shut out of heaven unless we have it; so please give it us."

"Amen," said Miss Chester, and bowing her head on her hands, she prayed earnestly that both her little

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charges might be clothed with the beautiful garments of salvation.

"Oh, Miss Chester!" said May, as, tea being over, the schoolroom party sat in front of the fire, for the half-hour's talk before going to bed, "I have felt so happy all day; I keep thinking I have got on the beautiful robe. Do you think I have?"

"See here, dear," said Miss Chester, and opening her Bible she turned to Romans iii. 22, and read, "'Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and *upon* all them that believe.' If you believe, my child, the righteousness of God is yours. Look also at 2 Corinthians v. 21, God hath made Jesus 'to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' If you believe He was made sin for *you*, then you are made the righteousness of God; or in other words you are clothed with the robe of righteousness. Are you believing in Him, May?"

"I don't know how to, Miss Chester."

"'All we like sheep have gone astray,'" read Miss Chester, turning to Isaiah liii.—"little children as well as

grown up people ; all are sinners. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of all who believe, and this must include children. Will you believe that God means what He says, and that Jesus died for you?"

"Thank you, Miss Chester," said May, "I understand better now, we must believe what God says, but is that all?"

"Yes, my child, that is all, we must believe 'the record that God gave of his Son.'"

"Then I do," said May, "I *do* believe Him."

"Miss Chester," said Winnie, earnestly, "if God says it, it must be true, must it not?"

"Yes, dear," said Miss Chester, kissing the eager little face turned towards her. "The word of God is true and abideth for ever. Now, my dears, if you both believe in Jesus, you have on the beautiful garments of salvation. Shall we thank Him for giving them to you? Can you truthfully say —

"Lord Jesus, we thank Thee for being made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God. We thank

Thee for giving us the garment of salvation, and the robe of righteousness. Precious Saviour, we cannot love Thee enough, for doing so much for us. Oh! help us to live for Thee, to work for Thee all our lives, and at length to meet Thee in heaven. Amen."

Then opening her hymn-book, Miss Chester read :

"Jesus! Thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress ;
'Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head."





CHAPTER II.

“**Q**UAY,” exclaimed Winnie, as she rushed into the schoolroom one Sunday morning, “just fancy, Miss Chester is going to teach us our Sunday lessons, and she is going to ask the Browns and Deans and Norah Temple and Nellie Wing to come too.”

“Who said so, Winnie?”

“Oh, Miss Chester asked Papa, and he said they might come.”

“There will be seven girls, nine with us, what a number!”

“Shall you like it, May?”

“Yes, I think so, I expect she will tell us some stories. Oh! Miss Chester,” as the governess just at that moment entered the room, “are you going to begin this afternoon?”

"Yes, dear, we will ask some of your little friends this morning. I dare say we shall only have a small party at first, but, perhaps, next week we may get more."

"I should like there to be ever so many," said May.

"Now, my dears, I have something to talk to you about. I wish you to start reading a portion of scripture every day, and want to know if you would like to do so. I can give you a card, with a list of scripture portions for every day, or you can read regularly through the whole Bible."

"Oh! I should like to have a card, would not you, Winnie?"

"Yes," said Winnie, looking up from the card she had been examining, "and there is not much to read, only twelve verses sometimes. Are you going to ask the girls who are coming this afternoon to read also?"

"Yes, we must ask them, and I should like also to get a number of the village children to read a portion of God's word daily."

"Oh, that will be nice," exclaimed May, "When shall we read, Miss Chester?"

“As soon as you are dressed in the morning would be the best time. And do you see that at the top of the card you are asked to pray that God would bless His own word? And every Sunday morning when you pray, will you remember to ask God to bless all the children who have promised to read portions of scripture, and pray that they may all be brought to believe on the Saviour?”

The seven little girls, who joined May and Winnie in the afternoon, were quite as eager as they had been to have each a card of texts, and to read regularly the verses that were upon them.

“Help me, O Lord, to bring these lambs to Thee,” prayed Miss Chester, as the children took their places round the table. “Bless thy word to them, and sow the seed of eternal life in their hearts.”

After reading the xiii. chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, Miss Chester closed her Bible, and drawing a well-worn little volume towards her, said “We will see now, what my little book says of the first parable.

"THE SOWER (Matt. xiii.)

" 'Jesus spake many things to them in parables.' "

" Before beginning to talk about the parable of the Sower, let me ask you to tell me what a parable is.

" Oh ! you say it is 'an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.' Yes, that is a very good answer.

" The parables are little stories that mean something good, only it is not always easy to make out the meaning of them. Let us think now of the parable of the Sower.

" The seed is sown on four kinds of ground. On the way-side, on stony places, among thorns, and on good ground.

" Do all the seeds grow ?

" No, some are eaten by birds, some are withered by the sun, and some are choked with thorns.

" Whose fault is it ? Is it the sower's, or is it the fault of the seed ?

" No, it is the fault of the ground ; it is hard, stony, and thorny. The seed is the word of God. (Luke viii. 11.) So the lessons you learn from the Bible are seeds sown in your hearts. Jesus

Himself was the sower, and your hearts are like the fields. Jesus shews us pictures of four kinds of ground on which the seed is sown ; only one is good or prepared ground. The seed sown by the way side are lessons taught to hard-hearted children. Lesson after lesson is sown, all sorts of good seed, but nothing seems to take root. The love of God, the story of Jesus, the wickedness of sin, all seem to be lost. But do you know what can reach hard hearts ? Showers make the ground soft, don't they ? And there is something that can soften your hearts, and make them altogether new. What is it ? It is the grace of God which can reach the most hardened ones, and cause them to cry, What must I do to be saved ?

“Some seed was sown on stony ground, which had not much earth ; so it was withered by the sun, because it had no root. This is like some boys and girls, who listen to the lesson, and think they will try to be Christians, who seem to keep right for a short time, but when any one laughs at them for doing right, they cannot stand it and they go back. This is because they have no root ; corn

cannot grow if it has no root, so we cannot be real Christians unless we are rooted in Christ ; that is, we must come to Jesus and believe on Him. Some seed fell among thorns, which choked it ; and so some lessons fall into children's hearts and cannot grow, because there is no room for them. They are thinking so much of their play, their books, or their work that they have no time to think about Jesus. And some fell upon good ground ; so some little ones listen to the word about Jesus ; but they do not only listen, they believe it, and when they go home they pray to Him, and ask Him to help them to trust in Him fully, and to love and serve Him. The good seed brought forth fruit, so shall we if we believe in Jesus. God will cause His Holy Spirit to dwell in us, and the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.

“ Which of the four kinds of ground do you want your hearts to be like ? ” asked Miss Chester of her attentive little audience

“ Oh ! the good ground, Miss Chester, ” they all cried.

“ Then ask God, dear children, to

soften them by His Holy Spirit, so that the good seed may grow in them ; and now if you are not tired we will go on to the next parable.

“ THE TARES. (Matt. xiii. 24.)

“ We now come to the parable of the Tares. Whom do the wheat and tares represent ?

“ Men and women, boys and girls, all are either wheat or tares.

“ Which are we ? Is it hard to tell ? Let us see. The wheat and the tares looked almost alike, yet there were three great differences.

“ First, they were different because the wheat was the children of the kingdom, and the tares the children of the evil one.

“ Secondly, the wheat and the tares were different in nature ; they would grow up differently, and have different fruit ; so with you, if you have come to Jesus, and trusted in Him, you will shew forth the fruits of the Spirit.

“ Thirdly, the tares and wheat were to have a different end ; the tares were to be burned, but the wheat was to be

gathered into the barn. Jesus says, He will send His angels to gather together all people who are like the tares, and they shall be cast into the furnace of fire ; but the righteous shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of the Father. Now, which do you want to be, tares or wheat ; to be thrown into the furnace of fire, or to shine like the sun in 'God's kingdom?' You can be changed from being like the tares, and become like the wheat. Jesus calls the wheat the righteous ; you have no righteousness of your own, how then can you be wheat ? God will give you His righteousness if you come to Jesus and believe in Him.

"The Bible says, Jesus was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Jesus changed places with believers, He bore their sins, so that they might share His throne. Oh! children, think of the dreadful end of the tares, and before it is too late accept from God the robe of righteousness, so that you may shine in His kingdom."

Miss Chester repeated, as she glanced round at the children's earnest faces,

“What is earth, but God’s own field
Fruit unto His praise to yield?
Wheat and tares therein are sown
Unto joy or sorrow grown.
Ripening with a wondrous power
Till the final harvest hour;
Grant, O Lord of life, that we
Holy grain and pure may be.

“For we know that Thou wilt come
And wilt take Thy people home;
From the field wilt purge away
All that doth offend that day,
And the angels charge at last
In the fire the tares to cast.
But the faithful ears to store
In Thy garner evermore.

“Grant, O Lord of life, that we
Holy grain and pure may be.”

“And now let us have a moment of silent prayer. Will you use these two lines as a little prayer, and ask Jesus to lead you to believe on Him, and to clothe you with the robe of righteousness? I hope you will all be able to come next week,” she added, as the little visitors took their leave.

“Oh, yes! Miss Chester, and thank you very much,” responded the children heartily.

“I hope the seed has fallen into good ground,” thought Miss Chester, as she


sat listening to the children's merry voices, as they ran down the garden path, accompanied by Winnie and May.
"Oh! what will the harvest be?"

'Sown in the darkness or sown in the light,
Sown in our weakness or sown in our might,
Gathered in time or eternity,
Sure, ah, sure will the harvest be."





CHAPTER III.

“ HAVE some news, May, for you and Winnie,” said Mr. Graham one morning at breakfast, laying down a letter he had been reading, “and I think you will consider it very good news ”

“Oh, what is it, papa?” exclaimed both children.

“Mamma has asked your cousin Fred to come and stay a few days with us, and your uncle writes to say he will be very pleased for him to come.”

“Hurrah!” shouted Winnie, that is capital.

“Oh, papa, that will be nice,” exclaimed May. “Thank you, mamma, so much for asking him.”

“You must remember, my dear,” said her mother, “that he is much older than

you, and may consider Winnie and you rather young for play-fellows."

"When is he coming, papa?" asked Winnie.

"Next Saturday, your uncle suggests. If you are both very good children, I will take you over to the station to meet him."

For the next few days the children talked of little else but Cousin Fred, and their excitement knew no bounds when at last Saturday came. Miss Chester did not see much of her pupils during the remainder of the day, after their cousin's arrival. For Fred, as they said, had to be taken everywhere, and shewn everything, and very good-natured the big school boy was to his little cousins.

"Will you come up to the schoolroom, Fred, and see Miss Chester?" asked Winnie, as bed time approached, "she is very kind."

"I don't know," said Fred, "governesses are generally so stiff."

"Oh! Miss Chester isn't. She is ever so nice," said May, "do come."

"All right, I'll come. I needn't stay long, and she must be dull all alone."

So Fred good humouredly allowed himself to be led into the schoolroom. He soon made up his mind that Miss Chester was not a bad sort, and he would not mind paying a visit to the schoolroom pretty often.

“Fred,” said Winnie, presently, “shall you come to Miss Chester’s Bible-class to-morrow?”

“Oh! I don’t know it may be well enough for little girls like you, but a fellow gets too much of that sort of thing at school. Half an hour is a long time, I can tell you, to listen to the old doctor prosing.”

“Miss Chester does not prose,” said May. “I wish you would come, Fred. Do ask him, Miss Chester.”

“Will you, my boy,” said Miss Chester, laying her hand on his shoulder. “It would give me great pleasure to have you join us to-morrow.”

Fred hesitated, he did not like the idea of giving up Sunday afternoon to a long, dull Bible lesson. But another thought struck him, if he was obliged to have a dull time to please Miss Chester: perhaps she would make up for it by telling them a good story; for he re-

membered that the children said she was good at stories.

"If I make a martyr of myself to-morrow afternoon, will you tell me a real good story to-night, Miss Chester?" he asked.

"Oh, do, do!" cried May and Winnie.

"I am afraid, Fred, you will be difficult to please."

"Do you know anything about Indians or lion hunts? I like something of that sort best."

"How would 'The Lions of Wady Arabah' do?" asked Miss Chester.

"The very thing!" exclaimed Fred.

"It is a long time since I read it, so I have forgotten a great deal. To begin with, I do not remember in what city the family lived of whom I am going to tell you; but all I know is, it was somewhere in Arabia. The persecution from which they suffered was ordered by one of the Roman Emperors; but by which one I have quite forgotten. The family, consisting of father, mother, three boys, and a little girl of seven, on refusing to sacrifice to the Roman gods, were condemned to be taken into the middle of the desert called Wady Arabah, and

then left to become a prey to the lions, which were to be taken there for the purpose of killing them.

“The eldest girl, Lucia, was not at home when her parents, brothers, and little sister were seized; she had called in to see an old nurse, to whom she was greatly attached. Just as she was thinking of returning home, one of her father’s servants rushed into the cottage to warn her of what had happened.

“‘Nurse, I must go to them,’ she exclaimed, and it was with great difficulty that the old woman was able to persuade her to stay quietly with her, instead of giving herself up to the authorities. ‘Then find me a way of joining them in the desert; if you do not, nurse, I shall certainly set out by myself.’

“‘Give me time to think, my young lady. Perhaps something will turn up.’

“That evening the nephew of the old woman called, and mentioned that he had to set out early the next morning with a caravan of lions to let loose on the Christians in the desert, and he badly wanted, he said, a boy to feed them; but it was such short notice, he was afraid he would not hear of one. The old

woman at once thought that Lucia might go disguised as a boy. So promising to let her nephew know if she heard of one, she bade him good-night ; and calling Lucia, made known the plan to her.

“ ‘Of course I will go, nurse,’ said Lucia, quietly, ‘you must help me to get ready.’

“ There was not much to be done, for the boys and girls there were dressed very much alike up to a certain age. When the few alterations were made, Lucia bade good-bye to her old nurse, and with a beating heart went to offer herself as servant boy to the rough caravan men. They did not half like taking such a weak, puny boy, as they called her, but no other was to be had ; so to Lucia’s great joy, she was accepted. She thought nothing of the hardships she must go through in her great desire to join her dear ones.

“ But poor Lucia little knew the nature of the duties she was undertaking. When ordered to carry to the lions their midday meal, the poor child shrank from having to carry the great mass of horse-flesh, the sight and smell of which made her feel faint ; but it had to be done. If

the men found her of no use to them, they would leave her behind, and then all her hopes of joining her family would be gone. She had planned to travel three days with them, and then make her escape at night. Everything was favourable to her design; she managed to slip away from the caravan unperceived, and before she was missed she was miles away. Towards noon, on the second day, she felt as if she could go no further.

“She had just come to a rocky place where there were some tempting little pieces of shade, and was just on the point of casting herself down for a rest in the welcome shade, when two ruffian-looking men rushed out from behind the rocks. Poor Lucia tried to run, but she felt quite powerless to move her aching limbs. Just at that moment, two men mounted on camels appeared in sight. Lucia took a few steps towards them, and then sank down with the cry, ‘Save me’ No sooner had the ruffians caught sight of the new comers than they fled, casting frightened glances behind them as if they feared pursuit.

“The foremost rider was in a minute by Lucia’s side.

“ ‘Quick, Gaius, the water!’ he cried, ‘’tis a girl! However comes she alone in the desert?’

“ The poor girl had fainted, and it was some time before the young doctor, for such he was, could restore her to consciousness. When at last she recovered, she learned that he was also a Christian, but was free from persecution, as he had successfully treated a serious illness from which the Emperor’s daughter was suffering. In fact he had saved her life. So, out of gratitude the Emperor had given him a document, signed by himself, promising him safety from persecution.

“ On hearing Lucia’s story, Marcus, for such was his name, offered to help her in her search for the banished ones. And Lucia, anxious not to lose time, begged him to start at once.

“ I must now tell you what had befallen the poor exiles. They had been taken by a caravan into the middle of the desert, and there left, with only enough bread to last them a couple of days. The father’s first thought was to look out for a suitable place, where they could spend the night. This he

soon found in a half-ruined cottage, belonging once, no doubt, to a hermit. It was soon made into a very comfortable shelter. The door they carefully built up with stones to a good height; then the father lifted in the boys who had been helping him; and climbed over himself, after he had thrown in a sufficient number of stones to finish blocking up the doorway from the inside.

“The whole of the next day they walked in the direction in which they believed some villages lay. Towards evening they reached a little wood, and decided to spend the night among the branches of a tree. The little ones were tied securely to the branches, and had dropped off to sleep, when a terrible roar was heard. On looking down they perceived what they had been dreading all along. Close beside the tree which they had climbed, stood a lion, glaring up at them, and at a little distance the lioness.

“The poor father’s heart sank within him, for well he knew there was no hope of the lions leaving them; they would watch the tree by turns, and nothing seemed before them but starvation.

“Morning came, but there were the

lions still ; all the bread had gone, and the poor children were crying from hunger and fear. But deliverance was near. In their terror about the lions, the frightened captives had scarcely noticed what a fearful storm was gathering ; but at last it burst upon them ; the thunder rolled above their heads, and the forked lightning made the children hide their faces for fear. Then came a rushing, whizzing sound, and a heavy thud—a thunderbolt had fallen at the distance of only a few feet from them, and underneath it, crushed and dead, lay the lion.

“ ‘ God has preserved us, my children,’ exclaimed the father ; ‘ let us thank Him for His great goodness in saving us from the lions. As soon as the storm is over, we may set out on our march again.’ ”

“ The lioness had been frightened away, but they had not seen the last of her.

“ At noon they stopped at a little stream to rest and refresh themselves under the shade of some trees which stood near. On descending from the tree in the morning they had cut some slices of lion flesh, which their long fast

made very acceptable to them, badly cooked as it was in the embers of a wood fire. After finishing their meal, the children were amusing themselves by wandering up and down the brook, the father had just called to little Vera not to get too far off, and she had answered, 'I will come back in one minute, father,' when a stealthy tread was heard among the trees, a crackling of dead leaves, and then a spring, a sharp cry, and little Vera was carried off by the lioness. Lucia was never to see her little sister again. When a few hours after she joined her parents and brothers, it was a sorrowful meeting, and bitterly she wept for the sad fate of her little sister.

"Before dark they reached a small village, where they were warmly welcomed by the Christians of the place. They thought here they might remain quite safely, as it was a retired, obscure place. But their troubles were not over yet. That same evening, the tramp of armed men was heard approaching the house where they were, and they were called upon to surrender in the name of the Emperor.

"All but Marcus, he was free to go where he would ; but he determined not to leave his new friends in their time of trouble. Asking Lucia for a few minutes' conversation, he told her that he could offer her safety if she, young as she was, would consent to become his wife, for the Emperor, not knowing he was unmarried, had included his wife in the order from freedom of persecution. Lucia told him that her answer might have been different under different circumstances, but she did not wish safety for herself, while her father, mother, and brothers were going to glorify God among the lions.

"Once more that evening was heard the tramp of soldiers, then a flourish of trumpets, and 'Long live the Emperor,' and all was still again.

"Not till morning did the prisoners know what this meant for them. They were free, the Emperor was dead, and his successor wished the persecution of the Christians to cease. The story ended, I think, by Marcus asking Lucia the same question again, and this time she gave a different answer, and not long after they were married."

As Miss Chester paused, there was quite a chorus of thanks.

"Were you not frightened, May, at the part where the lion came under the tree?" asked Winnie.

"Yes, rather," said May. "I wish the lioness had not got the little girl."

"When did you read the story, Miss Chester?" asked Fred.

"Oh, many years ago, when I was a little girl. And now, my boy, remember we shall expect to see you to morrow afternoon."

"Yes," said Fred, with a resigned air, "I suppose I must come, but you won't make it too long, will you?"

"No, I promise you that," said Miss Chester, "I should be sorry to weary you."





CHAPTER IV.

“**H**IS afternoon we are going to read about ‘The Grain of Mustard Seed,’ ‘The Hidden Treasure,’ and ‘The Goodly Pearls,’ ” said Miss Chester, when the children had assembled on Sunday afternoon.

“Winnie,” said Fred, in a whisper, “wake me up when it’s over. I know I shall be asleep before she’s half through.”

But Fred was mistaken. He did not feel anything like sleepiness. As soon as Miss Chester began to read, he was all attention.

“THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED.

“‘Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed.’ (Matt. xiii. 31.)

“By this parable Jesus wanted to shew His disciples how Christianity would increase and grow ; the mustard seed, you know, is a very small seed, and yet it grows into a tree. So at first Jesus only had one or two disciples. (John i. 37.) Then in Acts i. 15, we read of one hundred and twenty disciples, and now there are millions of Christians.

“But Jesus wants His seed to bring forth fruit in your hearts also. The seed which is sown in your hearts is the word of God. (Luke viii. 11.) Now I will tell you of a very small seed ; it is ‘only believe.’ (Mark v. 36.) If that is really sown in your hearts you will have everlasting life. Another small seed is the beautiful text, ‘Come unto me.’ (Matt. xi. 28.) Coming means believing, so that both these seeds are very much alike.

“How can you come to Jesus? You can come to Him by believing in Him. Think how He bore the punishment due to us, think how He hung on the cross, and that everything He suffered, He suffered for us, to save us from perdition. His hands and feet were nailed to the cross, His forehead wounded, His side

pierced, all for poor sinners. We deserved everything He suffered, but He bore it all instead of us. And now, if you will really believe in Him, God will forgive you all your sins.

"All are by nature dead in trespasses and sins. (Eph. ii. 1.) But he that believeth on the Lord Jesus, hath everlasting life. So you see what a great thing this little seed, 'only believe,' grows into. Before it was planted you were dead, when it begins to grow you are made alive. If you, dear children, have not come to Jesus yet, let me intreat you to come to-day. Ask Him to help you to come, and remember He says, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'

"Now, children, can any of you tell me of some more small seeds, some short texts, which we may plant in our hearts?"

"I know one, Miss Chester," said Winnie, eagerly, "'He was wounded for our transgressions.'"

"Yes, dear, if you believe that, you have the good seed planted in your heart."

"'With his stripes we are healed,'"

said May.

“ ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,’ ” said one little girl.

“ ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,’ ” repeated another.

Fred was quite ashamed to find he could not think of any appropriate text, when, on turning over the leaves of his Bible, his eye caught the words, “God is love,” and he repeated them aloud.

“Yes, that is a beautiful little seed. Turn to John iii. 16, Fred, and see how God shews His love.”

“ ‘God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ ”

“Now look at 1 John v. 19: ‘We love him because he first loved us.’ You see if the little seed, ‘God is love,’ is planted in our hearts it will grow into the beautiful plant of love to God. When we learn how much God has loved us, we shall then begin to love Him.

“Now we will go on to the next two parables.

“THE HIDDEN TREASURE.

“(Matt. xiii. 44.)

“‘And the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field.’ Can you not fancy how eager this man must have been to get possession of the field, so that the treasure might belong to him, and how great must have been his joy, when at last it was his own ?

“It has often been thought that this parable teaches us that we must sell all that we have in order to buy salvation ; but, dear children, this is not its meaning. We are not called to obtain salvation in that way. It is the Lord Jesus who sold all that He had in order to buy the field in which His chosen ones are hidden ; as we read, He who *was* rich, became poor to save us (2 Cor. viii. 9) ; yes, He gave up His life that He might make poor sinners His own.

“The parable of ‘The merchantman seeking pearls,’ means very much the same as the ‘Hidden Treasure.’ This merchantman had been looking for pearls. At last, seeing such a large and beautiful one, he sold all that he had that he might buy it. Jesus is the mer-

chantman who bought the Pearl of great price, which, no doubt, refers especially to His church, made up of those who now believe on Him, as He said, 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed' (John xx. 29), in contrast with those who believed when they saw Him on earth.

"Have *we* to pay anything to Jesus to be saved? No, the Bible tells us we may come 'without money and without price.' But we must be ready to give up anything we dearly love that keeps us from coming to Jesus. Jesus is worth more than anything else. Think of what it cost Him to make His loved ones His own."

"Fred, my boy," said Miss Chester, the same evening, when, the children having gone to bed, they were left alone in the schoolroom, "have you found Christ as your Saviour yet?"

"No, Miss Chester," answered Fred; then after a pause, he added, "I wish I had. Winnie says she and May have."

"Yes, I think both the dear children have come to the Saviour; but, my dear boy, He that said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me,' is also saying to you,

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‘Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.’ Will you not come to Him, Fred?”

“I don’t know what ‘coming’ means, Miss Chester.”

“Read this verse,” said Miss Chester, opening her Bible at John vi., and pointing to verse 35.

“‘I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst,’” read Fred.

“‘Coming’ and ‘believing’ are here used to mean the same thing. If you believe that Jesus died instead of you, if you accept Him as your substitute, and trust your soul to Him, He saves you, and He will never cast you out.”

“I have never done that; I have not thought of Him at all.”

“For fourteen years, Fred, Jesus has been calling you to come to Him. Do you not think you have kept Him waiting long enough?”

“If I only knew how, I would come to Him!” said Fred in a husky voice.

“My dear boy, Jesus is even *now* waiting to see if you will come to Him. Will you not accept the salvation He has wrought out by His death?”

Very earnestly did Miss Chester plead that the boy might be led to accept the Lord Jesus as his Saviour, and trust his soul into His hands. "Lord, here is a poor, lost sinner seeking Thee," she prayed. "Open his blind eyes, that he may see those wounds in the hands and feet of the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep; open his deaf ears, that he may hear Him saying, 'Look unto me and be ye saved.'"

At the concluding words, Fred quite broke down and hid his face in his hands.

"Do you think He will save me, Miss Chester?" he sobbed. "I have never loved Him or thought about Him all my life."

"His promise is, that He will not cast out any poor sinner who comes to Him. You want really to come to Him, Fred?"

"Yes, Miss Chester."

"Then, my boy, tell Him so yourself."

As they knelt again, Miss Chester asked him to repeat, sentence by sentence, a little prayer she often used when praying with children, if it expressed what was really true of him.

“Dear Lord Jesus, I come to Thee just as I am. Take me and make me Thine. I give myself to Thee. I want to love and trust Thee, for I know Thou hast loved me. Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief. I believe Thou wilt wash all my sins away, and blot them out of Thy book, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.”

As they rose from their knees, Fred said heartily :

“Thank you, Miss Chester.” Then after a little hesitation, “Would you mind lending me your parable book? I should like to read it a bit up in my room.”

“Do, my boy, you will find the last chapter a very nice one.”

Locking his door, Fred sat down in his little room to have, as he said, a good search to see what God’s message to him would be. Turning to the last chapter of Miss Chester’s little book, he commenced reading :

“THE NET.

“‘The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea.’ (Matt. xiii. 47.)

“The net here means the gospel, the fishermen are preachers, and the fish are men, women, boys and girls. Whenever any one preaches the gospel, he casts a net into the sea. While the net is in the sea, the fishermen cannot tell which fish are good and which are bad ; but when they draw the net to shore they pick out the bad and throw them away, ‘but gather the good into vessels.’ So when the gospel is preached, a great many people listen, but they do not all believe and come to Jesus. Listening to the gospel will not save them ; those only who believe in Jesus and come to Him are saved.

“In Matthew xiii. 49 we read that at the end of the world, the angels shall come forth and sever (that means separate) the wicked from the just. The wicked are those who have not come to Jesus, and are not washed in His blood. The just *were* sinners, too, but they are washed sinners, they have come to Jesus, and washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. To which sort of people do you belong, the saved or the unsaved, the washed or the unwashed, the wicked or the just?

“The net has been let down, you have heard the gospel preached over and over again; but are you saved? If you are trusting in Jesus, you are saved, but if you do not believe in Him, you are still among the unsaved. Friends and teachers cannot tell to which class you belong; but God knows, and He will not make any mistake. Everlasting life for those who believe in the Lord Jesus; everlasting death for those who do not. God offers you *now* everlasting life, will you *take* it?”

As Fred finished reading he heaved a deep sigh. “Everlasting life or everlasting death,” he said to himself, “it must be one of them for me. I know I shall not sleep a wink in this unsettled state. I’ll call Miss Chester to come and have another talk when she comes up to bed.”

All the time Fred was undressing the words “saved or unsaved,” “washed or unwashed,” kept coming into his mind; and as he lay listening for Miss Chester’s footsteps he kept repeating them over and over again. And when, an hour later Miss Chester, hearing him call, came into his room, he exclaimed:



FRED AT PRAYER IN HIS OWN ROOM.

"I can't go to sleep for thinking of those words, 'saved or unsaved.' Tell me how I can be saved, Miss Chester."

"You know this text, don't you, Fred, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved'?"

"But, Miss Chester, I do believe in Him."

"If you believe, Fred, you are saved, because the Bible says so."

"No," said Fred, sadly, "I know I'm not that."

"You believe, that Jesus is the sinner's Saviour you have said; then why not trust Him as such? Give yourself up to Him, and trust Him to save you now. He has promised not to cast any one out; will you not trust Him, Fred?"

As Fred did not answer, Miss Chester continued:

"I am going to say a little hymn, and I want you, in the words of the hymn, to trust your soul to Him, while I am saying it."

Then very slowly and distinctly she repeated the following beautiful lines:

“Jesus, I will trust Thee, trust Thee with my soul,
Guilty, lost and helpless ; Thou canst make me whole.
There is none in heaven, or on earth like Thee,
Thou hast died for sinners - therefore, Lord, for me.

“Jesus, I do trust Thee, trust without a doubt,
Whosoever cometh, Thou wilt not cast out.
Faithful is Thy promise, precious is Thy blood.
These my soul's salvation. Thou my Saviour God.”

For several minutes Miss Chester knelt in silent prayer by the boy's bedside, while Fred, with his head buried in the bed clothes, prayed, as he had never prayed before. It was not till Miss Chester had risen from her knees, that he looked up and said :

“I have done it, Miss Chester. I can say, ‘Jesus, I will trust Thee,’ and I think I have found out now what it is to have Christ as my Saviour.”





CHAPTER V



“LETTER for you, Miss Chester,” cried Winnie, running into the schoolroom a fortnight after Fred’s return to school. “Guess who it is from.”

“Is it from Fred?” asked Miss Chester.

“Yes,” said Winnie, a little disappointed that Miss Chester had guessed so easily ; “do see, Miss Chester, if there’s one inside for me.”

“No,” said Miss Chester, unfolding the closely written sheet, “but I daresay you would like to hear it, so if you will call May, I will read it to you. No doubt your cousin sends a message to you both.”

“May, May!” shouted Winnie, rushing downstairs. “A letter from Fred.

Miss Chester is waiting for you, she's going to read it to us. Do come quickly."

In less than a minute the children were by Miss Chester's side, begging her to begin, which she did at once:

"DEAR MISS CHESTER,—I have not had time to write to you before, though I have tried to do so once or twice. I want to thank you very much for all your kindness to me when I was at Oakfields. I often think that if it had not been for you I might have been lost for ever. Tell May and Winnie I am keeping on at the scripture reading, and have several fellows to read with me. I did not like asking them at first, but I made up my mind that I would not be ashamed of my colours, so I asked those in my dormitory. They all joined but one big boy, and he makes it unpleasant for us. I like the Magazine you sent me very much, and shall take it in. I am going to ask more fellows to join. I shall try, too, and have a prayer meeting in our dormitory; one of the boys says he will help me. I lent Winnie's and May's little books to two friends of mine. They asked me if I had the robe of

righteousness ; when I said ‘ Yes,’ they wanted to know how I knew ; so I told them all about it ; but I did not know how to make it plain to them. I so wished you could talk to them. Will you pray for them and for me, that I may be bold to work for Jesus ? Please give my love to all, and with best thanks, believe me,

“ Yours ever,

“ FREDERICK GRAHAM.”

“ What does Fred mean by working for Jesus ?” asked Winnie, with a puzzled look.

“ To work for Jesus is to try and get other people to come to Him. A true Christian will always be a working Christian ; even little children can work for Jesus.”

“ Miss Chester, how can I ?” asked May earnestly.

But there was a way opening for May, of which she little dreamed. That day an invitation had come for her to spend a few weeks with her mother’s brother, Mr. Hamilton. May was delighted when it was arranged for her to go ; she only wished Winnie could go, too. There was quite a bustle

of preparation, for May was to go in a few days.

"Miss Chester, I wish you would lend me some of your little books," said May, the evening before she was to start. "I could lend them, you know, to my cousins on Sunday."

"I shall be very pleased to do so, dear. You can take which you like."

"I think I'll have for one, 'The Good Samaritan,'" said May, as she turned over the leaves of the little books, "because there's something in it about the 'beautiful garments of salvation,' and I'll take these others, too; that will be seven altogether. Is that too many?"

"Oh, no, not at all, dear; and I will put you up, if you like, some scripture cards, and some magazines and leaflets. It would be nice if you could get your cousins at Sandport to regularly read a portion of scripture."

The whole family of cousins were waiting on the platform to welcome May next day, as she alighted from the train.

"I thought you would be tired, May," said the eldest girl, "so I drove down to fetch you, and all the children came,

too, though I told them it would have been much better for them to be at home when you arrived. Are you ready? Have you all belonging to you? Then we will start. Leave the pony alone, Ted, you will get run over, if you don't mind."

May was thankful to be delivered from the boisterous welcome of the younger children. She felt shy at seeing so many at once, but was soon pleasantly chatting with Mattie.

"I am so glad you have come, May," said her cousin, after a while. "You see the boys all go together, and I am one by myself. I often wish there was another girl."

"There is Eva," said May.

"Oh! Eva is only seven, she and Lily are mostly with the nurse, but it will be so nice to have you to talk to."

May had seen both her uncle and aunt before, so felt quite at home with them. After a quiet half hour spent in the drawing room, the boys, with Eva and Lily, came in and carried her off to the schoolroom tea. She soon lost all feeling of shyness and passed a very pleasant evening with her cousins.

There was so much to shew her, and so much to tell, that no opportunity occurred to shew them the scripture cards. But May had not forgotten her resolve to work for Jesus.

At seven the party broke up, the little ones going to bed, and the boys to read their holiday task. May was left alone in the schoolroom, Mattie being wanted by her mother. The little girl sat turning over the leaves of a book her cousin had lent her ; she was not reading, her head was too full of the thought—What could she do for Jesus ? “ I wonder if Eva and Lily love Him,” she thought. “ How I should like to help them to come to Him. I think I will go and tell them about the ‘ Robe of Righteousness,’ perhaps they have never heard about it.”

“ May I come in ?” she asked, looking in at the little girls’ room. “ I came to ask whether you would like me to tell you a story that Miss Chester told Winnie and me.”

Of course the children were delighted and made May climb up beside them on the bed while she told them of “ Little Walter and Willie,” and the robe of

righteousness. She then went on to tell them in her childish way the story of the prodigal son and the best robe. How that an ungrateful son went away from his father into a far country and wasted all his money, and at last had no food to eat. So he came home, and when his father saw him a great way off he ran to meet him, and kissed him, and told his servants to put on him the best robe, and made a feast for him, because he was so pleased to have him back safely.

"Miss Chester says we are all like that wicked son," continued May; "we are all a long way off from God, because we have not loved Him, and He will give us a beautiful robe directly we come. There are three different names in the Bible for the robe—the 'best robe,' 'the garment of salvation,' and the 'robe of righteousness.' Winnie and I like to call it the 'garment of salvation' best. We asked God to give it us, and we are sure He did, because He always gives what He promises."

"I should like to have it, too?" said Eva.

"And so should I," said little Lily.

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Then May repeated what Miss Chester had taught her :

“The best robe of heaven He bids thee put on,
Oh, couldst thou be better arrayed?”

The next day was Sunday, and May ventured to bring down to the school-room her little books. The children at once took possession of her, and begged her to read aloud to them. The boys even shut up their library books as she began to read, and drew round to listen.

“ THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

“(Luke x. 30.)

“ This parable of the Good Samaritan tells of a poor man who was attacked by thieves and wounded and left half dead ; but he was found by a Samaritan, who bound up his wounds and took him to an inn, and told the host to take care of him. If that kind Samaritan had not found the poor man, he must have died, and, reader, if Jesus, the Good Samaritan, has not found you and healed your wounds, and carried you home, you are in danger of eternal death.

“ Do you say, I have not been attacked

by thieves, I have not been wounded, and left half dead? Yes, but you have; your sins are like thieves, they have attacked and wounded your soul. God describes poor sinners as sick ones, as diseased, defiled, and helpless. That is your condition before God, and it is your sins that have made you so. But remember there is One who is ever ready to become the Good Samaritan to your souls. You know who it is. Jesus is waiting and longing to heal you, and to take you home. Will you let Him? Can you say :

“ ‘ Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling,
Naked, come to Thee for dress,
Helpless, look to Thee for grace,
Vile, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die ’ ?

Or do you still refuse Him and turn away from that kind Saviour, who loved you so much, as to leave heaven and come to die for you? If that wounded man had said to the Samaritan, ‘ Leave me alone; I do not want to be helped, I would rather be left to die,’ how foolish he would have been; and if the kind Samaritan had gone away grieved and

sad, because the wounded man preferred to be left in his misery ; the helpless man would, when it was too late, have been sorry he had refused such a friend, who had been so ready to help him.

“ But the poor man knew his need, he knew how wretched and weak and helpless and poor he was, so he was only too glad to be helped. Now this is just what I want to ask you if you know. Do you know that you are wretched and poor and blind ? That is what the Bible tells you that you are. (Rev. iii. 16.) If you know this you will be glad to come to the Saviour to get your wounds healed, your sins washed away, and yourself clothed in the beautiful garments of salvation. All your stained, torn clothes changed for the robe of righteousness. The Good Samaritan is even now waiting to save you. Little reader, are you going to keep Him waiting any longer, are you going to drive Him away, and tell Him you don't want Him ; or will you say :

“ ‘ Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come ’ ?

"You have on the beautiful robe, have you not, May?" said Eva, putting her arm round her cousin, and looking up earnestly into her face.

"Yes," said May, colouring and looking down, as she met six pairs of eyes all curiously turned on her; but remembering her "work for Jesus," she said, after a minute's pause, "Every one may have it who believes in Jesus."

"I'll read now," said Mattie, breaking the silence which followed. "Which shall we have next?"

"Excuse me, May, but I think I have had enough," said Charlie, yawning. "I think one sermon is enough at a time. Come on, Ted: let's go for a stroll."

As the younger boys passed Bertie, Charlie stopped.

"Are you not coming, Bert?"

"No," said Bertie shortly.

"Oh! May's going to make you religious, is she? I say, Bert, you'll have to give up some of your little games if she does."

"Mind your own business, and keep your advice till you are asked for it," said Bertie, crossly.

“Shall we have ‘The Lost Sheep,’” asked Eva, as the two boys left the room.

“Do you mind which?” inquired Mattie, taking the book from Eva.

“Oh! no, have just which you like,” answered May.

“THE LOST SHEEP.

“(Luke xv. 4.)

“In this beautiful parable of ‘The Lost Sheep,’ we see a picture of the love of Jesus in leaving heaven and coming down here to die, so that He might bring poor wandering sinners back to Himself and give them everlasting life. The shepherd represents Jesus, and the lost sheep *you*, if you have not yet come to Jesus. And Jesus is calling you *now*. He has been calling you all your life, but you have not been willing to hear Him. Will you listen to Him *now*? Hark! He is saying to you still, ‘Come unto Me.’ Are you going to refuse Him?

“Besides being our Shepherd, Jesus tells us in John x. 9 that He is the door, and all who enter in by Him shall be

saved. Now I want you to try and find out if you have gone in by this door. You are not in unless you have gone in by the door; there is only one door, and that is Jesus. How can we come in by the door? By faith in Jesus, by believing what He says. Look at verse 14, He says: 'I *know* my sheep.' Does he know you? or are you far away from Him? In verse 27 He says, 'My sheep hear my voice.' Oh, listen to His voice and follow Him; you know what He promises to those who follow Him. Eternal life. Come then to Jesus, and trust in Him, and you will be a part of His flock; and then trust Him to keep you safe, for He has promised that those who have come to Him shall never perish: no one shall be able to pluck them out of His hand. How safe the sheep are. Are you one of that happy flock? Can you say, 'The Lord is *my* Shepherd?'"

While Mattie was reading, Bertie seemed restless and uncomfortable, May thought, and at the last words, "Can you say, The Lord is *my* Shepherd?" he rose abruptly, and walking to the window stood looking out with his back to the girls.

"And now, May," said Mattie, as she closed the book, "please open your other parcel ; I know you want to do so, for you keep looking at it."

So May brought out her scripture cards, and Mattie at once said she would like one ; then the little girls asked if they might have one also, and were very pleased to hear that May had brought one for each. Then she explained that the portions of scripture on the cards were to be read from the Bible every day.

"Will you have a scripture card, Bertie?" May asked, looking across to the window where the boy still stood.

"No," he answered, shortly, without looking up.

"Oh! leave him alone, May," said Mattie ; "he's in one of his sulks, it's no good taking any notice of him when he's like that. Come, let's go out now, you would like a walk, would you not?"

As May followed her cousin from the room, she looked wistfully at Bertie, she longed to be able to comfort him, for she saw he was not happy. But it was of no use, he did not wish to be spoken to, so all she could do, was to ask the Good Shepherd to bring him into His flock in His own good time.



CHAPTER VI.



“MAY! I’m off for a row, are you coming? it’s a grand sea to-day, I can tell you.”

“Oh! thank you, Bertie, I should like it so much. I’ll get my hat.”

Bertie had hardly spoken to May since Sunday evening, and she, poor child, had been feeling most uncomfortable ever since, thinking she must have offended him, and wondering what was the cause. Of all her cousins she liked him best: he had been very kind to her the first day, and had tried to make her feel at home. She was very pleased now to find that he had quite regained his good humour; they chatted pleasantly together as they made their way to the river.

"Can you row, May?" he asked, as they took their places in the boat. "No? then I'll teach you. I expect you'll be a first-rate hand at it."

May was delighted, she had seldom been on the water before, and had never held an oar. It was a beautiful morning, with just enough wind to make a swell on the river, causing the boat to rise and fall pleasantly.

"Shall we go towards the sea, Bertie? It looks rougher there; I should like the boat to be tossed about more."

"All right," said Bertie; "but don't lean so far over, you'll topple in."

The water got rougher and rougher as they approached the mouth of the river. But May declared she liked it, and when they reached the sea, and the big waves rolled in upon them, lifting the little boat, and then letting it down, she begged Bertie not to go back yet, it was ever so much nicer than the quiet river.

"I think it is time we turned now," said Bertie at last. "I am glad you like it, May, you must come often with me."

It was with great difficulty Bertie

succeeded in turning the boat round, wind and tide were both against him now.

"I wish I had not come so far," he muttered, as he pulled away with all his strength. A quarter of an hour passed in silence ; for Bertie was working very hard at his oars, and did not seem inclined to talk. May sat quietly watching his flushed, anxious face : something must be wrong, she thought.

"I may as well give up," he exclaimed at last, looking over his shoulder at the distant shore ; "I have not gained an inch with all my pulling, in fact, we are drifting as fast as we can to sea ; it's no use rowing," he continued, shipping his oars ; "it's all up with us, May, unless a fishing vessel comes along, and takes us up."

All day the children kept an anxious look out, but no sail appeared on the horizon. At last the sun sank, and there was no longer any hope of being seen in the fast gathering twilight. The evening was chilly, and Bertie, notwithstanding May's protestations that she was not very cold, had insisted on wrapping her up in his coat.

“ I think there is very little hope of our being picked up,” he said, breaking a long silence ; “ there is nothing before us but starvation. Oh, May, if I were only saved like you ! ”

“ But you can be, Bertie, if you will believe on Jesus ; He will wash your sins away and give you the robe of righteousness.”

“ It’s no good, May ! He would not have me now.”

“ Oh, yes, He would ! He says to every one, ‘ Come unto me.’ ”

“ Look here, May,” said Bertie vehemently, “ it’s no good asking Jesus to forgive you, if you mean all the time to do something He would not like, is it ? ”

“ No, of course not.”

“ Well, those two books of yours on Sunday made me want to have my sins forgiven, and to be safe in the fold. But I could not make up my mind to give up some wrong things, so I as good as told Jesus I would not have Him.”

“ What wrong things, Bertie ? ”

“ Coming on the sea, was one thing,” answered Bertie ; “ Father only allows us to row on the river by ourselves ; it’s

all my fault that we are like this now. You cannot think how I feel."

"Poor Bertie," said May compassionately.

"So you see, May, there's no hope for me."

"Oh, yes, there is, Bertie. For the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. Accept His forgiveness now."

"He will refuse me. I deserve that He should. I refused Him the other night."

"Oh, no, Bertie. 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' He means your sins, too, Bertie."

For a long time neither spoke, the boy's face was hidden in his hands, and May sat silently looking up to the starlit sky, saying over and over from the bottom of her heart, "Lord Jesus, help Bertie to come to Thee." Without knowing it, May had commenced saying the words aloud, when Bertie, who was kneeling at the bottom of the boat, drew her down beside him.

"You need not pray that any more, May," he said; "God has heard your

prayer and *has* helped me to come to Him, and shewn me He is willing to save even me."

"Oh, Bertie, I am *so* glad."

There was silence for a few minutes while the children knelt side by side their hearts full of gratitude and joy. Presently May said, "Shall I say some verses of a hymn to you? they are so beautiful, whenever I say them they make me feel so safe.

" 'Now we are free—there's no condemnation,
Jesus provides a perfect salvation.

'Come unto me'—oh! hear His sweet call,
Come, and He saves us 'once for all.'

'Children of God'—oh! glorious calling,
Surely His grace will keep us from falling,
Passing from death unto life at His call,
Blessed salvation 'once for all!'

"Isn't that nice, Bertie?"

It was now getting late, and May, at Bertie's desire, lay down at the bottom of the boat, and was soon fast asleep, while he sat hour after hour keeping watch. At last the morning came, and with it deliverance, for far away on the horizon Bertie could just make out a white sail.



MAY ASLEEP IN THE BOAT.

“Saved, saved!” he cried. “Wake up, May, there’s a ship in sight.”

“Oh! Bertie,” exclaimed May, as she sprang up, rubbing her eyes; “do you think they will see us? she does not seem coming this way.”

“I’ll hoist a signal of distress, if you’ll lend me your scarf and handkerchief.”

Bertie proceeded to lash the two oars together, and fastening his coat on one end, he raised it, waving it from side to side.

“I think they’ll see that, May.”

He was right, the ship at once altered her course, and made straight for them; and before long they were safe on board. The captain was most kind, and, on hearing their story, told them it would not be much out of his way to take them to the mouth of the river.

“Oh thank you, Captain,” said Bertie heartily; “they’ll be very cut up about us at home, so the sooner we get back and shew ourselves the better.”

“Bertie,” said May, when, after thanking their kind preserver for all his care and attention, they were again in their little boat, “how good God has been to bring us safely back.”

"Yes, indeed, May," was all Bertie answered; but he there and then resolved to give up the life which God had so graciously spared to His service.

And now they are at home again, and there is a perfect hubbub of welcome, and a battery of questions hurled against them on all sides, and Bertie's hasty confession of a long course of disobedience is cut short by his father, with "Never mind, my boy, let bygones be bygones. I have nothing but welcome for you now."

"May," said Bertie, one day, as they sauntered up and down the shrubbery path, "I should like to do something for Jesus—something, you know, to bring others to Him; but I don't know what *I* can do."

May pondered a little.

"Could not you, Bertie, have some children's services on the sand? In the supplement of our magazine it tells about them. They have them at lots of sea-side places."

"What are they like?"

"Oh! so nice. A gentleman preaches to the children, and they make a place with seats to sit in, and have singing,

and sometimes form texts on the sand with pebbles and sea-weed."

"What kind of a place do they make?"

"It's rows of seats, thrown up of sand. The children make it before the service begins."

"I'll try it, May," said Bertie, after a turn or two in silence; "there are not many children amongst the visitors, but I dare say there are a dozen or so. I can read some of your little books, you know."

"Oh, Bertie! I am so glad. When will you begin?"

"To-morrow, I should think, if it's fine."

Early next morning Bertie and May, accompanied by Mattie and the little girls, started for the sands, carrying buckets and spades. On arriving there, they began in earnest the work of building the seats. They were soon joined by several willing little workers; and from time to time others came up to help them. It did not take long to make sufficient sitting room and to spare for the whole number; and then, when a strong wall was thrown up round, it

was pronounced quite finished. As the little people took their seats, Bertie whispered to May,

“We had better begin with a hymn, I think; what shall we have?”

May suggested “Rock of Ages,” and Mattie led it off in a sweet, clear voice, all the children joining in heartily.

After a short prayer, Bertie commenced what Mattie afterwards insisted on calling “his first sermon.” He had chosen the “Parable of the unmerciful servant” (Matt. xviii. 23), which he first read through. If my little readers will look at verse 35 of the same chapter, they will see that the parable ends with the following verse, “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”

He then read from the little book

“THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT.

“(Matt. xviii. 23.)

“We have our Saviour’s explanation of this parable in verse 35. He tells us that if we are unforgiving, our heavenly Father will not forgive us. But there

is something to learn from the beginning of the parable. The servant owed his lord more than a million pounds of our money, a sum impossible for him to pay. What does this remind us of? Should it not make us think of the vast debt which every one of us owes to God? Every sin we have committed has added to the account against us, it grows larger every day.

“If we look back at all the years we have lived, and think of what we have left undone, as well as what we have done wrong—when we think of our wrong thoughts, as well as our unkind words, to say nothing of the many sins which we have forgotten—we must all say that we owe a debt to God which we can never pay.

“Well, this servant’s debt was forgiven him, he had only to ask for mercy, and his lord frankly forgave him his debt. And God is ready to forgive us if we confess our sins. He says in Isaiah xliv. 22, ‘I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.’

“What does ‘redeem’ mean? To

buy back again. Jesus has a right to you, because He made you ; but as you are a sinner He died to redeem you. He gave His life as the price.

“ How much He must love you ! Why did He redeem you ? what does He want to do with you ? He wants to blot out your transgressions, and He wants you to come to Him. Besides redeeming us, buying us back, Jesus has given us everlasting life. He had to pay a great deal for this. What was the price ? His precious blood. (1 Peter i. 19.) He was paying our debt so as to give us everlasting life when He hung on the cross, suffering such dreadful pain. And then He bowed His head, and said, ‘ It is finished.’

“ But what a price !

“ Dear friends, do not your hearts fill with gratitude when you think of all He gave in order to redeem us ? If you have never thought much of your sins before, do you not feel sorry for them now, when you think what Jesus bore on account of sin on the dreadful cross, and that your sins helped to nail Him there ? Have you thanked Him, or do you live, day after day, without thanking Him,

without thinking about Him, without loving Him? If you have believed in Jesus, and accepted Him as your Saviour, then you have this precious gift. If you have not believed in Jesus, then, instead of having everlasting life, you are 'condemned already.' But thanks be to God, the gift is still waiting for you. If you will accept it, everlasting life will be yours."

There was another hymn sung, and then Bertie's little service was over.

At May's suggestion, he asked the children to collect some shells, pebbles, and sea-weed, for making a text on the sand.

At three o'clock they were to meet again on the sands.

"What text shall we have, May?" asked Bertie.

"Shall we have 'God be merciful to me a sinner'? said May, "and then you could read afterwards the parable of 'The Pharisee and Publican.'"

"All right, then, we'll settle on that."

Even Charlie and Ted, who had refused to come in the morning, appeared at three o'clock, and took great interest in the text making. There were about

twenty children in all, so there was a letter for each, and some over to be taken by those who finished first. There was great variety in the materials collected, and the letters were shaped according to the fancy of the little workers, some were ornamented with green sea-weed, and some with red ; but each child displayed their taste, and the text when finished was pronounced "just beautiful." And now came Bertie's part again, and there was a general rush towards the sand seats. Charlie and Ted took their places among the rest, they could not miss the fun, they said, of hearing Bertie preach.

"THE PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN.

"(Luke xviii. 10.)

"These two men who went up to the temple to pray were as different as they could be one from the other. The Pharisee had always lived what people would call a good life, and he thanks God he is better than other men. He does not pray to God, but he tells God how good he is, and seems to want nothing from God. He trusts in his

own righteousness, so he has not the righteousness of God. At the last day, do you think his own righteousness will look pure and white? No, it will be only the righteousness of God that will be any good then. This man did not ask God to forgive him, he did not confess his sins, so he went home unforgiven. How different from the publican: he knew he had no goodness of his own; but he believed that God could give him what he had not. He believed God would hear his prayer, and God did hear him. It was a very short prayer, only seven words; but it went up from his heart. and brought down an answer from God. He went down to his house justified; that means, that God looked upon him as if he was quite just and good, and would treat him as if he were righteous, because he repented and believed. (Acts xiii. 39.)

“If God answered that publican’s prayer, don’t you think that if you prayed the same words, God would answer you?”

“Won’t you try it? You would like to be justified, you would like to know your sins were forgiven, and that God counted you as righteous, would you not? God

is just as ready to answer you as He was that publican, only you must come as a sinner. If you do not know that you are a sinner it is because Satan hath blinded your eyes. (2 Cor. iv. 4.) Will you not ask God to open your eyes, and turn you from darkness to light?"

"This is all your doing, Miss May," said Charlie, as he walked beside her on their way home. "Just fancy a little mite like you coming here and making all these doings, and turning Bertie into a parson. What do you think of yourself?"

"It was Bertie who arranged it all," answered May; "I only told him of the children's services I had read of."

"Oh! all very well, but I know you are at the bottom of it; but you are a brave girl, for all that; I wish Mattie was half as jolly as you are."





CHAPTER VIII.



HE part of the beach the children had chosen for their service was a long way off from the most frequented part ; so they had it entirely to themselves.

“I say, Bert!” said Charlie, who accompanied the others next day, “give us a long text and a short sermon, and then that will suit us exactly ; eh, Ted?”

“I don’t know,” said Ted ; “it’s too hot stooping so long over the sand ; I was very glad when I had finished my letter O.”

“What text shall we do to-day?” asked Mattie.

“I was thinking of ‘Knock, and it shall be opened unto you,’” answered Bertie. “The parable is ‘The Ten

Virgins,' so the text about knocking would do nicely."

From the top of the hill they could see quite distinctly yesterday's text stretching out a few yards on the sand.

"Oh! doesn't it look nice?" exclaimed Eva, clapping her hands.

"Quite like an illumination," said Mattie; "let us make haste and begin before the others come."

But on arriving on the shore they found quite a number already at work picking up shells and sea-weed, and eager to know what the text was to be; and then followed quite a discussion as to how the letters were to be appropriated. As soon as that was arranged satisfactorily, the work began, and a pleasant task it was, judging from the bright, happy faces of the children. When at last the text was finished, and had been duly admired, the children were glad enough to sit down on their comfortable sand seats; for they were both hot and tired with their morning's work.

After a hymn and prayer, Bertie began to read—

"THE TEN VIRGINS.

"(Matt. xxv. 1.)

"'The kingdom of heaven shall be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.'

"In this parable the bridegroom represents the Lord Jesus Christ. The foolish virgins, people who are called Christians, but who are only so in name; while the five wise virgins are real Christians, people who have come to Jesus, and are trusting in Him. Which are you like, the wise or foolish virgins?

"The oil signifies the Holy Spirit, and He is only given to those who believe in Jesus. It is very easy to make a profession, to go to church or chapel because our parents wish us to go, without paying any regard to what is said there. Easy to say our prayers without meaning what we say to God. This is like having a lamp but no oil.

"The wise virgins took oil, the foolish did not; so of course their lamps went out; and while they went to buy some oil the door was shut. Then they came

and knocked at the door, and said, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' But He answered, 'I know you not.'

"Jesus says to us now, 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' It is not too late to come to Him now, Jesus is still calling, 'Come unto me;' but if you refuse to come to Him now, it will be too late when He shuts the door. If you are not ready to go in with Jesus, you will be shut out of the bright home for ever, into the cold, black, everlasting night. It is not safe to put off coming to Jesus for a single day, for you cannot be sure you will live till to-morrow.

"If you were to die to-night, where would your soul go? To live with Jesus, or to be shut out of heaven for ever? If you put off coming now, you may die without being saved; or Jesus Himself may come and you will not be ready to meet Him. You know in the last chapter in the Bible He sends word to us three times that He is coming quickly. Oh, are you ready? ready at the sound of the trumpet to be caught up to meet the King of Glory in the air—to meet Him, not with shame and dread, but with joy and triumph?"

“Our lamps are trimmed and burning,
Our robes are white and clean ;
We’ve tarried for the Bridegroom,
Oh may we enter in ?

We know we’ve nothing worthy,
That we can call our own :
The light, the oil, the robes we wear,
All come from Him alone.

Behold, the Bridegroom cometh !
And all may enter in,
Whose lamps are trimmed and burning,
Whose robes are white and clean.

Go forth, go forth to meet Him,
The way is open now ;
All lighted with the glory,
That’s streaming from His brow.

Accept the invitation,
Beyond deserving kind :
Make no delay, but take your lamps,
And joy eternal find.”

“There will be no going out this afternoon, May,” said Bertie, as they stood by the school-room window on Sunday afternoon. “Just look how it rains ; if it did clear up by and by, the seats would be soaked ; we must give up all thought of it.”

“Yes, I suppose we must. But you’ll read at home, won’t you ? You know I’m going home on Tuesday, so there

won't be much time for finishing my books."

"I tell you what, May, I wish you were not going at all."

"I shall ask papa to invite you to our house, Bertie. Should you like to come?"

"Oh, shouldn't I! but we go back to school on Thursday."

"I wish your holidays were the same time as cousin Fred's, and then we could have you both together."

"Well, May, call the others and I'll begin," said Bertie, as he took out of the packet the two little books which they had not yet read.

"It is not so nice as being on the sands," said Eva, as she drew her chair close to May.

"I rather prefer it," said Mattie, settling herself comfortably on the sofa; "it was far too hot yesterday out of doors in the sun. Do sit still, Lily. Now, Bertie, we are ready."

"THE VINEYARD.

"(Matt. xx. 1.)

"God is the great householder. He

hires labourers to work for Him, and gives them wages according to His great goodness, but we will now look at the parable in the light of the gospel invitation. The gospel call is given to those who stand idle in the market place. The market place is the world; and we are called to leave the world, and come into the vineyard. Some are called early as children; some at the sixth or ninth hour, when they are men and women; and some at the eleventh hour, when they are old.

None are called at the twelfth hour. When life is done there will be no opportunity of coming. People who come to Jesus in the eleventh hour are saved just as much as those who come in the morning; they will all go to the same heaven; all be washed in the blood of Jesus; all be covered with the robe of righteousness. But this must not make us think we can put off coming till we are old; for we may not live to be old.

The men who were idle at the eleventh hour said that no man had hired them; no one had asked them in before. Now you have been asked to go into the vineyard in the early morn-

H

ing ; but have you obeyed? Have you come? Do you say, There will be time enough to think of coming when I am old. Oh, but Jesus is calling you *now*. If you won't listen to Him in the morning, perhaps you may not live till the eleventh hour.

The Bible says, "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." To-day is the only time we can be sure of, we may not be alive to-morrow. If we put off coming till another day, we may die without having our sins forgiven. But if you will come to Jesus *now*, you will have everlasting life ; you will be saved *now*, saved for ever. Should you not like to be sure you had passed from death unto life? If you believe in Jesus you may know it, for Jesus says—"He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation ; but *is* passed from death unto life." (John v. 24.)

"I like that text," said May, as Bertie closed the book, "it's so nice to know that."

"Know what?" asked Mattie.

"That we have passed from death unto life."

"I don't know that I have," said Mattie; then, after a pause, "I wish I did."

"Oh, but you may, Mattie, dear; you have simply to believe in Jesus."

"Are you going to read the other one?" asked Eva, "it's nearly five o'clock."

"It's a very short one," said Bertie, "we shall have plenty of time."

"THE WEDDING FEAST.

"(Luke xiii. 35.)

"In this parable Jesus tells us, those who believe in Him, to be ready for His coming. Christ is then our Master, and we are all His servants, not only working servants, but waiting servants. We must be as men who wait for their lord. Jesus has gone back to heaven, but only for a time, He is soon coming again. Christ's servants are now looking for their Master's return. The time of our Lord's return is unknown; but what He expects and requires of His servants is, that they shall be ready to open to Him immediately, whenever He comes. In other words, we must live in

continual readiness for our meeting with our Lord. How can we get ready? By coming to Him now, and giving ourselves up entirely to Him; to be washed in His precious blood, and clothed in His righteousness. The servants were to have their long garments girded, or tied up; which would else get in their way while they were serving their lord; so we must be willing to give up everything that would be likely to make us forget that Jesus is coming soon. If we love story-books and play better than our Bibles we are not getting ready to meet Jesus. He has left word that all who believe in Him are to watch for His coming. He says—‘Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching;’ and again, ‘What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch!’”

“Are you ready for the meeting
With the Saviour in the air?
Longing for that holy greeting
With the ransom’d myriads there?
If not ready, if not ready,
Oh, for that great day prepare!”

As Bertie read the last words, little Lily, who had been listening attentively, turned to May saying,



"If we have the robe on we are ready to meet Jesus, are we not, May?"

"Yes, dear," answered May, drawing the little girl to her; "if you love and trust Him, He will give you the beautiful robe which will make you fit for heaven."

"May," said Mattie a few minutes later when they were alone, "what is it to believe? It's something I do *not* understand."

"To believe, is to accept Jesus for your Saviour, to give yourself quite up to Him, and to trust Him to do what you cannot do for yourself, to save you from your sins."

"Who told you all that?"

"Miss Chester: I wish she could talk to you."

"Will you pray for me, May?"

"Yes, dear, shall we kneel down here?"

"Thank you, May," said Mattie, as they rose from their knees. "I am glad you came to stay here, for I never thought of these things before."

"I should so like," she added, "to look over your parable books; will you lend them to me?"

"I have another one besides those you have heard," said May. "I'll fetch it for you."

"Oh! thank you, May," said Mattie, as her cousin returned in a minute with the little book in her hand.

"Oh! it's 'The rich man and Lazarus.' I'll read that first. I will be sure and let you have them to-morrow before you pack."

Alone in her room, Mattie opened her Bible, and found the parable of "The rich man and Lazarus." She sat a long time after finishing it, with her head resting on her hands, lost in deep thought; and it was with trembling hands she at last took up May's little book.

"I wish I were like May," she said; "if I were to die to-night what would become of me?"

"THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

"(Luke xvi. 19.)

"This is a solemn picture: we first see the rich man so taken up with his riches and pleasures that he forgets he has a soul to be saved. We next see him in the lake of fire, where he has no rest day or night, and asking for a drop of water

to cool his tongue ; but he may not have even that.

“ Between him and the happy place where Lazarus is, we see a great gulf fixed, so that none can pass from either side. Let this parable be a warning to you. Jesus told it because He wanted to warn you not to go to that dreadful place. There is time for you *now* to repent and believe, but if you die without having your sins forgiven there will be no heaven for you, but instead—the lake of fire, from which there is no escape. Jesus is calling you to come to Him. He has been waiting for you to come to Him for eight, ten, or twelve years, but how can you be sure He will wait any longer? If you do not come *now*, you may not come at all, to-morrow may be too late, to-morrow you may be dead. Jesus is calling now, ‘Come unto me,’ but if you will not listen, one day He will say, ‘Depart from me.’ Why should you not make up your mind to come to Him to-day? Would it not make you happier to know that your sins were washed away in His precious blood?”

It would, indeed, thought Mattie, as she read the last words ; “ I wish I did know that my sins were washed away.”



CHAPTER IX.



NE morning at breakfast, about a week after May's return home, Mr. Graham said, "Here is a letter for you, May. It has the Sandport postmark, so it must be from one of your cousins."

"Oh! is it from Mattie?" exclaimed May. "Yes, that's her writing, I am so glad, I wanted to hear from her."

May was pleased when she could steal away by herself to read the letter alone. Since she had left Sandport Mattie had been much in her thoughts; she had been so sorry to leave her before she had found peace. Could this letter be to say that she, too, had come to Jesus? With trembling hands she tore it open and eagerly glanced it through, and then commenced to read it carefully.

"MY DEAR MAY,

"Thank you so much for sending me the little books, they did so help me. After reading them, I prayed that I might be clothed with righteousness, and I think God has heard me, for I feel so happy. I think I have really found Jesus, and I am trusting Him to save me. I want to do some work for Him, so I am going to have a class at the Sunday school. I shall get the children to read the scriptures, and lend them our magazines. I do so miss you, especially now Bertie has gone. I am so glad you came here ; perhaps if you had not I might never have come to Jesus, nor Bertie either. I often thank God that He sent you here. Good-bye, May. dear, and mind you are to come and see us again soon.

"Your loving cousin,

"MATTIE HAMILTON."

How pleased Miss Chester will be, thought May, as she finished reading the letter, I will go and shew it her.

"Miss Chester," she exclaimed, running into the schoolroom, "here's a letter from Mattie, would you like to see it?"

"It contains good news, I see," said Miss Chester, with a smile, as she looked up at May's bright face.

May stood watching Miss Chester as she read the letter.

"Shall we thank God, May dear?" she said, as she returned it; "it is all His work; you planted, but He gave the increase."

"Miss Chester," said May presently, "if you had not taught me, I should not have helped Bertie, and then he would not have had the services; and Fred, too, you taught him, and then he got the boys at his school to read their Bibles."

"To God be all the praise, dear, for using my poor efforts to bring so many of His lambs into the fold. There are some beautiful lines called 'The Watered Lilies,' shewing how, if we want to be used by the Master, we must keep close to Him. Shall I read them to you?"

"Oh, please, Miss Chester!"

"THE WATERED LILIES.

"The Master stood in His garden
Among the lilies fair,
Which His own right hand had planted,
And trained with tenderest care;

“ My lilies need to be watered,”
 The heavenly Master said ;
 “ Wherein shall I draw it for them,
 And raise each drooping head ? ”

Close to His feet on the pathway,
 Empty, and frail, and small,
 An earthen vessel was lying
 Which seemed no use at all.

But to the fountain He took it,
 And filled it to the brim ;
 How glad was the earthen vessel
 To be of use to Him !

And to itself it whispered,
 As He laid it aside once more ;
 “ Still will I lie in His pathway,
 Just where I did before.

Close would I keep to the Master,
 Empty would I remain ;
 And perhaps some day He may use me,
 To water His flowers again.”

If you wish to serve the Master, May, you must be like an earthen vessel and keep close to Him, and be ready for any service, no matter how small it is, that He gives you to do. Some little word you speak for Jesus, which perhaps you may think will not do much good, may by His blessing be the means of bringing hundreds of souls to Him. I will tell you a story to shew what I mean.

"Here's Winnie coming," exclaimed May. "Winnie, you are just in time, Miss Chester was going to tell me a story."

A little boy, commenced Miss Chester, named John Williams was one Sunday evening loitering at a corner of a London street, waiting for some bad companions; when a good woman who knew him, passing by to church, asked him to go with her. He went, and heard words by which he was saved. He became the "Apostle of the South Seas." I suppose he has been the means of bringing hundreds, perhaps thousands, of souls to Jesus. Think how pleased that good woman must have been, if she lived to read of his noble work.

Neither of the children spoke for a minute or two, for the story had made a great impression on them both, then Winnie broke the silence by saying—

"When I am a woman, I mean to be a missionary."

"I could not wish anything better for you, my child. It is a great privilege to be able to give one's self wholly to work for Christ."

"Do you think when I am grown up

"I could be a missionary also?" asked May.

"I do not know, dear; but if your will is entirely given up to Christ, He will use you, as it seems best to Him, whether it be at home or abroad."

"Miss Chester," said May, breaking the silence which followed, "you haven't given us the parable of 'The Talents;' have you got it?"

"No, dear, I gave it away; but if you like I will read to you a hymn of one of God's workers, which speaks of giving hands, feet, lips, intellect, heart and money, all to God—of using every talent we have for God's service. Here it is—

"Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise;
Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

"Take my voice and let me sing
Always, only, for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee;
Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold;

Take my intellect and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose.

“Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine ;
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne ;
Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store ;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.”

“You both, dear children, have the knowledge of Him ; that is the best talent you could have. Don't hide it, look forward to the blessed time that is coming, when those who serve Jesus will hear the ‘Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.’”



