

## Children's Department.

"Two Full Years."

What a long time a year—"a whole year," as we sometimes say, seems to eager children! And to some who are no longer children it appears a great while to look forward when it stretches between us and the probable accomplishment of some dear desire, or the end of some troublesome task. Everybody finds it hard to wait; some say it is far more difficult than the hardest work, and so many of us have proved. "A whole year before our seaside holiday will come round again!" "A whole year before I can get that prize for which I have begun to try!" "A whole year," perhaps, before we shall meet once more with the friends from a distance whom Christmas time brought. And the seasons stretch out ahead of us, and the months and days, and a very long procession they make, indeed!

But to be in constant expectation of some pleasure or relief, which is continually delayed, seems to double and treble the waiting time. If we know certainly that we cannot have what we desire for a week, or a month, or a year, we settle down, more or less content, to wait; other things occupy our minds, and perhaps, after all, the period which as we looked forward to it seemed well-nigh interminable, slips away before we are aware. But if any day may bring us the letter or the visit or the present which we expect, and every morning we get up in fresh hope, and evening after evening closes our eyes in renewed disappointment, oh, then it is weary work indeed! "Hope deferred," says Solomon, "maketh the heart sick." I am sure that any of us who have been through such an experience as this, will ever be careful not thus to sadden and weary others with blighted hopes and promises unfulfilled.

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Poor Joseph! How very, very long must have seemed those "two full years" that he was lying in prison after the liberation of that chief butler to whom he had been a friend. The misery of a painful captivity was intensified by the constantly frustrated hope that the man would remember him, as he had so pathetically entreated, and, by speaking a good word for him to the king, procure his release. But the days and the months and the years dragged on, and no message came. Wrongfully immured, deserted by those who once highly esteemed him, neglected by the selfish and ungrateful man who might have helped him if he would! It could have been no great wonder had Joseph sunk in despair.

But, black as things looked, there was One, the greatest, the best, most powerful Friend of all, who had not forgotten him. God never forgets! That is a beautiful thought, is it not? The time may seem never so long or so weary, and troubles may be never so heavy, yet all the while we may feel at peace in the assurance that we are not for one minute forgotten, that, as a good man has touchingly expressed it, "God is awake and utterly loving." He cannot forget. He says to teach one who loves and trusts Him, that even though a mother might forget her little baby, "Yet will I not forget thee." Could tenderness and faithfulness go farther than that? Joseph was in God's heart all through those dreary "two full years."

And something good was preparing for him. If that had been ready for him, and he had been ready for it, he would have received it sooner. Does it ever occur to you, boys and girls, that our loving Father above gives us our nice things just as fast as he possibly can? Often, I am afraid, the

reason we have to wait so long is that our naughty, impatient tempers, or other wrong feelings, render it impossible for a wise Father to make us happy as quickly as He would like to do. At other times the good we crave is delayed because by keeping back a while it will grow much more valuable, or because we shall become better able to enjoy and benefit by it.

I think the latter must have been the reason for the delay in Joseph's case. At any rate, we are sure that God, who was watching over him, did not allow him to be kept in prison one day longer than was best. God sent to King Pharaoh a strange dream, and then put it into the mind of the chief butler to remember the young man who two years before had interpreted his and the chief baker's dreams so truly for them, and Joseph was sent for to the palace.

What a day of excitement that must have been! Joseph could not fail to recognize how much, humanly speak-

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