

THE
LADY



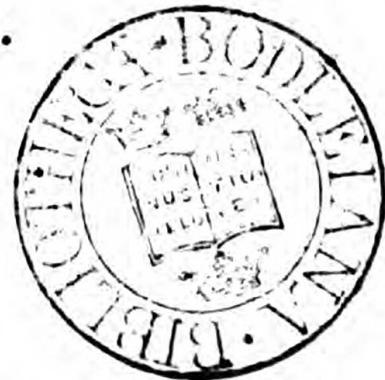
“Such a cheery picture of home comfort did not often greet lonely Lily’s eyes.”

Page 24.

LONELY LILY.

BY

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Third Edition.

LONDON:
JOHN F. SHAW AND CO.,
48, PATERNOSTER ROW.

250. q. 9.





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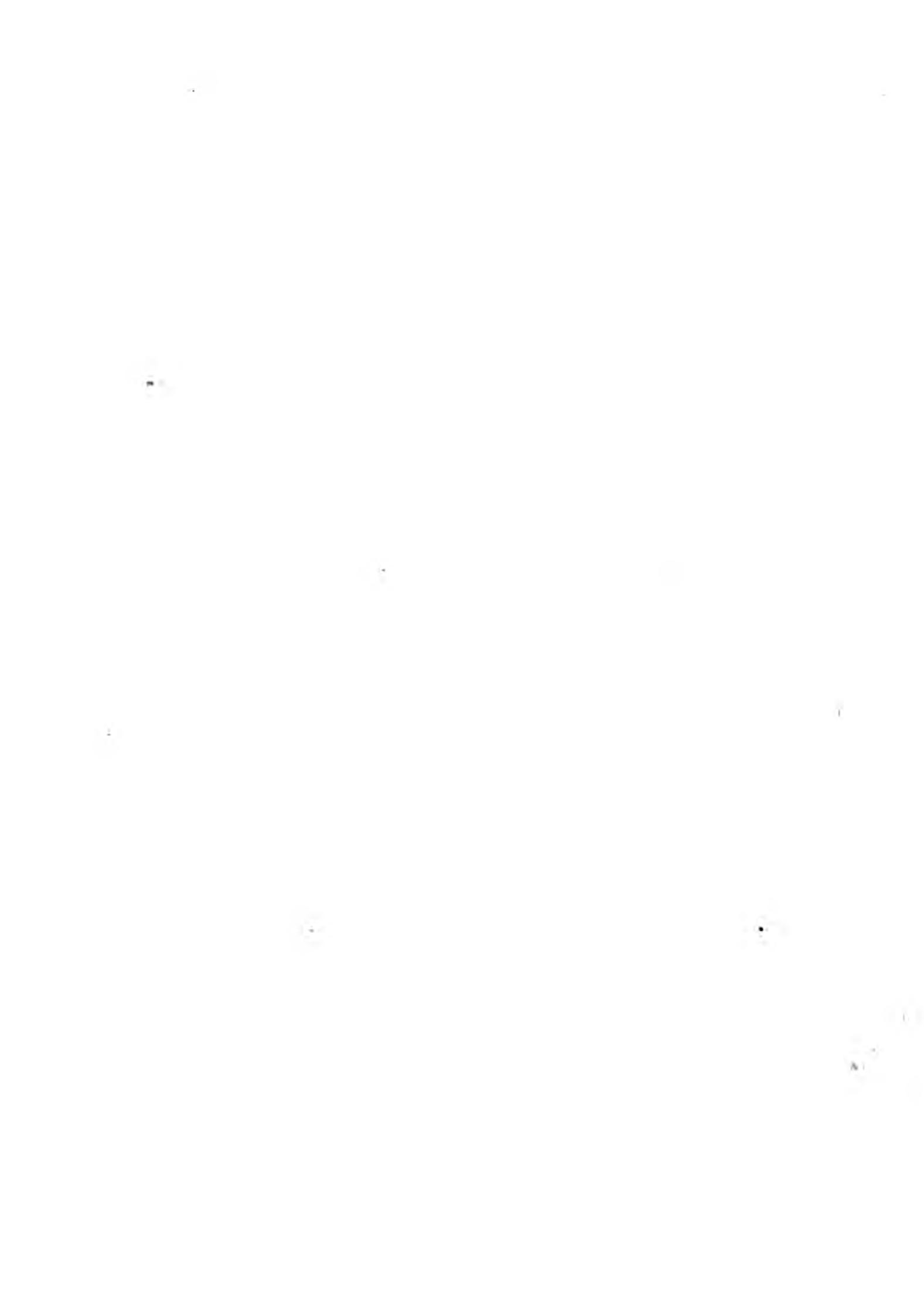
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LONELY LILY.

CHAPTER I.

"WHAT IS HEAVEN LIKE?"

SOME little way from the main thoroughfare in a large inland town, in a back street where the houses were tall and dark, and the space between was narrow and dirty, lived an old, silent woman. She had no companion but one little girl—her grandchild—a fair, pale flower, pale from the atmosphere of smoke and heaviness around.

The old woman was quiet and reserved; she “kept herself to herself,” as the saying

is, and she wished that the child should do the same. So Lily grew up, knowing little of the children around ; for she did not mix with them, and her childish plays were lonely ones.

There seemed to be some great burden hanging over the old woman ; and when she spoke of men and their ways to the fair-haired child beside her, it was with sad, bitter words of disappointment and regret. For she had known sorrow. When she was young and gay, her heart had bounded, like other young hearts, with thoughts of a rich future of brightness and joy ; but the future that came was dark and lonely ; her husband and children had one by one left her for the land whence none return ; her treasures had been taken away by fraudulent means, and those from whom she might have expected kindness and love had given her wrong and neglect ; so now, with the only one left, she had drawn away from those around her, and

wished to live alone and apart in a garret in this back street. But sometimes in the evening, when Lily sat by the window and watched the bright glow that made the distant country beautiful, and even in the smoky city lustred the sky, she turned to her grandmother, and, pointing west, she said, “O granny, did you ever see such a lovely sky ?”

And the grandmother smiled—a pitying, sad smile.

“Yes, child,” she said, “I’ve seen the sun sink down behind blue, snowy mountains, and set all the sky round in a bright glowing flame—in Switzerland, long, long ago ;” and then she stopped. “But it’s all past and gone,” she said, “and I don’t want to think of it ; for I can’t bring it back again, and the dead won’t return from their graves that saw it with me.”

Then the child nestled closer to the old woman’s side. “Tell me about it, dear granny, do.”

And how could she refuse her only little darling? So she would tell of distant lands and scenes, and the child's young mind would see pictures of far-off, blue mountains, where the snow lay clear against the deep sky; of blue lakes and rushing torrents; and her city-bred ears could almost catch the sound of the wind rustling through the trees, or hear the water bubbling over its rocky bed.

And so, left to her own thoughts and impressions, she grew up with many strange ones. She had no child friend with whom to share the ideas she had formed of the wonderful world around. She felt like a little bird in a town cage, and sometimes, like on this sunset evening, she longed to spread her wings and fly far, far away to the lands which her grandmother said were so beautiful, or, better still, to enter the heaven of which she had only just heard. But she did not know the way, and how could she reach it?

The old woman had one evening returned

from her daily toil, and had taken her seat at the small, neatly-laid table which Lily had taken such pains to prepare. She was tired and hungry, and at first she did not notice that the child was not eating anything, and that her eyes were turned away from the dull, dark room, over the chimneys and houses, to the blue glowing sky, almost framed in by the buildings around.

“Grandmother,” said Lily, presently, “is heaven like the countries where you’ve been?”

The old woman started and looked round. “Heaven, child!” she said. “I can’t tell. May be ‘tis, and may be not. Eat your supper, love.”

But Lily still looked out beyond the houses; and when the grandmother’s supper was finished, the little table cleared, and Lily had taken her evening seat by the small fire, she came and sat down by her knees, with her head resting on her lap.

“But, granny,” she said again, “we shall

go there some day, shan't we? and I want to know what it is like beforehand."

"God grant we may," said the old woman, with a sigh; "but I hope it's the Almighty's will that that day is a long way off for you, my lambie."

"I don't know, granny," answered the child. "I like to think of it, if—if—I knew more about it, and if I knew I was going there for certain."

The grandmother's eyes sought the child's face with a keen gaze in the failing firelight. "Oh, nonsense, my lambie," she said; you're lonely up here by yourself. I wish I could take you with me; but I can't; or that there was some well-behaved neighbour's child to keep you company."

"Rosie Clare would come up if you would let her, granny; and I saw such a pretty picture-book she left on the stairs the other day. I wish she might come and talk to me sometimes."

“She shall, my darling,” said the kind old grandmother. “I believe her parents are honest folks, as folks go, and the mother keeps her children clean and tidy.”

John Clare was a workman in the neighbouring factory. He was different from a good many of his fellow-workmen; for he and his wife were real Christians. And although this would have been no recommendation to Lily’s grandmother, yet their respectable way and appearance made her more favourably inclined to admit their eldest girl as Lily’s companion. As to John Clare and his wife, when they heard of the honour intended for their family, they smiled at the thought; but they were glad for their girl to make friends with the lonely child, whose long, solitary hours they had often pitied.

The next morning as old Mrs. Parfitt went down the creaking stairs, she knocked at the left hand door on the second landing. A clean-looking woman soon appeared; she had

a pleasant, cheerful face, and carried a fat boy of about two years old in her arms ; two little girls were holding on to her dress, and an older boy and girl stood near the window ready for school.

“Good morning, ma’am,” said Lily’s grandmother. It had just struck her that her message was a request, and as such required a greater degree of politeness than she was accustomed to bestow on the families residing in Swan Street. “My little girl upstairs is apt to be lonely sometimes, and I thought maybe you’d let your Rose look in now and then.”

“Yes, ma’am,” answered Mrs. Clare pleasantly. “You see Rose’s at her school mornings, but maybe after dinner she could look in. Rosie, my dear, she said, “you go up this afternoon and show Mrs. Parfitt’s little girl that new book your teacher gave you.”

“You see,” said the old woman, “it isn’t every one that I would let keep company

with my Lily ; but I take it, Mrs. Clare, you hold with me in not letting your children mix with the young ones around.”

“ Well,” replied Mrs. Clare with a bright smile, “ they’re so busy with their lessons and their work that they havn’t too much time left ; and as to play, why I think they’re a party in themselves. But Rose ’ll be right glad to cheer up your Lily, Mrs. Parfitt.”

The old woman turned away. As she walked along the narrow street she said to herself, “ A right sort of woman she is, that Mrs. Clare. I shouldn’t wonder now, but she’s lived in some high family in her young days.”

As little pale Lily sat after her early dinner in the deep window seat, where, with her work in her hand, she looked down on the street below, she heard an unwonted sound for that time of day ; the handle of the door was turned, and the bright, fresh face of Rosie Clare appeared.

"May I come in, Lily?" she said. Lily's pale face flushed all over, partly with pleasure, but also with a good deal of shyness.

"Yes, do," she said softly.

But Rose was not troubled with shyness. "Your grandmother asked my mother if I might come up and stay with you a little, so I brought up my work and my new picture-book, and mother says I may stay an hour."

"I'm very glad you've come," answered Lily less shyly. "And, please, would you like to sit by the window? The fuchsias in Mrs. Jones' window opposite look so pretty."

Rose came over and took her seat by Lily in the deep window. "Why," she said, with a bright look of surprise, "you can see the tops of the hills from this window, I do think. We can't."

They soon became friends, and when old Mrs. Parfitt was assured that the little girl was doing no harm to her carefully-guarded flower, she gave her the *entrée* of her room,

and sometimes even allowed Lily to pay a visit to the busy family scene on the second landing. But Lily liked the quiet times upstairs, where she would pore so lovingly over the books that Rose brought with her ; bringing before her scenes of which she had never heard ; and deepening the deep longing in her heart to know more.

“Rosie,” said Lily, one afternoon when they were sitting together, “I want to ask you something. I asked granny once, and I don’t think she knew, or, any way, she didn’t like to tell. And now I don’t like to ask you.”

“Ask me, Lily,” said Rose, “but maybe I don’t know.”

“Well, I want to know,” said Lily in a low voice, almost a whisper, for her voice was always low, “What is heaven like, Rosie ? Is it like the place where the trees, and the mountains, and the flowers are ? and do the people rest always ? I want to know *what it is like.*”

"I think," said Rose slowly, "I think—I don't know exactly, Lily dear; but I know it's a happy place, and of course they rest; it says the weary rest, you know, and the angels are there."

"I remember," said Lily, "some one once saying to my granny, 'You must know the Lord.' I suppose he meant she couldn't go to heaven without knowing Him. I don't know Him, Rose."

Rose did not answer for a little, and then she said carelessly, "I don't suppose you could get there without knowing Jesus, Lily; father says so."

It was beginning to get dark, and Lily's face was bent low, so that Rose could not see the deep, anxious expression on her little pale face.

"Then, oh!" she said, "Rosie, how can I know Him? I can't see Him—I can't ask Him to let me come to heaven. And if I don't go there when I die, where shall

I go? Oh, Rosie, I don't like to think of it.”

Rose hardly knew what to say. She did not know very much about it herself, poor child. She had heard of these things from her infancy; but she had never felt the sad, longing anxiety that rose in little Lily's heart, who knew so little and felt so much.

She came to her side, and put her arm round her, and stooping down to kiss her, she said: “Father or mother could talk to you, but I never think much about it. I shall go to heaven, of course, some day: but I don't think we are going to die now, Lily.”

This was bad advice, was it not? But old Mrs. Parfitt would have thought it just the right thing to say. She came into the room as Rose had for the evening finished speaking, and asked her to stay and have tea with them; which she was very glad to do, with her mother's leave. And soon, with her grandmother's gossip about the day's events,

and Rosie's gay talk, Lily's trouble was half forgotten for the present. But afterwards, when her companion was gone, and the silence of the night had gathered over the town, her sad thoughts came back again, and little Lily's heart looked out and around with the yearning wish, *To whom shall I go?*

Then she thought of the bright, lovely places of which her grandmother spoke, where the sun shone down on fields, and trees, and flowers, and sparkled on the waters; where the warm wind rustled through the trees, and the light made soft patterns on the grass; and she longed for some friendly hand to beckon her there, and to lead her away to a place of rest. For Lily was weary —tired of the feeling of being alone. God had made an empty place in her heart, which He only could fill. So is it any wonder that until she gained the Ark, the poor little dove found no rest for the soles of her feet?

CHAPTER II.

FRIENDS FOUND—“DO YOU KNOW THE WAY?”

NE morning, a week later, about an hour after Lily had watched her grandmother disappear round the corner of the street, Rose appeared at the door. She had left off knocking now, for they were on intimate terms, and Lily was not likely to be occupied with any private business.

To-day Rose's face was beaming with some mysterious pleasure. She evidently had some news to communicate.

“Lily,” she began, “didn't you hear mother talking to your granny on the stairs? Now, can you guess what that was about?

“Yes,” said Lily, “I think I heard granny stop; but I didn’t hear what they said.”

“You didn’t listen, then?” asked Rose, “that was very good of you, then. Never mind, though, I’ve come to tell you; and I’m very glad you didn’t listen, ‘cause then, you see, I shouldn’t have had it to tell.”

Lily was all attention. You see, little reader, incidents came few and far between to her. “This is Willie’s birthday,” proceeded Rose, “and he’s eleven years old, and father gave him a new Bible, and we all gave him a present, and mother’s made a cake—oh, such a big one, Lily, as big as your grandmother’s footstool; ‘tis in the oven now. And now I’ve come to the best part, about you. Mother asked your grandmother, and she said you might come down to tea, and after tea we’re all to sit around the fire, and father’s to tell us a story. Oh, isn’t it nice, Lily dear?”

Lily’s eyes were sparkling very brightly

now; and there was a flush of pleasure on her pale cheek, as she said, “Oh, how nice! And when am I to come?”

“Oh, I’ll come up about four, and fetch you down; when the table’s laid,” answered Rose.

At three o’clock Lily fetched some water, and rubbed her face until it glowed. Then she put her curly head into some order; and finally donned a bright blue dress, which her grandmother had once bought, in order “to make the child look respectable, as her mother’s child should.”

At a quarter to four the younger part of the Clare family came up in a body, to escort their visitor to their room, where the tea was laid, with *the* cake standing in all its pristine beauty. The twins had wished to put the boots (one of Willie’s birthday presents) on the top, but Rose had suggested that it would not look pretty; so they compounded by putting one on each side, on separate pieces of paper.

The twins stood on each side of the table ; each shining face contemplating the cake, and each pair of little hands clinging to the white cloth. Rose began toasting bread ; while Willie, as king of the day, took his place in mother's large arm-chair, fondly handling the new Bible ; mother herself stood near the fire, with one arm holding the fat baby, while with the other she stirred a saucepan, which all the children knew contained father's supper.

Such a cheery picture of home-comfort did not often greet lonely Lily's eyes, and they gleamed brightly at the sight. Mrs. Clare came to where she stood, and greeted her with a genuine mother's kiss.

"Welcome, my little dear," she said. "I'm glad granny gave you leave to help keep Willie's birthday, and to make the hole in the cake larger. There's enough ; ain't there, Rose ?"

"I told mother to make it so big," said

Rose. “I thought, may be there’d be a bit wanted for some one.”

“Just as if se ‘ouldn’t make it big, if ‘ou didn’t say anything,” muttered the biggest of the twin girls.

“No matter, no matter,” put in the mother. “Rose has a loving heart, and a larger heart than an oven, I fancy,”

And then they all sat down to tea. Great was the excitement when Willie took up a knife to cut the cake. Nobody could accuse him of cutting small pieces: and when each had had enough, you may imagine, little reader, there was not a small gap. And finally, he cut a large slice to put by for father’s supper.

All the children were allowed to help Rose wash up the tea things. This was considered a great treat; and the mother wished it to be felt as such, that enjoyment might be connected with usefulness in her children’s mind. So even the baby was allowed to put his fat

hands into the water ; and although he was not of much use, as you will believe, his funny feats contributed not a little to Lily's amusement.

After a while the father came in ; and when his supper was over, all the children came clustering round him for "a story."

"And let it be a very nice one, please father, because it 's Willie's birthday."

"Why I should think my stock of stories was wearing out," said father, with a manner which told the children that he was going to begin. "Well, what shall it be about ? Come, my little maiden," he said, turning to Lily, "it shall be what you like. Shall it be about girls or boys, or cows, or sheep, or what ?"

Lily looked up and smiled. "I think I'd like it to be about both boys and girls," she said.

"About both ? Well, you're not very hard to please, little girl ; and I think I can find you a true story about both boys and girls."

Then Mr. Clare leaned back in his chair, and looking round on the semi-circle of eager, up-turned faces, began :

“When I was a lad”—

“I always like father’s tories dat begin, ‘When I was a lad,’ ” said Katie, one of the twins, in a little voice, which was instantly drowned in a chorus of “hush !”

“When I was a lad,” he continued, “you know, children, I lived in a part of the country far enough away from here—amongst the trees and fields down in Devonshire. And a fine country it is too ; only, you see, I wasn’t strong enough then for a labourer, and I had to take to a business. Well, father was carrier in the village were Sir Edward Reid was lord of the manor, and lived up at the great house on the hill. Father hadn’t too much money ; but he was a true man, and a kind one. He did his best for us, and had us taught to read and write at the village school ; and, better still, he used to teach us himself

out of the large old Bible that stood on the top of the press—the same one that you bring to me now, Willie, of an evening.

“That school was where all the village children went. Lady Isabella Reid used to come sometimes and ask us all questions, and see how we were getting on. It was a great day when she came. The old gentleman that taught us used to get wonderful fussy when the carriage wheels were getting closer ; and all the little fellows in the room tried to look their best.

“One day we were expecting the lady. She came in, and brought the young lady, little Miss Ina, with her. She said we answered very well ; and we all thought so too. While we were waiting, Miss Ina came up and whispered something to the lady ; and then Lady Isabella nodded her head, and we were all expecting something ; when the silence was broken by the little lady’s clear voice sounding through the room. ‘Schoolmaster,’ she

said (and I seem to hear her pretty little voice now), ‘I want you to give the boys a half holiday to-morrow ; and I want you to bring them all to my father’s house ; and we are all going to have tea on the lawn, because it’s my birthday, and they have not been naughty boys.’

“Mr. Deane looked at her ladyship, and so did we all, I can tell you. Then Lady Isabella smiled, and said, ‘Yes, if you please, Mr. Deane ; it’s my little daughter’s birthday, and she has chosen for her treat to have all the boys and girls up to the park to tea ; so, if you have no objection, we hope to see them all at five o’clock.’

“Mr. Deane bowed low. ‘He should be most happy ; and her ladyship was very kind, and the young lady.’

“And then you should have heard the cheers we gave the ladies as they went away, with little Miss Ina kissing her small hand out of the carriage.

“ My sister Minnie and I were full of pleasure. Minnie was quieter ; but I was half wild. To think of going up to the park, and having a right to walk on that beautiful lawn where the flowers grew, that I had sometimes just seen from the distance, and of being invited to tea by her ladyship herself ! And the consequence was that my wildness got the better of me.

“ All the morning Minnie and I, when school was over, were playing about in the garden ; and I am sure mother was well worried by me. Now if there was anything my mother was particular about, it was a little corner where she reared a few flowers—some roses and stocks, and a few fuchsias and geraniums from slips that the park gardener had given her. I think she was always uneasy when we young ones moved in the direction of that plot ; and to-day it seemed as if Minnie and I could be contented nowhere else. First we began admiring the flowers, and counting the

blossoms; then it came to cracking the fuchsia buds with our fingers. At last I said to Minnie, ‘Now get out of the way; see if I can’t clear mother’s best rose tree five times running.’

“Minnie begged me not; but I would. Mother was hanging out the clean clothes to dry; and she told me several times to stop; but I was a headstrong boy, and I wouldn’t mind her. I laughed, and told her I should do it no harm, and I went on.

“At last I made an unfortunate jump; my foot caught in the branches, and down I came on the other side, in the middle of the flower-bed; and pretty confusion I made of it. I was not hurt; for I came on the soft earth, with my face in the violet-bed. But oh! you should have seen the difference in the flowers. The fuchsias hung with their branches broken, and the rose-buds were scattered round.

“I got up, feeling very much ashamed of myself; and I was really sorry for mother’s

garden. She did not say much to me, and I was turning into the house, when Minnie said in a frightened voice, 'Oh, Johnnie, what will father say?' Oh dear, I had not thought of that. Father would be in presently; for he was coming home to dinner to-day, and he would see the mischief I had done; and then indeed what would he say? My heart sank very low indeed, and I ran upstairs to my little room so as to be out of the way when father came in.

"By and by I heard the latch of the garden gate, and there stood father. He must pass the flower-bed on his way up; and I saw him come slowly along the walk, looking at the beans and potatoes, until he reached it; then he stopped.

"'Dear, dear,' I heard him say, as I peeped out of my little window; 'why, mother, has Rover been here?'

"Mother was sitting at the kitchen window, and I did not hear what she said. She was

speaking in a low voice ; and then there was a silence, and I hoped father would not ask any particulars. Presently he spoke again :

“‘ Had you told him not to do it ?’

“ And then the next thing I heard him say was—

“‘ Then he shall not go to the Park ; my son must obey his mother.’

“ That was all I heard ; and I knew that if father said a thing once, and that he knew it was right, then nothing would turn him from it ; and oh, how my heart sank down ! It seemed as though it *could* not be true, that I was not to go to the Park ; and I sat down on the floor in my little room, hardly knowing what I did. Then I began to think again, and oh, how angry and wicked I felt against father ! I called him cruel, and unkind, and wicked ? How *could* he keep me from going ? It was dreadfully unkind !

“ I did not go down to dinner, for I was afraid of meeting him ; and I thought, if I

did not show myself before the time, I could slip out with Minnie, and father would never know I heard him say I was not to go.

“So at half-past three o’clock I got myself tidy, and put on my new coat. I brushed my hair well, all the time feeling very frightened and uneasy. At last I was ready, and I stood listening at the door for Minnie to go out. Presently I heard her step, and I knew she was going. Soon I saw her go down the garden where father and mother were. Father had an idle afternoon, and he was trying to mend some of my morning’s mischief. Mother kissed her as she went, and I heard her say, ‘I wish poor Johnnie was going with you.’ That told me they thought I knew; but I was determined to put a bold face on it; so presently, when they came into the kitchen, I went downstairs, and walked out just as if nothing had happened; but I had very little hope that I should go now.

“Just as I reached the door, father came

out of the kitchen. I felt hot and red all over when I saw him ; and he stopped and said, ‘Where are you going ?’

“I could hardly answer, ‘Up to the Park, father.’

“Father said very quietly, ‘I thought you knew, Johnnie, that I said you should not go. I can’t let you ; you disobeyed your mother when she told you to stop. I should have punished you just the same, whether you had spoilt the flowers or not.’

“This was all ; and I ran upstairs again in a great passion. I stamped on the ground, and said all sort of wicked things in my heart against father. It was all no good, though ; I was not to go to the Park, and the feast and all the pleasure would go on without me ; and, although I was a biggish boy, I cried like a baby.

“By and by I got tired of staying up in my room ; so I went out the back way, up the road that led to the Park ; for I could go

in no other direction just then. I went on by the road round the grounds until I was near the house, and, by climbing on the opposite wall, I could just see something of what was going on through the trees. I saw little glimpses of the white, loaded tables, with here and there servants carrying baskets that I knew contained nice things. Then, while I was looking, I heard the schoolmaster cry, 'Silence!' and the boys and girls began to sing before tea. Oh, how nice it sounded to me, all by myself on the wall.

"And so I passed the afternoon very miserably. I wandered about all the lanes near the Park, and it was near eight o'clock when I reached home. Oh, what a sting I felt as I passed the flower-bed. Father had gone out to the village, and I was glad, for I felt right angry with him still; and I did not want to speak to anyone, so I was going up stairs, when I heard mother calling me. She was sitting at the kitchen window resting;

for she was very weak, and was easily tired. I stopped at the door, but I did not go in until she said, 'Come here, Johnnie,' and when I went over to her she put her arm round me, and I saw there were tears in her eyes. 'Johnnie,' said mother, 'my heart has been very sad for you all the day, lad. I think it's been as much a punishment for me as for you.'

"I think my anger and pride was gone now, from mother at any rate; so I burst out crying, and said, 'Oh, mother, I'm sorry I spoilt your flowers.'

"'Ah, and 'tisn't *that* I'd vex for, my boy,' said mother, "'tis for your trouble, and the sin that brought it. Johnnie lad, do you know that 'twas a sin against God to disobey your mother; and that unless it's blotted out, He will have to shut you out from the feast and the joy for ever?'

"And then she talked to me in her own kind way about the love of God in sending

down His Son to die, so that we might have a right to say, ‘My Saviour ;’ and she told me how often her heart was sad to think I had not said it, and that I was still outside the joy that God has laid up above.

“I never can forget that night, children. And long afterwards, when she was laid in the cold grave-yard, and when I was taking my fling and mixing in bad company ; while I was enjoying it all, I often thought, though I didn’t much want to think of it then, of her words about God shutting me out from the joy and the gladness above.

“And then afterwards, when God showed me the way, and I came to the world’s Saviour, and took Him for mine—with the joy of salvation and the joy He gives—there was a sweet thought that my mother’s prayers were answered, and God had saved her boy.”

It was getting late. The little group had been so intently listening that they had not seen that the fire was burning low ; so Willie

availed himself of his birthday privilege of taking care of the fire, while the mother and Rose carried the twins to bed.

When they were gone, Willie sat near the sender, looking at the lights and shadows in the fire, out of which children love to build castles, and rocks, and plains, and far-away places, and to people them with creatures of their young imaginations. And then as little Lily stood silently near, John Clare put his strong arm round her, and asked,—

“ Little girl, do you know the way to the joy up there ? ”

Lily’s eyes filled with tears. The story of the kind man’s youth had brought back her own sad thoughts. If he had been outside, she thought, where am I ?

She did not answer ; for she was very shy ; and although she liked Rosie’s father very much, she was particularly afraid of him. And John Clare did not press her to answer ; but he took the little white hand in his strong

work-stained ones, and said, “The Lord bless thee, little one.”

When Lily went up to the attic-room, it looked rather bare and desolate after the family scene below. But her grandmother was settled in her chair by the fire, and she laid her hand fondly on Lily’s head, and told her how she had missed her, and how glad she was to see her back.

And then afterwards, when the candle was put out, and she lay in bed watching the silver line that the moon laid on the floor, her thoughts went up beyond the sky and the golden stars, up to the home where John Clare’s mother had entered, and where he was so sure of going some day. And the child felt alone and “outside;” and still she did not see the hand that would guide her there, nor hear the voice that was saying, “Come unto Me.”



CHAPTER III.

THE SHEPHERD'S CALL—“COME UNTO ME.”

“**W**ONDER,” said John Clare to his wife one evening after the children were all in bed, “would the old lady upstairs let that little one go to Miss Spencer’s with Rose? I often think of the little one, Kitty; sometimes with no one to speak to the whole day.”

Mrs. Clare shook her head doubtfully. “I don’t know, John,” she said; “old Mrs. Parfitt’s mighty close in her ways, and she can’t bear the child to mix with other folks. It’s a great compliment to you and me that she lets our Rose near her.”

“We might try;” said the husband. “I

know you speak to her sometimes, Kitty ; but I'd like her to hear the young lady. And then it's not like a Sunday-school, which some foolish folks think ain't good enough for them, I believe."

" Well now, John," said Mrs. Clare, " suppose you speak to Lily's grandmother, and ask her to let the child go, as a sort of favour, to please us, you know ; and tell her that Miss Spencer's quite a grand young lady ; which she is indeed, every one knows."

Miss Spencer was the only daughter of a rich merchant. Her father's town house was some distance from the street where Lily and her grandmother lived, in a large square where the houses might be called mansions, and the rich of the town congregated ; for Mr. Spencer possessed riches, but, it was to be feared, he loved them too well, and the good things that money can bring.

When she was in town, during some of the winter months, Miss Spencer collected to-

gether on Saturday afternoons nine or ten little girls, that she might speak with them, and tell them things that God had taught her.

How glad she would have been to have done more, to have been more actively useful; but this little work was as much as she could do.

She was very weak and delicate: a complaint of the spine kept her almost always lying on the sofa, in the pretty light drawing-room, which was one of the set of apartments that Mr. Spencer had taken pleasure in furnishing for his darling Annie: for he loved her very dearly. She was the last of his four children, and her life was a very frail one. But everything that love could collect was hers; and if her joy had consisted in those outward things that please the senses, she might have been indeed called happy.

Her days were often full of pain, and her nights were long and dreary at times; but

she had said at the beginning, “Thy will be done;” and she said it still, though the way she trod was not the one which her natural taste would have led her to choose.

Sometimes, when the bright spring-time came, and she lay by the window in her father’s country house, watching the life spreading over all, and feeling the longing to bound out on the sunny slopes, and wander in the lanes where the birds were answering the music of the breezes, it did seem sad to lie there, and to be able only to see the hills she used to climb, and to watch the buoyancy in which she could take no part. But God’s will was hers; and then she could say—

“All gone, all gone, for this life gone,
My days of health and strength:
Wearied and worthless, glad were I
To welcome home at length.

“And yet I’m happier far, in truth,
Than e’er I was in buoyant youth;
For, Jesus, Thou art more to me
Than health and strength and youth could be.”

And then how much worse it might have been. It might have been her lot to lie in misery and wretchedness, up in some dirty garret, with sights to shock and sounds to distress. I have heard of a poor, bed-ridden woman, who for years had seen nothing more refreshing to the eye than the sight of a city. One day, a friend hung a looking-glass on her wall in such a position that she was able to see in her lying posture the reflection of a field, and she cried out with joy. So you see how much more favoured Annie was than this poor woman.

But it is winter now, and Mr. Spencer and his family are in the town. His house is the corner one in the square, and may also be recognised by the conservatories that contain a rare collection of fruits and flowers.

Half way down the street leading to this end of the square, two little girls are coming slowly on, and by the fair clustering curls of one, and the bright brown eycs of the other,

my little readers would soon recognise Lily and Rose.

For old Mrs. Parfitt has given her consent for Lily to accompany Rose to Miss Spencer's class. It needed a good deal of persuasion to get her to allow it, to be sure, and all Mr. and Mrs. Clare's arguments would have been unavailing, if the grandmother had not been touched by the sight of a tear on Lily's face, when she first refused to let her go. Then she considered, and finally she determined to give her consent, if Lily would have as little as possible to do with the other children. And now, even when the little girl has come so far, we can see by her faltering step, that she almost wishes herself back in the attic at home ; but Rose will not hear of such a thing as a retreat now.

When Rosie's modest ring has brought an answer to the door, Lily looks up in shy expectation ; but the tall footman who opens the door does not seem a very formidable

sort of person, and Rosie greets him as an old acquaintance.

"How do you do, my dear?" he said, when she had asked him for Miss Spencer. "Ah. that's it, wipe your shoes well. 'How is Miss Spencer?' Well, pretty well to-day, but a little thing upsets her; so mind, Rosie Clare, I look to you to set a good example to the others. It would never do to have to say that Miss Spencer brought all you little girls into her nice room, and that then you went and made her ill by being troublesome, oh, never, never!"

They went upstairs. The steps seemed so soft and easy to Lily, and her new boots did not make half the creaking produced by the three uncarpeted flights at home.

At length they came to the end of a long corridor, where Miss Spencer's maid stood to bring them into her young lady's room. Lily thought she could never have imagined such a lovely place. There were three long win-

dows, with green sweeping curtains, and what looked like a magnificent golden top ; and at the further end of the room there was a glass door through which she seemed to see a garden in the house, where bright flowers were hid in branches of clustering green. The fireplace looked so bright, and the chimney ornaments seemed to shine in Lily's eyes with gold and silver ; and, altogether, the little girl could hardly have been more astonished if she had been suddenly introduced into a royal palace. It was a palace to her, and she was so intent on all she saw at first, that she forgot to proceed further than the door, until a sharp little push from Rose, and — “ Miss Spencer's speaking to you, Lily,” made her recover herself with a start.

Then she looked round and saw the lady herself. Miss Spencer was young, and she looked very lovely indeed to Lily. But she was not beautiful, only that she had such a gentle look on her sweet, pale face ; and

when she spoke, her voice was low and soft.

“Well, Rose,” she said, “so you have brought a little friend with you to-day. Come here, dear, and sit on this footstool; you must be near me to-day, as this is the first time we have seen each other.”

Lily took her place near the sofa, and from that time Miss Spencer had a large share of her love.

There were about nine little girls in the room besides Rose and herself. They all belonged to the class which is generally called respectable. They greeted Rosie Clare as an old acquaintance; and although the keen looks of scrutiny to the new comer made the colour rise to Lily’s cheeks, the introduction was not at all so trying as she had expected; and besides, had she not been welcomed by the lady herself?

The chapter Miss Spencer chose to read was the seventeenth of John. The children

each read a verse in turn, and then the lady asked if anyone had a question. Lily had noticed the words, "I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ;" and she longed to ask her old question, "What is heaven like, and would Jesus ever let me go there ?" and, "Who were the people that He would have with Him ?" But she was timid, poor child ; and when the lady saw her eager eyes, and asked her, Did she wish to know anything ? the bright crimson came over her cheeks, and she hung her head, and Miss Spencer passed on to the next. But her question was answered after all.

"Sarah, said the lady to one of the eldest, "where would the Lord Jesus have us with Him ?" The girl answered, "In heaven." "Does any little girl know what kind of a place heaven is ?" One answered, "A happy place." Another said, "Where they wear crowns and have golden harps." But the lady saw little Lily's eyes earnestly fixed on

her, and she went on to say some of the few, sweet words that had often before been sent by God into hearts that He had opened to receive.

“You have told me, dear children,” she said, “that heaven is a happy place ; and so indeed it is. There is never any sorrow there; no pain, and no weariness, and no crying. Those who have been weary here, if they enter the home above, shall rest for ever. And there is One there whose presence will make everyone happy: for Jesus Himself will be with us, and His smile will make our hearts glad ; and, safe with Him, we shall go no more out. Oh, no ! God will keep us for ever in that happy place, where we shall sing in joy and gladness, and praise the Lord who brought us there—away from the darkness and the woe. And up there it is light, and rest, and love, and peace, and joy, where the Lord Jesus is waiting for us in His Father’s house above.”

Soon the lesson was finished—too soon for Lily—and Miss Spencer sent the other little girls home.

Then she called Rose to her, and said, “Your little friend Kate Murray has come, and I told the housekeeper that you should see her, so now run and tell my maid, and leave this little girl with me. We must know each other,” she said, turning to Lily, who could hardly believe the pleasure in store for her.

“My little girl,” said the lady, when Rose had gone, “I think I see that you want to know something more about the things of which we have been speaking. Tell me, Lily, would you like to go to heaven?”

Lily did not answer, but her head bent low, and there was a quiet sob.

“Are you one of the weary little ones, my child,” asked Miss Spencer, putting her arm round her, “who would be glad of everlasting rest?”

“Oh,” said Lily, with a gush of tears, “I am tired of wanting to know the way ; but I don’t know it, and I can’t get there without knowing the Lord Jesus, and I don’t know Him.”

“But if I tell you that He knows you, Lily ; that He has always known you, and that now He is saying to you, ‘Come unto me’?”

“If He does know me, may be He wouldn’t let me in,” said Lily.

“The Lord Jesus is God,” answered Miss Spencer, “and He knows the badness of every one. He knows it all ; and when He said, ‘Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,’ He meant it, and the worst will not be cast out. Could He say what was not true? Would He promise, and break His promise?”

“But I don’t know how to come. I wish, oh ! I wish I could,” sobbed Lily. Her face was buried in her hands ; and as the lady

watched her bowed, quivering figure, her own eyes filled with tears, and she longed that the little troubled heart might find its rest in the bosom of eternal love. But she knew that a mighty arm would soon encircle her, and that the Good Shepherd, who knows His sheep, would soon number her among His flock.

“Lily,” said Miss Spencer, softly, “the Lord Jesus is looking at you now. He knows that He has said, ‘Come unto me,’ and He is saying it still. Listen to Him, dear child, and look up to Him—He can see, though He is hid from your eyes—and say, ‘Lord Jesus, I do come to thee.’”

For a long time Lily stayed with her head bent low, and there was no sound, except now and then a quivering sob. Miss Spencer lay back on her couch with closed eyes ; but her lips moved, and she was praying for the child. At length, after a long time, in the silence of the room she heard a low, broken voice, and little Lily said softly—

“Lord Jesus, I thank thee for saying,
‘Come unto me.’”

And then she lifted her face, with the tears still undried ; but there was a bright smile there now, and she said—

“I have come. I did say to Him, ‘Lord, I come to thee.’ And did the Lord Jesus Christ *really* die that I might be happy ? For, oh ! I’ve been very, very wicked.”

Miss Spencer said nothing ; but she smiled a sweet smile to herself, and she opened the Bible that lay by her side, and pointing to a passage there, she told Lily to read ; and the child read slowly, aloud—

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

“Is not that enough, dear Lily,” she said, “You see God loved the wicked world though they were sinners ; and it was because they were sinners that the Lord Jesus must die.”

"And did He *really* die, that we might not be punished for our sins? How kind God is to give His only Son to die!" said Lily.

Just then the door opened, and Rose appeared, her face all flushed and glowing from the play in the garden.

"Oh, Lily," she said, "we've had such a splendid game. Wouldn't you have liked to have been with us?"

Lily smiled, but she said nothing.

Soon they went away; and as the lady bade them good-by, she whispered to Lily, "The Lord Jesus has said, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments.'"

On the way home Rose was chattering gaily about her visit to the housekeeper's room. "Such a lovely place," she said; "I don't think it was much less grand than Miss Spencer's own room; and old Mrs. Murray went away and left Katie and me to play. She gave us some pictures to look at, such beautiful ones! And then we went into the

garden, and got some apples ; for Mrs. Spencer lets Katie have as many as she likes.”

“But, Lily,” said Rose presently, “how odd you are ; you don’t seem to care about going to Miss Spencer’s, and I thought you’d be almost mazed ; *I* was the first time. And yet you don’t seem put out either.”

Lily smiled,—a glad, sweet smile.

“I was thinking of something,” she said. “Don’t ask me to tell you what it was, Rose dear : I’ll tell you some other day ; may be soon.”





CHAPTER IV.

SUNSHINE AND SHADOW—THE ELEVENTH HOUR.

HE winter passed on, and Rose and Lily still often met in the old room on the attic floor, or down stairs amidst the family life and bustle.

But Lily was not unhappy now ; and often, when her grandmother was away, and she had to spend the long morning hours with no companion, and little to see but the tall chimneys and the sky beyond, she would sit in her old place by the deep window and think, as she had so often done before.

But now her thoughts were not vague dreams and fancies ; for she could look forward to a certain future of gladness and joy ;

and she knew that the One who loved her had prepared a home for her for ever.

She had a new occupation too. Miss Spencer had given her a Bible—a dearly-loved treasure to Lily ; and hour after hour would pass swiftly by as she pored over its contents, so new and sweet to her. And she treasured the words in her heart, little knowing how soon they would be made the means of gladness and blessing to another.

And there was a happy light in her eye, and a spring in her step, as she climbed the creaking stairs, that sounded pleasantly in her old grandmother's ears, and made John Clare and his wife look at one another, and smile, and say,

“ The child is a different creature since she went with our Rose to Miss Spencer.”

January had passed away, and the heavy rains of February were pouring down, making the dark streets still darker and more gloomy.

One morning Lily woke up, and saw the

rain pouring in torrents from the sky above. She went to the window, and the driving sheet fell against the glass.

“Oh, granny,” she said, “you must stay at home to-day; you’d be soaked through and through in this rain.”

“Ah, my dear,” answered the old woman, “poor old granny must go out, wet or dry.”

Soon she was ready, and the old weather-beaten umbrella had been brought by Lily from its peg behind the door, and she rubbed her grandmother’s old-fashioned pattens clean and dry.

How comfortable the little room looked when she was gone, with its fire blazing in the small grate; and the poor old grandmother must face all the cold and rain outside.

“How kind dear granny is,” thought Lily, as she watched her from the window slowly disappearing round the corner. “How I love her, and how I wish she was happy, like I

am. But I 'm afraid she is not ; I 'm afraid she has not a home in heaven. "O God," she said, with the tears in her eyes, and her head bowing on the low window-seat, "save dear granny, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake."

She remembered all the love that the grandmother had shown her, almost before she could lisp her name, and since they lived in the large town, which was little Lily's earthly home,—ever since that cold winter morning, which was almost the first she could remember, when she had stood at another window in a larger home in the north of England, watching the slow, dark procession that bore her own mother to the grave.—then, when she felt sad and frightened, hardly knowing why, and had turned round to her dear old grandmother, hiding her face in her lap, so often afterwards to be her resting-place ; for until lately the kind old woman had been the centre of all her love.

The day continued as wet as the morning

had begun; and soon the narrow thoroughfare in Swan Street was running with rain and mud.

As the evening drew on Lily brightened the fire, and laid the supper ready. At length she heard the well-known slow step on the stairs, soon the door-handle turned, and Lily's arms were round the drenched form of her old grandmother.

How pleasant it was to see her sitting down in the old, worn chair by the bright little fire, with the table near; for Lily had insisted on drawing it close to the hearth, and on preparing some toast, which was all the sweeter to the old woman, because made ready by her darling's hands.

But she seemed very silent, and her hand shook as she raised the cup of tea to her lips. She was rather querulous too; and Lily could not help thinking that granny was cross.

She remembered all about that evening afterwards; and that when the old woman

rose to put away the tea things, a weakness and trembling came over her, and she had to sit down again, and say, "Lily, child, just put the place straight if you can ;" for she could hardly yet think Lily anything but the helpless little child that she had been long ago.

The grandmother was very restless in the night, and her quick breathing and moaning kept Lily waking. She was uneasy about her grandmother ; but it was not with her as it would have been once, for despite her fear, she had a refuge still.

The next morning rose softly and brightly. It was very different from the day before. The sun shone through soft, rosy clouds, and some bright rays found their way into the attic-room where Lily was standing at the window. She had risen early. The grandmother had fallen into a fitful sleep as the morning broke, and she looked so ill and worn that Lily let her sleep on.

At length, as the small hand had almost

reached half an hour to the time when her grandmother must go out to her daily business, she went softly near to the bed. How quickly her breathing came, and what a deep flush was on her dear, thin checks ! But Lily thought her face had never looked more sweet and loving.

She stood looking at her for a long time ; and at last she softly said,

“Grandmother.”

She stirred in her sleep, and looked troubled.

“Grandmother,” said Lily again, “won’t you be late ?”

The old woman opened her eyes, and looked quickly at the little girl. There was an unhappy, perplexed look in her face ; and she stretched out her hand towards her, but said nothing.

“Ar’n’t you well, granny ?” asked Lily.

“No, my lamb ; my head’s hot, and I can’t well move ; so I must lie here ; may be I ’ll be better to-morrow, and I think they can do

without me at the shop to-day : at any rate they must," she answered with a heavy sigh, putting her hand to her head. "Give me a cup of tea, 'twill be all the sweeter if you make it, my pet." But when Lily brought her the tea she could not drink it, but lay back looking strangely at her. By and by, as the day wore on, she slept a little; but she ate nothing, and the burning flush deepened on her cheeks.

The sun had set and twilight was gathering in the little room ; the old woman was lying silently on the bed, and Lily sat by the fire, frightened and sad.

Presently she saw the old woman turn round towards her on the bed : there was a strange light in her eyes, and she looked fixedly at her.

"Lucy," she said quickly, "Lucy, is it you? Tell me, did you say you would leave me, and that you don't want my blessing? Come here, child. Oh Lucy, come here!"

“Granny, dear granny!” cried Lily, her heart beating quickly with fear, “what do you mean? I’m Lily, your Lily. Granny! granny!”

Lily got up and came quickly to the bedside. The colour rose higher on the old woman’s face, and her voice was quick and angry, as she said,

“Then I can’t see you again. Go away, Lucy. I can’t forgive you; you’ve broken my heart. And yet I love you, child—my child.” And she buried her face in the bed-clothes and sobbed.

Lily thought a moment, and then quickly opened the door and fled down the stairs to reach the second landing. As she ran down, she heard the shrill, unnatural tones of the old woman’s voice calling angrily, “Lucy, Lucy!”

Mrs. Clare was in the midst of her afternoon’s washing. Rose had just come in from school, and was sitting by the fire, relating to

the twins the wonderful story of her adventures in the way ; and Willie was waiting, cap in hand, to go out and do his mother's commissions ; when all at once the door was burst quickly open, and Lily rushed up to the mother.

“Oh, Mrs. Clare !” she said, seizing her apron, and looking piteously into her face, “Come, do come to granny ; she's so ill, and she's in bed, and she called me Lucy, and spoke to me like she never did before.”

“Softly, little one, softly,” said Mrs. Clare, as the children began wonderingly to cluster round, and Lily threw herself on the ground in an agony of sobbing. “May be it's not so bad as all that ; but I'll just go up and see her. She's just taken a chill, may be, this soaking weather.”

She had gathered from Lily's confused account that the old woman's mind was wandering, and had mistaken her for some one else, and she thought it might do Lily herself

harm to be near her just now ; so, as the little girl was following her upstairs, she put her hand gently on her head, and said,

“No, Lily, you must stay and keep them company down here, as I’m going to look after the granny.”

Rose sat down on the rug near Lily, and put her arms round her.

“Oh, Lily,” she said, “don’t cry so; I don’t believe she’s so very ill.” But Lily sobbed on ; and when the little twins came near and pressed their chubby faces to hers, with a comforting kiss, her tears only came the faster.

“No,” she said, in a low, choked voice. “Perhaps granny will die, she may *die*—and that is not the worst. Oh, what shall I do, —what shall I do ?”

“Does oo mean the ganny will go to God ?” asked one of the twins, looking earnestly in her face.

“Oh no, no, no !” Lily almost shrieked,

burying her face in her hands, with a fresh burst of tears.

“What do you mean, Lily?” asked Rose, in a grave but rather frightened voice.

Willie had been standing silently by the window, as if he had not heard what they were saying. But he was a shy, silent boy, and seldom showed his feelings by much speaking. But he could speak kindly ; though even on the subject dearest to Willie’s heart, his words were apt to sound cold and ungentle.

“I know what Lily means,” he said, turning quickly round to them, “and so ought you too, Rose. She meant that her grandmother”—

“Oh, hush—hush please,” said Lily, in a quick, almost terrified voice.

Willie turned to the window again. He had not meant to say anything unkind, and his clear, straightforward mind could not imagine why Lily should so dread having her

own fears expressed aloud. He wished to comfort her very much, but first he did not know what to say. So Lily still sat by the fire, with her head on Rose's shoulder, weary and exhausted.

Presently Willie came nearer the fire.

"Lily," he said softly, "did you ever pray for your granny?"

"Yes, oh yes," said Lily.

"Then why are you crying so?" asked Willie. God says He will answer. Shall we pray now? And, Lily, you must not cry if I ask God about—about, you know, the thing you want Him to do for her. He knows all about it, and He will answer, oh, I'm sure He will."

They knelt down on the hearth-rug together, and the little twins joined their hands together as Willie prayed. His clear, boyish voice rose earnestly as he spoke.

"Oh, our Father," he prayed, "save her soul! in the Lord Jesus Christ's name, we ask

Thee ; and make her happy by giving her eternal life.” For he knew that the weight on Lily’s mind was not so much that perhaps her grandmother would die, as where she would go, if her life were cut off.

Lily stayed on her knees after the others had risen, and when they saw her face again, it was calm and hopeful.

It was a long time before anyone came with tidings from the attic room. Once in the evening Mrs. Clare had called Willie, but they had heard him go out into the street, and he did not return until about eight o’clock, with his father.

John Clare looked very grave, as he threw himself back into his comfortable easy chair.

“ Little girl, come here,” he said.

Lily rose and went to him. He took her in his arms, and looked steadfastly in her face : “ Your grandmother is very ill, my child,” he said.

"I know," Lily answered, her lip quivering again.

"But," continued John Clare, "her life is in God's hands, and the doctor says she *may* get well. Willie has been for the doctor, you know."

"Thank you, Willie," she said, looking gratefully to him. "But please, Mr. Clare, mayn't I go up to her? She'll want me, I am sure she will."

"Nay, my little maiden, that's just what you must not do," he answered; she's so ill that she wouldn't know you; so 'twould do her harm, and you'd get no good. Tell me, Lily, was your mother's name Lucy?"

"No," she said; "but I had an aunt that I never saw called Lucy, and granny says I'm very like her, and maybe she couldn't see well being ill. Mayn't I go up and tell her that I'm Lily?"

"She wouldn't believe you. No, Lily, you must remember that she's very ill; mother

will stay with her, and all we can do is to wait and ask God about it."

Lily shared Rose's bed that night in a tiny chamber opening out of the large family room. Rose tried to comfort her, but Lily did not say much. She kissed Rose fervently, but her tears were over, and only a stray shadow passed over her sweet, pale face; for Lily had told Jesus about it, and she trusted, and was not afraid.





CHAPTER V.

POINTING THE WAY; OR, "GRANNY'S GOD'S CHILD NOW."

COLD Mrs. Parfitt was indeed very ill, and for some time the fever which had attacked her was violent and unabated, leaving her weak and exhausted ; so weak and ill that the doctor gave but slight hopes of her recovery.

“The illness was caused,” he said, “by long-accustomed neglect ; and that wet day, when the rain penetrated her garments, had finished the work that the previous neglect had begun.

“If we could get her into the hospital

now," he said to Mrs. Clare, "she would be well cared for.

But Mrs. Clare assured him that the old lady would never hear of such a place; and she said right; for when the doctor proposed it to her, the fever flush that mounted to her forehead warned him to let the matter alone.

"Well, my good woman," he answered, "it's your own look-out; but I wont give much for your chances here."

"Well, let it be," said the old woman bitterly; "I ask nothing from anybody, and it's little enough they 'll care whether I'm well or ill."

But she wished to have her grandchild with her; so on the fifth morning after her illness Lily came back to the old attic room.

Mrs. Clare had warned her to be very quiet. "And oh, Lily, my child," she said, as they stood on the landing outside the door, "if you could say a word to the old lady about the Lord, she 'd listen to you; for it 's

an awful thing to go away without knowing Him, Lily."

Lily said nothing, but she threw her arms round the kind woman with a quick, loving squeeze, and Mrs. Clare felt the hot tears on her face. Lily crept in softly to the room. The old grandmother was asleep, and the child's soft step across the floor did not disturb her. She sat down in her old place on the deep window-seat. How often she had sat there before, in the days when the small room had contained all she loved, and the deep sky beyond was the region of her fancy.

And then days afterwards she remembered, when vague thoughts and wishes had disturbed her, unsatisfied as she was then by the One who receives little children and makes them glad.

How changed was all now. Then she had not known an earthly care, and now the great weary coming shadow was falling ; for her

grandmother was wearing away, and Lily must live on, unsheltered by her love, and uncared for by her, in the lonely world,—the world of which she knew so little, except from the sights and sounds of strife and misery, from which the old woman’s care had not shielded her darling.

But the sky above was bright and glowing, and the red glow in the far west had spread some of its rosy light to the place overhead, where Lily was looking.

Presently there was a rustle from the corner of the room where the old woman lay, and Lily looked up and saw her eyes open, and looking tenderly and steadily at her. She rose quickly and came to the side of the bed ; she buried her face in the sheets, and the old woman’s hand passed fondly over her golden curls.

“It’s my little Lily come back again,” she said. “Granny’s been lone without you, my lambie.”

But the voice came with a pang to Lily's heart, for it was broken and very feeble.

"Oh, granny, granny!" was all she could say.

"My poor little flower," whispered the old woman, the tears rising to her eyes, "they'll be kind to you when the old woman is gone; they couldn't be rough with you."

"But, granny," and Lily raised her head and spoke with a great effort, "are you going—*where* are you going, granny? Oh, I've been asking God to take you to heaven,—are you going there?"

A shadow passed over the sick woman's face. She shut her eyes and breathed heavily.

"God knows, child," she answered, "I've been as good as my neighbours, and better than most, maybe. I've done my best, and God is merciful."

"But, oh, granny!" sobbed Lily, "I don't want to make you unhappy, or to say dreadful things; but I have been reading the Bible,

and it says that it is not because we are good that we go to heaven, but because Jesus died, and if we believe on Him we shall go there.”

“Maybe, child, maybe,” she answered, “but I can’t think of those things now, I must sleep.”

And she closed her eyes and lay silently back, but she was not sleeping.

And then Lily began to think again ; but although it all seemed so unpromising, and there was no answer to God’s great love in her grandmother’s heart, Lily was not terrified as she had been before ; for she had asked, and had not the God of truth promised to answer ?

Then a bright thought struck her, and she rose softly and went to the table where the new Bible lay that Miss Spencer had given her ; and sitting down by the bed on a low stool she turned over the leaves to the third chapter of Romans. Then she bowed her

face in her hands and prayed, "O God, in Christ's name I ask, make granny confess that she is bad, and then make her see that she may go to heaven, because Jesus has died."

Soon the sick woman opened her eyes again. Her thoughts had wandered back to the long life she had passed, and which, in spite of what she had said, she knew was faulty. She remembered sins hidden from the eyes of all around. She thought of the wrongs that others had done her, and of the fierce bitter anger that she had borne them in her heart. She felt the hard unforgiveness against contempt and neglect still rankling within. And then she remembered long past days and years of giddy pleasure, when she had lived, not to please God, but to please herself.

"Grandmother," said Lily, "I'm going to read to you."

"Do so, my pretty one," answered the old

woman; "I love to hear the sound of your voice."

And as Lily's child-voice read slowly, she heard the words—"They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

"Stop, child," said the old woman quickly, "does the Bible say that? that no one is good—not one?"

Lily's heart beat fast, but she said nothing, and read the verse again.

The old woman closed her eyes and lay back on the pillow.

"All gone out of the way; none doeth good, no, not one," she murmured. "God says it; then it must be true; and if He says it of the best, what can He say of me, a poor old sinner, that's going to die?"

She lifted her weak, trembling hand to her forehead, and began whispering softly, as if to herself, "'Twas the cruel world made me

the hard old sinner I am, and yet perhaps it treated me not worse than others ; and I feel the bad within me, here. Oh Lily, child," she said, turning round to her, "I've a hard, hard old heart ; and the Bible says true, that I have not done good."

"I'll read you something else, granny," said Lily, "about how kind God is, and about the way He has made for us to go to heaven."

She turned to the third chapter of the gospel of John. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

When she had finished, the old woman did not speak.

It was very silent, and darkness had fallen

on the small room ; but the fire burned brightly and danced gaily on the white-washed walls. It sparkled on Lily’s golden head, and lighted up the thin features of the old woman as the child gazed at her.

What was passing in that old weary heart now ? for her thoughts were roaming back again, far into the dim past, and the sunny spring-time of youth spread out before her ; days when her heart had bounded with glad, earthly hopes, and the blessed message of God’s love was heard and unheeded by her. It seemed almost like another life, that time so long gone past.

And then a form seemed to rise before her, and she saw the pale, earnest face of a brother, who had gone away to join the ransomed above. She saw again his deep, loving eyes bent on her own child face, as he had spoken to her of God’s love and grace, and she had heard his voice saying the words that Lily had just read—“God so loved the

world." She had forgotten them since, and time's cares and pleasures had showered down and covered the words that he had spoken. But now, that time of childhood seemed so near, and the days of her life were like a moment between, as she stood on the brink of eternity alone.

And so she lay a long time, and several hours had come and gone before the old woman spoke again.

The household had gone to rest, and the street below was silent, except from the occasional step of some passer by, and there was no sound to break Lily's slumbers; for the child had fallen asleep with her head leaning on the bed. The fire had burned low, and there was no light now in the low attic room.

"Lily," said the old woman at length, and her voice, weak and quivering as it was, awoke the child with a start, and she shivered at the cold, dark room; "Lily, child, I want to hear those words again."

She could not see to read, but Lily's long hours with her Bible served her in good stead now, and the words came clear and distinct in the darkness.

"But God couldn't love me. Oh, child, child, He has shown me myself to-night, and He knows my sin," she cried, in a broken voice of agony.

"Granny," said Lily, and first her own voice was broken by sobs, "I never heard you were very bad; but if you were, didn't God know it when He said He loved the world. And didn't He say '*whosoever*,' granny? And doesn't that mean any one?"

"Say it again, child," said the old woman, presently, "and again, and again, may be I'll remember them, and be sure of them."

And in the dark, silent night, when sleep had fallen on all around, and no earthly eye was onlooking in the small lone room, the Good Shepherd saw His little lamb leading

the weary sinner to His arms of yearning love.

She said it over again and again ; until at last little Lily's voice ceased, and she sank into sleep.

It was getting light when she awoke. The old woman was awake, but her breathing was laboured, and her voice was broken, as she spoke.

“ Lily, child,” she said, “ I saw it while you slept, and I ’ll tell you now if I can. I said them over to myself—the words you read. Yes, I love God, for I do believe He loves me ; and He ’s my Father, for I ’ve taken His only-begotten Son for my Saviour. I know I ’m a wicked old sinner ; but there was nought else for me, so I just sank at the Saviour’s feet, and it ’s there I am now.”

“ Oh, granny, granny !” cried Lily, throwing herself on her knees by the bedside, “ oh, I do thank God, I do, I do !”

“ And,” continued the old woman, as a

sweet smile broke on her worn old face, "I can forgive now, for God has forgiven me. Last night when I was waking, child, I saw those I shall never see again down here. I saw the man that took away everything I have, besides turning my life all dark, my Lucy's husband. I use to hate him and all else, I think, but you ; but now I can forgive him and the others the wrongs they did ; for they were cruel wrongs, God knows ; but I forgive them, for God has forgiven me."

The effort of speaking had been too much for the old woman, and she sank back exhausted. Lily did not know how quickly her grandmother was nearing the shores of the shining land, shining now with the light of eternal love.

The grey morning had been softly stealing on ; Mrs. Clare had been stirring down stairs a long time ; and when she heard Lily's step above, she came to look after the old woman and the child.

Lily's quick ear heard her steps outside, and she went to the door to meet her.

"Oh, Mrs. Clare," she said, throwing her arms round her, with a flood of tears, "granny is God's child now, and heaven is her home."

The old woman heard the sound at the door, and she feebly called, "Lily, Lily."

The little girl was quickly at her bedside.

"My lambie," she said; but she spoke with great difficulty, and the words came slowly and at intervals; "tell Mrs. Clare to bring her little ones here."

Lily looked wonderingly at her. She almost thought that her grandmother's mind was wandering again; but the deep, earnest look in her eyes was not denied, and she bore the message to her kind friend at the door.

"But why?" said Mrs. Clare; "what is it, Lily? They 'll worry the granny."

"Perhaps granny 's better," suggested Lily. Mrs. Clare shook her head; for she had

heard the old woman's voice, and she knew well what it told. She went down to the room, where the children were clustering round the table in health and life. How different it looked from the room above! and a pang struck her heart as she thought of the lonely child.

The children looked astonished as their mother bade them follow her to Lily's home; and the twins clung to their mother's dress with grave, awe-struck faces, when they heard that Lily's granny was going to heaven. Silently they all entered the room. The father and mother sat at the bed's head, where the old woman lay, while the children looked on from a little distance.

Lily sat on her low foot-stool. She knew now that her grandmother was dying, and that soon the dark grave would enclose the body of the one who loved her so well; but she knew too that the grave was not her home, but that heaven's glad rest was her

grandmother's portion, and that the Lord Jesus Himself would care for her for ever.

When the Clare family came into the room, the old woman opened her eyes, and gazed earnestly at them, and for a little while no one spoke.

“Children,” at length said the old woman, “I’ve sent for you all, because I wanted some way to serve God. I’m going away to heaven, for God has had mercy on a wicked old sinner. God has forgiven me, and I want to tell you all that now I forgive those that I hated before. Oh, children, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ now, while you’re young. For though I’m saved, I can’t live to serve God.” The old woman did not say all this at once. It was by slow degrees that the words came, and often she had to stop, and begin again to speak.

When she had finished, she lay back motionless, and there was no sound in the room but her quick, heavy breathing.

Out of doors all was going on as usual. The early sun was streaming in through the window, and the sparrows twittered away as gaily as ever, while the town bustle from the streets near sent up the cries that told of busy life and labour.

But the shadow of death was stealing on the worn old face, the eyes were dimming, and the breath came quick and short.

Presently the dying woman stretched out her hand with a last effort, and laid it on the head of the child by her bedside, and the thin, bent fingers spread amongst her clustering golden curls; and a quivering sob of anguish passed through Lily’s frame.

John Clare bent down to the dying grandmother, and whispered softly, “We love Him, because He first loved us.”

The closed eyes opened slowly again, and she answered, after trying vainly once or twice first, “Yes—the world—me.”

She said no more. Half-an-hour passed

away, when there was no sound in the room but the ticking clock, and the smothered sobbing of the Clare children. Lily was still and silent as the old grandmother.

At last, as Mrs. Clare watched the dying woman's face intently, she saw a sweet smile pass over the weary face, her lips parted as though she would speak, and then, with a gentle sigh, she entered the home prepared for the children of God.

Her cold hand still lay on the child's head ; and when Mrs. Clare saw that the spirit was gone, she drew it off, and folded the child to her bosom. "You're my Lily now," she said. And Lily knew what she meant. She did not cry, but a shiver passed through her, and she clung with intense earnestness to Mrs. Clare's neck, and lay there some minutes without speaking.

Then the father went to his work, and the children must go to their school. Willie's earnest face was more earnest that day, and

Rose was sad and silent in the midst of her gay school-fellows.

And Lily went down to Rosie's home. John Clare and his wife took her to their hearts, and the gentle child gave them her grateful love.

But she was silent and strange amongst them for a long time ; and Lily never forgot the dear old grandmother who had loved and cared for her when the old attic room was her home. And sometimes when the little room was untenanted, she would steal up and sit in the old seat by the window, where in other times she had watched the rosy glow and the golden stars above ; and then, remembering the goodness and mercy that had followed her all the days of her life, her grateful heart was glad that she should dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

And afterwards, when years of toil and time's troubles had passed over Rosie Clare, she too came to see that Lily was right ; and

thinking sadly of the long years she had spent in her own way, she took the world's Saviour for her own, His Father was hers, and she looked forward to the time when “the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”



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