

In the Sea Islands.

BY LAURA E. RICHARDS.

LIFE in the fair Sea Islands,  
Oh, but it once was gay!  
Soft lay the sea about them,  
And laughed like a child at play.

Soft hung the sky above them,  
And we could not tell for true  
Whether above or below us  
Were the deeper, sweeter blue.

Hoary and gray were the live-oaks,  
And jewel-bright were the flowers,  
And long and sweet the days went by,  
With song to mark the hours.

For the children sang at their playing,  
And the elders sang in the field;  
And seldom a trouble came that way  
But might with a song be healed.

Down on the fair Sea Islands  
Came driving the winter storm;  
White and gray was his mantle,  
And wild was his shrouded form.

Up sprang the sea to meet him,  
Down crashed the sky in wrath:  
Terror and desolation  
Followed his onward path.

Up sprang the sea in madness,  
And flung itself far ashore,  
And over the fair Sea Islands  
It swept with a mighty roar.

Then rose the crying of children,  
The groans of stricken men;  
And women clasped their babies,  
And fled for their lives again.

But where, when the skies are falling,  
When the waters are heaping high,  
When cabin and hut are crashing,  
Where shall the people fly?

John Reynolds' wife, in her doorway,  
Counted her children all,  
From Mary, the eldest daughter,  
To the baby sweet and small.

And one she bound to her shoulder,  
And one she held to her breast;  
But—"God ab mercy," she faltered,  
"How kin I save the rest?"

"Take little Jake in you' arms, Mary,  
An' hol' him tight an' close!  
An' Benny kin keep to his feet, maybe;  
But who's gwine to take my Rose?"

"Four-year-old little Rosy,  
An' neber a chile more dear;  
Come, honey, close to you' Mammy,  
An' cuddle beside me here!

"Four-year-old little Rosy,  
An' here is de babies three  
Dat Mammy an' Mary mus' carry,  
Wid neber a hand lef' free.

"What, Benny? Why, chile, you' crazy!  
You're lame as it is, an' weak;  
De Lord know best if you hab a chance  
You' owa little life to seek.

"You wantin' to carry Rosy?  
My lamb, she's heaby as you?  
We mus' pray to de Lord and leabe her;  
De aint nothin' else to do."

But Benny raised his patient head;  
"Mammy, I's small, dat's true;  
But Jesus Christ is a tall man,  
An' maybe he'll help us through."

Down came the flood upon them;  
The mother was swept apart,  
With a baby bound to her shoulder,  
With a baby clasped to her heart.

And now she drifted, drifted,  
And now she touched and clung,  
But still in the battling darkness  
She kept her mother's tongue;

And hushed the babe at her bosom,  
And hushed the babe at her back,  
And called to the daughter Mary,  
Through the torrent's rush and wrack.

Dawn on the fair Sea Islands  
Broke with a dreary light;  
And never the southern sun looked down  
And saw such a woful sight.

Ruin, and death, and ruin;  
Sorrow and bitter pain;  
And many asleep in the tangle  
Who never would wake again.

Oh! the laughing lips laid silent!  
Oh! the dark eyes dim and veiled!  
Oh! the cries to God for pity,  
Sinco earthly pity had failed!

John Reynolds' wife, in the desert  
Where lately a garden smiled,  
Sat brooding like a nesting bird  
Over each rescued child.

And smoothed the curls of this one,  
And rocked it on her arm,  
And bade the other bless the Lord,  
Who kept it safe from harm.

Cherfully she and Mary  
Spoke now and again to each other,  
But nought they said of the baby Rose,  
And nought of the little brother.

Yet ever their eyes went seeing  
Through the ruin waste and wide;  
And they did not look at each other,  
But turned their heads aside.

What is it, there in the willows,  
That stirs, and moves, and wakes?  
What sound is this, 'mid the hush of death,  
Like an angel's voice that breaks?

What sight is this, that the woman falls  
To her knees in the wet and slime;  
That the maiden weeps, who has shed no tear  
In all the fearful time?

Oh! the little, weary figure,  
Tattered and bruised and torn,  
With the heavy child on his shoulder,  
And his face all gray and worn!

But oh! the joy in his sweet dark eyes,  
As when the heavens rejoice;  
And oh! the sound of a seraph's song  
In his trembling voice that cries:

"I's got her! I's got her, Mammy!  
I's brought her safe to you.  
I tol' you Christ was a tall man,  
An' he done brought us through!"

BAXTER'S SECOND INNINGS.

BY PROFESSOR DRUMMOND.

CHAPTER III.

SLOWS: AND THE CASTLE THAT WAS TAKEN WITH A SINGLE GUN.

HERE Baxter's beef-téa came in. This was the old cook's institution—everybody who stayed at home from church had always to take beef-téa. While he was sipping it the monologue went on.

"When the bowler sees you are up to swifts," resumed the captain, "he turns on slows. What makes them deadly is that they look so insufferably stupid. They come dribbling along the pitch and you slog at them gaily—with the probable alternative of being 'caught' if you hit, or 'bowled' if you miss. Good slows are about as diabolical as anything in that region can be—and that's saying a good deal. The average boy is fairly proof against a very big temptation; it is the little ones that play the mischief."

"How's that?" asked Baxter, laying down his cup.

"We are mostly too proud to go wrong in a big way. Notorious sins are bad forms; but when quiet temptations come, which no one knows about, even the strongest may break down. Then of course there's the other side. One thing that keeps us up in great matches is the applause of the spectators. But on the week-days, when we are practising alone against the slow monotony of a private sin, there is no crowd to cheer us when we win or to hiss at us when we lose. These are really the great days, Baxter. They are the decisive battles of a boy's life."

"But must a fellow meet every ball," said Baxter, "every miserable little slow? If he's a good all-round man, is that not enough?"

"What do you mean?" said the captain. "Do you mean that if we are ninety-nine parts good it does not matter if the hundredth part is a little shady?"

"I know I'm wrong," said Baxter, "but surely we are not meant to be all saint? Take your three wickets, for instance. I'm quite aware that if one is down the rest are down; but suppose a fellow keeps all these fairly standing—Duty, Honour, Unselfishness—what more need he care for?"

"Baxter, you have forgotten something. There are more than wickets."

"What?"

"Balls," said the captain.

Baxter was silent.

"I've lost several matches that way."

Baxter. Stumps all standing; only one miserable inch of a bail off. No, we must play a whole game—no sneaking.

"But I'll tell you something more. I believe temptation sometimes does nothing but bowl at the balls. Some players are so much on their guard that it would be useless trying anything else. I suppose you know that every boy has some weak point to which nearly all the bowling is directed?"

"How do you mean?"

"Well, each boy has his own temptation—different in different cases, but always some one thing which keeps coming back and back—back and back, day after day till he is tired and sick. What though he score off all the other balls if this one takes him? It's not new sins that destroy a man; it's the drip, drip, drip of an old one."

"Have you ever heard of the castle which was taken with a single gun? It stood on the Rhine, and its walls were yards thick, and the old knight who lived in it laughed when he saw the enemy come with only a single cannon. But they planted the cannon on a little hill, and all day long they loaded and fired, and loaded and fired, without ever moving the muzzle an inch. Every shot struck exactly the same spot on the wall, but the first day passed and they had scarcely scratched the stone. So the old knight drank up his wine cup, and went to his bed in peace. Day after day the cannonade went on, and the more they fired the louder the knight laughed, and the more wine he drank, and the sounder he slept. At the end of a week one stone was in splinters; in a month the one behind it was battered to powder; in ten months a breach was made wide enough for the enemy to enter and capture the castle. That is how a boy's heart is most often taken. If I had any advice to offer anybody I should say, Beware of the slow sins—the old recurring temptation, which is powerful not so much in what it is or in what it does once, but in the awful patience of its continuance. It is by the ceaseless battery of a commonplace temptation that the moral nature is undermined and the citadel of great souls won."

Here the captain paused. Baxter lay very still, as if he had fallen asleep. His visitor rose gently and made on tiptoe for the door. He was opening it when the boy exclaimed:

"And what about the screws?"

"I thought you were asleep," said the captain. "I was afraid I bored you."

"I was never more awake in my life," said the boy. "I was thinking. All that's new to me. If you don't mind I should like to hear the rest."

"I protest," urged the captain; "—but I will at least tell you a story."

CHAPTER IV.

SCREWS: AND WHAT HAPPENED TO BOB FOTHERINGHAM.

"WHEN I was a youngster there was a sort of Prize Boy in our village called Bob Fotheringham. He came to my mother's Sunday class, and was the best boy in it. Everyone liked Bob; he was good at everything, and especially clever with his fingers, and his father wanted him to follow his own business of carpenter. But Bob had a rich uncle who kept a saloon. On busy Saturdays the boy used to go there and bear a hand in an amateur sort of way. Sometimes a drunken man would take a fancy to him and give him money, so that Bob learned to get money easily and became rather fond of it. Just as he finished school his uncle offered to make a publican of him. He had no sons of his own, and he half promised Bob that one day the business would be his."

"Now, Bob did not like the saloon. But how could he lose such a chance? He need not touch drink himself, he argued; and if he did not sell it someone else would. So he decided. His parents solemnly warned him to let it alone; but Bob urged that it would only be for a few years, and then he would set up in some other business and do good with the fortune he would make. Bob's heart was full of good, and I verily believe he meant to end his days by becoming a great philanthropist."

"But there was a screw on that ball. A screw goes wide at first, and then suddenly rounds upon you and twists in among your wickets before you know where you are. For three or four years Bob lived as straight as a parson. When his uncle died he found he had to sample what he sold 'cat narn'. Better to sell good stuff than bad. The business went swimmingly, and he had to sample a good deal oftener than he liked. Finally, he 'joked' a good deal oftener than he had to sample. After that he was always sampling. You know the rest. One day a ball fell off. Bob thought no one noticed it and went on with the game for a year or two. Then a wicket

fell—Duty; then Honour. Do you remember that blackguard who used to sell cards at the sports? That was Bob."

"There's something all wrong there," cried Baxter, almost fiercely. "I don't blame Bob. How was he to know that was a screw?"

"My boy" said the captain, "I'm glad to see you frightened."

"Frightened! Why, this might happen to any of us. How is a fellow to know he is not being taken in all the time?"

"You mean, if you were Bob you would just have done the same?"

"Certainly; I would do it to-morrow."

"No, you would not, Baxter."

"Why?"

"Because you are frightened. Bob was not frightened. A man who underrates the strength of an enemy is pretty sure of a licking. When you are constantly on the watch for screws the game is half won."

"But I don't see how he could have escaped this trap. It looked all right."

"Screws always do," replied the captain. "That's where they differ from swifts."

But where Bob went off the rails is plain. First, he disobeyed his parents; second, he wanted to make money regardless of consequences either to himself or others; third, he trifled with one of the biggest temptations in the world."

"I hope that's all," said Baxter.

"No, there is one thing more. I won't mention it unless you wish, Baxter!"

"What was it?"

"Well, he did not—he did not pray."

"Perhaps he thought that was for women."

"The people who need it most are boys," said the captain, seriously. "If Bob had done that he would have not 'entered' temptation. Bob saw the gate open and walked straight in."

(To be continued.)

DO IT IN TIME.

"WINNIE, dear, have you finished that pair of socks you were knitting for little Harry Greene?"

"No," answered Winnie, "I am going to do them next week, auntie; I forgot about it yesterday, and read a book instead."

"How often you say that, Winnie. But what are you doing now?"

"Nothing particular, auntie."

"Nothing particular; well, then, do something important. Call your sister, and I will tell you a short story about myself."

Winnie obeyed her aunt, and, fetching her knitting from the cupboard, sat down beside her aunt and sister, who were both sewing, and began to knit quickly. Auntie, after giving her some instructions about her work, commenced her story.

"When I was about your age, Winnie, I had an old friend, a lady, who had been very kind to me when I lived in London, where she lived. Wishing to requite her kindness, I thought of making a little present of my own work. After a consultation with mother as to what I should make, I decided on a shawl. I saved some money and bought some wool. Mother began a pretty pattern for me, and I commenced it. But I soon began to tire of it, and in my leisure time did something else. It was not half done, and was quite forgotten by me, while I began new work. One day I heard that Mrs. Armand was very ill, and in two days she lay dead. I was filled with remorse—it was too late! Yes, now it was no use to her for whom it was intended. She had passed away to a better land. I finished the shawl, and also many things I had in hand, but I have never forgotten the lesson it taught me."

"And now, Winnie and Ethel, try and remember this short story and act upon it, and I shall not have told it to you in vain. Do all that you have to do in time. But there is one thing especially—prepare your hearts by being repentant, and give them to Christ now, while you have time, for soon it will be too late!"

DR. PARKHURST says in the *Ladies Home Journal*: "When I was a boy I always expected to be at home except when there was some special reason for my being away from home; unless appearances are deceptive, children now expect to be away from home unless there is some special reason for their being at home." This is a portentous difference, and we fear that Dr. Parkhurst is correct.