

**"Not lost, but gone before."**

A PARABLE FROM MRS GATTY.

The sun shone softly down upon the Hillside Cemetery, where Mr Bell and his children were standing amid the fresh clover, strewing a new-made grave with roses and violets from their garden. It was only a little mound, and the weeping mother sat at its head mourning for her youngest born.

"Papa," said Arthur, "where is heaven, that my little brother has gone to? It is not up in the sky, for I can't see anything there." The little boy looked sorrowfully up into the far-off blue, and then turned to his father for a reply.

"Heaven is not in sight, Arthur," answered his father. "We cannot tell where it is. It might be very near without our being able to see it with our eyes."

"But, papa," said Helen, "if heaven is near, isn't it strange that Willie cannot just come back one minute to tell us he is happy?"

"Yes, dear," said Mr. Bell, "it is all strange to us. We can only trust our Father in heaven about it, and wait till we go to him. If we love him here, we shall be where he is hereafter, and with dear little Willie, too, I think."

They lingered awhile beside the precious grave, and then turned homeward through the pleasant cemetery grounds. As they passed a little pond fringed with flowering shrubs, Mr. Bell said to his wife, "Anna, let us sit down beside this pond while I tell the children that parable of Mrs. Gatty's which sister Alice read to us—'Not lost, but gone before.'"

"O yes," said their mother, "I should like to have you."

Mr. Bell placed his wife upon a rustic seat, and sat down by her side, with Arthur on his knee and Helen at his feet.

"This parable," said he, "tries to teach us how near heaven may be to earth, and how the holy people may remember us and know where we are, and yet not be able to return or speak to us. I will tell you all I can remember of it."

"Once there was a beautiful pond in the centre of a wood. Trees and flowers were growing about it, birds sang and insects hummed about it. Under the water, too, there was a little world of beings. Fishes and little creatures that live in water filled it full of busy life. Among them was the grub of a dragon-fly, with a large family of brothers and sisters."

"What is a dragon-fly?" interrupted Arthur.

"It's just a darnin'-needle," said Helen.

"Yes, you children call it darnin'-needle," said their father; "that beautiful swift creature, with a long glittering blue-and-green body and brilliant gauzy wings. Now, before he became a dragon-fly, darting through the air and flashing back the sunshine, he was a dark scaly grub, and lived down in the forest pond. He and his family were born there, and knew no other world. They spent their time in roving in and out among the plants at the bottom of the water in search of food."

"But one day this grub began to talk among his mates about the frog. 'Every little while,' said he, 'the frog goes to the side of the water and disappears. What becomes of him when he leaves this world? What can there be beyond?'"

"You idle fellow, replied another grub, 'attend to the world you are in and leave the "beyond" to those that are there!' So said all his relations, and the curious grub tried to forget his questionings. But he could not do it; so one day, when he heard a heavy splash in the water and saw a great yellow frog swim to the bottom, he screwed up his courage to ask the frog himself."

"Honored frog," said he, approaching that dignified personage as meekly as possible, 'permit me to inquire what there is beyond the world.'"

"What world do you mean?" said the frog, rolling his goggle eyes.

"This world, of course; our world," answered the grub.

"This pond, you mean," remarked the frog, with a sneer.

"I mean the place we live in; I call it the world," cried the grub with spirit.

"Did you, indeed?" rejoined the frog. "Then what is the place you don't live in; the "beyond" world, eh?"

"That is just what I want you to tell me," replied the grub briskly.

"Well then," said froggy, "it is dry land."

"Can one swim about there?" asked the grub.

"Dry land is not water, little fellow," chuckled the frog; "that is just what it is not."

"But tell me what it is," persisted the grub.

"Well, then, you troublesome creature," cried the frog, "dry land is something like the bottom of this pond, only it is not wet, because there is no water."

"Really," said the grub, "what is there then?"

"They call it air," replied the frog. "It is the nearest approach to nothing."

"Finding that he could not make the grub understand, the good-natured frog offered to take him on his back up to the dry land, where the grub might see for himself. The grub was delighted. He dropped himself down upon the frog's back and clung closely to him while he swam up to the rushes at the water's edge. But the moment he emerged into the air the grub fell reeling back into the water, panting and struggling for life. "Horrible!" cried he, as soon as he had rallied a little; "there is nothing but death beyond this world. The frog deceived me.—I cannot go there, at any rate."

"Then the grub told his story to his friends,

and they talked a great deal about the mystery, but could arrive at no explanation.

"That evening the yellow frog appeared again at the bottom of the pond.

"You here!" cried the startled grub. "You never left this world at all, I suppose?"

"Clumsy creature," replied the frog, "why did not you cling to my back? When I landed on the grass you were gone."

"The grub related his death-like struggle, and added, "Since there is nothing but death beyond this world, all your stories about going there must be false."

"I forgive your offensive remarks," said the frog, gravely, "because I have learned to-day the reason of your tiresome curiosity. As I was hopping about in the grass on the edge of the pond I saw one of your race slowly climbing up the stalk of a reed. Suddenly there appeared a rent in his scaly coat, and after many struggles there came out of it one of those radiant dragon-flies that float in the air I told you of. He lifted his wings out of the carcase he was leaving, and when they had dried in the sunshine he flew glittering away. I conclude that you grubs will do the same thing by-and-by."

"The grub listened with astonishment and distrust and swam off to tell his friends. They decided that it was impossible nonsense, and the grub said he would think no more about it. He hurried restlessly about in the water hunting for prey and trying to forget. But not long after he began to be sick, and a feeling he could not resist impelled him to go upward. He called to his relations and said—

"I must leave you, I know not why. If the frog's story of another world is true, I solemnly promise to return and tell you."

"His friends accompanied him to the water's edge, where he vanished from their sight, for their eyes were fitted to see only in water. All day they watched and waited for his return, but he came no more.

"One of his brothers soon felt the same irresistible impulse upward, and he also promised the sorrowing family that if he should indeed be changed into that glorious creature of which they had heard, he would return and tell them."

"But," said one, "perhaps you might not be able to come back." "A creature so exalted could certainly do anything," replied the departing grub. But he also came not again. "He has forgotten us," said one; "he is dead," said another; "there is no other world."

"And now a third brother felt the same inward necessity driving him upward. He bade his friends farewell, saying, "I dare not promise to return. It possible I will; but do not fear in me an altered or a forgetful heart. If that world exists, we may not understand its nature."

"His companions lingered near the spot where he disappeared, but there was neither sign nor sound of his return. Only the dreary sense of bereavement reminded them that he had once lived. Some feared the future; some disbelieved, some hoped and looked forward still. Ah, if the poor things could only have seen into the pure air above their watery world, they would have beheld their departed friends often returning to its borders. But into the world of waters they could never more enter.

The least touch upon its surface, as the dragon-fly skimmed over it with the purpose of descending to his friends, brought on a deadly shock, such as he had felt when as a water grub he had tried to come upward into the air. His new wings instantly bore him back.

"And thus divided, yet near-parted, yet united by love, he often hovered about the barrier that separated him from his early companions, watching till they, too, should come forth into the better life. Sweet it was to each new comer to find himself not alone in his joyous existence, but welcomed into it by those who had gone before. Sweet also to know that even in their ignorant life below, gleams from the wings of the lost ones they had lamented were shining down into their dark abode. O, if they had known, they would neither have feared nor sorrowed so much!"

Mr. Bell sat in silence a few moments after finishing this parable, and then said—

"Do you see how the other world may be out of our sight and bearing, though very real and near?"

"Yes, father, I do," replied Helen. "It makes it seem as if Willie might be close beside us"—*Household Reading.*

**Missionary Intelligence.**

Our friends generally will be pleased to read the extracts given below from a letter of Mrs. Van Meter received lately by a friend of hers in the States. It is cheering to see that our sisters (among whom he is remembered is numbered our own beloved Missionary, Miss DeWolfe) did not wait till they reached their foreign field of labour, before beginning their life work, to which they have solemnly consecrated themselves, but at once besought those around them to come to Christ. And God blessed their prayerful efforts, and gave them the desire of their hearts in the conversion of sinners, even before their feet touched the shore where they are anxious "to spend, and be spent" for him who has called them we trust by His Spirit for this great work.

**Letter from Mrs. Van Meter.**

SHIP JOHN BUNYAN,  
Near the Island of Ceylon, April 10, 1868.

DEAR BROTHER BRIGHT.—I think you will be glad to notice the precious revival of religion with which God is again blessing us on board

ship. You may perhaps remember the *R. B. Forbes*, in 1860, when God poured out his Spirit, and captain, officers, and nearly every one of the crew, were converted during our voyage to Rangoon. In returning this time we longed for a like blessing, and we knew that many dear Christian friends in the churches and Sabbath schools of our beloved land were praying for us. Often during our voyage have we felt that we were enveloped by an atmosphere of prayer.

Deeply as we are interested for the seamen—believing that God is ready to perform his promise to Zion as soon as she fulfils her part, that "the multitude of the sea shall be converted unto Thee"—and knowing that often these weather-beaten men are not so gospel-hardened as many of the regular attendants upon our churches in the highly favored cities of America, we still could hardly tell how we, a company of only women, could labor for them. But God prepared all before us. As soon as we were able to be up from sea-sickness we invited Mrs. Nichols (the captain's wife), and after a time the captain also, to join us at our evening worship. They had just come from the death-bed of a pious father, and having a high respect for religion received kindly and courteously our messages, as we pressed home the claims of God upon their hearts. O, how rejoiced we were when they were first willing to kneel with us! and now for many weeks their voices unite with ours in prayer and praise.

From about the fifth week out, with the hearty co-operation of the captain and officers, we have met on deck for regular evening worship, which is generally accompanied with Bible class instruction; and Wednesday and Sabbath evenings are appropriated for prayer and conference, in which for some time past all the converts (which includes most of the crew), take part—so that we have indeed a *Bethel ship*. Would that every ship carrying missionaries to and from their fields of labor might be alike blessed, and why not, if it is prayed for, and expected? and if it is not done, how is this important department of missionary work to be accomplished? At our last Wednesday evening meeting one of the sailors prayed "that the time might soon come when every ship should be a 'Bethel,' every captain a missionary, and every man a Christian;" a prayer which should meet a response from every Christian heart.—When, at one of our first meetings with the men, we urged upon them the duty of prayer as the sure and only way of finding forgiveness and mercy, he with several others thanked us, saying that our words and manner of instructing them recalled their mother's teaching, when, as children, they knelt by her knee in prayer, but it was little they had heard of such things since. A beautiful tribute, certainly, to woman's work in persuading men to be reconciled to God!

Another man, who has evidently been very well brought up—his mother, of whom he always speaks with tenderness, was a French lady educated in Paris—had been for many years skeptical, reading infidel books, and asking questions which sages could not answer—remarked, as he related to us his religious experience a few evenings since:

"When I began to pray, I doubted almost everything, but I felt wearied of myself and almost everything. I thought, surely there is little good to me in this world, and there can be little harm come from my praying to Jesus Christ as the Son of God, even if he is not so—and I want to find peace somewhere; and" (in his broken English) "this is what has come of it. I hope I am a different man from what I was; and I trust God has for Christ's sake forgiven all my sins, though I know they have been very great."

"And you believe now, Philip, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the very God, do you?"

"Yes, I know, ma'am, that He must be, or He could not bear my prayer and give such peace and love to my soul!"

"But how is this? You have not been reading any particular arguments or books, to make you change your belief? What has become of your skepticism? What makes you believe now?"

"Well, ma'am, I surely cannot tell what it is. There are many things which I cannot understand, but it seems to me I feel this in my heart—that Jesus is the Son of God. I have only prayed to God to teach me, and to lead me in the way He would have me go. It is nothing I have done, or that I have made myself believe, and yet I think I can say I know it."

"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee; but my Father which is in heaven."

Does any one read this who would know the blessedness of the child of God, be you skeptical or not, let me ask you to faithfully try prayer. It is the way by which the Karens—the way by which seamen—the only way, and the sure way by which any who will, may come unto God and find peace to their souls.

During all this voyage, and all this work, I have found the young ladies who are going out with me true in sympathy and prayer—and judicious, as well as zealous, in laboring for the conversion of souls; and I trust the prayers of Christian friends will continue that God will thus bless us in our labors on heathen shores.

In the service of Christ,

I am ever, sincerely,  
MRS VAN METER.

In the neighbourhood of Newcastle upon Tyne, England, there are accounts of a religious movement which is almost entirely in the hands of women. They go about among the labouring people, read the Bible to them, and converse on religious topics with great enthusiasm.

**By the grace of God I am what I am.**

As the Rev. John Newton, that eminent servant of God, lay on his dying bed, a friend was reading to him the fifteenth chapter of first Corinthians. Coming to the tenth verse he read: "But by the grace of God I am what I am." "Stop," said Mr. Newton; "that expresses just my case. I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I might be. I am not what I hope to be. But I am better than I once was. 'By the grace of God I am what I am.'"

Does this not express, Christian friend, the state of each one of us? Let us see.

*I am not what I ought to be.* I ought to be perfect, but alas, alas, I am very far from perfection. It is my duty to be holy, even as God is holy. But I am not; much, very much of sin mingles with what is best in me. I fall short, every day of my life, of doing even what I know to be duty. I fail to set the example to those about me that I ought. Indeed when I come to look into my conduct and character there is so much that is evil that I can only take my stand by the side of the publican, and cry "God be merciful to me a sinner."

*I am not what I might be.* For God did not leave me alone to struggle through the world. He has said to every child of his, "My grace is sufficient for thee." I can have the resources of Omnipotence. Why then should I fail so grievously. If I had only used those resources I might have been much nearer what I ought to be than I am. I might be a much more consistent Christian than I am. I might do more. The fault is not in God. It is not in the religion of Jesus Christ. The fault is in me, who fail to receive the grace of God that is promised to all who depend upon it.

*I am not what I hope to be.* For I hope through the grace of God in Christ Jesus, to reach heaven at last. I shall then be purified from all spot and stain of sin. I shall then be perfect! Blessed hope! Glorious expectation! To be no more tempted. To be no more led astray. No more to fail in the discharge of duty. To love even as I am loved. To know even as I am known. This is what I hope for—even I, so unworthy a sinner here on earth. Blessed be God that I may hope for this. Blessed be God that, through Jesus Christ his Son, I may confidently expect it.

*But I am better than I once was.* I once had no love for the Saviour. Now I do love him. I do trust him. I once went on unmoved in my course of sin. Now I do repent of my transgressions. Once I had no pleasure in the Bible, in the Sabbath, in the society of Christians. Now all these are my delight. I can honestly say that "Whereas I was blind, now I see." I have a new principle of action. Instead of seeking only self, I am, even if it be in poor and imperfect measure, seeking the glory of God.

But "by the grace of God I am what I am." It was that grace that had mercy on me, and called me from my reckless course of sin. It is to that grace I look to make me what I hope to be, bringing me off conqueror, and more than conqueror. I sing in the words that John Newton himself wrote:—

"Amazing grace! how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me:  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

"Through many dangers, toils, and snares  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home."  
—Am. Mess.

**Correspondence.**

For the Christian Messenger.

**NEW CHURCH AT SUMMERSIDE—PROPOSED ISLAND ASSOCIATION.**

Dear Brother,—

We have just formed a little Baptist church at Summerside. The place has been thought rather hopeless for a movement of this kind. But we have had our Island missionary hard at work there for some months past. God has blessed his labours; and hence the result just stated. The church as yet scarcely numbers twenty. But the friends are hopeful, prayerful, and have a mind to give and work; and may therefore expect a gracious and gradual increase. They greatly need a meeting-house. They have a piece of ground, and are raising funds for building. Sister churches on the Island will aid them. But they will also need help from sister churches elsewhere, which they trust will not be denied.

We are about at length to form our Island Association. We propose to meet for this purpose on Saturday, the 18th prox., at North River, not far from this city. The new meeting-house which our brethren there have just completed will be opened in connection with this occasion. Need I say, that friends from abroad disposed to visit us at this time will receive a brotherly welcome? Permit me to add, that we do not separate from old friends because we have ceased to love them. But we hope to serve our common Lord better by means of a separate organization than we could by continuing to form a part of our Eastern Nova Scotia Association.

Your fellow-labourer,  
J. DAVIS.  
Charlottetown, June 22, 1868.