

Andrew Walter's Christmas Eve.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS. Restoring the piece of newspaper and the envelope to his pocket book, he lit a candle...

In remembrance of JAMES EDWARD WALTER (only son of Andrew Walter, of this place), who was drowned in the River Houghly, Bengal, during the great hurricane of 1867. Aged 22 years.

He had chosen to append this reference to a text of Scripture, rather than the text itself. Those who cared to turn up the passage in their Bibles, as they sat in church, would see that the comfort he found in it was in keeping before him the thought that though hereafter there should be a new heaven and a new earth, there should be "no more sea."

The father called the girls in for a minute to look at the slab, and they read the inscription silently and tearfully. Then he covered it up again, and they went back.

The stone had been worked elsewhere and sent home to him that he might himself (as he had wished) superintend its erection over his own pew. Thus he and his daughters had each a duty in church to-morrow—his, to go early with the mason and put up the stone;—theirs, to go later, and help the vicar's wife to affix the Christmas decorations; for the morrow was the Eve of Christmas Day.

"Remember," said Andrew, "teaching him all about India, and the Ganges, and this very Houghly itself, years and years ago; little thinking—ah! little thinking."

The girls only shook their heads gently and sighed. "And I doubt and fear it was my teaching him so much geography that filled him full of longing to see the world, and the ways of strange people, and first made him impatient of this dull place."

"Impatient of it, but never of us, papa. Let us be thankful for that," said Maggie. "Tired of us? No, indeed," said the father with proud affection. "I have known some sad days, and I doubt there are more in store for all of us; but the saddest day of all would be that on which I should first think my children were tired of their father or each other."

A little hand had stolen into his as he spoke and a little mouth had been upturned to kiss him, while two other faces had turned to him with looks more eloquent than words. He took the young child upon his knee and wound her curls about his rough, strong fingers as he spoke again. "And I won't say he was wrong to choose the sea. Could any lad have done better at it than he has done?"

Would not his masters have made him captain at twenty-one of their own vessel if I had not bought him a ship myself, and freighted it? "And he never once," said Edith, "spent a holiday anywhere but here."

"I wonder if it was the name that did it," pondered Andrew, who was not without his superstitions. "I wonder if I brought Providence when I would call the ship no other name than 'All is Well.'"

"The ships that went down in the storm that day had names of all kinds," said Maggie, "and one name had as little protection in it as another."

There, as the outer darkness deepened they sat by the fire and talked. The little one on Andrew's knee. It seemed a transition almost from night to day when they passed from talk of the lost boy to talk of the mere loss of money, so much had the greater trouble exceeded the less. But it was not till Maggie had peeped over her father's arm into the small face and said, "she's asleep," that they spoke quite freely of their pecuniary difficulties.

The father had taken his elder girls wholly into his confidence, knowing that he could trust them. And they seeing themselves so trusted were cheerfully making the least of all difficulties. The solicitor through whom all Andrew's money transactions had hitherto been arranged was an old schoolfellow of his, whose probity and kindness of heart he had long known. His position was rather that of an intimate and affectionate family friend than a legal adviser. But the letters of this friend, which had of late been many, had, in spite of all his wishes to serve, come to him looked on almost with dread. Their appearance and their prim were well known by all the family. Even little Lucy knew so well that these letters were different from other letters, that she had a way of cropping them up and lecturing them seriously before they were opened, and sometimes even went the length of whipping them very severely, with a view to impressing upon them that they really must be good and try to please papa when he opened them. A mode of treatment which had as yet produced, to her regret, no salutary effect.

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