

### "Kiss me, Mamma, I can't sleep."

THE child was so sensitive, so like that little shrinking plant that curls at a breath and shuts its heart from the light. The only beauties she possessed were an exceedingly transparent skin and the most mournful, large blue eyes.

I had been trained by a very stern, strict, conscientious mother, but I was a hardy plant, rebounding after every shock; misfortune could not daunt, though discipline tamed me. I grieved, alas! that I must go through the same routine with this delicate creature; so one day when she had displeased me exceedingly by repeating an offence, I was determined to punish her severely. I was very serious all day, and upon sending her to her little couch, I said: "Now, my daughter, to punish you, and show you how very, very naughty you have been, I shall not kiss you to-night."

She stood looking at me, astonishment personified, with her great mournful eyes wide open—I suppose she had forgotten her misconduct till then, and I left her with big tears dropping down her cheeks, and her little red lips quivering.

Presently I was sent for. "Oh, mamma you will kiss me; I can't go to sleep if you don't!" she sobbed, every tone of her voice trembling; and she held out her little hands.

Now came the struggle between love and what I falsely termed duty. My heart said give her the kiss of peace; my stern nature urged me to persist in my correction, that I might impress the fault upon her mind. That was the way I had been trained, till I was a most submissive child; and I remembered how often I had thanked my mother since for her straightforward course.

I knelt by the bedside. "Mother can't kiss you, Ellen," I whispered, though every word choked me. Her hand touched mine; it was very hot, but I attributed it to her excitement. She turned her little grieving face to the wall; I blamed myself as the fragile form shook with half-suppressed sobs, and saying: "Mother hopes little Ellen will learn to mind her business," left the room for the night. As! in my desire to be severe I forgot to be forgiving.

It must have been twelve o'clock when I was awakened by my nurse. Apprehensive I ran eagerly to the child's chamber; I had had a fearful dream.

Ellen did not know me. She was sitting up, crimsoned from the forehead to the throat; her eyes so bright that I most drew back aghast at their glances. From that night a raging fever drank her life; and what think you was the incessant plaint that poured into my quivering heart? "Oh, kiss me, mamma, kiss me; I can't go to sleep. You'll kiss your little Ellen, mamma, won't you? I can't go to sleep. I won't be naughty you'll only kiss me! Oh, kiss me, dear mamma, I can't go to sleep."

Holy little angel! she did go to sleep the gray morning and she never woke again—never. Her hand was locked in mine, and all my veins grew icy with its gradual chill. Faintly the light faded from the beautiful eyes; whiter and whiter grew the tremulous lips. She never knew me; but with her last breath she whispered: "I will be good, mamma, only you'll kiss me."

Kiss her! God knows how passionate, how unavailing, were my kisses upon her cheek and lips after that fatal night. God knows how wild were my prayers that she might know, if but only once, that I kissed her. God knows how I would have added up my very life, could I have had forgiveness of that sweet child.

Well, grief is all unavailing now! She lies in her little tomb; there is a marble slab at her head, and a rosebush at her feet; there grow sweet summer flowers; there waves the gentle grass; there birds sing their matins and vespers; there the sky smiles down to-day; and there is buried the freshness of my heart.

### The Old Home.

In the quiet shadows of twilight  
I stand by the garden door,  
And gaze on the old, old homestead,  
So cherished and loved of yore,  
But the ivy now is twining  
Untrained o'er window and wall;  
And no more the voice of the children  
Is echoing through the hall.

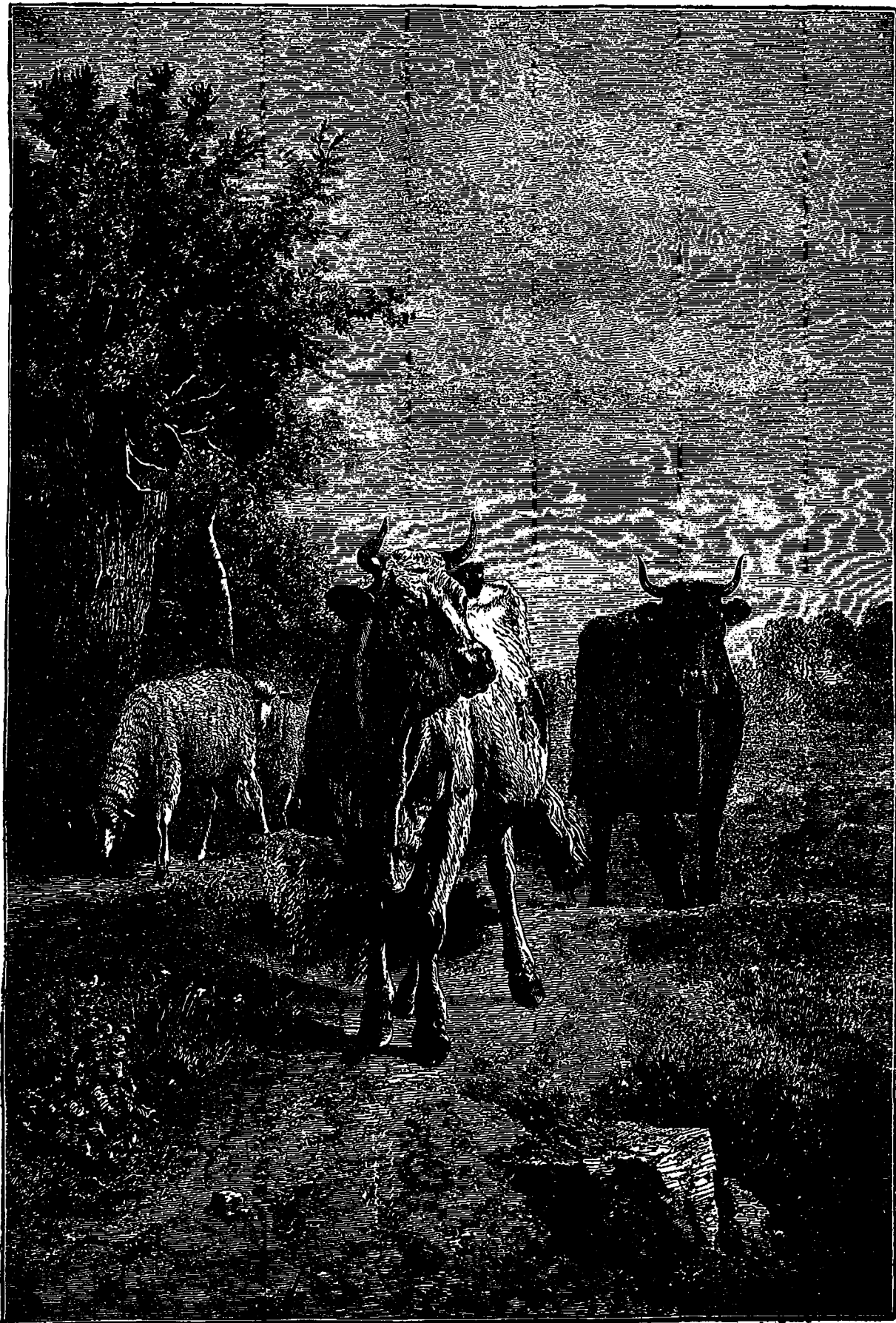
Through years of pain and sorrow,  
Since first I had to part,  
The thought of the dear old homestead  
Has lingered around my heart;  
The porch embowered with roses,  
The gables' drooping eaves,  
And the songs of the birds at twilight  
Amid the orchard leaves,

And the forms of those who loved me  
In the happy childhood years  
Appear at the dusky windows,  
Through the vision dimmed with tears.  
I hear their voices calling  
From the shadows far away,  
And I stretch my arms out toward them  
In the gloom of the twilight gray.

But only the night winds answer,  
As I cry through the dismal air;  
And only the bat comes swooping  
From the darkness of its lair.  
Yet still the voice of my childhood  
Is calling from far away,  
And the faces of those who loved me  
Smile through the shadows gray.

—Chambers' Journal.

WHATEVER thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.



GOING HOME.