

But Mrs. Brandon could not answer, for thoughts too deep and strong for quick expression crowded on her mind. How was it that the dying utterances of a mother long since passed away came back upon her then and made her weep? How was it that the conscience she so long had silenced woke that night and said "Thy mother, *dead*, hath taught thee better than thou, *living*, has taught this, *thy child!*" Never before had conversation such as this passed between Katherine and the child she loved better than her own life; never before had she, so anxious in all things beside, spoken of death and heaven and Christ to this soul hungering and thirsting after righteousness. True, she had every evening taught the child to repeat some form of, to her, incomprehensible prayer, and every Sunday she had taken her to the old parish church, but there the religious education of little Ettie had been supposed to end. Ah, but she *had* a Teacher, though she knew it not, and He who said of such as she, "Forbid them not to come," was drawing even now that young heart to himself. And when her mother left her the stars saw a snowy figure creep from the little bed and kneel down on the floor to pray in her own simple words to "Jesus up in heaven."

Next morning at the usual hour Grayham went forth to meet his new companion, but he found her not. Noon passed and eventide came on, but still no Ettie came. The twilight of a second day found him before the cottage bent on the removal or the confirmation of the fears that clustered round his heart. Already he began to love this child; even now something whispered in his ear that she was almost ready for the home to which he was himself no lingering traveller.

She was not dead; he knew that by the fact that blinds were raised, and that the surgeon's horse stood by the door. He entered and found Mr. Brandon in the hall.

"Your little girl—" was all he said, but those three words conveyed at once his anxious interest and sympathy.

The answer but confirmed his fear. Ettie had been seized with fever, and there was little hope. Who that had seen an idol worshipper, when his heart's deity is tottering on its shrine, can fail to picture all the father's wild and terrible distress? In vain were holiest words of consolation spoken; the maddened heart would hear no voice but that of dark rebellion against God.

"I have not deserved this, sir," he exclaimed, bitterly. "The Book you quote would make me believe that it is right that she should die, and I should thank God for the loss of my only child! I will not, cannot do it. She *shall* live. Why should I lose the treasure I have learned to prize so dearly?" and he looked sullenly upon the darkening sea.

For ten days after this Mr. Grayham called in vain on his new friend. True, Mr. Brandon sent him constant messages of unmistakeable cordiality, but he was never visible. At the end of that time, Ettie, whose life ebbed fast, desired to see him, and he went up into her room, to find her changed indeed.

Upon the fair white bed, beneath the window through which she had gazed upon the stars, the child lay quietly, her bright orbs fixed, and her hands clasped together.

"I am so glad to see you, Mr. Grayham. I want you to pray to God aloud. Ask him to take us all together up to heaven, if he likes; and tell him I can smile like you, now, when I think that I shall die."

With warm tears in his eyes, he knelt and prayed. It was a prayer as simple as sublime—such as only a poet could have worded, such as only a Christian could have felt. The child looked at him when he ended, and said thoughtfully, "Whenever I see you in heaven I shall think about that prayer!"

He smiled, and whispered, "Then you think that your going to heaven, Ettie? Why do you think so?"

She looked at him again, as if in wonder. "Because you read to me one day out of your little book that Jesus was punished for my naughty ways, and so I need not be punished at all; and you said that, if I only believed what the book said about him, I should go up to Jesus when I died. And I do believe that he let them kill him because I had been naughty, and because I could never have been made quite good, and taken to a good place, if he had said that he would not die for me. And so, if I believe it, you know, I *must* be going to God."