

FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

THE FISHER'S SONG.

"Thou rulest the raging of the sea."—Ps. lxxxix. 9

Come, messmates, 'tis time to hoist the sail,
When it's fair as fair can be;
Then the eddying tide and the favoring gale
Will carry us out to sea.
So down with the boat from the beach so steep,
We must part with the setting sun;
For ere we can spread our nets in the deep,
We've a weary long way to run.

As through the night watches we drift about,
We'll think of the times that are fled,
And of Him who once called other fishermen out,
To be fishers of men instead.
Like us they had hunger and cold to bear,
Rough weather, like us, they knew;
And He who guarded them by His care
Full often was with them too.

'Twas the fourth long watch of a stormy night,
And but little way they had made,
When He came o'er the waters and stood in their sight,
And their hearts were sore afraid;
But He cheered their spirits and said "It is I,"
And then they could fear no harm,
And though we cannot behold Him nigh,
He is guarding us still with His arm.

They had toiled all the night and had taken naught;
He commanded the stormy sea,
They let down their nets and of fishes caught
An hundred and fifty-three.
And good success to our boats He will send
If we trust in His mercy aright;
For He pitieeth those who at home depend
On what we shall take to-night.

And if ever in danger and fear we are tossed
About on the stormy deep,
We'll tell how they once thought that all was lost,
When their Lord "was fast asleep."
He saved them then, He can save us still—
For He is the winds and the sea;
And if He is with us we'll fear no ill,
Whatever the danger be.

Or if He see fit that our boat should sink,
By a storm or a leak, like lead,
Yet still of the glorious day we'll think,
When "the sea shall yield her dead."
For they who depart in His faith and fear
Shall find their passage is short,
From the troublesome waves that beset life here,
To the everlasting port. AMEN.

MERCY REJOICETH AGAINST JUSTICE.

It was a summer Sunday afternoon, many years ago, and the yellow sunshine lay all along the village street. By twos and threes the village folk were straggling home from church, not by any means in too much hurry for a little friendly talk with each other as they went.

But old Mr. and Mrs. Welby, as they went on arm in arm, seemed to be too busy talking to have time for more than a nod or a smile to their acquaintance. They were the most well-to-do folks in the village, and the most regular in attendance at church; and Sunday afternoon would not have seemed like itself without their sober old-fashioned figures passing along the village street, always side by side, while their rosy little servant maid followed at a short distance.

Mr. Welby was a gentle-looking old man generally, but on this particular Sunday afternoon he looked grave and almost annoyed, and his wife's soft placid face looked a little grieved, as if for sympathy.

And yet it was only the sermon that they were talking about, as they passed on together.

'No!' he was saying. 'I don't agree with it. I'm old-fashioned I suppose, and I hold with what I was brought up to. "A jealous God," it used to say when I learned the Catechism, "and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation." It's not scriptural, this new notion about everyone being God's child—bad folks and all. There's covenanted mercies for some, and there's others that are vessels of wrath. And it stands to reason that those that are properly brought up must stand the best chance.'

'But,' said his wife's gentle voice, 'it seems very hard on those that haven't been properly brought up, and never had a fair chance, poor things!'

'Of course it is,' answered her husband, promptly. 'But it can't be helped. The sins of the fathers—that's what it is. Just look and see if it isn't so really. There's that fellow Wood—James Wood—a regular bad lot he's

been, and cheated me and ever so many more. And look at his children. No mother, and running about the place as ragged and miserable as any beggar's children, and all through their father's bad conduct.'

Mrs. Welby sighed. She had vexed her motherly heart on the miserable condition of the little Woods many a time, thinking of her own dead babies and how tenderly they would have been cared for if they had but lived.

'Poor little things,' she said. 'It's a pity they can't be better done to.'

'Nay!' said her husband, stoutly. 'I'm sorry for them, but it would not be fair if every scamp's children were to be as well off as those that belong to respectable folks. It's contrary to Scripture.'

The words were still on his lips when a woman came up the road to meet them, rather hastily, with a grave important face.

'Oh! Mr. Welby, have you heard the news?' she asked, stooping before them, and speaking in a low, almost awe-struck voice. 'Nay! I've not heard it long myself, but they've just sent up to fetch me to come and lay him out. Jim Wood's dead.'

'Nay! you don't say so,' cried the old man, looking shocked as well as astonished. 'Why! we were just talking about him. When did that happen?'

'Only this afternoon. It were very sudden, but he'd been ailing a good while, and the doctor told him he might go any time. He'd got about to the far end of everything, I doubt.'

She nodded, and hustled on, and the old couple went on up to their cosy little house almost without speaking a word.

They were silent, too, over their cup of tea in the pleasant little Sunday parlour. Mrs. Welby was thinking of those two poor little children, a boy and a girl, left without a friend in the world as far as she knew. But she did not like to speak of them lest it should seem to reproach her husband for what he had said of them just before.

After tea Mr. Welby took his hat and stick and went out again, but for once he did not tell his wife where he was going, or ask her to take another turn with him.

It was nearly dark when he came home again, and then he did not come straight in, but stood at the door, calling to his wife in rather a shame-faced tone.

She hurried out, and started in surprise to see two wretched-looking little children creeping behind him.

'It's the little Woods,' said Mr. Welby, looking rather ashamed of himself. 'I couldn't help speaking to them, and they've followed me up here. Could you—could you put them up, wife, just for to-night? I don't like sending them home again, and him lying there.'

'To be sure I can,' answered Mrs. Welby, promptly. 'Come in, my dears.' She gathered the two frightened little creatures into her motherly arms and drew them into the house; and her husband saw no more of her, or of the rosy-cheeked maid either, until the poor little things had been fed and comforted, and were forgetting the troubles of the long strange day in sleep.

The two old people said very little about the children that night, but Mrs. Welby bent over them before she went to rest with a tender recollection of her own three, safe in their 'churchyard bed.'

And she was pleased to see, the next morning, how much interest her husband took in them and their little ways. He had always been fond of children.

Presently Mr. Welby, still looking rather abashed, asked his wife if she would mind keeping the children till after the funeral.

'They're left quite destitute by what I can make out,' he said, 'and it seems hard to pack them off to the workhouse, and their father not buried yet.'

'Very well, my dear,' answered Mrs. Welby, placidly. 'But to herself she said, 'I know you better than you know yourself, my old man. And if you find the heart to pack these children off to the workhouse after their father's buried, I shall be very much surprised!'

And, indeed, Mr. Welby proceeded to give orders for 'a bit of decent black,' for the two children, in a way that did not look much as if he intended them to go away immediately.

Nothing more was said between the two old folks for the present; and the days passed on and still nothing was said about sending the children away. It began to be understood that they were there 'for good,' and they grew rosy and merry; and seemed to be in a fair way to forget that they had ever had a less happy home.

But Mrs. Welby did not forget, and one night after she had carried them off to bed, fresh from a romp with the indulgent old man, she came back resolved to speak out what was in her mind.

'George!' she said, 'how about visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children? That's not what you're doing now. No one would think that James Wood had cheated you to see you with James Wood's children.'

Once more Mr. Welby looked rather ashamed.

'I can't help it,' he said. 'I can't do different, somehow.'

'But if it isn't scriptural, George?' she went on smiling to herself.

'I can't help it,' he said again. 'But the feeling I have in my heart towards those children—I can't believe but what God put it there. And there's texts in the Bible that agree with it well enough. It's a puzzle to know how to explain it all.'

'I can't explain it,' said his wife gently. 'But it seems to me that folks are often better than their own notions if they'll do what their heart tells them is right. And if that's so it's not much to be wondered at that God should be better than our poor notions of Him.'

HELEN SHIPTON.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE DEBT.

A venerable clergyman said recently: "Men in my profession see much of the tragic side of life. I have seen men die in battle, children, and young wives in their husbands' arms, but no death ever seemed so pathetic to me as that of an old woman, a member of my congregation. I knew her first as a young girl, beautiful, gay, full of spirit and vigor. She married and had four children; her husband died and left her penniless. She taught school, she painted, she sewed; she gave herself scarcely time to eat or sleep. Every thought was for her children, to educate them, to give them the same chance which their father would have done. She succeeded; sent the boys to college, and the girls to school. When they came home, pretty, refined girls and strong young men, abreast with all the new ideas and tastes of their time, she was a worn-out, commonplace old woman. She lingered among them for two or three years, and then died. The shock woke them to a consciousness of the truth. They hung over her as she lay unconscious, in an agony of grief. The eldest son, as he held her in his arms, cried:—"You have been a good mother to us!" Her face colored again, her eyes kindled into a smile, and she whispered: "You never said so before, John." Then the light died out, and she was gone."

How many men and women sacrifice their own hopes and ambitions, their strength, their life itself, to their children, who receive it as a matter of course, and begrudge a caress, a word of gratitude, in payment for all that has been given to them!

So, children, acknowledge the debt you owe your parents before it is too late!