
CHRISTMAS
STORIES
WINNIE
&
WALTER
BOOKS

WINNIE AND WALTER'S

CHRISTMAS

STORIES.

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WINNIE AND WALTER'S

CHRISTMAS STORIES.

INTRODUCTION.

AT THE close of the last volume I told you that Winnie and Walter, with their father and mother, were invited to spend Christmas at Mr. Johnson's, in Boston. You may be sure that those three days before Christmas were very joyful. Every morning as soon as their eyes were open, they thought of this visit which was coming, and on the morning of the happy day, they were

up bright and early. Their father went into the city in the morning, and the hours seemed long until it was time for them to go in the afternoon. But it came at last; and they set off with their mother, and when they reached the city they first called at their father's store, and from there they all went together to Mr. Johnson's house. People were very thick in the streets, and the bells were jingling merrily, there were so many horses and sleighs everywhere.

Winnie and Walter knew the little boys and girls at Mr. Johnson's very well, because they had often been there before; and these children, too, had been out to visit them in their own country home, and so they did not have to take any time to get acquainted.

But after tea, other men and women

and children began to come in, that were strangers. There was the minister, who preached where Mr. Johnson and his family went to meeting. He came with his wife and two little boys, about five and seven years old, named Joseph and Harry, and a little girl whose name was Mary, but whom they called May, and who was about nine years old. There was the chief clerk in Mr. Johnson's store, who had no wife or children of his own, but was very ready on that night to give his attentions to all the little folks, that he might amuse them and make them happy. There was a brother of Mrs. Johnson, who was a sea-captain, and though he had had some rough times in the life he lived, he was a very kind and good-hearted man, for all that. He had to be away from his home a

great part of the time, but his wife and children lived in Boston, and it so happened now, that he was at home to spend Christmas with them. Mr. Johnson's children called him Uncle George, and they were always very glad to see him, because he brought home from other countries, a great many curious presents, and told them wonderful stories about the sea. He was there that night, and Aunt Mary, his wife, was there with him. They had four little folks to add to the company, the oldest of whom was Susy. Uncle John and Aunt Carrie were also there, but they brought no children with them, but were in mourning for their dear little boy, who only a short time before had died.

Then there was an Englishman, — a merchant from London, with whom Mr.

Johnson had traded, and who had now come to this country on business, and as he was staying at the hotel, and Mr. Johnson knew how much English people think and make of Christmas, he had asked him to his house to spend the evening. There was also a younger brother of Mr. Johnson's, who was a student in college, and was now at home to spend his vacation, — for as his father and mother were dead, he called Mr. Johnson's house his home.

I do not think I have yet told you all of the little folks or of the grown folks that were there, so you see there was quite a company.

When they first came to the house, the parlor was very carefully shut up, and none of the children were allowed to go into it. Mrs. Johnson and some

of the other ladies were running in and out, opening and shutting the door very quickly, so that the children could only get a peep now and then at what was going on. But they were on the watch, I can tell you: and when any bundles were slily passed in, there was a great deal of guessing as to what was in them.

But quite early in the evening (and the evenings are long you know at Christmas), all was ready, and the parlor doors were thrown wide open, and there was the green Christmas-tree hung all over with little horns and bags of candy, dolls and doll-dresses and hats and shoes, and a great many other things which I should not have time to tell you about if I should try. It was a very splendid sight, and all the children were

in high glee the moment they saw it. All these presents had little papers pinned upon them telling whom they were for, — whether "For Georgie," or "May," or "Susy," or "Winnie," or "Walter," or "Harry," and so on through all the names. There was no little child there forgotten that night. Somebody had taken thought for them all, and most of them had more than *one* present or *two*. But there was one thing that made them all laugh, and gave them a merry time.

There was one black doll, with great staring eyes and thick lips, and dressed very funnily, that was "For May." If this had been her only present, I don't think she would have liked it very well. But as she had several more, she was very well pleased to have this droll one,

and she took her in her arms and called her "black darling," and tossed her up and down, and talked to her, until all the children and grown-up people shook with laughter.

So after the presents were divided and compared and talked about long enough, and the strange wonders of the Christmas-tree were all known, and some of them eaten up, the company went into the sitting-room to get ready for the Christmas stories. They had to sit rather thick, there were so many of them; but some of the little folks could be tucked away on a stool or cricket, into a very small corner, and so when they were all ready, the minister, who was to tell the first story, began.

CHAPTER I.

THE MINISTER'S STORY.

AT SUCH a time as this, when so many thousands and tens of thousands of children are made happy in all parts of the world, I think it is very proper and right that we should ask what Christmas means, and why we keep the day so joyfully. If I try to tell you about this it will not be a new story by any means, for it has been told over and over, not in the same words that I shall use, but in one way or another, for a great many hundred years. Little children that were alive and active upon the earth a thousand years ago,

used to listen to this story with the same interest that I hope you will listen to-night.

I have said that my story would not be a new one. But new stories are not always the most interesting, and certainly they are not always the best for us to hear. The story which I am going to tell has been called "That sweet story of old," and I wish that one of these little girls or boys who knows those beautiful verses, would stand up and repeat them.

[There was a little shyness when this request was made, for though quite a number of those children knew what verses he meant, and could repeat them perfectly well, yet they were somewhat afraid to get up and say them before so many persons. But at length little

Winnie, seeing her mother motion to her, took courage and began.]

"I think, when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How he called little children like lambs to his fold,
I should like to have been with him then.

"I wish that his hands had been placed on my head,
That his arms had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen his kind look when he said,
'Let the little ones come unto me.'

"Yet still to his footstool in prayer I may go,
And ask for a share in his love;
And if I thus earnestly seek him below,
I shall see him and hear him above,

"In that beautiful place he has gone to prepare
For all who are washed and forgiven,
And many dear children are gathering there,
'For of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

"But thousands and thousands who wander and fall,
Never heard of that heavenly home;
I should like them to know there is room for them all,
And that Jesus has bid them to come.

"I long for the joy of that glorious time,
The sweetest and brightest and best,
When the dear little children of every clime,
Shall crowd to his arms and be blest."

[When Winnie had said these verses very sweetly and clearly, the Englishman, who first had to wipe away a tear that was on his cheek, said that a good woman in his own loved England wrote those verses, and if she knew how many happy children in England and America, and in other far-off lands, were repeating them every day, and especially every Sunday, though she had never written any thing else in all her life, she might feel that she had done a great work.]

Now, said the minister, this is the story which I wish for a few moments to speak to you of, before you listen

to other stories which may be more new and exciting, but I am very sure will not be more beautiful or good than this. We keep Christmas, you know, because it is supposed to be the day on which Christ was born; and though it is by no means certain that he was born on the twenty-fifth of December, yet it does not perhaps make any great difference whether he was or not, for we know that he was born on some day of the year, more than eighteen hundred years ago. For a good while after he was born men did not know how great a thing had happened, or how wonderful it was that Jesus should come upon the earth as a little child. If they had thought more about it, they would have been very careful to have kept the exact month and day.

But it was perhaps just as well that they did not keep them exactly, for what Christ came to do for us is so much more important than the day he was born, that it is well for us not to have too many of the little things to think of, so that we may be the more free to think of the great things.

But there are many true and beautiful things that we do know about his birth, and about the infant Jesus, because God has been pleased to tell us of them.

I have always loved to think of those shepherds, who were out in the lonely fields, among the hills which are round about Bethlehem, "keeping watch of their flocks by night." The gentle sheep and lambs that had been feeding through the day were now all gathered

together into some safe place, and were lying down to rest; and the shepherds stayed there by them through the night, so that the wild beasts might not come out of the woods and mountains and kill and devour them. Every thing was still about them in those quiet pastures. The bright stars were shining upon them in their beauty, — the same stars which now, after eighteen hundred years, look down upon us so peacefully, — shining with the same light and keeping the same places in the sky.

God has always seemed to love shepherds. It may be because it is so kind and gentle in them to watch over and take care of the simple and innocent sheep, that cannot take care of themselves, in lands where fierce and strong wild beasts are roaming about, — so

beautiful to shelter and protect the little lambs, that might otherwise wander and perish. And when God wants to make us know how much he loves us, and how kind is his care over us, he likens himself to a shepherd, who "will feed his flock," "will gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom."

Do you know that it was in these same fields, near to Bethlehem, more than a thousand years before Christ was born, that the youthful David kept his father's sheep, and when God wanted a king to rule over his people, he sent the prophet Samuel to find David, and bring him from those fields, and make him king?

These shepherds were thus alone, with only their sheep and the stars for com-

pany, when they were startled by a great light that shone about them, and they were full of fear, and were wondering what this should mean, when the angel appeared and told them not to fear or be afraid, for he had come to bring them the joyful news that Christ was born in Bethlehem.

How strange, we might think, that the angel should tell this story to them, and that they should be the first, of all the people on the earth, to know that the blessed Saviour had come to dwell among men. There were great cities then as now, full of noise and pomp, and men who thought themselves great, and whom perhaps others thought great too. But the angel was not sent to Rome, to Athens, or even to Jerusalem, to tell this news, but to the plain and

honest shepherds, in the quiet and lovely fields about Bethlehem. God does not care much about the things which men call great, but he loves what is simple and faithful and true.

This child that was then born, was at first a helpless little infant, needing his mother's care and kindness just as you all have needed the same care, and have had it. He was small and weak as other little children, but as he grew up, it was seen that he had a great and wonderful power, such as no one else who ever lived upon the earth has had, or ever will have. He could heal the sick by a word. He could cure the lame. He could raise the dead. He could know all the thoughts and feelings which were in the minds of those about him; and more than all, he could

forgive our sins and fit us to dwell with him in heaven.

Now Christmas is kept as the day on which this infant Jesus was born, and how wonderful it is that, after more than eighteen hundred years, what was thought so little of at first, and seemed so very simple and common, should come to be looked upon as so great, that to-night we could not count the thousands and millions that worship this Jesus who was born as a little child; and as the years pass on, all men of every nation, and from every part of the earth, shall come as the wise men did on the night in which he was born, and say, "We have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

And as the good Jesus, who thus came from heaven to our world, was so kind

and loving, so ready to help the poor and needy in all their troubles, so quick to feel all our sorrows; so Christmas ought to be a time of all others for every gentle and loving thought, and for every kind act. We ought to be thoughtful of those who are in want; of those who have not so many friends, and so much of every thing to make them happy, as we have.

And before I stop I will tell you one very short story.

I once knew of a happy company of little children, gathered as you are gathered here to-night; and they too had a Christmas-tree hung all over with nice presents, as yours was a little while ago, and when the door was opened, the children were all just as full of happiness and hope as you were, when you

first caught sight of yours. But when the presents were taken down and divided, it was found that one dear little girl in that company had nothing at all. In the hurry, and among so many children, though she was invited, she had been forgotten, and when the presents were handed down one by one, till all the other children had their hands full, and she saw that the beautiful things were all gone, and that nothing whatever had come to her, she could bear it no longer, but burst into tears, and cried as if her little heart would break.

But there was another little girl there who saw in an instant how it was, and kind thoughts and feelings came very quick and easy in her heart, and she said at once, "Let us each give Jenny one of our presents, and then she will have more than any of us." And so it

was agreed. But you could see a great difference among those children while this was going on. Some, who were most full of pity and kindness for the poor little girl that was in such trouble, picked out the nicest presents they had and gave to her, and some were very careful to take the poorest. But there was one boy who was so selfish and greedy, that he did not think he could part with any of his, and he kept them all to himself in spite of every thing that was said to him. Now I do not think I should ever expect any great and noble things from such a boy as that. I should be afraid that he would go through life trying to get all the good things to himself. But Jesus came to teach us a better lesson, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

CHAPTER II.

MAY'S STORY.

I DON'T KNOW as I have any thing to tell about, only about the presents I had last Christmas. I had a nice lot of them, I can tell you, and I guess I have found out where they all came from, but it was a good long time before I knew this. You see that I do not believe in Santa Claus, and about his coming down the chimney with all these nice presents, for I think if that was true, he would be very apt to get his things pretty black and dirty with soot; and I am sure that mine had not a speck of black on them. Besides, if

he had to go down so many chimneys all over the land, he would be so black himself before morning that he would not be fit to be seen, and he would get his eyes so red with smoke that I think they would smart well the next day, so that *he* would not have a very merry Christmas, if other folks did. I don't believe a word about it, for father has told me that it is all a story, got up to make little children open their eyes and wonder, and that there is no such fellow as old Santa Claus.

But I know I found some nice presents, if they did not come down the chimney, and I can guess pretty well now where they come from.

And this was the way it was. For several days before Christmas my mother wanted me to go of errands a great

deal, or she wanted me to stay in another room, and she used to send me to bed very early every night. If I happened to open the door suddenly where she was, she had all her sewing things about and seemed to be very busy, doing nothing at all. I rather thought something curious was going on, but I did not say any thing, but kept thinking and wondering and guessing to myself what it should be. I did not look about in cupboards and closets and drawers when my mother did not see, and try to find out what she was doing, because that would be rather sly and mean you know, and then I should not have the wonder and joy on Christmas morning. But I thought about it a great deal, when I went to bed and when I woke up in the morn-

ing, and I longed to have the time come.

I am sure I am very much obliged to Mr. Johnson for asking my father and mother to come here to-night, and to bring us with them, for we are having such a nice, nice time. But last year we were not asked to go anywhere at Christmas, and so we stayed at home, and had our joy and pleasure all to ourselves.

Well, at last Christmas eve came, and father and mother both thought that all of us children had better scamper off to bed pretty early, because we should want to be getting up early in the morning. I know well enough now, and I thought then, that they wanted to get us out of the way, so that they could look over the presents and get them all ready for us.

I slept in the room with my older sister, and there were two doors opening into the room on different sides; and it was agreed that I should hang my stocking on one door, and my sister on the other, so that if we got up in the dark, we might know, each one of us, where to find our own stockings. And so we went to bed, and as soon as we could we went to sleep. I say as soon as we could, for you may depend upon it we had to talk it all over, and guess and guess ever so many times what we should find in the morning.

But by and by we went off to sleep. I did not know what time it was when my sister shook me, and told me she was going to get up and find her stocking. I only know that it was dark as it could be, for I was wide awake in half

a minute. So we both tumbled out of bed, and began to fumble about to find the doors, and there we found our stockings. And oh! such stockings! They were stuffed out fuller than they had ever been before, and on the outside of mine there was something pinned which hung down and made it heavy. We ran against each other two or three times in the dark, and came near bumping our noses together, but at last we were back in bed again, feeling of our bundles, and guessing what they were. I found very quick that the great heavy thing on the outside of my stocking was a doll, bigger than any I had ever had before; and though I could not tell very well how she looked, I had no doubt she was a nice one. I put my finger on her eyes and nose and mouth,

and she seemed just right. I felt of her dresses and her shoes and her bonnet, until I could almost tell how she looked. Just then, my mother, who had heard the noise, opened the door and set a light into the room, but said nothing. And now I can tell you the stockings had to be emptied very quick, and we had a merry time, my sister and I, as we pulled out one thing after another, and held them up so that we could see them. There was some candy, but not a great deal, for my mother does not like to have us eat much of that. But there were a great many cunning little things, and some of them were queer and funny. There was a little box in my stocking, and when I took off the cover of it, a terrible looking old fellow popped up his head and sprung at me,

and at first I was just as frightened as could be, but the next minute I laughed as loud as I could laugh.

After I had taken all the things out of my stocking, then I had time to take up my doll and give her a good long look. She was a beauty and a darling, I can tell you. I had four or five dolls before, but I thought more of this doll than of all my other presents. I don't see why boys want a whip or a horse or a ball or something that will make a noise. I am sure that dolls are the prettiest playthings in the world. I cannot tell you what nice times I have had with this doll, for I have her yet all safe and sound.

When I used to go out to walk with my mother, I almost always took my doll, and I used to show her to every

one we met. One day we met a boy, and I ran up to him to show him my nice doll, but he put his finger in his mouth and looked down on the ground, and did not seem to care any thing for her. My mother told me afterwards that I must not run to show my dolls to boys, because they do not have dolls to play with, and they do not know what to say.

I used to put two chairs together up by the window in the room where we slept, and make up a little bed, so that she could sleep there nights near me. But my father saw her there one night, and he told me that she would catch her death sleeping under that window. And sure enough she did have the croup and was very sick. But I gave her some medicine, and took good care of

her, and she got well. When I play school with all my dolls, this one that was given me last Christmas is the best scholar among them. She sits up so nice and straight, and behaves so well, that I praise her a great deal and give her merit marks, only I should like her a good deal better if she was born. I think a real born baby would be the nicest thing in the world.

I don't much suppose that we shall find any presents to-morrow morning, because we have had so many things and such a nice time here. But I think I shall hang up my stocking just the same, because we never can tell, you know, what is going to happen.

CHAPTER III.

THE ENGLISHMAN'S STORY.

WHEN THE Englishman was called upon for a story, he began by saying,—I must confess that it makes me feel rather queer to be here in this country for the first time, among real "live Yankees," about whom I have heard so much. When English and American people meet together it is very natural for them at first to think, Well, we have had some pretty tough quarrels in times past, but they are all made up now, and we are glad of it." We had the same fathers and mothers a good while ago, and we are all cousins

after a sort, and we ought certainly to love each other, and treat each other kindly, and I hope after this we always shall. I believe the good time is coming by and by, as the minister said in his story, when all men shall love and worship Christ, and the nations which have been so long fighting and killing each other, will live in peace, and try to do each other good.

I sometimes think that we English and Americans feel rather more kindly toward each other than we should, because of these old wars, which have now been so long ended. It is very natural, I know, for us Anglo-Saxons, on both sides of the water, to want to have our own way pretty well. It is in the blood. But we have learned to love and respect each other now so well, that

I hope we shall hereafter settle all our disputes without going to war.

[Here one of the older boys said, in a modest and low tone, that for his part he should like to understand what "Anglo-Saxon," about which he heard and read so much, means, and if he himself was an Anglo-Saxon, he should like to know it.]

A very proper question, said the Englishman, and though I think it likely that the minister or the student from college (for I understand we have one here among us), would tell you better about that, yet, as I just said, an Englishman don't like to give up any better than a Yankee, and so I will do the best I can. But I must turn aside a little from the story to which I was coming, and, in fact, must first tell you quite a long story about England herself.

I presume that these children think it a long, long time ago, since the Pilgrim Fathers came to Plymouth Rock, and began to settle New England. Very great and wonderful changes have, it is true, taken place since that time; but that was less than two hundred and fifty years ago. Now two hundred and fifty years do not take us back a great way in the history of Old England. If we should double the two hundred and fifty years, so as to make them five hundred, and then double the five hundred so as to make them a thousand, even that would not bring us back very near the beginning. But if we should double the one thousand, and make it two thousand years, that would take us just a little, and only a little, further back than we should have to go, to reach the first we know about England.

It was inhabited then by people who were very much like the savages that were here when the Pilgrim Fathers first came to these shores, only they had fairer skins, and were not quite so brutal and cruel. The old Romans, under Julius Cæsar, who was a great warrior and conqueror, came to England fifty-five years before Christ was born. That is the first we know about our beautiful island.

How long those savage people, who could not read or write, and had kept no account of themselves, had been there, or where they came from, we cannot tell. But since that time we know pretty well all the great changes that have taken place, and they have been very wonderful and strange. The Romans, after they had conquered the island, did not seem to care very

much about it, though they were there with their armies a good many times in all, and to this day we find things in the island to remind us of them. We sometimes dig up from the ground their old weapons of war, which have been rusting for almost two thousand years,— we uncover the old urns in which they used to bury the ashes of their dead,— we find the old pieces of money which they lost, or which they buried in the earth to hide. Some of the old walls and towers which they built are still left, and we should know that some such people had been there a long, long time ago, if history did not tell us who they were.

But after some hundreds of years the old Roman Empire began to sink and fall, and after that the Romans had very

little to do with us,—only we got one thing from them, which was the best thing we ever had, and one that has done more to make England the great nation it is than all things else besides,—and that was the Christian religion. Before the old Roman Empire fell and passed away, it sent missionaries to England to teach the poor ignorant people about God and Christ, and the way of truth, and so in time England became a Christian land, and has done more than any other land to make the rest of the world Christian too.

But I must not make my story about England too long. After some hundreds of years from the time England was first known, there came in a people from the continent of Europe that were

called Angles, and they conquered so much of the land and became so powerful, that after that, for some time, the people all went by the general name of Angles, and that was the way that the country came to have its present name of "Angland," or "England." It was after these Angles came in and gave their name to the people and to the country, that the Christian religion also came in. The way of it, as the story runs, was this. Some of these Angles or Angli (as the Romans called them) had been taken prisoners in war, and had been carried to Rome as slaves, and were standing in the market-place to be sold. They were very fair-skinned and fair-haired, and drew much attention for their beauty. Some one came along and stopt to look at them, and

was so much pleased with them that he asked of what nation they were. The answer was, they are "Angli." Well, said the man, they are so beautiful they would be "Angeli" (which was the Roman word for angels) if they were only Christians. And this is said to have given the first thought to some good men in Rome, of sending missionaries to England to teach the people the true religion.

But I have not yet told you what Anglo-Saxon means, though you will see that we have found out now where the first half of the word came from and what it means.

But the history of England, as of many other nations, is a history of a great many wars, and of much wrong and suffering. After a while, other

nations round about began to look with longing eyes on our fair and lovely island. Among the rest, the Saxons, as they were called, who were at the first a rough and cruel people, and who lived in the north of Germany, came in and took possession, and though they saw some hard times, because they were attacked and beaten by the Danes and Northmen, yet they did not let go, but fought on, and finally held the land. And so came the name of Anglo-Saxon. But in course of time there was one invasion more, and that was by the Normans, as they were called, who came from the north of France into England. They were called Normans, or Northmen, because they had first come from the north of Europe and taken possession of a portion of France, and from

that place they crossed over to England. There was a very fierce and bloody battle at that time between the Saxons and the Normans. On each side there were about sixty thousand men, and those in the Saxon army were most of them killed, and even the Normans lost fifteen thousand of their men. But the Normans had the victory, and they became the rulers of the land, though the Saxon race was still there, and was a very brave and hardy race. That battle, which is called the battle of Hastings, was fought almost eight hundred years ago,—in the year 1066. Since that time we have had a great many wars and battles on the island, but they have been from quarrels among ourselves, and not because people came in from other countries to attack us.

After the battle of Hastings, the Normans, who were the conquerors, took the lands and the offices and honors pretty much all to themselves, and the kings, the lords, and the barons, and almost all the men of high titles, for a long time were these Normans, and their children and grandchildren: while the Saxons held the humbler and lowlier places. But this Saxon race, as I have told you, had great energy and force, and so by degrees it has been working up higher and higher, until at length very many of the lords of England, that are now living, came from the Saxon stock, and a very large proportion of the wealth and influence and power of England at the present time belong to the descendants of the Saxons. And in New England, almost all of the people

that sprung from the Pilgrims, and from others who early came out from England to this country, are of this Saxon blood, and not from the Norman.

So you see that a good many people have mingled together in the course of two thousand years to make up the present English race. There was first the old race that lived on the island when the Romans took it, and who were called Celts. Then came the Angles, of which I have spoken. Then the Saxons and Danes and Normans. But because the Angles and Saxons were rather the most important in their influence, therefore the race is called by the general name of Anglo-Saxon. Have I made it plain?

[The children who were old enough to be interested in a subject like this,

all agreed that they knew better now what "Anglo-Saxon" meant, than they ever had before.]

So you see, said the Englishman, taking up his story again, that in England we have a great many things that are very, very old, — churches that for centuries have been covered with moss, buildings of every sort, scattered all over the island, that are so old you can hardly find out when they were first built. We have in the Tower of London all the different kinds of armor that our warriors have worn and used in battle for ever so many hundred years, kept there for show. Wherever you go in England you are made to know that you are in a country where men of the same race with yourselves have lived and labored, have fought and suffered

and died far back in the past. In this country every thing that man has done seems new to me. For though many things here may seem old to you, yet they look so unlike our really old things, that to me they do not seem old at all. Only in one thing you have the advantage of us. Your rocks and hills and forests, which are older than any thing we can show, are a good deal more as they were made at first than ours are. People have lived so long, and have been so busy in our little island, that almost all these things have been worked over and changed. But here, as I go about the country, I see that many of them are just as rough and shaggy and wild as they were when the world was made. And I suppose that I find a pleasure in looking at these old

craggy rocks and rough woods that you do not, simply because you are so used to them; just as you would find a greater pleasure perhaps than I do in looking at our old churches and towers, because they would be so strange and wonderful to you.

You think your good city of Boston, I have no doubt, a very great and populous city. I think from what I have seen since I have been here, that it is a very active, thriving, and well-governed place. But it seems to me rather like a clever, clean, and wide-awake village. The city of London, where I live, is some fifteen times larger and more populous than Boston. And because it is so large and the people are so many and so thick, it has often been called a great wilderness.

Nowhere does a stranger feel more lonely than in the heart of London. So many thousands of people are all the time rushing by him, in one great stream of life and business, not one of whom he knows, — not one of whom stops to take any notice of him, that if he were in the midst of the Great Desert he could hardly feel more lonely and desolate. Men live and die in the same building and never speak to each other, or hardly know each other's faces all their lives long. There are so many people in London, that if they were all before you so that you could count them, and you should set about doing it, and should count sixty every minute, and should keep on counting twelve hours each day, at that rate, it would take you fifty-eight days simply

to count them. It is a great wilderness of people, crowding along on the side-walks, and in every kind of carriage, jostling against each other, — hurrying on as though everybody had something to do which must be done that very minute. London, you know, is the great centre of trade in all the world. There is no city anywhere that has such wide connection with all the nations of the earth as that, and hence it must be a very busy place.

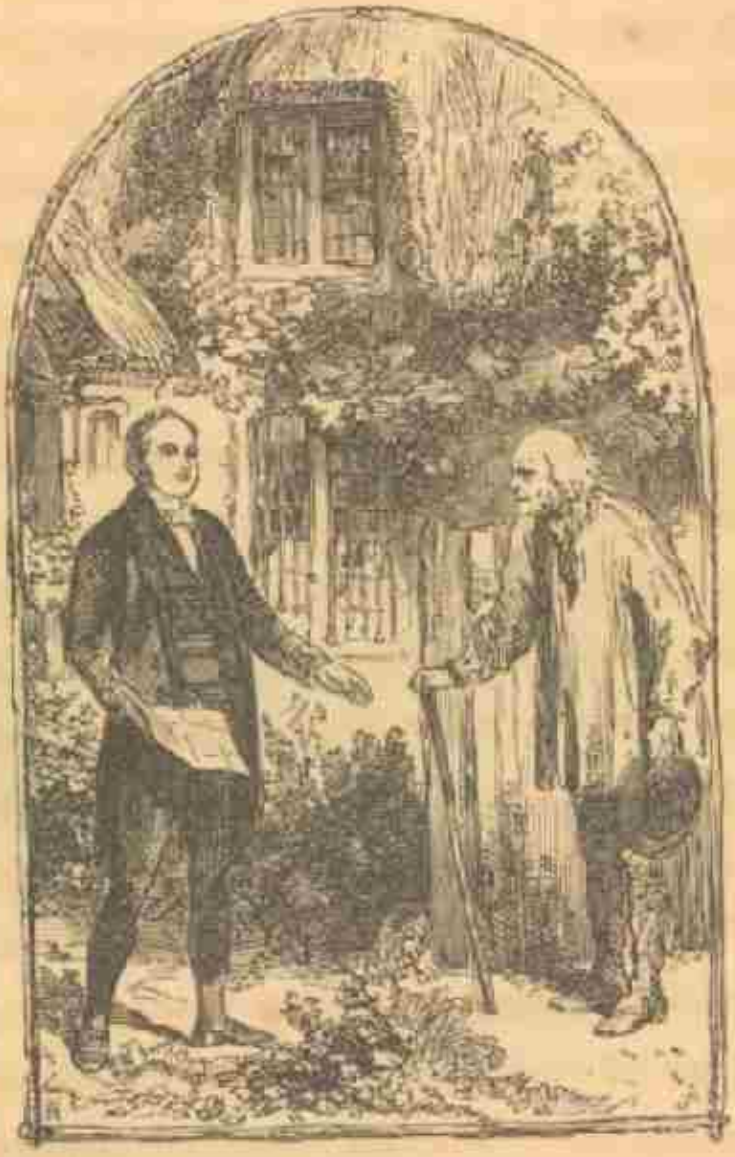
I remember very well the first time I saw this great city of London, and I shall never forget the feelings with which I looked upon it. I was born in the south of England, not very far off from the coast of the stormy English channel. Though we could not see the water of the channel at our house, yet

we were only a few miles from it, and the news of the dreadful shipwrecks, which often happened there in the stormy seasons of the year used to reach us very quickly, and my father often went with other men round about to try and render assistance. My father was what would be called in England a small farmer. He did not own the land upon which he worked, but hired it for a long course of years, so that we lived there in one place just the same as though it were our own. There were seven of us children, all older than myself except one,—a dear sister, who was several years younger. My older brothers and sisters some of them had grown up into life, and were away from home. One of my brothers was in the army in India, and my mother used to

have a great many anxious days and nights about him, and we all used to enjoy very much the letters we had from him. One of my sisters had married and gone to Canada.

At length, through the kindness of the man of whom my father hired his farm, and who always took a great deal of interest in us, a place was procured for me in London.

I may as well tell you here that in England people who are rich are very kind to the poor. We have a great many more poor people in England than you have here, and those who own lands and houses expect to do a great many favors for those who are not so well off. Men of great estates are wont always to receive the poor kindly, — to listen to their story of suffering and want,



and to try to give them good advice and assistance.

I was to go into a great store, — at first as a sort of errand boy, but if I was faithful, was soon to have a higher place among the lower clerks. That was a great event in my life. I was then fifteen years old, and boys and girls at that age are so full of hope, and they know so little of the real trials and sorrows of this world, that they almost always look forward to any such change as this, and expect the highest joy and pleasure from it. I loved my father and mother, and all my brothers and sisters; but especially I loved my little sister, who was so much younger than myself. She had always looked to me for care and protection. I had led her by the hand to and from school a great many

hundreds of times, and she had grown up from a very little girl with the idea of always running to me and telling me all her little joys and sorrows. Her other sisters were so much older that she never made much of them, but I was her playmate and companion. When she came to know that I was to go away from home, she could hardly bear the thought of it; and though I felt sorry for her, yet I was so eager to go and live in the great London, about which I had heard so much; and was so full of youthful hope and dreams of happiness, that I did not stop much to think how badly she felt. I know now that I was very thoughtless and selfish in my joy; and many, many times since I have found my eyes moist with tears when I have remembered

how sad my little sister felt at the idea of parting with me, and how noisy and boasting I was at the thought of going to live in London.

But at length the day came for me to go. My mother gave me her parting counsel and her parting kiss, and my little sister after kissing me ran away sobbing to the chamber where she slept. My father carried me several miles, to a place where I was to take the coach for London. It was the month of September, and we had to start very early in the morning. As is common in England, the morning was so foggy that we could not see any object, unless it was very near. Even after I was on the coach, the fog was so thick that I coul l not see the country through which we passed. But by and by the fog began

to grow thinner, and at length the sun broke through the mist, and the day was beautiful. Then I enjoyed the journey highly. I had never been away from home any distance before, and every thing was new and wonderful to me; and I had all the while in prospect the sight of London itself, which would be so much greater and more wonderful than all the rest.

It was late in the afternoon when we drew near the city, and I began to see in the distance the spires and the towers and the countless chimneys, and there was a stir of people along the road, going to and coming from the city, and for the first time in my life I began to know and really feel what a mighty place London was. As we went on we began to come into the noise and roar of

the city, and the rush of people moving to and fro was almost fearful to me. I was so occupied that I hardly knew what I was about until the coachman stopped at the store where I was to be employed. He had his directions from my father to carry me to the very spot.

And so my life began in London. For a few days I went about with another boy, who was sent on errands, so that I might learn some of the main streets, and the ways of the city, and then my business of errand-boy began in earnest.

When I told you, a little while ago, that nowhere would a stranger feel more lonely and desolate than in the heart of London, I spoke from what I myself had felt. Though I had been so much

pleased with the idea of coming up to the great city, and looked upon every thing at first with eyes of wonder, yet soon the thoughts of home began to come over me, and I may as well confess that I was dreadfully homesick. When I was out in the streets, and crowds of people were rushing by, not one of whom I had ever known or seen before, and who had no time to think of me or care for me, I could not help but remember that there were hearts that loved me. I knew if my dear little sister could meet me in this crowd, she would rush into my arms for joy; and I was sad that I had not felt more for her and tried more to comfort her when I came away from home. For a good many days the thought of home, if I happened to be alone, would set me

crying, and if I was not alone it was all I could do to keep from tears. I was sorely tempted to break away and go back to my father's house. But I knew that would be weak, and that my father and mother would not approve of it, and so I held on, and tried day by day to do my duty. By degrees this home-sickness wore away, and my life became more easy and natural. I tried to be true to my employers, and to do every thing I could to merit their approbation, and though they were men of few words, I judged from what they did say and from their manner towards me, that I pleased them. I gave heed to my mother's counsel, who had asked me before I left home to commit to memory one single verse of Scripture, and to repeat it every morning when I awoke,

if for no other reason, out of my regard for her. The verse was, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Those words of the wise man, I am sure, have saved me a great many times from falling into sin. I know by my own experience, that it is very easy to live safely in the midst of a great many temptations, if one only resolves, and resolves strongly, that he will have nothing to do with them. But if he once begins to "consent" to these enticements, he never can tell when he will stop, or whether he will ever stop.

Sooner than I had expected, I was promoted from the office of errand-boy to a higher place, and this made me almost certain that my employers were satisfied with me.

Once in a great while I had a letter

from home. These were very precious to me, and I could have wished that they had come oftener, but I knew that my parents were a great deal better used to working than to writing, and they did all that I could expect of them. So matters had been going until it was the last of winter, when a letter came one day bringing me the sad news that my dear little sister had been sick with a violent fever, and was dead and buried. This was a trouble which seemed greater than I could bear, for I had been fondly picturing to myself my return home in the coming summer, when business would be dull, and I could easily be spared. This matter of my visit had been spoken of by my employers, and it was understood that in the latter part of June I might go home for a little

vacation. I had pleased myself with the idea of going home and carrying some nice presents, such as I could easily buy in London, to my dear little playmate and sister, and how delighted she would be with them, since in her kind of life in the country, and among farmers, she was very little used to receiving presents. All this I had thought over in my mind a good many times. I hoped in this way to atone for my selfish joy in leaving her as I did, and to make her some amends for her grief and sadness in thus losing me. But now the dear sister was dead and gone, and I should see her no more on earth forever. My first impulse was to fly to my father and mother, that I might mingle my tears with the tears I knew they were shedding. My

mother, however, when she wrote the letter giving me this sad news, took the precaution to tell me that, though they very much wished to see me, now that death had been in the family, yet it was probably best that I should not return home until the time fixed for my summer visit. And so I kept about my daily duties, but with a sad load on my heart. My employers, knowing what had happened, treated me with a kindness and sympathy that called out my love toward them in a much higher degree than before, and I resolved before God and in my own soul, that I would be faithful to them, and try to be as useful to them as I could. I had not the remotest thought when I made this resolve what it would lead to. I am sure, nothing could have been fur-

ther from my mind at that time, than to suppose that I, who had just taken one step up from the place of errand-boy, should afterwards go on taking steps up until I should at length become one of the partners of the house, as I now am. But I have seen the same thing happen in many cases, and I often think when I see a young lad setting out in life, how much will depend upon the line of conduct which he pursues in the very beginning of his course.

I do not know but you may think that I have been trying to praise myself, but I did not so mean it. When I came to speak of London, and what a great city it is, it brought back so fresh to my mind the early days I spent there, — the early sorrows and griefs, as well as joys, which were mine during my first year

there, that I felt moved to tell this story of my own experience.

In the summer, as was my plan, I visited my home and my sister's grave. My father and mother have now for many years been dead, and the greatest of all my earthly joys has been, that I came at length into a condition so that I could make their last days somewhat more easy and comfortable than their early life had been.

CHAPTER IV.

UNCLE GEORGE'S STORY.

I SUPPOSE YOU all think because I am a sea-captain, and spend so much of my time on the water, that I shall tell you some great and terrible story about shipwrecks and storms and dangers on the deep. But I am not going to do any thing of the kind. For my part, I have quite enough of the sea, and I like once in a while, when I can get a chance, to talk about something else. Besides I think I have full as good a right to the land, when I can get on to it, as those who stay on it all the while. And to-night I am so glad to be here

with my friends after a long, rough, and stormy passage home, that I think you must let me tell a story to please myself and not to please you.

I was not born upon the sea, at any rate, and I hope I shall not be buried there. I have pleasant memories of home and childhood on the green earth like the rest of you, and I don't think those memories any the less pleasant to me because I am tossed about so much of the time on the restless sea. Often in my sleep, on the mid-ocean, and when the ship is rolling and plunging along in her course, my dreams are of the green fields and summer woods, around my early home; or of a happy group of brothers and sisters, gathered with their father and mother about the cheerful winter fire, — the old-fashioned open fire

of wood. And so to-night, as it is Christmas, and every thing tends to remind us of quiet and joyful home-scenes, I think you must let me stay on the land.

And yet I will tell you a good story, and what is more, it is a right up and down true one. I am not going to set my fancy at work to make up any thing, I can tell you, when there are so many better stories than I could invent, all lying ready and waiting to be told. It shall not be about myself exactly, and yet, as you will see in the end, I am a good deal interested in it, and I think I have a right to be.

There is one reason more why I tell this story. I want our good friend from England, whom we are all glad to have here to-night, and whose story has pleased us

all so much; I want him to know what kind of a spirit our grandfathers and grandmothers had in their old war with England. I know he will not be displeased at this, for I have been in England a great deal, and I know that almost all English people now feel that we were in the right and they in the wrong in that war, and there were a great many of them who thought so in the time of the war; and that was one reason why England could not conquer us, though she was so much more powerful than we. However, I will not talk in this roundabout way any longer, but will come at once to my story.

In the second year of the war of the Revolution, 1776, there was living in the State of Connecticut, in one of the stony and hilly towns in the eastern

part of the State, about twenty miles from Hartford, a hardy and thrifty young farmer. He had been married a little more than a year, and had one child, though he was only twenty-one years old. At this time the scene of the war had been moved from Boston to the region about New York. For the information of my younger hearers, I may say that the war began here about Boston, and the early fighting took place here; but after several months the British army withdrew from Boston and went near New York, and so our people had to follow them there to see that they did no mischief. It was found necessary also to call out many men who had not been in the war before. At this time the State of Connecticut undertook to raise quite a large

body of men for the war, and among the rest this young farmer was called to leave his farm, his young wife and little child, to enter the army.

He had first to go to a central place in his own State, to be enrolled with his company, before marching away to New York. After he had been at this place for some days, waiting for all the other members of the company to come in, at length they were ready to set off upon their journey to join the main army. It so happened, that in starting upon this march, the road which they were to take would lead them some eight or ten miles from the young farmer's home, and it would have been very pleasant, no doubt, if he might have stopt long enough to run home once more, and see his wife and baby,

before going so far away. But this was not to be thought of. He must keep with his company, and the march could not be stopt for him any more than for any other man. Very many of the men doubtless had young wives and children too, and if all these were to stop and go home to take leave again, it would use up a great deal of precious time.

But the young farmer wanted, before he went away to New York, to get a bundle of clothes from his home, which his wife had been preparing for him, and so a day or two before he started he sent a letter to his wife, telling her to have the bundle of clothes on such a day at a certain place, through which he with his company was to pass, so that he might find it there, and take it along with him.

Now it so happened that the letter was delayed, and she did not get it till within a very few hours of the time when he was to pass through the place which he had named. The farm-house, where she was with her young babe, was quite a distance apart from all other houses, and she felt very anxious and hurried, lest her husband should lose the bundle, after all the pains she had taken to get it ready. It was now near four o'clock of a summer afternoon, and the company was expected to pass through the place a little before night. Something must be done, and that very soon.

So she nursed her baby and gave him a good hearty supper, and laid him asleep in the cradle. Then she went out into the pasture and caught a young horse that was only partly broken, and

was rather wild and frisky, — saddled and bridled him and made ready for the journey in quick time. In those days a carriage was hardly known, in the country towns, but men and women both were wont to make their journeys on horseback; the women sometimes riding alone when horses were plenty, and sometimes behind their husbands on the same horse. She took a last look to see that her baby was sleeping quietly, locked the door, mounted the colt with her bundle, and off she went. She reached the place in season, and I have no doubt that one reason why she was so prompt and ready to go herself, instead of hunting up some one else to carry the bundle, was that she thought she should have a chance to see her dear husband, just for a minute, and give

him once more a parting kiss. And by waiting a little while after she reached the place, she had this great pleasure.

But it was now almost night, and the dear baby was at home alone in the cradle. It was a little comfort to know that he was so young he could not very well get out; and if he should happen to wake up and cry an hour, perhaps it would not hurt him much.

But a thunder-shower was rising fast, and this is not something put in to make the story better, but it is a part of the real fact. The cloud was heaving up thick and fast, and the heavy muttering thunder was heard in the west, and was all the while drawing nearer. She tried to urge on her horse, but he was wild and unruly, and made her a good deal of trouble. She could not run away

from the shower that was now following close behind her. The night, which was almost ready to shut in when she started for home, now came on all the quicker, because of this black cloud that hid the west. Soon it was so dark that she could hardly see the road, and she had to let her horse pick his steps for himself; she could not see to guide him. It would not do to stop anywhere, because of the baby. A mother would go straight through a darker and stormier night than that, when a babe, left alone as hers was, was drawing her on.

At length the drenching rain came upon her, and she could not see the nearest object, not even the horse upon which she rode, except when the vivid flashes of lightning came, leaving the darkness thicker the instant it had

passed. But she worked her way along slowly, never giving up, nor once thinking of turning aside to find a shelter.

It was after nine o'clock in the evening when she reached her home, and I can tell you she was not long in jumping from her horse and rushing into the house to find how it might have fared with her baby. There he was, sound asleep in the cradle. I cannot say that he had not waked up while she had been gone. Perhaps he had, and cried by the hour together, until he had cried himself asleep again. But no harm had come to him at any rate.

I fancy that that young farmer had some thoughts of his wife that night,—how she would ever get home through that wild storm, and how it would be with the baby when she did get home.

He went to New York, and was in some of the battles that were fought in the years 1776 and '77, but was not killed or wounded. At length he was released from service, and came home to live again with his young wife.

That young farmer and his wife were my grandfather and grandmother, and that little baby was my father, and the story, as I said, is true.

When Uncle George had finished, the Englishman said that was real Anglo-Saxon grit, and that he thought a good deal more of such a young woman, than of one who could simply work worsted and play the piano.

CHAPTER V.

SUSIE'S STORY.

I CAN'T THINK of any thing to tell, only "My Ghost Story," and though I suppose you will all laugh at me, I don't care much if you do, for I shall laugh too.

When I was quite young, I was always a very timid little girl, and my father and mother have told me a great many times that I did not dare to go from one room into another without having some one go with me. I don't know what made me so much afraid, but I can't think I was to blame, for I could not help it. My mother says she never had

any fear in those days that I should run away, for she knew I would not dare to go out of doors alone, and as I was then the only child, and had no bold, mischievous brother to lead me off, she was always very sure, whatever she was doing, or wherever she was going, about the house, that I was not very far behind her.

But the worst thing of all was going to bed. My mother used to say that it was all nonsense for me to think that I must have somebody stay close by my bed until I went to sleep, and I suppose it was, but I could not help it. The moment I was left alone, even though I had a light burning in the room, it seemed so lonesome to me that I could not stand it; and though I felt sorry and ashamed, I could not lie still many

minutes without calling out for some one to come and stay with me. They used to tell me a great many stories about other little children that were very brave, and went to bed and were left alone without any light, and who never made any fuss, and I thought sure enough I ought to be as brave as they. And so sometimes when I was with my father and mother, before I went to bed, I would get up a great heap of courage, and I was going to bed bravely, and not mind any thing about staying alone. But when I was in bed, and my mother had kissed me and said good-night, and I saw her turn and go out of the room, and heard her steps as she was going down stairs, and then heard the door into the sitting-room open and shut, by that time all my courage was gone, and

I felt as though I could not stay there a single minute. My mother said I was a very good little girl about all other things, but in this she could not make me do as she wanted me to. I am sure I tried very hard, and I knew there was nothing really to be afraid of, but still I *was afraid*, and I could not help it.

As I grew older, I was more and more ashamed about my silly fears, and at length I made up my mind that I would stay alone, and would not mind it. So after that I did not have any one to stay by me, but I had a great many frights, I can tell you. After I had been in bed a little while, some trifling noise would make me think of something that I wanted to say to mother, and it was a great comfort to have her come to the foot of the stairs and answer my ques-

tion. If I could only hear her voice for a moment, it gave me new courage. Sometimes I used to find that I was very thirsty after I had gone to bed, and could not go to sleep without some water to drink.

If a mouse stirred in the attic, I was sure to hear him, and many a time I have covered my head all up in the bed-clothes, so that I might shut such sounds out of my ears. My mother always used to come and look at me after she thought I was asleep, and take away the light, and she says that she has often found me with my head all covered up, and my face as red as it could be, and she used to tell me that I ought never to go to sleep in that way, for it is very unhealthy. And I never meant to go to sleep so, but I used to

cover my head up when I heard these noises, and before I knew it I was sometimes fast asleep.

I guess it was when I was about six years old, that I went to bed one night when there was a great storm. The wind was blowing very hard, and made all sorts of wild and dismal noises about the house, and the snow was beating against the window of my room. Every time the wind blew hard the blinds would rattle, and one of the barn-doors got loose, and blew together with a great slam, and my father had to put on his boots and go out and fasten it. I could not go to sleep that night for a long time. As I lay awake listening to these strange noises, all at once there was something that frightened me worse than all the rest. Right at my window

there was a loud, sharp sound, just like a woman's voice, and I thought it called out "Susie!" I tell you I was out of bed and down stairs in quick time. I rushed into the sitting-room with my bare feet and in my night-gown, where my father and mother were, and told them that I guessed there was a ghost up in my room.

"A ghost!" said my father, laughing as loud as he could laugh, "what makes you think there is a ghost there?"

"There was a woman's voice," said I, "right at my window, and it called out so that I heard it very plainly, 'Susie!'"

"Ghosts!" said my mother, "who ever told you any thing about ghosts?"

"Oh!" said I, "Bridget has told me a great many stories about ghosts, and about fairies, too. I like her fairy sto-

ries a great deal the best. Only last night she told me a beautiful long story, about how a hunter was lost in the mountains, and wandered this way and that, till one night he lay down on the edge of a steep rock and fell asleep, when a fairy came to him and awaked him, and told him how he might find his way back to his home. But I am sure that it must have been a ghost which I heard, for it came close to my window, and called out 'Susie!'"

"Well," said my father, laughing, "I will go up and stay with you, and we will see if the ghost will come while I am there."

So my father went up into the room and stayed with me, but I could not go to sleep for a long time. It was so cold that he wanted to go down and leave

me, but I had been so frightened that I could not bear to stay alone. After a while there was a very hard gust of wind that made every thing rattle again, and right in the midst of it came that strange voice at the window calling out "Susie!"

"There," said I, "that was the ghost."

My father heard the noise, but he said that it did not say "Susie," any more than it said "grandmother."

But he went close to the window and waited a long time, and by and by there came another great gust of wind, and with it the voice calling out "Susie."

"There," said my father, "I guess I have found out your ghost."

So he opened the window and reached out his hand, and broke off the end of one of the limbs of our cherry-tree.

"There is the ghost," said my father. "Look at it now, and see what a frightful looking creature it is."

You see the way of it was this. One of the limbs of the cherry-tree had grown so long that it reached almost up to my window, and when the wind blew very hard, as it did that night, so that the whole tree would bend a very little, the end of that limb rubbed against the glass, and made that little squeaking noise that I thought was the voice of the ghost calling out "Susie." It was only when the hardest gusts of wind came that the tree would bend enough so that the limb could hit the window, and that was the reason why I always heard my name called when the wind was very wild and noisy. And so this is my "Ghost Story."

I suppose I shall never hear the last of it. Whenever any of us children get frightened about some little thing, my father always has to tell my ghost story.

I think it has done me good, and I am getting now to be quite brave.

You may laugh at me now just as much as you please, because I have been laughed at so many times about my "ghost," that I am used to it.

CHAPTER VI.

AUNT CARRIE'S STORY.

I WAS ALMOST afraid to come here to-night, and look upon such a happy group of children, for I knew how freshly it would bring back to my mind our dear little boy whom we laid in his grave in Mount Auburn only a short time ago. For myself I am not sorry to have these thoughts of him, for though it may be called a *sad* pleasure, it is nevertheless a *real* pleasure for me to think of him. He was such a dear and loving child while he lived, and was so good and thoughtful and patient in his death,

that I can have no higher earthly joy than to sit silently and think of him.

But I would not bring a cloud over the pleasure of others, and especially I would not disturb the happiness of the dear children who are gathered here to-night, yet still I think the best joys of even little children are not the noisiest ones; and that they feel sweeter and happier after their minds have been moved with things tender and gentle and a little sad, than when they are filled with mirth and laughter. I thought all these little folks seemed to enjoy the story which the minister told about the birth of Jesus; or the one which our good English friend told about the death of his dear sister, quite as well as they would have enjoyed stories which are funny, and which

would make them laugh. And I am very certain if they like them as well, while they are hearing them, they will like them a great deal better afterwards, when they remember and think of them. And so I think it will be right and proper for me to tell a brief story of the life and death of our dear little boy.

[The children had all been still thus far, and had heard every word that was spoken. But here there was a moment's pause, when Susie said, in a low voice, that she should love dearly to hear this story, and she guessed all the rest would. There was such a look of satisfaction among the children, and it was so plain that they all wanted to have the story told, that Aunt Carrie, who had been a little doubtful and hesitating, felt courage now to go on.]

There is a little boy here to-night who has the same name that my own dear child had; and when I came in this evening, and heard the children calling "Walter," it sent a strange thrill of feeling through me which I cannot well describe. The "Walter" who is here is a stranger to me, for I have never seen him before, and I had not once thought of meeting to-night a little boy of that name. But since I have known who he was, I have hardly been able to keep my eyes off from him, and already he is a very dear boy to me.

My own dear Walter was younger, it is true, for his fourth birth-day will not come until the next summer. He was born among the rose-buds of June, and none of them ever opened more sweet and fair and lovely than he. While he

lived he had no little brother or sister for a playmate, but he was so full of joy himself, so full of sweet and pleasant fancies, that he could make playmates of all the grown-up people about him; or, if they were not with him, he could turn his own playthings into companions, and make up life which seemed just as real to him as our life appears to us.

There are some children that seem born to die early; not because they are weak and sickly, for often it happens that these very children are among the healthiest and happiest while they live; and their brief life is crowded as full of joy as it can hold. It is true, there are children who from the time they are born are never well, and no one can think when he looks upon them, that they can have a long life. But I speak

now of other children, who are for the most part very well. Some of them hardly ever know what pain is, until they come to die, and even then they do not have to bear it very long. And yet they seem to be born to make the hearts of their parents very glad while they live, — to win the love of everybody about them, and then, after three or four years of this beautiful and happy life, to die.

The reason why we come to feel that they were born to die thus early, is, that when we watch them while living, and still more when we sit down and think over all their life, when they are gone, we see that they have been a little too bright, — a little too thoughtful and amiable and loving for this cold and troubled world, — that what they have

said and done during their stay here, has after all been more like heaven than earth, and it was not meant that they should stay with us long. We love them, it is true, all the more for the bright and happy life they have lived, and when they die it grieves us sorely, and makes our hearts bleed with anguish. But still I think it is pleasant to feel that the kind and loving God can take better care of them in that world, where they have gone, than we could take of them here, — that He can furnish better teachers for them than we are, — more gentle and loving hands to supply their wants, than even a mother's hands could be; — that He can open before them scenes more bright and joyous, — objects to look upon greater and more wonderful than any which earth can show. For

though our fair earth is beautiful with its rising and setting suns, its moon and stars, its flowers and singing birds, its green fields, woods, and mountains, yet heaven is more beautiful by far, and I know we ought not to wish the dear ones who have passed away from the sins and sorrows of our earthly state, to that bright and peaceful home, — we ought not to wish them back again.

Still, it is very hard, after we have taken care of them for a few short years, and have come to love them as we love our own souls, to be so suddenly and strangely parted from them. And especially it is so, when an only child dies; when there are no other happy voices of children to break the dreary silence of the house, — no other little feet to go pattering through the rooms and up and

down the stairs,—no further use for all the playthings, which for many months have been kept at hand, and have been as much in demand as the dishes for the daily meal,—nothing to fill the sad and aching void in the home and the heart.

I have had, ever since the dear Walter was born, a dim, strange feeling that he was not to live, not because he seemed frail and weak, for though he has at times been sick, he was what would be called a strong, robust boy; and any one looking upon him in his days of perfect health, would think that his chances for life were better than those of most children. Nevertheless it has all along been strangely impressed upon my mind that he was to die, and I have often spoken of this feeling to others, and sometimes I have felt so sure of it, that I have

almost wished the end might come, and the trial be over, before my heart had grown any closer to him; for I knew when it came it would be a dreadful blow. I cannot explain this feeling, only I suppose it may have come upon me because all the dear little boys in the families of my older sisters have died before they were four years old, while the girls, with only one exception, have all lived. Walter, at the time of his death, had ten cousins, on my side, who are girls, but his boy-cousins, four in number, and one dear little girl, had gone to the other world before him, and were there to meet and welcome him, and a most precious little company of cousins they are. None of these children died very young, that is, in early infancy, and none of them lived much

over four years. They were all bright and lovely children, and all lived long enough to bind the hearts of their parents and friends to them, as with bands of steel, before they were taken away. I myself, years ago, mourned for one of those little boys, the sweet and darling Willie, the child of my sister, as I had never mourned before. I had been with him so much, that I seemed to love him with all a mother's love, and when he died, I felt for a long time that I could not be comforted. I suppose that it may have been from this fact of the death of all Walter's boy-cousins, that I was made to fear so strongly that my dear boy could not live. Most of these children had died of the same disease — scarlet fever — that has smitten so many of our New England households,

and carried sudden and terrible sorrow to so many homes and hearts. I knew that there were many ways in which the dear child might die besides this, but I have always felt that if this dreadful disease should come upon him, my hope would be gone at once. Not that all children who have this disease die. Thousands and tens of thousands of them go through with it safely, but it has been so sure and fatal in our family that I could have no courage to meet it.

Such were my real feelings, through all the years that the darling Walter was spared to us, and every year made him more and more dear to us, and to all the house. As he grew older, he was so ready to do every thing that was thought proper and right, however it might go against his feelings and wishes,

he had such kind and loving and winning words and ways, — his mind was so clear and bright, so joyous and hopeful, that we came to love him with our whole souls, though my love was always mingled with this trembling and fear.

But I must tell you some of the pleasant things he said and did while he lived. Hardly ever was there a little boy who enjoyed life more than he. It was very easy to please him and make him happy, because his soul was so joyful.

We had two dogs, — the name of one was "Ponto," and the name of the other "Turk." Little Walter thought very much of these dogs, and it was his great delight to carry them their breakfast and see them eat. But "Ponto" was the largest and strongest, and Walter

used to think that he sometimes got more than his part. He liked "Turk" the best, and so because he thought "Ponto" was a great greedy fellow, he used to take care that his good dog "Turk" should not be cheated out of the nice pieces, but should have his part, in spite of "Ponto."

He had some beautiful white rabbits, that he loved very much indeed. One day this same "Turk," that Walter thought was such a good dog, but who was something of a rogue after all, caught and killed one of these rabbits. Walter was sorry for the rabbit, and sorry to lose him, but he could not bear to think that "Turk" had been naughty, and so he came to the kind and charitable conclusion that his dog must have been mistaken. And so, if any one said

any thing to him on the subject, he used to answer, "Turk was mistaken, he thought it was a 'at" (rat).

He had a nice rocking-horse, and he was called "Bucephalus." That, you know, was the name of the horse that Alexander the Great used to ride upon, and so his father told him to call his horse "Bucephalus." It was rather a hard word for him to speak, and he used to make funny work at first in trying to say it. But this was his name, and so he always called him by it. This horse he rode a great deal. Always before getting on to him, he must have his little cap on his head and his whip in his hand, and then he was prepared to go off on errands for me, or for other members of the family. He would go to the store, or to the post-office, or

wherever we wanted to send. His mind was full of pleasant fancies, and he would often make remarks that amused us very much. One day when he was riding, he stopt suddenly, and said, "There is a dog barking at me, I must get off and shoot him." So he coolly got off from his horse, and took a stick and pointed it where the dog was supposed to be, and then "bang" went the gun. "There," said he, "that dog is shot." Then he put up his gun, mounted his horse again, in the most serious manner, and went on, riding as before.

One day a boy a little older than himself came to see him, and he wanted to ride "Bucephalus." But when he was on his back, he began to whip him very hard, and to talk to him in a very rough and noisy way, and Walter did

not like this at all. He came to me and told me that "that boy ought not to whip Bucephalus so, for he was a good horse." He himself always treated his horse very kindly and gently, and it troubled him greatly to think that any one should whip and abuse him, as though he were naughty and bad. This horse and he were very great friends, and so in his last sickness, when it would seem as though he were too weak and too full of pain and trouble to think of such things, he used to look at the horse, which was standing in the room where he was, and sometimes he would speak to him, and call him by his name.

Only a few weeks before he died he startled me one day with a question that seemed to me very strange for him to ask, and which seems so now as I think

of it. He was at the time fresh from his play, full of life and joy, the very picture of health. Plump, robust, and active, it would seem if any child might live, he might.

He came running to me, and said,—

"Mamma! what should you do if you should lose me?"

"Oh!" said I, "I should look all round, in the house, out at the barn, out in the garden, down in the fields, until I found you."

"No," said he. "I mean what should you do if you should lose me up in the sky?"

A strange fear came over me, and for a moment I did not answer. Then I said,

"Walter! I should cry."

"Then I would come right back to you, mamma."

This might be the merest child-talk, it is true, but I "kept all these sayings and pondered them in my heart."

I can see now that his mind was too active and quick, and that he was too bright for his age. During all the last year of his life he committed to memory things which were read to him, with the greatest ease, and some of the little books which he had heard a few times he could say entirely through with hardly a mistake, but he wanted the book in his hand, and would turn over the leaves at the right place, though he could not tell one letter from another.

He had a little prayer which he used to say every night when he went to bed. One day his father read to him the chapter in the New Testament which has the Lord's Prayer in it, and told him, when

he came to it, that it was the Lord's Prayer. So he wanted to learn that too, and very soon had it in his memory all right, so that he could repeat it perfectly.

It is the fancy of children often to try and imitate every thing which they see anybody do, and so after he began to go to church, it was his delight to stand up in a chair or on the sofa and preach a sermon. Sometimes he had me for a hearer, or if any little girl or boy came to the house, he would preach them one of his sermons, and he had a great many thoughts like those which we hear in real sermons, only they were brought out in his own childish way.

It was very charming to hear him repeat the many things which he had learned, because he did it with so much

life and earnestness, and hardly ever made a mistake. And there was another thing that made it very pleasant and childlike. He was not old enough to speak the words distinctly as we speak them, and so if a stranger did not know beforehand what was said, he could hardly understand a word; but if he knew, or if he had a book to look over, he could see then that the dear little fellow had it all right, though it sounded so odd and and queer.

There was one member of our family whom Walter always called by the name of "Aunty." They were very good friends indeed, and his dear "Aunty" mourns his death almost as much as I do. Whenever Walter happened to find her sitting alone in her chamber, he seemed to think it was very lonely for her there,

and many and many is the time that he has gone to her kindly and asked her to come and sit in his "nuttery," as he called it, and there was one chair that she was always expected to sit in, which was there for her.

A few weeks before he died, his nurse, whom he had had for a long time, went away to be married, so that Walter had no one now whose particular business it should be to take care of him. He had been used to this kind of care so long that he thought this state of things would never do in the world, and he wanted very much that we should get him another nurse as soon as we could. We did so, and as soon as she came he took to her at once, — told her where every thing was, that was needed for him, and indeed he went through the

whole process of teaching her, in his childlike way, how to take care of him. Oh! he was the light and life of the house.

He was taken sick on a Saturday, and when the doctor came he could not tell whether it was scarlet fever or not, and for a day or two we were in great doubt what was the matter with him. But it proved to be that which I had always dreaded, and my heart sunk within me. From the time the disease was fairly upon him, it went on with its work of destruction, and nothing which we could do, or the doctors could do, seemed to have the least power to stop it. But it was most touching to see how patient he was under all this, and how he tried to do every thing just as we told him. His thoughts and feelings were all so mild,

gentle, and heaven-like, that we could not but feel that the hour of his death was drawing nigh, and that he was ripening very fast for a higher and purer life.

It often happens in this disease that the mind is strangely affected, so that the thoughts wander. But it did not seem to be so with him. He understood all that was said to the last, and whatever he said, seemed to have a real meaning.

A few hours before his death, I knew that he must soon go, I leaned over him, and said to him, —

"Has Walter got a sweet kiss for mamma?"

I asked the question in this way, because every morning when he was well, and his nurse had dressed him, the first thing he did was to come running into

my chamber, with the words on his lips, —

"Walter has got a sweet kiss this morning for mamma."

When I asked him this question, he was lying upon his side, and he made an effort to turn his head, but was so weak that he could not. I saw how it was, and I said to him, —

"Walter need n't try, but Walter is a good boy."

I had hardly ever had to punish him in his life in any way, except to tell him if he did so he would not be a good boy, and when he did what pleased me, I used to say to him, "Walter is a good boy." And so he understood what I meant, but at the same time he seemed also to understand that he had not done all that I had expected and hoped, and

sick as he was, he kept this in his mind. A few hours after, and just before he died, he had, as is often the case, a few moments of more ease and comfort and brightness. He called for me, and when I went to him, he told me he had a sweet kiss for me, and he kissed me twice, and told me he loved me, and then sinking back he said,—

"*Walter is a good boy now*,"—

And these were the last words he spoke. Knowing all his thoughts and ways, as I do, he could hardly have said any thing in those last moments so sweet and comforting to me as those words.

I cannot think that the dear child could have any clear idea of what dying is, and yet it seems to me that even little children, just before they pass from this world to the other, are in some way

moved to say things which do after all have this meaning. I have heard of many little children who, in their dying hours, have said what I cannot explain in any other way. I have said that Walter did not seem to be wandering in his thoughts during his whole sickness, and yet he said to me a little while before his death, and said it very distinctly, at the same time pointing upward with his hand, —

"I am going up there, and I wish you would go up with me."

These words, strange as it may seem, were almost the same that one of his cousins had uttered in the dying hour.

I know that people who have never seen or heard such things, are apt to think that these sayings are somehow made up. But the two worlds come

very near together in the dying hour and I myself have seen enough to know, that words are spoken and things are done at such times, which we cannot very well explain, but which nevertheless are true and wonderful.

And so the dear Walter has gone from my sight, and I shall never more see him in this world, but I hope to see him in that bright world where I trust and believe he is now forever at rest. That blessed Jesus is there, who was once a little child upon the earth, and who knows by his own experience, all the thoughts and feelings of little children, and what they need to have done for their comfort and peace, — that Jesus, who when he was grown to be a man, said, as in the beautiful verses which we heard to-night, —

"Let the little ones come unto me."

And from his bright and beautiful home above he says the same now; and every day, from all parts of the earth, these dear ones are going up to be with him, in this heavenly home.

The morning of the day on which we laid him in his little grave, was dark and gloomy. Thick clouds hung over the earth, and there were signs of an approaching storm. It seemed dismal to carry the dear child to his last resting-place on such a day as this promised to be. But God was better to us than our fears. As the hours passed on, the clouds grew thin and began to scatter, and in the afternoon, when we were making our sad journey to Mt. Auburn, the sun broke out in his fulness, and the soft, still, clear light covered the earth, as

with a mantle of beauty. It came to us as a sign of quiet and beautiful rest and peace. It seemed to dispel, in a measure, the darkness and gloom of our minds, and light them up with hope and expectation.

All that I have now of the dear boy, is the precious memory of his life, stored up forever in my own soul, and this is a treasure I prize above all price. I know that in the weary years before me I shall have longings for him, such as I can never express; but still, with my whole soul I can feel and say, —

> "'T is better to have loved and lost,
> Than never to have loved at all."

I cannot tell you how sad and lonely our house seems without him, and so it must be for a long time to come.

"I shall miss him when the flowers come,
In the garden where he played;
I shall miss him more by the fireside,
When the flowers have all decayed;
I shall miss his toys and his empty chair,
And the horse he used to ride,
And they will speak with a silent speech,
Of the little boy that died."

END.