

## Family Reading.

"Changed Lots; or, Nobody Cares."

## CHAPTER XI.

A TALE OF THE PAST.

It was late one January afternoon, and growing dark, when Jem, closing his book which he had long ceased reading, asked Lil to stop working and come and sit on the bed beside him, he wanted to talk to her. She had been standing the last hour under the little window, trying to catch the last ray of daylight as she mended a pair of very torn stockings. She threw down her work with a little sigh; Jem had been coughing so badly that afternoon that she had hardly liked to speak to him at all, and soon perched herself on the edge of the shelf which held Jem's narrow couch.

"Do you mind, Missie," he began rather abruptly, for he felt he dared not waste his words, "that day in the summer, not last summer, but the one before when we were over Surrey way, and you asked me who you really was, as you weren't my real, own sister?"

Dorothy squeezed the thin hand which had taken hers, and nodded assent; lately she had hardly thought of her parentage, present anxieties had been too pressing for dreaming.

"Well, I was talking to mother, t'other day," he continued, with an effort; "and asking her to tell me all about it; somehow, I never liked to ask her before, for if I ever talked of it, she always put me off."

"Oh, Jem, what did she say?" questioned Lil eagerly. "I remember what you said, that Ro pulled me out of the water, and I was brought in all wet, but I must have been somebody's little baby."

But even as she spoke, Dorothy's thoughts wandered off to the common in Surrey, and the little gate, and the stately house among the trees, which seemed ever to live in her dreams, with other vague remembrances of places and things never seen now.

"Yes, that's right," he said, "it was quite true what I remembered, you was brought back by Daddy, all wet, in a long white gown, and it was dear old Ro that really pulled you out of the water; mother said poor father was in among the bushes close to the river, 'twas a very wild place up in Scotland somewhere . . . he had been setting snares, I fancy, 'twas wild land, miles and miles from our camp, and getting on towards winter; he was setting quiet among the bushes, watching, and Ro was close to him; he had seen no one all the afternoon, and heard nothing, till all of a sudden came a great cry and a splash, and he jumped up and saw a woman, a lady she looked like to him, she had a very fine bonnet on, in the water, and a baby too, only he did not see the baby at first."

"They both were took away fast by the water which was running strong. Father could not swim, but he sent Rover into the water; he was little more than a puppy then, he caught hold of the baby's long gown, and pulled it out . . . the woman did not move nor cry out after that, and in a few minutes he could not see her, something seemed to pull her down under water. He wrapped the baby up inside his coat, hardly knowing if it was alive or dead, and started back towards the van, meaning to tell anybody he met what he'd seen and give up the baby; but it was a very lonesome place, and he met no one at all, not a soul; he had to walk miles and miles, and long before he got back it was quite dark."

"He took the baby into mother, and she was fretting over Rose's death, and it comforted her like to have it in her arms; she undressed it, warmed it up, and fed it, and it soon got all right, and mother being so pleased to have it, and father, he being afraid they would never take his word about it, but think he'd pushed the woman in, or frightened her, or something, he put the horse in that very night, and they came south, and for days and days they never went into a town and saw nobody, and nobody would have known you wasn't our Rose, only Joe and his wife they knew she was dead, and asked questions, but mother she never told them anything, and Danny he knew

nothing neither, he came home very drunk after father had brought you in, he was always prying to know where you came from." Here a bad fit of coughing seized Jem, and it was some minutes before he recovered his breath.

"Then the mother, my real mother, was drowned," said Dorothy, who had been listening to the story with breathless interest.

"Mother says, yes, she's sure she was drowned, that's why she didn't mind taking you; it seemed, Lil, as if you were just a poor little lost thing, and we was all wanting to love you," said Jem wistfully.

"Dear Jem," said Lil affectionately, "'twas very good of you to take me and to love me, but 'twas sad for the poor mother to be drowned. I wonder what she was like, and what sort of a house she lived in! Didn't they put in the papers that a mother and baby had been drowned? They'd be sure to think the baby was drowned too."

"I've thought of that many times," he answered; "but you see neither mother nor father could read; mother says she never heard a word about it; but then 'twas weeks before they were near a town again, and they never went back to that part of the country, they didn't care to, you see. After a bit it would have been worse trouble than ever if 'twas known father had taken the baby, and he could never be quite sure Joe wouldn't talk."

"Does mother remember the name of the place?" asked Dorothy. If this was the true story of her infancy, what did all her dreams of the past mean?

"Yes, I think she knows whereabouts it was, but she did not tell me the name, and she has the long white gown you wore, and some other things; they are beautiful, she says, and all trimmed up; she thinks you must have come of gentlefolks; it don't seem quite right to me, Missie, darling, that we should keep you here; I think of it as I lie here, and try to find out what's right for mother to do, now poor father can't be hurt by the telling . . . but then they might punish mother for stealing you, and you mayn't have no one to love you, as she loves you, Lil."

Again Jem was half strangled with his cough; Dorothy laid her rosy lips on his thin hand, it was very white now.

"I shall never love any one as much as I love you and mother, Jem, dear," she whispered; "but couldn't we go and try to find out without telling anything, if a baby was lost, I mean who the baby was? We needn't let Joe go with us, we might go alone, you and me and mother."

"I shall never travel far again, Lil darling," Jem said sadly, as he drew her towards him and kissed her fondly; "but you'd never forget mother, whatever happens, she's been good to you, as good as she knew how; you may come of grand folks, but you mayn't get more love than mother's given you." He spoke in a tone of gentle sad reproach, which cut Dorothy to the quick.

"It's cruel of you, Jem, to talk like that," she exclaimed hotly, "you know I love mother, and it's cruel of you to think I'd ever forget to love her."

"No, no, Lil, dear, I didn't mean that, 'deed I didn't, but I know you'd like things different, you'd like to live different and learn things and have things nice like the folk who lives in houses," said Jem, with a very weary sigh.

"Yes, Jem, that's true," she replied, and her voice shook with emotion; "it's true that I want things different, I feel as if I couldn't always live like this, indeed I couldn't, but is that wrong?"

"And then, Jem, how is it that I seem to remember things quite different, a big house and big high rooms with lots of pretty things all about and pictures all over the walls, and somebody called papa and somebody called mamma, and going about in a railway and in a ship; I remember going in a ship quite well, Jem."

"Those were the fancies you had when you was very ill, Lil," said Jem, soothingly; "and you have been in a ship, and went over to Ireland once when you was very young; I wonder you can mind that, you have forgot such lots of things."

"But it is wrong, Jem, to wish for things to be different?" she persisted in a low voice, and Jem knew her tears were falling.

## Sunday School Lesson.

5th Sunday after Epiphany.

Feb. 7, 1892.

## FAITH.

We are about to speak of the Apostles' Creed, of which the second part of the Catechism treats. But before doing so let us have a lesson on Faith. Faith and the Faith are not the same thing. The Faith is the body of truth which God has revealed; faith is the power or faculty by which we assent to this truth. It is of faith we are to speak to day.

## I. FAITH.

We begin the Creed "I believe." Every one of us must believe for himself. There are some things we can see with our eyes. [Name some.] There are some things we can hear with our ears. [Name some.] There are some things we cannot see or hear. What about them? We believe them. Name some common things we believe, though we have not seen them or heard them. [Earth moving round the sun. That there is such a place as India. That there was once a great fire in London.]

The things of God cannot be seen, or heard, they must be believed. By the things of God I mean all that is told to us about God and eternity, and Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Seeing and believing are two different things. When we have seen we do not want to believe. When we get to heaven we will not want faith, because we shall see God as He is (Heb. xi. 1, 6). Faith—the "evidence of things not seen."

## II. WHAT TRUE FAITH IS.

When we say "I believe" anything, we mean that we are quite sure it is true; just as sure as if we could see it with our eyes. When we say "I believe in the Resurrection of the Body," we mean that we are quite sure our bodies will rise again; just as sure as if we could see them. So that true faith is that which feels quite sure. We show that we have a true faith when we act upon our faith. Suppose a man on a ship; captain sends word there is a hole in the bottom of the ship, and that the ship is sinking: if the man wants to save himself he must get into a boat. The man may not believe it because he does not see it; but if he believes it he will show that he does by getting into the boat. If we believe the Articles of the Christian Faith we must show our faith by our actions. Christian faith must lead to Christian life. Faith and nothing more is worth nothing. See what St. James says. (ii. 16-19 and 26). Faith is the root; and the flower is holiness. You cannot have a flower without a root; you will not value a root which does not put forth leaves.

When you say "I believe," remember you mean "I feel quite sure about it, and will act upon it." If we have the Christian faith, and our faith makes us holy, we shall be kept from sin and Satan. See what St. Paul calls faith. (Eph. vi. 16.) Only we must pray to God for faith—true faith—because God only can give it. (Eph. ii. 8.)

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