

Longfellow.

At the Poet's Grave with the Children.

BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

BECAUSE that he loved the children,
If for nothing else, we would say
This is a grand old poet
Who is sleeping here to-day.

Awake, he loved their voices,
And wove them into his rhyme,
And the music of their laughter
Was with him all the time.

Kindly and warm and tender,
He nestled each childish palm
So close to his own that his touch was a prayer,
And his voice a blessed psalm.

Though he knew the tongues of nations,
And their meanings all were dear,
The prattle and lisp of a little child
Was the sweetest for him to hear.

He has turned from the marvellous pages
Of many an alien tome—
Haply come down from Olivet,
Or out through the gates of Rome;

Set sail o'er the seas between him
And each little beckoning hand
That fluttered about in the meadows
And groves of his native land—

Fluttered and flashed on his vision,
As in the glimmering light
Of the orchard lands of his childhood,
The blossoms of pink and white,

And there have been smiles of rapture
Lighting his face as he came,
Hailing the children hailing him,
And calling them each by name.

And there have been sobs in his bosom,
As out on the shores he stepped;
And many a little welcomer
Has wondered why he wept.

That was because, O Children—
(In fancy the words came slow
And solemn and sweet through the roses
You have heaped o'er the heart below) —

That was because, O Children,
Ye might not always be
The same that the Saviour's arms were wound
About in Galilee!

So because that he loved the Children,
If for nothing else, we would say
This is a grand old poet
Who is sleeping here to-day.

PILGRIM STREET.

BY HESBA STRETTON.

CHAPTER V.

THE FEAST IN PILGRIM STREET.

TOM was very sparing of speech as they walked along the street, for the sovereign in his mouth made it difficult to talk; but Alice, who knew nothing about it, was disappointed at his silence, and soon left off speaking herself. Presently they reached the corner of the street leading to Tom's old home, and here he came to a dead stop. He had heard Handforth's wife screaming and crying loudly in the court, when the judge sentenced her husband to seven years' imprisonment, and he scarcely knew whether it would be safe to show himself at her house. Alice saw the doubt and hesitation which troubled him, and she spoke heartily and eagerly.

"You're to come on home with me," she said; "you and Phil; father said so. Phil and me are going to buy something for tea with the lady's sixpence. You go on, Tom, and tell the little ones we're coming. We won't be long after you."

Tom was not sorry to be alone for a little while, but he did not hurry on to Pilgrim Street. He turned up a quiet road by the cathedral, and crouching down under the palisades round the cathedral yard, he took the glittering coin out of his mouth, and rubbed it dry upon the sleeve of his jacket, while he kept a jealous and wary look out lest anybody should come within sight of it. It was very bright and beautiful. He held it deep in the hollow of his hand, and let the sun shine upon it. His fingers tingled at the touch of it. He had a vague recollection of the words Mr. Hope had spoken to him, but they awoke very faint emotions compared to the delight of feeling and handling this real piece of gold. Play at pitch-and-toss with it! He caught his breath at the very thought of such a thing, for he could not even venture to hold it lightly in his fingers, and it lay in one palm covered with the other, while he only indulged himself with frequent glimpses at it. How could he ever bring himself to change it? And yet it would have to come to that, he supposed. He almost wished he had not let Alice and Phil go away to waste the sixpence; he might have started with that, and it would have lasted over a day. But he felt a little pinch of shame at the thought; and rousing himself from his solitary pleasure, he replaced the sovereign in his mouth, and ran off towards Pilgrim Street.

When Tom opened the door, after a loud single knock at it—for he had never before been there as a friend and visitor—he found that Alice and Phil had reached home before him. Half of Phil's sixpence had bought half-a-dozen herrings, for it was a plentiful herring season, and as it was getting near the evening, Alice had been able to get them for a halfpenny apiece. The other threepence had been spent in tea—Alice saying there was plenty of bread at home.

When Tom made his appearance, Phil and the four little Pendleburys were hovering with delight round the plate of beautiful fish, longing for tea-time to arrive. Tea was not to be thought of before six o'clock, when the father would come in, and the mill be "loosed" where Kitty Pendlebury was at work; but until then there was the pleasure of looking at the silvery scales of the fish glistening in the scanty light which visited the cellar. In spite of the general joy, Tom was quite still, and sat by the handful of fire as if he were cold, though it was a warm day in August, and Alice only kindled the fire to boil the kettle and fry the herrings. Tom began to feel embarrassed with his riches, for there were many things he would have said to Alice and Phil, but for the difficulty he felt in speaking freely.

"Tom," said Alice, almost in a whisper, while the little ones were busy near the door, "Tom, aren't you glad to be set free? Father and me were so glad, we couldn't tell you." And Tom saw her wipe her eyes with her apron, as she stooped down over the fire.

"Miss Alice," he said, in a thick voice, "I don't mind telling you—you're safe, anyhow. Look here!"—and he gave her a sudden vision of the sovereign, flashing for an instant in the light of the blazing chips.

"Oh, Tom!" she cried. "How ever did you come by it? Oh, Tom!"

"It's all right," said Tom. "That gentleman, he gave it me—him who got me off. It's to begin life with, and I'm to make my fortune—mine and little Phil's. Did you ever have as much?"

"No," answered Alice; "but father had one once."

The sovereign made Alice quite as serious as Tom, and she sat in sober thought until the cathedral

clock struck six, and the children crowded round her and the fire to watch the hissing and spluttering of the fish in the frying-pan, while each one held a plate to warm by the brief heat of the chips. The tea had been made some time ago, in a tin tea-pot, which was kept warm on the hob, and the tea and the fish filled Nat Pendlebury's cellar with a pleasant fragrance.

It was, without doubt, a noble feast to celebrate Tom's escape from imprisonment, and, now that he had shared his secret with Alice, he was sufficiently at ease to take some interest in the meal. By some means or other the children knew at once when their father had turned into Pilgrim Street, and they ran to meet him, and to bring him in with a tumult of gladness.

"Bless thee, Tom!" cried Nat, stretching out both his hands to him. "Welcome out of jail a hundred times. I wish I'd only known thee was there before, and a word or two from me and Alice could get thee out. But it's done thee no harm, my lad, I'll be bound. Alice, my lass, we'll treat ourselves to a table-cloth this night. There now, I'll lay it all right and straight. Kitty's mill is loosed, and she'll be here to the minute. Now then, children, for the table-cloth and the crocks."

Nat was not still for a moment while he was speaking. He prepared the table-cloth by selecting and unfolding two large posting-bills—one blue and one red—and spread them neatly on the table, with the printed sides downward, upon which he laid all the knives and forks which the house contained, and the plates that had been warming at the fire. Before all his arrangements were completed, Kitty came, and every one was listening and looking at the last hiss of taking the last herring from the pan, which Alice accomplished with great dexterity and composure.

"Just like her poor mother!" said Nat to himself. "Why, my dears," he added, rubbing his wiry hair with sudden excitement, "which of us can remember the chapter Alice read out of the Testament last night, all about the great multitude of people whom the Lord Jesus fed with bread and fishes? Just the same as us, Joey, wasn't it? And they sat down on the grass, didn't they, Suey? Well, we can't sit on the grass, but Phil and the three smallest shall have the little bench, and Suey must come on my knee; and Tom, you bring up that old box to the table; and Alice, have mother's rocking-chair; and Kitty, sit on the stool. There! Now, we're all ready and comfortable."

They were all more than ready, devouring with their eyes the plate of fish which Alice had placed before her father. The largest was picked out to be divided between Alice and Kitty, who declared, both of them, that they could not possibly eat a whole herring at once; the next largest was allotted to Tom, because he had so narrowly escaped being sent to jail; and the third, everybody said, must be for father. After that, the very smallest was given to Phil, who had a whole one to himself, as being both a guest and the giver of the feast; and the remaining two were divided among the four little ones.

Never had finer or better flavoured herrings been caught in the Irish Sea, and they took a very long time to be eaten, especially by Alice, who was kept busy with the tin tea-pot and the brown mugs. But the feast came to an end at last, like all other feasts, and the children had their hands and faces wiped by Alice; and as soon as the tea-things had been cleared away, they took their seats again quietly, and Alice brought out of a drawer a small Bible, which Tom at once knew was the strange book he had seen before.

"Now, little ones," said Nat, looking round him.