

TALKINGS IN THE
TWILIGHT



TALKINGS
IN
THE TWILIGHT.

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"GOD'S WONDERFUL TREES," ETC.

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TALKINGS IN THE TWILIGHT.



CHAPTER I.

ON WINGS.

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles."—Isa. xl. 31.

OME, my young friends ! let us gather round the fire; and have a chat. The shadows of the coming night are falling over the quiet fields, and the busy town. The wind is driving the snow in feathery flakes on to the window sills, and the trees and roofs of the houses lie white and cold against the leaden sky. The little birds that were hopping about a few minutes ago have gone to roost, and a deep stillness reigns over all.

How pleasant it is to stir the fire, and watch its fiery red glow, to see the flames leap up into the smoke, and feel their genial heat. So now while our shadows are dancing a noiseless dance on the wall behind us, let us begin our "Talkings in the Twilight."

What shall we talk about? It is a solemn time when the sun has set, and the night is closing in. We must talk about *real* things; all that is not true belongs to Satan. There are plenty of wonderful things that are true without having any "make-up" stories.

This morning when I saw how snowy it was, I put some crumbs on the window sill for the birds.

Poor little things! they were up at the window directly, and were feasting away as if they had had no food for a week. I could not help thinking what a very pleasant thing it must be to have wings. If we want to get up to any high place we must have stairs or ladders, and trudge up step by step, while these tiny little feathered

things can skim about in the air as lightly and as easily as possible. If we want to take a journey we must move upon the earth, and either walk, or get horses or steam-engines to drag us along, but these birds, these little winged birds, can visit distant lands at their own sweet will, and it takes them but a few minutes to skim over the lofty mountains over which we must climb so wearily, or through which we must tunnel with so much labour. No wonder that I thought to myself as I watched them, What a pleasant thing it must be to have wings!

Then let us have a talk about "wings."

Wings! Why, the very sound of the word has something waving, fluttering, flapping about it. I will tell you what it brings to my mind:

Some years ago, I lived in the country, and the house was covered with ivy—ivy that had grown there for years. The little grey sparrows found it a capital place in which to build their nests; and the chirping and the bustling that

used to go on round my bedroom window was something wonderful. I liked to have them there, and I almost seem to hear them now, chattering and chirping, and quarrelling sometimes, I am afraid, and to see them flying up and down with straws, and wool, and feathers.

But though I loved the busy sparrow town, and liked to peep into the nests, and look at the pretty eggs that lay within my reach, the gardener could not bear it, and he often brought his ladder, and took them all away. He was an open foe, and came by daylight, and open foes are never to be so much feared as secret ones.

There was a secret one, however, and he came at night, when all was still and dark, when the little grey people were all asleep under cover of the ivy leaves, dreaming, perhaps, of the beautiful nests they had been building all day, or of the fine little families that would soon be filling them; then,—stealthily and silently, through the darkness, came this fearful foe, and with a smothered cry of terror some father or mother sparrow

would be borne away, and never would be seen again.

Now, I could protect my little friends from the gardener, by telling him to leave them alone, but of this foe I knew nothing. It is true that I often heard strange sounds outside my window at night, as if some one was pulling the ivy down, and I heard low cries from the sparrows ; but for a long time I had no idea of what was really going on so near to me.

One morning, however, when walking in the garden, I saw a small heap of bones under a tree which grew near the house ; they were the bones of birds, picked quite clean, and bleaching in the sun. This set me thinking. How could they come there ? If Puss had caught a bird, she would have eaten it, bones and all, I knew that quite well ; it was not old Pussy's work, *that* was plain. But whose then could it be ? I will tell you how the mystery was solved.

One night soon after this, I was sitting up very late reading and writing, when I suddenly heard

such a dragging at the ivy, that I thought for a moment a thief must be putting a ladder against the wall, to get in at my window, which was wide open.

“Now,” said I to myself, “I must find this secret out.” So I started from my seat, and blew out my candle; then I crept quietly to the window, drew back the curtain, and peeped out. In a moment I understood it all, I knew how the bones came under the tree, and why I heard those pitiful cries.

It was a calm still night,—not a breath of wind was moving the leaves of the trees; the moonlight was falling softly on the lawn, and the dark shadows of the trees were lying motionless on the grass, which was white with dew; the stars were looking down from the deep quiet sky, not a cloud, not a shadow passed across it; all was calm and peaceful around, yet there was mortal terror in the hearts of my feathered friends. I will tell you why. A wing,—a long, soft, white wing, gently fanning, to and fro, was stretching



out from the ivy, on one side of the window. It was close to me, I could have touched it with my hand, but I was so much startled at seeing it there, that I stood quite still to watch what would follow, and presently a large white owl flew noiselessly away from the spot. Not a sound did he make with his wings as he moved through the air, and the moonlight gleamed on his round head, and hooked beak ; but he was not going away, for when he had flown a few yards from the house, he turned, and coming swiftly back, banged himself against the ivy, and clinging fast to it with his talons, searched among the leaves with that hooked beak of his, for his prey. A sharp cry,—a little struggle, and away he went again, and perching on the branches of the tree near the house, finished his cruel work. After all, the poor white owl was only finding his own supper, and perhaps he had some owlets at home who were crying to him for food ; but his coming at night when the sparrows were asleep seemed very cowardly and mysterious, but then, he could not see by day.

Owls' eyes are so large that they take in a great many rays of light, and so they are blinded by the light of the sun. They have to mope in a dark corner all day, but in the night they can see distinctly, because their large eyes can use all the light there is. Owls are birds of the night.

Night, dark deep night, hangs over this world, little people. It settled down upon it, on that sad day when Satan led Adam and Eve away from God, and they went out of the light of His presence, into the darkness of their Deceiver's kingdom. All their children have been born in the darkness, and have owls' eyes, they cannot bear the light. There was pity and love in the heart of God, and Jesus Christ came down into the darkness, with light straight from heaven, to give "light to them that sit in darkness, and the shadow of death." But we did not want Him here; His light showed how dark and black our hearts were, and made our eyes ache, so we hung Him up upon a tree, and left Him to die there,

and then we put Him in a grave, and rolled a big stone upon its mouth.

“Now,” said we, “we have put out the light.” But wonderful to say, He burst from the grave, and God took Him back to heaven, and now He is living to give new sight to all who turn to Him. If you wait on Him He will open your eyes to see the things of God, and will make you children of the light. Evil spirits, like birds of the night, are ever moving about in the gloom around us, tempting the children of the night to do deeds of darkness.

It is a sad thing for the children of the light to be caught asleep, and resting happily in the gloom around them, like the sparrows in the ivy. It is then that the birds of the night get power over them, and would make an end of them altogether, but for One who never slumbers nor sleeps, and who ever comes to the rescue.

“Ye are all the children of the light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness; therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us *watch*.” (1 Thess. v.)

This is written to those who have been to Jesus the Lord to receive their sight. I wonder if *you* have been? If not, you will not understand much of what I am telling you, but do go *now*, and He will give you eternal life at once. Then you will get sight too, to see things as they really are in God's light. Then you will know how dark a night you were in before and you will feel a new Power—a Power which will bear your soul along over all the difficulties which lie before it, just as if it was flying. For the soul that trusts in Christ has, as it were, wings given to it, that it may mount up above every danger, and escape every snare.

Have you ever thought that only God can make a “flying” thing? Men have often tried, but they have always failed. You can catch and kill the pretty feathered birds, and the painted butterflies, that glide so gracefully through the air, but you cannot make anything that can fly; no one ever could. But the moment a soul trusts in Christ, He makes it able to “mount up with wings as

eagles." It has no more fear of hell, because its sins are pardoned; and it delights to soar and sing in the light of God's presence.

I am going to tell you of a text which I did not know to be in the Bible till I began to think about wings. Listen—"Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." (Psa. lxxviii.) When a potter wishes to make a pot, he takes a lump of clay, and forms it as he wishes, and then he bakes it hard in the fire. God made Adam of the dust of the earth, and He made him a beautiful vessel for His own glory.

But you know the sad story of Satan's coming into Eden and spoiling God's beautiful vessel. It was broken then; and God calls us potsherds now. "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth." What is so useless as a potsherd? It is thrown at once on to the dust-heap. But God loves the poor ruined thing, and He says, "Ah! I will make a winged thing

out of that poor earthen sherd"—a better thing than ever it could have been if Satan had left it alone in Eden.

So Jesus, the Son of God, stood upon the earth and cried, "The hour is coming and *now is* when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear *shall live*." (John v. 25.) He is "the resurrection and the life."

That is how the poor broken sherd gets changed into the winged dove. He who believes in Jesus receives wings of silver and feathers of gold. A power is in him which he never had by nature; he is a new creature. The blood of Christ has bought life for him—the blood of Him whom we valued at thirty pieces of silver, the price of the potter's field, where no doubt earthen vessels were made. Wings of silver and feathers of gold! Power to fly, and fitness for the presence of God, in a righteousness which is not ours!

Perhaps you are saying to yourself, "I should like to have life, instead of being like a potsherd fit only for the rubbish heap, but I do not know

how to get it." "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." (John iii. 36.) "Him that cometh unto me I will *in no wise* cast out." (John vi. 37.)

But do not think that you will feel something very extraordinary within you when you get eternal life. Nothing of the sort; you simply believe what God says in the Bible, about the blood of Christ blotting out your sins, and that He has forgiven you. Then you have eternal life, and you can thank Him for it. Do not wait till to-morrow. Get it *now*. To some people to-morrows never come.

CHAPTER II.

SNARES.

“ Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any thing that hath a wing.”—Prov. i. 17 (margin).

NOW I am going to talk about snares, and gins, and traps, and nets, because these are the things with which birds are caught and wounded.

Long ago there lived a man who loved God, and he wrote these words by the Spirit of God,—
“ The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords, and have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me.” (Ps. cxl. 5.) And again another wrote,—“ They set a trap, they catch men.”

I do hope that this evening I am talking to those who have yielded their hearts to Jesus, and are therefore “mounting up with wings as eagles.” If so, it is well that you should know, my dear little friends, that dangers surround you on every side, and cruel enemies also. Yes, there are the same dangers for your precious souls, as there are for the little birds that fly so lightly from tree to tree.

What is a snare? A snare is that which appears good for you at first sight, but which has evil hidden within it.

One very fine day in the Spring, I was travelling in a railway train, and then I saw something which will help me to explain a snare to you. The cold dark winter was over, and the hedges and trees were all dressed in the brightest green. The grass in the meadows was growing long, ready for hay-making, and the pretty wild flowers were peeping out everywhere. “Oh,” I thought, “what a lovely world God has made! Can there be sorrow under so bright a sun?” But hardly

had these thoughts passed through my mind when I caught sight of a man crouching down beside a thick hedge, and eagerly watching something that was going on in the meadow beyond him. What could he be so earnest about? He never turned his head to look at the train as it swept past him. He moved neither hand nor foot, but kept his eyes fixed, intently fixed, on some object that he could see through the lower part of the hedge. Another moment and he was hidden from my view by the thick green boughs, and I could look down, and see what it was that interested him so much.

Yes,—I saw that down in the soft green grass there was a net spread. The lovely wild flowers were blooming all about it, blue, and white, and gold; and over it, or near it, there was a bird fluttering about; there was tempting food upon the net, and all was still and calm and sunny, no danger could be seen. High up in the bright blue sky the merry larks were singing, but the hidden fowler knew that when they saw the food



they loved, laid out before them, and this other bird apparently enjoying it, they would come down, and be quickly caught.

Ah ! that poor little bird, it had once been as free as they, but now it could not soar, or fly, or sing, for it had ventured down to feed upon that fatal net, its claws had been set fast in the sticky slime that covered the snare, the meshes had been drawn over it, and it had been made a prisoner.

And what was it doing there when I saw it ? It was a *decoy* bird then ; that is, it was left there to look as if it was free, that it might tempt other birds down to share its own sad fate.

Satan is a master fowler, and he has spread this earth with snares to catch all the souls he can. Most of the people you meet in the streets are like birds hopping about over the fatal net, they do not know their danger, nor do they care to know it ; they are busy with the things of this life, and do not like to hear that the fowler is only waiting his own time to draw the net over them, and bear them away into “outer dark-

ness." They will be his for ever then. "For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them." (Eccles. ix.) Thank God, Satan has lost the power to keep *one* who wishes to be saved. Jesus has broken the chains and bars of his prison house, and all who wish to escape, can do so.

Is it not strange that people do not care to get away? It is because they do not believe God when He tells them of their danger. When I was by the seaside a year or two ago, I saw a bird that acted very much like this. It was a pretty yellow canary, and had as fine a chance of escape as ever a bird could have. The man whose prisoner it was, kept it, and a number of others, in little cages, tied fast together, and these cages he used to carry on to the parade and place on the ground, that every one who passed by might see the birds and buy them. Now there was a very little boy, out for a walk with his nurse, and I

suppose he pitied the pretty yellow birds, and thought he would like to see one of them fly away in the sunlight; so while the man was looking another way, he opened the door of one of the cages, and out hopped the little prisoner. Its master soon saw it, though, and it was through his shouts of anger at the little boy, that I began to watch the scene. Hop, hop, went the little bird, turning its head first on one side and then on the other, but it never once opened its wings, or tried to mount up in the air. I think it had been born a prisoner, and had never known the joy of flying. At last it reached the edge of the cliffs, and there was nothing beyond it but open space, and far below it lay the rolling sea. The fowler crept after it very gently, watching it with eager eyes, but he knew that it did not love him, and that if it saw him come too close, it might open its wings, and find out that it had power to fly, so he took the cages in his hand, and quietly put them down between the bird and himself. The door of the empty cage stood open, and the

other hapless captives hopped from perch to perch in their narrow prisons as they had ever done. It was a moment of choice for the little bird, space before it, and its prison behind it. Which would it choose? The fowler stood still as a statue, he seemed almost to hold his breath as he watched the prey that was so nearly escaping him. Then the little boy,—who must have been, I fear, a very naughty little boy—broke away from his nurse, and rushed towards the bird, and shouted and waved his hands. Now, I thought, it will surely be off, but no, it only went to the *very* edge of the lofty cliffs, and seemed to look timidly over them, then with two or three quick little hops it went back towards its prison and its companions, and in another moment I heard the click of the cage door, as the man made it fast. Oh, how satisfied he looked, as he carried his captives off!

Ah! how many souls are like that poor bird; the door is open, the chains are broken, yet they love their prison-house too well, and at the last

Satan will make them fast for ever, because they did not escape when they could.

How could a person who has not got "eternal life" live in heaven? Can a fish live on dry land? No, it has not got the kind of life that can live in the air. You can never live in heaven unless you get eternal life before you die. You would not be able to bear the place for one moment; you would be like a poor fish on dry land, in great misery. You can only get eternal life from one Person, His name is Jesus, the Son of God. He says, "I am come that they might have life." He *gives* it to all who look to Him for it. "I *give* unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." (John x.) No words of mine can tell you how happy the soul is that turns to Jesus, and gets eternal life. It is safe for ever and ever and ever, and then it begins to sing with joy, and to tell others of its great happiness. "I am saved," it cries, "saved for ever! The Lord has given me eternal life. Won't you come and be saved too?"

Now, Satan cannot bear this song of joy, and so he spreads this earth with gins and snares, not so much to keep those who are happy under his power, as to catch those whom he has lost. But you say, "What is the use of his catching them, if he cannot keep them for ever?" Just this,—as soon as a soul is in a snare, it is of no use in telling others of the way of escape. It cannot sing, nor can it soar away in the sunlight. And worse than this, it serves Satan as a decoy-bird then; it looks as if it were happy in the things of this world, far off from Christ; and others who see it there, are tempted down to live amongst the pleasures and cares of this sad world.

It is a solemn thing to say, but it is true, that every real Christian whose heart is fixed on the things of this world, and who is living for them, and putting Christ in the second place, is one of Satan's decoy birds. When first I turned to Jesus and received eternal life, I thought I should fly and sing for ever; but alas, I turned my eye from Christ, and looked below at the tempting

pleasures of this poor world. Then I saw the decoy-birds, busy, and seemingly happy on the things of earth; I said, "*He* is a Christian, and does so and so; why should not I?" And, "*She* is a Christian, and goes to this pleasure or that; why should not I?" And soon, too soon, I was but a poor decoy-bird myself.

It is never safe to look at others. There is only one object on which the eye should be fixed, and that is Christ. As long as you are occupied with Christ, and obeying His word, no matter what others do or say, you will be "mounting up with wings as eagles," and singing of deliverance. I wasted years, sad years in fluttering about the nets and snares of the fowler; and should have been there now, had it not been for the love and mercy of a living and acting Christ; for no one that is snared can make his own way out.

Would you like to know some of the terrible snares that Satan has laid down in the world to keep souls from escaping from him; and to catch, and mar those who have escaped him? I will

try and point them out to you. When a king is going to send an army to fight in a foreign land, he first gets a map of the country, and finds out every dangerous place, and every spot where the enemy may lurk in secret to surprise him. God knows that we, who are saved from Satan, have to pass through or over an enemy's country, on our way through life, so He has given us a map of the world, and on it are marked the gins, and traps, and snares, which are laid to catch us. For, "in vain the net is spread *in the sight* of anything that hath a wing," or of "the lord of a wing."

Now would you have thought it? Satan finds that the best traps that can be set, are those baited with nice things to eat and drink. Those are the traps that catch well. Hungry birds are caught with bread and corn; and Satan catches many a soul with dainty dishes and foaming cups.

God tells us of a man who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. I wonder if you can tell me his name?

I see, too, in the map of this world which He

has put into my hands this warning written,—
“Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide
thine heart in the way; be not among wine-
bibbers, among riotous eaters of flesh; for the
drunkard, and the glutton shall come to poverty.”
(Prov. xxiii. 19—21.) “Who hath woe? who
hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath
babbling? who hath wounds without cause?
who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry
long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed
wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is
red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it
moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a
serpent, and stingeth like an adder.” (Prov. xxiii.)
Ah! God says, Don’t look at it, for at the last the
trap will fall on you; He says too, that no drunk-
ard shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. (1 Cor.
vi.) And in another place He classes this sin
with murders.

But I dare say you are saying in your hearts,
“We are but children, and Satan cannot catch us
with such snares as these!” Do not be too sure.

Do you never look out for the best bit at meal-times, and feel vexed if you do not get it? Do you never turn the plate round to get the largest piece of cake? and look out for the best-buttered piece of bread? Oh, little people, believe me! Satan has his traps ready for all sizes and for every age. Fine joints of fat venison, and basins of turtle soup for men, and nice plum cake, and sweets, and fruit for children. I know that sad quarrels and jealousies will often begin among brothers and sisters because one gets nicer things to eat than the others. But now remember this is a snare, and the winged one should never be caught in it. Depend on God to give you whatever He sees best for you, and take your food as from Him; and this will be flying over the snare. Do not look to see what the others have, but thank God for what He has sent to you. God has given you power to do this; let this snare of Satan's be spread in vain for you.

I have heard that there is a flower that eats flies. But how does it catch them? It has no

wings and it cannot move towards them. Ah,—it catches them though, for all that. When the sun shines, and the flies are sporting about, a sort of sweet gum comes out of this flower, and the silly flies come down to taste it. Then, while they are feeding, the flower closes up, and the flies are fast for ever. They become food to the plant. Is it not a clever trap? Are you going to be caught like the flies for the sake of a little something sweet? God is speaking of professing Christians when He says by His apostle, “For *many* walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.” (Phil. iii. 18, 19.)

The snare which is baited with nice things to drink is one of the most dreadful of all. Many, many are in that snare. Ah! I know some of them, and I know how wildly they sometimes struggle to break the net, and fly again. But they never will. The more they struggle, the more they are be-

daubed with the slime around them. There is no hope for them from themselves. No HOPE AT ALL. I will tell you by and by how alone these nets can be broken.

God has given us food of all kinds on which to live, and He has given us wine for medicine, to increase our strength when we are weak and ill. He once sent this message to a young man who loved Him, and who was living to serve Him—“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake, and thine often infirmities.” So Satan baits his traps with things that are good in themselves, but on which the heart should never be set. He wants people to *love* eating and drinking. Then they are caught.

But it is time now that I should tell you of another trap, and this is one which generally catches women and little girls. I cannot tell you the numbers and numbers of winged ones that flutter round and on this very pretty net. What do you think are the baits that lure so many souls from the narrow shining path of light that leads

through the fogs, and mists, and clouds, of this poor world, up to the gates of pearl, and the golden city? Pretty dresses, beautiful ribbons, feathers, flowers, laces; shining gold and glittering gems lie scattered on this net.

Why do people like to put on these pretty things? Because they wish to look nice in the eyes of those about them. Whom should the Christian dress to please? Ah! If the heart is set on Jesus, and the love is on Him because He first loved us, then Jesus will be the One for whom a Christian woman will dress.

But how are they to know what He likes them to put on? He tells them twice over how He likes to see them dressed. "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Peter iii. 3, 4.) And again, "I will therefore that women adorn

themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness, and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold or pearls, or costly array." (1 Tim. ii.) *He* does not say, Be untidy, or dirty, or careless, but He means "Dress to please Me." And I am sure that with little girls, this means, put on the clothes that are provided for you, and thank God for them, and always remember that the Lord values the love of those who are His, and says, "Set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth." (Col. iii.) "Why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these; wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Wherefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek—for your heavenly Father knoweth

that ye have need of all these things." (Matt. vi.)

A little bird taught me a great lesson once. I was sitting at the window of my room, looking out at the wide expanse of rolling waves which was before me. The weather was very hot, and everything seemed dry and parched with heat; I could see from where I sat, the corner of the roof of the next house, and there were some little sparrows perched upon it. I saw one of them hop into the waterspout which ran round the roof, and stoop and drink, then raise its head and chirp and fly away. "Ah," I thought, "where will that poor little bird get another drink of water? The sea is salt, and the pools are salt, and the rain water has all dried up. What will it do?" But the bird had no care; it chirped and flew away quite gaily. It had learned somehow or other this text, "Your heavenly Father feedeth them." And what is more, it taught it to me. "Ah," I thought, "If we acted as winged ones we should have no care." We should be always depending on God.

There are many other snares which would take me too long to talk about, but I will just show you where some of them are marked on God's map. "They that *will be* rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the *love* of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have been seduced from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows; but thou, O man of God, *flee* these things." (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10, 11.) That is a snare for men and women. Sovereigns, and bank notes, lie on that net, but God puts up a large "Beware" near that fearful trap. God can make a Christian rich if He likes, that he may use the money for Him. A man is not in the snare because he is rich, but if his *heart* is set on money, then he is caught.

There lived long ago a man whom God loved very dearly, and who loved God, and he was caught in a snare, that has caught many another since. I do not think you would ever guess what

that snare was baited with. Because, though it will affect you all one day if you live, it is not set for you yet. Well, the bait that caught him was a *wife*. God had promised this man that He would make him king over a great nation, and a beautiful country. All he had to do was to depend on God, and wait His time; but Satan persuaded him that it would be well to marry the daughter of the king who then reigned, and be the king's son-in-law. So the king said, "I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him." She was a trouble to him all his life, for she was a woman who did not love God, and he ought never to have married her.

Wives and husbands are baits that catch many winged ones; for if the heart gets fixed on any one who does not love the Lord, or who only pretends to do so, the feet are quickly in the mire, the net is soon over the wings.

I dare say you are getting tired now of hearing about the snares. I will only tell you of two more, and these two catch children as well as men

and women. The first was one that caught the Israelites when they first came into the land of Canaan. They made friends with some of the people who knew not God, and whom they had been told to destroy. God had said, "Make no covenant with them lest it be a snare." (Ex. xxxiv. 12.) A worldly friend is a snare.

And now there is one more snare of which I must lovingly warn you before I close. It is baited with *books*. Not with lesson books! Satan knows these would not attract boys and girls; but with make-up story books.

There grows a tree in foreign lands which emits a poisonous vapour, and any bird that perches on its branches, or that even flies too near it, falls down stupified and dying. Birds are found dead beneath its fatal branches. And many and many a poor soul will be in hell that will cry out, "But for those make-up story books that lulled my soul to sleep in the midst of danger, I had not been here."

Have you heard people talk of the opium

eaters? Opium is made out of poppy-seeds, and it has the power to soothe pain, and to send those who take it into pleasant dreams. The poor Chinese, who do not know God, go in crowds to houses where they sit and chew this stupifying stuff. There they sit and waste their precious lives dreaming pleasant dreams, and seeing lovely sights, that can never be. They wake up to sorrow, and want, and poverty, and then take more opium and dream again. Must it not be a fearful sight to see them there, and to know that they may die at any moment too stupid to think about their souls and eternity?

But do you know that there are thousands of people in this country, and some of them, alas, are winged ones, who sit and dream away their lives in Satan's opium house? Drinking, ever drinking draughts of fiction, and ever calling out for more.

Many people will say that imagination is a good thing, and that works of fiction do good. So I have looked very carefully on God's map of

the world to see if He marks it “Dangerous!” and I find that He says, “Every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil continually.” (Gen. vi. 5.) *Wherever* it is mentioned in God’s word, it is spoken of as bearing evil fruit. Depend upon it that novels are Satan’s opiates; they lull the soul to sleep till the net can be made fast over it. Cast them away from you, they are deadly things.

And now I shall bid you all “Good-night” with a very precious text. It shows one more snare, but it shows also that “Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of (the lord) of a wing.” Listen—“The fear of man bringeth a snare, BUT WHOSO PUTTETH HIS TRUST IN THE LORD SHALL BE SAFE.” (Prov. xxix. 25.)



CHAPTER III.

THE WAY OF ESCAPE.

“Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers ; the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”—Ps. cxxiv. 7, 8.

LAST evening, I was telling you of the gins and snares with which the fowler has covered this world, and I was warning you of the danger of looking at his tempting baits. Now to-night I must talk to those who are already set fast in one or other of his traps. I think they may be divided into three classes.

Firstly : Those who never have been free, and know nothing about the joys of liberty.

Secondly : Those who have been free, but have

been caught again, and are very wretched in captivity ; and

Thirdly : Those that have been free, but have forgotten all about it, and are making the best of their prisons.

Did you ever long with all your heart to have a live bird to pet and tame ? I did once ; and I will tell you what made me so anxious to have one. My mother had a large wire cage, and in it two canaries. I was very little then, very little indeed, not three years old, but I remember seeing these busy building in one corner of the cage. And by and by there were the prettiest little eggs lying amidst the down of which it was made. Ah, those two birds had never known what freedom was. They were quite happy in captivity, and so long as they were well fed, they did not care to escape, for they knew no better, and chirped and sang to their gaolers. They had been born, (if you can speak so of birds) in a cage, and knew no other state.

Thousands and thousands of people are thus living happily and carelessly in Satan's thrall.

They will not believe that the cage door is open ; they do not care to hear about it. Perhaps they have nests and young ones to feed, and they say, " We are too busy to-day," or " We are sure of food here," or, " Our fathers lived and died in this way, why should not we ?"

Did you ever try to take a canary out of his cage, that he might have a fly in the room ? Was it not almost impossible to catch him ? He was fond of his cage, and was frightened to leave it. You had to take the perches out, I am sure, and follow the bird round the cage, with your hand, till you had him in a corner, and he could go no further. Then he was yours.

Nor is there one soul now winding its way along the shining pathway of light to heaven above, but has thus been followed and caught by the loving hand of Jesus. Satan has put perches in his cages to make his captives comfortable, and often these things, to which the heart clings, have to be taken away one by one, ere the terrified soul will yield itself to the Hand that has come forth to meet it.

If you are in trouble and sorrow, this very night, and your eyes are red with crying, and your heart is very weary, do not be afraid. It is Jesus taking away the perches, that He may set you free. Oh ! do not fear to trust Him. If He did not wake you up to your danger, you would go happily on, and perish for ever. It is love that follows you—nothing but love. Listen ! He says, “It is I, be not afraid.” *You cannot save yourself*, but Someone from without will save you, if you will but trust Him to do so. “Why dost thou strive against Him,” Who says, “Deliver him from going down into the pit ; I have found a ransom ?” (Job xxxiii.)

I told you how I longed to have a bird of my own. Well, when I grew older, some one told me to set a trap for one. “Get a sieve from the stable,” he said, “rest one side of it on the ground, and the other on a forked stick, then tie a piece of fine twine to the lower end of the stick, put some corn or bread under the sieve, and go and hide behind a tree, holding the string in your

hand. When the birds go underneath, pull the string, and the sieve will fall." I did as I was told, and very soon there was a sound of wings, and first one little bird, and then another, came down to look at the corn. My heart beat very fast, and the fingers that held the string twitched with eagerness to pull the cord. Hop, hop, hop, went the knowing little sparrows round and round the snare, but not one would venture in. Then a saucy robin red-breast came and actually sat on the top of the sieve, and of course while I looked at him he looked at me, and was far too wise to be caught so easily. Oh! I cannot tell you the hours that I wasted with my eye on that sieve, and the string in my hand.

At last, an elder brother saw me at my post, and he made fine fun of me, and said he would show me how to make a real trap. So he took four bricks, such as they build houses with, and made a square with them on the ground; one of them was raised on end so that three small twigs kept it from falling down upon the others. No

bird could pass those twigs without touching them, and then down would come the heavy brick, and shut him in, in darkness. But my brother was far too wise to set his trap that day. "No," he said, "put plenty of bread and corn in it for a day or two, and let the birds take it away unhurt, then set the trap in earnest and you will have a prisoner very soon." It was a real snare now, it thoroughly deceived.

The morning after it was really set, I woke quite early, and peeped out of the window. Yes—the trap was down; I could hardly stop to dress, I was in such a hurry to go and feel inside it. Very soon I was racing down the garden, and when I reached the place I saw a little feathered head lying between the rough edges of the bricks the beak wide open, and the eyes glazed. With trembling hands I opened the trap and took out the poor little robin red-breast, stiff and dead.

The trap often fell when there was nothing inside it, and I was disappointed again and again; but one morning as I carefully slipped my hand

into it I heard a little scream, and there was a flutter and a struggle, and then I felt a tiny beak pecking my hand with all the strength it had. Oh ! what the terror of that bird must have been. shut in, in darkness, all by itself ! And then to feel a hand laying hold of it in the gloom. I do not wonder it pecked and struggled, but I was its best friend after all, for I was but opening the trap to set it free, that it might fly again.

I had been told that birds that once had flown would never be happy in my cage, but would beat themselves to death upon its wires, and that I must have one that had never known freedom as my pet. So I was setting the captive free. It was a joy, after I had stroked his ruffled feathers, and smiled at his efforts to hurt me, to open my hand and see him mount away in the air, as free as ever ; and wiser I am sure. Yes, it was a joy to me, to see him mount away ; I watched him with delight, and thought, "Ah, little bird, you will be more careful where you feed another time." The bird had not been happy in the trap, for I found the food that

lay within it untouched. And many, many a poor soul that the fowler has lured into his snares, is wretched in captivity, and hates the very thing that lured it down. But how to get out it knows not.

I was standing at my window one morning, and presently I heard such a loud buzzing noise that I looked round to see what caused it, and I saw that a honey bee was hanging in a spider's web. The web was large and strong, and I watched the spider creep out of his house in the corner, and make for the bee. I think the poor bee felt him coming, for his struggles were terrible to see; but the more he twisted himself about to escape, the closer he wound the fine web about him. He was a bee that had spent his life in getting honey from the flowers about. A busy, useful little fellow, but fast in a snare for all that. How was he to get out? Could his own efforts save him? No, no! and soon, very soon, the spider would have bitten him, and sucked out his life blood, and have wound him up, and dragged him to his den, had not I been watching the scene.



The bee had wings,—shining wings, but the web was over them, he could not use them. He did better than struggle—he buzzed very loudly, and that cry of his terror drew my eye to his need, and touched my heart. Should he be sucked to death there, and I not save him? No, no! though he should sting me in his terror, I would set him free. When the spider saw me move, he stopped just an inch or two from his prey; but when my hand broke up his gossamer web, he fled back to his hole. Just a touch of mine, and the poor prisoner was free again, and winging his way back to his hive, where his friends would soon clear away the bits of web that still hung about him.

Do you understand me, dear little people? A Power from outside can alone set the snared one free. Wretched and terrified, and longing perhaps for the joy you have lost, cease your struggles and let your cry go *out* to the only Person who can help you. Do not think that by any doings of yours you can break from what has overcome you. Your

own efforts will plunge you deeper and deeper down. "Your help is in the NAME of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." What is His name? JESUS. It means Saviour. Rest upon this, then, at once. Leave Jesus to break the web, and set you free. Drop your soul upon Him. The web will be broken in a moment, and you will have power to live for Him again. Reading and praying will then be your joy, but they cannot save you; it needs a living Person to do that. Will you not trust Him *now*?

Trusting, is not praying; it is leaving your desire in His hands, without making an effort of your own. It is saying, "I have done with that, for Jesus will see about it for me." When we trust Him for our sins, we say, "I have done with my sins, for Jesus has promised to settle all that for me." Many a soul spends the greater part of its life here, in the fowler's net, because it is afraid to leave off struggling. It is easier to struggle than to trust.

I know a person, who, after trying for years to

get out of a snare, gave up in despair, and throwing herself down on her bed, cried out to the Lord Jesus, "If you do not help me, no one else can!" That very moment He came to her help; but while He was breaking away the web that had entangled her, she thought He meant to hurt her, and was very like the bird in the trap, pecking at the loving hand that had come to save her. The snare that troubled her so much, was the habit of making up stories in her head, and she had tried every plan of which she could think to break it off. But all in vain; it had grown stronger and stronger.

Many, many are in this snare; and no soul can sing and fly while thus entangled. For a month she was too weak and ill even to think of making up one of these foolish tales; and when she grew well again, the habit was broken for ever, and she was free. She could sing a glad song. "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." Jesus had set her free, as soon as she left it to Him.

Now I must talk for a little while about those who have so completely forgotten that they could once fly, that they are quite happy in captivity. Most of these souls have been caught very young, when they could only flutter a little, and before they had tasted the joy of deliverance. I do not believe that one who has ever really flown, can forget it, or be thoroughly happy in a snare.

But what is to be done for those who are neither struggling, nor crying out? For him who has “forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” (2-Pet. i. 9.) This soul is like a nightingale in a cage. Shall I tell you why? A nightingale has been made by God to sing in the night. When other birds are asleep, its sweet notes ring through the darkness, and are most delightful to hear.

Christians should ever be like nightingales, flying and singing through the night. For it is night here now, as I told you before. But why is a Christian who is happy in a snare, like a nightingale in a cage? He is blind, and therefore knows nothing about night or day; it is all alike

to him. When the fowler catches a young nightingale, I am sorry to tell you, he runs a hot needle into its eyes, that it may never see again, and so learn to sing all day, for the pleasure of its captors.

I am sorry to have to tell you of such fearful cruelty, and I know that God is angry when He sees it done. Nor will the sin be forgotten at the judgment day unless the man who has done it gets forgiveness for it; but this is why a Christian happy in captivity is like a poor caged nightingale. "He is *blind*, and cannot see afar off." (2 Pet. i. 9.)

If you were to pity a caged nightingale, and set it free, what would be the use of it? It would only starve. It could not find its food. What is the best thing to do for souls, in this most terrible condition. Pray for them. Do not talk of liberty and safety to them; that would be of no good to them. If you are like this, I am very *very* sorry for you; it is the most terrible state of all. It is of no use my talking to you, I cannot help you. No one can. If God does not in His much love

and mercy wake you up, and make you feel your danger, your position is terrible. Not because you are in a snare, remember, but because you are *happy* to be there, and have not a wish to be taken out.

You are in the far country, but the Father loves you still. I can tell you *that*, and pray for you. And I know He has messengers called Trouble, and Sickness, and Want, and Sorrow, one of which He will send if necessary, to remind you that you have a Father still.

I knew a boy once, who when he was about twelve years old, believed that Jesus had died for him, and thus escaped from Satan's power. He was at school at a place called Reading, among a number of other boys; but his song of deliverance sounded so loudly and sweetly that it was heard a long way off. The dark fowler could not endure that song, and so he spread artful snares for him; things that looked so innocent and harmless, that he soon tempted him down, and the song was hushed. Then he put his eyes out,

and he forgot that he had been saved. He was a merry, active, happy boy, full of all sorts of fun. He set his heart on things of the earth, and forgot his Saviour altogether. Anything that catches a soul gets the first place in the heart.

Innocent things catch more souls than outwardly wicked things. This boy was very fond of bees; and as he grew older, he made houses in which they could live, with glass windows to them, so that he could look in and see what the busy little creatures were about. One day he took me to see his bees, and I saw the queen of the hive taking a walk about her palace. It was a strange sight; there were hundreds of bees bustling about the place, and she could scarcely have moved through the crowd, had not several servants cleared the way before her. This they did, walking backwards. I shall never forget the strange sight, nor the glee with which the young beemaster showed me his handiwork. He was very happy in all these things, but he was in the far country feeding on its pleasures. Had his Father

forgotten him ? No ; and after he had been there about eight years, there began to be a famine in that land.

His bees and his other innocent amusements could only satisfy him as long as he was well ; but when sickness came, what use were bees, and such things as those ? His cheek grew pale and thin ; and the step that had been so light, became languid and slow. He could not bound about as he had done, he lost his breath easily, and there was a pain in his side. Then he often said he did not care to live ; and though he did his work as before, his face grew sad, and his eyes heavy.

He grew worse and worse, and one day bright drops of blood flowed from his mouth. Then terror seized him, for he thought he should die. It was terrible to see him ; great drops stood on his pale brow, and he trembled from head to foot.

The doctors came, and wondered at his alarm ; they did not know that he had just awoko to find himself fast in the fowler's net, and that he expected to be wound up, and carried away, where

there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. "Going into eternity unprepared!" He could think of nothing else. His bees and his pleasures were nothing to him then. Was the fowler going to let him escape though? No, not if *he* could help it, and he tried to lull him to sleep with those soul-opiates,—novels and story-books. They did quiet him a little, but not for long, for when he laid down the books, the terror came on him again. There was a famine indeed, and he was in want.

His mother read to him out of God's Word, and he listened now, and longed to be free. One day when he was by himself he opened his Bible by chance, as he thought, and his Lord—his neglected, long-forgotten Lord spoke straight to his soul. These were the words; "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." (Rev. ii.) Ah! that was the hand of the Lord Jesus breaking away the snare, and enabling the poor captive to rise from the fowler's net.

If his song had been sweet before, it was far sweeter now, an unearthly glory was on his face, and the light of heaven was in his eyes. Most earnestly he prayed that his Father would take him home to heaven at once, if He saw that there was any danger of his falling again into the snare of the fowler. It was just about six months after this, when the doctors said that they could do nothing more for him and that he must die. For a moment he was terrified, but that was only when he looked at death; the next minute his eye was on Christ, and his face shone with joy.

“I’ve done with doctors,” he cried; “done with them. I am going home—going home!” And from that moment till he fell asleep in Jesus, nearly a month afterwards, it was just a triumphal march to glory; or I would rather call it, “a mounting up with wings as eagles,” along the pathway that shone brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

No words of mine can tell you what a scene it was. I had read of such things in books, but

I had scarcely believed them to be true. He seemed at times to be already in the glory, and talked of sights and sounds which he could not express; and from moments of rapt communion with the Lord who had delivered him, he would start to deliver solemn warnings to friends about him. For some he prayed, and almost in the same breath burst into praise for the answer given. And thus he mounted heavenwards, while we watched him with amazement, and learned what a deliverer Jesus is.

I stooped over him, when life was almost ended here, and asked a question,—it was a foolish question,—I said, “Is Jesus with you?” A low, soft whisper floated back to me. “Closer than a brother.” A few short hours more, and the glory shut him in. He was for ever with the Lord, his Saviour and Deliverer.

Who saved him? JESUS.

Who delivered him? JESUS.

And He is waiting to do the same for you. But do not put Him off. I entreat you yield to Him

to-night, or cry out to Him at least, for He is coming very soon to call those who love Him to meet Him in the clouds. Then He says He will give shining crowns to those who have loved Him here. No one will *deserve* a crown, but He will give them out of His princely grace. He says they are for those who let Him fit them for His service here.

Will those who are content to spend their lives here, hovering about the fowler's nets, and minding earthly things, have crowns? No, I see nothing about them, but that they will be saved, "so as by fire." How very solemn this is!

Now, ere we part, let me once more remind you that if you are snared, that is, if your heart is fixed on things here, your own efforts to escape are quite useless. *Drop your soul on Jesus.* "Our help is in the name of the Lord." "Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler." (Ps. xci.)

CHAPTER IV.

SHAM WINGS; OR, FLOATING IS NOT FLYING.

“How oft is the candle of the wicked put out—they are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away.”—Job xxi. 18.

“The hypocrite’s hope shall perish.”—Job viii. 13.

NOW, this evening, I want to tell you about sham wings, and to show you that floating and flying are two very different things. Draw your chairs round the fire, and listen, for I have some sad stories to tell you to-night.

I want to explain to you how useless the sham wings are, which I see that men have fastened to their own shoulders. You might as well glue a

pair of pretty wings on to a poor creeping caterpillar. He could not fly. Nor will the name of being a Christian save a single soul. The caterpillar must die, and become a chrysalis, and out of his grave he rises a winged butterfly. So you must believe that Christ died instead of you, and so take the place of death, if you would be able to mount up "with wings as eagles." God only can make a flying one; I say this to you again and again.

Then again you will see that floating on the wind is not flying; the floating thing is carried about by the will of the wind. A flying thing can make its way against the storm,—it has life and power to resist the stream that opposes it. It is sad when a winged one drifts on the wind. Alas, alas! there are many people who wear sham wings, but who have never let the Saviour take them up, and give them real faith. They remind me of a story I read long ago, and which I will tell you, as well as I can remember it.

It is about a man who lived many, many years

ago in Greece. Now the Greeks prided themselves on being the very wisest and cleverest people on the face of the earth; and as far as earthly wisdom went, they really were. They worshipped a number of false gods, which the Bible says were devils (1 Cor. x. 20), and built such splendid temples in their honour that people still go many miles to look at the ruins. They knew no better, so that God did not punish them as He always punished the Israelites when they chose these false gods instead of Him. Now these Greeks were very much puffed up by their cleverness; and in Athens the people spent all their time in telling or hearing something new. (Acts xvii. 21.)

I do not remember the name of the town in which the man lived, about whom I am going to tell you; nor do I remember *his* name, but you could find it in the Grecian history, if you like. This man was thought to be very clever, even by his clever countrymen; and he wanted to discover something more wonderful than any of

them. For clever as they were, and wise as they were, not one of them could do, or ever had done, what the little fly that sometimes lighted on his nose, could do, every moment of its life. Not one of the wise Greeks could fly. Now if he could only fly, this would be a wonder that would distinguish him for ever. He set himself to work very quietly to make a large pair of wings, and when he thought he had made them large enough, and strong enough, he announced that on a certain day, any one who liked to take a walk to a hill outside the town, should see him fly.

There was a great sensation, you may be sure, and the news spread very fast. "A man going to fly! Was ever a nation so wise or so clever as ours?"

The day came at length, and a large crowd, it is said, went out to the hill to see this new wonder. I dare say troops of little boys and girls went with their parents, full of joy at the thought, that some day they too, would be able to fly. They reached the spot named, and gathered

round the foot of the hill, which rose in a precipice above their heads. A precipice is a steep side of a hill, too steep for any one to clamber up, and is as high as many houses one on the top of the other. It was there that the wise Greek was going to fly.

“Was he going to fly *up*?” No—he would have been a wiser man if he had tried that first,—he was going to fly *down*. He appeared on the top of the hill, with his great wings on his shoulders. Every eye was fixed upon him,—what a moment it must have been for him! He had said he could fly, and he must now spring off into the air. He must have been a brave man, and no doubt believed his wings were as good as real ones, for he *did* leap into the air.

I think any little sparrow would have laughed, if it could, at a pair of wings that could only fly downwards. Alas! for this clever Greek though, for his wings would not even do that,—they proved themselves to be sham ones indeed; for down he fell, to the very bottom of the steep

rock, and was dashed to pieces. His false wings only added by their weight to the speed of his fall—they were worse than useless.

What a terrible sight it must have been! I think all those wise Greeks must have gone back to their homes that night, wondering, that all the wisdom in the world could not make a man able to fly. They must have felt that a greater Mind,—a greater Power than that of man must have formed the tiniest insect that winged its way from flower to flower. (Rom. i. 20.)

Presumption, is not faith. If I settle in my mind that I will make myself fit for God by adopting good habits, and leaving off bad ones, I am trusting *really* in myself, all the while. “*I am going to be good,—I am not going to do wrong again,—then God will love me, and take me to heaven when I die.*” No, *no, no!*—you are trying to fly with false wings; they cannot bear you up,—you will fall and fall and fall, and if you will not give up trusting to your useless false wings, you will plunge into hell at last.

You have nothing to do with flying till you have cast yourself down before Jesus as a *helpless, hopeless* thing; then He will take you up, and *His* power, not *yours*, will keep you up. *Only let Him have His way with you.*

Do you know what a manufactory is? It is a place where things are made by hand; men make clever machines, that look almost as if they were alive, they do their work so beautifully, and with them they make all sorts of useful things. There are numbers of manufactories for false wings, in this world; man makes a religion of his own, and thus supplies false wings, to those who want to make themselves fit for the presence of God. Some of these manufactories have most skilful machinery at work, and make the wings look extremely well—so well, that many a child of God is decoyed by those who wear them, far from the narrow shining path.

But there is something else I want to tell you about *Wings*. Have you ever watched a number of rooks on a stormy day, flying home from the

fields where they have been feeding, to their nests in the tall elm trees? The wind may blow a perfect gale, and may tear the dry leaves from the trees, and whirl them away in myriads, but the heavy black rooks, with their eyes on their storm-tossed nests, come steadily on; flap, flap, flap, go the great strong wings; the wind may blow as it likes, but the rooks have a purpose, and their purpose is to get home; and though it may be slow work, and though it may be hard work, flap, flap, flap go the great black wings. Above them, the cloud wrack rushes along at a breathless speed,—below them, the trees bend, and sway, and creak, and leaves and feathers, and even dry sticks, are whirled along by the blast; but the rooks have a home, and they mean to get there; and the rooks have strong, true wings, and they mean them to take them there. Generally one large bird leads the way, and the others patiently follow him. If you listen, you will hear their caw, now and then, to encourage each other on the way. Anything with sham wings would

have no chance at all,—it would be blown away along the stream of wind at once. Then at last, the rooks reach their home, and as they settle on the trees, the air is filled with cawings. Each one has something to say then; I suppose they are rejoicing at getting home in spite of the wind. You see wings are for making progress with, even against the wind, or the stream of things around us.

I was out walking the other day, and suddenly looking up in the air, I saw a queer looking red thing floating about. It was the autumn, and the swallows were congregating before taking their long journey to a warmer clime. These pretty little birds were busily trying the strength of their wings, ere they ventured to start away for their southern home. Round and round, and in and out they flew, quick and light and strong,—the wind, which blew pretty briskly, seemed to make no difference to them; but high up, in the midst of them, floated this odd red thing, and soon I saw that it was a kite made like a bird,

with wings; some boy on the earth below, had hold of it fast by a string, or it would have floated away on the wind, and quickly fallen to earth again.

“Sham wings again!” I said to myself. “There is no power to move against the wind; those lively swallows seem to fly round it as though they wondered what heavy lifeless thing was shamming to be amongst them!”

There will come a day, little people, when the sham wings will be all found out; the storm of God’s wrath against those who are only sham Christians, will be poured out, and then those who have never been to Christ Himself will have no shelter, and no power to escape from the destroying tempest,—they will be blown away as chaff before the wind. The swallows, which I saw, have long been resting in a sunny clime; the sham thing that floated amongst them has, I daresay, long ago been destroyed by the boy who played with it that day.

Those who have real wings can fly like the

rooks and the swallows, right against the wind. Everything in this world is against Christ, and those who are following Him find everything against them; the closer they follow Him, the more they feel the rush of the stream against them. I will try and make it plain to you.

If I have received the life of Christ, which He gives to all who come to Him, I am a pilgrim and a stranger in this world; that is, I am a foreigner here—my country is in another world. The language and dress and manners of this world are not for me; nor are mine for the world. The people of this world think our ways very strange and odd, and, naturally enough, they laugh at us when they see us.

When the citizens of heaven speak of being guided by God's eye, and of waiting on Him to know what they are to do, or say, or where they are to go, the citizens of earth are much amused; but when they find that these foreign people do not even care for balls, and theatres, and any amusements, then they think them mad. Then

their dress looks so strange. Bracelets and earrings and chains of gold, and jewels, and costly garments, are worn at earthly courts, but the Lord of the heavenly people says, "Do not wear them."

Now, little people, you can see what a very odd, and foreign-looking being a true-hearted follower of Christ is, in the eyes of the people of this world. He has to go against the stream of all their ways, depending on a Power of which they know nothing, and following a Person whom they cannot see. This is flying against the wind. Is it not? But you say,—“All Christians are not peculiar and foreign-looking, for many of them talk, and act, and dress, and live, just as other people do!” Ah! Do not get looking at others, it is not safe; keep your eye on Christ, and “press toward the mark.” The sad failures of others will not help you when you stand alone before the judgment-seat of Christ. “For we” (Christians) “shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.....so then every one of us shall

give account of himself to God." We are *saved* once for all, but we shall have to answer, *each one of us*, for how we have lived after we received salvation; whether we have really let Jesus be *Lord*, or whether we have floated down the stream of the world, and *only called* Him Lord. Little Christian, *be out and out for Christ!* If no one else is in earnest for Christ,—Why not you?

If we are on the wings of faith, we are carried over dangers, as well as against the current of things here. How little the sea-bird cares for the rage of the waters beneath it. The big ships are broken to pieces by the waves which cannot reach the sea-mew.

Have you ever seen a wreck? Once, when I was a very little child, I went to the sea-side with my parents. I was so very young that I hardly remember anything about it. I have forgotten the name of the place to which we went, and all about the journey, and all about the house we lived in, and all about the place itself, except-

ing *one thing*. I remember that I was on the beach with my mother, and I saw a little crowd of people standing round a dark mass of something that was lying by the boats. We went to see what the fuss was about, and what do you think we saw? I remember it as if I had only seen it yesterday; it was such an ugly sight. A great piece of black wood lay there, it had been in the water a long time, and it was covered almost all over by the queerest little fish I ever saw. They were like fleshy fingers, one end of which stuck fast to the wood, and the other stretched out with two little shells at the end, which kept opening and shutting, and bobbing up and down, and writhing about in the ugliest manner possible. A sailor standing by said they were "barnacles," and that the piece of black wood was part of a ship which long ago had foundered at sea; they had dragged this bit of wood up in their nets, and it had torn them so much that they were useless. My mother gave the man a piece of money, and in return he pre-

sented her with a small piece of the black wood, with the ugly barnacles bobbing about upon it.

But it was not the queer fish that interested me, or that made me remember all the scene so distinctly; it was the thought that I was looking at a *real* bit of a *real* wreck, that touched my heart. I looked at it with awe, and wondered and wondered what its history was.

But I might wonder then, and go on wondering now if I liked, for no one ever told me its history,—I daresay no one ever knew much about it, for wrecks at sea are common enough,—but I never forgot my first look at a piece of a real wreck.

Ah! what a moment it must be, when in the darkness of the night, with the angry waves dashing over her, the ship strikes on the fatal sands or rock; and the water gushes in at the hole, and the sailors labour hard at the pumps, and try in vain to launch the boats, and they know that “Foundered at sea—all hands lost,” will be put in the papers about them. How their

thoughts must go to their little homes, and they must picture the faces of those they love! And all the while the sea-mews can skim the frothing waves, and rise up with cries of joy against the roaring wind.

Thus, when storms of trouble come, which overwhelm those who have not the power to meet them, the Christian can mount up against the blast, and survive when others perish. A Power not his own carries him along, and he *knows* that all will be well in the end. Thus a flying one always brings glory to Christ, because it is seen that a real Power supports him, when all on earth gives way.

Lofty mountains cannot hinder the progress of a winged one. Those who toil on foot may sigh to see peak after peak rise before them; they may say, "We cannot surmount this difficulty, and even if we could, there is another beyond it; our journey must stop short here,"—but the winged one soars up and on, and looks down on the loftiest mountain peak.

What does the carrier pigeon care for broad seas or towering hills? It knows its home, and the moment it is set free, it rises to an immense height in the air, and starts at once for the place. Nor does it stop to rest, till it folds its faithful wings at its dearly-loved abode. Well would it be for us, whose home is in heaven, if we never paused in our flight till we reached the shelter of the gates of pearl.

Now let us look again at those who think they are floating to heaven.

A thing can float without wings, or with sham wings only, but then it will always go whichever way the wind blows. Many and many a one who looks like a Christian, and floats along with the stream of this world, will find, when the storm bursts on him, that he cannot face it, or fly through it, and will perish miserably. Those who *float* depend on something in themselves to give them the appearance of flying; those who *fly* depend entirely on Divine power to keep them up, for *only God can make a flying one.*

I will tell you a sad story about a balloon, which will, I think, help to explain what I mean. To go up in a balloon is the nearest approach to flying that man has ever made; but after all, it is only floating on the air, as my sad story will show you.

A balloon is made of two parts; the car, which is like a large wicker-work basket with seats in it, and the ball which is made of silk, very strongly woven. I have seen several balloons come down, and have been to look at them as they lay upon the ground. The car is fastened to the ball of the balloon by strong cords, and it looks a very small thing in which to float above the clouds. The silk part is filled with the gas that we burn in our houses and streets; it is a light gas which rises quickly through the air, and bears the whole balloon up with it.

How strange and solemn it must be to float about so far up in the sky! to see the clouds lie like a floor below you, and to be, perhaps, for hours, without getting one glimpse of the earth!

Yet this is not flying, it is only floating; they travel whichever way the wind likes to blow them, and if it changes its direction, their course changes also. They float along the current of air, as a cork floats along a stream of water. The atmosphere gets thinner and thinner the farther it extends from the earth; and not very long ago I read of two æronauts who went up so high that they lost their consciousness, and when one of them came to himself, his hands were so benumbed with cold, that he could not open the valve to let the gas escape; at last he managed to do so with his mouth, and the balloon began to descend. How thankful they must have felt when they were once more upon the earth, and could talk in safety over the perils through which they had passed!

There is a valve in the ball of a balloon, which those who sit in the car can open when they like, and then as the gas rushes out, they sink towards the earth by their own weight, till, like the one I saw come down, the car

rests on the ground. As it descends, the men throw out grappling irons, which have strong hooks at their ends, and are fastened to the car by ropes, these catch in hedges, or fences, or trees, and anchor the balloon, which would otherwise drift along near the earth, bumping the car against everything that came in the way. Then the men get out, and by degrees the gas rushes out at the valves, and the big ball becomes a small heap of folded silk; then a cart is fetched, and away goes the balloon to the nearest railway station—for it can never get home itself, against the wind which brought it out. Our horse had to help several balloons to get home again, for all their grand floating was of no use, except to bear them farther and farther away.

But the story I have to tell you has no such happy ending as this. When I was a child, my parents left the country house which had been our home, and came up to live in London. We none of us liked the change at all, and I was very sad about it; the streets were so noisy and so

crowded that I would never have gone out for a walk if I could have helped it. I had been used to amuse myself by watching the habits of rabbits, and mice, and water-rats, and different kinds of birds, and by hunting among the nettles in the hedge-rows for long-haired caterpillars to play with. There were wonderful lizards too, to be caught in the ponds, with red, and green, and yellow breasts, to say nothing of the fish in the river, which I tried to catch with a perseverance that astonishes me now. Then I used to take my book and climb up some tree in the thick shrubberies that surrounded the house, and sit and read, where I could only hear the birds singing, or the wind rustling the leaves, or the solemn rush of the river in the distance ; well, all this fun was over for ever, when we came to London. I had to be clean and tidy, to walk steadily along, and to look at houses and shops instead of at trees and hedges.

I have learnt since that it is good for us not to have just what we like, but I was very sad about

it then. At the back of our London house there was a square yard-like garden, with a wall at each side, and a few melancholy-looking flowers in the border, there was not a single tree, there was no room for one; but as the neighbourhood was not then thickly built over, there was a dingy-looking meadow beyond, with houses all round it, and in this meadow close to our wall stood a clump of tall gaunt poplar trees, and beneath them a little patch of what had once been a country hedge. They looked like a group of forlorn old people who had once seen better days, and were only waiting a few months to be swept away like the rest of their race. My father had a little door made in our garden wall, so that we could walk into the meadow when we liked. My favourite seat was under the poplar trees, and there I used to learn my lessons, and turning my back on the nearest houses, used to try and forget that I was in London, and that hundreds of windows, like so many eyes, were staring upon me.

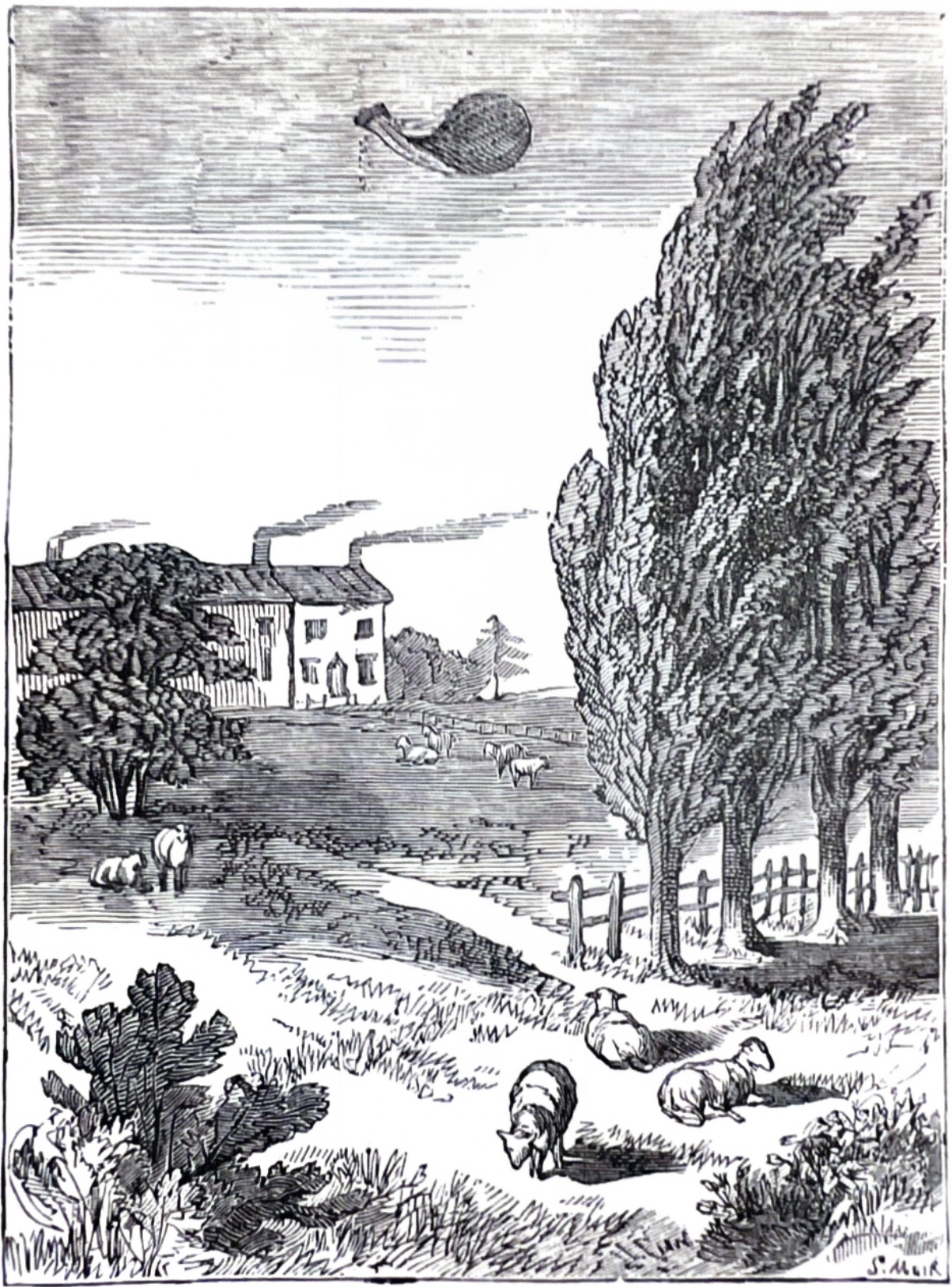
One day, I was playing there with a brother

about my own age, when we looked up, and saw a balloon, floating high up in the air. Boys and girls who live in the country far from London, hardly ever see such things, so that it was a great wonder to us, and we left our play and stood still to watch it. The weather was unsettled, and a gusty, fitful wind was swaying the tops of the poplar trees, and was driving the balloon along, high up in the air, but not very far distant from where we stood. Along it went, very fast indeed, and while our eyes followed it, we thought how nice it must be to be carried away like that, far above the smoke, and the noise, and the bustle of the great city, away,—away into the quiet country where the cows lay chewing the cud in the meadows, and the blackberries were hanging in clusters in the tangled hedges. Ah! we little knew how full of mortal terror was the heart of the poor man in that balloon, at that moment. We little knew that while we stood and gazed with wonder and delight, that he was drawing almost his last breath, and in a few moments this earthly scene

would have closed to him for ever, and his soul would have passed into the presence of his God.

How it was, I do not know, I can only tell you what I saw. The balloon seemed to be caught by a sudden storm of wind,—it may have been a whirlwind, up there among the clouds; it looked as if two strong winds had met, and were contending as to which should blow the balloon along. It was a helpless thing floating there, at their mercy, and they caught it, and tossed it about in a frightful way, the car swayed to and fro like the pendulum of a clock, sometimes high up on one side, sometimes on the other, sometimes the ball of the balloon seemed blown almost flat, and would be driven so rapidly along in the air that it dragged the car after it in a sloping position, then again it would be plunged downwards, and the car seemed upside down above it.

“Look, look!” cried my brother, “the grappling irons have fallen out, and are hanging to the car.” And there I saw them, sure enough, swinging uselessly to and fro, for there was nothing for



them to catch hold of up there, far above the highest church spires, and the highest hills near London. We saw the ballast too, come streaming down in a fine shower, and we stood and watched breathlessly, wondering what would fall out next. "There cannot be a man in it," I cried, as I saw it tossed about in this frightful fashion, "it must be a play balloon." But play balloons do not have grappling irons, and ballast; and there *was* someone in it all the time, and while we little people were standing under those tall poplar trees, in safety and peace, he, poor man! was clinging for dear life to that car as it was tossed to and fro by the contending winds. I do not know how it was that he could not hold on any longer, for though it takes some time to write, the whole thing was over in a few minutes, but I suppose he grew dizzy with the violent swinging, or turned faint at the thought of his awful danger; but suddenly, something—we could hardly tell what—parted from the car, as it was tossed once more upside down—and down, and

down, and down, that something came. Oh, how fearfully fast it fell! It seemed to plunge through the air, to twist and turn and plunge on again; it seemed all arms and legs, twisting and plunging through the air. Just one second or two, and we saw it no more.

“That was a man,” cried my brother. Oh! how those words thrilled through my heart,—I feel them now. It was a terrible thing—a very solemn sight—it seemed too fearful to be true, but the account was in the *Times* paper afterwards, and it was said that the poor body fell through the skylight of a house, and was smashed to pieces. He must have been dead, my brother said, long before he reached the earth, the violence of the fall would kill him, so that he did not feel the last awful crash.

But as for the balloon, that went floating away on the wind, very fast to be sure, but still, the hurricane seemed to end with that last terrible struggle. Away it went with the grappling irons hanging below it. When the wind had done, playing with it, and the gas had gradually escaped,

it came down to earth, a long way from London.

There, that is my story ! Floating is not the same as flying ; is it ? When the storm comes, it will make short work of the floaters. It is sad to think how many are trusting to their own works for the appearance of being Christ's, who will find out too late that nothing but real union with a Power outside this world will carry them above the storm. "Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney." (Hosea xiii. 3.)

As I said before, "*pretending* won't do for God." If your wings have only been sham ones till this moment, or if you have been only a floater, go to the Lord this very night, and get life from Him ; and with the life, power to live for Him. Those Christians who float with the stream, are those who "mind earthly things," and of them it is written that they are "enemies of the cross of Christ." (Phil. iii.) They do not own that

His rejection ought to sever us from earthly things, and from those who still find their pleasures in them.

Now, good-night again, and do not, oh! do not forget that "PRETENDING WON'T DO FOR GOD."

CHAPTER V.

SHELTERING WINGS.

“He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust.”—Psa. xci. 4.

I THOUGHT I should not have any more to tell you about wings, to-night, when this beautiful verse reminded me that I had not told you a word about God's wings.

And what do God's wings mean? They are a picture of His care over His people while they are passing through the enemy's land, down here.

When I was a little child, I lived near a beautiful river, and there was a path from our garden down to its banks. I do not know how it was

that I was allowed to go there by myself, for the water was very deep, and ran very swiftly; but it was my great delight to go to it, and fish; and while I fished, I used to watch the habits of all the living creatures that came that way. Between the spot where I used to stand, and the opposite bank of the river, there was an island, covered with tall osiers, and in amongst these osiers a beautiful white swan used to build her nest. It was a curious nest, and she must have worked very hard to have piled up so many sticks one upon the other, but she knew that the river often flooded the island altogether, and that the osiers were left standing half under water, so she built her nest very high. I have seen her patiently sitting there, poor thing, covering her eggs with her soft downy feathers, and sheltering them from the cold rain with her beautiful wings, when the water was rushing in one wild stream over the osier bed, and surging round her nest on every side. When she saw me watching her she would flatten herself down as much as she could, so as



not to be seen if possible. Her mate used to swim about close to me, and I think he watched me narrowly, though what he thought of me I cannot tell, I only know that I thought him a very handsome fellow, and I had sundry dreams of his swallowing my bait, and my catching a real, live swan. When a boat came that way, he always swam betwixt it and his island home, rushing through the water as fast as he could, setting out his snowy feathers, and hissing and flapping his long white wings. Some said that he could have broken a man's arm with one blow of that strong wing of his. He would follow the boat a long way, ready to fight any one who should dare to touch those he loved, then he would come proudly back again sweeping through the water, with his graceful neck curved, and adjusting his ruffled feathers. When the eggs were hatched, and the young ones were old enough, their parents would take them out for a swim, but whenever they saw a boat coming towards them, they would both get between their cygnets

and the danger, and face the foe all the time, ready to defend their helpless young. Oh ! it was very pretty to see them ; and people often pretended to attack them to make them come forward to do battle with their wings.

There is another sight I love to see, and that is when a hen knows danger is coming, and calls her chickens under her wings. All the little downy yellow things disappear so suddenly under her wings, and the mother bird shelters them so completely. Ah ! the young cygnets know, and value, and avail themselves of the protecting care of the parent swans ; and the little chickens obey the call of the careful hen. It is only God's children who too often doubt the love and care of their Father.

How sad the Lord Jesus must have been, when he beheld Jerusalem, and cried out, " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not.*" Ah ! He wept over that city left desolate by its own

unbelief. And now He offers far and wide the shelter of His wings to all who will obey His call. *He* sees the danger coming,—He knows the end is near, and loudly He calls, “Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Happy is the one who can say to Him, “I will trust in the covert of Thy wings.”

Ah! my dear little friends,—you who love and trust the Lord,—do you think He will ever leave you to be overwhelmed by the foe? If swans and hens care for their young so faithfully, will God forget His own children, and leave them unprotected and unfed? Away with such a thought! Surely we ought to have as much faith as cygnets and chickens! God likens His people to young eagles. Have you ever seen an eagle? I was very much disappointed when I first saw one, but then I saw him in adversity—he looked like a monarch in prison, his eyes were dull, his wings were drooping. How could the king of birds be happy in a cage? I had heard a story of how an eagle had carried a baby up to her nest

among the rocks, for her young to feed on; and how the mother of the child had had the courage to climb up the steep crags, and save her infant from their claws; so I expected to see a much larger bird than the one that sat moping in that dark cage. Had I tried to hold it, I daresay I should have gone away with much greater respect for it, for the eagle is very strong in the wing, and lives among the crags of lofty mountains. She builds her nest high up among the rocks, and there is often a precipice above and another below, so that when her young ones are fledged, and are old enough to fly, they are afraid to venture out of the nest, because they see no spot near at hand, on which to alight. So the little eagle sits, and looks and longs, and flaps his wings, but fears to venture off into the air. How is he to be taught to fly? I will tell you. His mother comes suddenly into the nest one day, and breaks it up, and makes it very uncomfortable, and she bustles about till the eaglet gets on her back, then out of the nest she darts, and suddenly swooping down-

wards leaves him struggling in the air. Thus he finds out for the first time that he can fly. Far below him lie the fields and plains, the towns and rivers ; he does not fall, because he has wings ; he is very timid and awkward, and he cannot wheel about in the air as his mother can, and I have no doubt his heart beats very fast, and that he feels most anxious to get back to the sheltering nest again. His wings are weak, and he begins to sink. How is he to get up to the lofty crag again ? Must he fall ? No, there is one watching him who loves him dearly, and who could not bear to part with him. Down she comes on her great wings, and swooping under him, rises up till she has him resting on her back, then up and up she flies till with mighty strokes of her own strong wings she lands him in his home again. And each day he learns to fly longer and to fly farther till at last he can build a nest for himself among the crags.

God says of His people, “As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth

abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him." (Deut. x̄x̄xii.) And He says in another place, "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." (Exodus xix.)

God teaches His children to fly, by leading them into circumstances that try their faith in Him; and then just when, like the young eagle, they grow frightened, and begin to sink, and say, "He must have forgotten me *this time*," He comes to the rescue with all His love, and all His mighty power, and rests His weary child upon Himself. This is how He teaches us to trust Him; and every time perhaps the trial is a little longer and a little sharper, but never *too* long, never *too* sharp. When we pray, "Increase our faith," it is a lesson in flying that we are asking for. When we think we have ventured to trust wholly on the Lord, it is wonderful to find that in our secret hearts we have fixed our eye upon some handy perch, where we can rest, *if we begin to sink*.

Is this not true? I am sure you answer "Yes." If we can but see some place to rest on near by, we think we might venture off into the air. But there is no perch, *not one*, on which our souls can rest for salvation. All created things are useless for this; all the powers of the mind, are nothing in the grip of death.

Soul! you must venture on God *only* for your salvation. You have launched off into a mighty solitude where none but God can support you. There is no resting place for you, but the wings of Him, who is bearing you *unto Himself*. If, then, you trust Him for Eternity, why doubt Him for Time? Venture along your path beneath His watchful eye, without a care, without a fear, and do not look out for perches. The child of faith is above circumstances, and his "strength is renewed" by resting on the Lord, as the young eagle's by resting upon its mother's wings. Borne on by Him, the world lies below, as a thing that has no charms for us; and sheltered by Him we need not fear the storms that overwhelm others.

“ Sheltering wings ! ” What an idea of safety and of comfort the very words give ; and they bring to my mind a story which I read long ago, of the wonderful way in which the Lord sheltered an aged servant of His, in the days of persecution, which are, for the present, gone by.

It was in Scotland that it happened, about two hundred years ago. A cruel king had made a law that everyone in Scotland was to worship God after the form which he commanded, and all who refused to do so were to be treated as rebels against the government, and executed. The people in Scotland were very angry at this law, and justly so ; they had been used to pray to God without having all they were to say written down in a book, and those of them who were real Christians, felt it would be very wrong to obey the king rather than God. I am sorry to say that there were many amongst them who had not learnt to trust in God only, in the hour of trial, and rather than suffer the wrong, and go on quietly serving God in the way He wished, and

braving the king's anger, they took up arms, and fought for their rights.

This made matters worse and worse. Jesus said, "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword;" and so it was; and many who would not have taken the sword, suffered with those who did; for the king thought they were all rebels, and forbad anyone to shelter them, or give them food; and sent his soldiers out to ride about the country and shoot them wherever they found them.

The man of whom I am going to tell you was named Peden. He would not have taken up arms, for he had learned to trust his God; but after preaching the gospel all his life, he was turned out of his home in his old age, and had to escape into a desolate part of the country where he could hide from his persecutors. It was in the winter when he was turned out of his house, and what was he to do? None of his friends might take him in, and no one might give him food. Poor old man! it must have been difficult

to have trusted God in such circumstances, must it not? He wandered about as others did of old, "destitute, afflicted, tormented." There was nothing left for him, but to shelter himself in the dens and caves of the earth.

Have you ever been in Scotland? If not, you can hardly understand how wild and lonely are its mountain glens. And there is no glen much more wild and lonely than Glendyne, about three miles from Languhar; a brawling stream rushes through it, and dark and lofty mountains frown down on either side of it. There, among the trees that covered the glen, Peden fled, and there he found a lonely cave, which no one would be likely to discover.

Ah! you little boys think it would be a grand thing to hide in a wood, and live in a cave, do you not? I am sure you do; so did I, years ago, but when I saw the wild heights of Scotland, and felt the damp chill of the mountain air, after sunset, even in the pleasant months of summer, I quite changed my mind, and was very glad

indeed that I had not to spend even one summer night in a cave. It is so dark too, so intensely dark, when there is no moon, and the stars are hidden by the clouds. I daresay the poor old man had a few comforts in his lonely cave, for there were many who loved him, and who would have risked their lives to help him. I do not know how he got through the long cold winter, but one morning in May he ventured out of his hiding-place, and stood enjoying the bright sunlight and beauty of the scene around him. Far down the glen there was a cottage, in which there lived a Christian man, who had frequently helped him in his need. To this cottage he resolved to go, and spend a few hours with his friend. With his staff in his hand he crept down the mountain side, and arrived in safety at the house.

What a treat it must have been to him to sit by the cheery fire, and have a nice warm meal, and above all to have someone to speak to about the Lord he loved, and for whose dear sake he thus cheerfully suffered. I do not wonder that,

being there, he stayed till the sun set, and the shadows of evening gathered over the mountains; but he dared not stay all night, for the king's troopers were about in the neighbourhood, and might come and search the cottage at any moment. So he started for his dreary home in the mountain side; but as he trudged along, staff in hand, suspecting no harm, several troopers rode suddenly up; he fled as well as he could to the margin of the stream, and slipping into a cavity which the winter torrents had worn in the soft bank, was completely hidden from his pursuers, who galloped over the very spot where he lay, and one of the horse's hoofs went through the soft soil; and grazed the old man's head.

How thankful to God he must have been, when he knelt down in his cave that night; and while the wind moaned over the bleak mountains, and tossed the branches of the trees without, how his praises must have risen up to the One who had delivered him from a cruel death. Surely the "sheltering wings" had been over him.

But I must tell you one more incident in his life, before I close my chat about sheltering wings. A few friends had joined him,—men hunted like himself from every shelter—and one day, when they were all quite exhausted with fatigue and hunger, they ventured to a farm-house where one lived who would feed and care for them for Christ's sake. The farm-house and its offices were built in the form of a square, with narrow openings at each corner, and while the poor weary sufferers were enjoying themselves within, a party of dragoons dashed into the enclosure, and took possession of the yard. What was to be done? There was not a moment for thinking over, or planning any way of escape, so they boldly rushed out among the horses, waving their bonnets and shouting loudly. The startled horses plunged and reared, nor could their riders dismount, till every one of the men they sought had escaped onto the moors. Then the troopers galloped after them; but they had had time to clamber down a very steep bank where the horses

could not go, and had crossed a stream beyond, and were hurrying away to the woods. What a chase it was. It was life and death with them, for the troopers showed no mercy. For a little while it seemed as if they would escape, but the horsemen galloped hard to a spot where they could safely force their horses over the stream, and then they turned in full pursuit. Peden was old and feeble, he could not run far or fast, and the horsemen were hastening towards them. All hope was gone, a cruel death was before them, there was no earthly shelter into which they could run for refuge.

“Lads,” said the old man, as he gazed at the foe as they swept along beneath the rugged hill; “Lads, it is only praying people that can get through the storm.” But his friends wanted to cover him up in some hole and to trust to their own legs for their safety; but he would not let them, and kneeling down upon the heather that might soon be his grave, he thus prayed to his God:—

“Lord, we are ever needing at Thy hand, and if we had not Thy command to call upon Thee in the day of our trouble, and Thy promise of answering us in the day of our distress, we wot not what would become of us. If Thou have any more work for us in Thy world, cast the lap of Thy cloak over old Sandy and these poor things, but if this be the day of our going off the stage, let us walk honestly off, and comfortably through, and our souls will sing forth Thy praises to eternity for what Thou hast done for us.”

Then he rose, and ran forward a little way, but came quickly back to his friends, saying, “Lads, the bitterest of the blast is over; we will be no more troubled with them this day.” He was right, for God had heard his cry in the hour of his distress, and covered them with His sheltering wings. High up upon the mountain ridges, the soft white mists had been lying in swelling masses; but as he prayed they came rolling down the steep hill side—a silent but effectual answer to the prayer of faith. Down they came—till the troopers

were shrouded in their folds, and could no longer pursue their prey. Shouts of rage and blasphemy rose out of the midst of that sheltering cloud, but vain was the rage of man, and the rescued children of God could go on their way rejoicing.

And do these “sheltering wings,” cover *you* to-night? Are *you* going to lie down in peace, covered with the feathers, and trusting in the wings of this loving Father? Terrible is it for those, who, after refusing again and again the offer of this shelter, have to face their foe unshielded. Vain, then, is their cry of terror; this, *this* only is for them—“Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded—I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.” (Prov. i.)

Will it be thus with you? May God forbid.

Now, to-morrow night, I will tell you the story of a man who *could* fly, and I think you



will own it is very wonderful; but do please be sure that *you* are sheltered *to-night*, for to-morrow it may be *too late*. My talkings about “Wings” will then be over; but perhaps some other day we shall find something else quite as wonderful to chat about.



CHAPTER VI.

THE STORY OF THE MAN WHO COULD FLY.

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God that passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Phil. iv. 6, 7.)

NOW this is the story that I like, and I think you will own when you have read it, that it is a very wonderful one.

I am not going to tell you about a great Prince, or a King, or a very learned man; I am not going to take you into splendid palaces, or the mansions of the rich, or the studies of philosophers; the Bible shows me that very few of these can “fly.” “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble.” (1 Cor. i. 27.)

The man whose history I am going to tell you, was very poor; he lived in a cottage, and worked for his daily bread. "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" (James ii. 5.) Does this mean that only poor people can be saved? Oh, no! It means that the moment a person is born again, all that he, or she, has, belongs to God; and if a rich person is converted, he becomes at once only a steward of all he has; so he is poor at once, you see, because he only holds his money for another. He holds it all for his Heavenly Father, and he may not even give his money away without looking to see that it is according to the will of his Master in heaven.

It is a very solemn thing to hold money for Christ; and the poor man's money belongs to God, as much as the rich man's. So you see there is neither rich nor poor in God's sight among Christians, only He sees fit to entrust some people with far greater responsibilities than others; but

He will ask each of His children by-and-by, how he has spent his money. Those to whom He has given but little money here, will only have to give account of a little, and they generally are the ones who are rich in faith. Why is this? Because they often have to look to Christ for daily bread, and all they need for their bodies. Thus they prove again and again, what a loving, tender Shepherd Jesus is! They *prove His heart*, and so they learn to trust Him. It is only as we know more of Christ, and of His tenderness, that our faith increases. The more we prove His love, the more we trust Him. It is indeed a shame to us all that we trust Him so little.

Now I do not know whether your parents are rich or poor in this world; but I am sure that if they are poor, and you are having the "Talkings in the Twilight" beside a cottage fire, that you will very much enjoy "the story of the man who could fly." You will know what it is to have the cupboard empty sometimes, and you will know what it is to hear of friends and neighbours

going to the workhouse ; perhaps sometimes the fear crosses your own mind that you will have to go there too.

Now I am going to tell you the story of a man who flew up the shining path, and in at the pearly gate, right over the workhouse roof, and if *that* is not wonderful, I don't know what is ! The only thing that I am not quite sure of in this account is the man's *Christian* name, but I believe it was Richard, and so I will call him Richard Bond. He was brought up to be a gardener, but I do not know where he was born, or how early in his life he trusted his soul to Christ ; I only know that his early days were often rough days, and full of trial. My story opens in troublous times, when work was scarce, and Richard Bond had to learn many a hard lesson of faith and patience. If we can only trust in our God, when things are going well with us, our confidence is founded on our circumstances, and not at all on a living Person above ; then when the circumstances change, our foundation is gone, and we cry out

in terror that we shall sink. Jesus caught the sinking Peter by the hand, to teach him to trust in a *Person*, and not on what was under his feet. But, I fear, we all have to learn this lesson over and over again.

When trouble came, Richard Bond began to learn both the power and the love of the One to whom he had trusted his soul. He had a wife, and a large family to support, and as he loved them very dearly, it was harder for him to trust *them* to the care of the Lord, than himself. We first learn to trust the Lord with ourselves, and then with those whom we love. It is easier to believe that "He is doing all things well" when He afflicts us, than when we see Him dealing with our loved ones. Why is this? Because we have not thorough confidence in His heart.

Often and often Richard Bond would divide his share of the scanty meal between his wife and children, and say, "I will take my Bible for my dinner." He fed there on promises that have never been broken, and learned to take all his

cares, and cast them on One who cared for him. Thus it was that little by little he learned to "fly," while God was ever ready, like the great eagle watching its young one, to catch him when his wings grew weak, and bear him up to his nest in the Rock. Thus he learned to "fly" over the difficulties around him. And so, through all those hours of trial and poverty, he went on *proving* from day to day, the heart of his Lord. Those who knew him, saw that he had something outside this world on which to depend.

But a change came in his lot. He went to London, and a gentleman who owned a warehouse took him into his service as night-watchman. The name of the building was the Pantechnicon, and it must have been when it was first used as a warehouse that Richard Bond was engaged to watch over its valuable contents at night.

Would you like to know what was kept there? I will tell you. When rich people go away from their houses, to travel, or when they are changing houses, and are not sure where they would like to

live, they send their furniture, and paintings, and china, and other valuable things to a warehouse, where they are all stored away; and as they are worth a great deal of money, the person who owns the warehouse has to take great care, that neither thieves nor fire shall get at them. For this purpose, there were then two watchmen kept, one was inside the building and the other outside, so that they could help each other in case of need. It was a post of great trust, for while other people slept, they had to be wide awake, and on the watch. It was not very long after Richard Bond died, that the Pantechnicon was burnt to the ground, and all in it was destroyed; I saw the lurid glare in the sky, and knew that there was a large fire in London, and the next day we heard what had happened.

Evening after evening, when other men were returning to their homes, Richard Bond went out to keep his lonely watch. Not *lonely* though, for there was One ever with him to whom "the night shineth as the day." When all the other men

were gone, and the doors were all shut and locked, his watch began. He had a nice little room, with a fire and lamp, and there he used to sit and read. He might not go to sleep for a moment, lest he should not hear the noise of any thief breaking into the place. To have slept, would have been to have betrayed his trust, for his master said, "Watch;" and in the Book which he read during those long quiet hours, he found written a special message from God to servants. "Obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God." (Col. iii. 22.) So, though no eye but God's could see him, that was enough to keep him wide awake, and watching. Our Master who is in heaven calls to us all to "watch," and has set His children in this world's dark night to "Watch," "lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping."

Are you ever looking out for Him, or have you gone to sleep, and are you saying, "I will do as I like for a little while, for my Lord delayeth His

coming?" If you are sleeping, you are snared, and His coming will come on you suddenly, and you will be ashamed before Him. How Richard Bond would have hung down his head, if his master had come in quietly one night, and found him fast asleep! How sorry and ashamed he would have been; for he had a good and kind master, who treated him very well; it would have looked as if he did not care for his kind master's interests. Perhaps you will wonder that he was not afraid to sit there all night by himself; but oh! who can say what trysts he and his Lord held there; and he made the building ring with the glad songs of praise that burst from heart and lip, as he learnt more and more of his Lord and Master.

"Ah!" you will say, "it was easy for him to trust, he was in good work, with good wages, an industrious wife, and a happy home. What had he to fear?" Yes, but had he rested for happiness on these things, it would have been building his house on the sand, and great would have been

the fall of it; but as it was, when the floods descended, and the wind blew, the foundation stood fast; for his nest was in the high Rock, which could not be moved.

Day by day as he went to, and returned from his work, he passed by the high wall that enclosed the workhouse. The world has set up the workhouse as a refuge for the destitute, and many and many a hard-working, respectable person has to find shelter under its gloomy roof; but there are so often wicked and bad people there, that I do not wonder at the horror which some feel at the thought of going there. To a Christian especially, the trial would be intense, for he would have to live with people whose conversation would shock him, and whose ways would daily grieve him; therefore to come to the workhouse, was at one time the great fear in Richard Bond's heart. But when he had learnt how loving and how powerful the Lord Jesus is, he was able to cast this "care" upon Him, and at the time of his history which I am now giving you, he would

walk past that gloomy wall, saying, "Ah! I trust in the Lord that I shall never come to that." That was depending on something outside this world, was it not? It was not in health, or strength, or laying by, or his good master, that he trusted, but in his *living Lord*. And you will see, that when all these failed him, the Lord did *not* fail him. "When my flesh and my heart fail-eth, God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." (Ps. lxxiii. 26.)

I have told you that depending on God alone, and not on things here, is like flying, so you see Richard Bond was "flying," and now we shall see how it all ended, and whether, when he was old and grey-headed, God let him drop into the place he dreaded. But first I have several other glimpses at his life to give you.

Good wages cannot keep away sickness, nor can money buy life, even for a day; and sickness now came to his house. He and his wife had several children, but there was one of the little ones, whom perhaps they loved more tenderly than all

the rest; she was a little clinging, loving thing; and her winning ways had twined their affections closely round her. But this little one was taken ill, and the doctor said the child must die. Oh, how was the sorrow to be borne?

Have *you* ever had a brother or a sister very *very* ill? It is sad to see such a baby suffer, is it not? But no one feels the sadness so much as the mother and the father of the little one,—its helplessness is so great; and when they see it look up to them, and they hear it moan and cry, and know they cannot help it, their hearts are ready to break.

When Mrs. Bond was told that her child would not recover, she forgot everything but her misery, and walked the room wringing her hands, and weeping bitterly. She was a Christian woman, but she had not learned to trust God as her husband had, and she was afraid for Him to take her little darling. Shall I tell you why? Some people who knew very little about the word of God, and therefore very little about the love of

God, had told her that some of the youngest babies would go to hell. This filled her with fear, for she thought her poor little girl might be going into eternal torment, because of the evil nature she had taken from her parents.

I do not wonder that she cried, and grew almost wild with grief. It was a terrible thought. She had been listening to what men say about our God, instead of looking in the Bible for herself, to see what He says about Himself. She would have seen there, that Jesus took the little ones up in His arms, and said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven;" and that He came out in Christ to die for Adam's sin, that none of Adam's children need perish because their father had sinned. Each one who goes to hell, will go for his own sins; not because he was born wicked, but because he went on sinning when Jesus offered him a full pardon, and power to resist the devil. Now, little baby children are too young to know this; and so, as Jesus died for the sin of Adam, which is in them, they go to heaven through His death, though they know nothing about Him.

I do not think I can make this very plain to you, for even very few Christians really understand the difference between sin and sins; but God will show you, if you ask Him. The baby was born with sin in it, but it was too young to have been naughty *on purpose*, so, Jesus having borne the punishment for sin, the baby *must* go to heaven; but if it had been old enough to have been naughty *on purpose*, it would have had to have gone to God himself for a pardon.

Richard Bond tried to comfort his poor wife, but she would hardly listen to him, the picture of her baby just sinking into hell was in her mind, and she would not be comforted. It was a dreadful scene, and the neighbours came to look on, and help if they could. But no one on earth could give any aid.

The dying child lay in a strong convulsion, its arms and legs were stiff, its lips rigid, its eyes rolled up and fixed. Nothing could be done. The poor father, amidst all the confusion and bustle around him, was calm and quiet; he was sad

enough, but still he could trust his child with his Lord. It was his wife's wild grief that distressed him most; he feared that she would lose her reason. He said he hoped the child would give some sign of joy as it died, that the mother might be comforted, but the doctor, and everybody else, said this was quite impossible, the convulsion had fixed for ever lip and eye and limb.

“Impossible!” that is a word that belongs to man alone, “with God all things are possible.” The poor father knew this, and he turned away from every earthly help, and asked his God to let him have this joy. He remembered a text which says, “The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but *in every thing* by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Phil. iv.) He made known his request unto God, and then he told his wife that he “*was quite sure*” they should see some sign of a joyful departure.

Once more, you see, Richard Bond was “flying.” And now, quietly and calmly, he sat down to watch the expiring child. His heart was wrung with sorrow, but he knew that his heavenly Father did all things well, and he had grace to say, “Thy will be done.” And so he sat and watched; and while man whispered around him, “Impossible,” he could say, “*Quite sure*,” and the “peace of God which passeth all understanding kept his heart and mind.”

Now, dear little people, what are you thinking of all this? Are you saying, “What wonderful faith that man had?” People are very fond of calling faith “wonderful,” but I do not think there is any *wonderful* faith to be found,—there is a wonderful *want of* faith, if you like! For when you come to think that a Person so mighty as the Lord Jesus *loves* you, and engages that “all things” shall work together for your good; is it not extraordinary that because you cannot always understand His ways, you are ready to doubt Him?

But so it is with us all. And when anyone *does* trust Him, and gets his prayer answered, we all cry out, "How wonderful!" Strange indeed must such words sound in the ears of Him, whose heart is craving for our confidence.

It is a solemn thing to sit by the bed of death. Our life may sometimes seem like a troubled dream, but *death is real*. The tenderest love cannot hinder *death*, the strongest man is powerless as a baby in the presence of *death*. There was One only who came down, and grappled with the tyrant, and "death by dying slew." It cost that One His life to draw death's sting, for the "sting of Death is sin." That means Adam's sin, which we all inherit; so there was no sting in death for the baby child.

The time passed on, and still the father sat, waiting to see the spirit pass to its Saviour's presence. The stern grasp of the convulsion never relaxed for one moment, but he heard the breathing change, and he knew the end was at hand. Was she gone? No,—for as the last

breath sighed itself away, the pretty lips relaxed into a beaming smile, the little arms were thrown up in loving welcome to some waiting Friend, and the half-closed eyes opened, and were fixed on some Person near, whom the father's straining eyes saw not. It was not for *him* she smiled that last glad smile; it was not to *him* she stretched those baby arms, to be taken up; it was not *his* presence that flooded her sweet face with joy unspeakable; it was none of it to him; it was never more to be to him, and yet it was all *for* him.

His loving Lord let him see his baby folded home, and what more could he wish or ask? He let him see her joy as she bounded to the arms of Him who had said, "Let the little ones come unto Me." Surely there was "joy unspeakable" in that father's heart in the midst of his sorrow, for the parting and the meeting had been one. His child was with the One whom his heart loved best. Surely he went from that scene on stronger wings than ever. "With God all things are possible," and the God of power loved him.

Years and years afterwards, when he had gone to be with his Lord, his widow spoke with tearful eyes of that sad, yet happy, parting scene. If either of *you* were to be called to die to-night, would *you* see the Lord Jesus coming for you, like this little girl, do you think? You have all been naughty, and you must get your sins pardoned; but only one Person can pardon you; have you been for the pardon No one who goes to Him comes away without it. So if you have really been to Him and owned your sins, I know you have it.

It was God who laid your sins on the head of Jesus on Calvary; so you see, He has pardoned you freely, because the punishment is over. If God says He is quite satisfied about it, *you* must not do anything, you have only to say "Thank you, Lord Jesus," and rest in peace.

How calmly, how quietly, how peacefully you, who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, can lay your head on your little pillow to-night. Not a fear, not a cloud; God says he has nothing against you; you are white as the driven snow; no, *He*

says “*whiter* than snow.” Happy little boy! Happy little girl! There are many great princes and many wealthy ladies groaning under the burden of their sins, because they will not believe that God is satisfied by what Christ has done, and so rest in God’s satisfaction. Surely if the Creditor is satisfied, the debtor need not complain.

But I must go on with my story; and I want you to see by all this, how very *very* loving the Lord Jesus is. He will take just as much care of you and of me, as He took of Richard Bond. Years passed away, and Richard Bond grew old; his step was not so brisk and firm as it used to be, and his hair was thin and grey. Still he worked for the same master, and night after night watched over the treasures stored in the Pantech-nicon. Evening and morning he passed along by the high workhouse wall, and looked up to his living Lord to feed him, and clothe him till his journey’s end. He was still winging his way along the shining path, and it was “shining more and more unto the perfect day.”

But you will say, "Had he saved any money against the time of old age?" No, not a penny! With a family as large as his, and sickness and death for frequent visitors, he had only just been able to pay his way; he had put by nothing, and yet he could confidently say as he passed the workhouse door, "I shall never come to that."

Many a sick and suffering child of God had shared his scanty store. He was like the birds that "sing among the branches," he had not gathered into storehouse or barn, yet he had ever opened his heart and his hand to the needy and the poor, and answered his wife's fears for the future, with the trustful words, "Wife, we shall never miss it!" Was he wrong, do you think, to give, instead of saving? I think not. It would have been very wrong to have spent his money in self-indulgence and vanity, but by helping the needy, he was "lending to the Lord," and laying up treasure "where moth and rust do not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal."

And many and many an one who stored his

costly treasures under that faithful watchman's eye, knew far more of carking care, and deep anxiety, than he did. Nor moth, nor thief, nor fire, could touch his princely treasure house, and having food and raiment for his journey to his palace home, he was well content to store no treasure in the wilderness.

It is well for worldly people to save, because their master makes no promises for old age, and if he did, would not keep them. He often bribes them into the snare with gold, that their hearts may be filled with earthly pleasure, and the net be finally drawn over them; but he delights in anguish of mind and body, and the only wages he has ever paid is DEATH. (Rom. vi.)

Richard Bond is now enjoying *his* treasure, and will enjoy it for ever; the Pantechicon and its treasures have long since perished in the flames. So will the world perish, and all the works that are therein.

But though he had no money laid by, and his strength was failing, the night watchman was a

happy man. "There is old Bond, at it again," said those who knew him, as they heard his glad songs of praise echo through the building, and rise up to God through the darkness of the night.

"At it again!" Yes, he was always at it; how could he help praising such a loving Saviour as the Lord who had died for him, and now lived for him? The time was drawing near when he would pass the pearly gate, and see Him face to face, and of course he was full of joy; he could say, "The Lord will command His loving kindness in the day time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." (Psalm xlii. 8.)

His two elder sons had now grown up into fine, tall young men; and their mother, who loved them dearly, had earned money enough by nursing the sick, to apprentice them to trades; they were steady, industrious, clever men; and the fond mother, as she looked at their manly forms, and marked their deep attachment to herself, began to build her hopes upon them.

“Now,” thought she, “when their father fails, as he soon must, our noble boys will come forward and repay us all the care and love we have lavished on them.”

Ah ! poor mothers, lean not on the reeds of earth. “The voice said, Cry, and he said, What shall I cry ? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field,—the grass withereth, the flower fadeth ; but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” (Is. xl. 6—8.)

Both these young men had listened to the warning voice of the Lord, and both of them had started up the shining way with their faces Christward. Oh ! what joy it must have been to the father and mother to have seen their two boys turn from the follies here to follow Christ ! Have *you* given this joy yet, to your dear father and mother ?

Yet it was not safe to count upon them for the future, as my sad story will show you. When the second one, whose name was Harry, was out of his apprenticeship, trade was so bad that he could not get employment ; and rather than be a drag

upon his old parents, who had still several children to support, he applied for a vacant post as warder in the gaol near them. It was not very pleasant work, but he could not bear to be idle. The post was given to him at once, as his character was good, but when he found that he could only have one Sunday in three off duty, he was sorry that he should only see his mother once in three weeks. When he told her of it, she began to count up the dates on her fingers to see if her dear boy would be at home on Christmas day. It was then November, and Christmas day that year fell on a Sunday. What was her joy to find that that Sunday would be his turn off duty; and she began to rejoice at the thought.

“Ah! Mother;” said the young man smiling; “you can see farther on than I can.” It was his gentle way of reminding her, that “we know not what a day may bring forth.”

So he went to his post, poor fellow, well and strong; but only a few weeks passed before he caught a dreadful complaint from one of the

prisoners. It was erysipelas in the head. As he grew rapidly worse, he was removed to his home, and his kind mother nursed him night and day, and hoped against hope that her boy would be spared to her. Still, hour by hour he grew worse and worse. The poor old people did all they could, and many a tear rolled down their cheeks, and many a prayer went up to God, that if it were His will, He would spare this, their best, their noblest child. But it was not His will. "To die is gain," and He wanted their boy with Him in the glory,—it was best for him to die; and so God could not answer their prayers; He was taking him away from "the evil to come."

When we can *really* trust Jesus, the bitterness of sorrow is gone, because we know He is doing the best thing both for us, and for the one we love. "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him *good*," is enough for the trusting soul. But the poor mother was in dreadful trouble, for she lost sight of this, and it seemed as if the Lord was hard in taking her boy.

Do you not think that if you were to die, your mother would cry very much? I am sure she would. There is no love on earth so tender as a mother's, and yet the Lord says His love is much more so. Do you remember how tender He was when He met the funeral coming out of Nain? He did not blame the poor mother's sorrow, did he? What a joy it must have been to His kind heart to have known that He could give her her dear boy again! I should like to have seen His look when He saw them clasped in each other's arms; should not you? He had not many joys down here,—this tender loving Lord of ours—His was a hard path, and deep were His sorrows, but He loved to wipe away tears; though there was no hand to cool His bleeding brow, no one to stand by *Him* in His hour of agony and shame. And this is the One who follows the stray ones now, and says “Young man,—arise!” to dead souls still.

Harry Bond was at last so very bad, that the doctor said he could do no more for him, that he

must die. Then his mother said she would get another doctor, a physician, to come and see her son, for she hoped he might be able to check the complaint. Nearly all her money was gone, and she knew that the physician must have a whole guinea on the spot. When she had scraped together every penny they could all find, she had just enough to pay his fee; so she sent for him. He came in his carriage, and went up stairs with the doctor, and after looking at the young man, came down again, and told the poor mother that her son would get well. He did not like to speak the truth because of her sorrow, but it was no real kindness to raise hopes which had no foundation. The next morning the spirit of the young man passed away from earth, to its home above.

That was sorrow for the poor father, was it not? when he came home from his nightly watch, to find that his son was no longer on earth. The one whom he might have regarded as the stay and the comfort of his old age, had gone before him into the Saviour's presence. And yet he could

rejoice while he wept, for he knew that for his son, "to die was gain."

And now there was a new trouble ; a trouble that had not been thought of, while the bustle of nursing the sick man had lasted ; there was no money ; no one had any money ; and there was no bread, and the children would soon be coming in hungry and ready for their dinner, to find that there was nothing for them. Do you think this was a light trial for the poor mother to bear ? No, it was a very heavy one, especially when she remembered how uselessly that last precious guinea had been spent. She was worn out with changing hopes and fears, and tired with the nursing, and almost broken-hearted at losing her favourite son, and now this fresh trouble seemed too much to be borne.

"I've no bread ;" she cried to her husband ;
"and no money to buy it either."

"Well, wife !" said the old man, sadly, "*we must trust.*"

"It's easy for *you* ;" she cried, angry, as well as

sad ; “It’s easy for *you* to talk of *trusting*, you hav’n’t got to find bread for the children !”

“The Lord never has forsaken us, wife ;” said her husband gently, “ and He won’t now.”

“But what am I to do for bread for the children ?”

“Trust, wife, *trust*,” he replied.

You see, Richard Bond was above the difficulty, he was “flying” over it, as he had so often done before. He remembered that his Lord had said, “Call upon me in the day of trouble ; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” (Ps. l. 15.)

“It’s no use to talk of *trusting*,” persisted his weeping wife, “nobody ever calls in to visit us here ; where *is* it to come from ?”

But her husband was on the wing, and the wavering of her own flight, and all her terrified glances round at the want of earthly resources, could not pull him down. He had proved his Lord often before, and he was not going to doubt His tender heart in this hour of anguish. He only repeated firmly—“Trust, wife, trust.”

Now do you think the Lord was going to leave them hungry and penniless? No, He was not. But how was He going to help them? He had many people in this country, and there were numbers of them in London then; some of them were very rich, and could soon have helped these tried ones, but they did not know of them, and too many of them were so busy either with the cares or pleasures of this life, that He could never make them hear when He wanted to send them on an errand for Him.

I have told you that His voice is soft and low, like the whispering of a gentle wind; He does not make Himself heard when people are in a bustle; He only speaks like this to listening ones, and He always keeps *them* busy for Him, one way or another. Some Christians say they cannot think what to do for Christ. Others rush about, and do a great deal that He has never set them to do, and does not want done; and all this idleness and confusion is for want of *listening*. "Wait on the Lord." He will Himself set you to work, and

give you work for which you are fitted, for which indeed He has fitted you. He did not go to rich people, or grand houses, for a messenger to the Bonds, in this hour of need. He wanted a servant who would go at once, for it was getting near dinner-time.

Now I must take you to the place where the messenger from the high Court of Heaven lived. Do not think it was a grand palace, with footmen and carriages and horses. No, it was a *cellar*. He lived in a cellar with his wife and children, and he was very *very* poor, as poor as poor could be. He was only a poor old cobbler, and his work was so badly paid that he had to sit stitching all day long, from early dawn till late at night, to do enough to keep his family from want. He never knew what it was to walk out by daylight, except on Sundays, when he put his work away, and went to hear about the Saviour whom he loved. He could not afford to lose the daylight on week-days; he fetched his work and took it back after dark.

“What was the use of him then,” you will say, “if he never went out in the day?” Why, he was the very man! As he sat stooping over his work, on that day, close under the high window of his cellar home, his little boy ran in from school, and cried, “Father, Harry Bond is dead!”

He could not stop his labour, even for such news as that, but his heart was sad, for he knew and loved the family, and while his busy fingers plied his tools, his cry went up to God that they might be sustained and comforted in this hour of their sorrow.

Busily, busily, he went on with his work, while his prayer went up out of his humble cellar home, into the presence of the God whose aid he sought. Why was it that suddenly he threw aside his work, straightened his stiff limbs, and rose to take his coat and hat from the peg on which they hung? He had received a message from his Lord to go himself, and comfort his sorrowing friends.

“Why, where are *you* going?” cried his wife, as he put on his coat and hat.

“Harry Bond has gone home,” said he; “and I am going to speak a word of comfort to the old folks.”

“Why not get on with your work while the light holds,” said the woman, “and go in the evening?”

“No, I am to go *at once*,” replied the husband; and up the narrow steps he trudged, and out at the street door, into the fresh air and daylight.

“But what was the use of *his* going,” you will say, “he had not a penny to give them?” Quite true. He had not a penny to spare, but he was sent, and that was enough for him. He was a messenger from the high Court of Heaven going at his Lord’s command to visit the house of mourning. None knew, as they passed that old man by, in his worn clothes, and with his crooked legs, that he was a King’s messenger. Had a horseman dashed down the narrow street, in grand uniform, with jingling spurs and loosened rein, everybody would have stopped to stare and wonder, but *this* King’s messenger passed on unknown and unheeded. But the Lord had His eye upon

His willing servant, and as he went obediently along, that Lord knew that there was a gentleman, full of the worry and bustle of this world's business, hurrying down a cross road to meet him. This gentleman knew both the cobbler and the Bonds, and just at the point where the two streets crossed each other, the two men met. Surprised to see the cobbler out by daylight, the man of business paused for a moment, to express his wonder.

“Hullo!” he cried, “wherever are *you* off to, at this time of day?”

“Old Bond has lost his son, Sir;” replied the man, “and I am going to speak a word of comfort to him.”

“Lost his son, has he? I’m sorry,” said the gentleman, “poor souls, they will be wanting help. Here, take them this,” and as he hurried on, he slipped five shillings into the old man’s hand.

In the meantime poor Mrs. Bond had gone on fretting over their sad condition. “No money, no bread; and nowhere for the money to come from, till the wages come due again.” Very sad

and heavy hearted was she. The waves of sorrow were very deep, and she failed to see that the Lord was with her in the storm. Scarcely had she uttered her last despairing sentence to her husband, “It is easy for *you* to talk of trusting, but *where is the money to come from?*” when two loud raps on the street door startled them both; and in no very amiable mood she went to open it, saying, as she did so, “Who can that be, I wonder, coming here just at this time?”

Who indeed? It was none other than the King’s messenger, but when we have been looking for help from God, we often fail at once to detect His messenger in the answer He sends. What could that poor cobbler do for her just then? He stepped into the little passage, grasped her toil-worn hand, and as he looked at her tear-stained face, he said, “So the Lord has taken another of His ain jewels to be with His-self.” Before she could answer him, he was gone, and in her hand there lay two silver half-crowns. Had the money fallen from the clouds at her feet, she could not

have been more surprised. Again and again she looked at the coins to assure herself that it was not a dream, and that help had really come, so suddenly and so unexpectedly.

“I told you so, wife,” said her husband, as she held out her hand towards him, with the money in it. “Trust Him, trust Him.”

“But I cannot touch it;” she cried, suddenly regaining her speech; “they cannot afford this.”

“Never fear, wife!” said Richard Bond; “he will not miss it.”

“Not miss it!” she cried; “it is impossible he can spare it. His wife will be wanting it; I must take it back.”

“The Lord has sent it for *you*,” urged her husband; “the man will never miss it, and his wife will never want it. Use it, it has been sent to you; be sure they will never want it.”

And so she used it, and there was food for the hungry children in that house of sorrow; but not till months afterwards did she know how that timely aid had reached her in her hour of need,

and that the cobbler and his wife had never parted with the money. Dependence sees no difficulties; all is smooth and even to the eye of faith. Neither the want of the money, nor the possession of the money, troubled the "man who could fly." He depended on his Lord, not on the circumstances, and he was not mistaken.

And on that Christmas day when the fond mother had hoped to have had her boy at home with her, the white snow was falling softly on his new-made grave. Sorrowfully she thought over the past, and his parting words to her on that morning in November rang in her ears, "Ah! mother, you can see farther on than I can."

Little people, there is nothing to lean on here; there is nothing sure and stedfast here. Where are your hopes built, on things that you hope will happen here, or on Christ? Think of that empty chair on that Christmas day, and count on nothing here, for we cannot tell what a day may bring forth. Ah! that happy young man had not left it till his dying hour to trust in Christ, he was

ready when the call came, and went in to see the King.

And do *you* love Jesus? and are *you* His child? and would *you* like to serve Him while you are in the world, that is ever serving the Usurper? Then remember the poor old cobbler, and how he, who had no money of his own, carried five shillings to his friends in trouble. It was all, you see, by waiting on the Lord, and being quite content to do so small a thing as speak a word of comfort from the Lord. He did not stop to reason as to what the good would be of his going. He did not say, "I cannot leave my work, I will get on with that, and then perhaps at the end of the week I may be able to spare a sixpence." No, he went at once, and was willing to do a very little thing for the Lord he loved, and so God could use him, and did use him; and the story of the old cobbler's service taught me a great lesson, and I hope it will teach you one also. Nature cannot serve God; I mean our old Adam nature, which likes to arrange and plan, and be very active. If the

Spirit of God could use my powers as the steam uses the steam engine, then all would be well.

When my own will comes in, it hinders God from using me. Depend! depend! depend! You cannot depend too much. God loves to have your confidence.

But I must go on with my story, and very sad and terrible it grows at this part. I told you that Richard Bond had two sons, who had grown up to be young men, and that both of them had listened to the voice of Christ. The history of the second one, the most promising of the two, I have already given you, and now I must give you the short and sad story of the eldest. Poor fellow! he did not keep his eye fixed on Christ, but he looked down at all the snares and wares spread out below him; then he began to sink out of the narrow pathway of light. The heart soon follows the eyes; and when he was down in the darkness, the arrows of the archers hit him and wounded him sore. His poor father saw him sinking lower and lower, and called to him often, and warned

him earnestly, but all to no avail. He went down to live among the glittering things of the world, his feet were soon fast in the mire, and his wings were useless. Then he began to love those who cared nothing for his Lord, and soon afterwards he married a gay young woman, who led him farther and farther into the mire.

“Well,” you will say, “and what was the end of it?”

Listen. There are some people who think that they will set everything that is wrong about them right on their death-beds. But did you ever think that there are a great many people who never have a death-bed at all? Perhaps *you* never will. This young man never had one. He was employed at the gas-works, and suddenly,—without a moment’s warning, he was standing in the presence of God. I suppose his eyes saw not the flash, and his ears heard not the thunder of the explosion that startled the neighbourhood, and hurried himself and five of his companions into eternity. It was all the work of a moment;

one instant alive and well, the next a mangled corpse. *So mangled* that the comrades who dragged him from the ruins sent a messenger in haste to find the poor father, that he might say which blackened body had once been his son's.

Poor old man ! As he turned his eyes on the mangled form, and thought of the dark uncertainty which hung over the fate of his son's soul, a wave of sorrow, so deep and so dark, burst over his aged head, that he fell to the earth as helpless and apparently as lifeless as his boy.

“ But was the young man's soul lost ? ” you will ask.

I cannot say. No one can say. The Day alone will declare it. The Lord will never let the weakest of His own perish, but we cannot always tell the difference between mere sham floaters, and those real ones who allow themselves to float with the stream of things around them. If he had never really had to do with Christ, and only pretended to be among Christians, he would be utterly lost. But we do not know. God knows,

and, "shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" Only let his terrible fate be a warning to you and me. Do not love earthly things. The music, the painting, the sculpture, the taste and style, the poetry, and the wisdom that ornament this world, all grow out of the nature that crucified Christ. They are like the bright coloured fungi that grow out of a rotten tree. They may cover its ugliness, but they prove it rotten.

Do not be startled. Listen to God. "For *all* that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is *not* of the Father, but is of the world; and the world passeth away and the lust thereof." (1 John ii. 16.) "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." (1 Cor. iii. 19). Oh, redeemed one! waste not your time over the fairest flower that grows out of a Christ-rejecting world! Turn your eyes to the person of Christ where He sits at God's right hand in glory, and you will soon drop earth's fading treasures, and be able to exclaim—

"Marvel not that Christ in glory,
All mine inmost heart hath won."

Poor Richard Bond ! The storm had indeed burst upon him, with a fury that threatened to sweep everything before it. The blow which took from him his eldest and only surviving son, the stay of his declining years, took from him also the power to work. He never recovered from the shock of thus suddenly viewing his son's mangled form. A paralytic stroke was the consequence, and the whole of one side of his body was rendered useless, and his speech was much affected. The strong, hale, old man was thus in a moment reduced to the helplessness of a child. And what now lay before him but a weary sojourn under the workhouse roof, separated from the faithful wife who alone survived of all his helpers ? Was this fate indeed for him ? Had the Lord forgotten His deeply tried and afflicted servant ? and was the cold, heartless world to sweep him into the place he had so much dreaded ? No, He touched the heart of his earthly master, who was an old man also, and he did not forget his faithful servant. For years and years the sorely

stricken man had guarded his property, and now he came forward to shield his old age from want. He settled a pension of ten shillings a week upon him for his life.

Thus the old people were fairly provided for. The wife being still well able to nurse the sick, could thus add all that was needed to their income; "and now," you will say, "all danger of the workhouse must have vanished for ever." Wait a bit.

A few years passed on, and the old master went to the grave, leaving, however, the same provision for his servant in his will. Then the aged couple moved from London to one of the suburbs, and rented two small rooms in a house, in a quiet street; but Mrs. Bond's health began to fail, and several succeeding seizures leaving her husband more helpless than ever, she had to give up her nursing, and poverty stared them in the face. The two rooms were quickly changed for one on the second floor, for which they paid three shillings a week, and the remaining seven were all they

had between them, for clothing, firing, and food.

November, with its bitter winds and driving sleet, set in, and the poor woman was seized with bronchitis, and brought down to death's door. She had no money to pay for assistance to get her crippled husband lifted from his chair to his bed ; no money for the washing ; and what she had for the food was soon all gone. The doctor, too, who was summoned to attend her, gave his decided opinion that the old man should be removed to the workhouse infirmary, as her strength, he said, was not sufficient to move him about.

Well ! what do you think of the case now ? Was the Lord going to let the man who depended on Him, claim the world's cold charity ? Was Richard Bond going to the workhouse after all ?

Ah, my dear little friends, follow this story carefully ; for the days may come, when old, and weary, and sore-stricken, *you* may be in like circumstances of sorrow and need. Truly " God is faithful." Oh ! that you may learn to confide in Him, while all looks bright and sunny ! Earth's

sunshine cannot last, the shadows *must* grow longer, its sun *must* set at last, and cold, grey, and cheerless indeed will be the closing day if you have nothing beyond this scene to count upon, no hope beyond the grave ; but remember, your God has come down in Christ, and has set an open door into heaven, before you ; and the glory from the scene beyond the grave, pours from that open door, and lights up with unearthly radiance the darkest days of sorrow here.

Follow my story now, as I show you how the Lord bare up His child upon “ eagle’s wings,” and carried him in safety to his journey’s end.

A few months before this November, of which I have told you, there had come to live in the same neighbourhood as the Bonds, a young lady,—she was one whom the Lord had long been trying to teach to “ fly.” Again and again He had rescued her, with untiring patience, from snare after snare, but again and again she had turned aside to seek pleasure and support from the scene around her. She loved Him, however, because He had first

loved her, and now that she was far from the country cottages, in which it had been her joy to speak of Him, she cast her eyes round her on street after street, and asked herself where she should go to carry His message of pardon and peace. Like too many of His dear ones, she preferred *working*, to *waiting*; and often wearied herself with labour which He had not given her to do. Yet now she hesitated, for she shrank from encountering strangers, and the occupants of the London houses would scarcely care to be called upon with tracts by one utterly unknown to them. While she delayed, a clergyman called on her parents; he was a man who knew the Lord, and who loved to speak of Him; and He offered to make her one of his district visitors. That is, she was to go to a specified row of houses as sent by him, and with funds from his church to help all who were in need.

Now it was an easy path, and sheltered by his well-known, and justly honoured name, she went to the work. Yes, she who for years past had

gone from house to house with only the Lord to support and cheer her, now stooped to lean on the arm of flesh. But there was no joy in the work; the lips that had been wont to speak of the love of Christ were sealed, or uttered cant phrases, powerless to reach the heart of the listener; the hand that dealt the cold charity of others was never grasped with the sudden grip of hearty thankfulness, that it had been wont to feel. It was joyless work, and her spirits failed, and her health failed, and cold duty alone carried her stolidly through the man-appointed task.

That was not the Lord's work for her. He wanted someone like the old cobbler to go at His slightest call. He has said, "I will guide thee by Mine eye." His servants must depend entirely on Himself for guidance, for strength, for help of all kinds.

She soon became aware that His eye pointed her to a different place altogether, but she looked at the houses, and said "I dare not go." It was weeks before she was able to trust her Lord as

before to set her to work Himself, and to support her in it; but one cold, grey afternoon in November, when a bitter north-east wind was driving a fine sleet before it, she set out tremblingly to do His will. I daresay you will laugh when I tell you that she went through the whole street, and back to her home, twice over without having courage to knock at a single door. But she could not rest, and the third time she went in a strength not her own, depending only on her living Lord, and she called at each house till she reached No. 6. By this time, it was nearly dark, the gas lamps were flaring in the streets, and the shadows flickered about on the pavement as the cold wind struggled with the flames. It was a desolate evening, but her heart was singing with joy, she was rejoicing in her "Rock."

At No. 6, an old woman, with aquiline features, neat dress, and of most respectable appearance, opened the door, and invited her in. Gladly enough she entered, and found herself in a room as neat and tidy in its furniture as the owner was

in her person ; and there, sitting in a chair by a small fire, was a fine looking old man. An expression of calm, peaceful repose sat on the handsome features; the noble, open brow was surrounded by hair as white as snow, and the clear blue eyes rested on her with a quiet, vacant look. In one hand he held a white pocket handkerchief, and on his head he wore his hat. In a few words, uttered in a low tone, the woman explained to her, that her husband had become quite childish, through repeated paralytic strokes, and that he very rarely spoke, or noticed what passed around him. Touched with the deep calm of his expression, she bent over him, and spoke a few simple words about the "Rock" on which her own soul rested. In a moment a look of intelligence gathered on the placid face, a new light beamed in the quiet eye, and the stammering tongue lisped out three words, that thrilled the listener's heart with surprise and joy. "The Altogether Lovely." That was all he said, and surely that was enough. The poor body, crushed as it was with sorrow and

sickness, gave utterance to the soul's deep peace,—the peace that passeth all understanding. And though the lady knew it not, she was standing by the side of the “man who could fly,” and he, in his old age and weakness, was to be the means in God's hand of teaching her to venture on her living Lord, to give up dependence on earthly props, and thus herself to “fly.”

She went to no more houses that day, and returned home thanking Him who had deigned to give her work to do, for Himself. It was but a few days after this, that Mrs. Bond was seized with bronchitis, and the doctor who came to see her, urged the removal of her afflicted husband to the workhouse infirmary. What was to be done? The poor old woman lay and wept as she thought of her own helplessness, her empty purse, her apparent friendlessness. A kind neighbour came in to tidy her room, and to get the poor old man from the bed, to his seat by the fire; and then she was alone with God, and face to face with her sorrows. She had never learned to trust her

Lord as her husband had done, and that husband's counsel was lost for ever. As she lay and watched him sitting in helpless silence by the flickering fire, she thought of the words of comfort and cheer which it had ever been his wont to speak in former days, when the waves of sorrow had run high. He seemed unconscious of it all now, yet ever and anon turned his calm blue eyes with a wondering look upon her tear-stained face. And *must* the dreaded doom be his? And *must* she speak the word that should pass him to stranger hands to nurse? *Must* a workhouse woman watch his last breath, and close his eyes, and wrap him in his grave clothes? After their long years of happy wedded life, and patient toil, must they part thus? Do you wonder that she wept? And do you think she wept unwatched, unknown, uncared for? No, there was One whom she could not trust,—poor, weary soul that she was!—watching by her on that gloomy day, and suddenly He whispered in her ear, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.”

You see the Lord's care for His children does not depend upon their faith, it depends upon His own heart. What a blessing this is for us, is it not? He was caring for His poor doubting child, all the time, for while she wept and wondered, He was sending His own messenger down to help her. His messenger was not the poor cobbler, this time, but the young lady whom He was teaching to depend upon Himself.

And so it came to pass that the "cruse of oil did not fail, nor the barrel of meal waste," till the poor woman was able to leave her bed, and move about again. But her illness had been so severe that her strength was gone, and the doctor said she must never try to move her husband again; nor ought she, he said, to wash the clothes any more; and again, he repeated his wish that the old man should go to the infirmary. He was only doing his duty in speaking so, but when he left the house that day, he left a cloud of sorrow behind him deep and black indeed.

The hours passed on; and as the evening fell,

the gloom without was slight, compared with the darkness that settled down on the poor woman's soul within. As she stood leaning against the bed in hopeless sorrow, there was a knock on the door of her room, which stood ajar, and, pushing it open, and the young lady who had been sent to her before entered.

What a scene it was ! By the small flickering fire sat the old man, with his hands on his knees, his placid face unruffled and calm as ever ; against the bed leant the thin form of his aged wife, trembling with emotion, while the tears streamed down her furrowed cheeks ; the room was lighted by the wavering glare of the gas-lamp in the street, which was nearly on a level with the uncurtained windows, and outside, the snow was drifting silently and rapidly to the earth. Between her sobs, the heart-broken woman told her tale of sorrow.

“It *must be*,” she said ; “there is no help for it now !—After all these years we must part,—it will break his heart,—but if they only wouldn't

put the dress on him, perhaps he wouldn't notice—oh dear, oh dear; it *is* hard to bear."

"Have you *no* friends?" said her visitor, "no one to help you?—No one to add a weekly sum to your pension, for the washing, and for help to move your husband?"

"They all say the same," wailed the poor woman; "he must go to the workhouse."

Then she dropped her voice, and glanced anxiously towards the fire-place; the lady's eyes followed hers, and she saw a sight not easily to be forgotten. The old man's feeble mind had caught the meaning of those last bitter words, his face was turned fully towards them, the placid look was gone, and large bright tears were chasing each other down his cheeks. His helpless frame shook with sobs.

"He understands us," cried the woman, hurrying to him; "oh! do not cry," she added, striving to comfort him, "they will be very kind, and I shall come and—" then her voice failed, and they wept together.

And it was then that He who knew all the past, and was "afflicted in all their afflictions," laid it suddenly on the lady's heart that it was a sin and a shame for an aged Christian to have to take shelter under the workhouse roof. It was the first time that the thought had ever crossed her mind; she had no time to reason why it should, or should not be, she only felt that it would be a crying disgrace to herself and every Christian in the neighbourhood, if that man was allowed to go there. It was the Lord who was thus stirring her heart within her, for He knew the past history of which she was ignorant. He had been trusted with His child's care in days gone by, and now He was about to use her to carry out His own purposes. It was not a scene that the hardest heart could look on unmoved; she hastily beckoned to the wife to follow her, and left the room.

"It cannot be! it must not be!" said she, as she stood on the little landing outside the door; "it shall not be if I can help it! I will see what I can do for you. Say no more about it. I will see you again to-morrow."



"They all say the same," wailed the poor woman: "He must go to the work-house."—Page 159.

Then she wrung the old woman's hand, and hurried away through the frost and snow. And to whom do you think she went for help? For she had not the means to do much for the poor souls herself.

"Oh!" you will say, "to the Lord, of course, as He had sent her there."

No, indeed she did *not*; she did not understand "flying," she went to all her earthly friends with the tale of sorrow; some were Christians, and some were not, and she rested on the kindness of their hearts, instead of on her living God. It was such a sad tale, that she soon had enough money promised, to allow the Bonds several shillings a week; and the next day she went down with the good news. The poor old man sat with his eyes fixed on her, as she told his wife of the help provided. It was no vacant stare now, but an anxious, eager gaze, as the shattered brain strove to catch and appropriate the meaning of her words. She heard that after she had left on the previous day, he had seemed to become suddenly aware

that it was his bodily weakness which was bringing him to his dreaded doom ; and stammering out "that there was no knowing what the Lord might do yet," he had risen from his chair ; and to his wife's surprise and terror, had swung himself half across the room. Then his strength had failed him, and he had stood clinging to the bedstead, trembling, and crying like a child. It was not the Lord's will to save him like this, but He meant to save him nevertheless ; his "strength was to sit still," and let the Lord undertake for him ; yea, He would "bear him up on eagles' wings."

"Can you not thank the lady ;" cried his wife ; "she has saved you from the workhouse. You need not go !" But the feeble tongue could frame no words, he bowed his hoary head and wept.

And so the months rolled on, and as they went, the one whom the Lord had used to carry out His plans, was learning a new and strange lesson, she was learning to "fly." First one, and then another of her friends withdrew their subscriptions, and as each prop gave way, the Lord drew

her on gently and tenderly to lean upon Himself alone. One only, of all her helpers, esteemed it a privilege to aid to the last, and she sent her money unasked. Thus, like the young eagle, the helper learned to "fly."

So several months passed on, till the Autumn had come round again. It was then that one morning, as the lady gave Mrs. Bond her money for the month, she said, "I am going from home, and I cannot tell you where the next supply will come from, but the Lord can send it."

But He never did send it, for it was never needed. A few days later on, the old man was taken suddenly worse, and was confined to his bed; and now, as though the prince of this world would make a last effort to triumph over the faith of the child of God, and to prove even in this last hour the promise of the Promiser null and void, the worn-out wife yielded to the remonstrances of those about her, and agreed to her husband's removal to the workhouse infirmary. Helpless as an infant, and almost unconscious of what was

passing around him, he would perhaps have known little of the change, *but* the prayer of by-gone days had been registered in heaven, and his Father was watching over His helpless child. All was settled on earth, and the order went forth for the workhouse conveyance to come for the poor shattered body on the following day. Slowly and quietly that night closed in, and men went to their rest as usual, while the weary wife sat down to watch and weep for the last time, by her husband's side. But there was One watching also, to whom the night shineth as the day ; one Eye that never slumbers and never sleeps ; and ere the first gleam of the cold morning light had broken over the quiet town, a messenger had come forth from the courts above, and had whispered his message to the fettered spirit ; he hushed the feeble breathing, and glazed the failing eyes, and as he did so, the glory in all its splendour burst upon the ransomed soul. Ah, redeemed ones ! "all things are yours," yea, Death himself is yours ! Out of that feeble,

stricken, shattered body in the darkened room the spirit passed into the glory of its Lord. Far, far below him lay the workhouse roof, as he was borne in at the pearly gate to the presence chamber of his Lord.

The next morning, when the people in the street were looking out for the workhouse van, Richard Bond had gone where he would one day sit on the throne and have a crown, and praise his Saviour for evermore. And do you think that was all? Do you think that he was buried in a pauper's grave? Many thought that it mattered little where the poor dust was laid, now that the spirit was rejoicing with the Lord,—but not so that tender Saviour,—He sent the poor widow money enough to lay her husband in a cemetery near, and there the body lies, awaiting the Voice that shall one day call it from the grave, incorruptible, a spiritual body, fit for the glory.

Nor was that all. The widow herself was then the Saviour's care; the pension was over, it is true, but the Lord was living to watch over her, and to

supply all her need. He touched the hearts of those whom she had nursed in sickness, and they provided her with all she required. Very soon after this she fell ill of a deadly disease called cancer, and the doctor said she must die. It is a solemn thing to be told that “you *must* die,” that there is no doctor in all the world who can heal you, no medicine known that can stop the complaint. When Mrs. Bond heard that she had not long to live, she felt frightened at first, and Satan tempted her to look at her own life and ways to see if she belonged to Jesus. Then she grew terrified, and the thought of death became dreadful to her, for the more she looked at herself, the worse she saw herself to be, and she doubted whether all her happy feelings in the past had been real, and feared that she had deceived herself, and that she was going to hell after all. I do not wonder at her fears, she was doubting the love of Jesus, and disbelieving His word. He hath said, “Whosoever cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” “I came not to call the

righteous, but sinners to repentance.” “He that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” “He that believeth on Me *hath* everlasting life.” Instead of just trusting God’s word, she said she wanted to see by some signs in herself whether she was one of “the elect.”

What would you think of a man, who, when his friend had paid his debt, said he would not believe it till he saw the receipt? You would say that man has no confidence in his friend, he does not believe his word. This was how she was treating the Lord Jesus. Many people treat Him like this, they say they want to *feel* saved before they will believe Him; but till they take His word for it, they have neither peace nor joy. We have nothing to go upon but the Word of God. God asserts a fact, and expects us to believe what He 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.)

God, in His love and faithfulness, took care to

comfort this poor doubting child. He sent a messenger to her, who pointed out to her the value of the blood of Christ, and reminded her that she was saved entirely by what He had done, and not by any change in herself. She was as fit for heaven as the thief on the cross, and no fitter. Then, as she looked at Jesus dying, the "Just for the unjust, to bring us to God," her fears vanished, and she saw that the blood of Christ alone was her title to heaven. She trusted the One who died for sinners, accepted God's word as true when He said He was satisfied by the death of her substitute, and "the peace of God that passeth all understanding" was her portion.

Never look inside for any signs of your salvation. The blood, and nothing but the blood of Christ can meet your case. The blood of Christ cries out "forgive them," and if you own your need of it, and believe God's word about it, you will get pardon and everlasting life.

I must tell you one thing more before I close my story, to show you how real a thing it is to have

God to take care of you. One day, shortly before her death, poor Mrs. Bond was in such agony from her dreadful disease, that she hardly knew how to bear it. The only thing that could ease her was brandy, but she had none in the house, and no money to buy any. I do not know whether she cried to her heavenly Father, I daresay she did, for He sent one of His children to see her. This child of His was very poor, and had just then no money of her own, but when she heard of the poor widow's distressing need, she put her hand into her pocket, not expecting to find anything there, but to her surprise she found a shilling, and gave it at once to the sufferer. When, however, she had left the house, she remembered, with great sorrow, that that shilling was not her own; at least it had been given to her for a special purpose. She had many friends to whom she could have gone for such a sum, but she knew how to "fly;" that is, she depended on God alone; and so she told Him of her mistake, and left it with Him. Then at once, that very afternoon, He put

it into the heart of her sister, far away in the country, to put twelve stamps in a letter, and send them off for old Mrs. Bond. So the next morning they fell out of the envelope, a proof of the loving care of her living Lord.

And now my story is finished; and perhaps you are wondering why God let "the man who could fly," suffer such heavy trials in his life. Such thoughts have puzzled many, when they have looked at the paths of difficulty and danger along which He so often leads His children. I am quite sure that if you could have asked Richard Bond if he would like to have been without any one of his trials, he would have said, "No." And why would he have answered thus, do you think? Because he had confidence in God; he knew that his Father was doing in him that which would glorify Christ most before men and angels; and all the desire of his heart was that the Saviour who died for Him—"the altogether lovely one"—should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death. The deeper the trial that the depend-

ing one is carried through, the greater the testimony to the supporting power of Christ here, and the brighter will that one shine for Him through all eternity. "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." (Ps. lxxviii. 13.)

It does not matter how wicked and careless you may have been up to this moment, or how often you have turned away from the warning Voice that follows you! If you will listen now to the cry which once more sounds in your ears—"the fashion of this world passeth away," and accept the shelter of the blood of Christ, you will even now be saved, and learn what it is to "mount up with wings as eagles."

Oh, little people, before we part, let me remind you once more, "*Pretending*" *won't do for God*.

The Lord Jesus may call, any moment, to those who know His voice, "Come up hither." False wings will not serve you then; *the name* of being a Christian will not answer then. If you have not

yielded to Christ, who seeks you to-night, before that, you will be left behind. There will be no feast in the banqueting hall among the clouds *for you*,—no smile from the loving tender Saviour *for you*,—no word of welcome, no song of praise, no seat upon the throne, no crown to cast before His feet; none of these things will be *for you*. Wailing and gnashing of teeth will be yours for ever, as you look back, and remember how the Voice called to you again and again, and you heeded it not, or said, “Another time I will listen, and give heed.” Then He who followed you to save you, but whose long-suffering you despised, shall say to you,—“Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh *as a whirlwind*, when distress and anguish cometh upon you; then shall they call upon Me, but I

will not answer, they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me." (Prov. i. 24—28.) You will be left behind, without a shelter from the whirlwind of judgment, which will sweep across this Christ-rejecting world, and which will whirl you before it like chaff, into the lake of fire.

"*Pretending*" won't do for God. Perhaps you say, "But I do trust Jesus, to-night, only I am afraid that to-morrow I shall forget Him, and be just as I was before." Ah! but you have nothing to do with to-morrow, leave to-morrow to Jesus. He will not forget you; there is "joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." There is nothing to be done to save you, it was all done long ago, and if you have trusted Him, you are saved; saved for "*always*," and you must leave all your to-morrows with Jesus. The more you trust Him the better you will "fly", and the seldomer you will look down to the world for props to keep you up. All such props are reeds on which if a man lean they shall pierce his hand,—they are links to the scene you have left.

Oh, depend on the Lord more and more ! Ask Him to make you a very, *very* simple, trusting one, and then trust Him to do it.

Now the Talkings in the Twilight about Wings are over, but please each one remember my solemn parting word—"PRETENDING" WON'T DO FOR GOD.

But,—“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint.” (Isaiah xl. 31.)

