

led and anxious about difficulties or trials in the future; wait till you come to them."

"But still I don't exactly see what it means about the bridge," said Annie. "Of course, no one can cross a bridge before they come to it."

"I will tell you a little story that may help you to understand it. Once upon a time there was a little girl named Ruth. She was a timid child, afraid of all sorts of things that had no intention of hurting her. If a cow backed towards her, she felt sure it meant to run at her; if a dog barked, she thought it meant to bite her; and if she had to go into a dark room, she trembled with fear till she was safely in the light again. Don't you think she was very foolish?"

"Yes," said Annie, hanging down her head a little, for she remembered some such feelings herself. "But, grandmother, how can any one help being afraid?"

"I will tell you one way. When you are alone in the dark, for instance, do not think about unpleasant things—about ghosts, and robbers, and such things, that will naturally make you afraid; but think of pleasant things, and, if nothing else will take away your fear, remember that your Heavenly Father is with you as much in the darkness as in the light, and when you are with him there is surely nothing to fear."

"But to return to my story. Ruth had been spending a day with her aunt, who lived in a great farm-house, not far from her own home. Her father drove her over in the carriage in the morning, and told her she might stay all day, if she would be home by the time the sun set. So Ruth had seen the little new chickens, and played in the hay, and picked currants for Aunt Mary, and been very busy and happy all day. After an early supper, while the sun was still far up above the hills, her aunt took her out in the garden and orchard, and gave her a basket of fruit and flowers. Then she showed her a new and short way home, across the field, into a narrow lane that led into the main road."

"Ruth ran on merrily, stopping sometimes to add some wild flowers to her basket, and sometimes to look back to the fence where Aunt Mary stood watching her. She soon found herself safely in the lane, and, after climbing a little hill, she could see her own home not far away. It was a beautiful view, for she could see a blue ocean far away between the hills, and the river, with the white houses of the village reflected in it, and, close by the winding road, with hedges of wild rose and elder, and little clumps of trees here and there. But Ruth did not stop long to admire the view; for, as she looked down the hill, she saw something which frightened her. What do you suppose it was?"

"A cow?"

"No; guess again."

"A great black dog."

"No; it was only a pretty little brook, which ran sparkling over the stones."

"I don't see how she could be afraid of a brook. That couldn't hurt her."

"This was the trouble. The road, as seemed to Ruth, ran directly down to the brook, and for a bridge there was only a broad plank. So she began to think it dreadful it would be to have to go over such a bridge. It might break down, or she might be dizzy, and fall off, and be drowned."

"Why, I like to cross over the brook on board," said Annie, quite relieved to find that Ruth was not to be an illustration of her own foolish fears.

"But Ruth had not lived in the country long, and little city girls are not in the habit of running about in all sorts of places as you are. Ruth was very much afraid, and she began to think what she could do. Could she go back? No; for it would take a long time to go round by the road, and, besides, she was ashamed to have her aunt know that she was afraid. So she did the most foolish thing possible; she sat down and cried, and then she looked down the hill again, and the water seemed deeper and the bridge narrower than before; and so she cried again. She didn't know how long she would have been there crying, if the sun had not gone down towards the mountains so fast, reminding her that it was time to go home. She went slowly down the hill till the bushes and trees hid the brook and the little bridge, and then she took courage, and ran on faster. She soon came to a turn in the little lane, which she had not seen, the trees were so thick; and where do you suppose she found herself? In the main road, with only a very short distance to go to reach her own gate, where her mother was looking out for her!"

"And where was the brook?"

"The brook was by the side of the road where it had always been; but the path down to it led off in another direction."

"So all her crying was for nothing, as she didn't have to cross the bridge at all."

"No. And now you see what is meant by crossing a bridge before you come to it; don't you?"

"Yes, grandmamma; but people are never so foolish really, are they?"

"Yes, dear; very often. Many a tear has been shed over troubles that never came. Do you remember a little girl who cried because there were such long words at the end of her spelling-book? How was it when she really had to learn them?"

"Oh, they were easy enough then. And I remember crying one night last week because I thought it would rain the next day, and I could not go to the pic-nic. And it only rained a few drops in the night, and the next day was beautiful. Oh, dear! I didn't think I was so foolish."

"Ah! dear Annie, older people than you sometimes do the same foolish thing."