

STRONG SON OF GOD, IMMORTAL LOVE.

Strong Son of God, Immortal Love, Whom we that have not seen Thy face, By faith, and faith alone, embrace, Believing where we cannot prove.

GRAN'S STORY.

"I quite forgot all about him, poor little chap! You see, gran, I was playing cricket here with the other fellows down in the meadow there, and then we strolled home, and I only remembered Bertie was left behind in the farm garden when I had got back."

"Where is he now, then, Tom?" "The old mill, because I should have gone and fetched him at once, only uncle Joe said he'd pick him up. I'm sorry that I forgot again." And Tom looked pensively into gran's face, with a good deal of affectation, as if he were his own.

"Gran was a beautiful old lady, with snow-white hair and the kindest of smiles, and her grandchildren thought that they almost worshipped her. But for all that, they often managed to give her tender heart, and especially the heedless poplar, Tom. She put away her knitting now, and gazed gravely down on the boy with an expression of deep pain, which somewhat frightened him—and it was not many things that could alarm Tom."

"Why it's no great odds, gran," he ventured. "Bertie would be all right with the little ones at the farm. It's only that I forgot to take the youngster home."

"And how often are you in the habit of forgetting, my boy?" Tom flushed uneasily now. "Thousands of times, I expect," he said candidly. "I'm sure I don't want to! It gets me into more scrapes than anything else. If you knew, gran, what it is to have a memory like mine, you might—"

nie can take care of North? It was ever her satisfactory and wondering excuse. But when darkness came it was quite another thing! Then she showed a constitutional and most painful timidity, rather unusual among most unaccountable. Very Nora had once been left in the dark for a moment by her nurse, and had nearly fallen into a fit with fright, paralyzed with fear, and unable to scream or speak.

"In those days, Tom, I had a very bad memory indeed, whatever you may fancy now. I forgot things right and left as you would say, and was my most serious failing as a young girl, for which I had been lectured, punished, warned, times without number. How often had I heard my mother say, half sadly, 'Elsie, Elsie, some day you will be a very sharp lesson to me in mind and body. The easy ones that are given to you now.' And I would fling my arms around her neck and cry, and say I would try—I would indeed. For a short time I kept my word, and I foolishly believed that victory was mine, when the enemy was but driven back a few steps. Child, remember that a fault must always be watched against! Never suppose it to be actually conquered! For the Christian life is a life of warfare and striving, fighting against all our temptations, and promises to be faithful soldiers as well as servants. Ah, well! We don't learn that all at once, Tom."

"At first I used to fine myself when I had forgotten an errand or a message, but I had intended to do and had not done. I was very much in earnest then, you see. But in the novelty of this country visit my good resolves went to the winds—anywhere, completely out of my head. And I made no effort whatever to bear in mind Mrs. Mary's caution about little North, though, at the moment, I had been impressed, and had promised faithfully, but what are promises to those who will not trouble to remember them?"

"One day North and I were having great fun together. It was perfectly wet—the only wet day that came at all into that long visit of mine. Down came the rain steadily for hours and hours. It was toward the end of September then, and the days were shortening perceptibly, and the hedgerows grew damp and cold. We had been frolicking in the cozy fire-lighted nursery till I became restless, and announced my intention of going further afield. Aunt Mary was away for a few days, and had left a note to Mrs. Harris. I ran down to where she was busy in the store-room amongst jam pots and mysterious herbs, and cried out, 'May we go and play in the lumber-room for a little while, North and I?' 'Ready leave was given for half an hour, and away we two ran—I delighted to change my quarters, North happy to be with me anywhere. Her gleeful laugh rang out as clear as silver bells, her blue eyes sparkled joyfully. Long indeed was it ere I heard that laugh again. God help me!"

"The lumber-room was a long, low chamber with hanging rafters, old doors and niches, piles of travelling trunks, many of them furnished with drawers, where and a most medley collection some of it was, I promise you—just the sort of place you would have revealed in, Tom, for all you are listening to me so quietly now. Through the wide lattice window I saw the hills look purple in the gathering twilight, for the clouds were parting now, and a yellow light shone behind them."

"I did not mean to be cruel, Tom. I meant to have opened it in a moment, and had sprung away to about and sit next to Mrs. Harris that she would do it in two minutes, when a voice from below suddenly called me by my name. My mother's voice! Down the staircase I went, and I was the first to see Mrs. Harris. My arrival was unexpected. We had not met for some months, and I poured forth a torrent of eager questions for the next quarter of an hour."

"Why, Elsie, where can little North be?" My mother asked sternly. "You have forgotten to tell me about her." "Forgotten! I started as if I had been stung. Back rushed Aunt Mary's warning too late, musing me with my guilt as though it had been words of fire: 'Never leave her in the dark, Elsie! Whatever else you forget, remember that! And I had not remembered.' 'Mother, I gasped, 'little North is shut up in the closet in the lumber-room. I quite forgot her.' 'You had better go and see for yourself, had just entered the dining-room heard my exclamation. She turned as white as a sheet. A long, low howl floated down from above, and a sound of vigorous scratching."

"Bernard at any rate had not forsaken his little mistress. I darted upstairs in front of the rest, and burst into the lumber-room. The collie ceased scratching at the cupboard door, and looked at me with a look of human agony. 'North! North! darling! I am here! You are not afraid are you?' Dead silence and darkness, only relieved by nurse's candle, which glimmered feebly behind me. The silence made my heart beat in great thumps of fear. I threw the candle away, and opened the door, where were you? Oh, nurse, bring the light quick, I can't find her! That light fell on an awful sight, Tom. The child sat upright, staring straight before her, with a vacant glassy stare. Her blue eyes full of a terror that I cannot describe—her lips parted in horror. Oh, my boy, if you had once seen such a sight in your life could you ever do anything but remember?"

"Young as I was, it was burnt in upon my brain. Mrs. Harris pushed me fiercely aside, 'See what you have done,' her gesture said, but never a syllable did she speak. She seized North in a despairing grasp and carried her into the nursery. The doctor was sent for, and Aunt Mary. He stayed a considerable time and looked very grave when he left the house. And my tortures, and almost fell overboard, coiled upon the door mat at her feet. 'Elsie!—she stooped down and kissed me tenderly—'my child, you must not stay here. She stroked the wet hair out of my swollen eyes, and half hid, half bore me to my own room. Her kindness wounded me almost, instead of healing. I asked herself, 'is North better?' 'She is conscious, Elsie, but the doctor fears—'mother started, half choked. 'Go on,' I cried, impatiently, 'the doctor says she is not a very seriously injured indeed, Elsie! So injured, my poor, poor child, that although her life is spared, and although she may live to be an old woman, she will never see, or speak, or hear. God help you to bear it as well as you can.' 'God did help me to bear it, Tom. But from that hour my childhood went from me in one bitter, bitter wall, never to return. The doctor was right in his dreadful suspicion; that sweet baby never saw, never spoke, never heard me again."

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