

Family Reading.

For the Christian Messenger.

Prayer.

Lord, what a change within us one short hour spent in Thy presence, will prevail to make! What heavy burdens from our bosoms take! What parched grounds refresh, as with a shower; We kneel, and all around us seems to lower; We rise, and all the distant and the near, Stands forth in sunny outline, bare and clear; We kneel, how weak; we rise, how full of power! Why, therefore should we do ourselves this wrong, Or others, that we are not always strong, That we are ever overborne with care, That we should ever weak or heartless be, Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer, And joy and strength, and courage are with Thee?

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.

"He hath made every thing beautiful in his time"

What a fair dwelling is this world of ours,

Varied and beautiful on every hand, The fertile vales, the mountains tall and grand,

The fresh green fields all carpeted with flowers, The genial sunshine, the refreshing showers,

The great deep awful sea, the teeming land,

The solemn forests that majestic stand, Day's cheering light, the night's dark solemn hand.

Within, without, above, below, around, Afar and near, whatever land, or climate, He hath made beautiful in every time, In whom is beauty and perfection found.

O wondrous world, or hidden or revealed, God's handiwork with his own signet sealed.

JOHN ASKHAM.

Select Serial.

THE KING'S SERVANTS.

BY HESBA STRETTON.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ON THE SEA.

I know now that this was the perfect hour of my life. I had almost said, "Would to God I had known it then!" But would it not have been a greater grief to have recognized its perfectness and to see it waning, than to have through it with a heart a little fretted from its happiness by small cares which seemed to tarnish the brightness, but served to soften it into light that did not dazzle my half dim eyes?

One thing I grudged—that Philip should gain so little personal advantage from his wealth. Certainly he bought a vessel of his own, and he and his father went hither and thither as they pleased. They came in home oftener; but every time they stayed on shore longer than a few weeks, it became more evident that as long as Captain John Champion was living, Philip must spend the best portion of his time on the sea.

"It baffles me rather," said Captain John Champion to Mrs. Transome one day, "why the wise Lord spared me so long in Africa, and leaves me now to be a burden on my son. I look upon it as a hardship for him."

"Never say the word again, Captain John Champion," cried Mrs. Transome, excitedly. "Love's no hardship. There can't be any hardship between father and son, or husband and wife, like me and Transome. No, no! True love knows no hardship, whatever it brings us to. Never say such a word again."

It was about two years after Philip came into his inheritance, that at last a plan for sending out to America some of our rescued girls became practicable and advisable. It was a new step for us, and gave us much anxiety. But Philip had already joined in some emigration movements, and had given free passages to many a poverty-stricken artisan and his family to Canada and the States. For the times were bad in England just then; and there was a great clamor of distress and want, which reached our ears more directly

than it could have done in former days. George and Philip and I discussed the matter in and out, from every possible point of view.

"Milly," said George, "what would you say to going out yourself to America, and seeing the ladies who are to take charge of our girls?"

Such a question positively made my heart cease to beat for some seconds. If you will think that for five-and-twenty years I had never spent a night, except one at Liverpool, from under our own roof; that I knew absolutely nothing of friendly visiting, or excursions to the seaside; that for a whole quarter of a century I had slept in the same room, and opened my eyes each morning on the self same objects, you will see how the question stunned me as though a thunderbolt had fallen at my feet. It opened some vast changes, such undreamed of revolutions in all the habits of my life, that I shrank back frightened.

"Could you spare her?" cried Philip, all aglow with excitement.

"To be sure," said George, calmly as if it were no unusual thing "I should like her to go, if you promise to bring her home safely in two months or so."

"There is nothing I should like so much," exclaimed Philip, "you shall have no trouble at all. Aunt Milly; and we shall be back in two months at the latest, with three or four weeks to spare on the other side. You will know something of the sea, then? Say you will come."

I felt fluttered and frightened; yet an irresistible yearning came with my fears to break loose for once from the safe moorings of home, and see something beyond its narrow confines. I wished George had not suggested it; for the idea would never have come itself into my head. But now it was there, it could not be dislodged; and the restlessness I had conquered in my girlhood threatened to assert itself again.

"You might just as well take Mrs. Transome," I said; "I'm too old now."

"I will take her," answered Philip; "she will come if I ask her, and you cannot say you are too old then. Say no more Aunt Milly, I shall run down to Liverpool, this very night, and see that everything is made comfortable for you. It will be the greatest pleasure I've had since I was a boy."

I made some faint remonstrances; but it was impossible to me to oppose him when George was on his side. There were only a few days for me to prepare in; for all our arrangements had been made, and our emigrants were waiting to go. After all it was far less trouble and exertion than I expected. Philip came back from Liverpool to fetch Mrs. Transome and me; and I had simply to leave myself in his hands, and have everything done for me. It was I who obeyed now, not Philip. I bade George farewell, and left home, with a strange sensation of losing almost my own identity.

But there were no good-byes at Liverpool. All we had to do was to cross over to the steamer, which lay in the river, ready to start, for we must get over the bar at the next tide, and the last hour has come. As we drew near, I was surprised to see how large it was.

"That is not your own ship, Philip?" I said to him.

"No," he answered, "ours is much smaller, and not as steady a sailer as this is. So we are all going as passengers only; and I shall have nothing to do but take care of you both."

"Why wouldn't you let us rough it with you?" I asked, disappointed that we were not to cross the Atlantic in Philip's ship, and under Captain John Champion's command.

"Nothing rough should come near you, if I could help it," he said tenderly.

Certainly he had no intention to let us meet with any hardships on the sea. The state-room he had chosen was the best on board, and was furnished luxuriously. The saloon upon which it opened was fitted up at a still greater cost, with a magnificence that astonished me, and still more amazed Mrs. Transome.

"Wait till you visit the steerage," said Captain John Champion.

I went there with Philip that evening before the sun set. The low, long cabins, where a man could hardly stand upright; the crowded berths, one shelf

above another, with little more space left than was necessary to crawl into them; the close herding together of over five hundred emigrants of the lowest class; the rough struggling for places at the narrow boards, which served as tables; the unwholesome stifling atmosphere; the wailing of babies, and the cries of children; all these things sent me back to my state-room, sore and grieved at heart.

"Oh, Philip!" I said, "there ought not to be this difference between man and man; and only a few planks between us!"

"Yes," he answered, sadly, "there are hardships on the sea."

But there was nothing that I could do. There was my place in ease and luxury; and between me and them there was a great gulf fixed. Philip and Captain John Champion went often among the steerage passengers; but they would not let me go. Whenever I thought of them, and that was often for I was grieved for them, I wished Philip had let me rough the passage in his own boat. Then I should have felt at home; and if it had rocked somewhat, I should not have been frightened with him close at hand.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN PERIL.

We had been out seven days, and more than two-thirds of the voyage were over; yet the same unvarying, shimmering, tossing plain of water stretched round us to the unbroken circle of the horizon. From the first the sky had been almost cloudless, and the vast dome of it bent over us like a hospitable roof, which would shelter us from all storms; for no one could dream of change in heavens so clear and calm. Now and then a distant vessel glided, phantom-like, across the same blue field. The water at times looked strong enough, and solid enough to walk upon; like that sea of glass, mingled with fire, upon which John saw the victor standing, having the harps of God.

"What are you looking at so earnest, captain!" asked Mrs. Transome on the seventh evening, as we watched the solemn setting of the sun into the crimson sea. A low streak of livid purple, with a line of gold on its ragged edge, lay along the horizon southward; and Captain John Champion, with his brown hand shading his eyes, was searching the sky above it with keen glances. When Mrs. Transome spoke, he went off, and leaned over the great magnet opposite the wheel. I asked Philip what it meant.

"A change in the weather," he said, lightly; "you must get ready for some slight hardships, Aunt Milly."

We lingered late upon the deck that night, so late that Mrs. Transome, who felt chilly with the night air and dew left us. The moon was at the full, and we watched it rising in the clear eastern sky. It seemed to mount up quickly, and then pause, half wearied. Below it a silvery light spread over the rippling water.

"Look there!" said Philip, in a low tone.

Under the moon itself lay a dark yet glistening spot, above and below which, and on each side of it, a sparkling stream of light stretched for some little distance on the waves. It formed the image of a cross, silvery and shining, which rested upon the black and tossing waters that whirled about our ship. For a few minutes only could we see it, for as we changed our position, and the moon rose higher in the sky, only a lustrous ring of light shone upon the sea.

"Yes," said Philip, half to himself, "even a cross becomes a glory, and a sorrow a great gladness."

We bade one another good night then, but after he had taken me down to my cabin, I heard him go up on deck again. Even to me there was a difference that night in the sound of the waves, as they beat against the thin planks between me and them. There came, too, all at once, a low, long, suppressed moan of the wind across the sea; the first sigh of the storm that was driving toward us. I shall hear it to my dying day; a sound never to be forgotten, sad and inexpressibly mournful, as if it were what Paul heard when he wrote, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

All the next day, and the night fol-

lowing, did the storm rage. At first the passengers took little heed of it; but as hour after hour passed by, and the tossing of the sea did not lull for a moment, they grew frightened. The steerage passengers were almost unmanageable. Whenever we saw the captain, he looked grave and anxious; but he remained on deck most of the time, as did Philip and Captain John Champion. After the night set in, I sat with Mrs. Transome in our cabin, listening to the heavy roar of the storm, and the groaning timbers of the vessel, till Philip opened the door.

"Lie down," he said; "but do not undress to-night."

"Is there any danger?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered, "there is some danger, but my father and I are here to take care of you. You must trust yourself to me, and promise to obey me implicitly, and at once, whatever I may tell you to do."

"Philip?" I said, questioningly.

"Obey me like a child," he continued.

"We have sprung a leak, and if the danger increases, there will be mad confusion on board among the steerage folks. Your only safety will rest in simple obedience, even if we have to be parted for a little while. Do you understand me?"

"Oh, Philip!" I cried, "do not let me be parted from you."

"Not if I can help it," he said.

"But it may be our duty to be separated. Will you leave me when I bid you go? Promise me, my darling."

"You will not leave me if you can help it?" I asked.

"Not for a moment," he answered, cheerfully. "And you promise me the same, mother?"

"No," said Mrs. Transome; "no Pippin."

She was gazing at him earnestly, with a placid smile. Philip gazed back at her; and a solemn, steadfast, happy expression passed over both their faces. She had been reading in the Gospels before Philip came in, and her hand rested on the open page still.

"Listen, Pippin," she said; "this is the verse I am at now: 'And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.'"

"It didn't hurt him much after that to hang upon the cross," said Mrs. Transome; "he'd keep saying to himself, 'To-day, to-day, I shall be with Him in Paradise.' All of us, sooner or later, must hang upon the cross beside the Lord; but He'll remember us, never fear. We're more likely to forget Him."

Philip had bent over her to follow her finger as she pointed out the verses; and now she put her arm round his neck, and drew his face down to hers.

"God bless thee, my boy Pippin!" she said. "I think I see thee like thee was when I saw thee first! God bless thee!"

We watched the daybreak, dawning slowly over the whirl of waters, that washed against the cabin window. It strengthened very slowly into a dull leaden light. There went a shiver suddenly all through the great ship; and a cry, as of one voice, ran through all the roaring of the tempest. Captain John Champion ran down to us. All the saloon was thronged with hurrying and frightened people. We struggled up the ladder on to the deck; some hands helping us, and others dragging us back again. All the deck was covered with panic-stricken men and women, fighting for their own safety. Captain John Champion pushed a way for me through the crowd; and all at once I felt Philip's arms about me.

"Shall we all be saved?" I cried.

"Not all," he said, "not all. But I promised George you should go home safely. I must do all I can for you."

"Will you be saved yourself?" I asked.

He did not speak. But the look upon his face, the young, beautiful, solemn face, was answer enough for me.

"He saved others: Himself He cannot save."

"Let me die with you," I cried, clinging to him.

"No! there is George at home," he said, "you must go for his sake."

He unclasped my hands from about him, and carried me across the deck to

the place where the last boat was filling rapidly with passengers. I looked over the sea, heaving and swelling still, though the fierceness of the storm was over. Here and there peaks of black rock, against which the white foam was tossing. Some of the boats were already hurrying away, so heavily laden that they sank dangerously in the water. Underneath the deck there was a mingling of tearful sounds, of cries and shrieks for help which none could give. Every face about me wore a terrified aspect; except Philip's and Mrs. Transome's who looked at me sorrowfully indeed, yet peacefully, as though they were thinking of me, not of themselves.

"Isn't she coming?" I said to Philip.

"No, she may stay with me," he answered.

"Good-bye, my dear," she said, "to-day I shall be with Him, and with Transome."

"There is not another moment!" cried Philip, "good-bye, my darling. God keep you."

I know nothing of the next few minutes. Only as the boat cast off from the ship's side I heard Philip's voice again calling me. God give me strength to look up and see his face once more. He was standing apart from the throng now, for there was no more work for him to do, and his father and Mrs. Transome were beside him. I could see their faces clearly, their eyes following me, and their hands waving a last farewell to me. The sun was breaking through the mass of drifting clouds, and shone full upon them. "Is there no hope?" I asked from one of the crew beside me, who was putting all his strength to the oar.

"No; she is settling down fast," he answered, and I saw that all the seamen were urging the boat onward, to get well out of the swirl of the water when the ship went down.

Oh, Christ! thou knowest how much anguish a human heart can bear without breaking. For though Thine own heart was broken, it was not under the burden of our sorrows but under the weight of our sins.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HOME AGAIN.

A few hours after we left the steamer we were picked up by a vessel homeward bound. I know very little of the voyage back. Fortunately I could tell the captain and the doctor, who attended me assiduously, who I was, and where I lived; but all else seemed blotted out of my memory. All was a blank to me, a dreary emptiness, through which I vainly tried to get at some realization of my sorrow. There remained to me only a dull, aching sense of loss, and I could not pierce through it to a sharper and clearer anguish.

It was not three weeks from the time I left home, when I landed in Liverpool again. I remember the long journey up to London, solitary and desolate, as if it had been yesterday. There was still the confused sense of a terrible grief hanging over me; but when I rang the bell of our own house door when I was listening for him to come home, the cloud upon my brain began to lift itself. Before the door was opened to admit me, all was clear and distinct; I knew that his foot would never cross the threshold again. I beckoned to our servant to keep silent as I entered the house, where henceforth life would be for me a solemn waiting for death. At the farther end of the hall was the door of my brother's room, which stood partly open; and as I drew nearer to it I heard a quiet voice reading aloud. I had a thought of going in, though I was longing to weep the bitter tears that were burning under my eyelids, but I must be careful for George. The sudden shock of my return now might be dangerous for him. The quiet voice fell upon my ear in these words:—

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

I sank down on the ground beside the door, and my tears came like a flood. Still my brother's low calm voice went on reading:—

"And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nei-

ther shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.

"And He that sat upon the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said unto me, 'Write; for these words are true and faithful.'"

"True and faithful," repeated George. I could see him from where I knelt at the half open door. He had lifted up his eyes from the book, and was looking across the room, with almost a smile upon his face. Who could it be he was looking at, out of my sight?

What was it that made my heavy heart leap, with a hope springing from the very darkness of my sorrow?

"If we only knew that Aunt Milly was safe!" said the other voice.

I could not, for the first moment, believe it was Philip who was speaking. When Mary stood at the sepulchre weeping, because the body of the Lord had been taken away, and she knew not where they had laid Him, I do not wonder that she did not know Him, even though her dim eyes saw Him, and her ears, dull with her own sobbing, heard His voice; I do not wonder that, in her first surprise, she spoke to him as a stranger. But the next instant, when He said "Mary!" and the quiet, familiar tone sounded through all the depths of her despair, I think I know now something of her rapture. To believe the Lord was dead; to mourn for Him through the garish hours of the sunny day, and the dreary watches of the desolate night; to seek Him early in the solitary sepulchre; and then to find Him, not dead but living, and hear Him call her by name, and see His eyes, which had been sealed in death, shining upon her with the same light in them as old—yes, surely I know somewhat of all that. And when I see my Lord for myself with these dim eyes of mine, and these dull ears catch the tone of His blessed voice, the rapture of it will not be all strange. I have had a foretaste of that heaven in finding Philip was alive still.

I cannot tell you how we met. I only remember that after awhile I found myself in my own chair, on my brother's hearth, with Philip beside me, my hand grasping his, as if we were again in a sinking ship, and I had nothing else to hold as the waters were closing over us.

Yet, after the first few minutes, it could not be unmingled and untroubled gladness for us, as it will be when our Lord welcomes us to His Father's house, our everlasting home. Philip had to tell me how, when the steamer went down, his father and Mrs. Transome sank at once with it, and he lost sight of them forever; while he, who was young and used to the perils of the sea, caught a floating spar, and was upheld by it for a time while the vessel settled. The shock I had felt in the cabin, and the shiver that ran through all the timbers of the ship, had been caused by it striking, though lightly, upon a sunken reef, and there was but little swirl of the waters, such as had been anticipated. The upper portion of the rigging had even remained above the surface; and Philip, with a few others, had found safety amongst it. They did not remain there long, for they lay in the course of vessels; and before night came on they were rescued by a steamer, which had brought him home yet more quickly than I had been brought home myself. He had reached London only the day before I did.

There is little more for me to tell you. In the course of a few weeks we heard that our emigrants, the girls we were taking out to settle in American homes, had all reached New York in safety. They wrote to us in the hope that we had also been rescued, telling how Philip and Captain John Champion had quietly marshaled them to their boat through a crowd of passengers frenzied with terror, and savage with the hope of saving themselves.

There is now no longer a necessity for Philip to live upon the sea. His life has grown fuller of influence and of power over his fellow men. The one duty has been faithfully discharged; and broader, perhaps grander duties are rising up in its place. What he will become, what special work he will do here for God, I do not yet know. But it is no more as a servant that he works, it is rather as a son. There is a perfectness and unity in his obedience which is not the obedience of a hireling, looking for a reward. Only yesterday I found these words, copied in his own handwriting:—

"Who stands already on Heaven's highest dome Needs not to search for ladders. He who lies, Folded in favor, on the Sultan's breast, Needs not the letters, or the messenger."

THE END.