

Children, Will ye too go Away?

"Avoak the world is bending  
A tender, holy Face,  
A crown of thorns surrounding,  
It shines with holy grace.  
It bends in love upon us,  
Its sweet smile seems to say:  
'Come to me, oh! my children;  
Will ye, too, go away?'

"Forth to the world are stretching  
Two arms both strong and true—  
The hands are scarred and bleeding,  
Yet still they seem to woo;  
Still, still in love they beckon—  
Still, still in mercy pray,  
'Come to me, oh! my children;  
Will ye, too, go away?'

"Unto the world there cometh  
A voice both rich and rare;  
Its tones ring down the ages,  
And plead with earnest care.  
To the world's heart it speaketh  
In tones of love to-day,  
'Come to me, oh! my children;  
Will ye, 'oo, go away?'

"For sinners there is boating  
A heart of tender care,  
A heart that wept with anguish  
O'er sins it fain would bear,—  
A heart that with its life-blood  
Beseecheth while it may,  
'Come to me, oh! my children;  
Will ye, too, go away?'

"Oh! face so pure and loving,  
Oh! arms so true and brave,  
Oh! voice so sad and pleading,  
Oh! heart that broke to save;  
Dear Jesus! precious Master!  
Earth knows no love like thine—  
'To thee, Lord, would we go then;  
Thou hast the words Divine."

LOST IN A MINE.

BY HESBA STRETTON.

CHAPTER IV.

No one stirred from the mouth of the pit. Reuben had promised to be back in an hour's time; and though many more spectators gathered to the spot, not a soul could leave it. The men and boys still clustered about the very edge, looking down anxiously into the darkness below, and ready to catch the faintest sound.

Judith Hazeldine and old 'Lijah's wife sat together, sobbing and praying; whilst Abby crouched on the ground near them, hiding her face from the sight of all, and from the mocking, garish light of the sun. "God take care of my Reuben!" were the only words she could think of. She had never been down into the pit, and the darkness there seemed terrible to her. There was very little talking going on around her, and those who spoke all spoke in whispers. But she would not have heard them if they had talked loudly. She did not hear the merry sounds of a spring evening which filled the air; the carolling of the birds calling to one another from the topmost branches of the trees, and the bleating of the young lambs in the meadows, and the lowing of the cows as they trode slowly along the lanes towards their stalls. The heavy minutes dragged by, and Abby saw only a great darkness, and heard nothing save the cry of her own heart.

But she was among the first that caught the sound of a shout—faint and smothered as it was—that came up from the gloomy depths below. It was a little over an hour since Reuben had disappeared from their sight. Yes! Surely that was the shout of men saved from a terrible death! In an instant the spell that had kept the crowd silent was broken. The women cried and laughed in the same breath. The men shouted hurrahs, and shook hands joyfully with those nearest to them. Abby sprang to her feet, a smile dawning through the look of terror and despair that still lingered on her face. Every eye watched the chain that slowly dragged up its load of rescued men. How slowly the old engine did its work! And how noisily the chain creaked and grated! But here they were

in sight! Here they were in the blessed sunlight once more!

The truck stopped on a level with the shaft's mouth. But now it was evident that there were only three persons in it—the three that had been at work when the flood broke out. Where, then, was Reuben Hazeldine, the one who had taken his life in his hand, and gone down to save these? Silence fell again upon the crowd, which lasted only for an instant, yet which seemed long and terrible, until old Judith cried out:

"But where's my lad, Reuben?"

"Reuben!" they all cried, in one breath.

"Aye!" answered old 'Lijah's wife, grasping her husband's arm with both hands, "Reuben went down to seek you. Hast seen nought of him?"

"Nay!" he said, "we fled for our lives, and did not tarry. We 'scaped with the skin of our teeth only. There was a road that none knew of save me, and I guided the other twain along it. Wherefore did Reuben come?"

"He thought as nobody knew of that road save him," sobbed his wife; "and he is down in the pit seeking to save you!"

Once more the silence of awe and terror fell upon them all. Three were saved, but one was lost; and he was the one who had been chief and foremost in all their hearts for the last hour, excepting in the heart of the old woman, who was clasping her husband's arm as if she could never let it go.

"Who will go down after my lad Reuben?" cried Judith, mournfully.

"There's not a soul can live in the pit," answered old 'Lijah. "It's too late by now; the flood's rising—rising. Look here! It was half way up to my knee at the foot of the shaft. If he's not here in half an hour there's no chance for him."

"He must get out!" exclaimed Simeon, so young yet that he could not believe in any harm coming to his brother Reuben. "God is bound to save him!"

"Hush, lad, hush!" said old 'Lijah. "God's not bound to bring him back. But let's pray to him for Reuben."

"Wouldn't it ha' been wiser like of God Almighty if he'd kept Reuben from going on a fool's errand?" asked Levi Hazeldine, with a sneer. He had been very silent while the crowd was waiting for the return of Reuben from his brave adventure, but this was too good an occasion to be missed for impressing upon the simple folk their folly in believing in a God and trusting him.

"Levi," answered old 'Lijah, "there's nobody here but thee that 'ud call it a fool's errand. There isn't a soul about that won't love Reuben Hazeldine, aye, a hundred times more than if he'd saved himself and stayed skulking round the pit's mouth whilst there was a chance of saving his friends! I believe he's saved his own soul, and won a crown of life by what he's done, whether he comes out of the pit alive or no. It isn't every man has such a chance of showing how he's learned to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. God Almighty was too wise to look to thee to do such a deed as this."

There was a faint, quick, dying laugh as Levi Hazeldine walked away, with his head carried high, and with a contemptuous smile upon his face. He felt that the sympathy of the people were not with him, and that it would be useless to argue his point with them just then. He turned round for a last disdainful glance at the crowd before losing sight of the spot; and clearly outlined against the evening sky he could see them clustered about old 'Lijah, some kneeling and others standing, but all bare-headed; whilst the old man, with face upturned and uplifted hands, was evidently speaking in earnest prayer.

"Poor fools," sneered Levi, "as if there was anybody as could hear them, or anybody as cared."

He fancied he was sorry for Reuben, but it was of no use to be sorry, he said to himself. What could he do? What difference would it make to him? The sun would shine as brightly, and his food would be as savoury, and his clothing would be as good, whether Reuben was alive or dead. It would not alter in the smallest degree his own actual life. Why should he fret himself about fanciful things?—about such a thing, for instance, as a man—by his own folly and rashness—throwing away his existence, and sacrificing all the sober

realities of life for a mere fanatical idea of duty! It Reuben had only been persuaded of what he himself knew—that there was no God, no immortality, no life better than or beyond the present—then he would have valued his own precious existence too highly to treat it as a thing to be held cheap. Poor Reuben!

It was a dreary night in the little hamlet. The crowd about the pit's mouth did not separate until the long twilight had faded into night, and the birds had long ago ceased to sing from the topmost branches of the trees. They had lingered and listened, but no voice, however faint, had called up from the black depths of the pit. The long, sad minutes brought no new hope. Again and again the shaft had been sounded, and the water was steadily rising—slowly but surely. Before the moon was to be seen in the clear, cold gray of the eastern sky, they all knew for certain that Reuben Hazeldine had met with death in the dark galleries below the green meadows and the wooded coppices upon which the pale and mournful light was lying. There was nothing more to be done but to go home, and to mourn over the brave, unselfish, Christ-like friend who had so lately lived among them, but whom they had not loved as they loved him now.

Even Abby felt that she had not loved him as he deserved to be loved. She had been carried in a death-like swoon to Judith Hazeldine's house, and laid upon the bed in the pleasant attic under the thatched roof, which Reuben had been so fondly preparing for her. When she came to herself her eyes opened upon the almost finished work, which was still waiting—and must wait for ever now—for the last touches of his hand. There were the beautiful flowers he had bought for her, on the window-sill, and the picture he was just about to hang upon the wall. Under the window was the garden, where he had worked in the long summer evenings, after his sunless toil in the pit. His Bible and hymn-book, which they had read in and sung from together, were almost within her reach; and she stretched out her hand for them. All the night through she clasped them to her breast, or kept them under her cheek, while she was lying—tearless and speechless—on the bed, thinking of him down below, not dead yet perhaps, but hopelessly imprisoned and buried in a living grave. Why had she not known him better, and loved him more, while he was with her? She had been sharp with him, and trifled with him, and made his heart ache with her foolish, contrary ways. Perhaps God had thought him too good for her, and so had taken him away to a place where he would be happier than with her. Yet all the while she seemed to see him pacing the dark passages underground, in search of his lost comrades for whom he had laid down his life.

Simeon had cried himself to sleep, and was still sobbing in his troubled dreams; but old Judith had not even laid down on her bed to rest her weary limbs. Her heart was too heavy for sleep. She had been so much bound in Simeon—her youngest born, that she had somewhat neglected Reuben. At this very time her mind had been so fully engaged with the contest for the Hazeldine Bible that she had been too ready to chide and thwart her elder son, and to fume at the changes he was making in the house for his young wife. She had even opposed peevish objections to his marriage, though Abby was a girl quite to her liking. Life had not been as smooth and happy to Reuben as it might have been of late. Ever since he had lost his chance of winning the Hazeldine Bible he had been looked down upon as a poor scholar, chiefly fit for the harder and rougher work of the world; whilst Simeon had been put forward and brought to the front on every occasion. But what a good son her first-born had been to her! She could not remember a harsh word or unkind look from him, though he could not read the Bible aloud like a parson, as Simeon did. All his quiet, thoughtful, patient ways, came back to her mind; his hard work, and his constant self-forgetfulness; his tender care of her, and his silence when she was blaming him. He was too good for them all—and God had taken him. Her thoughts brought her to the same point that Abby had reached.

(To be continued.)