LEFT AT HOME

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LEFT AT HOME

OR

"The Heart's Resting Place"



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“They walked on for some distance without saying muc

LEFT AT HOME;

OR,

The Heart's Resting-p

BY

MARY L. CODE,

AUTHOR OF
"WANDERING MAY;" "CLARIE'S LITTLE CHARGE;"
"LONELY LILY;" ETC.



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LEFT AT HOME.

CHAPTER I.

LITTLE MILDRED, OR THE GATHERED LAMB.



TOP, Mr. Arthur, if you please. You are not to go upstairs. Mistress left orders for you to stay in the library until she came down."

So spoke the younger servant at Ashton Grange, as Arthur rushed upstairs three steps at a time.

"Why, what's the matter? Why shouldn't I go upstairs? Is anything the matter?"

"I don't know, Mr. Arthur, whether there is much the matter; but I am afraid Miss Mildred is ill. The doctor is upstairs, and mistress said there is not to be a sound of noise."

These words quite sobered Arthur, as he turned from the stairs and went into the library. It was a pleasant

room at all times, but especially so on a winter's evening, when the frosty night was shining clear and cold without. A bright fire was blazing, lighting up the crimson carpet and curtains, and sparkling on the snowy table-cover, where preparations for such a tea were made as Arthur was usually at this time prepared to appreciate. But as he sat down on the rug, and, holding his face in his two hands, gazed earnestly into the fire, he was not thinking of his hunger. A very grave expression was on his boyish face. He was thinking of what the housemaid had told him, and wishing very much to know more.

"Why, what can be the matter with baby?" he thought. "She was all right when I went out. She can't be so very bad, I should think, all in a minute. No; I don't believe she is. I'm hungry."

And Arthur started up, and came nearer the table, intending to help himself to something. But then he stopped, and thought again—

"I suppose she is though, or else the doctor wouldn't be here, and every one wouldn't have to be so quiet. Oh, dear, I wish mother would come. I wish she would come. I do wish very much she would come."

Then he thought of creeping quietly upstairs, and listening outside the nursery door; and the temptation to do so was very strong; but he remembered his mother's injunction, and sat down again on the rug. But it was very hard to wait. It would have been a great deal easier to Arthur to do almost anything else just then. One half hour and then another passed, and no sound came to break the stillness which was in the house, till Arthur's head dropped on his hand for weariness, and in a few minutes he was fast asleep. How long he remained so

he hardly knew; but he did not wake until a gentle step came on the stairs. The door was softly opened, and Arthur's mother entered the room. She was very pale, and had a sad, sad look on her face, and just sank wearily down in an easy-chair, on the opposite side of the fireplace to her little boy, who was wide awake now.

"Oh, mother, is it true what Anna says about Mildred, that she is so very ill?" asked Arthur breathlessly. He had come nearer to his mother, and, leaning his chin on her knee, he looked eagerly up in her face.

"Yes, Arthur;" and the hand that was pressed on his forehead to stroke back his brown hair was hot and trembling.

"*Very* ill?" asked Arthur again. "Why, she was a right just after dinner. She will get better, won't she, mamma?"

"Mildred is very, very ill, dear Arthur," his mother said gently. "I came to tell you myself, darling, because I knew you would be wanting to know. She has been attacked with croup very violently indeed, and the doctor does not give me any hope that she will live. I cannot stay with you, my darling boy."

She did not say any more, and before Arthur had scarcely understood what he had heard, his mother was gone. There was only one thought in his mind now. Mildred dying! his darling baby sister, who a little while ago had laughed, and crowed, and kicked her pretty feet as he played with her. How could it all have happened? And how soon a dark cloud had fallen over everything that had seemed so bright! And then a little picture of her fresh baby face came

before him, and he could see the little rosy mouth, and bright blue eyes, and the soft cheek that he had so often kissed. Would her sweet face *never* laugh again? And would he never hear her clear, soft voice calling “Artie, Artie”? Arthur did not know he had loved his baby sister so deeply until now that the dark, sad news had come that perhaps she was going to be taken away from them all for ever. So he sat in the pleasant firelight on the hearth-rug; but there was no brightness on his face now. A very grave cloud had fallen on it, as the words were in his heart that his mother had told him. And then, as he thought about what they really meant, his lip quivered, and the tears fell on the floor, till at length his head bowed down on the armchair where his mother had been sitting, and Arthur sobbed bitterly all alone. It was a very hopeless, heart-sick feeling, as he wept with the vehemence of his strong, loving nature; and he had never felt in this way before; for all his life hitherto he had known what it was to be loved and to love, and had never had cause to mourn over the loss of what his heart had wound itself around.

“I wish some one would come and tell me how Mildred is,” said Arthur presently to himself, after half an hour had passed when he had been crying on the rug. “I wonder is the doctor going to stay there all night?”

Poor little Arthur! it was very hard work waiting there all alone with no one to speak to, not even Hector the house-dog, his friend and confidant; for a servant had gone into the town and taken him with him. Presently the door opened, and he started up eagerly. It was the housemaid, and the candle that she held in her hand showed a grave, tear-stained

face.

“Mr. Arthur, will you come upstairs?” she said. “Mistress sent me to tell you. Will you come up to the nursery?”

“Why—what—may I really? What, is she better then?” asked Arthur joyfully, and yet with a certain trembling at his heart, as he saw the expression on Anna’s face.

“Oh, no, Mr. Arthur,” she said, bursting into tears. “Poor, dear little darling, she can’t scarce breathe; its dreadful to hear her, and she such a sweet little pet. Oh, dear, dear, dear, and whatever will mistress do, and master?”

But Arthur was not crying now as he went slowly up the stairs, feeling as if it was all a dream, and not at all as if these were the same stairs that he generally mounted, or that this was the nursery door where he had generally bounded in with a laughing shout to the bright little sister who now lay very near the shore of the other land. She was a very little girl; not two years ago she had first come; and Arthur, who had been half-afraid of the tiny baby that lay in the nurse’s arms so still and quiet, had by degrees learnt to love her with all his heart. He knew just the best ways to please her, and to make her voice ring out the merry crow he so liked to hear; and always, when she saw her brother coming up the avenue that led to the house, she would stretch out her tiny arms, and try to jump from her nurse’s arms to meet him.

It was only a few hours ago that Arthur had waved his hand to her, and made Hector jump and roll along the ground, that she might see him. She had looked so bright and rosy then, and now it was all so

different!

The room felt warm as he entered, and there seemed to be a great many people around the little white bed where Mildred lay. Arthur never, never forgot that scene; it lay on his heart like a strange, sad picture all his life. He could not see his little sister's face, only a stray golden curl was peeping from the white sheet, and lay on the pillow; he could hear her breathing, and it made his heart quiver to listen to the sounds. The nurse was standing a little aside; for there was nothing more for her to do. She had been placing hot flannels, and trying favourite remedies; but these were all of no avail. The doctor was standing at the post of the bed; for he knew that Mildred's little life was ebbing fast. And then Arthur looked at his father and mother. His mother was sitting by the pillow, and she almost lay upon the bed as she leant over her little dying child. His father was standing close by, and Arthur looked again at the expression that was on his face. He was in general a little afraid of his father; in fact, for the last two or three years he had not seen him at all, and it was only by the kind letters and messages from India, that he had known him of late, and he had thought him rather grave and stern, he was so different from his sweet, gentle mother; and though Arthur loved him at a distance, he had quite different feelings for her.

But now, as he looked again, he saw that a softness was on his father's face, and that the hand that was laid on his wife's shoulder was trembling; and the thought that was in Arthur's mind just then was, "Father really looks as if he was going to cry."

Presently his mother went a little closer to her baby,

and Arthur just heard her whisper, “Let her die in my arms.” His father looked as if he thought it would be better not. But she looked up again: “Give her, I must.” So very gently she took the covering from the child, and drew her to her arms.

Little Mildred did not lie there very long. It was terrible to see her, and Arthur could hardly bear to look; but he did look as the convulsions made her struggle and gasp for breath.

At length he heard his father’s voice in a low whisper say, “She’s gone; thank God.” And then he saw him take a little helpless form from his mother’s arms and lay it back on the white bed, and Arthur saw that his tiny sister was dead. She was lying still, her breath was gone for ever; her eyes were closed, and her curls lay soft and golden on the pillow. She would never open her blue eyes again, and her voice would never more call “Artie, Artie.”

He just saw that his mother sunk down on the floor by the bedside. He could not see her face, but he heard a deep, deep groan, and then she said, “My baby, my darling.” She did not cry, she only knelt there still and silent; and then suddenly a great rush of feeling came over Arthur’s heart as the thought of sweet little Mildred lying dead came over his mind, and he threw himself by his mother’s side, burying his face on her shoulder, and burst into a passion of crying. “Oh, mamma, mamma!” was all he said. “Don’t, Arthur; you had better go down stairs, my boy,” said his father gently. But his mother whispered, “Let him stay;” and she threw her arms round him, and clasped him so tightly that he could hardly breathe.

Perhaps it was good for her to hear her child’s sobs;

they seemed to enter into her heart and melt it, for it was icy in its mourning before.

“God has taken our little Mildred,” said Arthur’s father presently, in a very choked, quivering voice. “He has taken her to be very happy with Himself. He will take care of her for ever.”

“I know it,” said Arthur’s mother; “better than we could.”

Presently Arthur got up, and before he went away from the room he threw his arms once more around his little dead sister, and the tears fell over her golden curls and her round fair cheeks, which were still round and red.

He cried himself to sleep that night, and when he awoke in the morning it was with a dreary feeling that a great deal was gone. He was the only child now, and as he stood by the little open grave where Mildred’s tiny coffin had been lowered, and as he felt the soft, tight clasp of his mother’s hand in his, Arthur felt he would be a loving boy to her.





CHAPTER II.

GOING TO INDIA.

THE home seemed very sad and silent indeed without the little child who had been laid in the low green-covered grave, and a sadness seemed to have fallen upon it. At first Arthur went about the house silently and slowly, and it was some time before his boyish spirits came back to him; but he was only a boy after all, and a very young boy, and by and by, when the green leaves came budding on the trees and the spring voice was waking in the valleys and the fields, when the young lambs answered with their bleating and the young birds sung a chorus of bursting joy, Arthur's face brightened, and his step was bounding again. And his mother was glad to see him with the weary cloud gone, only her heart ached with a deep throb as she thought of the new care that was hanging over him, and of which he knew nothing as yet.

One day, when Arthur was passing the door of his

mother's morning-room, he heard his father's voice within, saying, "I think you had better tell him, Louisa." The door was partly open, and if he listened he would easily be able to hear what they were saying. The temptation was very strong, and Arthur yielded to it. It was very wrong, and he knew it.

"Oh, no!" he heard his mother say, "I could not tell him; I don't think I could. It almost breaks my heart to think of it myself."

"Louisa," said his father—and Arthur thought his voice sounded rather sad—"you know it is your own choice, and even now you can change if you like."

"Oh, no, no, dear Ronald!" said his mother—and he could hear that her voice was quivering and trembling—"you know very well I could not. Forgive me, I ought to be very thankful I have you still; and so I am. But tell him yourself, Ronald; you know I am so foolish."

"Very well," said Mr. Vivyan, rising and stirring the fire with great energy, as if he were then acting what he had made up his mind to do.

And then Arthur stole away, feeling very strange with various mingled feelings. Something seemed to say that the conversation concerned him, but what it was all about he could not imagine. Something terrible seemed to be going to happen; something that his mother could not make up her mind to tell. And then he remembered how very wrong it had been for him to listen to this conversation. He had always been taught never to do such a thing, and the consciousness of his fault weighed heavily on his mind. He wished very much that he had not waited at the door, when he had seen it stand so temptingly

open. Indeed, so much did he think about what he had done, that the strange things he had heard hardly troubled him.

But by and by, when he was walking through the lanes, where the primroses were dotting the hedgerows with green and yellow tufts, he began to think again of what he had heard, and his step was slow and steady as he thought. He was not the same Arthur who generally bounded along, startling the little lambs who were feeding on the other side of the hedge; and Hector seemed puzzled by the unusual quiet as he ran on first, inviting his master to follow. Altogether it was a very grave and thoughtful walk, and when Arthur came in, the quiet look was on his face still, and a very troubled expression could be seen there.

“Arthur dear, is anything the matter?” asked his mother in the evening, as he sat on his low stool before the fire doing nothing, and thinking again of what he had heard and what he had done.

Arthur started, and blushed a very deep red.

“Why should you think there was anything the matter, mother?”

“Because I see there is,” she said quietly.

He did not answer, and Mr. Vivyan looked out keenly at him, from behind the book he was reading. But still Arthur had nothing to say, and the troubled look came deeper on his face. He came nearer to his mother’s chair, and presently when he found himself there he laid his head on her lap.

“What is it, my darling?” she asked, laying her hand on his brown hair. Then the tears came into his eyes,

and it was not directly that he was able to say, “Mother, I know it was very wrong of me; but I heard what you and papa were saying this morning when you were in the boudoir.”

“It was very wrong indeed,” said Mr. Vivyan; “I did not think you would have done such a thing, Arthur.”

“Oh, Arthur, Arthur!” said his mother very gently and sadly, “why did you, why did you not remember?”

He was crying now, and he did not need to be told that he had done very wrong.

“Well, then, you know all about it, I suppose?” said Arthur’s father.

“No, I don’t, papa. I only heard that something dreadful was going to happen; and you told mother to tell some one, and she said she couldn’t; and then you said you would, and I don’t remember the rest.”

Mr. Vivyan smiled rather sadly, and Arthur felt his mother’s arm more closely clasped around him.

“Was it about me?” asked Arthur presently.

Mr. Vivyan looked up at his wife, and then he said, “Arthur, my boy, when I was in India before, why did your mother stay in England?”

“I don’t know,” said Arthur, somewhat surprised at the question. “To take care of me, I suppose. Oh no, it wasn’t, though; it was because she was ill, and she couldn’t live in India, the doctor said.”

“Yes; and now, is she as ill as she was then?”

“Oh no, I should think not!” said Arthur brightly. “She is ever so much better, aren’t you, mother?”

“Yes, dear,” she said gently.

“Well,” said Mr. Vivyan, speaking very slowly, and laying his hand kindly on Arthur’s curls, “did you know, Arthur, that my time for being in England is very nearly over? there are only six weeks more left.”

“Yes, father,” said Arthur, and feeling his father’s hand laid so tenderly on his head, he felt more sorry at the thought that he was going than he had ever done before. “I’m very sorry.”

“But then, don’t you see, my boy,” Mr. Vivyan said, looking anxious and as if he had great difficulty in expressing himself, “your mother need not stay at home this time?”

“No,” said Arthur, after a pause, “I suppose not. And am I going to India too?”

“Why no, my dear child. You know how glad we should be to take you with us; and very likely you do not know, Arthur, what it costs us to leave you at home. But you know you could not go; children of your age would very likely not live.”

Arthur turned quickly round, and gazed with an incredulous, questioning look at his father and mother. He could not see his mother’s face, for it was hidden by her hand; but if he had looked closely he might have seen that her whole form was trembling, though she did not speak a word.

“Papa,” said Arthur presently, “what can you mean? Do you really mean that you and mother are going out to India, and that you are going to leave me in

England by myself?"

"Dear Arthur, you know we must."

Arthur turned away, and for a little while he said nothing. Presently he spoke—it seemed as if half to himself—"No, I don't believe that," he said. "I don't believe that could be true."

"Arthur, my darling, darling boy, come here," said his mother, after some time when nobody had spoken.

Arthur came nearer to his mother, and laid his head upon her knee. He was feeling almost stunned, and as if he had not understood yet what he had heard. Then a sudden thought came over him, that it meant he would soon not be able to do this any more.

"Mamma," he said in a low voice, which was very touchingly sad in its hopelessness, "need you go? Wouldn't you rather stay at home with me?"

"Oh, Arthur," said Mrs. Vivyan, "you must not say those things, dear."

"Won't you take me with you, then? I don't believe I could stay at home without you. Won't you take me? Oh, do! please, do!"

All this was said in a very low, mournful voice; for Arthur felt almost as if he had not strength to cry about it.

"Arthur," said Mr. Vivyan, speaking gravely but kindly, "I tell you we would if we could; but you must be contented to believe that it cannot be."

"But I am sure it would do me no harm, father; you don't know how much heat I can bear. I believe I am

better sometimes in hot weather. And oh! I don't believe I *could* live in England by myself."

He gave a very weary sigh, and leant his head heavily on his mother. Presently he felt a tear on his forehead, and he knew that she must be crying.

"My own darling little mamma," said Arthur, "I love you with my whole heart. Oh, you don't know how very much I love you!" and he gave a deep, weary sigh.

She put her arm round him, and pressed him very closely to her heart; and he felt as if he were a tired little baby, and that it was very nice to have his mother's arm around him. By and by he began crying; not with a hard, passionate feeling, but in a weak, weary way, the tears flowing down one after another over his mother's hands.

"My dear child," said Mr. Vivyan, as the time came nearer for Arthur to go to bed, "you don't know what it is to your mother and to me to leave you; but we hope you will be happy by and by, for your aunt will be very kind to you, and will love you very much. She lives in a very nice part of the country. You may be sure, Arthur, we should be quite certain that every one would be kind to you."

"Do you mean that I am to live with some other person?" asked Arthur listlessly.

"Yes, with my sister; that is, your aunt."

It did not seem to matter very much to Arthur just then where he was going, or what was to become of him. He knew his father and mother were going away, and that he was to be left all alone, quite alone it seemed to him, and a very desolate, forlorn

feeling fell over his heart, and seemed to make him feel numbed and heavy.

“Good night, my own dear mother,” said Arthur, as he took his candle. He was not crying, and there was almost a little wan smile on his face as he said it, making him look very different from the bright, joyous boy who generally threw his arms around her neck with an embrace, which was most emphatic as well as affectionate. He did not know how her heart was aching for him, and he knew still less of the pain his father felt, but could not show.

As Arthur sunk on his knees that night by the side of his little bed where the firelight was brightening and glowing, a deep sob came up from the very depths of his heart; and when he tried to pray, all he could say was, “O God, take care of me; for there is nobody else.”

Arthur knew what it was to have put his trust in the Saviour of the world, but hitherto everything had been so bright, and things had come and gone so smoothly, that he had not thought much about Him. He stayed awake a very long time, waiting to see if his mother would come and talk to him, as she very often did when there was anything to say. He did not know what had passed when he had left the library, that his mother’s head had sunk low, and her heart had shed the tears that he had not seen, and that now came flowing from her eyes. And he did not know that she was utterly unfit to speak to any one, so that when she stopped at his door, and seemed to be going in, his father had said—

“No, Louisa, you must not; I will go and tell him that you would come, but that you can’t.”

So that was how it was when Arthur heard his bedroom door open, and looked round with an eager longing in his eye. He sunk back again on his pillow when he saw that it was his father that was coming towards him, and he lay there quite quietly without moving, so that Mr. Vivyan almost thought he was asleep.

“Arthur,” he said, “your mother wished me to tell you that she would have come to see you herself, only she was not able. You know, my dear little boy, she is quite ill with the thought of your trouble; and won’t you try and be cheerful, for I am sure you would not like to make her ill, would you, Arthur?”

“No, father,” said Arthur, in a very quiet voice, without lifting his head or looking up.

“Good night, my child,” said his father, stooping down and kissing him; and then as he took his candle and went away from the room he said to himself, “He is a very strange boy—very strange indeed. After all, I don’t think he takes it so very much to heart as Louisa imagines.”

But he did not know. When Arthur heard his door shut, and when he knew that no one would come in again, the storm began, and it was a storm of passion when sorrow, and anger, and affection all raged together.

Arthur had always been a passionate child, and now the wild tempest that nobody saw showed plainly his uncontrolled feelings. “Oh, dear! oh, dear! what shall I do?” moaned the poor child to himself, tossing on his bed. “And am I making mamma ill too? But how can I help it? How *can* I help it? I can’t help being most frightfully miserable; yes, and angry too. I am

angry. Why did he come back from India to take mother away? I don't believe she wants to go. Yes, I suppose she does though. Oh, I wish, I wish he had never come back from India! Everything has gone wrong since. I don't love him one bit. I wish, oh, I wish it was as it used to be once!"

Poor Arthur, he sobbed and moaned until he was tired, and the knowledge that he was very wicked did not certainly make him happier.

He sobbed himself to sleep that night, and when the morning sunbeams stole into the room and lighted on the white curtains of his bed, he awoke with a dull, desolate feeling of a great pain in his heart.



CHAPTER III.

ARTHUR'S MOTHER; OR, "SAFE IN THE ARMS OF JESUS."



RS. VIVYAN'S morning-room was on the pleasant sunny side of the house, and was a very favourite retreat of her little boy. Indeed there was one corner of it which he considered as especially his own. It was a little sofa near the window, rather hidden in a recess, so that any one might be lying there and not be seen. Perhaps this idea of privacy was one thing which made Arthur like it; and then it was near the window, from which he could see the garden and the birds; and he liked to watch the sun sparkling on the pond, and making diamond showers of the fountain, which sometimes he would persuade the gardener to do for him.

And now, with his new deep trouble weighing on his heart, he sought his usual refuge. Nobody was in the room as Arthur and his companion, Hector, came in, Arthur throwing himself wearily on the sofa, and Hector making himself comfortable on the rug.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Arthur, after a while; "I don't think mother cares very much. Come here, sir; do you care?"

Hector came, and obediently lay down near the sofa.

"Father doesn't care much, that I'm pretty sure of," continued Arthur; "but I don't mind that so much. I wonder will mother miss me in India. I wonder will you miss me, Hector, old boy. You ought, and you will too, I expect. Do you think you will, Hector? Speak to me, do!"

But Hector only gravely wagged his tail.

"Oh, dear! I wish a great deal," said Arthur.

Just then there was a rustling noise at the door, and Arthur lay very still and quiet as he saw that it was

his mother who was coming in. He was hidden on his sofa, so she did not see that he was there.

Presently she took her work from the table, and sat down in a low chair by the fire; and Arthur watched her as she sat there, and gazed at her sweet, gentle face.

He could not understand all that was there; but he could see enough to make him very sorry that he had said “Mother doesn’t care much.”

There was such a look of patient sweetness there, and the eyes that she now and then lifted up were deep with an expression of pain, only over it all peace was shedding a softness and beauty that he could feel. He watched her for a long time in silence, until at last a look of intense pain seemed to furrow her brow, and suddenly she buried her face in her hands, and he could just hear her say, “My darling, my darling!”

Arthur started up, and as she heard the sound she looked over to where he was.

“My dear little Arthur, I did not know any one was in the room.”

“Mamma, I did not mean to hide—to look—I mean, to listen. I forgot I ought to have said I was here. Mother, may I say what I was thinking before you came in?”

“Yes, darling. I always like to hear your thoughts.”

“I was just thinking that you didn’t seem to care so very much.”

“What about?” asked his mother.

“Oh, about all those dreadful things—about dear little Mildred having died, and about my being left all by myself.”

It was not just directly that Mrs. Vivyan was able to answer, and then she said:

“When you are older, darling, you will find out that it is not always the people who talk and cry most, who feel things most; and that there is such a thing as saying ‘Thy will be done,’ and of not giving way to all our feelings for the sake of others.”

“Ah, yes; that is what I ought to do,” said Arthur with a deep sigh.

“Arthur, dear,” said Mrs. Vivyan presently, looking straight into the fire, and closing her hands very tightly, “don’t ever think I do not care or feel. Oh, you never can know how much I have felt! You know nothing about the hungry feeling in my heart when I think of my darling, darling little baby, whom God is taking care of now; and how, when I see the little bed she used to lie on, and her little frocks and shoes, I feel something biting in my heart, and as if I *must* have her in my arms again. And about you, my own precious boy, God knows how I feel, as I never could express to you; but I can tell Him, and I do.”

And Arthur’s mother buried her face again in her hands, and burst into an agony of weeping. He had never seen her cry like that before, and it was something quite new to him to see his sweet, gentle mother so moved. He hardly knew what to say to her; so he rose from his sofa, and coming close up to her chair, he threw his arms with a fervent embrace around her, and said softly:

“Never mind, my own dear mother; I will try and bear it.”

And then Arthur cried too; for the bitterness of what it would be to bear it came over him.

“God will bless us both in it, my darling,” said his mother; “and He will take care of us while we are separated, and bring us back to each other again some day, I trust. But Arthur, my own, am I leaving you in a loving Saviour’s arms? Are you there, folded in His everlasting arms?”

“Mother,” said Arthur in a faltering voice, “I do really believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I am nearly sure I do. But I don’t feel happy. I don’t think much about Him, and it makes me feel frightened when I think about dying.”

“But He says, ‘Trust, and not be afraid,’ and He says, ‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.’ Oh, Arthur, I do leave you in His arms! for I am sure you are there if you trust in Him; and perhaps He is taking me away so that you may feel His arms, and that it is a very sweet thing to be there, and to be loved and taken care of for ever. As I do,” she added, “in the midst of all my sorrows.”



CHAPTER IV.

LAST DAYS AT ASHTON GRANGE.



RS. ESTCOURT, Mr. Vivyan's only sister, was a widow lady living by herself. Her home was in the neighbourhood of a large town, and here, in a comfortable, moderately-sized house, she had lived for many years. She had no children of her own, and when her husband had died she had seemed to wish to avoid much intercourse with any one, so that Arthur knew very little of his aunt. Once or twice he had seen her when she had paid very short visits at Ashton Grange. He remembered a very sad-looking lady, with a sweet face, who had held his hand as he stood by her chair, and that he had half liked it, and felt half awkward as she spoke to him. He remembered that as he had stood there, he had felt afraid to move or fidget in the least bit, and that every now and then, as he had stolen a glance at her, he had seen that her large dark eyes had been fixed upon him. He had been very glad when the nursery dinner-bell rang and he was obliged to go, without seeming to wish to run away.

"Nurse," said Arthur that day at dinner, "there's a black lady down stairs."

"A black lady!" said nurse; "there's a way to speak of

your aunt, Master Arthur. Mrs. Estcourt is your papa's own sister."

"Well, she looked all black, I know," said Arthur. "I think I won't go down stairs much while she is there."

Nurse remarked that if he were going to stay she hoped he would be quiet and well-behaved; but as he had to keep all his quiet behaviour for the drawing-room, it is to be feared nurse's temper was tried a little during the few days that Mrs. Estcourt passed at Ashton Grange. Consequently Arthur's memories of his aunt were not such as to make him very happy at the prospect of living with her always.

"Mother," said Arthur, on the evening of the day after he had heard about these strange things that were going to happen, "is the aunt that I am going to live with, that one that came here once?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Vivyan; "She is very kind, Arthur, and I know she will love you very much, if——"

"Yes, if I am good, I know," said Arthur; "and that's just the difference. You know, mamma, you always love me, whatever I am."

"Of course," said his mother, smiling; "but you could not expect any one to love you in the way your mother does. You would not like her to be your mother, would you?"

"No, of course not. Now, mother, tell me something about what her place is like, and where it is, and what sort of things I shall do when I am there. I have loads of questions to ask, only I forget them now."

"Well, begin then," said his mother; "perhaps one

will remind you of another."

"First of all, then, what is the name of her place?"

"Myrtle Hill, near Stanton."

"Myrtle Hill! what a funny name. Is it at all like this, mother?"

"No, dear, not much. I am afraid it is a much more orderly kind of place. But I will try to describe it to you. It is a good many years since I was there, and I did not notice things so very much. It is a white house with myrtle trained over the lower parts, and a great many myrtle trees growing in the avenue; that is why it is called Myrtle Hill. I know there is a large garden with a good many shady places under the trees, that I remember thinking would be delightful in the summer. There is a front garden too."

"That's nice," said Arthur.

"Oh, but I don't expect your aunt will like little boys to have the run of her garden!"

"I daresay she will," said Arthur. "She is going to be very fond of me, you know."

"Well, that is question number one. Now, what is the second?"

"Yes; where does she live?"

"It is a good way from this; about six hours by the train, and five miles from Stanton."

"Oh, yes! and that reminds me of another question. How am I to learn? Will she teach me? I hope not."

"No," said Mrs. Vivyan; "we have thought you are old enough to go to school now. There is a very good

school between your aunt's house and the town. It is about two miles from Myrtle Hill, and you would go there every morning and come back early in the evening."

"Ah, I like that very much," said Arthur joyfully; "that really is jolly, mother. Who keeps the school?"

"A very nice gentleman. Your father has known him for a long time."

"He is tremendously strict, I suppose?"

"Well, I daresay he likes to be obeyed," said Mrs. Vivyan; "but that is quite right, isn't it?"

"Yes, of course," Arthur answered. "What is his name, mother?"

"Mr. Carey."

"Well, I don't like that name," said Arthur emphatically; "but I suppose he can't help that. Does he wear spectacles?"

"No, I should think not," said Mrs. Vivyan, smiling; "he is not old enough. I think he is not quite so old as your father."

"I suppose he is rather young then. I am glad of that. I should never be so much afraid of youngish people as of old ones."

"Any more questions?" asked Mrs. Vivyan presently. "There is one question you have not asked, Arthur, darling, that I was expecting, and it is the one question that my heart is paining to have to answer."

"What can it be, mother?" said Arthur wonderingly. "I think I have asked a great many. What can it be?"

And then he thought for a little while very earnestly. At length a troubled look came into his eyes, and he looked at his mother, and said softly—

“I know, mother, I know, and I am rather afraid to ask; but I must, for I want to know. When am I going?” The question came out very slowly.

“Arthur, my own darling little boy,” said his mother, pressing her arm very closely around him, and he could hear the quiver in her voice as she spoke, “it is very soon. We did not tell you until just at the end, when we were obliged to do it; because what was the use of making you unhappy before we need?”

“Well, when is it?” said Arthur.

“It is the day after to-morrow.”

“Oh, mother, mother!” was all Arthur said; and he became very still indeed.

By and by he said, in a very troubled voice, “I wish I had known it before.”

“Why, dear?”

“Because then—oh, mother!” said Arthur, bursting into tears, “I would have stayed with you all the day, and I would not have done anything you don’t like.”

And then the tears came into his mother’s eyes, and she said tenderly—

“But I knew it, Arthur dear, and I kept you with me as much as I could. And, my darling, you do not often do things I don’t like.”

“Oh, yes I do, mother, very often!” said Arthur, sobbing still.

“Well, dear, if you do, I know that with it all you really do love me.”

Arthur gave her hand a passionate squeeze, and said, “Indeed, indeed I do, mother.”

And then Arthur said no more, but fell into a grave fit of musing. Presently he roused himself, and said, “But, mamma, how can I go in two days? Are there not things to be done? Mustn’t I have a lot of new clothes, and ever so many things?”

“But, don’t you see,” said Mrs. Vivyan with a smile, half amused and half sad, “I have known it for a long time, and I have been making arrangements that my little boy knew nothing about.”

“Oh, well,” said Arthur with a deep sigh.

“Would you like to see some of the things that you are going to take away with you?” asked his mother.

“Yes, I think I should,” said Arthur; but he spoke so hesitatingly; for dearly as he liked preparations for a journey, he remembered with a bitter pang what the preparations were for, and what the cause of the journey was.

Mrs. Vivyan opened the door of a small room adjoining her own, which was generally kept locked, and where, Arthur knew, he was not expected to go without being allowed. There was a large table near the window; it was covered with various things; there was a leather writing-case, a new paint-box, and a Polyglot Bible; there were several new books too, and a very large pile of new clothes, but they did not take up much of Arthur’s attention. His quick eyes soon detected a fishing rod and cricket bat, that stood in the corner of the room near by; indeed there

seemed to be nothing that his kind father and mother had not provided. He noticed something else that was there, and that was a Russia-leather purse; and when he took it to examine the inside he found that it was not empty—the first thing he saw was a five pound note!

“Oh, mamma!” said Arthur breathlessly; “who is all that money for?”

“Who do you think?” she asked, smiling.

“Well, I suppose for me,” said Arthur; “but, mother, is all that really for me? It will last until you come back.”

“Do you think so?” said Mrs. Vivyan. “Well, I hope you will use it well, and show that you can be trusted with so much.”

“Is it to buy new clothes with, when I want any?” asked Arthur.

“No; I don’t think you could quite manage that,” said his mother, laughing; “besides, look at all the new clothes you have; don’t you think they will last until I come back?”

“I don’t know; I do use a great many clothes, certainly,” said Arthur thoughtfully, as he remembered various rents in more than one of his little coats; “and boots, oh, yes, my boots must cost a great deal.”

The next day Arthur devoted to taking a farewell ramble through the grounds; and in roaming through all the places in the country around, that he knew so well. He visited every little hiding-place, to which he and his companion had given names of their own,

and then he sat down on the top of a high mound near the house, where on one of his birthdays a flagstaff had been planted. The gay-coloured flag was floating in the breeze now, and Arthur wondered whether if any one else came to live at Ashton Grange they would take down the flagstaff; “at any rate,” he thought, “I will take down the flag. I think it is nicer that it should be folded up while we are all away. Oh, yes, and then it will be all ready to put up again, when we all come back, if we ever do come back again to this place. Let me see, I shall be almost a man then. Fancy me a man. I wonder what kind of a man I shall be. Like papa, I daresay; and yet they say I am like mother. I should think a man like mother would be very queer.”

And Arthur began painting fancy pictures of the time when his father’s term in India should be over; and though it was very pleasant to do it, and the things that he intended to happen then, were very much to his fancy, yet it was with a little sigh of regret that he said to himself, “But any way, I shall never be mother’s little boy any more.”

Then Arthur took out his new pocket knife and carved his name upon the flagstaff. “How odd if anybody sees it while we are away,” he thought; “they will wonder whose name it is. Shall I put Arthur T. Vivyan? No, I think not, that might be Thomas. I should not like any one to think my name was Thomas.”

So, after an hour’s diligent labour, the name appeared, “Arthur Trevor Vivyan.”

And then he sat down to take a last long look at everything. It was late in the afternoon, and the sun was shining with its soft spring gilding, sparkling

through the ivy, and making the shadows of the woods look deeper. It was shining with a ruddy glow on the windows of the house, every window that he knew so well. There was his mother's room. Arthur always thought hers was the nicest window, and he used to be very glad that the roses climbed up there, and clustered lovingly around it. There was the little window on the landing over the hall door; where he remembered, on more than one occasion, he had made nurse very angry, by wishing to try if he could not climb out there, and plant himself on the top of the porch, so as to look like a statue. Then there was the drawing-room window, with the green Venetian blinds half drawn up, and the bright colours appearing from inside. Lastly, he looked to the nursery, where, oh, so often! he had watched for little Mildred's white-robed figure to appear. How pleased she used to be, when he stood where he was now! It was a sad, sad sever to Arthur's heart; only everything seemed so dark and sad just now, that he had not thought much about Mildred lately; but his eyes followed the sunlight on, far away, until they rested on one fair green spot amongst the trees, where he knew that a little green mound was covering his baby sister's form; and as all the sad things that had happened so lately came into Arthur's mind, and he thought of how different it had been a little while ago, he covered his face with his hands, and the sobs came thick and fast.

So that when after a little while he came indoors, and wandered into the room where he expected to find his mother, she saw that his eyes were red with crying, and she knew that his heart was as sad as her own. But she said brightly, "Arthur, I want you to help me. See, here are piles of your things, and I want you to help me to count them over, and to put

down how many there are of each; that is what we call an inventory, and you must have an inventory, of course." Arthur was quite pleased with this idea, and presently he was very busy helping his mother. When it was all done, when the last little garment was laid neatly in the box, and the nice presents that had been given to him were stored away underneath, and Arthur's mother was resting in her armchair in the firelight, he drew his stool to her feet, and laid his head lovingly on her lap; and his mother felt the hot tears fall on her hands, and she saw that the brown curls were trembling with his crying, and she knew that the same thought was in his mind that had just been aching in hers—"For the last time!"

But Arthur did not cry long, for he was trying hard not to make her more unhappy than she was, and presently he stopped, and became very still, and after a little while he said softly—

"Talk to me, mamma."

"What shall I say, dear?"

"Oh, you know, mother! you always know the right things to say."

"And yet, Arthur," said his mother, after a very long pause, and speaking in a soft, low voice, as if she was afraid to speak louder, "I do not know what to say now, dear; for I never could say all that is in my heart. I can only say it to God about you, my own child."

"Do you often pray for me, mother? I don't think I ever miss praying for you any day."

"You are always in my heart, Arthur; and so when my heart rises to God, it bears you with it."

“How nice it is to have a mother,” said Arthur in a restful voice, “even although—” and then he stopped; for he thought it was better to say no more.

“After all, it is not so very, very far to India,” said Arthur. “How long would a telegram take getting there?”

“About two or three hours.”

“Oh, dear, I wish I could be turned into a telegram!” sighed Arthur.

“Oh, but,” said Mrs. Vivyan, laughing, “that would be only doing one little bit of good, and I want my Arthur to be of some use all the day long.”

“How can I,” asked Arthur, “without you?”

“Do you know who you belong to before me?” said his mother. “You know, Arthur, you have told me, and I believe it is true, that you have put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that His blood has washed all your sins away. Then, if that is true of you, you are your own no longer. You belong to Him; for He has bought you with a price. Is it not sweet, my darling, to feel that He says to you now, while you are being left at home, ‘Thou art mine’? You know I love to take care of you, because you are mine; and don’t you think He does much more? You know the Bible says that a mother may forget, but God *never*.”

“Oh, mother, it is so nice to hear you talk,” said Arthur. “Go on, please.”

“Well, I was going to say, the Lord Jesus is always the best Friend; and now that you are going to leave me, perhaps you will think of Him, and look to Him,

more than you have ever done before. Oh, Arthur, my child, get to know Him better; talk to Him as you have talked to me; tell Him about your little troubles, and joys, and sorrows; tell Him when you feel lonely and weary, and sit at His feet, just as you are now sitting at mine. Do you think He would turn you away? Just pour out your heart before Him, whatever is in it, because He loves you as only He can love."

"But, mamma, I can't see Him as I see you."

"No, my child; but that is where faith comes in. You must believe when you do not see; and remember that He said, 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'"

"Mother, I think you were going to say something else," said Arthur, after a little while.

"Yes; I was talking about the first half of the text I had in my mind, and that I give you to keep from me —'Whose I am, and whom I serve,' I want you to know the sweetness of the first, my darling, and then I think you will want the last to be true of you, and He will show you the way."

"Yes, I know," said Arthur meditatively, "I ought to be patient, and gentle, and thoughtful; and, you know, mamma, it is just my nature to be the opposite, and I don't know how on earth I can be all that to that aunt."

"Oh, hush, dear! Of course you could not be expected to love her much at first; but that ought not to make any difference; for it is to please the Lord Jesus that you are to be all this, and the harder it is for you the more He will know that you really do try to please

Him. Then, are there not other ways? I mean things that you could do to bring honour to Him. Think of your being the means of bringing God's salvation to anybody, or of making the heart of any of His people glad."

"Yes," Arthur said, "and I think I could try. I could give away tracts, or I could visit sick old women."

"Yes, and you might speak for Him."

"If He will help me," said Arthur reverently; "but that is a great deal more difficult, mother."

They did not talk much more that night, for it was getting late, and Arthur sat looking at the lights and shadows in the burning coals. Out of doors the fair spring evening had darkened into a gusty night; and the wind was sighing in the trees, and blowing the rose-bushes against the windows. It was very comfortable sitting there on the hearth-rug with his head on his mother's lap. Arthur felt so very safe, and it seemed to him that he could not be very unhappy, whatever happened to him, so long as he could be there. And he did not dare think of what it would be, when miles and miles of land and sea would stretch between him and this sweet, well-known resting-place. He would enjoy it for this last time without thinking of the dark, dreary to-morrow that was coming.

CHAPTER V.

THE PARTING.

IT had to come at length. Arthur awoke that morning with a great, dreary burden pressing on his heart, and a feeling of half horror, and half unbelieving, that it could really be true.

He hardly knew how he dressed, and he did not notice that the daylight had not changed the dreariness of last night's weather; for a chill mist was falling outside, and if he had looked for the fields and hills near he would have found them all hidden in the damp fog.

Mrs. Vivyan was waiting for him in the breakfast-room, and presently, as she stood there, the door opened, and a very solemn-looking face appeared. Arthur had been nerving himself for this time; he had been trying very hard not to cry; and he had succeeded pretty well until now, although on the way down stairs he had to bite his lips very hard as

he felt the tears in his eyes. But now, as he came into the warm, comfortable room, and noticed everything there, it was no use trying to keep it in any longer. His mother had provided that morning everything he liked best, he could see that.

“Come, dear,” she said, “you must make a good breakfast to please me, you know, Arthur.” Her own face was very, very pale, and Arthur little knew the intense effort it was to her to speak at all. So he sat down in his own little chair, and was very still and silent for some moments; but presently Mrs. Vivyan saw him moving his cup of coffee away, and when there was a clear space before him he threw his arms on the table and buried his head there. It was only just in time; for a very bitter cry broke from his heart and his lips: “Oh, mamma, mamma, I can’t go! Oh, do stay with me! Don’t you think you ought to stay?”

What could she say? What could she do, but lift up her heart to her refuge and strength?

While she was doing this, Arthur’s sobs gradually ceased, and presently he said, in a little broken voice, “I did not mean to do it, mother; I did try not.”

But he could not eat much breakfast, and after a little while he came nearer to her side, and said, “Just let me stay until papa comes for me. I don’t want you to talk. I only want to stay here.” For Mr. Vivyan had gone into the town, not intending to come back until just before the time, when he would come to fetch Arthur away to the new home, where his heart certainly was not.

So they did not speak at all during that hour; only Arthur sat with his head pressed very closely on his

mother's shoulder, and holding her hands in both his, as if he would never loosen his hold.

By and by there was a brisk step in the hall, and out of doors carriage wheels could be heard on the road; and then Mrs. Vivyan lifted the curly head, that was leaning on her shoulder. Arthur knew what it meant —the bitterest moment that had ever come to him was now at hand—and it was only a few minutes, before the good-bye would begin the five long years of separation.

Everything was ready, and he had only to put on his coat and comforter. He was in a kind of maze, as he felt the warm coat put on him, and as his mother's white hands tied the scarf round his neck. Then her arms were pressed very closely around him, and as he lay there like a helpless little baby, he could just hear her whispered farewell, "Good-bye, my own child; may God take care of you." Then Arthur felt that his father's hand was holding his, and that he was leading him away. Suddenly he remembered something that he had forgotten. "Oh, father!" he said, "please stop a moment; I must do something I forgot." This was a tiny white paper parcel, which he had been keeping for this last moment, in a hidden corner upstairs. Arthur ran up to the place, and bringing it down he put it in his mother's hands, and said, "That's what I made for you, mother."

She did not open it until he was gone; and perhaps it was well that Arthur did not see the passion of tears that were shed over that little parcel. It was only a piece of ivory carved in the shape of a horseshoe, or rather there was an attempt at carving it in that shape; and on a slip of paper was written, in Arthur's round hand, "For my own dear mother to wear while

I am away. This is to be made into a brooch."



CHAPTER VI.

MYRTLE HILL; OR, THE NEW HOME.

WHEN Arthur Vivyan was looking forward, with such feelings of dread, he did not know that his aunt was hardly less anxiously expecting his arrival; and that, much as he feared what living with her would be, her thoughts had been very troubled ones on the same subject. She had lived alone for so many years now, and as she said, she was so little accustomed to children, she was afraid that her young nephew would find her home deary and sad; that she might not understand him herself, or that she might be foolishly indulgent and blind to the faults, which might make him grow useless and miserable. She had spent many anxious hours thinking of all this, and laying plans about the care she would take of him,

and all the ways in which she would try to make him happy and contented.

Arthur and his father had left Ashton by an afternoon train, which did not bring them into the town, near Mrs. Estcourt's house, until it was quite dark. It was a very cheerless journey to Arthur. Generally he liked travelling by the railway, and when he took his seat by his father's side, his spirits rose very high as they passed quickly along, and the new scenes and sights, that he watched from the carriage window, occupied his attention pretty fully.

But this time it was quite different. His mother's sweet, sad farewell was still sounding in his ears; and as the train rushed along on its way, he knew that it was bearing him farther and farther away from her, and from the home where he had lived so long. He could hardly have explained his own feelings; only a very dreary aching was in his heart; and as he thought of the strange new place, where he was going, and then of the miles and miles of land and sea, that would soon lie between himself and his father and mother, he felt very strange and desolate, and you would hardly have recognized the grave, serious-looking face as Arthur Vivyan's.

Perhaps it was that expression that drew the attention of an old gentleman, who was sitting opposite to him. At any other time, Arthur would have been inclined to be amused at this old gentleman; for he came into the carriage, bringing so many parcels and wraps, that for some little time he was stowing them away, talking all the while to nobody in particular, and finishing every sentence with "Eh?"

"Going to school, my boy—eh?" he asked at length,

after he had looked at Arthur's mournful face for some little time.

Arthur did not feel much inclined to talk just then, so he only said "No;" and then remembering that, in fact, he was to go to school while he was living at his aunt's, he was obliged to say, "At least, yes."

"'No' and 'yes' both; not quite sure—eh?" asked the old gentleman.

Then Mr. Vivyan turned round, and explained that his son was going to live with his aunt, and that he would go to school from her house.

"Oh, that's it—eh? Fine times for you then, young man. When I was a boy things were different with me, I can tell you. Hundred boys where I was; and I was one of the little fellows, who had to make it easy for the big ones. Up at six in the morning—coldest winter mornings. Never had a chance of getting near the fire; never went home for the winter holidays. How would you like that—eh?"

"I don't suppose I should like it at all," said Arthur. But he thought in his own mind, that his case was not much better.

After a few more remarks from his old friend opposite, when he saw him pull his cap over his face and settle himself to sleep, he was more pleased than otherwise.

Poor little Arthur! He thought he was feeling desolate enough; and as he sat by his father's side, and thought that even he would soon be far away, it made him feel inclined to cling more closely to him than he had ever done before; so that, when the jolting of the train made his head knock against his

father's shoulder, he let it stay there, and presently he found his father's strong arm was around him, and Arthur felt that he loved him more than he had ever done before.

"Cheer up, Arthur, my boy," he heard him say presently, and his voice had a softer sound, than it sometimes had, he thought. "We may all be very happy yet some day together, and not very long, you know. Five years soon pass, you know, Arthur."

But five years had a very long, dreary sound to him just then. In fact, he could not bear to think of it at all; and he was afraid that if he thought or spoke on the subject, that he should cry, which he did not wish to do just then; so he gave a very deep, long sigh.

By and by he went to sleep. Perhaps it was because he had spent several waking hours the night before, and that this day had been a dinnerless one for him; but so it was, and when he awoke it was to a scene of confusion and bustle, for they had arrived at their journey's end, and the guard was calling aloud, "Oldbridge."

Arthur rubbed his sleepy eyes, as the station lights flashed brightly, and the train came to a sudden stop. "Come, Arthur, my boy, here we are. Make haste and open your eyes. We have a drive before us, so you will have time to wake up on the way to your aunt's," said Mr. Vivyan, as they threaded their way along the crowded platform.

It was a very dark night; there was no moon, and thick clouds shut out the starlight. Oldbridge station stood at the extreme end of the town, and in order to reach Myrtle Hill, they must drive along a country

road of two or three miles. In summer time this was a very pleasant way, for the trees sheltered it on one side, while the other was bordered with a hedgerow and wide-spreading fields; but now on this dark night, nothing of all this was seen, and Arthur wondered what kind of a place they were passing through. When he had made little pictures in his mind of their arrival at Oldbridge, they had not been at all what the reality was. He had imagined a drive through a busy town, where they would pass through street after street, and that the bright gas would light the way, and show him the place and the things that they passed.

“What kind of a place are we in, father?” asked Arthur. “There seem to be no houses—I hope the man knows the way—and they have no light at all.”

“Well, I think certainly a little light would be desirable; but the people here don’t seem to think so. Well, never mind, we shall have light enough by and by. It will be pleasant to see aunt’s snug, warm house, won’t it, Arthur?”

“Yes,” said Arthur; but his answer was a very faint one; for he thought of another warm, bright home that he knew very well; and that there was some one there, sitting in the old chair, and that the rug at her feet was empty, and he had to smother a bitter sob that arose, and hold himself very still, as a shivering feeling passed over him.

But presently Arthur’s quick eye caught a bright gleam, shining through the darkness, and soon he found that it was a lamp over a gateway, and that they were nearing their destination. The lamp showed just enough for him to see, that inside the gateway a broad gravel walk led up to the house

between thick laurel bushes; and soon the sound of the wheels grating over the gravel, told him that they were driving up the avenue, and would soon be there. His father began to collect their rugs and packages, and seemed to be very contented that they had arrived. As for Arthur himself he hardly knew what he felt; not particularly glad, certainly; for there was far too dreary and heavy a feeling at his heart just then, to leave room for much gladness; still, he was very tired and cold, and perhaps even hungry, so that it was with some feeling of satisfaction that he felt the carriage stop, and looking out he saw the warm firelight from within, dancing on the curtained windows, and shining through the windows in the hall.

It was not very long before they were standing inside the hall door; and Arthur had just one minute to look about him while his father was taking off his great coat. Any one who took notice of things could see that no children belonged to Myrtle Hill. Everything was in the most perfect order. The hair mats were white and unruffled, the chairs were placed in an orderly manner against the wall, and no dust lay upon them. Just as Arthur was looking round with an admiring eye, one of the doors opened; and a lady appeared, that he knew was his aunt. It was almost like a new introduction to him, for he had not seen her for a very long time, and then only for a day or two. She greeted her brother very warmly, and then she turned to him. “And so this is Arthur,” she said; and it was almost timidly that she spoke, for she was almost as much afraid of her little nephew, as he was of her. “Ronald, he is a great deal more like Louisa than you. His eyes are like hers.”

“Yes, I believe he is generally considered to be so,”

said Mr. Vivyan, smiling. “A great compliment; don’t you think so yourself, Arthur?”

Arthur always had a very peculiar feeling when people looked at him, and said who he was like. He did not very much approve of it on the whole; and once he had confidentially asked his mother why the ladies and gentlemen who came to Ashton Grange did not make remarks about her face, and say who they thought she was like. At present he was making use of his blue eyes in taking an accurate account of his aunt.

Well, she was nice. Yes, he thought he should love her. She had a sweet sound in her voice, and a gentle expression about her mouth, that made him think she could not be unkind. She was not like his own mother in the least; she was not nearly so pretty, Arthur thought. His mother had pink on her cheeks, and a smile on her lips; but *her* face was very pale and colourless, her eyes were very deep and sad ones, and when she looked at him they seemed so large and dark, and as if they were saying what she did not speak with her lips. He felt he would love his aunt; but he was not quite sure that he would not be a little afraid of her, at first at any rate.

“You must be quite ready for something to eat,” said Mrs. Estcourt, as she led the way to the drawing-room. “You dined before you came away, Ronald, of course.”

“Yes, I did; but Arthur did not. I don’t think he has had much to eat all day, poor boy.”

Mrs. Estcourt looked very much surprised as she said, “Why, how could that be, Arthur? I thought boys were always hungry.”

“Well, I think I am generally,” said Arthur, “only I was not to-day.”

“Why not?” said his aunt.

“Don’t ask me why, please,” said Arthur in a low voice, “or else perhaps I might cry, and I don’t want to do that.”

She seemed to understand him, for she asked no more questions; only she took his hand as they went into the drawing-room, and as Arthur looked in her face, he thought there was something in her deep eyes, that reminded him of his mother.

If the hall at Myrtle Hill was neat and orderly, the drawing-room surely was equally so. There seemed to be everything in the room, that one could possibly want; and a great many that seemed to Arthur to be of no particular use. He could not help thinking of the difference there would be in that room, if he and Hector were to have a round in it. But it was very bright and comfortable, he thought; and this opinion seemed to be shared by a large white dog that lay in front of the fire. “Great, sleepy thing,” thought Arthur; “I would not give old Hector for ten cats like that.”

The tea-table itself was a very attractive object to his eyes just then; and he turned his attention to it now. Arthur thought it looked rather in keeping with the rest of the room. The silver teapot and cream-jug were bright and shining, but they were rather small; and he could not help thinking that it would take a great many of those daintily-cut slices of bread and butter, to satisfy his appetite; so he was glad to see a good-sized loaf on a table near, and other more substantial things which had been added for the

travellers. Indeed he need not have been afraid of not having enough to eat, for his aunt, in her ignorance of boyish appetites, would not have been surprised, if he had consumed all that was before him. So that Arthur had to be quite distressed, that he could not please her by eating everything.

“I wonder what she lives on herself,” he thought, as he noticed the one tiny slice lying almost undiminished on her plate; “and I wonder how I should feel if I did not eat more than that.”

By and by they drew their chairs to the fire, and Mrs. Estcourt gave Arthur a beautifully-ornamented hand-screen to shade the heat from his face; as he sat with his feet on the fender, listening to his father’s and aunt’s conversation.

“Well, you have a snug little place here,” said Mr. Vivyan.

“Yes, I suppose so,” Mrs. Estcourt said; but she sighed as she spoke.

“It seems like old times, eh, Daisy?”

A light shone on her face for a minute and then was gone, as she said, “’Tis very odd to hear any one call me that, Ronald. I have not heard it since——,” and then that deep look of pain came again. But as she looked at Arthur almost a merry smile curled the corners of her mouth, and she said, “Arthur thinks so too, I know.”

This was true; for he had just been thinking that if his aunt was like a flower at all, she was more like a lily or a snowdrop, or a very white violet. But he only said, “Is that what I shall have to call you, then? Aunt Daisy! that sounds rather funny, I think.”

Mrs. Estcourt laughed and said, “Well, I think perhaps it does; so if you like you can say Aunt Margaret.”

“Oh, I don’t like that at all!” said Arthur in a very decided tone. “No, please; I would rather say the other; and I think perhaps you are like a daisy when you can’t see the red.”

“Well, you are a funny little boy,” Mrs. Estcourt said; and she laughed quite merrily.

“Arthur,” said his father, “you are forgetting your good manners, I am afraid;” but he seemed rather amused himself.

“Do you often say those funny things, Arthur?” asked his aunt.

“I believe he is rather given to speaking his mind freely,” said Mr. Vivyan.

“Did I say anything rude?” asked Arthur, looking up earnestly into his aunt’s face.

“No, dear, nothing at all; only, you know, I am not accustomed to little boys; and so perhaps that is why the things they say sound odd to me.”

“Well, aunt,” said Arthur, “mind, if I seem to say rude things I don’t mean them; I don’t really; and I should be very sorry to say rude things to you, because I think I like you.”

“You don’t say so,” said Mr. Vivyan, laughing.

But Mrs. Estcourt did not laugh; she stooped down and kissed Arthur; and then she held his hand in hers for a little while, so that it almost felt to him as if it was some one else’s hand, and, though it was very

pleasant to have such a kind aunt, that he felt he would love, it brought a strange, choking feeling into his throat, and his eyes felt as if they would like to cry; so he suddenly jumped up, and said—

“I think I should like to go to bed.”

Mrs. Estcourt took him up herself into the room that was to be his own. It was a pretty, pleasant room, and a bright fire was burning in the grate. There seemed to have been a great deal of thought, spent on the comfort of the person who was to sleep there; and Arthur almost smiled, if he could have smiled at anything then, as his aunt hoped he would not want anything, and said she would send him a night-light presently.

“No, thank you,” he said; “I always sleep in the dark.”

“You are a brave boy, I suppose,” said Mrs. Estcourt.

“I don’t know,” Arthur said; “but mother always says it is wrong to be afraid.”

“Wrong?” asked his aunt.

“Yes; because don’t you know, aunt, we ought to trust in God, mother says.”

“Then are you never afraid, dear Arthur?” his aunt was just going to say; but as she looked at him she saw that his lips were trembling, and that the tears were filling his eyes; for the mention of his mother’s name was bringing memories to Arthur, and he was thinking of the times in the old nursery at Ashton Grange, when he used to be frightened sometimes in the dark; and she had sat with him then, and told him about the angels of the Lord encamping round

about them that fear Him, and about the kind, tender Lord Jesus, who takes care of all who put their trust in Him.

So she only put her arms around him, and kissed him very tenderly; and then she went away. It was only just in time; for as Arthur heard the door shut behind her, and knew that nobody would see or hear him, the tears that had been burning under his eyes all the evening came at last, and Arthur threw himself sobbing upon his bed. But his grief did not last long that night, for he was very tired and sleepy. He was excited too with the strange scenes and places, through which he had passed, and on which he was just entering; so it was not very long before he was sleeping as soundly in the white curtained bed, that his aunt had taken such pains to prepare for him, as he had ever done in the old room at Ashton Grange. That room was empty now. The little bed was there with the coverlet undisturbed, but no curly head lay on the pillow; and as Arthur's mother stood there thinking of her little boy, and of the miles that lay between them, and that soon the broad ocean sweep would separate her from her child, her heart sank very low, and she thought that she was like Rachael, weeping for her children. But she was comforted, for she knew the comfort of having a Friend, who had borne her griefs and carried her sorrows; and when her heart was overwhelmed within her she said, "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I;" and He said to her, "None of them that trust in Him shall be desolate." She listened to His word that says, "Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge for us."

Is it not a happy thing, when a heart is full and bursting—so full that it cannot contain—to know

that there is One, whose name is Love, before whom that heart can be poured out? Is it not the place where the Master would have His disciples, sitting at His feet, hearing His word? And is not that the cure for being careful and troubled about many things? And if our hearts have chosen that good part, we know that He has promised that it shall not be taken away. And as Arthur's mother thought of this, she said, "Hide me under the shadow of thy wings."



CHAPTER VII.

LEFT ALONE.

ARTHUR had been very tired the night before; so that the spring sun was shining quite brightly, when he found himself lying awake in his new room. Indeed, he did not know whether he would have awaked even then, if he had not heard a knocking at his

door, and then a voice saying—

“If you please shall I light your fire?”

“No, thank you,” said Arthur; and then to himself he added, “I’m not quite such a muff as that!” Then he began to examine his room. “I wonder is this going to be my room always!” thought Arthur. “’Tis much nicer than my room at home, only I don’t like it half so well; indeed, I don’t.”

It was a very pretty room certainly. The paper on the wall was bright and soft-looking, with a pattern of bunches of spring flowers, tied with silver ribbon. The carpet was something of the same sort, and it reminded him of primroses hidden in the grass. The window-curtains were spotlessly white, with green cords, and the chair-coverings were a soft green.

“Yes; it certainly is a very nice room,” said Arthur to himself, after looking round and examining everything; “but I think it is a great deal more like a girl’s room than a boy’s. What can she think I want with such a lot of looking-glasses? And I suppose she thinks I like reading and writing very much;” for he saw that the book-shelves were well filled, and that in the corner of the room there was a small table, where a writing-case and inkstand stood. “Well, she may think so. I expect she will soon find out her mistake.”

Arthur was more cheerful this morning, than he had been the evening before. It was natural to him to feel hopeful in the morning. He liked the feeling of awaking in a strange place. At least he had always liked it hitherto; though with the pleasant feeling of excitement and interest it brought, there came a dreamy heart-sinking too; for he could not forget,

that this was to be no visit, but that he was to live on here for years and years without his mother.

But the sun was shining very brightly into his room, and as he stood waiting for some call downstairs; he thought he would like to see what kind of surroundings belonged to his new home.

Very different was the view he now saw from the country that lay around Ashton Grange. From the highest window there, the view extended over only a few miles, and the green wooded hills that arose, not so very far off, marked the horizon to the pretty country scene that Arthur knew so well; but here a wide stretch of country lay beneath him, undulating here and there, but spreading far on, covered with fields and trees, and dotted with hamlets, until it faded away into grey distance. The sun had risen not long before, and the rosy beams were falling on the country, lighting with a ruddy radiance the windows of the cottages, and sparkling on the little river that was winding peacefully through the pasture land. It was a very sweet scene, and Arthur felt its beauty. He could not see the town, where they arrived the night before; for a stretch of woodland near by shut it out from his sight.

Having looked at the distant hills, he now turned his attention to the objects nearer home. How very neatly the gravel walks were rolled. The grass was smooth and evenly cut; not even the little daisies were allowed to peep their modest heads from the lawn. “Well, I wonder aunt cuts off all the heads of her namesakes,” said Arthur to himself. His window was at the side of the house, and he could see that the garden surrounded it on all sides, and that the low trees that led down to the arbour gave their

name to Myrtle Hill. It was early spring-time yet, and not very many flowers were blooming; only here and there bright-coloured tufts of crocuses and primroses were shining on the brown earth, and the snowdrops were shaking their bended heads, in the morning breeze. Arthur looked at it all, and wondered whether he should ever be as familiar with this place, as he was with the home far away. This thought led him into a reverie, and he began to wonder what every one was doing at this time there —who was feeding Hector; and would the gardener's boy remember to water the seeds; though he remembered with a deep sigh that it did not matter very much, as long before they would be in bloom, Ashton Grange would be empty and deserted; and this thought was a very dreary one. Arthur was beginning to feel very dismal again. The changing spring sky, too, had become overclouded; the morning sun was hidden, and it seemed as if a shower was going to fall. There was a prospect of a shower indoors, too; for Arthur dashed the tear-drops from his eyes, and said, "I won't cry; no, I won't; I'm always crying now. I wonder how mother can keep from it so well. Well, perhaps when I am as old as she is I shall be able; or, perhaps I shall be like papa, and not want to cry. I wonder if he does ever; it would be queer to see father cry. Perhaps he did when he was in India by himself."

And Arthur almost laughed to himself at the idea. Presently a bell sounded through the house. "I suppose," thought Arthur, "that is the breakfast-bell; it ought to be by this time. But then, suppose it should not be; suppose it should be some bell that I have nothing to do with; it would not be at all pleasant to go down. I think I will wait for a little, and see; but then, if it should be the breakfast-bell,

aunt will think I am a lazy thing. So what shall I do? I will go."

And so saying, Arthur opened his door in a determined manner, walking along the corridor; where some canaries were hung in a cage, making his ears quite aware of their presence. Notwithstanding the courage with which he had left his room, it was with a cautious step he came near the dining-room, and opening the door very gently he was quite relieved to see that his father and his aunt were both there.

As he came into the room Mrs. Estcourt was talking to his father, and she seemed in rather an anxious state of mind, as he listened to her with an amused expression on his face. "You know, Ronald, you—you really must begin breakfast, the carriage will be coming round in no time. And you are not nearly ready, dear Arthur," she said, giving him a hurried kiss. "Where are the railway rugs and the shawls? Your father will want them; for it is a cold morning."

"Now, my dear sister," said Arthur's father, putting his hand on her shoulder, "don't be putting yourself into a fuss about nothing; I always take my time, and I think I generally manage to come in all right in the end. I want some breakfast, please, when you are ready, Daisy. Good morning, my darling little boy," and Mr. Vivyan put his arm very tightly round Arthur's neck, and gave him such a kiss, as he had never remembered having had from him before. "Now, don't cry, Arthur," he said; for this loving embrace from his father was bringing the tears into his eyes again. "Do you know what I was thinking about, when I was looking out of my window this morning? I was thinking of you; and I came to the

conclusion that you ought to think yourself very well off. Here you are with an aunt who is going to make ever so much of you, I can see; going to live in a most beautiful country, with a school near, where, of course, the boys will be pleasant companions if you are pleasant to them; a half-holiday every Saturday; a father and mother gone away for a little while, thinking of you all the day; and a letter from India—I won't say how often. Ah, it was very different when you and I were young! Eh, Daisy?"

"No. I think I was very happy then," said Mrs. Estcourt. "I am sure our grandfather and grandmother were just as good as any one could be."

"Yes; for you, my dear, I daresay they were; but I was not you, you know. Well, I'm very glad some times have not to come over again. I suppose Arthur is feeling that just now."

Mr. Vivyan himself seemed very well contented with his present position, and Arthur thought so.

"Father," he said presently, "as I have to stay in England, of course I would rather be with Aunt Daisy than with any one else, and I think this is a very pretty place indeed. But you don't know how frightfully I wish I was going to India with you. Don't you wish you could take me, father?" asked Arthur a little wistfully.

"My dear little boy, I wish it so much, that it is one of the things it is better not to think about. And then, you know, you must always look on the bright side of things, and there are plenty of bright sides for you. Just think of all the bright sides I have been showing you. Now, let us have some breakfast, or really, auntie, I shall be late."

But before Mrs. Estcourt moved, she said in a very low voice, and as if she did not think any one else heard her—

“There is not always a bright side to look at.” For she was thinking that all the brightness had been taken away from her life’s story. Would not Arthur’s mother have said, “If there is none anywhere else, look to where the Lord Jesus waits to bless you, saying, ‘Your heart shall rejoice;’ and then the light of His love would make the shadiest life shine with a summer gleaming?”

Arthur’s appetite seemed really gone this morning, and his aunt’s attention was too much occupied with anxiety about his father’s comfort for the journey, to notice that he was eating hardly anything; and in the midst of his trouble the thought came across Arthur’s mind that it was a very good thing he was not hungry, as he felt a great deal too shy to help himself.

Presently there was the sound of carriage wheels on the gravel outside. “Now,” said Mrs. Estcourt, starting up, “there is the carriage, Ronald; I knew it would be here before you were ready.”

“Well,” said Mr. Vivyan quietly, “you know one of us would have to be ready first, and I would rather the carriage waited for me than I for it. Besides, I am quite ready. Now, my dear sister, expend your energies in seeing if my luggage is all right.”

Then Arthur and his father were left alone.

“Now, my darling boy,” Mr. Vivyan said, “come here. I want to speak to you, and to say good-bye.”

So Arthur came closer to his chair, and his father put

his arms around him, and took his hand in his.

“Arthur,” he said, “perhaps you don’t know how much I love you, and how deeply anxious I am about you, that you should grow up to be a man that your mother need not be ashamed of. You know, Arthur, I cannot talk to you as she does; but I pray for you every day, and now especially that I am leaving you. But we shall have another home on earth some day, I trust; and, better than that, you know about the home where the Lord Jesus is waiting for those who are washed in His blood. You are going to that home, my precious boy?”

“Yes, father,” said Arthur in a low voice.

“Well, then, you know you always have that to think about; and now I will give you this text to keep from me while I am away, ‘Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.’ And won’t it be nice to get a letter from India!”

“Yes, oh yes, father,” said Arthur, bursting into a flood of tears; “but it would be so much nicer to be going.”

“Hush, hush,” said Mr. Vivyan kindly; “you know there are some things that God has forbidden, and it is wrong to think of how nice they would be. I suppose you cannot think of how pleasant a great many things you have are just now, but by and by you will find it out.”

This was just what Arthur was thinking. It was very strange to him to hear his father talking in this way to him; he had never done so before; and it made him love him as he did not know he ever could. It

was quite true that everything was looking black and gloomy, and that to try and see brightness in his life at Myrtle Hill seemed to make the dreary feeling more intense at his heart. But still he could lie down at the feet of the Master who is so kind, and rest there while earthly things were so dark, and trust Him, waiting while the violence of the storm was passing. Arthur had answered the Shepherd's call —"Follow thou me," and the one who has said that "He gathers the lambs in His arms, and carries them in His bosom."

"And now, my boy," said Mr. Vivyan, "God bless you and keep you; good-bye, my own dear little boy." Then he put his arm around Arthur's neck, and kissed him. A minute after, Arthur was standing by himself before the drawing-room fire; and when presently he heard the carriage roll away, and the sounds became gradually fainter and fainter in the distance, he felt that he was all alone.

Indeed, he hardy knew what he felt. There seemed to be a sudden quiet hush within him, and as he looked outside the window where the carriage had just stood, and the bustle of going away had just ceased, the quiet of every thing seemed very still and deep. Only the little birds were just the same, singing gaily as if nothing had happened, and the morning breeze was brushing the myrtle trees as they did every spring morning when the sun was making the country look glad.

Presently he heard steps outside the door, and as they came nearer and nearer, Arthur felt as if he would like to run away; for he was afraid his aunt might talk about his father and mother, and he felt as if he could not talk of anything just then. But he

need not have been afraid, Mrs. Estcourt was wiser than that, and she only said kindly—

“Would you like to go out and look about you a little, Arthur dear? It will not rain just yet, I think; and you may go where you like; at least, that is, if you are accustomed to go by yourself.”

“I should think I am, indeed,” said Arthur; “why I have done that ever since I was eight.”

“You won’t lose your way?” asked his aunt anxiously.

“If I do, I shall have to find it again, you know, aunt,” said Arthur.

“You are a funny little fellow,” said Mrs. Estcourt. “Well, if you get hungry before luncheon-time, you must come and tell me.”

Arthur thought of Hector, and how pleasant it would be if his old friend would come bounding in answer to his whistle; then he looked at the sleepy white-haired creature lying on the hearth-rug.

“Aunt Daisy,” he said, “would you like me to take out that white fellow?”

“What, dear?” said Mrs. Estcourt. “Oh, I don’t know, Arthur; I think, perhaps, not just yet; not until you are more accustomed to it.”

“Very well,” said Arthur, as he went away; and he said to himself, “I would quite as soon not.”

Arthur felt, as he stood outside the hall door, as if all the world was before him, to choose where he would go. He thought he would first examine the garden, which encircled the house on all sides. A gap in the

myrtle bushes led him down a narrow path into a large space, which the fruit trees and vegetables showed was the kitchen garden. He walked round, and noticed how neatly the beds were kept, and that the walks even here were stripped of weeds. Two boys who were working there, rather older than himself, eyed him curiously. Arthur wondered whether they knew who he was; but he felt inclined to be where there was no one else just then. So he left the garden, and passing out through the iron gate, he found himself on the high road, turning to walk down in the direction which they had come the night before. Presently a sign-post stood before him, one hand pointing to Stratton, and the other to Harford. Arthur followed the last name along a green, flowery lane, where the wild roses were mantling their green, and here and there an early bud was making its appearance. He walked on for some distance, until the high road was hidden by a bend in the lane, and the green trees began to arch overhead; and on each side, the road was bordered with grass and green, velvety moss; the birds were warbling soft songs in the branches, and from the wood hard by the sweet cooing of the pigeons could be heard. It was a very pleasant spot, so much so, that when Arthur threw himself down on the grass to rest, he said with a deep sigh, “Well, it might be worse; and Aunt Daisy is certainly very kind.”

“Yes, it might be worse,” he continued to himself; “and it is nice to think of by and by, when they come back. Suppose they were dead!” He shuddered at the thought. “I can quite fancy what mother will look like when she sees me again. No; I don’t believe I can, though. How will she feel, and how shall I feel? I suppose very different from what I do now; for I shall be really a man then. Oh, dear! I had better not

think of that time yet. I must try and think about all the things God gives. Father said something like that. Father was very kind to me to-day. I did not know he could be so kind."

Arthur did not know then much about the true, deep, persistent tenderness of a father's love; but we know that when God spoke a word that expresses His heart to His people, He called Himself His children's Father.

"Let me see!" continued Arthur. "Five years, and in every year three hundred and sixty-five days. If I multiply three hundred and sixty-five by five, I shall know how many days I have to wait, and then I could mark off one every day; but, oh, dear! that makes a great, great many."

So he sprang up from the grass, and walked briskly on the shady road, where the sunlight was falling softly; for Arthur meant never to cry, unless he could not possibly help it, and certainly not out of doors. He wandered over a good distance—for it was pleasant exploring in the new country—until he suddenly remembered his aunt at home, and that she would be thinking he had lost his way. "And I must not begin by frightening her," said Arthur to himself.

Up till this time Arthur's first day had passed more brightly than he had expected. It would be hard for him to be very unhappy on that spring day, with everything rejoicing around him, and the free country breathing in soft breezes. But it was different when he came in. The house seemed very dark and gloomy after the cheerful sunlight, and it seemed to him as if there was no sound of any sort indoors, except now and then a faint noise from the servants' regions far away; for even the canary-birds were

silent, and the fat dog was sleeping its life away upon the hearth-rug. Indeed, Arthur thought he could almost imagine, that the hairy creature and the soft hearth-rug were one and the same. There seemed to be nothing at all to do within doors, and he could not be out always. Besides, the bright morning was fast changing, and grey, gloomy clouds were gathering over the country. The myrtle trees were beginning to shake with a rainy wind, and he could see that the fine weather was gone for that day.

Altogether, Arthur felt very dismal as he stood at the drawing-room window, near to where his aunt was sitting at her writing-table.

“Have you had a nice walk?” she asked presently.

“Yes, aunt,” said Arthur, tapping very forcibly on the window.

“And what did you see?”

“Oh, nothing particular!” said Arthur.

Mrs. Estcourt saw that she must try some other subject to talk about.

“Have you anything you would like to do, dear, until dinner-time?”

“No, I don’t think so, aunt.”

“What do you generally do at home when you are not walking?”

“I don’t know, really aunt,” Arthur answered. “I suppose I do lessons.”

“Oh, but I don’t want you to begin lessons just yet.

Well, then, what do you do when it is neither lessons nor walking?"

"Sometimes I go for messages, and sometimes I make things with my tools."

"Make things! How do you mean, dear?"

"Oh, I make boats and things! and I used to make wedges for a window in mamma's room that rattled with the wind. Have you any windows that don't shut quite tightly, aunt?" asked Arthur. "I could make you some by and by, if you have."

Mrs. Estcourt smiled; but she was not able to remember any window that needed Arthur's arrangements. So he was left to himself and the rain again; for the drops were falling thickly against the window now. At first he employed himself in tracing their course down the glass, but very soon he was tired of that, and presently Mrs. Estcourt heard a heavy sigh.

"That was a very deep sigh," she said cheerily. "What did it mean?"

"Well," said Arthur, "partly, I think, it meant that I wish I had something to do."

His aunt thought that boys were very curious things, and wondered what they could do. She felt almost inclined to echo Arthur's sigh; but she thought a moment, and then she said—

"Would you like to have a skein of wool to wind into a ball?"

"Yes," said Arthur. He was quite glad to have even this to do. At home it was not the occupation he generally chose; but now, as he stood with the blue

wool encircling two chairs, steadily unwinding it into a ball, it seemed quite pleasant work. Mrs. Estcourt had quite made up her mind, that the skein would be spoiled, and so when her little nephew brought it to her, wound and unbroken, it was an agreeable surprise, and she began to have a higher opinion of boys in general.

The day seemed to wear very slowly on, and with the waning light Arthur's heart seemed to sink very low. So quiet was he, that his aunt could hardly understand him, and any one who had seen the boisterous, lively boy at Ashton Grange, would hardly have known him as the same one who was sitting so quietly before the drawing-room fire in the lamplight. He was sitting there in dreamy fashion with a very sad, heavy heart, when his aunt asked him what was his bedtime. A fortnight ago, if this question had been put to Arthur, he would not have given the same answer that he did now. Then he had considered it one of the greatest hardships of his life, that a quarter before nine was the time when he was expected to disappear. But now he said, "Oh, I don't much mind, aunt; I think I should like to go now!" for the weary, lonely feeling was making his heart so sick, that he wanted to be all alone for a while.

"Well, good night, darling," said his aunt, and she put her arms very tenderly round his neck; for she knew that his poor little heart must be aching, and that his thoughts must be seeing things that were very far away.

She kissed him so lovingly that it was just too much for him. The tears came into his eyes, and Arthur went sobbing up the stairs, not noticing that he was holding the candle on one side, and that his way

could be traced along the carpet by large white spots. Somebody else noticed it the next morning; and the housemaid thought that her mistress had done a very foolish thing when she brought that young gentleman into her orderly household.

Arthur's little room looked very snug as he opened the door and went in. The firelight was dancing on the white curtains and on all the pretty things around. But Arthur did not see any of it for the blinding tears that were in his eyes, and fast falling down. His whole heart was longing with one deep aching to be back again at home, and all the more that he had been trying all the evening to keep back the tears. It seemed as if he would cry his heart out, as he lay on the rug, sobbing so bitterly all alone. "Oh, mamma, mamma," he sobbed "come, come!" And this was all he said, this was what he repeated again and again; and it was very dreary that there was no answer—it seemed as if no one heard him.

But One could hear him. Jesus wept when He was on the earth, and He does not despise a child's first bitter grief. He knows what trouble is, and He knows just how much each particular trouble is to each one; for He Himself has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.

By and by Arthur remembered the text, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He knew that when the Lord Jesus Christ said "all" that He meant all, so he lifted up his heart to the One who alone can read hearts; and this is what he said, with the sobs coming thick and fast —what he prayed; for real prayer is a heart speaking to God, and calling to Him in need—

"Oh, Lord Jesus Christ, I do come to Thee! for I

remember the text that says ‘Come,’ and I don’t know what to say except that Thou knowest, Lord Jesus, how lonely and miserable I am. My mother is far away, and papa too, and I do so want to feel her arms round me now; but I can’t, oh, I can’t! Lord Jesus, if thou wert here on the earth, and in this room, I would come to Thee, and sit at Thy feet; and Thou wouldst put Thine arms round me. Oh, do it now, Lord Jesus! for I feel as if I must have somebody taking care of me. The Bible says that Thou healest the broken-hearted, and I feel broken-hearted to-night, Lord Jesus, so heal me. Lord Jesus Christ, I belong to Thee, I am Thy lamb; gather me in Thine arms, and carry me in Thy bosom.”

It was in this way that little, lonely Arthur Vivyan poured his heart out before the Lord. He went and told Him exactly what was in it, and then he lay at His feet; and he felt as he had not felt before, what it was to be in His keeping, and to hear His voice saying, “Thou art mine,” to feel the everlasting arms enfolding him, and to know that One so strong, and kind, and true, loved him with an everlasting love. The Lord Jesus Christ was a real person to Arthur Vivyan. He had known Him before as his Saviour; he was knowing Him now as the lover of his soul.

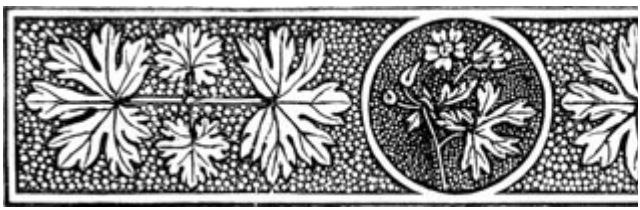
And that night, as he lay in his white-curtained bed, he felt the sweet rest that the Lord gives when “He giveth His beloved sleep.”

The stars shone in their melting blue depths, and their trembling light fell on two who loved each other, and who were both loved by the blessed God, who neither slumbers nor sleeps; and though such time and space were separating them, they were both in His hand who “measures the water in the hollow

of His hand."

Is it not a happy thing to belong to the Lord Jesus Christ?





CHAPTER VIII.

EDGAR NORTH; OR, A HEART WITHOUT A RESTING-PLACE.

ABOUT two weeks after his arrival in his new home, when Arthur came down one morning to breakfast, something in his aunt's face made him think of pleasant things; so that his "Good morning, auntie,"

seemed rather like a question.

“I think you had better have breakfast,” said Mrs. Estcourt, smiling, but holding something in her hand towards him, at the same time.

“A letter!” Arthur exclaimed, or rather shouted, as he seized the envelope. “A letter for me! It could be only from one person. But, oh, surely they are not in India yet! Mamma said they would be weeks and weeks going.”

“They must have passed some vessel returning to England. You see what a mother you have, to write to you the very first opportunity.”

“I should think I knew that, auntie. I don’t believe there ever was, or will be, any one like my mother in the whole world.” Then he began to read his mother’s letter:

“MY OWN CHILD,—For this is the sweetest name I can call you. You are my own, my Arthur, my darling little child—just as much mine now, as when we used to sit together by the fireside in the old home, and your head was on my lap, and my arms were around you. And although miles and miles of deep blue sea are lying between us, and the stars that look down on you in your peaceful English home may see me here on the broad, wide ocean, you are here safe in my heart, just the same as ever, and my watchful love, that cannot take care of you as I once did, pours itself out in prayers to the God who loves us both; for He is my Father and yours, Arthur. We are both in His hands. He will take care of us now, as we walk on this changing world, and He will take care of us for ever, in that land where there are no partings, or sighs, or tears—where the blessed God

will joy to bless us for ever.

“And now I must tell you something about ourselves, about your father and me. For a little while after we started we had very rough weather; and as the steamer tossed up and down, and rolled with great heaving swells on the waves, I was glad that my little boy had a bed to lie on, that did not heave from side to side. I was glad that the sounds he heard, were the sweet summer winds rustling, and the birds that sang in the trees, instead of the creaking and straining noises that I now hear, and that he was safe, and comfortable, and well; instead of sighing out his poor little heart with trouble; for sea-sickness is a reality, my little Arthur, as you would soon find out, if, like me, you had spent some days on the sea, when the winds had made the waves rough.

“Now the water is calm, and all around us it lies blue and bright, and the sun makes pleasant sparkles on it, which I look at now and again, as I sit here on the deck; writing the letter that you will read, and think of me on my way to the land where you were born.

“I only came on deck yesterday; for, as I told you, the weather was so rough, and I was so ill, that I had to stay all the time in my cabin. Your father was as well as ever, indeed he said that he was never better in his life; and as I lay there for several weary days, I could hear his voice, now and then talking with the other passengers, and sometimes he would come in and tell me where we were, and what was the state of the weather, until at length he was able to tell me that the wind was going down, and that probably we should have some bright, calm weather; and I was very glad to think that I should be able to leave my dark cabin, and sit out where the sun was shining,

and where the sea was stretching beneath it, until it met the spreading sky far away.

“There are a great many ladies and gentlemen on board; some of them, as we are doing, leaving their dear little children in English homes, and hoping to see them again some day. Some of them have one or two of their youngest children with them, and my only one is far away from me; but I know that God is taking care of my darling child, and from my heart I can say, ‘Thy will be done;’ for though I would have chosen another way, He who chose for me, loves me so tenderly, that I can sit at His feet and submit myself to what He has said.

“And that is what I want you to do, my own dear child; that is what I pray for you when my heart rises up to my Father’s heart and says, ‘God bless my child.’ I want you to remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is your Lord; for you told me that you trust in Him, and that He is your hope, and so I want you to remember that if you submit yourself to Him, you are owning Him as Lord, whom the God of all the world has made Lord and Christ; and so if you are meek and gentle, when something wrong tempts you to be passionate and proud, if you are kind and helpful to others, when selfishness tempts you to please yourself, you are acknowledging this blessed Master as yours. Is not this a happy thought, my Arthur? and do you not like to give pleasure to the One who loves you so, and who did for you what can never be told?

“And now, good-bye, my child. I need not give you your father’s love, for you have it already, and he joins his prayers for you with mine every day, that our God will bless you and keep you; and He will; for

'He that keepeth thee will not slumber.'

"YOUR LOVING MOTHER."

Great big tears were running down Arthur's face as he finished the letter; but there was a bright look there too, as he folded it up with an air of great content. "Auntie," he said, "would there be any use in my writing a letter now? When would she get it?"

"I think it would be a very good plan if you write now; your mother would find the letter awaiting her in Madras. It would not take nearly so long going as they do."

"Poor mamma," said Arthur, "I don't believe the sea is good for her, after all; you see how ill she is."

"Oh, yes! but she would very soon get over that; and then, depend upon it, the voyage will be very good indeed for her. Perhaps," said Mrs. Estcourt softly, "that is the way with people in other things and ways."

"I know what you mean, aunt," said Arthur suddenly, "and I expect you are right."

But his aunt heaved a very deep sigh, and said no more.

Mrs. Estcourt was very glad to see her little nephew busily occupied, for that day at least. For several days she had been trying to bring herself to the point of telling Arthur, that she thought he had better attend Mr. Carey's school; and day after day she had put it off, thinking it would make him unhappy.

Arthur's letter to his mother could not be called a very well written one; there were several mistakes in the spelling, and here and there, a great blot could

tell that a good deal of his heart had gone into it; but whatever it was, it was a loving little letter.

“MY OWN DEAR MOTHER,—Aunt says there is time for a letter to get to you; so this is an answer to the one you sent me. I think it was a most beautiful letter; and it was very odd that it made me cry.

“I like Aunt Daisy very much; I like her much better than any other lady in the world—except you, of course.

“Myrtle Hill is much grander than the Grange. I do try to be careful about the things, dear Mamma. Oh, mother! I do want to see you so very much sometimes. I could never tell you how much; only I do not want you to think I am unhappy.

“Mamma, I thought of a text the second evening I came here that made me not so unhappy. I did not think so much of how kind and good the Lord Jesus was until I came here. Tell papa I give him my love. I have made a lot of mistakes, and I could not help these blots.

“Good-bye, my own dear mother.

“Ever your loving

“ARTHUR”.

“Now, Aunt Daisy, will you direct this, please?” asked Arthur.

“Oh, but you are such a great boy! I think you had better do it yourself,” said his aunt.

“Shall I? Can I? I never did before; but I daresay I could,” Arthur said, and he was half pleased and half

afraid.

“Will that do?” he asked, after a long time had been spent, very carefully trying to write his best on the thin envelope.

“Why, Arthur, you are getting out of practice with your writing, I should think,” said his aunt. And she thought this might lead on to her proposal, about the school.

“No; I don’t write well, I know,” said Arthur; “but I try; and I heard some one once say, that it is not always the most stupid people who write the worst.”

Mrs. Estcourt laughed.

“No, my dear little boy, I did not say it was. But, dear Arthur, seriously, I think you ought to write better, and I am afraid you will be getting bad habits. Don’t you think it would be a good thing for you to begin school?”

“What, the boys’ school that mother told me about? Oh, I was hoping you were going to say something about that! Shall I soon be able to go?”

“Do you want to go?” asked his aunt, astonished.

“Oh, yes! I should think so.”

“Then, my dear boy, you shall begin to-morrow, if you like. I have spoken to Mr. Carey about your coming; so I can send over a note this evening to let him know.”

The remainder of that day Arthur could scarcely think of anything else than the prospect that was before him on the morrow—his first entering on school-life. Many were the wonderings and

conjectures that went on in his mind, as to what kind of a person the master would be—whether he would like the boys, if he would be strict and cross, and if the lessons would be very difficult. But he was quite decided on one point, that he would much rather be going to school every day, and have something to do, than loiter away his time in the house and garden at home.

So the next morning, after Arthur had finished his breakfast, it required little persuasion from his aunt to make him start for Mr. Carey's school. The house was about an hour's walk from Myrtle Hill, and it must be confessed that on his way Arthur's heart began to fail him a little, when he thought of encountering so many strange faces. Just as he approached the house the clock struck nine; and as Arthur entered the large iron gate, he caught sight of some thirty or forty boys rushing across the play-ground, some tumbling over the others, to be in their seats by the time the last stroke of the clock sounded. Arthur thought the best thing he could do would be to follow them; so keeping in sight two or three boys who had loitered after the others, he walked behind them, up a long passage; till he reached a door leading into the school-room. He pushed it open so quietly that he was not heard, and had time to take a good view of the room and its occupants. It was large and spacious. All down one side there was a long desk fixed against the wall, where numbers of boys were sitting, engaged in writing or doing their sums. Then there were several tables, round which the different classes were seated on forms. The walls were hung with maps, and there were two large globes in a corner of the room. All this Arthur took in, in a very short time; and his eyes quickly travelled to the top of the room, where Mr. Carey

was standing at his desk. He was rather thin and tall, with a very grave face, which made Arthur feel rather awed; but it was not a cross face.

Presently he looked up, and saw Arthur standing at the door. He had already been prepared for his appearance by a note from Mrs. Estcourt; so he knew at once who he was.

“So you have come, Vivyan,” he said. “Step up here, my boy.”

Arthur advanced to the desk with rather a trembling step, and then had to submit to a number of questions from Mr. Carey to test his knowledge; after which he was put into one of the lower divisions of the school. It was all new to him to-day; so the hours passed quickly away, and Arthur was quite ready again for afternoon school when the time came.

So the days went on—one very like the other—and things were seeming less strange as Arthur was getting to know the boys better, and to feel more at home with them.

There was one boy in Mr. Carey’s school who seemed different from all the rest. His name was Edgar North, and he was about Arthur’s own age. Some of the boys said he was delicate, and others told Arthur that he was a muff. Whatever it was, he seemed to stay outside the rest. He was very often in disgrace; not for lessons badly done, although it might have been so, but Mr. Carey was very indulgent to him, on account of his weakness, but for rules broken through, for quarrels with the other boys, or disrespect to the teachers. He did not seem happy; there was generally a cloud on his brow, and a weariness and discontent in his manner. Arthur

sometimes wondered why. Might it be on account of his delicacy and his cough, that very often he was obliged to stay at home, when the others joined in some country expedition, and that sometimes, when the game was at its height of interest, his quick, short breathing obliged him to leave off and sit down away from the rest? It would be very trying, certainly; Arthur was quite sure of that. He thought a good deal about Edgar North, and he could see that the other boys did not like him; to tell the truth, Arthur did not himself, but he was very sorry for him when he saw him sometimes all alone, when the others were at play. One fine, sunny half-holiday, when school had been closed for the day, and both boarders and day-scholars were deep in the interest of cricket, Arthur had lingered behind the others to put his books together in readiness for going home, and a message from Mr. Carey to his aunt had detained him still longer, so that by the time he reached the cricket-ground the game had begun. One of the older boys called to him to make haste; but Arthur seemed in no haste, and, unlike his usual way at this time, he seemed to be in deep meditation.

“Come, make haste,” said his companion. “Why don’t you come on?”

But still Arthur stood; for something had made him pause. It was Edgar North’s listless figure, half sitting and half lying under a large tree in a field a little distance off, with a very discontented, unhappy face.

“I think I won’t play to-day, I’ve got something else to do; I’m going for a walk.”

“What on earth is that for?” said the older boy; “I thought you were wild for this game to-day.”

He was not so very sorry, however; for Arthur was playing on the opposite side, and he knew by experience, that his vigorous little arms made a great difference sometimes.

“Well, please yourself. What shall I say when the others ask about you?”

“Say I have gone out for a walk.”

“All right,” said the other, and he walked away.

It was not without a very great struggle that Arthur had been able to say this. It was not without more than one earnest prayer, that he had been able to resist the strong temptation. He had been feeling very happy that morning in thinking of his mother’s text: “Whose I am.” And his heart had risen in gladness and thankfulness to the Lord who had bought him; and now there was a golden opportunity before him of doing something to prove his love, and of letting it be true of him “whom I serve.” Edgar North was not happy, and the others had left him all by himself. It must be very bitter to him to see from a distance the wild enjoyment of their game, without being able to take any part in it. Arthur knew how he would feel it himself, and a thought came across his mind that he could make it less sad for Edgar; that he could offer to go for a walk with him; and that this kindness to another would be pleasing to his Master. But then glowing thoughts of the game’s enjoyments came across his mind; his hands and feet were burning to run to the cricket-ground, and take part there, with all the energy of his young spirits, while the picture of a solitary walk with Edgar North came before his mind in very gloomy contrast. Then a voice seemed to speak in his heart: “I love you, my own. I gave myself for you. Follow me.”

The tears came into Arthur's eyes, and he looked up to where the blue was covered with little white clouds, and the sun's light was shining; and his heart whispered the words which only One could hear: "Lord Jesus, I will."

Arthur had to go over some little distance, before he reached Edgar North. He found him sitting on the soft grass, underneath a large tree. He seemed to have been trying to carve his name; for a large E and half of an N were there. But he was tired of that; and a book he had brought with him seemed to have proved equally unsatisfying; for it was lying closed at his feet. He seemed very much surprised at seeing Arthur; but all he said, when he came near was: "Well?" Arthur did not quite know what to say himself, but he asked him after a moment—

"Would you like to go for a walk?"

"Not particularly," said Edgar, not very graciously.

"Why, I thought you liked walking. I heard you saying so last week."

"I liked it last week; but I couldn't have it then. People can't always like the same things. I thought you liked cricket."

"Oh, so I do! I should think I did just!" said Arthur emphatically; and he could not help thinking of how much more he liked it, than talking to such a disagreeable companion as Edgar was now. It needed another remembrance of the voice in his heart.

"Well, why don't you play then? the others are playing."

"Why, I thought you might like to go for a walk."

Edgar pulled bits of bark off the tree, and threw them on the ground. Then he looked up in Arthur's face with a half laugh. "Well, you are queer. Perhaps I should like a walk. Where shall we go?" he said, rising suddenly.

"I don't mind," Arthur said, "except that dusty old road."

"The woods then," said Edgar, "and then we should be less likely to meet that Carey. I hate having to speak to him."

They walked on for some distance, without saying very much. Arthur found conversation with his companion rather difficult to keep up; most of his questions were answered by "yes" or "no;" and to anything that he said, not requiring an answer, Edgar gave a short laugh.

"There'll be lots of wild strawberries here soon," he said; "don't you like them?"

"Pretty well," said Edgar listlessly, "when I can't get others."

Arthur was beginning to think he had better say nothing, when suddenly the other boy turned to him, and said curiously—

"I suppose it was because you are converted that you came?"

"Yes," Arthur answered.

"How did you know I was?" he asked, after some little time, when they had walked on in silence.

"Why, I don't know; some of the others said things about you; and, besides, you know you are."

He would not say that he had noticed Arthur Vivyan's ways, and that he had seen there, what showed him there was a difference between him and the other boys; still less would he tell him just then, that there was an aching wish in his heart that he could say the same for himself.

"Yes," Arthur said, "I am, Edgar; and do you know I wish you were."

"How do you know I am not?"

"Well, I don't *know*," said Arthur; "but I don't much think you are. Are you?"

"No," said Edgar, pulling violently at the leaves that grew on the bushes near.

"Shouldn't you like to be?"

"What is the use of liking?" asked Edgar North. "I shall be if it is God's will, and I shan't if it is not."

"Oh," said Arthur, "that is a dreadful way to talk. I'm quite sure it is not the right way."

"Well, I know I have thought a great deal about it, especially when I have been ill, and it always makes me miserable, so I try not to think, and I can't think what made me begin it now. Do let us talk about something else."

And suddenly Edgar became very much interested in the subject of the next local examination, in which several of his schoolfellows expected to take part, and was much more lively for the rest of the walk than he had been before.

But he did not seem to avoid Arthur; on the contrary, after that day, he often seemed to try to be near him;

and at length he surprised him very much, by asking if he would come out for another walk. Arthur remembered the last one that they had had, and he wondered why! it was not for any pleasure to himself that he agreed, but at any rate this time it was not a cricket-day.

“You did not want to come, did you?” asked Edgar, after some little time, when they had been walking along through the fields, and had now reached a distant one, where the hawthorn hedge was throwing a sheltering shade. “And I expect you would just as soon sit down, as walk on further. Shall we stop here?”

“What a queer fellow you are, Edgar,” said Arthur; “I can’t make you out at all.”

“How am I queer?” asked Edgar.

“Why, you *are* queer; you are different from all the others. Perhaps it is because you are not strong.”

“No, I know I am not,” Edgar said; “the doctor at my grandmother’s used to say I should not live.”

Arthur looked very earnestly at Edgar’s pale, passionless face.

“Did he really? Are you sorry?”

“Oh, I dare say he did not know! and if he did, I cannot help it; so what is the use of being sorry or glad? Perhaps you may not, just as likely.”

“But,” said Arthur, “if I had heard any one say that about me, I should think more about it than you seem to do.”

“Why, it would be all right for you, because you are

converted, you know."

"But, Edgar," and Arthur looked very earnestly into his dark, sad eyes, "don't you wish you were?"

Edgar's eyes fell before his gaze. He looked away, and seemed to be dreamily watching the glistening sunbeams, darting through the trees; but presently the tears gathered, and he said, with a weary sigh,

"Oh, Arthur, if you only knew how much I wish it! if you only knew what I would give, to know I was converted!"

"Didn't your mother ever talk to you about it?" asked Arthur, remembering the sweet words that had fallen into his own heart; "or your father?"

"I don't remember my mother," said Edgar, "and papa died two years ago; but it was two years before that, when I saw him last."

"Poor Edgar," said Arthur softly; for, though he did not say this had been a bitter grief to him, there was something in his tone so hopelessly sad and sorrowful, that the tears came into Arthur's eyes to hear it.

Edgar saw the tears in Arthur's eyes, and a little faint smile came in his own. "You are very different from the others, Arthur," he said. "I haven't had any one kind to me, since papa went to India."

"Did your father go to India?" Arthur asked brightly. "So did mine. So we are alike, then."

"Ah, but yours will come back some day, and your mother too; but mine will never, never come back any more!"

“Tell me about them,” said Arthur.

“Well, you know I told you mamma died ever so long ago, so I don’t remember her at all; but papa used to tell me how nice she was, and he used to show me her picture.”

“What kind of a face had she?” asked Arthur. “I wonder whether she was like my mother.”

“Well, she had very nice eyes, brown ones.”

“Mamma’s eyes were blue, I think,” said Arthur.

“And brown hair; and she looked very kind.”

“Oh, then they are alike in one thing!”

“Papa used to keep it in his pocket,” Edgar continued, “and he used to show it to me often when grandmamma was not in the room. I don’t think she liked it, because I remember once when we were looking at it she came into the room, and papa put it back into his pocket directly.”

“Who used you to live with then?”

“Oh, I have always lived at my grandmother’s, only now she is dead. That’s who I am in mourning for,” said Edgar, pointing to his black dress. “But father used often to come and see us. It was his home too when he had leave, other times he was with his regiment. Then, four years ago, they were ordered to India, and he died of cholera, when he had been there two years; and I never saw him since, four years ago.”

“Poor Edgar,” said Arthur again. He knew enough of loneliness and sorrow himself, to feel what a sad, empty life Edgar North’s must be, without anything

in heaven or earth to make him glad.

“Did you love your father very much?” asked Arthur presently.

“Oh, Arthur, I did love him so!” said Edgar very sadly. “You see, I had no one else. I remember it was so very nice, when grandmamma had the letter to say he was coming; and he never let me have much lessons, when he was at home.”

“Was it in the town you lived, or the country?”

“It was near the town. We lived in rather a small house, that had a garden. I suppose I shall never see it again. Well, I don’t much mind.”

“Where shall you spend the holidays?”

“At my uncle’s in London; he has ever so many children, and I dare say they will not want me.”

“I think that is so strange of you, Edgar,” said Arthur. “You seem always to think nobody wants you, and that makes you disagreeable, and then they do not. Now, I don’t see why they should not want you, as well as any one else.”

“Well, I can’t help thinking what is true,” said Edgar.

“Go on telling me about your father,” said Arthur; “I like hearing of him.”

“I don’t think I have much to tell,” said Edgar, “except that it was very happy when he was at home; and, oh, so miserable ever since! And I think he might have stayed.”

“That is what I thought about mamma. But I am quite sure they knew best; indeed I’m certain, Edgar,

they would only do it for the best."

They stopped talking for a little while, and sat still and silent—very still it was, and very long it lasted for two boys of their age; but Edgar's short breathing and weakness had often enforced these times of rest, and Arthur's grave, earnest face showed him to be deeply thinking. They made a great contrast as they sat together in the woody shade, where the woodbine-scented breeze was fanning softly, and the quivering light fell scatteringly. There was a weary, restless look brooding over Edgar's dark eyes, and his face was pale and worn-looking. Arthur's cheeks were ruddy and round, and his thick brown hair clustering on his sunburnt forehead; but with all the energy and liveliness that could be seen on his face, a peaceful, restful look could be noticed there too.

"This walk to-day reminds me of long ago," said Edgar, after a while. "We used to walk, papa and I. Sometimes we set off directly after breakfast, and took some luncheon with us, and then father used to fish, and it was such fun when he caught some; and then we had luncheon, and sometimes father went to sleep for a little, and sometimes he would tell me stories; and talk, oh, so nicely!"

"What did he talk about?" asked Arthur.

"Well, I can't tell you exactly, or at any rate I don't want to tell you."

"I wish you would," Arthur said.

Presently Arthur spoke again.

"Yes, it is very nice; that is, it is *half* nice to think of those times."

“It must be quite nice for you,” said Edgar, “because, you see, you may think that it will all come again some day, and that you will be with your father and mother again; but I never shall. Oh, Arthur, I do want to see him sometimes! I think if I knew for certain he was alive in India, I could wait any time. It would be so nice to know he was coming back again, and that I was going to live with him.”

And then it struck Arthur, how very much more he had to be thankful for, than he had thought. He looked at Edgar’s sad life, and then he thought of how very much brighter his own was. But he knew enough of dreariness, to be able to enter into Edgar’s sadness.

“Well, Edgar, I’ll tell you what. When my father and mother come home, I will get them to ask you to come to Ashton Grange, and you may be quite sure the people there will want you. I know I shall. I think, although you are such a queer fellow, that I like you very much, and I am so sorry you are so unhappy.”

Something like a happy smile came into Edgar’s face, as he said, “I think I should like that.”

Arthur had not known it, but in Edgar’s heart there had always been a great liking for him. He was so different from himself. Perhaps that was one reason, and Edgar’s was one of those deep, intense natures that cling very closely to their heart’s objects.

By and by they began their homeward way, and as they walked along the lane, Arthur said:

“Tell me what it was your father used to talk about. I believe I know partly.”

“Well, if you know, what is the use of my telling?”

“Because I don’t quite know. And, Edgar, was it not about heaven, and the way to get there?”

“Yes,” said Edgar in a low voice; “but I don’t think grandmamma agreed with him. Any way, I know that when she talked, it made me miserable.”

“You seem to have had a great many troubles, Edgar,” said Arthur, “even more than I have.”

“Oh, Arthur,” said Edgar, “I don’t think any one knows how unhappy I have been! Look here,” and Edgar spoke in a lower voice; “I don’t mind telling you, because you are different from the rest; but, do you know, I have always been in a fright about something or other. Sometimes, in the winter nights, all by myself at home, I have had such horrid thoughts, and I have fancied all sorts of things; and even in the summer evenings, when the sky had that red look, it always made me think about the moon being turned into blood, and about judgment and punishment; and I used to think about the great white throne, and myself standing before it, and God judging me, and that papa and mamma would be on one side, and I should be on the other.”

“Well, I have had thoughts like that, I think; but then I always thought of the Lord Jesus Christ; and how could I be afraid then?”

“But He will judge people, won’t He?”

“Oh, Edgar, He is our Saviour!” said Arthur earnestly. “It is only when people will not have Him for their Saviour that He is their Judge. Why, I am not afraid of the Lord Jesus. How could I be?”

“Ah,” said Edgar sadly, “that is because you are converted, and I am not! I have tried so hard. Oh, so many times, after I have heard sermons, I have felt so frightened, and I have made up my mind I would be a Christian; and then in bed I have cried so, and I have thought, that surely this time I must really go on right, and the next day, it has all been different again, and I did not care a bit about it!”

“But, Edgar, the Lord Jesus wants you to come to Him, a great deal more than you want it. I know He does, because he says, ‘Ye *will not* come to me that ye might have life.’”

“But what is coming?” said Edgar in a dreary voice.

“Well, I’ll tell you the way, my mother once explained it to me. Don’t you know, if the Lord Jesus were here on the earth, you would go to the place where He was, and say, ‘I am here, Lord Jesus; I come;’ and so now you can say that while you are sitting here, because He is here, and everywhere; so you need not move. And, Edgar, don’t you think He knows that you say it? I am certain He does, because He has been wanting you to answer, ever since He called.”

“But,” said Edgar, “you make it out, as if it was not to try a bit.”

“Well, and that is it,” said Arthur, with a bright, happy smile. “That is just what mother says. I can tell you another thing she said. You remember about the Lord Jesus feeding the people in the wilderness?”

“Yes, with the loaves and the fishes.”

“Yes; that was it. Well, all He wanted them to do, was to rest on the grass, and be fed; and that was just

the thing, that pleased Him best. You see they had not to try and do anything hard—had they? And mother said, that this is what the Lord Jesus wants us to do—to stop trying, and let Him do what He likes with us; and, you know, the Lord Jesus could not do anything unkind, could He?"

"You don't seem one bit afraid of Him, Arthur."

"Why, no. How could I be afraid?" asked Arthur, with such a happy smile. "Don't you know

"'How our hearts delight to hear Him
Bid us dwell in safety near Him!
Why should we distrust or fear Him?
Oh, how He loves!'"

They neither of them spoke for several minutes. It was getting late, and the sun was falling in slanting golden rays on the green slopes; the shadows were deepening in the woods, and other sights and sounds told, that evening was coming on; so the two boys rose from their grassy seat.

"I wish, oh, how I wish," said Edgar, after a long pause, "that I could feel the same as you do, Arthur!"

"Well, but you must not be wanting to feel first; you have to believe what the Lord Jesus says, and He says, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;' so if you would only come, you must be safe, for He cannot break His word. And I will tell you what I do, Edgar, whenever I think of how bad I have been, and when I feel frightened. I just say, 'Jesus died,' and God hears me, and Satan hears me too; and of course when I remember why Jesus died, I feel glad. And then, there is a text I like to remember—a very short one it is—where the Lord Jesus is called 'the Saviour of the world;' and, you know, if He is the Saviour of the world, He must be my Saviour, and yours too."

They had reached the school-gates now; the shadows were deep and long, and Arthur's two-mile walk lay before him. But his aunt had long since found, that she could trust him alone; so even when the moon had begun to tell, that the day had gone; and the stars were speaking sparkling joy above, she was not uneasy about him.

“Well, good-bye,” said Arthur.

“Good-bye,” Edgar said; but he did not go, and he stood, looking wistfully at Arthur. Presently he spoke —

“Arthur, I wish——”

“Well, what?”

“I wish you would be my friend.”

“Why, so I am,” said Arthur.

“Yes; but I mean, I have not any brother, and you have not either. I wish you would be the same to me as if we were. Will you?”

“Yes,” said Arthur, with a half smile, for he felt a little shy; but he wanted to say something kind, so he said, “Very well then, we can; and when my father and mother come home from India, you can come to us, you know.”

And then Arthur turned away, and began his walk to Myrtle Hill at a running pace. But he was thinking all the way very much of his talk with Edgar North, so that when he reached his aunt’s house, the earnest look was on his face still. The darkness had not yet fallen, but the evening shades were gathering. Mrs. Estcourt was in the garden, looking out for her little nephew. She was very fond of Arthur; of course there were times when things did not run altogether smoothly between them, because, although he was a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, and really tried to please Him, he had a strong will and a hot temper. But if Mrs. Estcourt saw his faults, she saw his struggles too; and she noticed when he gave up, what was a great matter to a boy, such as he was;

and she knew that this was not natural. She knew that it was God's love that made Arthur glad; and often in her heart's secret depths she would wish to be a child like him once more, that she might believe as simply; for thoughts and questions made her very unhappy at times, and the reasonings of her natural mind prevented her enjoying the promises that God gives. But was she not making a mistake? Could she not become a little child, as God has told us all to do? Could she not cease to think, and begin to believe, and take the portion of joy and life from the One, who has said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"?

Arthur went to look at one particular corner of the grounds, which his aunt had given him for his very own; it was hidden by a bend in the trees, and he had expended a great deal of care and skill on this garden-plot. First of all Arthur had intended, that his estate should have a river flowing through it; but when he had dug a deep trench, and filled it, he was much disappointed to find that the water sunk into the earth; and even when he had lined it with stones and oyster-shells, there was only a very faint trickling stream, and not the brimming river, that he had fancied to himself; so then, in disgust, Arthur levelled the banks of his river, and determined to plan his garden anew. At present it was really a pretty one, though perhaps a little too bright, with hollyhocks and geraniums. Two very large roses stood at the entrance, and the scarlet geraniums were blooming there. There was a gravel walk through the middle, that led up to a grotto, and the ferns that were growing there were well watered. Arthur would have help from no one, in the care of his garden; and considering this, its neatness did him great credit.

Mrs. Estcourt thought so too, as they stood together inside the enclosure, which was all his own.

“Why, Arthur, I think you had better turn gardener, when you choose a profession,” she said.

“A gardener, aunt! Well, I shouldn’t mind. But I am not quite sure I shall not be something else.”

“What would that be?” asked his aunt.

“Well, I think I might be a missionary.”

Then he seemed to be thinking; and after some little time, he said, “I wish he would not talk like that, I wish I could make him see.”

“Who, dear?”

“Edgar North, auntie. I always thought he was very cross and disagreeable, but it is not that, at all. It is because he is so unhappy. I do wish I had thought of one other thing to say to him.”

“What was it, Arthur?” asked his aunt.

“Why, you know, he is so frightened. Fancy,” and Arthur’s voice was soft and low, “he is afraid of the Lord Jesus Christ. That must be, because he does not know Him, must it not, auntie? And I wish I had said to him, ‘If the Lord Jesus were to come walking towards us now, and sit down here, would you be afraid to see Him?’”

“And would not you, dear Arthur?” asked his aunt.

“Why, no, Aunt Daisy! How could I? The little children that He took up in His arms were not. I am sure I should not be afraid.”

Mrs. Estcourt did not say anything, but she was

thinking of what Arthur had said. It seemed to her then, that it must be very sweet to be one of the little children, that the Lord Jesus had blessed; for she often felt very lonely and weary. Some people—those who only care for the things that gold can bring—might say she had everything that she wanted; but her heart craved a great deal more than this, and when her husband went away from her sight for ever, she had felt as if he had taken her heart with him. There was One, who had said to her long before, “Give me thine heart;” but she had not listened to His voice, and she had not thought about His love; greater than which, there is none. She was trusting in Him for salvation, but she was not looking to Him, to feed her heart with His love. She was following Him afar off, too far to be able to say, “I sat down under His shadow with great delight; and His fruit was sweet to my taste.”





CHAPTER IX.

MIDSUMMER HOLIDAYS AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

THE summer holidays were coming very near, and most of the boys at Mr. Carey's school were looking forward to them with great joy; for they had pleasant homes, where they knew that their fathers and mothers would welcome them, and their young sisters and brothers would be glad to see them again. Arthur Vivyan, too, was expecting to enjoy his time; for Mrs. Estcourt generally spent some of the summer weeks in the Swiss mountains, and this year it was a pleasure to her to think of showing the places, that she knew so well, to her nephew; and the thought of his wonder and surprise, when he should see the snowy mountains, and the deep blue lakes, that the sun would glow with a deeper colour, gave her more pleasure than she had known for a long time. Arthur had been very busy with his examination, and other things had hindered another walk with his new friend; but they both expected, when the holidays were over, and they should meet again, that there would be more time for walks and talks.

It was the last day of school. Arthur was hurrying in to his class, which was in a different room from the one in which Edgar studied, when in the corridor they met. Arthur was passing him quickly, with a nod and smile, when Edgar stopped him, and said breathlessly—

“Oh, Arthur, I have been looking everywhere for you! I must speak to you.”

“I can’t stop one minute,” said Arthur. “I’m late as it is.”

“Yes; but I must!” said Edgar eagerly. “You don’t know, I am going away to stay.”

“Well!” and Arthur thought. “Let me see. I will try and be ready, five minutes beforehand; and I dare say, the other boys will be longer going to-day.”

“Oh, yes!” said Edgar. “I forgot; there will be plenty of time, of course, this last day.”

So Arthur hurried in to his class, forgetting, after he had given it a moment’s thought, what Edgar had said.

He thought of it again, when he was waiting under the trees; where groups of boys were standing, talking eagerly, with bright, busy faces. Edgar’s was very different, and his pale, earnest face was even deeper than usual.

“Well,” said Arthur, “what have you to tell me?”

Edgar had a letter in his hand.

“Why, look here,” he said. “I told you, I had to go and live at my uncle’s in London. I did not mind that; it did not make much difference; but see here, what he says in this letter I had to-day. He is my guardian now, you know, and he says he thinks it will be better for me on every account, to give up school.”

“And what are you to do? Not going to have any more lessons?”

“He says, I am to study with his boys. They have a tutor, and he hopes we shall all find it very pleasant.”

Edgar’s face did not look as if he expected to do so.

“Well,” said Arthur.

“Do you think it is well, Arthur?” said Edgar, a little reproachfully. “I hate it, and I hate him, and I hate them all. I thought it was bad enough before.”

“Oh, Edgar, that’s wicked!”

“Well, I can’t help it. Wait until you get bothered, and perhaps you will be wicked too. And, of course, they will hate me, all of them. He has a wife and a lot of daughters, as well as sons.”

“They would be your cousins, would they not?”

“I suppose so,” said Edgar hopelessly.

“Well, do you know, I think it need not be so very bad. You know, Edgar, they would be next best to brothers and sisters. And there might be a little one,” said Arthur, with a soft, tender feeling; as he thought of the little sunny sister, that still lived in his heart. “Why do you hate it so very much?”

“Every reason,” said Edgar bitterly. “And, Arthur, you know I love you, more than any one else in the world; and I wanted to talk to you sometimes.”

“And I am sorry, Edgar,” said Arthur; “only then, you know, you are coming to stay with us at Ashton Grange, when my father and mother come back.”

“Ah, but that is such a very long time; and, you know, I may die before that. Perhaps I shall; and if I

were certain of going to heaven, I should like to die."

"I thought you would be certain by this time, Edgar; you know you ought to be certain. Why can't you stop bothering about yourself? Oh, Edgar, I wish you would!"

"I do get so frightened," said Edgar, his lip trembling.

"But mamma says, that is all the more reason, why you should let the Lord Jesus take care of you. That's all, you know, Edgar. But I have told you so often, I think the best thing I can do, is to pray for you."

"Will you, Arthur? Will you really?" said Edgar, turning round a very anxious, eager face; and he said it again. "Oh, do please, every day, Arthur! I don't believe any one else does. Father used to pray for me; oh, I know he did!" and Edgar's words ended in smothered sobs.

Arthur's arms were round his neck now. "Dear Edgar, don't cry. You know I do love you just as if you were my brother; and I will pray for you every day. I do sometimes already. And then we can write to each other, you know, can't we?" Looking through the trees they could see that the other boys were fast dispersing, and that only one or two of the day boys were left; so Arthur knew that he must go, and that it must be a very long good-bye to Edgar.

They walked together to the gate, and then they stopped. Edgar seemed to be searching in his pocket for something. Presently he found it, and placed it in Arthur's hand.

"What is this?" said Arthur.

“Well, it is a present for you. I have nothing else to give you, and I did want to give you something.”

“But what is it?” said Arthur; for he seemed puzzled by the appearance of Edgar’s gift, although it was open in his hand.

“Well, I’ll tell you,” said Edgar. “I have two medals that my grandfather got at college, and father gave them to me when he went away; and, you know, if you were my brother you would have one; so I want you to take it. I have one just like it.”

“Very well,” said Arthur; “thank you, Edgar, and I don’t like saying good-bye at all, you know; but we must; and, Edgar, won’t you do it, what we talked about?”

“And you remember what you promised about praying. Mind you do, Arthur. Good-bye.”

Then Arthur went away; and as he was walking homewards, there was more than one tear brushed away by his little hot, ink-stained hand, though it was not a heart-grief to him, and he did not know what a lonely, desolate feeling was in Edgar’s heart, as he watched him walking slowly away until the distance hid him from his eyes; for Arthur was the chief object in his heart just then.

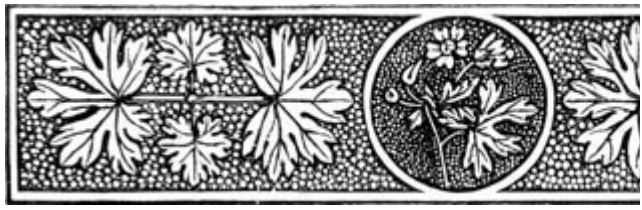
The next day the play-ground at Mr. Carey’s school was quiet and empty, and the broad shadows fell softly on the silent grass. The sheep in the fields must have wondered at the stillness. And Mr. Carey was enjoying the half-yearly silence that reigned there.

Arthur had been looking forward to the holiday journey on the Continent with glowing expectation; he could hardly believe at first that he was really

going to see the towns and countries of which he had learnt in his geography lessons. He tried to imagine the journey, and to see pictures of the places where they were going; but that was not very easy, as he had never been so far before as this last journey he had taken, and he knew nothing at all of travelling by sea; this he found out to be a very unpleasant reality; and he wished very much that, while he remained abroad with his aunt, the tunnel under the sea would be finished between Dover and Calais.

They had a very pleasant time in Switzerland. Then Arthur saw the deep blue lake with its solemn projecting mountains that swelled in great mounds around, and far down where the gleaming peaks of white made the blue look deeper; and in the evening, when the sun was hiding behind, and was throwing a flame-coloured glow on the grandeur around, he would stand on the terrace and feel the solemn hush that told the night was coming.

Several weeks were passed among the mountains, and it was not until just before the opening of the school that he found himself back at Myrtle Hill.



CHAPTER X.

AT REST NOW.



WONDER why Edgar North does not write to me. I can't think what can have happened to him. Just think, auntie; I know that when his last letter came, the leaves had not all gone from the trees, and now look at the snow."

Several months had passed away since Arthur and his aunt had come home, and the winter chill and shadows were gathering around. Many letters had found their way to Myrtle Hill from the far-away mother in India, and sometimes, though not so often, answers went back to tell her things about her child that made her glad.

At first Arthur had often had tidings of his absent friend, beginning, "My dear Arthur, I hope you are quite well;" and there was a sadness that spoke in his short notes that Arthur could scarcely understand. But in one of his letters Edgar had said, "I have to be indoors by myself a great deal, and then I think of the things we used to talk about". That was the last letter that had come from him, and now it was several months ago, and Arthur was wondering at the long silence, as he had written twice in answer to this letter. But many things had taken up his thoughts and his time, and the winter holidays had begun, before he had thought much of his absent friend.

“Aunt Daisy,” said Arthur one morning, about two days after he had seen his lesson books put away for the present, “I really wish I knew what has become of Edgar; I think it is the strangest thing that he never writes to me. People do not generally stop caring about their friends suddenly, do they?”

“No, dear, not generally. Perhaps little boys may be peculiar kinds of creatures, you know,” she said, smiling.

“I am sure, aunt,” said Arthur, looking aggrieved, “you think boys are much nicer than you did once. And, besides, Edgar and I are not little.”

“No, dear,” said his aunt, laughing and kissing him. “I do think they are very nice sometimes; and you are getting a great big fellow, whatever Edgar is.”

“I wish he would write to me,” said Arthur, pausing before he began his breakfast.

“Perhaps he may be ill,” his aunt suggested.

“Perhaps he may be, auntie,” said Arthur thoughtfully. “I wish I knew. Poor Edgar! fancy his being ill all alone.”

“Alone, dear! Why, is he not with his uncle and his aunt?”

“Yes; but then, you know, *all* aunts are not nice. And there are a lot of cousins. Perhaps you might not want to have me, if you had ever so many children, Aunt Daisy.”

Mrs. Estcourt smiled, and perhaps she thought that Arthur was not so very far from right. Arthur still wondered why no letter came, and at last he had almost made up his mind to write again; but this

would be a task not at all to his taste, and one which he would very much rather avoid.

One morning when he came down to breakfast, he saw that there was something on his plate. It really was a letter at last! and, of course, Arthur concluded that it could be from no one but his friend in London.

“A letter for me at last! Well, it is quite time. Now I shall have to answer it, I suppose. Oh! I forgot. Good morning, auntie!”

But when Arthur had gone back to his place, and had examined his letter more closely, he saw that it was not Edgar’s round, plain hand that had directed the envelope.

“Why, aunt,” he said, “I don’t believe it is from Edgar at all. Who can it be from? Edgar does not write that way. That is a lady’s writing. What lady could be writing to me? Mamma is the only one, and her letter could not be from London.”

“Suppose you were to open it,” said his aunt. “Nobody else has any right to do it but you.”

“Well!” said Arthur, drawing a long breath of expectation.

Presently he was deep in the interest of his letter, and it was not for several minutes that he spoke again.

“Well, this is a very queer letter, and I cannot understand it at all. I can make out that Edgar is very, very ill. And, Auntie, do you know he seems to think perhaps he is never going to get well at all,” Arthur said very gravely and sadly.

“Has Edgar written to you himself?” asked his aunt.

“Yes. At least, that is, he said it, and one of his cousins wrote it down. Would you like to read his letter, auntie?”

This was Edgar’s letter to Arthur:

“MY DEAR ARTHUR,—My aunt is writing to your aunt, and my cousin Minnie is writing this for me. I am in bed, so I am not able. You see, Arthur, I am very ill, and the doctor says I shall not get better; but I am not afraid now, dear Arthur. Cousin Minnie is very nice. I like her so much; but she has to go away soon. Arthur, I hope you will be able to come. I have prayed that you may; and I think your aunt will let you, because, you see, I am going to die, most likely, and I want to see you again.

“Your affectionate friend,

“EDGAR NORTH.”

“What can he mean, Aunt Daisy? What can he mean by saying, ‘I hope you will be able to come’? It is so strange not to explain.”

“Do you think that will help you to understand?” asked his aunt, giving him one of her own letters to read.

“What! Do you mean me to read your letter, auntie? Well!” said Arthur, wondering at this unusual occurrence, and not connecting it at all with his own letter.

Mrs. Estcourt’s letter began ‘Dear Madam,’ and it was some little time before Arthur could understand who it was from, or what it meant. By and by he found

that it was from Edgar's aunt, and that she was wishing him to stay at her house in London, so that he might see her little nephew again. This letter told that Edgar was very ill indeed; that his illness was consumption, and that the doctor expected him to live only a very short time.

It was several minutes before Arthur spoke, after he had read this letter. Breakfast was quite forgotten, and he could hardly understand at first the strange things he had read.

"Now, Arthur dear, you must eat some breakfast before we talk," said his aunt.

"Aunt Daisy," he said, when he had finished, "What shall you say, when you answer Edgar North's aunt's letter?"

"Well, what shall I say?"

"Auntie," said Arthur presently, "I am so sorry about Edgar. I never thought he was so very ill. Do you think he is really going to die?"

"Yes, dear. I should think he will not get well. But you need not be sorry, Arthur. Don't you see, he says he is not afraid; and the world is not such a very bright place that he should be sorry to go, when he knows he has such a home. Don't you think so, darling?"

"Yes," said Arthur; but the tears had dimmed his blue eyes, and a sudden feeling in his throat made him stop speaking.

When Mrs. Estcourt was sitting with her work by the drawing-room fire, with Arthur by her side, much more quietly and gravely than was usual with him,

he said suddenly:

“But, aunt, when are you going to answer that letter?”

“That is just the question I was asking myself, and the answer was, ‘Now.’ What shall I say, Arthur?”

“Well, don’t you think I had better go?”

“Yes, surely, dear. But how are you going to get there? You cannot travel by yourself.”

“Oh, aunt!” said Arthur, almost in an alarmed tone of voice, “I should hope I am old enough. Why, of course I could. The idea of anybody taking care of me!”

“Well, but,” said Mrs. Estcourt, smiling, “that is just what I have been thinking about all this time. I have been thinking that I should feel very unhappy, if I let you go alone. It may be foolish, Arthur; but, you know, your father and mother gave you to me to take care of for them.”

“I know,” said Arthur impatiently, “they would let me go by myself. I could not bear to have any old man or woman looking after me.”

“They need not be old, you know,” said his aunt. “Now, Arthur,” she added very decidedly, “there is no use saying anything more about it. If you go at all, I must know that some one is in the carriage with you. I need not tell them to take care of you, but I must know that some one will be there; and I know Mrs. Maitland is going to London to-morrow, so I shall find out what train she is going by.” Arthur made an impatient movement; he did not say any more, but a look was on his face that showed what

he was feeling. As it happened, he need not have been so disgusted. When the time for starting came, and he was taking his seat in the carriage, he found that the lady had already taken her place there; and it was not so very trying to his feelings as he expected, for Mrs. Estcourt only said, “This is my little nephew, Mrs. Maitland; he is going to London, and I am glad to think he is in your company.”

“She never asked her to take care of me,” said Arthur to himself, “and I am sure she could not think of such a thing herself when she sees me.”

But Mrs. Maitland had sons of her own at home about Arthur’s age, and she knew something about boys and their ways, so that by the time they reached the Paddington Station they were very good friends. Arthur did not at all object to her helping him to get a cab that was to take him to Leicester Lodge, in Kensington.

Indeed, he was obliged to confess to himself, when he found himself alone in the hansom cab that his friend had found for him, that it was very well she had been with him, for when he was standing on the platform, with the din and bustle around him, and the many people stirring in the vast station, he had felt quite bewildered. He had never been in London before, and this was the longest journey he had taken.

It was a very curious feeling that he had when he found himself alone in the cab: at first he could not get quite over the feeling that it was not safe; it seemed to him that it would be so very easy for the driver to go away and leave the horse to take him wherever he liked amongst the crowds of people, and cabs, and omnibuses.

You may be sure that he looked about him well, as they whirled along through street after street, skirting the park and the palace-like houses. He had to guess the names of the places they were passing through, and I dare say some of his guesses would have amused you very much indeed. He was quite sure a hotel that he passed was somebody's palace, perhaps the Lord Chancellor's. He did not think it could be Her Majesty's, because there were no soldiers.

It was quite dark by the time the cab drove up outside Leicester Lodge, and lights were shining above the shutters of the dining and drawing-room windows. The dim light enabled Arthur to see that it was a large house with a small piece of garden-ground in front, and one or two leafless trees, which gave it rather a dreary look.

It was not very long before he found himself standing inside the hall door with his portmanteau. The servant showed him into a small ante-room, and said he would tell the young ladies. Arthur had a curious feeling of not being expected, although he knew he must be, as his aunt had written to Mrs. North the day before.

This was not a very quiet and orderly household evidently; there were traces of that in the room where he was sitting, and he could hear noises on the stairs and in the room overhead that might say the same. Presently there was a scuffling noise in the hall, and after a little while the door was burst quickly open, and more than one curly head peeped in, and was as quickly drawn back, and Arthur could hear a little girl's voice say, "Oh, Gerald, it was you made me do it; you know it was!"

Arthur felt rather inclined to run out, and see who was there; but he thought it would be better to wait until some older person came.

By and by the door opened again, more quietly this time, and a young lady came into the room. She had a kind look on her face, as she held out her hand to Arthur, and said—

“I am so sorry you have been left here alone; but I could not leave the baby, my youngest brother. Won’t you come upstairs to your room?”

Arthur was feeling just a little shy, so he only shook hands with the young lady, and followed her upstairs. On the way, he asked, “Will you tell me how Edgar is?”

“Not very well, to-day; but just now he is asleep, I think. Were you and he great friends?”

“Yes,” said Arthur. “Are you his cousin?”

“One of his cousins. I dare say he told you there were ever so many.”

“Yes; I don’t think he knew how many,” said Arthur.

“No; I should think not,” said Maude, laughing. “I hardly do, sometimes. But I believe altogether we number ten.”

“Oh,” said Arthur, “what, ten brothers and sisters at home?”

“Oh, no; we are very seldom all at home together. Two of my brothers are abroad, and some of the girls are at school. It is a very good thing they are sometimes.”

“There, that is Edgar’s room,” said Miss North, as they passed one of the doors. “We try to keep the noise away from this passage as much as we can; but it is not very easy with so many boys and girls.” This was very true, as just then two boys about Arthur’s own age came bursting through one of the doors, and were stopped by their sister at the entrance of the passage.

“Now, boys, don’t come this way. You know Edgar is asleep. Just tumble down the other stairs, if you must tumble.”

“I suppose you never tear about in that way,” said Maude, with a faint smile.

“Oh, yes, I think I do sometimes,” Arthur answered; “but, of course, it is not so much fun doing it by one’s self.”

They were in Arthur’s room now, which was a small one not very far from Edgar’s; and a locked door, which opened into another room, showed that it was a dressing-room.

“You see, as the children and Edgar are at home, we have only this little room. Will you be able to sleep here, do you think?”

Edgar’s cousin smiled as she spoke, and Arthur thought how very nice it made her look.

“Oh, yes; I should think so,” he said.

“Well, presently you will hear the tea bell. Oh, no; but I forgot! We don’t ring the tea bell now that Edgar is ill. One of the children shall let you know, if you are not down first.”

But after a little while, when no one had come to call

him, Arthur opened his door and came down stairs. It did not need any one to tell him which was the room where the young people were, as the sounds that came through the shut door would let any one know that. Arthur paused outside the school-room door, and then he opened it and went in. It was such a strange new scene that he saw, so different from anything he had been accustomed to, and he was almost bewildered by so many boys and girls, most of whom seemed to be laughing and talking together.

There was a long tea-table. The eldest sister was at the head, five younger ones were seated around, and a tall boy was lying on a sofa near the fire reading. Indeed, he did not call himself a boy at all; for he had just left school, and was preparing for some difficult examination.

All the faces round the table were turned towards Arthur as he opened the door; but none of them spoke until Maude, noticing the silence, saw Arthur standing. Then she said, “Gerald, why don’t you speak? or Harold, this is Arthur Vivyan, Edgar’s friend.”

The two boys shook hands, and then Arthur spoke to the three little girls, who were looking as if they would like to speak. Arnold, the eldest, seemed to be half asleep over his book; so they sat down to tea. Arthur was wondering where the father and mother were. It seemed so strange altogether, and he could not help thinking that it was rather a disorderly party. All the children seemed to do very much as they liked, and yet it appeared as if their eldest sister took a great deal of trouble to make them behave properly. She seemed to be constantly putting them right without much effect. Arthur wondered whether

this was what gave her face such a tired look.

“Harold, I wish you would let Clara alone. Do take tea properly. Gerald, you know you would not do that if papa were here.” And Maude gave a sigh, as she saw her words had no effect.

“I do wish you would behave properly; what must Edgar’s friend think of you?”

“I dare say he thinks we are something like himself,” said Gerald, “don’t you?”

Arthur laughed, because he did not know what else to do. And then Maude gave a faint laugh.

“What’s the use of keeping on wishing, Maude?” said Arnold, rousing himself. “Why can’t you make them?”

“Well, how would you?” asked Maude.

“Oh, that is quite another thing,” said Arnold, yawning.

“I dare say you could not do it as well as Maude,” said Harold.

“No; very likely not,” said Arnold, laughing, and he returned to his book.

“Well, I wish you would all make haste and finish tea,” said Maude, taking out her watch, “whatever way you do it. Oh, dear, I must make haste, or I shall not be ready in time for dinner. Arnold, you must go. What will papa say if we are not ready when the bell rings?”

Arnold got up as if with an immense effort. “I dare say I shall be ready quite as soon as you are, Maudie.

You always get into such a fluster about every thing."

When the two eldest were gone, the younger ones became still more lively. One of the little girls was more quiet than the rest, and she seemed to think it would be nice and polite to talk to their visitor.

"Do you always have your meals by yourselves?" asked Arthur.

"All except breakfast," said Minnie. "You see, mamma hardly ever comes out of her dressing-room; she is ill, and papa is away all the day, and he only comes home to dinner at seven."

"Does he have dinner alone?"

"Oh, no; you know that was the reason Maude was in such a hurry. She and Arnold dine with papa." Then they were both silent for a little while. Presently Arthur said, "I wonder when I shall be able to see Edgar."

Minnie hesitated, and then said, "I was just thinking about that. You see, Edgar does not know you have come; and, besides, I think he is asleep; he was just now, and I cannot go and ask Maude."

"Why not?" said Arthur.

"Oh, because dinner is going on. Papa would not like it."

"You do what your sister tells you more than the others," said Arthur, "don't you?"

"Oh, we all do sometimes," said Minnie. After a little while she spoke again:

“I don’t think Maude would mind. Perhaps she forgot, and I can tell her about it afterwards. I’ll tell you what we will do; we will go up to Edgar’s door, and then I can go in, and you can stay outside while I see whether he is asleep, and whether I can tell him that you are here. I don’t think Maude will mind. Shall we?”

“Yes,” said Arthur. “I don’t see why she should, because I came on purpose to see Edgar.”

As soon as the other children saw Minnie and Arthur going away, there was a general cry, “Minnie, where are you going?”

“Never mind,” said Minnie resolutely.

“We wanted to have ‘post’. There won’t be enough without you. Come now, stop,” said Harold, putting his hand on the door handle.

“Oh, Harold, do let us go!” said Minnie pitifully.

“Well, tell us where you are going then?” Minnie saw that this was the only chance.

“We are going to Edgar’s room, I shall be back soon, Harold.”

“Yes; but we wanted Arthur Vivyan to play. Boys are twice the fun of girls.”

“But, you know, he came on purpose to see Edgar; and don’t you remember how very, very ill, Edgar is, Harold?” said his sister gravely.

Harold let go his grasp of the door, and Arthur and his new little friend found themselves safely outside.

“Now,” said Minnie, as they stood on the landing at

the top of the stairs, “you stop here, and then I will come back in a minute.”

She opened the door very cautiously, and looked in for a moment; then Arthur saw her go inside and shut the door. It was several minutes before she came back.

“I told him,” she said. “Oh, I hope I did not do him any harm. He was so very glad.”

“Why,” said Arthur, “I should think that would be a good thing.”

“But he is so ill, you know. I think you had better go in now. Oh,” she said, just as she was turning away, “if you think him looking very different from what he was last summer, don’t you think you had better not seem surprised? I know my mother never likes people to say anything about her looks.”

“Very well,” said Arthur.

It was only the firelight that brightened Edgar’s room, and it danced and sparkled around, and gave quite light enough for Arthur to see every thing distinctly. The room felt very warm and comfortable as he went in, and the sound of Edgar’s quick, hard breathing was very plain. Arthur drew very quietly near the bedside. Little Minnie’s caution was well given; for it needed an effort on his part to be quiet and composed, as he saw the change in his friend; and he had to try very hard to keep the tears from coming to his eyes. Edgar was lying so very still and quiet; his cheeks were white and sunken, and his eyes looked large, and dark, and shining; but there was a much happier look in them than in the old times when they used to talk together.

“Oh, Arthur,” said Edgar, trying to stretch out his hand, “I am so glad you have come. I did so pray that I might see you again.”

Arthur came and sat down as near him as he could. “Of course I came when you wanted me, and my aunt said I might.”

“Hold my hand, Arthur,” said Edgar, “while I talk to you. You are my brother, you know.”

Arthur took Edgar’s thin, hot hand, and held it in his own sturdy one; and as he looked at him, he could not help it, the tears came into his eyes.

“I know what you are thinking about, Arthur,” said Edgar, “and I know you are trying to seem as if you do not think me very ill; but you need not mind, I know I am, and I know I am going to be with the Lord Jesus very soon.”

“Dear Edgar,” said Arthur, burying his face in the bed-clothes to hide his tears, “I never knew you really were so very ill.”

“Didn’t you?” said Edgar. “No, I suppose not. I did not know it either, until lately, for certain. But it will be so nice in heaven, Arthur, with the Lord Jesus. I shall never be tired, or cross, or have those pains. And the Lord Jesus wants to have me there; that is so nice to think of. You know I have always had a feeling that people would as soon I was away; but I know He really wants to have me in heaven with Himself very much. It makes me love Him so much to think of that. That is one of the things Cousin Amy told me.”

“Who is she? Does she live here?”

“Oh, no; she is not one of these Norths; she is one of my other uncle’s daughters; and she was staying here in the autumn. She taught me more about the Lord Jesus than any one else, except you.”

“Did I?” asked Arthur.

“Why, you know you did. Don’t you remember those walks? I have never forgotten those things, Arthur.”

“But you used to be very miserable then.”

“Yes; but I thought about it all afterwards; and then Cousin Amy was so nice.”

“Tell me some of the things she said,” asked Arthur; “that is, if you can; but perhaps you have talked enough for to-night, Edgar. Perhaps I had better go now.”

“Oh, no,” said Edgar; “do stay; it is so nice having you; and I can talk much better in the evenings. I will tell you some of the nice thoughts I had, if you like. You know I have had so much time to think, Arthur. I have had so many hours by myself, lying here.”

“Have you been here long, then, and by yourself? Oh, Edgar, why couldn’t you have let me know?” asked Arthur reproachfully.

“Oh, because I could not write myself. I became worse so suddenly, you know. It seems such a long, strange time since I came, and since last holidays when I saw you, Arthur. At first it was so horrid; and then I got ill, and then Cousin Amy came, and then Louisa and Minnie came home for the holidays, and now you are here.”

“How was it horrid?” asked Arthur.

“Well, I know they did not much want me. I don’t mean they were unkind; but just think of all the children here. It does not make much difference to Uncle North, because he is away all the day at his office, nor to poor Aunt North either, because she is always ill; but I know Maude has enough to do already; and Arnold says he thinks boys are a great bother. Then the others used to be making such a noise, and taking long walks, and I could not; and they all said I was not happy; but I was just as happy as anywhere else, only I could not be the same as they were.”

“That little girl seems nice,” said Arthur, “the one that told you I was here.”

“Minnie? Oh, yes, she is a dear little thing. But she has only been at home about a fortnight. It was she who got Aunt North to ask you to come. I love her; she has been more kind to me than any of the rest.”

“I expect my little sister Mildred would have been something like her if she had lived,” said Arthur.

“You cannot think how I used to wish for you, Arthur. While Cousin Amy was here I never thought of asking her to write to you for me; besides, it would not have been very much use, when I could not have asked you to come. Maude used sometimes to come up and sit in my room. But I don’t know how it is, I feel rather afraid of Maude; and she has so much to do, and altogether I did not like her to do it. Then when the holidays began she could not come up. But the day after Minnie came home, she came up and talked; and I did not mind asking her anything.”

“Did you ask her to write to me?” asked Arthur.

“Not exactly. One day she asked me, when we were talking about my not going to live, whether there was any one I would like to see; and I said there was one person, and that was you, you know. Then the next time she came she said, ‘I’ve asked mamma, Edgar, and she says we may, if Maude can manage.’ I could not think what she meant at first. Was she not a dear little thing?”

“Yes; and then,” said Arthur, very much interested.

“Oh, then she coaxed Maude in some way, and I said the letter, and Minnie wrote it.”

Just then the door opened, and some one appeared with a tray, whom Arthur had not yet seen. This was the nurse, who was a kind person, and came to Edgar’s bedside when she could leave her own charge.

“Oh,” she said, “so you have your friend, Mr. Edgar, I see.”

“Yes, nurse,” said Edgar, “isn’t it nice?”

“But you must not talk too much, you know, sir.”

“I expect he has been talking quite enough,” said Arthur, jumping up; “and I am going now, Edgar, I can come again to-morrow, you know.”

“That’s a good young gentleman,” said nurse.

So Edgar’s thoughts could not be told until the next day.

On the way down stairs, Arthur met Maude; and he began to wonder now whether she would like his having been all this time in Edgar’s room, and whether she would know. Perhaps his thoughts were

in his face, for Maude smiled, and said:

“Oh, I know. You have been in Edgar’s room. Minnie told me all about it. What did you think of him?”

“I think he is very, very ill, Miss North.”

“Yes; poor child. It is easy to see he cannot live long. He is very peaceful though.”

Maude sighed as she spoke. Perhaps she was wishing that she was the same herself, and that there was a peace in her heart which the Lord gives, “not as the world giveth.”

“Miss North,” said Arthur, “you did not mind your sister having taken me up stairs, did you?”

“Oh, dear, no. I dare say she knows quite as well as I do what is good for Edgar. She is a very sensible little woman.”

Arthur did not find that the North family were much more subdued and orderly the next day than they had been the evening before. This was holiday time, and with no lessons to do, it could hardly be expected but that there should be a commotion all the day.

Happily the school-room was some distance from the room where the sick boy lay, so very little noise found its way there.

Mrs. North wished to see Arthur the next day. He felt rather shy of going; but as it had to be done, he made up his mind to do it. He thought her something like her daughter Maude, only more quiet and gentle, and there was a sweeter look on her face than Maude usually wore.

When the evening came, a message was sent that Edgar wanted to have Arthur with him again. He was always better at that time; and he would sit up with the pillows around him, and the crimson curtains looking so dark and red behind his pale white face; but the firelight that glowed around, and showed Arthur how thin and sunken his face was, showed him, too, that a calm, happy peace was spreading there, and making it very beautiful.

"Arthur," said Edgar, "I want you to have my Bible and my watch; will you? and keep them always for my sake."

"But, Edgar, you don't *know* you are going to die; you don't know it for certain," said Arthur, his voice trembling a little.

"Oh, yes, I do; I know I am dying; but, you know, Arthur, I am only going to the Lord Jesus, and He wants me so much; for He has died instead of me, and all my sins are washed away in His precious blood. Cousin Amy used to sing something so nice; I cannot remember it all, but some of it was this—

"'Like a bairn to its mither, a wee birdie to
its nest,
I wad fain be ganging noo unto my
Saviour's breast;
For He gathers in His bosom witless,
worthless lambs like me,
And carries them Himsel' to His ain
countree.'

"And that is just the way I feel, Arthur. I feel just going to my home; and I shall never be tired or cross there."

“I’m sure you are not cross here,” said Arthur. “Edgar, do tell me about your getting so happy.”

“Oh, yes; and I want to tell you about Cousin Amy too. Well, you know, it was rather miserable when first I came, and I had to be up here all alone; and I used to cry so, Arthur, thinking about you—I dare say it was like a baby; but I could not help it—and about papa. Oh, I did so want to see papa! and it did not make me happy to think about the Lord Jesus and heaven. But Cousin Amy came; and she used to sit here and read me little bits, and hymns; one was that one I said a bit of, and others. And she was so kind; she used to get me nice cool things to take; and sometimes she would fan me, and put her hand on my head when it was so hot; and, oh, I was so sorry when she was gone. One evening I was crying, and then I began thinking about the last verses she had read to me. You know, it was that part about the Lord feeding the multitude; and then He sent the disciples away in a boat, and went by Himself to pray; and I thought if I had been alive then, and that I had known He was away in that mountain by Himself, I would have got out of bed, and would have found my way to Him; and it would have been so nice with nobody there but Himself and me on the great lonely mountain! I should have felt so safe with Him anywhere. And then I began to think what He would have said to me; and I thought it would be, ‘Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.’ Then I would have stayed, you know, because He would not send me away. And I thought He would have put His arms round me; and how safe I would have felt! And then I began thinking that I could do just the same in bed where I was, because He could see and hear just the same; so I said to Him, ‘Lord Jesus Christ, I am here at Thy feet;’ and I said to Him

that hymn, 'Just as I am.' It was so happy. And now to think of all the things He has given me—everlasting life, and the forgiveness of my sins, and so much! And, Arthur, I am just keeping there now until I go to sleep, and I shall be with Him for ever."

"Oh, Edgar," said Arthur, "I am glad you are so happy."

Edgar had talked so much that he was exhausted; and he had to lie back on the pillows, breathing very quickly.

So they stayed quiet for a little while; and the firelight glowed and danced on Arthur's brown curls, and lighted his ruddy cheeks that seemed to make the paleness of Edgar's greater.

"Edgar," said Arthur, "you will not be able to come to Ashton Grange now. Don't you remember when we said you would? I did think it would have been so nice."

"Yes; I remember," a little shade passing over Edgar's face. "I used to think it would be so nice. But, Arthur, it is better to go to the Lord Jesus; it is the Father's house, you know, and my father and mother are there; and it is my own home."

Edgar's voice had been getting weaker while he was speaking the last time; and as Arthur looked at him, it seemed even to him, who knew so little about illness, that Edgar must be worse.

"Edgar," he said, "I am going now, because I know you are tired; and nurse told me you would want something to eat when I went, so I shall send her to you. Good-night, Edgar, dear Edgar."

He did not try to keep Arthur that night; and the "good-night" he said to him was faintly spoken; but there was a loving look in his dark eye as he watched his friend to the door.

They neither of them knew how very near Edgar was to "his own home," and that very soon his weary spirit would rest for ever, where no heart can breathe a sigh, and no sound can enter to say it is not joy.

That night a ransomed one went away from the earth, and God took him. He would never be weary any more, and no pain or trouble would make the lonely child sorrowful. He would never know what it was to be anxious or unhappy; he would have the sweetness of perfect rest, for

"So He giveth His beloved sleep."

And Edgar knew that the Lord who loved him had a welcome for him in the bright home of everlasting joy; for He has said, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am."



CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

WE will now pass over the next four years. After Edgar North was taken home, to be for ever with his Saviour, Arthur returned to Myrtle Hill with a sad, sad heart; for he loved Edgar very much, and he was the only boy-friend he ever had.

But then his sorrow was sweetened by the knowledge that Edgar was not gone into a dim, unknown region; but had left this world to be with that gracious Saviour who loved him far more, and cared for him better than any earthly friend could, however willing; and then Arthur knew that by-and-by they would be together; and meanwhile he was under the same good Shepherd's care, and just as safe as his little friend; for the Lord Jesus has promised that His sheep shall "never perish." Is it not happy to be a lamb of that flock which has Jesus for its Shepherd?

So the years passed on. Arthur was still studying very

hard at his lessons, and trying to work for his Master in the little ways he could. And did he all this time forget his dear father and mother in the far-off land? No, indeed. Often and often his fancy would wander far over the deep blue sea, to that country which contained those who were nearest and dearest to him, and the yearning to see them was just as strong as ever. Seven long years had passed since that sad day of parting, which Arthur remembered so well; and these years had made a great difference in him. He was not the same little boy as when we first saw him; indeed *he* quite thought his sixteen years entitled him to drop the appellation of “boy;” and he had grown to be very tall, so that he looked older than he really was. I think few people but his mother would have recognized him, and she would have known him by the same bright, open look on his face, and his merry blue eyes, for they were unchanged. Arthur had not been left alone all these years for nothing. In his loneliness and sorrow he had been learning slowly, but surely, more and more to cast all his care on another, to confide in Him as a child in its father; he knew more of the rest of lying in those “everlasting arms,” and had proved what a refuge God is; and this was well worth all the sorrow through which he had learnt the lesson.

One morning in May, when Arthur came down to breakfast, he found on the table something that was always welcome to him—a letter from India. He tore it open eagerly enough, but how little he knew what it contained! It was from his mother, and she wrote to tell her boy that Mr. Vivyan’s time had now ended, so nothing hindered their return to England, and even now, by the time this letter arrived, they would be on their way home. It was hurriedly written, as she was busy preparing for the voyage, so

there was little more said in it than was necessary; but Arthur's heart gave a quick response as he read the words: "And God only knows the great joy He has in store for me in giving me back my darling Arthur."

Was it *really* true? Arthur could scarcely believe it, that the long thought of and yearned for time was indeed so near. How often in his fancy he had tried to picture to himself that meeting, and to imagine what his feelings would be, and now it was coming so soon. He felt almost a little stunned at first, it was so sudden; but he was very, very happy, and very thankful to his Father in heaven for giving him this joy.

It was not long before Mrs. Estcourt came down. Her face showed that she already knew the good news, for she had a letter that morning too, and she met Arthur, who came eagerly to greet her, with a fond, sympathising embrace. "Oh, Arthur," she said, "I am *so* glad for you." His aunt then told him, during the course of breakfast, that they expected the ship would probably reach England in about a week from this time, and they would come direct to Myrtle Hill, where they would stay a little while.

It was some days after this, when Arthur had hardly got over the first excitement, that another letter arrived. This time the post-mark was Southampton. They were in England, and hoped to be at Mrs. Estcourt's house the following day. What a long and wearisome morning the next was! for, as I dare say every one knows, time always passes slowly when we are expecting or waiting for anything. Mrs. Vivyan had said in her letter, that the train by which they intended to come arrived at about five o'clock. The

day could not have been more lovely; it was a soft, bright, early summer's evening, and the country around Myrtle Hill looked very beautiful in the mellow sunlight; the trees which surrounded the house cast long, dark shadows on the green sloping lawn, and rustled gently as the breeze stirred amongst them. Arthur was out there watching and listening for the sound of carriage wheels, and though the time seemed to him to be creeping instead of flying, it was not really so very long before he heard it. In another minute a tall, fair lady was stepping out of the carriage. Arthur only said "Mother!" and rushed into her arms, and then to his father: it would be hard to say which was the happiest in that meeting-moment, only Arthur felt rather as if he were in a dream. May not such earthly joys show us a little what it will be to see the One whom, having not seen, we love? And as Arthur thus rejoiced in the fulfilment of his long-cherished hope, what will it be to have our one great hope at last realized? "And His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face."

It was not until late in the evening that Arthur and his mother were quite alone, when all the first bustle and talking were over; and then what a happy, quiet talk it was! and how their hearts were overflowing with happiness! Then they both knelt down together again before the throne of grace, and Mrs. Vivyan offered up heartfelt thanks and praise to God for past protection, and for now bringing herself and her son together.

Arthur left Myrtle Hill to live with his father and mother; and his mother rejoiced to see that her fondest hopes and wishes for him were fulfilled; and when he had left his childhood behind him, it was

still his joy to deliver to others the glad message of salvation with which his Master had entrusted him.



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